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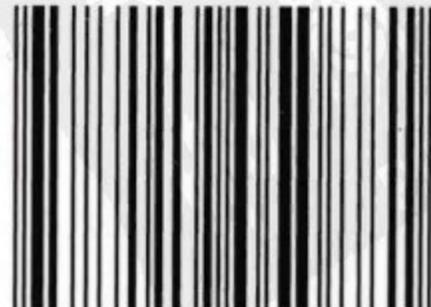
太平广记选

ANTHOLOGY OF TALES FROM RECORDS
OF THE TAIPING ERA

II



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Chinese-English

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II



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三 卫

开元初，有三卫自京还青州。至华岳庙前，见青衣婢，衣服故恶，来白云：“娘子欲见。”因引前行。遇见一妇人，年十六七，容色惨悴。曰：“已非人，华岳第三新妇，夫婿极恶。家在北海，三年无书信，以此尤为岳子所薄。闻君远还，欲以尺书仰累，若能为达，家君当有厚报。”遂以书付之。其人亦信士也，问北海于何所送之。妇人云：“海池上第二树，但扣之，当有应者。”言讫诀去。

及至北海，如言送书。扣树毕，忽见朱门在树下，有人从门中受事。人以书付之。人顷之，出云：“大王请客





The Mountain God's Daughter-in-Law

In the early days of Kaiyuan reign, a discharged officer of the royal guards was returning to his hometown in the east from Chang'an, the West Capital.

Approaching the temple to the god of Mount Hua, he was accosted by a shabbily dressed lady's maid, who said her mistress would like to meet him. He was then led to a young woman about seventeen years old, pale and haggard. "I'm not any ordinary human being," she introduced herself, "but the bride of the third son of the mountain god. My husband is a real tyrant. You see, my parents live thousands of miles away at North Sea, and for three years I haven't heard a word from them, so that my husband thinks he can mistreat and snub me as he pleases. As I learned you're going to the east coast, I hope you can do me a favor by bringing my parents this letter. My father will certainly reward your pains."

Filled with sympathy, he agreed to help, and asked exactly how and where he should deliver it.

"Knock on the second tree on the shore," she replied, "and someone will answer it."

The man kept his word and finally reached North Sea. He knocked on the tree and a red door suddenly appeared in the trunk. A voice greeted him from within, and he handed in the letter. Presently, the doorman opened the gate and announced that the king extended his welcome.

人。”随行百余步，后入一门，有朱衣人，长丈余，左右侍女数千百人。坐毕，乃曰：“三年不得女书。”读书大怒曰：“奴辈敢尔！”乃传教，召左右虞候。须臾而至，悉长丈余，巨头大鼻，状貌可恶。令调兵五万，至十五日，乃西伐华山，无令不胜。二人受教走出，乃谓三卫曰：“无以上报。”命左右取绢二匹赠使者。三卫不悦，心怨二匹之少也。持别，朱衣人曰：“两绢得二万贯，方可卖，慎无贱与人也。”

三卫既出，欲验其事，复往华阴。至十五日，既暮，遥见东方黑气如盖。稍稍西行，雷震电掣，声闻百里。须臾，华山大风折树，自西吹云，云势益壮，直至华山。雷火喧薄，遍山涸赤，久之方罢。及明，山色焦黑。三卫乃入京卖绢，买者闻求二万，莫不嗤骇，以为狂人。后数





A hundred steps or so brought him to another gate. Entering, he saw amidst thousands of serving maids a man over ten feet tall, clad in a scarlet robe. He must be the king, he guessed, as he was offered a seat.

"I haven't had a word from my daughter in the past three years," the king said as he broke the seal to read. "How dare he!" he burst out in a terrible rage and shouted for his lieutenants, who appeared almost instantly. They were also ten feet tall, with frightening looks and disproportionately large heads and giant noses. The king ordered them to deploy an army of fifty thousand strong and attack Mount Hua on the fifteenth of the month. When they left the hall, he turned around and told the servants to bring the letter bearer two bolts of silk. "Please accept this token of my gratitude," he said.

Two bolts of silk were not much of a reward for all his troubles, he thought unhappily. Anyway, he thanked the king and stood up to leave. "Don't give away these two bolts unless you're offered twenty million," the king said in farewell.

Curious to see what would happen, he returned to Mount Hua. Toward dusk on the fifteenth he noticed dark clouds piling up over the eastern horizon and quickly spreading west. Soon thunder was heard rumbling in the distance. At the same time, a howling gale rose over the mountain, pulling out trees by their roots and blustering east as if to repel the onrushing clouds. By now the mountain was overcast. Fire poured down from heaven; the earth quivered with the booms; even the slopes seemed to glow in the darkness. This lasted throughout the night.

At dawn, the mountain was scorched and charred. That was sufficient proof to make him continue his trip to the capital to sell the silk.

People thought him crazy as he asked for twenty million, but despite their ridicule he wouldn't sell it for a coin less. Not many days

日，有白马丈夫来买，直还二万，不复踟躇，其钱先已锁在西市。三卫因问买所用。丈夫曰：“今以渭川神嫁女，用此赠遗。天下唯北海绢最佳，方欲令人往市，闻君卖北海绢，故来尔。”

三卫得钱，数月货易毕，东还青土。行至华阴，复见前时青衣云：“娘子故来谢恩。”便见看盖犊车，自山而下，左右从者十余辈。既至下车，亦是前时女郎。容服炳焕，流目清眇，迨不可识。见三卫，拜乃言曰：“蒙君厚恩，远报父母。自闹战之后，恩情颇深。但愧无可仰报尔。然三郎以君达书故，移怒于君。今将五百兵，于潼关相候，君若往，必为所害，可且还京。不久大驾东幸，鬼神惧鼓车，君若坐于鼓车，则无虑也。”言讫不见。





passed when there came a nobleman on a white horse, who accepted the price straightaway. He already had that sum in cash deposited in the market vault, he said. When asked why he was buying such expensive silk, the nobleman answered that the god of the Wei River was going to marry off his daughter and this silk would be the best gift, for silk from North Sea is the world's finest. He added that he was just thinking of dispatching a dealer there to buy it when he learned that someone was peddling it right here in the market, and this saved him a lot of trouble.

With the money, the ex-officer went into trading. Months later, after selling out his wares, he decided to go home.

Passing by Mount Hua, he came across the same maid he had met before. She told him that her mistress was coming to express her gratitude in person. Then he saw a cow-drawn buggy descending the slopes, attended by a dozen maids. The buggy pulled up and out stepped a young lady. He could hardly recognize her, for this time her clothes were rich and elegant, and her eyes were bright and smiling. She made a deep curtsy and said, "Thank you, sir, for taking the trouble to bring my letter to my parents. Since that punishment, my husband has been quite sweet to me. I owe you a lot, and it'd be a shame if I couldn't do more for you. Listen now. Because you were the messenger, my husband has shifted his anger onto you. At this moment he's waiting for you at the Tongguan Pass with five hundred soldiers. If you continue eastward, you'll no doubt fall into his hands. Better return to the capital and stay there for the time being. His Majesty will soon pay a visit to the East Capital. Then you may find a place on the drum cart and go through Tongguan without harm. Nether spirits are afraid of drums." Having said that, she disappeared.

Scared, he immediately turned back to Chang'an. In a couple of

三卫大惧，即时还京。后数十日，会玄宗幸洛，乃以钱与鼓者，随鼓车出关，因得无忧。





months the emperor did set out on a royal visit to the East Capital. The man bribed the drummer and slipped through the Tongguan Pass in the emperor's train.





南 纘

唐广汉守南纘，常为人言：至德中，有调选得同州督邮者，姓崔，忘其名字，轻骑赴任，出春明门，见一青袍人，乘马出，亦不知其姓字，因相揖偕行，徐问何官。青袍云：“新受同州督邮。”崔云：“某新授此官，君岂不误乎？”青袍笑而不答。又相与行，悉云赴任。

去同州数十里，至斜路中，有官吏拜迎。青袍谓崔生曰：“君为阳道录事，我为阴道录事。路从此别，岂不相送耶？”崔生异之，即与联辔入斜路。遂至一城郭，街衢局署，亦甚壮丽。青袍至厅，与崔生同坐。伍伯通胥徒僧道等讫，次通词讼狱囚，崔之妻与焉。崔生大惊，谓青袍





Yin-Yang Doubles

The following story was related by Nan Zuan, Prefect of Guanghan.

In Zhide reign, an officer whose family name was Cui (his first name forgotten) was re-assigned to Tong Prefecture as Chief Registrar. As he set out to take up his new office, he met at the capital's east gate a man in a black robe, who was also riding out alone in the same direction. They saluted each other and rode on together. After some time, he asked the man about his office, and the man in black replied that he was newly appointed Chief Registrar of Tong Prefecture.

"Isn't that a mistake?" Cui said. "I was appointed to that position."

The man smiled but didn't say anything. They rode on together, both to take up offices at Tong.

Approaching town, they came upon a group of waiting officers at a fork in the road. "You're the Chief Registrar in the world of *yang*, while I'm the Chief Registrar in the world of *yin*," the man said. "This is where we should go our separate ways, but won't you first like to see me to my place?"

Amazed, Cui followed him onto the byroad. Soon they reached a town which looked like any other big city with wide streets and impressive buildings.

The man in dark led him into the hall, where they took seats to receive homage from the clerks and clergymen, and then to hear the cases. Cui was surprised to find his wife among those in custody.

曰：“不知吾妻何得至此？”青袍即避案后，令崔生自与妻言。妻云：“被追至此，已是数日，君宜哀请录事耳！”崔生即祈求青袍，青袍因令吏促放崔生妻回。崔妻问犯何罪至此，青袍曰：“寄家同州，应同州亡人，皆在此厅勘过。盖君管阳道，某管阴道。”崔生淹留半日，请回，青袍命胥吏拜送曰：“虽阴阳有殊，然俱是同州也，可不拜送督邮哉？”青袍亦饯送，再三勤款挥袂，又令斜路口而去。

崔生至同州，问妻，云病七八日，冥然无所知，神识生人才得一日。崔生计之，恰放回日也。妻都不记阴道，见崔生言之，妻始悟如梦，亦不审记忆也。





“Why is my wife among the group?” he asked the man.

The man left the desk to let Cui speak with his wife.

“I’ve been held here quite a few days already,” his wife told him.

“Could you beg that officer to release me?”

Cui pleaded and the man instructed his subordinates to let Cui’s wife go.

On what allegation was his wife summoned, Cui inquired tentatively.

“All the dying in this prefecture must come here to be reviewed before they are finally dispatched,” the man explained, “and your family is now within my jurisdiction. While you take charge in the mortal world, I take charge in the netherworld.”

Having stayed almost half a day, Cui took leave. The man asked his clerks to join him in a send-off. “Though we’re separated by *yin* and *yang*,” he said, “we’re officers of the same prefecture. Colleagues should see each other off, right?” They toasted and waved him goodbye at the road fork.

Cui reached Tong and went in to see his wife, who told him that she had been ill for seven or eight days. She had lost consciousness, she said, and it had been only one day since she recovered her senses. Cui calculated that was when she was released from the nether court. She didn’t remember what happened in the netherworld, yet with the help of Cui’s account, she seemed able to recall pieces of a dream, distant and vague.





陈袁生

贞元初，陈郡袁生者，尝任参军于唐安，罢秩游巴川，舍于逆旅氏。忽有一夫，白衣来谒。既坐，谓生曰：“某高氏子也，家于此郡新明县。往者常职军伍间，今则免矣，故旅游至此。”生与语，其聪辩敏博，迥出于人，袁生奇之。又曰：“某善算者，能析君平生事。”生即讯之，遂述既往事，一一如笔写，生大惊。

是夕，夜既深，密谓袁生曰：“我非人也，幸一陈于君子，可乎？”袁生闻之惧，即起曰：“君非人，果鬼乎？是将祸我耶？”高生曰：“吾非鬼，亦非祸君。所以来者，将有托于君耳。我赤水神，有祠在新明之南。去岁淫雨数月，居舍尽圯，郡人无有治者，使我为风日所侵铄，且日





The Ocher River God

In the early years of Zhenyuan reign, among the administrative staff of Tang'an County in Shu, there was a Mr Yuan. His term of office had just expired, giving him leisure to go sightseeing.

One day, he had just put up at an inn in Bachuan County when a man in white paid him a call. As soon as they were seated, the man plunged into an introduction. "My name is Gao and I live in Xinming County nearby. I served many years in the army, but now I'm retired and touring around." After chitchatting a while, Yuan was surprised to find that the man was extraordinarily intelligent. "I'm something of a fortune-teller," continued the man, "and I can tell your history quite accurately." Yuan asked him to make a try. To his utter amazement, the man recounted every detail of his life, event after event as if reading from a book.

That night when all was quiet the man confided to Yuan, "I'm not a human being. There's something I'd like to talk about with you. Shall I go ahead?"

Jumping to his feet in terror, Yuan babbled, "Not human? You mean you're a ghost? Have you come to lay a curse on me?"

"No, I'm not a ghost, neither am I here to fetch your soul. I came simply because I'd like to solicit your help. I'm the god of the Ocher River and my shrine is south of the county seat of Xinming. During last year's long rainy season, my temple house leaked and crumbled, and no one cared to repair it, leaving me to the mercy of the elements,

为樵牧者欺侮，里中人视我如一坏土耳。今我诉于子，子以为可则言，不则去，无恨也。”袁生曰：“神既有愿，又何不可哉？”神曰：“子来岁当调补新明令。倘为我重建祠宇，以时奠祀，则真幸之甚者，愿无忘。”袁生诺之。既而又曰：“君初至邑时，当一见诣。然而人神理隔，虑君仆吏有黷于我。君当屏去其吏，独入庙中，冀尽一言耳。”袁生曰：“谨奉教。”

是岁冬，袁生果补新明令。及至任，讯之，果有赤水神庙，在县南数里。旬余，遂诣之。未至百余步，下马屏车吏，独入庙中。见其檐宇摧毁，蓬荒如积。伫望久之，有一白衣丈夫自庙后来，高生也，色甚喜。既拜，谓袁生曰：“君不忘前约，今日乃诣我，幸何甚哉。”于是偕行庙中。见阶垣下有一老僧，具桎梏，数人立其旁。袁生问





buffalo boys and woodcutters. The villagers looked upon me as if I were a mere pile of dirt! Now that I've told you who I am, if you promise to help, I'll continue; if not, I'll leave you alone. I'll bear no grudge against you whatever."

"Since this is the god's wish," replied Yuan, "I don't see why I shouldn't pledge my help."

"Then listen carefully. Next year, you're to be appointed magistrate of Xinming County. I'll be much obliged if you can rebuild my temple and see to the seasonal sacrifices. You won't let me down, will you?" Having received Yuan's assurance he went on, "Upon your arrival at the county you ought to pay me a visit. However, we gods and you humans shouldn't be seen mixing company, and I don't want to be debased by your servants. So you must leave them outside and enter the temple all by yourself. I look forward to another talk with you then."

"Your wish shall be honored," Yuan promised.

At the end of the year, as the river god had prophesied, Yuan was appointed magistrate of Xinming County. Soon after he assumed office, he made an inquiry and learned that there indeed was a temple to the god of the Ocher River a couple of miles south of the county seat. A trip was quickly arranged. He dismounted a hundred yards in front of the temple and told his attendants to wait. Into the temple he went alone. The roofs had caved in; the walls were defaced; wild grass had sprung up unchecked. While he was looking around, a man in white walked out from behind the building. It was none other than that Mr Gao, smiling radiantly. Yuan bowed.

"You're really as good as your word, and I'm most honored by this visit," said Gao as he led Yuan up the steps. On the verandah Yuan saw an old monk in shackles, watched over by a pack of guards. "Who is this monk?" he asked.

曰：“此何为者？”神曰：“此僧乃县东兰若道成师也，有殃，故吾系之一岁矣，每旦夕则鞭捶之。从此旬余，当解之。”袁生又曰：“此僧既存，安得系于此乎？”神曰：“以生魄系之，则其人自沉疾，亦安能知吾之为哉！”神告袁生曰：“君幸诺我建庙，可疾图之。”袁生曰：“不敢忘。”

既归，将计其工。然贫甚，无以为资。因自念曰：“神人所言，系道成师之魄，当沉疾。又云，从此去旬余，当解之。吾今假以他语，俾建其庙宇，又安有疑乎。”于是径往县东兰若问之，果有成师者，卧疾一岁矣。道成曰：“某病且死，旦夕则一身尽痛。”袁生曰：“师疾如是，且近于死矣，然我能愈之。师能以缙货建赤水神庙乎？”道成曰：“疾果愈，又安能以缙货为事哉！”





“He’s Monk Daocheng from a Buddhist temple to the east of the county. He’s suffering a predestined adversity. I’ve had him here for almost a year, giving him a good whipping every day at sunrise and sunset. He’s to be released in a fortnight.”

“Well, since he’s not dead yet, how can you hold his soul in chains?”

“When a living person’s soul is apprehended, he’s always found ill, and he has no way of knowing it is my doing. Since you’ve promised to rebuild my temple,” the river god reminded him, “you’d better make haste.”

“I’ll keep my word.”

He returned to his office to calculate the labor and building materials needed for the project. It turned out to be far beyond his means. According to what the river god said, he deliberated, the monk must be lying seriously ill in his temple, but he was to recover soon. What about using that piece of information to talk him into undertaking the reconstruction project? He wouldn’t suspect anything. Having thus made up his mind, he mounted his horse and rode out of the east gate of the town. Upon inquiry, he learned that there indeed was a monk called Daocheng who had been bedridden for nearly a year.

“I’m dying,” the monk groaned. “Twice a day my whole body aches terribly.”

“You do seem to be in bad shape with little chance of surviving,” commented Yuan. “Nevertheless, I may be able to rid you of your disease if you promise money and building materials to reconstruct the temple to the Ocher River god.”

“If only I can recover,” exclaimed the monk, “what money or materials I won’t spend!”



袁生即给曰：“吾善视鬼。近谒赤水神庙，见师魂，具桎梏繫于垣下。因召赤水神问其事，曰：‘此僧有宿殃，故繫于此。’吾怜师之苦，因告其神：‘何为繫生人，可疾解之，吾当命此僧以修建庙宇，慎无违也。’神喜而诺我曰：‘从此去旬余，当舍其罪。’吾故告师疾将愈，宜修赤水神庙也。无以疾愈，遂怠其心，如此则祸且及矣。”道成伪语曰：“敬受教。”

后旬余，果愈。因召门弟子告曰：“吾少年弃家，学浮屠氏法，迨今年五十，不幸沉疾。向者袁君谓我曰：‘师之病，赤水神所为也，疾辄可修补其庙。’夫置神庙者，所以祐兆人，祈福应。今既有害于我，安得不除之乎？”即与其徒，持锤诣庙，尽去神像及祠宇，无一遗者。

又明日，道成谒袁生。袁生喜曰：“师病果愈乎，吾之语岂妄耶？”道成曰：“然。幸君救我，何敢忘君之恩乎？”袁生曰：“可疾计修赤水神庙也，不然，且惧为





"I'm capable of seeing the invisible," Yuan invented. "The other day I happened to pay a visit to the Ocher River Temple where I saw your soul shackled to the wall. I summoned the river god and demanded an explanation. He said that it was because you had sinned in your previous life. Out of pity for your suffering, I told the god that it's improper to hold a living person's soul in custody, and an immediate release would be wise. I also said you would rebuild his temple, a claim which I think you would honor. The god seemed pleased and he agreed to forgive you and your crime in a fortnight. That's why I told you that you could expect a speedy recovery. Just now you pledged money and materials for the reconstruction. If you should go back on your word when you've recovered, let me warn you, you'll be courting disaster."

"It's extremely kind of you to have told me all that," said the monk perfunctorily.

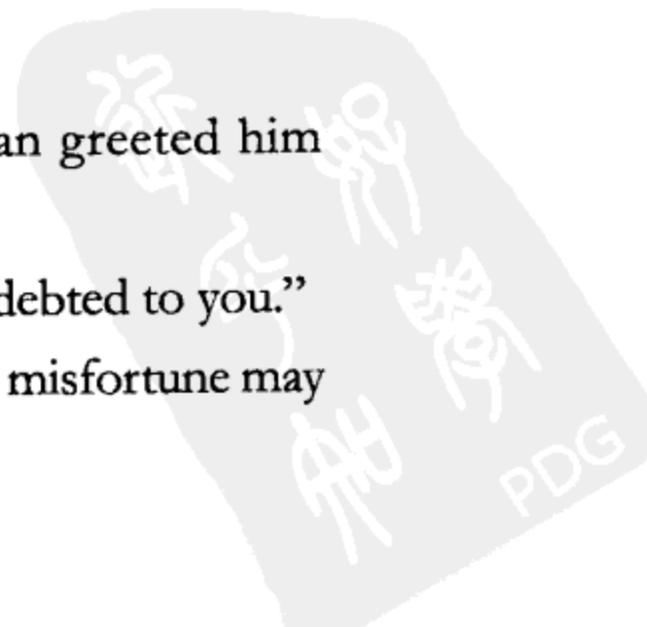
To be sure, the monk recovered in less than a fortnight. He called together his disciples and said, "It has been fifty years since I abandoned home to devote myself to Buddhism. As you all know, I was struck down by an illness. The other day, the magistrate told me it was caused by the god of the Ocher River, and I should repair his temple after I've recovered. A temple is built for gods to give their blessings to man and to answer people's prayers. Now that it has inflicted such adversity on me, it should be demolished!" Having said that, he led his disciples to the temple with spades and picks. They pulled down the statues and halls. Nothing was left standing.

Next day he paid Yuan a visit.

"Glad to see you've recovered, Master," Yuan greeted him joyously, "so I wasn't cheating."

"Right you are. You saved my life. I'm much indebted to you."

"So it's high time to repair the temple, otherwise misfortune may befall you again."





祸。”道成曰：“夫神所以赖于人者，以其福可延，戾可弭，旱亢则雩之以泽，潦淫则禱之以霁。故天子诏天下郡国，虽一邑一里，必建其祠。盖用为民之福也。若赤水神者，无以福人，而有害于人焉，可不去之？已尽毁其庙矣。”袁生且惊且惧，遂谢之。道成气益丰，而袁生惧甚。

后月余，吏有罪，袁生朴之。无何吏死，其家诉于郡，坐徙端溪。行至三峡，忽遇一白衣，立于路左。视之，乃赤水神也。曰：“向托君修我祠宇，奈何致道成毁我之舍，弃我之像，使一旦无所归，君之罪也。今君弃逐穷荒，亦我报仇耳。”袁生即谢曰：“毁君者道成也，何为罪我？”神曰：“道成师福盛甚，吾不能动。今君禄与命衰，故我得以报。”言已不见。生恶之。后数日，竟以疾卒。





“We worship the gods because they can extend our happiness and avert bad fortune. In a drought we can ask them for rain; when suffering a deluge, we can plead for sunny days. That’s why in ruling his land His Majesty decrees a temple in every locality, big or small. All is for the happiness of his subjects. How can we put up with such gods as this one of the Ocher River, who makes people ill rather than happy! I’ve razed his temple to the ground.”

Yuan was dumbfounded and humbled. His fear then increased with each passing day, while the monk seemed to become ever more robust.

One day more than a month after the monk’s visit, a subordinate of Yuan’s was charged with an offense and brought before him. Unfortunately, the man died under interrogation. The enraged family of the dead man lodged a complaint against him at the prefectural government, and in consequence he was exiled to Duanxi, a remote prefecture on the southern frontiers. Passing through the Yangtze Gorges, he saw in the distance a man in white standing by the roadside. A closer look affirmed that it was none other than the god of the Ocher River.

“I asked you to repair my temple,” said the river god reproachfully. “Why on earth did you make that monk demolish my statue and house? It’s all your fault that I’ve become a homeless vagabond! How gratifying it is to see you banished to the barren areas!”

“It was the monk who tore down your temple,” muttered Yuan sheepishly. “Why blame me for that?”

“At present, Monk Daocheng is swelling with good fortune so that I can’t affect him. But as you’re at the ebb of fate, I certainly can take my revenge.” So speaking, he disappeared.

Yuan was greatly annoyed by this encounter. A few days later he succumbed to an illness and died.



卢佩

贞元末，渭南县丞卢佩，性笃孝。其母先病腰脚，至是病甚，不能下床榻者累年，晓夜不堪痛楚。佩即弃官，奉母归长安，寓于长乐里之别第，将欲竭产以求国医王彦伯治之。彦伯声势重，造次不可一见，佩日往祈请焉。半年余，乃许一到。

佩期某日平旦。是日亭午不来，佩候望于门，心摇目断。日既渐晚，佩益怅然。忽见一白衣妇人，姿容绝丽，乘一骏马，从一女僮，自曲之西，疾驰东过。有顷，复自东来，至佩处驻马，谓佩曰：“观君颜色忧沮，又似有所候待来，请问之。”佩志于王彦伯，初不觉妇人之来，既





The Woman in White

Toward the end of Zhenyuan reign, the deputy magistrate of Weinan County was Lu Pei, a marvelously filial man. His mother had been bedridden for years, starting with a backache and pains in her feet. The pains grew from bad to worse, tormenting her during the day and waking her up at night. Because of that, he resigned from office to accompany her back to Chang'an, where they had a house in Changle District. He was counting on the medical treatment of the famous imperial doctor, Wang Yanbo, even if it was to cost him a fortune. Yet it was no easy job to fix an appointment with Dr Wang, and it was only after half a year's undaunted visiting and waiting, pleading and begging, that the doctor agreed to make a call.

On the appointed day, he waited from morning till noon but the celebrated doctor did not show up. Lu stood at the gate craning his neck, his hopes fading as the sun declined toward the west.

A gorgeous woman in white appeared at the west end of the lane and galloped past his gate on a fine horse, followed by a serving maid. In a moment, she rode back and stopped right in front of him.

"You look rather unhappy and disappointed. Are you waiting for someone?" she asked.

As his thoughts were riveted on the doctor, he didn't even realize the woman was talking to him. She had to repeat her question before he took notice and explained.

"Wang Yanbo is an imperial doctor," the woman remarked. "He

被顾问再三，乃具以情告焉。妇人曰：“彦伯国医，无容至此。妾有薄技，不减王彦伯所能。请一见太夫人，必取平差。”佩惊喜，拜于马首曰：“诚得如此，请以身为仆隶相酬。”

佩即先入白母，母方呻吟酸楚之次，闻佩言，忽觉小瘳。遂引妇人至母前，妇人才举手候之，其母已能自动矣。于是一家欢跃，竞持所有金帛，以遗妇人。妇人曰：“此犹未也，当要进一服药，非止尽除痼疾，抑亦永享眉寿。”母曰：“老妇将死之骨，为天师再生，未知何阶上答全德？”妇人曰：“但不弃细微，许奉九郎巾栉，常得在太夫人左右则可，安敢论功乎？”母曰：“佩犹愿以身为天师奴，今反得为丈夫，有何不可？”妇人再拜称谢，遂于女僮手，取所持小妆奁中，取药一刀圭，以和进母。母入口，积年诸苦，释然顿平。即具六礼，纳为妻。妇人朝夕供养，妻道严谨。然每十日，即请一归本家。佩欲以车





wouldn't make rounds to ordinary families. My humble self knows a thing or two about medicine, probably as well as Doctor Wang. May I see your mother? I'm sure I can cure her disease."

"If you really can cure her," he bowed in excitement, "I'm willing to be your slave."

He went in to tell his mother the good news. His mother was groaning in pain, but the moment she heard that, she felt the pain had somewhat abated. He led the woman to the bedside, and as soon as she laid her hand on his mother's wrist to feel the pulse, his mother was able to sit up and move on her own. The whole family leaped with joy. They pooled their money and silk to pay the woman.

"She has not thoroughly recovered yet," the woman said. "She must take a dose of medicine. It'll not only root out the disease but also give her longevity."

"I'm a bag of rotten bones and Your Ladyship gave me new life," Pei's mother said. "Would you please let me know how I can repay your kindness?"

"It would be my best reward if you do not look down upon me and let me be your daughter-in-law so that I can wait on you."

"Just now my son vowed he was willing to be your slave, and now he may be your husband. Isn't that something much better than he's expected?"

The woman made a deep bow, and took from her maid's hand a small toilet case, opened it and measured out a dose of powdered drug, which she mixed with water. Pei's mother took the drug and all her chronic diseases were instantly gone. Pei and the woman were then married in full ceremony.

The woman proved to be a good wife, respectful and diligent. However, once every ten days she would excuse herself to make a trip



輿送迎，即终固辞拒，唯乘旧马，从女僮，倏忽往来，略无踪迹。初且欲顺适其意，不能究寻，后既多时，颇以为异。

一旦，伺其将出，佩即潜往窥之。见乘马出延兴门，马行空中。佩惊问行者，皆不见。佩又随至城东墓田中，巫者陈设酒肴，沥酒祭地，即见妇人下马，就接而饮之。其女僮随后收拾纸钱，载于马上，即变为铜钱。又见妇人以策画地，巫者随指其处曰：“此可以为穴。”事毕，即乘马而回。佩心甚恶之，归具告母。母曰：“吾固知是妖异，为之奈何？”自是妇人绝不复归佩家，佩亦幸焉。

后数十日，佩因出南街中，忽逢妇人行李，佩呼曰：“夫人何久不归？”妇人不顾，促辔而去。明日，使女僮传语佩曰：“妾诚非匹敌，但以君有孝行相感，故为君治太夫人疾，得平和。君自请相约为夫妇。今既见疑，便当





back to her maiden home. She stubbornly declined his offer of carriage and servants, taking with her only her former maid and her own horse, going and coming as swift as wind.

At first he didn't raise questions, thinking that she might need time to adjust, but he became more curious as time went on. One day as she was leaving again, he decided to tail her. He saw her riding out of the southeastern gate of the capital and then her horse lifted up into the air. Doubting his eyes, he asked others, but none was able to see such a flying horse. He followed her into the cemetery in the eastern suburbs, where a witch was performing rituals. As she made the libation, he saw his wife dismount to accept the drink. Her maid was collecting the ashes of the burnt paper coins, which turned into real copper coins once they were loaded onto the horse! He then saw his wife drawing on the ground with the handle of her whip and the witch pointing at the spot, saying, "Dig here to make the grave pit." After that his wife and her maid mounted their horses and returned home.

Horried and disgusted, he told his mother what he saw.

"I knew from the very start that she's no ordinary woman," his mother said, "but what else can we do?"

Since then, the woman never again came home. Pei felt relieved and thought he was lucky.

Months later, business took him to the southern part of the city. Suddenly he saw his wife and her retinue riding down the street. "Dear, why don't you come home?" he cried out, but she ignored him and spurred her horse.

The maid came the next day, bringing him a message from the woman. "I know we're not a proper match, but I was touched by your filial piety. So I came to treat your mother and return her to health. You were then happy to take me as your wife. Now that you suspect me, our relations are ended."



决矣。”佩问女僮：“娘子今安在？”女僮曰：“娘子前日已改嫁靖恭李谿议矣。”佩曰：“虽欲相弃，何其速欤？”女僮曰：“娘子是地祇，管京兆府三百里内人家丧葬所在。长须在京城中作生人妻，无自居也。”女僮又曰：“娘子终不失所，但嗟九郎福祐太薄。向使娘子长为妻，九郎一家，皆为地仙矣。”卢佩第九也。





“Where does she live now?” he asked.

“She married a Mr Li in Jinggong District the day before,” the maid replied.

“She may not want to keep her marriage with me, but how can she remarry so soon?”

“My mistress is the earth goddess in charge of burial sites within a hundred miles of the capital. To do her duties, she can’t live by herself. She must be married to a living person in her jurisdiction.”

“She’ll never fail to have a husband,” the maid added. “It’s a pity that your fortune is low. If you had kept the marriage longer, you and your whole family would gain the longevity of immortals!”



刘元迴

刘元迴者，狡妄人也。自言能炼水银作黄金，又巧以鬼道惑众，众多迷之，以是致富。李师古镇平卢，招延四方之士，一艺者至，则厚给之。元迴遂以此术干师古，师古异之，面试其能，或十铢五铢，皆立成焉。盖先以金屑置于汞中也。师古曰：“此诚至宝，宜何用？”元迴贵成其奸，不虞后害，乃曰：“杂之他药，徐烧三年，可以飞仙；为食器，可以避毒；以为玩用，可以辟邪。”师古大神之，因曰：“再烧其期稍缓，子且为我化十斤，将备吾所急之器也。”

元迴本炫此术，规师古钱帛，逡巡则谋遁去。为师古





Alchemist Liu

Liu Yuanjiong, a crook, often boasted that he could commune with ghosts and spirits and turn mercury into gold. Many fell for his trickery and contributed to his wealth.

At that time General Li Shigu was the commander-in-chief of Pinglu Military Region, who was well known for his hospitality to talented men. Anyone with a masterly skill was welcome and treated generously. So there Liu went.

The general was fascinated by Liu's tall tales. When tested, Liu was actually able to produce five or ten pennyweights of gold on the spot — he must have mixed gold dust in the mercury in advance.

"That's marvelous," the general remarked. "But what use can we put this to?"

Eager to sell his trick, Liu bragged recklessly, "We can add other ingredients into mercury and smelt it longer, say, for three years. In that way we'd be able to produce longevity pills. The person who takes the pills can rise up to heaven and join the celestial beings. Or we can use this gold to make tableware, which will be able to detect poison in the food, or make personal ornaments, which will keep the wearer from the harm of evil spirits."

The general was greatly impressed. "Make ten pounds of such gold for me. Smelt it longer. I think I can use a lot of such gold."

Liu's original intention was to hoax money and silk out of the general and then steal away, but the general kept a close eye on his



縻之，专令烧金。其数极广，元迥无从而致，因以鬼道说师古曰：“公绍续一方，三十余载，虽戎马仓廩，天下莫与之俦，然欲遣四方仰归威德，所图必遂者，须假神祇之力。”师古甚悦，因而询之，元迥则曰：“泰岳天齐王，玄宗东封，因以沉香刻制其像，所以玄宗享国永年。公能以他宝易其像，则受福与开元等矣。”师古狂悖，甚然之。

元迥乃曰：“全躯而致，或恐卒不能办。且以黄金十五斤，铸换其首，固当获佑矣。”师古曰：“君便先为烧之，速成其事。”元迥大笑曰：“天齐虽曰贵神，乃鬼类耳。若以吾金为其首，岂冥鬼敢依至灵之物哉！是则斥逐天齐，何希其福哉！但以山泽纯金而易之，则可矣。”师古尤异之，则以藏金二十斤，恣元迥所为，仍命元迥就岳





production and demanded large orders.

As Liu had no way to get so much gold, he came up with a fabricated story. "Your Excellency has been governing this region for more than thirty years. Although your army and provisions are beyond compare, you may still need the blessing of spirits and deities in order to make others succumb to your absolute authority and to have your wishes fulfilled."

That found a ready echo in the general's heart and he asked for further explanation.

"You know why Emperor Xuanzong ruled so many years?" Liu continued. "Because he paid homage to the god of Mount Tai and used the most expensive eaglewood to carve a statue of the god. If Your Excellency can replace the statue with something even more precious, your rule will last as long as his."

Being an ambitious man, the idea couldn't have been more agreeable to the general.

"To replace the whole statue would need a lot of precious metal and a long time to prepare," Liu ventured further. "But if we only replace the head, fifteen pounds of gold would be enough, and that would be sufficient to win favors from the god."

"You're right," the general said. "Go ahead and produce the gold for the head. Start immediately."

Liu managed a short laugh. "Although the mountain god is treated as a deity, it in fact belongs to the realm of ghosts. If we use my magic gold to replace the head, how dare any nether spirit identify itself with it? That would be as good as expelling the mountain god from our side. How can we expect his blessing then? The gold from the earth would be good enough for that purpose."

The general was convinced. He retrieved twenty pounds of pure



庙而易焉。元迥乃以铅锡杂类，熔其外而易之。怀其真金以归，为师古作饮食器皿，靡不办集矣。师古尤加礼重，事之如兄。玉帛姬妾居第，资奉甚厚。

明年，师古方宴僚属将吏，忽有庖人，自厨径诣师古。于众会之中，因举身丈余，蹈空而立，大诟曰：“我五岳之神，是何贼盗，残我仪质？我上诉于帝，涉岁方归。及归，我之甲兵军马，帑藏财物，皆为黄石公所掠去。”则又极骂，复耸身数丈，良久履地。师古令曳去。庖人无复知觉，但若沉醉者数日。师古则令画作戎车战士，戈甲旌旗，及纸钱绫帛数十车，就泰山而焚之，尚未悟元迥之奸。方将理之，而师古暴殤。不数日，脑溃而卒。其弟师道领事，即令判官李文会、虞早等按之。元迥词穷，戮之于市。





gold from his treasury and placed it at Liu's disposal for casting a new head for the statue.

Liu filled the interior of the cast with such base metal as lead and tin, and saved the pure gold to meet the general's incessant requests. The general, however, thought highly of his productivity and treated him like a brother, bestowing on him jade, silk, girls and houses.

One day in the following year when the general was at a feast with his subordinates, a chef strode out from the kitchen and walked straight up to the general. He leaped ten feet from the ground and stood suspended in the air. "I'm the god of Mount Tai," he bellowed. "Who is that thief that dared to amputate my body and steal my head? I went up to heaven to file a complaint with His Almighty and was not able to return till now, only to find my soldiers and weaponry, and the treasures in my storehouses were all ripped off by Master Yellow Stone⁹ while I was away." He cursed and yelled and leaped again, this time even higher. It took quite some time before he touched down. The general ordered the guards to drag him away. The chef was unconscious as if he were stoned and remained in that state for several days.

The general had people make paper coins and effigies of armored soldiers, chariots and horses, which, together with other sacrificial objects, filled dozens of carts and were sent to the temple of Mount Tai to be cremated. Yet, it didn't occur to him that he was cheated by Liu, and before he had a chance to figure out the cause he was attacked by a sudden illness. His head festered and he died in a few days.

His younger brother Shidao assumed power and ordered judges Li Wenhui and Yu Zao to investigate the case. Liu couldn't defend his lies and was beheaded in the marketplace.

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画琵琶

〔原缺首二行。行二十二字。〕

泊船。书生因上山闲步。入林数十步，上有一坡。见僧房院开，中有床、床塌，门外小廊数间，傍有笔砚。书生攻画，遂把笔，于房门素壁上，画一琵琶，大小与真不异。画毕，风静船发。僧归，见画处，不知何人，乃告村人曰：“恐是五台山圣琵琶。”当亦戏言，而遂为村人传说，礼施求福甚效。

书生便到扬州，入吴经年，乃闻人说江西路僧室，有圣琵琶，灵应非一。书生心疑之，因还江西时，令船人泊船此处。上访之，僧亦不在。所画琵琶依旧，前幡花香炉。书生取水洗之尽，僧亦未归。





The Magic Lute¹⁰

As the boat moored at the foot of a hill, the scholar went ashore for a stroll. Up the slope and not far into the woods he saw a small temple. The gate was open and there were chairs and beds in the room, and brush and ink were laid out on the verandah. Having studied painting, he picked up the brush and drew a life-sized lute on the white-washed wall beside the door. By then the wind had lulled, so he returned to the boat to continue his trip.

The monk returned to find a lute painted on the wall. He couldn't imagine who had done it. "This must be a theophany of the magic lute at the Wutai Mountains," he explained jokingly to the inquiring villagers. But the humor was lost in its circulation, and people came to pray to the drawing. Many believed that their prayers were heard and answered.

The scholar reached Yangzhou and stayed for years in that area. He caught a rumor that a lute on a temple mural in Jiangxi had demonstrated magic powers on more than one occasion. He couldn't help feeling a tinge of suspicion. So on his way back to Jiangxi he made it a point to stop at that very place again.

He went up the hill and just as it happened last time the monk was absent. The lute he drew was still there on the wall, but in front of it was a spectacular display of incense burners, flowers and banners. He fetched water and washed off the painting. As the monk didn't show up, the scholar went back to the boat for the night.

The next morning he went to the temple again. The monk had



书生夜宿于船中，至明日又上。僧夜已归，觉失琵琶。以告，邻人大集，相与悲叹。书生故问，具言前验，今应有人背着，琵琶所以潜隐。书生大笑，为说画之因由，及拭却之由。僧及村人信之，灵圣亦绝耳。





returned during the night and discovered the lute was gone. He must have notified the villagers, for a crowd had gathered before the wall, sighing and lamenting the loss. Pretending not to know, the scholar asked what happened and people told him about the lute painting and its magic power. Someone must have offended the spirit, they said, so that the lute decided to desert the place. The scholar exploded with laughter and told them it was he who painted it and he who washed it off. The monk and the crowd accepted his story and there were no more theophanies of the lute.

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谈生

谈生者，年四十，无妇，常感激读书。忽夜半有女子，可年十五六，姿颜服饰，天下无双，来就生为夫妇。乃言：“我与人不同，勿以火照我也。三年之后，方可照。”为夫妻，生一儿，已二岁。不能忍，夜伺其寝后，盗照视之，其腰上已生肉如人，腰下但有枯骨。妇觉，遂言曰：“君负我，我垂生矣，何不能忍一岁而竟相照也？”生辞谢，涕泣不可复止。云：“与君虽大义永离，然顾念我儿。若贫不能自偕活者，暂随我去，方遗君物。”生随之去，入华堂，室宇器物不凡。以一珠袍与之曰：“可以自给。”裂取生衣裾，留之而去。

后生持袍诣市，睢阳王家买之，得钱千万。王识之





Mr Tan's Bedmate

Mr Tan was already forty years old, but was too poor to get married. His solitude goaded him into a more fervent study of the Confucian classics, and he often sat up late into the night.

During one of these nocturnal studies, a girl of about sixteen, with features more beautiful than tongue could describe, emerged and presented herself as his wife. "I'm no usual woman," she introduced herself, "so don't try to expose my body to light, not for three years' time. After that, I don't mind you looking at it."

In that way, Tan had a wife, and a son was duly born.

One night two years later, he could no longer suppress his curiosity. He lit a candle and lifted a corner of his wife's quilt while she was fast asleep. Flesh had filled out on the upper part of her body, but below the waist, she was a skeleton.

His wife awoke startled, "You abused my trust! I've almost regained a human form. Why can't you just wait one more year! Why do you have to look at my body?"

Tan apologized humbly.

"Our marriage is finished now," she sobbed. "But, for the sake of my son, come with me. I'll give you something. I'm afraid you're too poor to feed both of you."

He followed her into a grand chamber, elegantly decorated and exotically furnished. She handed him a robe of stringed pearls. "I think this might sustain you two for quite a while." So saying, she tore off a



曰：“是我女袍，此必发墓。”乃取拷之。生具以实对，王犹不信。乃视女冢，冢完如故。发视之，果棺盖下得衣裾。呼其儿，正类王女，王乃信之。即召谈生，复赐遗衣，以为主婿。表其儿以为侍中。





strip from Tan's garment and waved him out.

He later sold the robe at the market and got ten million coins from the House of Suiyang. When the robe was presented to the prince, he recognized it as the funerary object of his deceased daughter. Tan was arrested and interrogated on a charge of grave-robbery. He recounted every detail of his story, but the prince brushed it aside as sheer nonsense and went in person to inspect his daughter's tomb. Though it appeared intact, the prince still ordered it to be opened up. The shred from Tan's torn garment was seen sticking out from beneath the coffin lid. Tan's son was summoned, and the boy's distinguishing features of his daughter finally convinced the prince.

Tan was released and given back the pearl-robe. The prince formally accepted him as his son-in-law and petitioned the throne to enter his grandson's name into the peerage.

蘇子瞻
PDG



秦巨伯

琅邪秦巨伯，年六十。尝夜行饮酒，道经蓬山庙。忽见其两孙迎之，扶持百余步，便摔伯颈着地，骂：“老奴，汝某日捶我，我今当杀汝。”伯思惟，某时信捶此孙。伯乃佯死，乃置伯去。伯归家，欲治两孙。孙惊惋叩头，言为子孙，宁可有此，恐是鬼魅。乞更试之，伯意悟。

数日，乃诈醉，行此庙间。复见两孙来扶持伯。伯乃急持，动作不得。达家，乃是两偶人也。伯著火灸之，腹背俱焦坼，出著庭中，夜皆亡去，伯恨不得之。





You Won't Be Fooled Twice?

Qin Jubo, age sixty and a native of Langya County, once made a night trip home after a drink. As he walked past Pengshan Temple he suddenly saw his two grandsons coming forth to meet him. One on each side, they supported him for about a hundred steps when they clutched his neck and pressed him to the ground. "Old dog," they cursed, "remember the beating you gave us the other day? You must pay with your life now!"

Though pickled, he couldn't be more certain that he had beaten them before. He feigned death and lay quietly on the ground. The two left him there.

He reached home in a fury and summoned his two grandsons, but his accusation only astonished and confused them. They dropped to their knees and kowtowed. "We are your descendants. How dare we do such an unfilial thing! It must have been a trick by some mischievous devils. Don't let them fool you next time."

The old man sobered up. A few days later he made a deliberate trip by the temple again, pretending to be drunk. As it had happened, his two grandsons came forward to support him. He immediately caught hold of them and brought them straight home. They turned out to be two wood figures. He scorched them with a red-hot iron till they were charred and cracked, and left them in the courtyard, but by the next morning they were gone. He regretted that he didn't destroy them completely.

后月，又佯酒醉夜行，怀刀以去，家不知也。极夜不还，其孙恐又为此鬼所困，仍俱往迎之，伯乃刺杀之。





A month later, without informing anyone he went out on a feigned drunk trip again, but this time he carried a sharp knife. Late into the night he was still not back. Afraid that he was once more harassed by the devils, his grandsons went out to look for him. This time he managed to kill the two.





新鬼

有新死鬼，形疲瘦顿。忽见生时友人，死及二十年，肥健。相问讯曰：“卿那尔？”曰：“吾饥饿，殆不自任。卿知诸方便，故当以法见教。”友鬼云：“此甚易耳。但为人作怪，人必大怖，当与卿食。”

新鬼往入大墟东头，有一家奉佛精进，屋西厢有磨，鬼就推此磨，如人推法。此家主语子弟曰：“佛怜吾家贫，令鬼推磨。”乃犂麦与之。至夕，磨数斛，疲顿乃去。遂骂友鬼：“卿那诳我？”又曰：“但复去，自当得也。”复从墟西头入一家。家奉道，门傍有碓，此鬼便上





A New Ghost

A new ghost, weary and bony, ran into an old friend in the netherworld. His friend had died twenty years ago but now looked plump and healthy.

“How are you?” inquired his former friend.

“I’m starving,” replied the newcomer, “and it’s getting beyond endurance. You must know your way around here. Hope you can give me some tips.”

“That’s no problem,” said his friend. “All you need to do is play some tricks on the living beings. When they are put in fear, they’ll offer you food.”

The new ghost thanked his friend and went to the first house at the east end of a village, where he saw a stone mill in the western wing. He bent his back to it and pushed like a live human being. The father, who happened to be a devout believer in Buddhism, said to his children, “Buddha must be taking pity on our impoverished conditions, and has sent a ghost to help push the millstone.” So they brought him cartloads of wheat to grind.

When dusk fell, the ghost had already done a dozen bushels. Exhausted, he shambled back to the netherworld, sought out his friend and blamed him for lying.

“Try again,” his friend encouraged, “and this time you’ll get your reward.”

This time the new ghost started from the west end of the village.



碓，如人舂状。此人言：“昨日鬼助某甲，今复来助吾。可犇谷与之。”又给婢簸筛。至夕，力疲甚，不与鬼食。

鬼暮归，大怒曰：“吾自与卿为婚姻，非他比，如何见欺？二日助人，不得一瓯饮食。”友鬼曰：“卿自不偶耳。此二家奉佛事道，情自难动。今去可觅百姓家作怪，则无不得。”鬼复去。得一家，门首有竹竿，从门入。见有一群女子，窗前共食。至庭中，有一白狗，便抱令空中行。其家见之大惊，言自来未有此怪。占云：“有客鬼索食，可杀狗，并甘果酒饭，于庭中祀之，可得无他。”其家如师言，鬼果大得食。自此后恒作怪，友鬼之教也。





By the gate of the house was a mortar and pestle. He took up the pestle and pounded right away, as a good laborer would have done.

“I heard,” said the master of the house, who turned out to be a Taoist disciple, “yesterday a ghost helped a family at the east end. To-day it must be our lucky turn. Give him plenty of rice to hull.” His housemaid was told to provide the ghost with baskets and sieves.

Night set in and no food was offered. The ghost, more tired and hungry than ever, dragged himself back to vent his rage on his friend.

“Don’t forget we were related by family ties!” he shouted in his old friend’s face. “How dare you treat me worse than a total stranger! Because of you, I’ve been working two whole days without getting a single bite.”

“Don’t blame me, but blame your own foolishness,” soothed his friend. “Those two families you chose are strong believers in either Buddhism or Taoism. They won’t be easily affected. Tomorrow, go and find an ordinary family. I guarantee you won’t be disappointed.”

The new ghost went again and picked a house with bamboo poles at the gate. He entered to see a group of girls eating by the window. In the courtyard there was a white dog, which he grabbed and made it paddle its legs in the air. The family was astounded, saying that they had never seen, or even heard of, a dog behaving like that. They sought an oracle, which read: “A stray ghost is demanding food. He can be appeased by sacrificing the dog and offering it with food, wine and fruit in the yard.” The family took the advice and the new ghost got his first treat.

Thanks to his friend’s teaching, one more ghost haunts the world.



宋定伯

南阳宋定伯，年少时，夜行逢鬼。问之，鬼言：“我是鬼。”鬼问：“汝复谁？”定伯诳之，言：“我亦鬼。”鬼问：“欲至何所？”答曰：“欲至宛市。”鬼言：“我亦欲至宛市。”遂行数里。鬼言：“步行太迟。可共递相担，何如？”定伯曰：“大善。”鬼便先担定伯数里。鬼言：“卿太重，不是鬼也。”定伯言：“我新鬼，故身重耳。”定伯因复担鬼，鬼略无重。如是再三。定伯复言：“我新鬼，不知有何所恶忌。”鬼答言：“唯不喜人





A Daredevil

In Nanyang Prefecture, there lived a man named Song Dingbo. Once in his youth, while traveling in the depth of night, he ran into a ghost.

"I'm a ghost," acknowledged the ghost when greeted, "and who are you?"

"A fellow ghost," Song hoaxed.

"Where to?"

"To the market."

"Me, too."

So they shared each other's company.

"Walking like this is too slow," grumbled the ghost after a mile or two. "Why don't we take turns carrying each other?"

"Great idea!" Song responded.

The ghost led off by carrying Song on its back and scurried ahead. "You seem too heavy to be a ghost," it complained after a couple of miles.

"I'm a new ghost," remarked Song, "and you know new ghosts are heavy." When it came to his turn, he found that the ghost was virtually weightless.

They thus changed places every few miles.

"Excuse me," said Song, "I'm new in this world. Do you mind telling me what we ghosts dread most?"

"The most dreadful thing is being spat on by a living person," answered the ghost frankly.



唾。”于是共行。道遇水。定伯令鬼渡，听之了然无水音。定伯自渡，漕灌作声。鬼复言：“何以有声？”定伯曰：“新死，不习渡水故尔。勿怪吾也。”

行欲至宛市，定伯便担鬼著肩上，急执之。鬼大呼，声咋咋然，索下，不复听之。径至宛市中，下著地，化为一羊，便卖之。恐其变化，唾之。得钱千五百，乃去。当时有言：“定伯卖鬼，得钱千五。”





Across their way lay a river. The ghost walked right in and waded through without making the slightest sound, while Song made loud splashes.

“Why are you making so much noise?” asked the ghost somewhat annoyed.

“Sorry, pal. Haven’t learned the ways in water yet,” he replied.

It was Song’s turn to carry when they drew near the market. He clutched the ghost tightly by the legs. Alarmed, it cried out hoarsely, begging to be let down. Ignoring its pleas, he marched straight into the marketplace. As he settled the ghost on the ground, it turned into a goat. For fear that it might escape by transforming again, he spat on it several times. He then sold the goat for fifteen hundred copper coins.

So goes a popular rhyme of the day:

*Song spat and caught a ghost,
Half 'n' thousand for the goat.*





张果女

开元中，易州司马张果女，年十五，病死。不忍远弃，权瘞于东院阁下。后转郑州长史，以路远须复送丧，遂留。

俄有刘乙代之。其子常止阁中，日暮仍行门外，见一女子，容色丰丽，自外而来。刘疑有相奔者，即前诣之，欣然款浹，同留共宿，情态缠绵，举止闲婉。刘爱惜甚至。后暮辄来，达曙方去。经数月，忽谓刘曰：“我前张司马女，不幸夭没，近殡此阁，命当重活，与君好合。后三日，君可见发，徐候气息，慎无横见惊伤也。”指其所瘞处而去。





Zhang's Daughter

Zhang Guo, chief of staff of Yi Prefecture in mid Kaiyuan reign, had a daughter who died of an illness at the age of fifteen.

It was the custom of the time to send one's remains back to the family burial ground but, as Zhang was reluctant to part with his daughter, he buried her by the summerhouse in the eastern courtyard of the official compound. Not long after, he was transferred to Zheng Prefecture. Citing the long distance and trouble for a reburial, he left the coffin buried in the eastern courtyard.

His position was soon filled by Liu Yi. Liu's son took a liking of the summerhouse and often spent the nights there.

One evening as the son was taking a stroll in the open, he saw a beautiful girl coming his way. Thinking that she might be escaping a forced marriage, he hailed her and invited her to come in. She stayed for the night. Her tender affections and refined manners won the young man's heart.

After that, the girl would come at dusk and stay till dawn. Things developed happily for months. Then one night she disclosed that she was the spirit of the former chief's daughter. She had suffered a premature death and was buried near the summerhouse. As she was not predestined to die so young, she now had an opportunity to return to life and become his wife. If, on the third day from now, he would dig up her coffin and let her out, she would be able to regain her life. "Don't be frightened when you see a corpse arise from bed," she cautioned. She pointed to the site of her grave and vanished.

刘至期甚喜，独与左右一奴夜发，深四五尺，得一漆棺。徐开视之，女颜色鲜发，肢体温软，衣服妆梳，无污坏者。举置床上，细细有鼻气。少顷，口中有气。灌以薄糜，少少能咽。至明复活，渐能言语坐起。数日，始恐父母之知也，因辞以习书，不便出阁，常使赍饮食诣阁中。

乙疑子有异，因其在外送客，窃视其房，见女存焉，问其所由，悉具白，棺木尚在床下。乙与妻歔歔曰：“此既冥期至感，何不早相闻？”遂匿于堂中。儿不见女，甚惊。父乃谓曰：“此既申契殊会，千载所无。白我何伤乎？而过为隐蔽。”因遣使诣郑州，具以报果，因请结婚。父母哀感惊喜，则克日赴婚。遂成嘉偶，后产数子。





On the appointed night, the excited young Liu brought a confidential servant along to help him dig. Four or five feet down, they hit a painted coffin. Carefully prying it open, they saw the girl, her looks still fresh, her limbs soft and supple, and her clothes clean and intact. They lifted her onto the bed, and gradually she seemed to be breathing. Then her lips moved. They tried to feed her thin porridge, and she did swallow a little. By daybreak she was able to speak and sit up.

After his first excitement, young Liu soon began to worry that his parents might learn about the existence of the girl. Under the pretense of being preoccupied with his studies, he kept himself in the summerhouse and even ordered his meals to be sent there.

The father became suspicious. One day while his son was out seeing guests off, he took the chance to peep into the summerhouse and discovered the girl. Upon his inquiry, she told him the whole story and showed him the coffin boards hidden under the bed.

The parents were deeply touched by her sincerity and the wonders of the unknown world. She should have let them know earlier, they reproached kindly, and brought her to the main house where they offered her a room.

The son was stunned when he returned to find the girl missing.

"Why did you hide her away from us?" said the father. "Are you afraid we older people won't be appreciative of this inter-world relationship? A resurrection like this only happens once in a thousand years!"

They immediately dispatched a messenger to Zheng Prefecture to deliver the news to Zhang Guo, and asked for his blessing. Overcoming their first shock, the Zhangs erupted with tears and smiles. They hurried to Yi Prefecture to marry their daughter to young Liu. So the couple enjoyed a long and happy life and had many children.

萧颖士

兰陵萧颖士，为扬州功曹，秩满南游。济瓜洲渡，船中有二少年，熟视颖，相顾曰：“此人甚似鄱阳忠烈王也。”颖士即鄱阳曾孙，乃自款陈。二子曰：“吾识尔祖久矣。”颖士以广众中，未敢询访。俟及岸，方将问之，二子忽遽负担而去。颖士必谓非神即仙，虔心向嘱而已。

明年，颖士北归，至于盱眙，方与邑长下帘昼坐，吏白云：“擒获发冢盗六人。”登令召入。束缚甚固，旅之于庭，二人者亦在其中。

颖士大惊，因具述曩事。邑长即令先穷二子，须臾款





Mr Xiao

When Mr Xiao retired from office in the government of Yangzhou Prefecture, he decided to take that opportunity to visit the south before going back to his native place in the north.

On the ferry crossing the Yangtze River, he sensed that two youngsters were studying and talking about him. "That man looks rather like the Prince of Poyang," he caught them whispering. Being the great-grandson of the prince, he was intrigued by their perceptiveness. He accosted them and introduced himself.

"We've known your great-grandfather for many years," they said.

As he was aware that on such a packed boat it would be out of place to ask private questions, he chose to wait till they got ashore. But as soon as the ferry docked, even before he had a chance to open his mouth, the two young men clutched their shoulder-poles and baskets and whirled off, leaving him to think that his luck had brought him across some celestial beings or immortals. He bowed in their wake and prayed.

Next year, passing through Xuyi County while returning to his hometown in Lanling, he was having a chat with a town head when a constable reported that six grave-robbers had been caught.

At the town head's command, the six were led into the courtyard, securely tied up. Xiao was astonished to see among the gang the two young men he had met on the ferry. He related that strange incident to the town head, who ordered the two to be interrogated first.

伏，左验明著，皆云发墓有年，尝开鄱阳公冢，大获金玉。当门有贵人，颜色如生，年方五十许，须鬓斑白，僵卧于石塌，姿状正与颖士相类，无少差异。昔舟中相遇，又知萧氏，固是鄱阳裔也。岂有他术哉。





Before long, the two confessed that they had been in the grave-robbing business for years. They had dug into Prince Poyang's tomb and reaped a harvest of jade and goldware. There, facing the entrance on a marble bier lay the owner of the grave, his colors fresh as if alive, hoary-headed, about fifty years of age. And then they ran into a gentleman on a ferry who just seemed to be molded out of the corpse. Since he introduced himself as a Xiao, they were pretty sure he was an offspring of the prince.

So, they were neither celestial beings nor immortals.





黎阳客

开元中，有士人家贫。投丐河朔，所抵无应者，转至黎阳。日已暮，而前程尚遥。忽见路傍一门，宅宇甚壮，夜将投宿，乃前扣门。良久，奴方出。客曰：“日暮，前路不可及，辄寄外舍，可乎？”奴曰：“请白郎君。”乃入。须臾闻曳履声。及出，乃衣冠美丈夫，姿度闲远，昂然秀异。命延客，与相拜谒，曰：“行李得无苦辛？有弊庐，不足辱长者。”客窃怪其异，且欲审察之，乃俱就馆。颇能清论，说齐周已来，了了皆如目见。客问名，





The Traveler in Liyang County

In Kaiyuan reign, a poor scholar rambled to the north of the Yellow River in hope of securing a job, but nobody cared to hire him.

One day he arrived in Liyang County. Darkness was closing in and he seemed to be in the middle of nowhere. Suddenly, a magnificent house with a spacious yard appeared by the roadside. Thinking that this might be his only chance for a night under a roof, he went over and knocked at the gate.

It took quite a while before a servant came to answer the door. "It's getting late," explained the traveler. "I'm afraid I can't reach a posthouse or an inn before it's completely dark. May I spend the night in a wing room?"

"You'd better ask my master yourself," the servant replied and led him into the hall.

Presently, scuffing footsteps were heard. A well-dressed gentleman entered the hall. He was a handsome man, with leisurely and lordly manners. He greeted the traveler politely and told the servants to make tea.

"A long trip must be exhausting," said the gentleman. "I hope Your Excellency will find my humble residence comfortable enough."

This man sounds queer, thought the traveler. With necessity and curiosity, he decided to stay and see what might happen. The gentleman turned out to be quite eloquent, prattling about things that happened in the previous dynasties as if he had lived through them himself.

曰：“我颍川荀季和，先人因官，遂居此焉。”命设酒肴，皆精洁，而不甚有味。

有顷，命具榻舍中，邀客人，仍敕一婢侍宿。客候婢款狎，乃问曰：“郎君今为何官？”曰：“见为河公主簿，慎勿说也。”俄闻外有叫呼受痛之声，乃窃于窗中窥之。见主人据胡床，列灯烛，前有一人，被发裸形，左右呼群鸟啄其目，流血至地。主人色甚怒曰：“更敢暴我乎？”客谓曰：“何人也？”曰：“何须强知他事。”固问之，曰：“黎阳令也。好射猎，数逐兽，犯吾垣墙，以此受治也。”客窃记之。明旦顾视，乃大冢也。前问，人云是荀使君墓。

至黎阳，令果辞以目疾。客曰：“能疗之。”令喜，





When asked his name, he told the traveler that he was Xun Jihe, a native of Yingchuan. His father first came and settled here as an official, and the family stayed ever since.

A banquet was given in honor of the guest. The dishes were delicate, but rather tasteless.

The guestroom was ready when dinner was finished. The host showed him to the room and appointed a maid to attend to his needs.

When he felt familiar enough with the maid, the traveler asked what official title her master presently held. "Chief of staff under Lord River," murmured the maid, "but don't mention this to anyone else."

By and by cries of pain and agony were heard outside. The traveler peeped through the window and saw his host sitting on a couch in the yard lit by candles and lamps. In front of the couch stood a naked man in a pool of blood, his hair was disheveled, and flocks of birds were pecking at his eyes at the bidding of the servants. The host seemed very angry. "See if you dare trespassing against me again!" the traveler heard him shout.

"Who's that man there?" the traveler asked.

"Why ask about things you need not know," replied the maid.

But upon insisting, he learned from the maid that the man was the magistrate of Liyang County, who loved hunting, and had several times invaded the host's ground while chasing wild animals. Now he was being punished for his offense.

Waking up in the morning, the traveler found that where he had spent the night was nothing more than a majestic tomb. He asked the first man he ran into and was informed that it was the tomb of a Prefect Xun.

Arriving at the county seat, he was not much surprised to hear that the magistrate was declining audiences on account of an eye disease.

乃召人，具为说之。令曰：“信有之。”乃暗令乡正，具薪数万束，积于垣侧。一日，令率群吏，纵火焚之，遂易其墓。目即愈，厚以谢客而不告也。

后客还至其处，见一人头面焦烂，身衣败絮，蹲于榛棘中。直前诣，客不识也。曰：“君颇忆前寄宿否？”客乃惊曰：“何至此耶？”曰：“前为令所苦。然亦知非君本意，吾自运穷耳。”客甚愧悔之，为设薄酌，焚其故衣以赠之。鬼忻受遂去。





The magistrate was overjoyed to hear that someone knew how to treat his disease. When summoned, the traveler recounted his weird experience.

“So it was,” remarked the magistrate, and he gave the traveler a generous reward.

Then, without the traveler’s knowing, the magistrate issued orders to the local village head, demanding that thousands of bundles of firewood be placed around the tomb. He himself led the troops there to set fire and level the tomb. Soon enough, his eyes recovered.

Later, when the traveler once again passed by the site, he saw a ragged man crouching in the bushes, his hair scorched, his face severely burned. The man accosted him in a familiar way, but the traveler simply could not recall when and where they had met before.

“Don’t you remember you once spent a night right here under my roof?”

“Heavens!” the traveler exclaimed in astonishment. “What has happened to you since?”

“Well, that was the magistrate’s revenge. I know it was not your intention, just that my fortune was running low.”

Feeling deep remorse, the traveler bought wine and food for a libation, and burned up some of his old clothes as an offering. The ghost accepted the gifts gratefully and disappeared.





崔书生

博陵崔书生，往长安永乐里。先有旧业在渭南。贞元中，尝因清明节归渭南，行至昭应北，墟垆之间，日已晚，歇马于古道左。比百余步，见一女人，靓妆华服，穿越榛莽，似失路于松柏间。崔闲步剿逼渐近，乃以袂掩面，而足趾跌蹶，屡欲仆地。崔使小童逼而覘之，乃二八绝代之姝也。遂令小童诘之曰：“日暮何无俦侣，而惶惶于墟间耶？”默不对。又令一童，将所乘马逐之，更以仆马奉送。美人回顾，意似微纳。崔乃俛而缓逐之，以观其近远耳。

美人上马，一仆控之而前。才数百步，忽见女奴三数人，哆口盆息，踉跄而谓女郎曰：“何处来？数处求之不得。”拥马行十余步，则长年青衣驻立以俟。崔渐近，乃拜谢崔曰：“郎君悯小娘失路，脱驂仆以济之，今日色已





Aunt Jady and Her Jade Rings

Living in Yongle District of Chang'an was a young scholar from Boling County, Mr Cui by name. One Qingming Festival in Zhenyuan reign, he made a trip to his family property in Weinan County about thirty miles east of the capital. The sun was setting when he reached a desolate place in the northern part of Zhaoying County, and while he was resting by the roadside, he saw about a hundred yards ahead of him an elegantly dressed woman walking in the scrub as if in bewilderment. As he approached her, she covered her face with her sleeve and stumbled away. Several times she tripped and nearly fell.

He stopped and then sent his page-boy over. She was a great beauty about sixteen. "Why are you wandering in this rough country at this late hour without a companion?" the boy asked in Cui's behalf.

She made no answer. He had another page-boy mount his horse to catch up with her and offer her a ride. The girl threw him a glance as if in acknowledgement of his kindness. She mounted and allowed the page-boy to lead the reins. Cui followed at a modest distance, wondering how far her home was.

They couldn't have gone a few hundred steps when several maids appeared and ran gasping toward the girl. "Where have you been?" they panted. "We've been looking up and down for you." They conducted the girl toward an older maid in dark clothes, who was waiting a dozen steps ahead. "Thank you, sir," the older maid said to Cui as he caught up, "for helping our young lady and offering her your own

暮，邀郎君至庄可矣？”崔曰：“小娘子何忽独步凄惶如此？”青衣曰：“因被酒兴酣至此。”

取北行一二里，复到一树林，室屋甚盛，桃李甚芳。又有青衣七八人，迎女郎而入。少顷，一青衣出，传主母命曰：“小外生因避醉，逃席失路，赖遇君子，恤以仆马。不然日暮，或值恶狼狐媚，何所不加。阖室戴佩。且憩，即当奉邀。”青衣数人更出候问，如亲戚之密。顷之，邀崔入宅。既见，乃命食。食毕酒至，从容叙言：“某王氏外生女，丽艳精巧，人间无双，欲侍君子巾栉，何如？”崔放逸者，因酒拜谢于座侧。俄命生出，实神仙也。

一住三日，宴游欢洽，无不酣畅。王氏常呼其姨曰玉姨。玉姨好与崔生长行，爱崔口脂合子。玉姨输，则有玉环相酬。崔输且多，先于长安买得合子六七枚，半已输玉姨，崔亦赢玉指环二枚。





horse and servants. It's getting dark. May I invite you to our place for the night?"

"Why is the young mistress wandering alone in such wilderness?" he asked.

"She'd drunk a little bit too much," replied the older maid.

They went north for about a mile and came upon a mansion surrounded with an orchard. Half a dozen maids received the girl at the gate. Presently, a maid appeared to announce the hostess' welcome. "My niece was escaping from a drinking party," she said. "She ran out and lost her way. It's lucky that she ran into you, or she might have fallen prey to wolves and foxes after dark. Thank you for offering her your horse and servants. My whole family is indebted to you. Please take a seat. Dinner will be ready in a moment." Meanwhile, maids circled around, attentive to his needs as if he were a member of the family.

Before long, he was invited in to a dinner with the hostess. Wine was served after the meal and they chatted. "The girl you helped is my niece," the hostess told him. "Her family name is Wang. Beautiful, isn't she? You probably can't find her match in the world. What do you say to having her as a wife?"

He was never a shy man, and further emboldened by wine he stood up and bowed acceptance. The hostess sent for the girl. When she appeared, he thought he was looking at a fairy. For three days, they feasted and played to their hearts' content. The girl called her aunt Jady, who was fond of playing chess with Cui and took a liking of the lip-cream case he had with him. So the case became the trophy of her win, and if she lost, she would give him a jade ring. On the whole, he was the loser. He had bought half a dozen of such cases in the capital and by then half of his stock was lost to Jady. On his part, however, he had won two jade rings.

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忽一日，一家大惊曰：“有贼至！”其妻推崔生于后门出。才出，妻已不见，但自于一穴中。唯见荒花半落，松风晚清，黄萼紫英，草露沾衣而已。其羸玉指环犹在衣带。却省初见美人之路而行，见童仆以锹锒发掘一墓穴，已至椁中，见铭记曰：“后周赵王女玉姨之墓。平生怜重王氏外生，外生先歿，后令与生同葬。”棺柩俨然，开椁，中有一合，合内有玉环六七枚。崔比其赌者，略无异矣。又一合，中有口脂合子数枚，乃崔生输者也。

崔生问仆人。“但见郎君入柏林，寻觅不得，方寻掘此穴，果不误也。”玉姨呼崔生奴仆为贼耳。崔生感之，急为掩瘞仍旧矣。





Then a day came when the family was thrown into chaos. "Burglars! Burglars!" they screamed in alarm. His wife pushed him out of the backdoor.

He found himself in a pit, his wife nowhere in sight. The evening breeze was sweeping through the pines, carrying with it the purple petals and yellow sepals of lilac daphnes. Blades of grass wet with dew stuck on his clothes. The two jade rings he had won were still tied to his belt. He tried to find his way back to where he first saw the beauty. Suddenly he saw his page-boys digging up a grave. They had reached the coffin. The epitaph on the stone tablet read: "Tomb of Jady, daughter of the Prince of Zhao." On the other side it read: "It was her ladyship's wish to be buried with Miss Wang, her favorite niece, who unfortunately died young."

The coffin was well preserved. They opened the outer lid and found a small box, which contained half a dozen jade rings, the same as he had won from Jady. In another box, there were several lip-cream cases, which he had lost in the chess games. He asked the page-boys what had happened. They said they saw him go into the woods but couldn't find him. As there was only this tomb in the vicinity, they decided to dig it up, and thus were able to find him. So they must be the so-called burglars.

Deeply touched, he ordered the boys to cover up the coffin and rebuild the tomb.





李俊

岳州刺史李俊举进士，连不中第。贞元二年，有故人国子祭酒包佶者，通于主司，援成之。

榜前一日，当以名闻执政。初五更，俊将候佶，里门未开，立马门侧。旁有卖糕者，其气炯炯。有一吏若外郡之邮檄者，小囊毡帽，坐于其侧，颇有欲糕之色。俊为买而食之，客甚喜，啖数片。

俄而里门开，众竞出，客独附俊马曰：“愿请问。”俊下听之。曰：“某乃冥之吏送进士名者，君非其徒耶？”俊曰：“然。”曰：“送堂之榜在此，可自寻之。”





A Successful Candidate

Li Jun had taken a succession of imperial examinations and failed as many. In the second year of Zhenyuan reign, the chief examiner happened to be a close friend of his acquaintance Bao Ji, who was the head of the imperial academy and had promised to put his name on the list of successful candidates.

As was the custom, the chief examiner should present the list to the prime minister for final approval on the day prior to the proclamation of the results. Worried and anxious, Jun went over to Bao's place for news. So early was he that the gate of the lane was still locked. Beside the gate was a cake stall, steam rising appealingly from the cookers in the chill of dawn. While he waited on his horse, he saw a man crouching beside the stove, who, with a felt cap and a shoulder bag, looked like a postal clerk from the provinces. There was hunger in the man's eyes. Jun bought him several slices of cake, which he happily accepted and ate.

Before long the gate opened and people swarmed out. The man sidled up to his horse and whispered, "Could you spare a minute?" Jun dismounted.

"I'm a nether courier," the man confided. "I'm commissioned to deliver the list of successful candidates. Are you a candidate?"

"I am," Jun replied.

"Here's the list," he took out a scroll from his bag. "Look and see if your name is on it."



因出视。俊无名，垂泣曰：“苦心笔砚，二十余年，偕计者亦十年。今复无名，岂终无成乎？”曰：“君之成名，在十年之外，禄位甚盛。今欲求之，亦非难。但于本禄耗半，且多屯剥，才获一郡，如何？”俊曰：“所求者名，名得足矣。”客曰：“能行少赂于冥吏，即于此，取其同姓者易其名，可乎？”俊问：“几何可？”曰：“阴钱三万贯。某感恩而以诚告，其钱非某敢取，将遗牒吏。来日午时送可也。”复授笔，使俊自注。从上有故太子少师李夷简名，俊欲揩之，客遽曰：“不可，此人禄重，未易动也。”又其下有李温名，客曰：“可矣。”乃揩去“温”字，注“俊”字。客遽卷而行曰：“无违约。”





But Jun could not find his name. "I've been studying extremely hard for more than twenty years," he said with poignant tears welling up. "And I've attended each and every exam in the past ten years. Now I failed once again. Doesn't that mean I'm destined to be a failure?"

"Your time is not to come until ten years from now, and you can look forward to a high position then. However, if you really want to, it won't be difficult for you to pass the exam this year. But that means you can only get half of what is in store for you. Your career will be bumpy and you may only reach the position of a prefect. Would you rather like it that way?"

"Nothing could be more important than making a name. If only I can right now!"

"If you're willing to make a small contribution to the nether officer in charge, then you can pick out someone from this list that shares your family name and replace his given name with yours. Would you like to do that?"

"How much is needed?" Jun asked.

"Thirty thousand strings of coins in nether bills. It's not for me. It's for the nether officer in charge. I'm telling you all this because I'm most grateful to you for the cake. Remember, the money must be sent to him before noontime tomorrow." He gave Jun a pen and told him to find a namesake.

Scanning down the list, Jun came upon a man named Li Yijian and was about to erase that name when the courier stopped him. "No, not this one. This man is to reach a high position. It's unwise to replace his name."

There was another Li below called Li Wen.

"This one is okay," the courier said. So Jun changed the word Wen into Jun. "Don't forget the money," the courier said as he rolled up and scroll and left.



即而俊诣佶，佶未冠，闻俊来怒，出曰：“吾与主司分深，一言状头可致，公何躁甚？频见问，吾其轻语者耶？”俊再拜对曰：“俊悬于名者，若恩决此一朝。今当呈榜之晨，冒责奉谒。”佶唯唯，色犹不平。俊愈忧之，乃变服伺佶出随之，经皇城东此隅，逢春官怀其榜，将赴中书。佶揖问曰：“前言遂否？”春官曰：“诚知获罪，负荆不足以谢。然迫于大权，难副高命。”佶自以交分之深，意谓无阻，闻之怒曰：“季布所以名重天下者，能立然诺。今君移妄于某，盖以某官闲也。平生交契，今日绝矣！”不揖而行，春官遂追之曰：“迫于豪权，留之不





Bao Ji had just got out of bed and wasn't fully dressed when Jun arrived. The announcement of Jun's presence made him angry. He stomped to the reception room and blared, "The chief examiner and I are bosom friends. He would place your name at the very top of the list if I tell him to. Why can't you trust me but have to come time and again? Is it because you think I was bragging and making empty promises?"

Jun bowed humbly. "Please excuse my rudeness, but my future hangs on my success this time. This morning the list will be presented to the prime minister. I hope you won't grudge me your help at this critical juncture."

"I know," Bao grumbled, displeasure still on his face.

Jun was more worried than ever. He waited outside, and when he saw Bao going out he followed secretly in changed clothes.

Turning around the northeast corner of the government compound, Bao ran into the chief examiner, who was carrying the list to the prime minister's office. Bao raised his clasped hands in salutation and asked, "Is the person I mentioned last time on the list?"

"I'm extremely sorry," the chief said. "I must beg your pardon. I was under such pressure I failed to comply with your wish."

"You must have learned that one's word is as good as gold," Bao flared up, for he had thought his close ties with the chief were a guarantee that any of his requests would be readily granted. "Now because you broke your promise, you've made me a faithless man and a liar! Is it because you think my position doesn't carry any real power? We're friends no more!" He turned around and strode off without a goodbye.

"You must understand," the chief caught up with him and said, "I was unable to keep his name on the list because there was so much



得。窃恃深顾，处于形骸，见责如此，宁得罪于权右耳。请同寻榜，揩名填之。”祭酒开榜，见李公夷简，欲揩，春官急曰：“此人宰相处分，不可去。”指其下李温曰：“可矣。”遂揩去“温”字，注“俊”字。及榜出，俊名果在以前所指处。

其日午时，随众参谢，不及赴糕客之约。迫暮将归，道逢糕客，泣示之背曰：“为君所误，得杖矣。牍吏将举勘，某更他祈，共止之。”某背实有重杖者。俊惊谢之，且曰：“当如何？”客曰：“来日午时，送五万缗，亦可无追勘之厄。”俊曰：“诺。”及到时焚之，遂不复见。然俊筮仕之后，追勘贬降，不绝于道。才得岳州刺史，未几而终。





pushing and pulling from all sides and above. We're friends and I really didn't intend to hurt your feelings. Now let's look at the list and replace a name. I would rather offend a bigwig than disappoint a friend."

Bao spread out the scroll and had his pen on Li Yijian. "No, not this one," the chief said hastily. "He's the prime minister's man."

Bao ran his finger down the list and stopped at Li Wen.

"Okay," the chief nodded. So the word Wen was overwritten by Jun.

When the list was released, Jun's name appeared at exactly where he had put it.

At noontime Jun went with the other successful candidates to pay their respects to the examiners and he clean forgot about the nether money. When he returned to his quarters at dusk, he was stopped by the courier on the road.

"You let me down," the courier wept as he showed Jun his back. "Look! Because of you, I was flogged. And the officer was going to investigate the case. I had to seek help from all my friends and we just managed to withhold him."

Jun was shocked to see the bloody strokes across his back. "What can I do now?" he asked apologetically.

"Send him fifty thousand stings of coins before noontime tomorrow, and he'll drop the investigation."

"I won't forget it this time," Jun promised and burned the nether bills in due time.

After that, the nether courier didn't appear again, but Jun's official career was never smooth. He was impeached, investigated, demoted and exiled before he finally reached the position of Prefect of Yue, but even that he was not able to hold long, for he was soon overtaken by death.



卢江冯媪

冯媪者，庐江里中啬夫之妇，穷寡无子，为乡民贱弃。元和四年，淮楚大歉，媪逐食于舒。途经牧犊墅，暝值风雨，止于桑下。忽见路隅一室，灯烛荧荧。媪因诣求宿，见一女子，年二十余，容服美丽，携三岁儿，倚门悲泣。前又见老叟与媪，据床而坐，神气惨戚，言语咕囁，有若征索财物追逐之状。见冯媪至，叟媪默然舍去。女久乃止泣，入户备饩食，理床榻，邀媪食息焉。

媪问其故，女复泣曰：“此儿父，我之夫也，明日别娶。”媪曰：“向者二老人，何人也？于汝何求而发怒？”女曰：“我舅姑也，今嗣子别娶，征我筐筥刀尺祭





Widow Feng's Strange Encounter

In the fourth year of Yuanhe reign, a severe crop failure raged through the mid and lower Yangtze Basin and Widow Feng had to beg for food from village to village. Her husband had been a junior clerk in Lujiang County, and now being poor and childless, she was despised and rejected by the village folk.

One evening, passing by a place called Cowherd Shed she was caught in a storm and huddled under a mulberry tree. Suddenly she saw flickering candlelight from a roadside hut. There she went to beg for shelter.

A woman with a three-year-old child was leaning against the doorframe. She was in her twenties, good looking and in fine clothes, but she was weeping. Coming closer, Feng saw an elderly couple sitting on the bed. They were grumbling and their somber looks seemed to say they were extorting something from the woman. When they saw Feng, they went away without a word.

After a long while the woman stopped sobbing and came inside to prepare food and make the bed for Feng. Feng's inquiry provoked another fit of tears. "This child's father," she sobbed, "that's my husband, is going to marry tomorrow."

"Who were those two people just now?" Feng asked. "Why were they angry with you? What did they want?"

"They're my parents-in-law," the woman said. "They want my sewing kit and other sacrificial objects back for their son's



祀旧物，以授新人。我不忍与，是有斯责。”媪曰：“汝前夫何在？”女曰：“我淮阴令梁倩女，适董氏七年，有二男一女，男皆随父，女即此也。今前邑中董江，即其人也。江官为鄆丞，家累巨产。”发言不胜呜咽，媪不之异，又久困寒饿，得美食甘寝，不复言。女泣至晓。

媪辞去，行二十里，至桐城县。县东有甲第，张帘帷，具羔雁，人物纷然。云：“今日有官家礼事。”媪问其郎，即董江也。媪曰：“董有妻，何更娶也？”邑人曰：“董妻及女亡矣。”媪曰：“昨宵我遇雨，寄宿董妻梁氏舍，何得言亡？”邑人询其处，即董妻墓也。询其二老容貌，即董江之先父母也。董江本舒州人，里中之人，皆得详之，有告董江者。董以妖妄罪之，令部者迫逐媪去。媪言于邑人，邑人皆为感叹。是夕，董竟就婚焉。





new wife. They're angry with me because I don't want to part with those things."

"Where is your husband?" Feng asked.

"He lives in the next town. Dong Jiang is his name. His family is quite well off and he now holds an official position in Cuo County. I'm the daughter of Liang Qian, Magistrate of Huaiyin County. I was married to Mr Dong for seven years and have given birth to two boys and one girl. The boys are with their father and this is my daughter."

The woman kept crying. Feng, having been too tired and hungry to give it much thought and having had some decent food and now a nice place to sleep, just drifted off, while the woman wept till dawn.

Feng continued south in the morning. After six or seven miles she was in Tongcheng County. East of the county seat she came upon a grand compound of houses, splendidly decorated. People were streaming in and out. From their chitchat she learned that there would be a grand wedding ceremony of an official that evening, and the bridegroom was none other than Dong Jiang.

"But Dong has a wife!" Feng observed. "How can he marry another one?"

"His former wife and daughter have died," people explained.

"But last night I stayed at their place to wait out the rain," Feng contended. "How can you say they're dead?"

When she described the locality, people told her that was exactly where the grave was. And her description of the elderly couple corresponded with the looks of Dong's late parents. As Dong was a native, people here knew his family quite well.

Somebody informed Dong about the widow's story. He dismissed it as slandering and ordered his footmen to drive Feng away. Feng's story, however, aroused much sympathy and many sighs.

元和六年，夏五月，江淮从事李公佐，使至京。回次汉南，与渤海高钺、天水赵僂、河南宇文鼎会于传舍，宵话征异，各尽见闻。钺具道其事，公佐因为之传。



That night Dong was married.

*

In the summer of the sixth year of Yuanhe reign, coming back from the capital the author Li Gongzuo met Gao Yue of Bohai, Zhao Zan of Tianshui, and Yuwen Ding of Henan at a posthouse in Hannan County. Among the stories told to while away the night, the above was related by Gao Yue and recorded by Gongzuo.





赵合

进士赵合，貌温气直，行义甚高。大和初，游五原。路经沙碛，睹物悲叹。遂饮酒，与仆使并醉，因寝于沙碛。

中宵半醒，月色皎然，闻沙中有女子悲吟曰：“云鬓消尽转蓬稀，埋骨穷荒无所依。牧马不嘶沙月白，孤魂空逐雁南飞。”

合遂起而访焉。果有一女子，年犹未笄，色绝代，语合曰：“某姓李氏，居于奉天。有姊嫁洛源镇帅，因往省焉。道遭党羌所虏，至此挝杀，劫其首饰而去。后为路人所悲，掩于沙内，经今三载。知君颇有义心，倘能为归骨于奉天城南小李村，即某家粉榆耳，当有奉报。”合许之。请示其掩骼处，女子感泣告之。合遂收其骨，包于囊中。





The Desert Ghosts

Zhao He, an erudite scholar with an upright and amiable bearing, had a widespread reputation for being sympathetic and reliable. Once while he was crossing the desert to the City of Wuyuan in early Taihe reign, the ancient battleground plunged him into sentimentality. He and his servant drank themselves into soddenness and lay sprawled out on the sands. At midnight he woke up to a large pale moon and the melancholy tone of a woman singing:

My black hair has turned into withered weeds;

My bones are buried in the desert land.

A lone moon hangs above the pale white sand;

I hope my soul can ride the southbound geese.

He rose to his feet to trace the song, which led him to a girl – a budding beauty.

“I’m from the Li family in Fengtian County,” the girl told him. “My elder sister was married to the commander of Luoyuan Military Region, and I was going there to visit her. But midway I was abducted by the Tanguts. They killed me here and ran away with my valuables. It was only later that some travelers took pity on me and buried my bones in the sand. And that was three years ago. I heard you’re an honorable man. If you can carry my bones back to Xiaoli Village south of the county seat of Fengtian, that is my native place, your kindness will be requited.”

Zhao agreed to help and asked her where her bones were buried.

伺旦，俄有紫衣丈夫，跃骑而至，揖合曰：“知子仁而义，信而廉。女子启祈，尚有感激。我李文悦尚书也，元和十三年，曾守五原。为犬戎三十万围逼城池之四隅，兵各厚十数里，连弩洒雨，飞梯排云，穿壁决濠，昼夜攻击。城中负户而汲者，矢如猬毛。当其时，御捍之兵，才三千。激厉其居人，妇女老幼负土而立者，不知寒馁。犬戎于城北造独脚楼，高数十丈，城中巨细，咸得窥之。某遂设奇计，定中其楼立碎。羌酋愕然，以为神功。’又语城中人曰：‘慎勿拆屋烧，吾且为汝取薪。’积于城下，许人钓上。又太阴稍晦，即闻城之四隅，多有人物行动，声言云：‘夜攻城耳。’城中慑栗，不敢暂安。某曰：‘不然。’潜以铁索下烛而照之，乃空驱牛羊行胁其城，兵士





The girl pointed to the site in teary gratefulness. He collected her bones, put them in his bag and sat there waiting for the sun to rise.

Suddenly a man in a purple robe came galloping toward him. He saluted Zhao and said, "I heard that you're a man of honor with a benevolent heart, since you would even deign to help an unknown girl. My name is Li Wenyue. I was the garrison commander of Wuyuan. In the thirteenth year of Yuanhe reign three hundred thousand Tanguts surrounded the city. The circle of their tents was miles in depth. They attacked us night after day. Their arrows literally rained down on us; their ladders, if put end to end, could even reach the clouds. They diverted the river to drain the moat and dug tunnels beneath the city wall. Residents going to fetch water had to carry a door plank on their back as a shield and when they returned arrows sticking on the plank were as dense as the needles of a hedgehog.

"On my side, I had only three thousand soldiers. I had to mobilize the residents, and despite hunger and cold everyone, men and women, old and young, helped carry earth up the city wall.

"The enemy erected a scaffold tower north of the town. It was much higher than the city wall so that they could observe every movement of ours. I invented a wonderful contrivance that blew their tower into pieces. Their dumbfounded chief thought the gods were helping us. Then they resorted to propaganda. 'You don't have to pull down your houses for fuel,' they bellowed into town. 'We'll give you firewood.' And they did lay firewood at the foot of the city wall and allowed people to angle for it. Or they would spread a rumor that they were about to launch a night attack, and one moonless night we really heard a great din out of town as if thousands of cavalrymen were deploying. The townsfolk were thrown into trembling apprehension. No one dared to go to bed. I assured them that the enemy was feigning. We lowered



稍安。又西北隅被攻，摧十余丈。将遇昏晦，群胡大喜，纵酒狂歌，云：‘候明晨而入。’某以马弩五百张而拟之，遂下皮墙障之。一夕，并工暗筑，不使有声，涂之以水。时寒，来日冰坚，城之莹如银，不可攻击。又羌酋建大将之旗，乃赞普所赐，立之于五花营内。某夜穿壁而夺之如飞，众羌号泣，誓请还前掳掠之人，而赎其旗。纵其长幼妇女百余人，得其尽归。然后掷旗而还之。时邠泾救兵二万人临其境，股栗不进，如此相持三十七日。羌酋乃遥拜曰：‘此城内有神将，吾今不敢欺。’遂卷甲而去。不信宿，达宥州，一昼而攻破其城。老少三万人，尽遭掳





lanterns on chains from the city wall and to our relief we found out the noise was in fact made by herds of cattle and sheep driven to and fro.

“Another time, the enemy managed to make a hundred-foot-wide breach in the northwestern corner of the city wall by nightfall. The Tanguts were exhilarated. That night they were already celebrating their victory with wine and songs, thinking that they could march into town the next morning. I deployed five hundred archers at the opening, just in case, and ordered all others to carry earth to fill the breach. We had to do it quietly so that the enemy wouldn’t be alarmed. First we spread sheets of cowhide on the outside and filled the space within with earth. And then we poured water over it. It was in the depths of winter and water froze almost instantaneously. Layer after layer. So by the next morning what had been an opening was a solid wall of ice, shining silvery in the morning rays and impossible to penetrate.

“In the center of his commanding camp the Tangut chief had his army standard raised high on a flagpole. The flag was personally bestowed on him by the Tibetan king. One night I raided their camp and carried the flag away. The Tanguts howled and wept at the loss. To ransom it they offered to return all our people they had abducted. So over a hundred of our people were released and we threw them their standard from the city wall.

“By that time twenty thousand troops had been assembled from two neighboring garrisons and sent to reinforce us. But they halted just beyond the enemy line because their legs shook like jelly at the sight of the Tangut hordes. Our standoff lasted thirty-seven days. And then the Tangut chief decided to give up. ‘Their general has divine powers. I’m not his match,’ he was heard to say. So he lifted the siege and moved his troops away. In two days they reached the City of You and captured it in just one day. The city’s thirty thousand residents were looted



去。以此利害，则余之功及斯城不细。但当对时相，使余不得仗节出此城，空加一貂蝉耳。余闻锺陵韦夫人，旧筑一堤，将防水潦，后三十年，尚有百姓及廉问周公感其功，而奏立德政碑峨然。若余当守壁不坚，城中之人，尽为羌胡之贱隶，岂存今日子孙乎？知子有心，请白其百姓，讽其州尊，与立德政碑足矣。”言讫，长揖而退。

合即受教，就五原。以语百姓及刺史，俱以为妖，不听，惆怅而返。至沙中，又逢昔日神人，谢合曰：“君为言，五原无知之俗，刺史不明，此城当有火灾。方与祈求幽府，吾言于五原之事不谐，此意亦息。其祸不三旬而及矣。”言讫而没，果如期灾生。五原城仅死万人，老幼相食。

合挈女骸骨至奉天，访得小李村而葬之。明日道侧，合遇昔日之女子来谢而言曰：“感君之义，吾大父乃贞元





away. The sharp contrast of the fates of the two cities can well demonstrate my exploits. But what did I get for it?

“The prime minister refused me the honor of carrying a general’s baton and I was only allowed to add a decorative marten tail to my helmet! That reminds me of the story about Lord Wei, who built a dyke to contain the river. His successors and the locals didn’t forget him. Thirty years later they petitioned the throne to erect a stele in commemoration of his feat. If I had not been able to defend the city, all residents would have been made slaves by the Tanguts. Where come their descendants now? You’re a man to be trusted. Would you please tell the local residents as well as the prefect about what I did for them? All I require is a memorial stele to show that I’m not forgotten.” He retreated with a deep bow.

Having accepting that as a mission, Zhao arrived in Wuyuan. He talked to the locals and the prefect about Commander Li, but none believed his story, saying that it was his state of delirium that made him see a phantom. Extremely disappointed, he started on his return trip.

Back in the desert he came upon the man again. “I appreciate your efforts,” the ghost said. “The residents there are a vulgar mob and the prefect is a fool. Their city is to suffer a major conflagration and I’ve been negotiating with the nether forces to prevent it. Now I’ll give up those efforts since they don’t appreciate what I’ve done for them. Disaster will befall them in thirty days.” So saying, he vanished.

A fire broke out as the ghost had forewarned and more than ten thousand died in the fire and from the subsequent food shortage. Even children were swatted for food.

Zhao carried the girl’s remains to Fengtian. He asked his way to Xiaoli Village and had her buried. The next day he saw the girl waiting for him by the roadside. “I’m heavily indebted to you,” she said. “My



得道之士，有《演参同契》、《续混元经》，子能穷之，龙虎之丹，不日而成矣。”合受之，女子已没。合遂舍举，究其玄微。居于少室。烧之一年，皆使瓦砾为金宝；二年，能起毙者；三年，饵之能度世。今时有人遇之于嵩岭耳。





grandfather was an accomplished Taoist believer during Zhenyuan reign. Here are the manuscripts of his two books. If you study them carefully you'll be able to make longevity pills." He accepted the books and the girl faded from sight.

Thereafter Zhao gave up his attempts at the imperial examination and went to live in the Shaoshi Mountain. He devoted himself to the study of the two books and in a year he could turn roof tiles into gold ingots, in two years he was able to revive the dead and in three years he was able to produce longevity pills. Visitors to the mountain may still see him around.





李佐文

南阳临湍县北界，秘书郎袁测、襄阳掾王沂皆立别业。大和六年，客有李佐文者，旅食二庄。佐文琴棋之流，颇为袁、王之所爱。

佐文一日向暮，将止袁庄。仆夫抱衾前去，不一二里，阴风骤起，寒埃昏晦。俄而夜黑，劣乘独行，迷误甚远。约三更，晦稍息，数里之外，遥见火烛。佐文向明而至，至则野中迴舍，卑狭颇甚。中有田叟，织芒屨。佐文逊辞请托。久之，方延入户，叟云：“此多豺狼，客马不宜远繫。”佐文因移檐下，迫火而憩。叟曰：“客本何诣而来此？”佐文告之，叟哂曰：“此去袁庄，乖于极矣。然必俟晓，方可南归。”





Night at the Coffin Hut¹¹

In the sixth year of Taihe reign, a man named Li Zuowen, whose accomplishments in playing musical instruments and chess made him a sought-after guest, was invited by Yuan Ce, an imperial librarian, and Wang Qian, an officer with the Xiangyang prefectural government, to stay on their country estates in the northern part of Lintuan County.

One late afternoon Li was moving over to Yuan's estate. After the first half mile out of Wang's estate, a chilly wind sprang up, rolling in clouds and dust that swept off the remaining daylight and turned the day into murky night. As he had sent the servant ahead with his baggage, he had to trust the instinct of his nag and soon found himself completely lost.

Around midnight the sky cleared up so much that he was able to discern candlelight in the distance. There he went and came upon a lonely hut, low and small. Inside, an old man was weaving straw sandals. He begged for shelter, but it was a long time before the old man invited him in.

"Wolves and jackals roam this place," the old man said. "Better keep your horse close by."

Li tethered his nag to the rafter and went in to sit by the fire.

"Where are you going?" the man asked. "How come you've arrived at this place?"

Li explained.

"You're as far away from your goal as anything," the old man



而叟之坐后，纬萧障下，时闻稚儿啼号甚痛，每发声，叟即曰：“儿可止，事已如此，悲哭奈何？”俄则复啼，叟辄以前语解之。佐文不谕，从而诘之，叟则低回他说。佐文因曰：“孩幼苦寒，何不携之近火？”如此数四，叟则携致就炉，乃八九岁村女子耳。见客初无羞骇，但以物画灰，若抱沉恨。忽而怨咽惊号，叟则又以前语解之。佐文问之，终不得其情。须臾平晓，叟即遥指东南乔木曰：“彼袁庄也，去此十里而近。”佐文上马四顾，乃穷荒大野，曾无人迹，独田叟一室耳。

行三数里，逢村妇，携酒一壶，纸钱副焉。见佐文曰：“此是巨泽，道无人。客凌晨何自来也？”佐文具白





sneered. "Yuan's estate is to the south. Anyway, you have to wait till dawn."

While they were talking, Li could hear fits of painful cries of a child from under the straw mat behind the old man. Every time it wailed, the man would say, "It's no use crying. It can't be helped."

The child cried again. As the old man repeated his soothing, Li asked what was going on, but the man only muttered something unintelligible.

"If the child is cold, why don't you let him sit by the fire?" Li insisted.

Finally the old man told the child to come out. It was a country girl about eight years old. She didn't seem shy in front of a stranger, but sat there and kept drawing sketches in the ashes. She seemed to be suffering greatly, for she would burst out in heartbreaking screams now and then, and the old man would repeat the same consolation. No matter how many times Li asked, he was unable to draw out a satisfactory explanation.

Soon the day broke. The old man pointed to a stand of tall trees toward the southeast. "That's Yuan's estate. It's about three miles from here."

Li mounted his nag and looked around. He was in the middle of nowhere. Except for the old man's hut there was no trace of life. Less than a mile south, he came across a village woman carrying a flask of wine and a string of paper coins.

"Sir, where could you have come from this early in the morn?" she asked in apparent surprise at the sight of Li. "Few travelers come through this marshy area."

Li told her what happened.

The woman beat her chest and wailed. "Their ghosts! Their ghosts have come for me!"



其事，妇乃附膺长号曰：“孰为人鬼之遇途耶？”佐文细询之，其妇曰：“若客云去夜所寄宿之室，则我亡夫之殡间耳。我佣居袁庄七年矣。前春，夫暴疾而卒。翌日，始此之女又亡。贫穷无力，父子同瘞焉。守制嫠居，官不免税，孤穷无托，遂意再行。今夕将适他门，故来夫女之瘞告诀耳。”佐文则与同往，比至昨暮之室，乃殡宫也，历历踪由，分明可复。妇乃号恸，泪如绠縻。因弃生业，剪发于临湍佛寺，役力誓死焉。其妇姓王，开成四年，客有见者。





At Li's questioning, she told him her story.

"I've been a servant on Yuan's estate for seven years. Where you stayed last night is my late husband's coffin hut. He died of a sudden illness last spring and our daughter died the very next day. She had barely started to change teeth. I laid both of them in that temporary hut because I'm too poor to have them buried properly. And yet, even though my man is dead and I'm observing the mourning period, I'm not exempted from any of the taxes. No one is there to help me, so I have to find another man, and this evening I'm going to live with him. This is my last visit to my late husband and my daughter."

Li followed her back to the place. It was indeed a coffin hut, and he could find clear traces of the previous night. The woman moaned and groaned, her tears streaming down her face.

Thereafter, she shaved her head and joined a temple in Lintuan County, swearing to devote the rest of her life to Buddha.

In the fourth year of Kaicheng reign, visitors could still find her there. Her maiden name was Wang.



浮梁张令

浮梁张令，家业蔓延江淮间，累金积粟，不可胜计。秩满，如京师，常先一程致顿，海陆珍美毕具。至华阴，仆夫施幄幕，陈樽垒。庖人炙羊方熟，有黄衫者，据盘而坐，仆夫连叱，神色不挠。店姬曰：“今五坊弋罗之辈，横行关内，此其流也，不可与竞。”仆夫方欲求其帅以责之，而张令至，具以黄衫者告。张令曰：“勿叱。”召黄衫者问曰：“来自何方？”黄衫但唯唯耳。促暖酒，酒至，令以大金钟饮之。虽不谢，似有愧色。饮讫，顾炙羊，著





The Courier in a Yellow Jacket

The magistrate of Fuliang County, a Mr Zhang, 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.

At the end of his tenure he set out on a journey to the capital, and as always, he had an advance party prepare for his lodging and meals — his elaborate recipes demanded the rarest produce from land and sea.

His advance party, having reached the foot of Mount Hua one day, had a room cleaned and curtained. Wine cups were laid out and the chefs had a lamb roasting over a fire. A man appeared from nowhere and seated himself at the table. The servants tried to drive him away, but their scolding and cursing seemed to fall on deaf ears.

“He must be one of those royal falconers,” the landlady whispered. “They run amuck around the capital. Nobody dares to argue with them.”

The servants were going to seek the authority of Zhang when he arrived, and they clamored about the stranger in a yellow jacket.

“Don’t annoy him,” Zhang said, and turned to the stranger. “Where are you from?”

The man slurred out something while he kept motioning the servants to warm up the wine. When it was warm, Zhang himself poured it out into a big gold cup and handed it to the man. Though he made no explicit articulation of thanks, a glint of gratitude welled up in his



目不移。令自割以劝之。一足尽，未有饱色，令又以奩中
饭十四五啖之。

凡饮二斗余，酒酣，谓令曰：“四十年前，曾于东店
得一醉饱，以至今日。”令甚讶，乃勤恳问姓氏。对
曰：“某非人也，盖直送关中死籍之吏耳。”令惊问其
由。曰：“太山召人魂，将死之籍付诸岳，俾某部送
耳。”令曰：“可得一观乎？”曰：“便窥亦无患。”于
是解革囊，出一轴，其首云：“太山主者牒金天府。”
其第二行云：“贪财好杀，见利忘义人，前浮梁县令张
某。”即张君也。

令见名，乞告使者曰：“修短有限，谁敢惜死。但某
方强仕，不为死备。家业浩大，未有所付。何术得延其
期？某囊橐中，计所直不下数十万，尽可以献于执事。”





eyes. He gulped down the wine and fixed his gaze on the roast lamb. Zhang cut off a leg and offered it to him, which he finished off with hunger still apparent on his face. Zhang took out more than a dozen meat-stuffed griddlecakes from a food hamper and placed them before the man, and he washed them down with jars of wine.

Seemingly satiated, he looked up at Zhang. "The last good meal I had was at East Camp forty years ago."

Puzzled by that offbeat remark, Zhang insisted on striking up a closer acquaintance.

"I'm no human," said the intruder finally, "but a ghost courier carrying the death roll to Mount Hua."

"I don't understand," Zhang said with a start.

"When the god of Mount Tai¹² recalls a soul, he entrusts the death roll to couriers like myself, and we take it to the respective mountain gods governing the area."

"May I see what a death roll is like?"

"I don't think it matters if you have a peep." So he untied the leather bag he was carrying and retrieved a scroll. The title line read:

The God of Mount Tai to the God of Mount Hua:

Then came the name:

Zhang, ..., ex-magistrate of Fuliang County, greedy without shame, unrestrained in slaughtering and killing.

It was his name! Zhang implored the courier for help. "I know," he said, "the length of one's life is predestined. I'm not afraid of death, but, you see, I'm in the prime of life and was totally unprepared for the end. I haven't even made arrangements for my vast property. Is there any way death can be postponed? I have with me hundreds of thousands. You can have it all."



使者曰：“一饭之恩，诚宜报答；百万之贖，某何用焉？今有仙官刘纲，谪在莲花峰，足下宜匍匐径往，哀诉奏章，舍此则无计矣。某昨闻金天王与南岳博戏不胜，输二十万，甚被逼逐。足下可诣岳庙，厚数以许之，必能施力于仙官。纵力不及，亦得路于莲花峰下。不尔，荆榛蒙密，川谷阻绝，无能往者。”

令于是赍牲牢，驰诣岳庙，以千万许之。然后直诣莲花峰，得幽径。凡数十里，至峰下。转东南，有一茅堂，见道士隐几而坐。问令曰：“腐骨秽肉，魂亡神耗者，安得来此？”令曰：“钟鸣漏尽，露晞顷刻。窃闻仙官，能复精魂于朽骨，致肌肉于枯骸。既有好生之心，岂惜奏章之力？”道士曰：“吾顷为隋朝权臣一奏，遂谪居此峰。尔何德于予，欲陷吾为寒山之叟乎？”令哀祈愈切；仙官神色甚怒。





“I have no use for your millions, and I’m already indebted to you for this meal. A kindness must be returned in one way or another. Now, listen carefully. There is an immortal named Liu Gang living in exile from heaven on the Lotus Peak. Your Excellency may crawl your way up to his feet and beg him to write a petition for you and send it to heaven. That probably is the only way I know to save you. Also, I heard yesterday that the god of Mount Hua had lost two hundred thousand to the god of Mount Heng in gambling. He’s very much pressed. So, if you go to his temple and offer to pay his debt, I’m sure he’ll drop that Liu Gang a clear hint. Even if it doesn’t work, at least it’ll make your climb easier, for the hills are thorned and cliffed. Few can reach his abode.”

Zhang rushed to the temple of the mountain god with sacrifices of cows and lambs, and promised millions in reward. Then he made for the peak, and, luckily, found a hidden path. Miles of winding mountain trails led him to the summit. He discerned a thatched hut on the southeast slope, where a Taoist priest was sitting by a low table.

“How did you, a soulless walking corpse, manage to intrude upon my peace?” was the priest’s greeting.

“True as you have put it,” Zhang said, “I’m no better than a drained-off water clock at the end of a day or morning dew before a rising sun, but I hear Your Highness can reunite the soul with its shell and restore flesh and blood to a skeleton. Such benevolence emboldens me to think that you won’t grudge writing a petition for my sake.”

“You know why I was banished to this bleak place? Because I once penned such a petition for a cabinet bigwig of the Sui Dynasty. What do I owe you that you should think I would risk myself for your sake and live forever at this place?”

The more humbly he pleaded, the more furious the priest seemed to become.

俄有使者，赍一函而至，则金天王之书札也。仙官览书，笑曰：“关节既到，难为不应。”召使者反报，曰：“莫又为上帝谴责否？”乃启玉函，书一通，焚香再拜以遣之。凡食顷，天符乃降，其上署“彻”字。仙官复焚香再拜以启之。云：“张某弃背祖宗，窃假名位，不顾礼法，苟窃官荣。而又鄙僻多藏，诡诈无实，百里之任，已是叨居；千乘之富，今因苟得。令按罪已实，待戮余魂，何为奏章，求延厥命？但以扶危拯溺者，大道所尚；纾刑宥过者，玄门是宗。徇尔一氓，我全弘化，希其悛恶，庶乃自新。贪生者量延五年，奏章者不能无罪。”仙官览毕，谓令曰：“大凡世人之寿，皆可致百





Just then, a messenger appeared with a letter from the god of Mount Hua. The priest grinned as he read. "Once money is promised, one has to oblige," he commented to himself. Having sent the messenger back with an acknowledgment of receipt, he sighed, "I hope this time I won't be blamed by His Almighty again."

He opened a jade box and wrote something. Kneeling and offering joss sticks before the altar, he burned up the message. In the time it took for a meal, a folded sheet drifted down from heaven bearing a seal. Offering another bunch of joss sticks, he knelt again and spread out the sheet to read:

"Zhang has betrayed the teachings of his ancestors, ignored all decencies of life, and usurped a respectable social position through ignominious means. This person is greedy and stingy, dishonest and faithless. To govern a hundred villages is already beyond his lot, not to mention the thousand cartloads of riches that should not belong to him.

"All the above has been proved beyond a shadow of a doubt, and his soul is to be fetched and punished. How can someone send in a petition to extend such a life!

"Nevertheless, it is a tenet of the Way to assist the needy and rescue the drowning, and it is also in the spirit of Taoism to withhold punishment and to forgive. Thus, by pardoning one, our creed shall radiate many. Let him renounce the evil and reclaim the virtues. Let his life be extended five years, but, he who spoke for such a person shall not be forgiven."

The verdict thus pronounced, the priest said to Zhang, "An ordinary human being should be able to live for one hundred years, but all too often such emotions as joy, anger, and sorrow weaken the fountain



岁。而以喜怒哀乐，汨没心源；爱恶嗜欲，伐生之根。而又扬己之能，掩彼之长，颠倒方寸，顷刻万变，神倦思怠，难全天和。如彼淡泉，汨于五味，欲致不坏，其可得乎？勉导归途，无堕吾教。”令拜辞，举首已失所在。

复寻旧路，稍觉平易。行十余里，黄衫吏迎前而贺。令曰：“将欲奉报，愿知姓字。”吏曰：“吾姓钟，生为宣城县脚力，亡于华阴，遂为幽冥所录。递符之役，劳苦如旧。”令曰：“何以勉执事之困？”曰：“但酬金天王愿曰：‘请置子为阍人。’则吾饱神盘子矣。天符已违半日，难更淹留，便与执事别。”入庙南柘林三五步而没。

是夕，张令驻车华阴，决东归。计酬金天王愿，所费数逾二万，乃语其仆曰：“二万可以贍吾十舍之资粮矣，安可受祉于上帝，而私谒于土偶人乎？”明旦，遂东至偃





of his heart; love, hate especially, and other desires chop away at the root of his life; vanity and scorn, in addition, constantly disturb his mind, exhausting its spirit and destroying its harmony, just as pure water from the source of a river is always corrupted by added tastes of sweetness, saltiness, bitterness and sourness. In that case, how can a life sustain its vitality? Now that you've gained new life, don't let us down." Zhang bowed a farewell. When he lifted his eyes, the priest was gone.

The way back seemed less difficult. Halfway, he encountered the ghost courier, who congratulated him.

"May I have your name so that I could know who to thank?" Zhang brought up the question once again.

"My family name was Zhong. I was a messenger for the Xuan County government, and fell dead during an errand at the foot of this mountain. Because of my former experience, I was employed after my death as a nether courier. I'm worked as hard as I ever was."

"Is there any way I might have you relieved from your present toils?"

"All you need to do is pray for me to the god of Mount Hua, wishing me to be reassigned as a janitor. Then I would enjoy the privilege of sampling the offerings to god. Sorry that I must say goodbye to you now, for I'm already half a day behind schedule." So saying, he vanished in the mulberry woods south of the temple.

That night, Zhang made up his mind to return home the next morning. He calculated that it would cost him more than twenty thousand if he were to keep his promise to the mountain god. "Twenty thousand would be enough to cover ten days' traveling expenses," he confided to a servant. "Why should I give it to an earthen statue in a temple while I have the blessing from His Almighty?"

So east he went.



师，止于县馆。见黄衫旧吏，赍牒排闥而进，叱张令曰：“何虚妄之若是，今祸至矣。由尔偿三峰之愿不果，俾吾答一饭之恩无始终。悒悒之怀，如痛毒螫。”言讫，失所在。顷刻，张令有疾，留书遗妻子，未讫而终。





One night, he had just put up at a county guesthouse when the yellow jacket courier kicked open the door and strode in. "How dare you cheat god!" he shouted at Zhang, waving a scroll in one hand. "Now you're doomed. And because you failed to keep your word, you made me unable to repay your meal. That debt will forever be like a scorpion bite poisoning my heart!" He vanished without another word.

Instantly, Zhang fell ill. He grabbed a brushpen and tried to write a will, but he never finished it.





韦自东

贞元中，有韦自东者，义烈之士也。尝游太白山，栖止段将军庄，段亦素知其壮勇者。一日，与自东眺望山谷，见一径甚微，若旧有行迹。自东问主人曰：“此何诣也？”段将军曰：“昔有二僧，居此山顶，殿宇宏壮，林泉甚佳。盖唐开元中，万回师弟子之所建也，似驱役鬼工，非人力所能及。或问樵者说，其僧为怪物所食，今绝踪二三年矣。又闻人说，有二夜叉于此山，亦无人敢窥焉。”自东怒曰：“余操心在平侵暴，夜叉何类，而敢噬人？今夕，必挈夜叉首，至于门下。”将军止曰：“暴虎凭河，死而无悔？”自东不顾，仗剑奋衣而往，势不可遏。将军悄然曰：“韦生当其咎耳。”





Wei Zidong

Wei Zidong was a man of courage and righteousness. In Zhenyuan reign, he made a visit to the Qinling Mountains and stayed with General Duan, who was his old acquaintance and had a country estate near the main peak, Taibai.

One day as they were watching the scenery, a faint track as if cut out by the feet of man caught Zidong's attention. "Where does that path lead to?" he asked his host.

"There is a magnificent temple atop the peak amidst ancient trees and gurgling springs," the general replied. "You can hardly imagine how humans could have done that on the top of such steep cliffs. Actually, it was built by the disciples of Master Wanhui in Kaiyuan reign. Two monks used to live there, but we haven't seen them for a couple of years. I hear woodcutters say the monks were eaten by monsters, and rumor has it that the peak is now occupied by two yakshas, but no one has ventured up to check out."

"I hate brutality and cruelty," said Zidong indignantly. "Yakshas! How dare they eat people! I'm going up there to have a look. If there really are yakshas, I'll wipe them out tonight and offer their heads to you."

"Don't go!" the general warned. "That's like fighting a tiger empty-handed, or wading through a deep river. You'll regret it!"

To that Zidong paid no heed and went ahead with nothing but his sword.

自东扞萝蹶石，至精舍，悄寂无人。睹二僧房，大敞其户，履锡俱全，衾枕俨然，而尘埃凝积其上。又见佛堂内，细草茸茸，似有巨物偃寝之处。四壁多挂野彘玄熊之类，或庖炙之余，亦有锅镬薪。自东乃知樵者之言不谬耳。度其夜叉未至，遂拔柏树，径大如碗，去枝叶，为大杖。扞其户，以石佛拒之。是夜，月白如昼。夜未分，夜叉挈鹿而至，怒其扞镬，大叫，以首触户，折其石佛，而踣于地。自东以柏树挝其脑，再举而死之。拽之入室，又阖其扉。顷之，复有夜叉继至，似怒前归者不接己，亦哮吼，触其扉，复踣于户闕，又挝之，亦死。自东知雌雄已殒，应无济类，遂掩关烹鹿而食。及明，断二夜叉首，挈余鹿而示段，段大骇曰：“真周处之俦矣。”乃烹鹿饮酒尽欢，远近观者如堵。





“He’s looking for death,” the general sighed.

Zidong climbed up the rocks and cliffs and reached the temple. The temple yard was dead quiet, all doors thrown open. In the living quarters, the monks’ shoes and utensils were intact, their beds made, but everything was covered with a thick layer of dust. In the main hall, soft grass was spread on the floor as if it were the lair of giant animals. Pelts of black bears and skins of wild boars hung on the walls. There were pots and firewood and the remains of roasted meat. So the woodcutters’ story was true.

He guessed that the yakshas would return for the night. He snapped a cypress tree the thickness of a bowl, removed its branches and leaves, and made it a huge club. Then he pushed over a stone statue to buttress the door. That night the moon shone as bright as day. Near midnight, a yaksha returned with a killed deer. It bellowed in anger to find the door barred and butted its head against the door. The statue cracked and the creature stumbled and fell. Zidong swung his cypress club against the creature’s head and killed it in two strokes. He pulled the carcass in and closed the door. Soon, another yaksha arrived. Seeing the door closed, it seemed furious with the first one. With a terrifying roar, it rammed the door and fell over the threshold. Zidong struck again and killed it too. Having killed both the male and female, he guessed there were no others around. So he closed the door and cooked the venison.

At daybreak, he cut off the yakshas’ heads and carried them with the remainder of the deer back to Duan’s house. Duan was more than surprised. “You’re superhuman!” he exclaimed.

They cooked the deer and drank in celebration. People from far and wide thronged the place just to have a glimpse of the hero. A Taoist priest stepped out from the crowd and saluted. “I have a request,”



有道士出于稠人中，揖自东曰：“某有衷恳，欲披告于长者，可乎？”自东曰：“某一生济人之急，何为不可？”道士曰：“某栖心道门，恳志灵药，非一朝一夕耳。三二年前，神仙为吾配合龙虎丹一炉，据其洞而修之，有日矣。今灵药将成，而数有妖魔入洞，就炉击触，药几废散。思得刚烈之士，仗剑卫之，灵药倘成，当有分惠。未知能一行否？”自东踊跃曰：“乃平生所愿也。”遂仗剑从道士而去。济险蹶峻，当太白之高峰，将半，有一石洞，可百余步，即道士烧丹之室，唯弟子一人。道士约曰：“明晨五更初，请君仗剑，当洞门而立，见有怪物，但以剑击之。”自东曰：“谨奉教。”久立烛于洞门外，以伺之。

俄顷，果有巨虺长数丈，金目雪牙，毒气氤郁，将欲入洞。自东以剑击之，似中其首，俄顷若轻雾而化去。食顷，有一女子，颜色绝丽，执芰荷之花，缓步而至。自东又以剑拂之，若云气而灭。食顷，将欲曙，有道士，乘云





he said. "May I speak to you?"

"Sure," Zidong replied. "I'm always glad to be of some help."

"I'm a devoted Taoist," the priest said, "and through the years I've been in quest of magic pills. A couple of years ago I acquired a formula for the dragon-tiger pills from a celestial being. Since then I've been concocting it in my cave and now it's almost done. But on several occasions some evil spirits tried to invade my cave and they almost toppled my furnace. Now I need a really brave man to guard the place with a sword. When the magic pill is done, I'll let you share it. Can I count on your help?"

"This kind of job suits me perfectly," Zidong replied eagerly. He took up his sword and followed the priest.

They climbed up cliffs and snaked along precipices and were more than halfway up Taibai when they came upon a cave in the rock face. That was where the priest hid his smelter. The cave was about a hundred feet deep, with a sole neophyte tending the furnace.

"Please stand guard at the mouth of this cave till sunrise," the priest instructed. "If you see any strange creatures, just strike with your sword."

"I'll do that," Zidong promised.

He lit a candle at the cave mouth and stood waiting. Before long, a serpent appeared and was to enter the cave. It was dozens of feet long, with fiery eyes and snow-white fangs, its mouth puffing poisonous vapor. Zidong struck with his sword and was pretty sure he had hit it on the head. It dispersed as if it were the morning fog. After a while, a gorgeous woman approached with a lotus flower in her hand, swinging her hips. He wielded his sword and she vanished like a cloud. Shortly, the day was about to break. A venerable-looking Taoist priest came on the back of a crane, followed by a large retinue.

驾鹤，导从甚严，劳自东曰：“妖魔已尽，吾弟子丹将成矣，吾当来为证也。”盘旋候明而入，语自东曰：“喜汝道士丹成，今为诗一首，汝可继和。”诗曰：“三秋稽颡叩真灵，龙虎交时金液成。绛雪既凝身可度，蓬壶顶上彩云生。”自东详诗意曰：“此道士之师。”遂释剑而礼之。俄而突入，药鼎爆烈，更无遗在。道士恸哭，自东悔恨自咎而已。二人因以泉涤其鼎器而饮之。自东后更有少容，而适南岳，莫知所止。今段将军庄尚有夜叉骷髅见在，道士亦莫知所之。





“You’ve killed all the evil spirits,” he praised Zidong. “I believe this time my disciple will succeed in producing the magic pills, and I’ve come to congratulate him.” He hovered outside the cave as if waiting for the crack of dawn. “I’m really proud of him and I’ve composed a poem for the occasion. Would you like to come up with a matching one?” Then he intoned:

*He piously prayed for three years to the gods;
Now the dragon and tiger make the pills.
The sublimate will send him up to sky;
He’ll ride the clouds above the Penglai Isle.*

Judging by the poem, he must be the priest’s mentor. Zidong laid down his sword and bowed. Without losing a moment, the old man dashed past him into the cave. The smelting pot cracked and exploded, laying the whole place in waste. The priest moaned and howled while Zidong was seized with remorse and self-contempt. They collected the broken pieces and washed them in spring water. Then they drank the water, dregs and all.

After that incident, Zidong seemed rejuvenated. He left for Mount Heng and nobody has ever seen either him or the priest again. The skeletons to the two yakshas are still on General Duan’s estate.



马燧

马燧贫贱时，寓游北京，谒府主，不见而返。寄居于园吏，吏曰：“莫欲谒护戎否？若谒，即须先言，当为其歧路耳。护戎讳数字而甚切，君当在意，若犯之，无逃其死也。然若幸愜之，则所益与诸人不同。慎勿暗投也。某乃护戎先乳母子，得以详悉，而辄赞君子焉。”燧信与疑半。

明晨，入谒护戎，果犯其讳，庭叱而去，畏惧之色见于面。园吏曰：“是必忤护戎耳。”燧问计求脱，园吏曰：“君子戾我，而恟惶如是，然败则死，不得渎我也。”遂匿燧于粪车中，载出郭而逃。于时护戎果索燧，一报不





Ma Sui

Before Ma Sui rose from obscurity and poverty, he once visited Taiyuan, the North Capital, where he shared lodgings with a gardener friend. He paid a courtesy call to the mayor but the latter refused to meet him.

“Do you want to see the garrison commander?” the gardener asked. “If you do, let me know. I can manage that for you. But remember, certain words are taboo to him. If you should mention those words, you’re looking for death. On the other hand, if he should take a shine to you, you’ll be amply awarded. My mother was his wet nurse. That’s how I know. I hope this can help you. So, don’t waste your opportunities.”

Sui suspected that he was bragging.

Yet the next day he was granted an audience with the commander, and despite the gardener’s warning, the taboo words slipped through his lips. The commander’s face darkened and dismissed him in curses.

He returned to his lodging white with fear.

“You must have offended the commander,” the gardener remarked at the sight of him.

He begged the gardener for advice.

“You didn’t listen to me,” the gardener said, “and now you’ve got yourself into big trouble. Maybe I can help you one more time, but if you were caught, that’s the end of you. Don’t betray me!”

So he had Sui hidden in the tank of the manure cart, which carried him safely out of town.



获，散铁骑者，每门十人。燧狼狈窜六十余里。日暮，度不出境，求蔽于逃民败室之中。尚未安，闻车马啼喷声，人相议言：“能更三二十里否？”果护戎之使也。俄闻车马势渐远，稍安焉。

未复常息，又闻有窸窣人行声，燧危栗次。忽于户牖，见一女人，衣布衣，身形绝长，手携一襜曰：“马燧在此否？”燧默然，不敢对。又曰：“大惊怕否？胡二姊知君在此，故来安慰，无生忧疑也。”燧乃应诺而出。胡二姊曰：“大厄，然已过，尚有余恐矣。君固馁，我食汝。”乃解所携襜，有熟肉一瓯，胡饼一个，燧食甚饱。却令于旧处，更不可动。胡二姊以灰数斗，放与燧前地上，横布一道。仍授之言曰：“今夜半，有异物相恐劫，辄不可动。过此厄后，勋贵无双。”言毕而去。





The commander indeed dispatched a squad of officers to arrest him. As they failed to find him at his quarters, ten cavalymen were stationed at each city gate to check the outgoing traffic.

By dusk Sui had hurry-scurried some twenty miles from town, yet still within the commander's jurisdiction. He saw a deserted house and went in, but before he could conceal himself, the neighing and snorting of horses were heard.

"Could he have possibly gotten a few miles farther?" he heard someone say.

No doubt they were the commander's search squads. The clattering of hooves gradually faded and he was about to unwind and catch the normal rhythm of his breath when the rustling of an approaching person threw him back into fear and trembling. Then he saw a woman looking in from the window. She was rather tall, wearing plain clothes and had a cloth bundle on her arm. "Is Ma Sui in here?" she asked.

He didn't dare to make a sound.

"It must have been scary. No fear now. I'm the second sister of Hu. I know you're here and I've come to cheer you up."

Only then did he venture an answer and come out from his hiding place.

"It's just an ebb in your fortune, but the worst is over and only minor threats remain. I guess you're hungry and have brought you some food."

So saying, she took out a jar of cooked meat and a pancake from the bundle. When he filled himself, she told him to go back into hiding and keep quiet and calm whatever was to happen. Then she sprinkled a line of ash in front of his hiding place.

"At midnight a strange being will appear and it may frighten you,"

夜半，有物闪闪照人，渐进户牖间。见一物，长丈余，乃夜叉也。赤发猬奋，金身锋铄，臂曲瘦木，甲驾兽爪，衣豹皮裤，携短兵，直入室来。狞目电燿，吐火喷血，跳躅哮吼，铁石消铄。燧之惴栗，殆丧魂亡精矣。然此物终不敢越胡二姊所布之灰。久之，物乃撤一门扉，藉而熟寝。

俄又闻车马来声，有人相谓曰：“此乃逃入室，不妨马生匿于此乎？”时数人持兵器，下马入来，冲啼夜叉。夜叉奋起，大吼数声，裂人马啖食，血肉殆尽。夜叉食既饱，徐步而出。四更，东方月上，燧觉寂静，乃出而去，见人马骨肉狼藉，乃获免。

后立大勋，官爵穹崇。询访胡二姊之由，竟不能得。思报不获，乃每春秋祠飨，别置胡二姊一座，列于庙左。





she warned before she left. "Don't panic. Just hold yourself. When you've tided that over, all you have is good fortune in store for you."

At midnight, something glistening approached. Through the window he saw a creature about ten feet tall. It was a yaksha, with a head of standing red hair, a face glittering like gold, and elbows like the galls of an old tree. It wore a leopard skin skirt around its waist and held a kind of short weapon in one of its large claw-like hands. It entered the room, its eyes bloody red and flashing like beams. It jumped about and roared, so loud that it could have shattered rocks. He was scared out of his wits. The creature, though, didn't dare to cross the ash line drawn by Sister Hu. After a while, it seemed to have tired itself out. It removed a door plank from the doorframe and slept on it.

Soon the sound of hooves approached again. "That man may be hiding in one of these deserted houses," a voice said. Then several men dismounted and came through the door, their weapons clinking. The yaksha was startled awake. It leaped to its feet, made several deafening roars, grabbed and torn up the men and their horses, and devoured them all. Satiated, it ambled away.

The moon rose up. It was dead quiet outside. Sui emerged from his hiding place and went out. The ground was littered with bones and blood. So, it was all over.

Ma Sui later won many military distinctions and rose to a top-rank general, but hard as he tried, he was never able to find out who that second sister of Hu was and to thank her in person. He erected a statue to her memory in his family temple and offered sacrifices on every seasonal festival.

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蕴都师

经行寺僧行蕴，为其寺都僧。尝及初秋，将备盂兰会，洒扫堂殿，齐整佛事。见一佛前化生，姿容妖冶，手持莲花，向人似有意。师因戏谓所使家人曰：“世间女人，有似此者，我以为妇。”

其夕归院，夜未分，有款扉者曰：“莲花娘子来。”蕴都师不知悟也，即应曰：“官家法禁极严，今寺门已闭，夫人何从至此？”既开门，莲花及一从婢，妖资丽质，妙绝无伦，谓蕴都师曰：“多种中无量胜因，常得亲奉大圆正智。不谓今日，闻师一言，忽生俗想。今已谪为人，当奉执巾钵。朝来之意，岂遽忘耶？”蕴都师曰：“某信愚昧，常获僧戒。素非省相识，何尝见夫人，遂相





The Wax Figurine

It was early autumn and Monk Yun, the head monk of Jingxing Temple, was supervising the cleaning of the halls and the preparation of sacrificial objects for the oncoming *Ullambana* Festival. In front of a Buddha statue was a beautiful wax figurine of a woman with eloquent eyes and a lotus bud in her hand.

“If, in this world, there could be a woman as beautiful as this figurine, I would not hesitate to take her to wife,” the monk said jokingly to the neophytes around him.

Night fell and the monks each retired to their rooms.

Toward midnight, Yun heard a knock on his door and someone announced that the lotus lady had arrived. Without the least idea who she could be, the monk replied, “How can a lady be here at this late hour? There are strict rules against this and the temple gate has already been locked up.” He opened the door, however, to see an incredibly gorgeous lady with a maid.

“Thanks to my devotion and accumulated good,” the woman said, “I was enjoying a heavenly life, but today when I heard your words, a moment of worldly thought flashed through my mind and I was instantly ejected from heaven back to this mortal world to be your wife. You haven’t forgotten what you said in the morning, have you?”

“I’m only mortal,” the monk replied, “yet I’ve sworn to observe the commandments. We’re not acquaintances, and we haven’t met anywhere before. How can you invent such a lie!”



给也？”“即曰：“师朝来佛前见我，谓家人曰，倘貌类我，将以为妇，言犹在耳。我感师此言，诚愿委质。”因自袖中出化生曰：“岂相给乎？”蕴师悟非人，回惶之际，莲花即顾侍婢曰：“露仙可备帷幄。”露仙乃陈设寝处，皆极华美。蕴虽骇异，然心亦喜之，谓莲花曰：“某便誓心矣。但以僧法不容，久居寺舍，如何？”莲花大笑曰：“某天人，岂凡识所及。且终不以累师。”遂绸缪叙语，词气清婉。

俄而灭烛，童子等犹潜听伺之。未食顷，忽闻蕴失声，冤楚颇极。遽引燎照之，至则拒户闩，禁不可发。但闻猜牙啮舌嚼骨之声，如胡人语音而大骂曰：“贼秃奴，遣尔辞家剃发，因何起妄想之心。假如我真女人，岂嫁与尔作妇耶？”于是驰告寺众，坏垣以窥之，乃二夜叉也，锯牙植发，长比巨人，哮叫拿获，腾蹕而出。





"This morning we met in front of Buddha. You said to your neophytes you would make her your wife whoever has such looks. Your words are still ringing in my ears. I was touched and now I'm here to wait on you." She took out the figurine from her sleeve. "Am I lying?"

The monk realized that she was no human being. As he was trying to think out what to do, the woman said to her maid, "Dewy, why don't you get the bed ready for us?"

The maid started to prepare the bed. Everything she took out was luxurious. Although he was alarmed, deep in his heart he was congratulating himself on his good fortune. "I certainly would be happy with this," he said, "but that goes against the Buddhist commandments. How can I keep you in the temple without being discovered?"

"I'm a celestial being, how can mortals see me?!" she burst out laughing. "Don't worry. I won't get you into trouble."

They started to coo and bill, and soon the candle was blown out. His neophytes hid below the window to listen.

In less time than it might take to finish a meal, they suddenly heard the monk let out a cry as if he was terrified and suffering great pain. They hurriedly fetched torches but found the door and windows securely blocked. They heard groans and grunts, and the crunching of bones. Someone with a strong accent was scolding loudly, "You hairless beast! You've shaved your head and given up secular life. How can you still covet the fair sex? If I really were a woman, I wouldn't marry the like of you!"

The neophytes ran off to alert the other monks. They knocked a hole in the wall and saw two giant yakshas with raised hair and protruding teeth like those of a saw. Bellowing and flailing their arms, they leaped out and were gone.

后僧见佛座壁上，有二画夜叉，正类所睹，唇吻间犹有血痕焉。





The monks later noticed that on the mural behind the statue of Buddha were two similarly looking yakshas. On their lips were stains of blood.



王宙

天授三年，清河张镒因官家于衡州。性简静，寡知友。无子，有女二人，其长早亡，幼女倩娘，端妍绝伦。镒外甥太原王宙，幼聪悟，美容范。镒常器重，每曰：“他时当以倩娘妻之。”后各长成，宙与倩娘，常私感想于寤寐，家人莫知其状。后有宾寮之选者求之，镒许焉。女闻而郁抑，宙亦深恚恨，托以当调，请赴京。止之不可，遂厚遣之。

宙阴恨悲恻，决别上船。日暮，至山郭数里，夜方半，宙不寐。忽闻岸上有一人行声甚速，须臾至船。问之，乃倩娘，徒行跣足而至。宙惊喜发狂，执手问其从





The Departed Soul

In the third year of Tianshou reign, an official named Zhang Yi was transferred to Heng Prefecture. As a prudent man, he didn't have a wide circle of friends. He had no sons but two daughters. The elder one died early; the younger one was called Qianniang, beautiful beyond compare. He also had a nephew with him, his sister's son Wang Zhou, who was a bright, handsome lad. Zhang thought highly of his nephew and remarked more than once that the two youngsters would be a perfect couple when they came of age.

The two grew up admiring each other and wished the time would come for them to be man and wife. Yet, because of etiquette, that wish was kept their secret.

Then one day a colleague asked Zhang for Qianniang's hand, and Zhang consented. Qianniang was grieved by the news and Wang was deeply hurt and dejected. Arguing that it was time for him to seek an official career, he asked his uncle for permission to leave for the capital. Since he was so determined, Zhang sent him on his way with an ample purse.

The young man boarded a boat and departed with a bleeding heart. At sunset his boat moored at the foot of a mountain. Midnight came and passed, yet tormented by his unfortunate love he could not sleep a wink. Suddenly, he heard rapid footsteps scudding along the bank. In no time he saw a figure approaching the boat. Who could it be but Qianniang coming barefoot! He grasped her hands in ecstasy



来。泣曰：“君厚意如此，寝食相感。今将夺我此志，又知君深情不易，思将杀身奉报，是以亡命来奔。”宙非意所望，欣跃特甚，遂匿倩娘于船，连夜遁去。倍道兼行，数月至蜀。凡五年，生两子，与镒绝信。

其妻常思父母，涕泣言曰：“吾曩日不能相负，弃大义而来奔君。向今五年，恩慈间阻。覆载之下，胡颜独存也？”宙哀之曰：“将归无苦。”遂俱归衡州。既至，宙独身先至镒家，首谢其事。镒曰：“倩娘病在闺中数年，何其诡说也？”宙曰：“见在舟中。”镒大惊，促使人验之。果见倩娘在船中，颜色怡畅，讯使者曰：“大人安否？”家人异之，疾走报镒。室中女闻，喜而起，饰妆更衣，笑而





and asked how she managed to follow him.

“For so many years,” she sobbed, “we’ve been together. Our mutual feelings run deep. Now that I know you still hold me dear in your heart even when I’m to be married off to someone else, I’d rather die for you than let my will be violated. I’ve made up my mind to elope with you, come what may!”

This unexpected bliss made Wang’s heart pound with joy. He hid her in the boat and immediately set sail. Traveling nights as well as days, in a few months they arrived in Shu.

Five years rolled by and two sons were born. Throughout this period they remained out of touch with Zhang and their relatives. A sense of homesickness had gradually developed in Qianniang till one day she poured out her mind to her husband, “That day when I deserted my parents to come after you, I went against a maiden’s behavior code. For five years I wasn’t able to attend to them. If anything should happen to them, what face do I have to live on alone?” Touched by her fidelity, Wang promised to take her and the children home.

Arriving in Heng Prefecture, Wang left Qianniang and his sons in the boat and went ahead alone to see his uncle and apologize for their elopement.

“Qianniang is in her boudoir!” Zhang exclaimed as Wang tried to explain. “She has been in bed ill for years. How can you fabricate such a ridiculous story!”

“She’s now in a boat outside town,” Wang insisted.

In utter bewilderment, Zhang dispatched a servant, who saw Qianniang on the boat, alive and exuberant. She even asked the servant about her parents. The puzzled servant rushed back to make a report. As soon as the girl in bed heard of it, her face lit up and she jumped out of bed to make up and dress. All this she did with a contented



不语，出与相迎，翕然而合为一体，其衣裳皆重。其家以事不正，秘之，惟亲戚间有潜知之者。后四十年间，夫妻皆丧，二男并孝廉擢第，至丞尉。

事出陈玄祐《离魂记》，云：“玄祐少常闻此说，而多异同，或谓其虚。大历末，遇莱芜县令张仲规，因备述其本末。镒则仲规堂叔，而说极备悉。故记之。”





smile, but without a word. Then she came out to meet the other girl. There they merged into one — even their clothes blended perfectly.

*

The Zhangs kept that happening as a family secret among themselves, for fear that its weirdness might give rise to scandals. Both Wang Zhou and his wife died forty years later. Their two sons passed the imperial examination and reached the positions of county lieutenant and deputy county magistrate.

When I was young, I heard many contradictory versions of this story. Some people even dismissed it as a mere lie. At the end of Dali reign, I came to know Zhang Zhongxian, the magistrate of Laiwu County. Zhang Yi was his father's brother, so he knew the exact details of the episode, enabling me to write down this authentic story.





齐推女

元和中，饶州刺史齐推女，适陇西李某。李举进士，妻方娠，留至州宅。至临月，迁至后东阁中。其夕，女梦丈夫，衣冠甚伟，瞋目按剑叱之曰：“此屋岂是汝腥秽之所乎？亟移去。不然，且及祸。”明日告推，推素刚烈，曰：“吾忝土地主，是何妖孽，能侵耶？”

数日，女诞育，忽见所梦者，即其床帐乱殴之。有顷，耳目鼻皆流血而卒。父母伤痛女冤横，追悔不及。遣遽告其夫，俟至而归葬于李族。遂于郡之西北十数里官道，权瘞之。





A Collected Soul

Qi Tui, the prefect of Rao in Yuanhe reign, had a daughter who was married to a Mr Li, a native of Longxi. As Li had gone to the capital to attend the imperial examination, his pregnant wife went back to live with her parents and was put up in the east wing room in the inner courtyard.

One night late in her pregnancy, an elegantly dressed lordly man appeared in her dream. "Is this somewhere for you to profane with your dirty blood?" the man stared and blared, one hand on the handle of his sword. "Get out of here at once, or disaster will befall you!"

She told her father about the dream the next morning, but Tui was an unflinching man and did not believe in supernatural forces. "I'm the highest governor of this place," he said. "No evil spirit can harm me!"

His daughter gave birth a few days later. Without warning, the man in her dream reappeared and pummeled her in bed. Her nose, ears and eyes began to bleed and she died moments later.

Her parents were grieved by her untimely death and they regretted that they didn't move her out of that room. A messenger was sent to the capital to notify her husband, while her corpse was placed in a temporary coffin hut built by the postal road three miles to the northwest of the city, waiting for Li to return and bury her in his family cemetery.

Li had failed the examination when the obituary reached him. He



李生在京师，下第将归，闻丧而往。比至饶州，妻卒已半年矣。李亦粗知其死不得其终，悼恨既深，思为冥雪。至近郭，日晚，忽于旷野见一女，形状服饰，似非村妇。李即心动，驻马谛视之，乃映草树而没。李下马就之，至则真其妻也。相见悲泣，妻曰：“且无涕泣，幸可复生。俟君之来，亦已久矣。大人刚正，不信鬼神，身是妇女，不能自诉。今日相见，事机校迟。”李曰：“为之奈何？”女曰：“从此直西五里鄱亭村，有一老人姓田，方教授村儿，此九华洞中仙官也，人莫之知。君能至心往来，或异谐遂。”

李乃径访田先生，见之，乃膝行而前，再拜称曰：“下界凡贱，敢谒大仙。”时老人方与村童授经，见李惊避曰：“衰朽穷骨，旦暮溘然，郎君安有此说？”李再拜，扣头不已，老人益难之。自日宴至于夜分，终不敢就





hurried home, and by the time he arrived in Rao Prefecture, his wife had been dead for half a year. All along the way he was trying to think out a way to avenge her, for he had learned of her sinister dream and the conditions of her death. It was almost dusk when he drew near town. Suddenly, he saw a woman in the rough country. Her attire and looks were quite unusual for a village woman. Upon an impulse he reined back his horse for a second look but she had disappeared behind the bushes. He dismounted to search, and found that she was none other than his wife. They cried in each other's arms.

"No time for tears," his wife said. "I've been waiting for you for quite a long time. There might be a chance for me to return to life, but my father doesn't believe in ghosts and deities, and as a woman, I can't make an appeal myself. Now you're finally back, I hope it's not too late."

"What shall I do?" Li asked.

"Two miles straight west from here is a village called Poting, and there is an old school teacher named Tian. He in fact is a celestial being living on earth, but no mortals know that. If you can look him up and plead sincerely with him, maybe he can help us."

Directly, Li went to look for Mr Tian. At the village he went down on his knees and crawled his way up to Tian's gate and kowtowed. "A humble mortal here pays respects to Your Celestial Reverence."

The old man was teaching a group of village boys the classics. Li's respect seemed to surprise him. "I'm just a bag of rotten bones and may drop dead any moment," he said. "Why are you addressing me this way?"

Li kept kowtowing and refused to stand up. They seemed to be locked in a stalemate. And from dusk to midnight, Li kept bowed before the old man.



坐，拱立于前。老人俯首良久曰：“足下诚恳如是，吾亦何所隐焉。”李生即顿首流涕，具云妻枉状。老人曰：“吾知之久矣，但不蚤申诉。今屋宅已败，理之不及。吾向拒公，盖未有计耳。然试为足下作一处置。”乃起从北出，可行百步余，止于桑林，长啸。

倏忽见一大府署，殿宇环合，仪卫森然，拟于王者。田先生衣紫帔，据案而坐，左右解官等列侍，俄传教呼地界。须臾，十数部各拥百余骑，前后奔驰而至。其帅皆长丈余，眉目魁岸，罗列于门屏之外。整衣冠，意绪苍惶，相问今有何事。须臾，谒者通地界、庐山神、江渚神、彭蠡神等，皆趣入。田先生问曰：“比者此州刺史女，因产为暴鬼所杀，事甚冤滥，尔等知否？”皆俯伏应曰：“然。”又问何故不为申理，又皆对曰：“狱讼须有其主，此不见人诉，无以发摘。”又问知贼姓名否，





The old man lowered his head and thought a long while. "Since you're so earnest," he finally said. "I'm afraid I can't turn you down."

Hearing that, Li burst out in renewed tears and kowtows. He told the old man about his wife's untimely death.

"I know that already," the old man replied. "But since nobody brought up her case, her body has already decomposed and cannot be restored to life. I didn't accept your plea until now because I haven't thought out a way to solve that problem. But we may give it a try."

So he led the way out of the village and went north for about a hundred steps to a grove of mulberry trees, where he whistled sharp and loud. All at once, a large compound of houses appeared with all the splendor of a king's palace. Mr Tian, dressed now in a purple cloak, was sitting behind the desk in the main hall, attended by numerous adjutants. A decree was issued to summon the local deities. In a wink, more than a dozen officers, each with hundreds of attendants, galloped to the palace from all bearings. The chiefs were big men, more than ten feet tall with broad faces. They assembled outside the gate, tidied their clothes, and asked each other nervously what this gathering was about. The announcement of their arrival as they entered the hall revealed that they were none but the gods of the local mountains, rivers and lakes.

"Not long ago the prefect's daughter was killed at delivery by a brutal devil. Do you know that?" Tian asked.

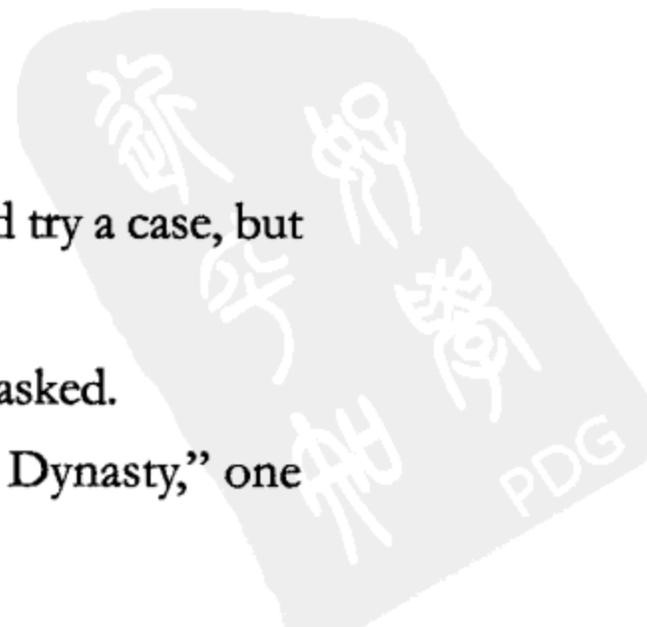
"Yes, we do," the gods bowed and replied.

"Then why didn't you redress the wrong?"

"There must be a plaintiff before we can hear and try a case, but nobody brought her case to court."

"Do you have any idea who the culprit is?" Tian asked.

"It's Wu Rui, the Prince of Po in the early Han Dynasty," one





有一人对曰：“是西汉鄱县王吴芮。今刺史宅，是芮昔时所居。至今犹恃雄豪，侵占土地，往往肆其暴虐，人无奈何。”田先生曰：“即追来。”

俄顷，缚吴芮至。先生诘之，不伏，乃命追阿齐。良久，见李妻与吴芮庭辩。食顷，吴芮理屈，乃曰：“当是产后虚弱，见某惊怖自绝，非故杀。”田先生曰：“杀人以挺与刃，有以异乎？”遂令执送天曹。回谓：“速检李氏寿命几何？”顷之，吏云：“本算更合寿三十二年，生四男三女。”先生谓群官曰：“李氏寿算长，若再生，议无厌伏。公等所见何如？”有一老吏前启曰：“东晋邺下有一人横死，正与此事相当。前使葛真君，断以具魂作本身。却归生路，饮食言语，嗜欲追游，一切无异。但至寿终，不见形质耳。”田先生曰：“何谓具魂？”吏曰：“生人三魂七魄，死则散离，本无所依。今收合为一体，





replied. "The prefect's present residence used to be his. So many years after his death, Rui is still a tyrant. He often grabs other people's land and rides roughshod over the locals. People are subdued by him."

"Bring him here immediately!" Tian ordered.

In a while Rui was led in in chains. When interrogated, he denied all charges. Tian then sent for Li's wife.

Rui debated with her in the hall. Before one could have finished a meal, he had obviously lost the upper hand. "I didn't kill her," he insisted. "She scared herself to death when she saw me in her post-partum frailty."

"Is there any difference if you kill someone with a knife or with a stick?" Tian rebutted. Rui was then transferred to the relevant celestial department to be sentenced.

A clerk was told to check the woman's predestined lifespan. In a moment he reported that she still had thirty-two years in store, and she should give birth to a total of four sons and three daughters.

"With so many years un-lived, we can't say justice is done if she's not resurrected. Do you have any suggestions?" Tian asked the gathering.

"There was a similar case in the Eastern Jin Dynasty," an old clerk stepped out and answered. "There was a man in Ye County who died an untimely death. The judge presiding over that case was Ge Hong the Immortal. His solution was to use the collected soul to replace the decayed body. When a person is resurrected that way, he can speak and eat, think and act like any real person. The only difference is that there will be no corpse when he dies."

"What is a collected soul?" Tian asked.

"A living person in fact is composed of three souls and seven spirits," the clerk replied. "When he dies, they will scatter to the winds. Now if we have them collected and bind them together with the glue



以续弦胶涂之。大王当街发遣放回，则与本身同矣。”田先生善，即顾谓李妻曰：“作此处置，可乎？”李妻曰：“幸甚。”俄见一吏，别领七八女人来，与李妻一类，即推而合之。有一人，持一器药，状似稀汤。即于李妻身涂之。李氏妻如空中坠地，初甚迷闷。天明，尽失夜来所见，唯田先生及李氏夫妻三人，共在桑林中。田先生顾谓李生曰：“相为极力，且喜事成，便可领归。见其亲族，但言再生，慎无他说。吾亦从此逝矣。”

李遂同归至州，一家惊疑，不为之信。久之，乃知实生人也。自尔生子数人，其亲表之中，颇有知者，云：“他无所异，但举止轻便，异于常人耳。”





which is used to connect the bowstring,¹³ she'll have a physical shape to attach to and Your Reverence can order her resurrection."

"Good idea," Tian said. Then he turned to Li's wife and asked, "What do you say to that?"

"I'll be most grateful to you then," she replied.

Presently, a clerk led in seven or eight women, who looked like the shadows of Li's wife. Another clerk came in with a bucket of what seemed to be sugar syrup and daubed it over her body while the former clerk pasted the shadows on. Li's wife felt like falling out of the air, but soon recovered from her initial stupor.

Day broke and all the grandeur during the night was gone. There were only the three of them in the mulberry woods.

"I've done my best," Mr Tian said. "Luckily, we've made it. You can take her home now, but to your family folks, just say she revived. Don't mention the other things. I'll leave this place right away."

Li and his wife returned to town. The prefect and all others were so surprised that they could hardly believe their eyes. It took them a fairly long time to accept her resurrection. She later gave birth to several children.

Quite a few among the family, however, knew about her story. They said that the only unusual thing they could detect was that her movements seemed somewhat light and buoyant.





刘积中

刘积中，常于西京近县庄居。妻病亟。未眠，忽有妇人，白首，长才三尺，自灯影中出，谓刘曰：“夫人病，唯我能理，何不祈我？”刘素刚，咄之。姥徐戟手曰：“勿悔勿悔。”遂灭，妻因暴心痛，殆将卒，刘不得已，祝之。言已复出，刘揖之坐。乃索茶一瓯，向日如咒状，顾令灌夫人，茶才入口，痛愈。后时时辄出，家人亦不之惧。

经年，复谓刘曰：“我有女子及笄，烦主人求一佳婿。”刘笑曰：“人鬼路殊，难遂所托。”姥曰：“非求





Pestered

Liu Jizhong once lived in the rural suburbs of the capital. His wife was seriously ill.

One day just before the family went to bed, a gray-haired woman about three feet tall emerged from the shadows of the lamplight and said to Liu, "Only I can cure your wife's disease. Why don't you pray to me?"

A man of no nonsense, he berated her. Slowly, she raised a hand and pointed a finger at him. "You'll regret this. You'll surely regret this," she said as she disappeared.

Suddenly, his wife was seized with a heart attack and passed out. He had no choice but to pray to the old woman, who reappeared as soon as the prayer was uttered. He bowed and offered her a seat. She asked for a cup of tea and turned her head toward the sun, her lips moving as if saying a charm. Then she told him to feed the tea to his wife. The moment the tea was down, his wife's heart pain ceased.

Thereafter the woman was a frequent visitor and Liu's household became accustomed to her presence.

"My daughter is now of marriage age," she said to Liu a few years later. "Would you please find her a husband?"

"I'm afraid I can't," he chuckled, "for we mortals and you ghosts live in separate worlds."

"I didn't ask you to find her a man. You only need to make a figurine out of paulownia wood. Of course a handsome one would be appreciated."

人也，但为刻桐木稍工者，可矣。”刘许诺，因为具之。经宿，木人失矣。又谓刘曰：“兼烦主人作铺公铺母，若可，某夕，我自具车舆奉迎。”刘心计无奈之何，亦许之。

至一日，过酉。有仆马车乘至门，姥亦至曰：“主人可往。”刘与妻各登其车马，天黑至一处，朱门崇墉，笼烛列迎，宾客供帐之盛，如王公家。引刘至一厅，朱紫数十，有相识者，有已歿者，各相视无言。妻至一堂，蜡炬如臂，锦翠争焕，亦有妇人数十，存歿相识各半，但相视而已。及五更，刘与妻恍惚，却还至家。如醉醒，十不记其一二。

数日，姥复来拜谢曰：“我小女成长，今复托主人。”刘不耐，以枕抵之曰：“老魅，敢如此扰之。”姥





He agreed and had one carved. During the night, the figurine was gone.

The old woman appeared again. "Could I ask you and your wife to be my daughter's honored uncle and aunt at her wedding? If you would, I'll come in person with carriages to pick you up on that night." Though reluctant, he consented, for there seemed to be no alternative.

As soon as night fell that day, the old woman arrived with a train of carriages and servants at their gate. "Let's go," she said and Liu and his wife each mounted a carriage.

It was completely dark when they reached a place with high walls and a big red gate. Lines of lanterns flanked the gateway. Lords and nobles swarmed around as if it were a party of a prince. Liu was ushered into a hall where dozens of officials in red robes were present. Some were his acquaintances, some were his dead friends. They looked at each other but did not say anything.

Liu's wife was led to a hall where candles were as thick as one's arm and dozens of women in silk and satin had gathered. She knew about half of the group, some already dead and some still around. They looked at each other without a word.

Toward daybreak Liu and his wife felt their senses grow dim and blurred, and they found themselves back at home as if they had just woken out of a hangover. Little can they remember about the previous night.

Days later the old woman came to thank them. "My younger daughter has attained marriage age too," she added. "Would you kindly help her?"

That was too much to stand. Liu picked up a pillow and pushed



随枕而灭，妻随疾发。刘与男女酹地祷之，不复出矣。妻竟以心痛卒。刘妹复病心痛，刘欲徙居，一切物胶着其处，轻若履屐，亦不可举。迎道流上章，梵僧持咒，悉不禁。

刘常暇日读药方，其婢小碧，自外来，垂手缓步，大言：“刘四，颇忆平昔无？”既而嘶咽曰：“省躬近从泰山回，路逢飞天野叉，携贤妹心肝，我已夺得。”因举袖，袖中蠕蠕有物。左顾似有所命，曰：“可为安置。”又觉袖中风生，冲帘幌。婢入堂中，乃对刘坐，问存歿，叙平生事。刘与杜省躬同年及第，友善，其婢举止笑语，无不肖也。顷曰：“我有事，不可久留。”执刘手呜咽，刘亦悲不自胜。婢忽倒，及觉，一无所记，其妹亦自此无恙。





the old woman away, saying, "Old hag, how can you be so bothersome?" The woman disappeared with the push and Liu's wife heart pain recurred. Liu and the whole family prayed and pleaded, but the old woman would not appear. His wife died from the heart attack.

Later, his sister suffered a heart attack too. He thought of moving away, but everything seemed glued to the floor, even things as light as shoes could not be lifted. Neither Taoist priests with their magic nor Buddhist monks with their incantations could dispel the evil spirit.

One day while he was studying a medicine book, one of his serving maids entered from outside. She strutted into the room with her hands at her sides. "The fourth brother of Liu," she boomed, "do you remember your old friend Shenggong?"

"I just returned from Mount Tai," she continued hoarsely. "On my way here I ran into a yaksha. It was carrying your sister's heart and liver. I wrested them from its hand and here they are." She raised her hand and he could see something throbbing in her sleeve. She turned aside and said, "Put it back in her," as if she was issuing an order to someone. A gust of air rushed out from her sleeve that made the door curtain flap. Then she came and sat at the table facing him. She asked about their acquaintances and talked about days of old. The way she spoke and behaved was just like his late friend Du Shenggong. The two of them passed the imperial examination in the same year.

"I'm busy," she said after chatting a while. "I must take leave of you now." She clasped his hands in hers and sobbed. Liu, too, was choked with emotion.

Suddenly the maid collapsed. When she woke up, she could not remember anything she did or said a moment ago. Liu's sister recovered immediately.



僧智圆

郑余庆在梁州，有龙兴寺僧智圆，善总持敕勤之术，制邪理病，多著效。日有数十人候门，智圆老，稍倦。郑颇敬之，因求住城东隙地，起草屋而居，有沙弥行者各一人。

数年，暇日，智圆向阳科脚甲，有布衣妇人，甚端丽，至阶作礼，泣曰：“妾不幸，夫亡子幼，老母危病，知师神咒助力，乞加救护。”智圆曰：“贫道本厌城隍喧湫，兼烦于招谢。弟子母病，可就此为加持也。”妇人复再三泣请，且言母病亟，不可举扶，智圆亦哀而许之。乃言从此向北二十余里，至一村，村侧近有鲁家庄，但访韦十娘所居也。





The Monk and the Woman

At the time of the story Zheng Yuqing was the prefect of Liang Prefecture. In the prefectural capital was a Buddhist temple called Rising Dragon. Its abbot, Monk Zhiyuan, was renowned for his mastery of incantations that could cure all sorts of nameless diseases caused by evil spirits and there was always a crowd of patients waiting at his door to see him. However, as his years advanced, he became tired of such hustle and bustle. Out of deep reverence, Zheng had a thatched cottage built for him, as the monk had wished, on a plot of vacant land to the east of the city, where he retired with a neophyte and a servant.

One balmy day years later, Zhiyuan was sitting in the sun trimming his toenails when a pretty woman in plain clothes appeared at his gate and bowed.

“Pity an unlucky woman!” she sobbed. “My husband has passed away, leaving me with an infant child, and now my elderly mother is critically ill. I hear Your Reverence excels at magic incantations. Please come to see her.”

“I’ve retired from an active life and no longer make house calls. If your mother is ill, you can bring her here and let me see if I can help her.”

The woman pleaded again and again with torrents of tears. She insisted that her mother was too ill to move, or to be moved. Taking pity on her conditions, he finally agreed to make a call.

She said she lived in a small hamlet called Lujia which was adja-

智圆诘朝，如言行二十余里，历访不得，乃还。明日，妇人复至，僧责曰：“贫道昨日远赴约，何差谬如此？”妇人言：“只去师所止处二三里耳。师慈悲，必为再往。”僧怒曰：“老僧衰暮，今誓不出。”妇人乃大声言：“慈悲何在耶？今事须去。”因上阶牵僧臂，僧惊迫，亦疑其非人，恍惚以小刀刺之，妇人遂倒，乃沙弥误中刀，流血死矣。僧遽与行者瘞于饭瓮下。

沙弥本村人，家去兰若十余里。其日，家人悉₁在田，有人皂衣褐襪，乞浆于田中，且说其事。沙弥父母，举家号哭，诣僧，僧犹给焉。其父及锹索而获，即诉于官。郑公大骇，俾求盗吏细按，意其必冤也。僧具陈状，复白：





cent to a larger village some six miles to the north. Once there, he may ask for the tenth daughter of the Weis.

Following her directions, Zhiyuan went north the next morning but, despite his efforts, he was unable to find her place.

"I trekked so many futile miles yesterday," the monk complained when the woman reappeared the following day. "Why did you give me the wrong directions?"

"It was no more than a mile away from where you had been," the woman replied. "As benevolent as you are, you must come again."

"I'm old and feeble," he said angrily. "I'm not going to make that trip again!"

"Then how can you claim to be benevolent?" she bawled out. "You must go!" She stepped forth and grabbed his arm.

Surprised by such offensiveness, he wondered if she was human at all. In panic, he stabbed with the trimming knife. The woman fell and he saw blood gushing out from a cut in his neophyte, who soon bled to death. With the help of his servant he buried the neophyte under the large kitchen vat.

The neophyte was a local, whose family lived only a couple of miles away. That day they were working in the fields when a man clad in a dark coat and a grayish headwear stopped by and begged for a drink of water. While he drank he talked about the death of the neophyte. The parents and family relatives wept and wailed their way to the monk's cottage. At first Zhiyuan denied, but the neophyte's father went to dig beneath the vat and discovered the corpse. The monk was brought before the authorities.

The prefect was shocked with disbelief. Certain that the monk was wronged, he told the officer in charge to make a careful investigation. However, Zhiyuan owned up to the crime and pleaded

“贫道宿债，有死而已。”按者亦以死论。僧求假七日命，持念，为将来资粮。余庆哀而许之。

僧沐浴设坛，急印契缚爆，考其魅。凡三夕，妇人见于坛上，言：“我类不少，所求食处，辄为师破除。沙弥且在，能为誓不持念，必相还也。”智圆恳为设誓，妇人喜曰：“沙弥在城南某村古丘中。”僧言于官吏，如其言寻之，沙弥果在，神已痴矣。发沙弥棺中，乃一苕帚也。僧自是绝其术。





guilty. "It must have been a debt I owed in a previous life," he said. "It can only be repaid by giving up this one."

The officer also thought that nothing but a death penalty was fitting.

The monk begged for an extension of seven days so that he could have time to hold a ritual and pray for a better afterlife. Feeling sorry for him, the prefect granted him his request.

After bathing piously, the monk set up an altar and printed magic spells to capture the evil spirit. On the third evening, the woman appeared before the altar. She confessed that she was bent on vengeance because the monk had ruined the livelihood of her and her like, which were large in number. The neophyte was all right. If the monk could pledge that he would never again resort to those incantations, she would return the neophyte to life. Zhiyuan made a promise.

"Your neophyte is in an ancient tomb in a village south of the city," she beamed with unconcealed delight.

The monk reported to the officer, who followed the lead and found the neophyte, in a stupor though. Then they opened up the neophyte's coffin and found nothing more than a broom inside.

Thereafter Zhiyuan abstained from invoking magic powers.



居延部落主

周静帝初，居延部落主勃都骨低，凌暴，奢逸好乐，居处甚盛。忽有人数十至门，一人先投刺曰：“省名部落主成多受。”因趋入。骨低问曰：“何故省名部落？”多受曰：“某等数人各殊，名字皆不别造。有姓马者，姓皮者，姓鹿者，姓熊者，姓獐者，姓卫者，姓班者，然皆名受。唯某帅名多受耳。”骨低曰：“君等悉似伶官，有何所解？”多受曰：“晓弄碗珠，性不爱俗，言皆经义。”骨低大喜曰：“目所未睹。”有一优即前曰：“某等肚饥，腊腊怡怡，皮漫绕身三匝。主人食若不充，开口终当不





The Tribal Chief of Juyan

During the reign of Emperor Jingdi of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, Juyan, an important outpost in the Northwest Corridor, was controlled by a tyrannical tribal chief called Bodu Gudi who led a sumptuous and sensual life.

One day, dozens of strangers arrived at the gate of his grand mansion. Their leader sent in a card, introducing himself as Phil More Chambers, Chief of Namesake Tribe. Bodu invited them in and asked why the tribe was called by such a funny name.

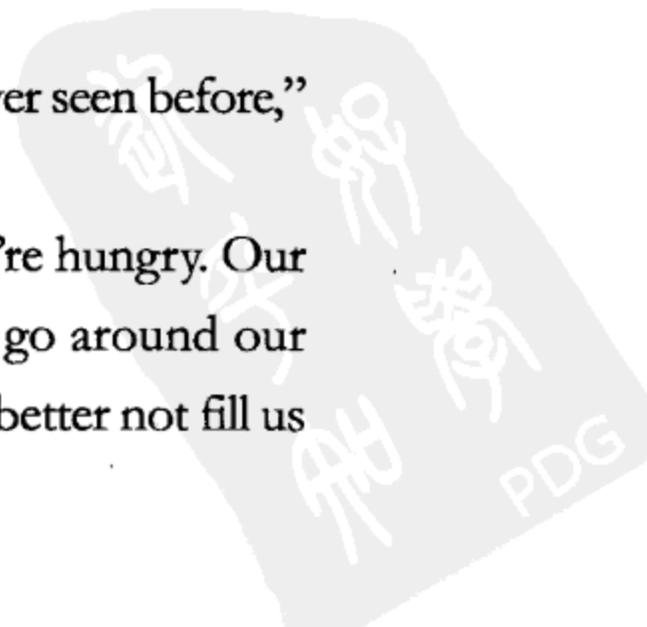
“That’s because we share our first name,” Chambers replied. “Since we came from different origins, we bear different family names, such as Horse, Deer, Bear, Riverdeer, Donkey, Tiger, Hide, and so on. Therefore it’s unnecessary to give each a different first name. We’re all called Phil,¹⁴ except me the chief. I’ve got a middle name More.”

“Your family names make it sound like a whole circus. Are you good at performing?”

“We can do plate-spinning, somersaults with bowls piled on the head, and all the usual tricks, but we like creative work and embellish our shows with witticism.”

“I certainly would like to watch some tricks I’ve never seen before,” said Bodu eagerly.

One of the Phils stepped forward and said, “We’re hungry. Our bowels are tied in knots; the skin on our bellies can go around our waist three times. If my lord cannot let us have our fill, better not fill us at all.”





舍。”骨低悦，更命加食。一人曰：“某请弄大小相成，终始相生。”于是长人吞短人，肥人吞瘦人，相吞残两人。长者又曰：“请作终始相生耳。”于是吐下一人，吐者又吐一人，递相吐出，人数复足。骨低甚惊，因重赐赆遣之。

明日又至，戏弄如初。连翩半月，骨低颇烦，不能设食。诸伶皆怒曰：“主人当以某等为幻术，请借郎君娘子试之。”于是持骨低儿女弟妹甥侄妻妾等，吞之于腹中。腹中皆啼呼请命。骨低惶怖，降阶顿首，哀乞亲属。伶者皆笑曰：“此无伤，不足忧。”即吐出之。亲属完全如初。

骨低深怒，欲用衅杀之，因令密访之，见至一古宅基而灭。骨低令掘之，深数尺，于瓦砾下得一大木槛，中有皮袋数千。槛旁有谷麦，触即为灰。槛中得竹简书，文字





Bodu was fascinated and he told his servants to bring them more food.

Another Phil stood up and said, "We'll show you a trick called the Sequence of Size and the Order of Life." So saying, the taller ones swallowed the shorter ones, the stouter gorged down the thinner till only two of the group were left. Then the tall one said, "Now, the Order of Life." So he disgorged a shorter one, and the shorter one in turn spewed out an even shorter one until all of the group reappeared.

Shocked by its sinisterness, Bodu hurriedly sent them away with a handsome tip. But the next day they were at his gate again, and played the same old trick. So they did every day for a fortnight. Bodu became very upset and could no longer afford to satiate their tremendous appetite.

They were offended. "If you take our great performance as nothing but magic," they bellowed, "we can prove it on your wife and children." They grabbed his sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, wife and concubines, and swallowed them all. Muffled cries and pleadings could be heard from their stomachs. Bodu was helpless. He descended the steps and bowed apologetically, begging for the lives of his family and relatives. The performers laughed, "No harm will be done to them. Don't be so alarmed." And they disgorged them intact.

Bodu was furious and murder sprang up in his mind. He had them shadowed to the ruins of an ancient building where they disappeared. He then ordered his men to dig up the site. Several feet beneath the rubble they came upon a big wooden crate in which there were several thousand leather bags. Beside the crate was a store of wheat grain, which turned into dust at the slightest touch. A bundle of



磨灭，不可识。唯隐隐似有三数字，若是“陵”字。骨低知是诸袋为怪，欲举出焚之。诸袋因号呼槛中曰：“某等无命，寻合化灭。缘李都尉留水银在此，故得且存。某等即都尉李少卿般粮袋，屋崩平压，绵历岁月，今已有命，见为居延山神收作伶人，伏乞存情于神，不相残毁。自此不敢复扰高居矣。”骨低利其水银，尽焚诸袋。无不为冤楚声，血流漂洒。

焚讫，骨低房廊户牖，悉为冤痛之音，如焚袋时，月余日不止。其年，骨低举家病死。周岁，无复子遗。水银后亦失所在。





bamboo slips were also found in the crate, but the words on them had long since faded. He could only make out a few, one of which was the word "Ling." It suddenly dawned on him that the performers were but the apparition of the bag spirits. He was about to have them hauled out and burned when the bags cried out in the crate, "We were not destined for longevity, and should have decayed long ago if it were not for the quicksilver General Li Ling¹⁵ stored here with us. It's the quicksilver that preserved us. We are the general's grain bags. The storehouse collapsed and buried us here for centuries, so long that we've gained lives of our own. The god of Juyan Mountain has adopted us as his performers. With respect to the mountain god, please spare our lives. We'll not bother Your Highness with our presence any longer."

But Bodu had his mind on the mercury. The bags were set to flames. Moans and wails filled the air and blood stained the ground. For months afterward, every pivot and hinge in his house would let out a groan or shriek on each turning.

Before the end of the year, all the Bodus had succumbed to a fatal illness of some kind. Within a year, none survived to preserve the family line. The mercury also mysteriously disappeared.



虢国夫人

长安有一贫僧，衣甚褴褛。卖一小猿，会人言，可以驰使。虢国夫人闻之，遽命僧至宅。僧既至，夫人见之，问其由。僧曰：“本住西蜀，居山二十余年。偶群猿过，遗下此小猿，怜悯收养。才半载以来，此小猿识人意，又会人言语，随指顾，无不应人使用，实不异一弟子耳。僧今昨至城郭。资用颇乏，无计保借得此小猿，故鬻之于市。”夫人曰：“今与僧束帛，可留此猿，我当养之。”僧乃感谢，留猿而去。其小猿旦夕在夫人左右，夫人甚爱怜之。

后半载，杨贵妃遗夫人芝草，夫人唤小猿令看玩。小猿对夫人面前倒地，化为一小儿，容貌端妍，年可十四五。夫人甚怪，呵而问之。小儿曰：“我本姓袁。卖我僧昔在蜀山中。我偶随父入山采药，居林下三年，我父常以





Lady Guoguo's Pet

A shabby monk was selling a young ape in the capital, Chang'an. It could understand what one said and even run errands. Intrigued by the report, Lady Guoguo, elder sister of Emperor Xuanzong's most favorite concubine Lady Yang, summoned the monk to her palace and questioned him about the ape.

"I lived in the mountains of western Shu for more than twenty years," the monk said. "Once, a group of apes passed by and left a baby ape behind. I pitied it and took it home to raise. In half a year, it was able to understand me and follow my instructions, and it became as good as a neophyte to me. When I arrived in the capital a few days ago, I found myself pinched and strapped. I'm afraid I have to part with this little thing just to bring in some money."

"I'll give you a bolt of silk," said Lady Guoguo. "Leave me the ape. I'll take care of it."

The monk went away gratefully.

The little ape followed Lady Guoguo around the house from dawn to dusk, which gave her much delight. It happened that later in the year her sister Lady Yang dropped in with a gift of glossy ganoderma. To show her sister her new pet, Lady Guoguo sent for the ape, but to her surprise, it rolled over on the floor and became a handsome boy in his early teens. She asked sternly what he was up to.

"My family name is Yuan,"¹⁶ the boy said. "My father is a herbalist. He took me into the mountains and there we lived for three years. He



药苗啖我。忽一日，自不觉变身为猿。我父惧而弃我，所以被此僧收养，而至于夫人宅。我虽前日口不能言，我心中之事，略不遗忘也。自受恩育，甚欲述怀抱于夫人，恨不能言。每至深夜，唯自泣下。今不期却变人身，即不测尊意如何？”

夫人奇之，遂命衣以锦衣，侍从随后，常秘密其事。又三年，小儿容貌甚美，贵妃曾屡顾之。复恐人见夺，因不令出，别安于小室。小儿唯嗜药物，夫人以侍婢常供饲药食。忽一日，小儿与此侍婢，俱化为猿。夫人怪异，令人射杀之，其小儿乃木人耳。





used to feed me on herbs, and one morning I found myself changed into an ape. My father was appalled and he abandoned me. Later, I was picked up and raised by a monk living in the mountains. That's the man who sold me and that's how I ended up in your palace. Although I wasn't able to speak, my head is clear and I remember things well. You treated me kindly and I've always wanted to tell you how grateful I am. I hated my dumbness and often shed silent tears at night. Today, heaven knows why, I'm back in human form again. What would Your Ladyship do with me?"

Lady Guoguo was fascinated. She dressed him in expensive clothes and kept him at her side. He became her secret.

In another three years, the boy grew into a handsome young man. And even Lady Yang had come more than once to pay him visits. Afraid that others might be jealous, Lady Guoguo allocated a separate courtyard to him in her palace and would not let him beyond the gate. The young man loved to eat herbs of various kinds and a maid was assigned to take special care of that need. Then one day, both the young man and the maid turned into apes. Horrified, Lady Guoguo had archers come to shoot them dead. The young man turned out to be a wood figure.





岑 顺

汝南岑顺字孝伯，少好学有文，老大尤精武略。旅于陕州，贫无第宅。其外族吕氏，有山宅，将废之，顺请居焉。人有劝者，顺曰：“天命有常，何所惧耳。”卒居之。

后岁余，顺常独坐书阁下，虽家人莫得入。夜中闻鼓鼙之声，不知所来，及出户则无闻。而独喜，自负之，以为石勒之祥也。祝之曰：“此必阴兵助我。若然，当示我以富贵期。”

数夕后，梦一人被甲胄，前报曰：“金象将军使我语岑君。军城夜警，有喧诤者。蒙君见嘉，敢不敬命。君甚





The Kingdom of Golden Elephant

Now getting older, Cen Shun, a learned man from Runan County, became deeply absorbed in war strategy. Too poor, however, to afford a house of his own, he moved to Shan Prefecture to live with his maternal relatives. They had an abandoned cottage on the hill behind the village in which he persuaded them to let him take up his quarters.

“I’m not afraid of ghosts, because one’s fate is always predestined,” was his answer to those who tried to dissuade him.

There he resided for a year, and had developed a habit of sitting alone by the window in his study. He would not let anyone, even his relatives, come to disturb him. For a few nights he had caught the faint sounds of drums and bugles. Though he could not figure out the source, he discovered that as soon as he walked out of his study into the yard, the sound stopped. He was very much excited, cherishing high hopes that it must be an auspicious omen to have a nether legion privately in his support. If a great fortune is in store for me, he prayed, let there be some sign.

A few days afterward, he dreamed of a man in armor approaching him, saying, “The King of Golden Elephant has dispatched me to bring Your Excellency the following message: As war is imminent, we have been making a lot of noise during the nights. We do appreciate your tolerance and the interest you show in our affairs, in that you have won our respect. You have good fortunes ahead. Watch out for it. Yet, for one with lofty ambitions, I wonder if you would stoop to assist a



有厚禄，幸自爱也。既负壮志，能猥顾小国乎？今敌国犯垒，侧席委贤，钦味芳声，愿执旌钺。”顺谢曰：“将军天质英明，师真以律。猥烦德音，屈顾疵贱。然犬马之志，惟欲用之。”使者复命。

顺忽然而寤，恍若自失，坐而思梦之征。俄然鼓角四起，声愈振厉。顺整巾下床，再拜祝之。须臾，户牖风生，帷帘飞扬，灯下忽有数百铁骑，飞驰左右，悉高数寸，而被坚执锐，星散遍地。倏闪之间，云阵四合。顺惊骇，定神气以观之。须臾，有卒赍书云：“将军传檄。”顺受之。云：“地连獯虏，戎马不息。向数十年，将老兵穷，姿霜卧甲。天设勍敌，势不可止。明公养素畜德，进业及时。屡承嘉音，愿托神契。然明公阳官，固当享大禄于圣世，今小国安敢望之？缘天那国北山贼合从，克日会





miniature kingdom like mine. In face of an immediate invasion, I beg you to take command. We will follow your orders and I will be your servant.”

“I am much honored,” he replied courteously, “but His Lordship is a wise man himself. He knows best the guiding rules of truth. Please convey my deepest gratitude to him for deigning to seek opinions from such a humble man as myself. If in any way my martial knowledge may be of help to His Lordship, I will not hesitate to apply it.” With this promise, the envoy retreated.

Suddenly, he woke up. So confused was he that he sat long in his bed trying to figure out the implications of the dream. Soon, drums and bugles were heard again. The noise grew deafening. He slid off his bed, straightened his robe, and bowed in prayers.

A wind picked up, flapping the curtains and bamboo drapes. In the lamplight suddenly appeared hundreds of heavily armored cavalymen several inches tall dashing across the floor. In a short while, they arrayed themselves into battle formations. Amazed, he held his breath and watched. Soon, a messenger came up with a scroll in hand, saying that the king had a letter for him. He spread it open and read, “Our territory unfortunately borders upon aggressive neighbors. They have forced us to bear arms for decades on end. My generals have lost their youth and my soldiers their households. Though we are tired of wearing armor through the four seasons of the year, heaven has set us against unrelenting and ever recurring enemies. Your Excellency being learned and cultured, we have benefited from your timely and frequent advice. We hope your blessings will bring us good luck. Your Excellency is a man of great prospects in the living world. We would not dare to have you involved if it were not for the joint invasion by the Kingdom of Beyond-Horizon and the North-Mountain Bandits. The



战。事图子夜，否灭未期，良用惶骇。”顺谢之，室中益烛，坐观其变。

夜半后，鼓角四发。先是东面壁下有鼠穴，化为城门。垒敌崔嵬，三奏金革，四门出兵，连旗万计，风驰云走，两皆列阵。其东壁下是天那军，西壁下金象军，部后各定。军师进曰：“天马斜飞度三止，上将横行系四方。辘车直入无回翔，六甲次第不乖行。”王曰：“善。”于是鼓之，两军俱有一马，斜去三尺止。又鼓之，各有一步卒，横行一尺。又鼓之，车进。如是鼓渐急而各出，物包矢石乱交。须臾之间，天那军大败奔溃，杀伤涂地。王单马南驰，数百人投西南隅，仅而免焉。先是西南有药，王栖白中，化为城堡。金象军大振，收其甲卒，舆尸横地。





decisive battle is to take place at midnight tonight. The outcome is unpredictable. But if the worst should come, let me die.”

He made an acknowledgment and brought out more candles to light up the room. Then he sat down to wait.

Midnight came. Drums and bugles flared up. First, the rat hole at the foot of the eastern wall became the gate-tower of a fortified town. After three cheers, formidable troops poured out from the four gates. Innumerable banners and colors flashed around as troops maneuvered into position. Finally, two distinct battle formations were formed. By the eastern wall was the army of Beyond-Horizon, by the western wall the army of Golden Elephant. A figure, who must be the chief-of-staff of Golden Elephant, said to the king:

“Across columns three the divine horse flies oblique;
Within the square the king moves horizontally.
The chariot dashes straight ahead with no return;
One by one the six pawns march forward orderly.”

“Good,” the king said. The drums boomed. Each side had a horse that moved obliquely over three feet. After another round of drums, a pawn from each side moved one foot across. Then with another round of drums, the chariots dashed forth. The booming of drums became more and more urgent. Every element in the forces was put into action. Arrows and projectiles flew across the field. Before long, the Beyond-Horizon troops took to their heels, leaving their wounded and dead behind. Their king fled south alone. Hundreds of the Beyond-Horizon army ran toward the southwest corner and surrendered themselves to save their skin. There had been a stone mortar for pounding herbs in the southwest corner of the room, in which the king of Golden Elephant had taken up positions. Now it was transformed into a castle. The Golden Elephant army was exhilarated. The

顺俯伏观之，于时一骑至禁，颁曰：“阴阳有厝，得之者昌。亭亭天威，风驱连激，一阵而胜。明公以为何如？”顺曰：“将军英贯白日，乘天用时，窃窥神化灵文，不胜庆快。”如是数日会战，胜败不常。王神貌伟然，雄姿罕俦，宴饌珍筵与顺，致宝贝明珠珠玑无限。顺遂荣于其中，所欲皆备焉。后遂与亲朋稍绝，闲间不出。

家人异之，莫究其由。而顺颜色憔悴，为鬼气所中。亲戚共意有异，诘之不言。因饮以醇醪，醉而究泄之。其亲人僭备锹锸，因顺如厕而隔之。荷锸乱作，以掘室内，八九尺忽坎陷，是古墓也。墓有砖堂，其盟器悉多，甲冑数百。前有金床戏局，列马满枰，皆金铜成形，其干戈之





enemy soldiers were rounded up. Broken chariots strewed the ground. As he bent low to observe, a mounted messenger from the king rode up to him and proclaimed, “*Yin and yang* have their ways. Those who master them will thrive. With the blessings of providence, we have smashed the enemies at one stroke. What does Your Excellency think?”

“Bright as the shining sun,” he replied, “His Lordship knows how to exploit time and space. I am most pleased to have been an observer to the show of his military wonder.”

The military campaigns did not end in one day, and there were many victories and defeats.

The king had an unusual air of dignity and pride. He was taller and sturdier than the others. He invited Cen to feasts of rare and most delicious dishes and gave him innumerable gifts of gold and pearls. Cen had whatever he desired, and was quite content to be one of them.

Thus he lived, hardly setting foot outside his room, and renouncing the company of his relatives. Though they became very suspicious, they could in no way put their finger on what was happening. One thing they were certain about was that he grew pale and haggard as if his spirit had been fogged by the devil. They agreed that something must have gone wrong, but he always held his tongue whenever asked.

One day they got him drunk and he gave away his secret. His relatives came to his cottage with hidden spades and picks. When he happened to go to the outhouse, they barred the door and started to poke around and dig up the floor. Reaching down eight or nine feet, the ground caved into an ancient tomb. It was a brick-lined tomb. Among the numerous funerary objects were hundreds of suits of armor. In front of the suits, there stood a table on which a chessboard was

事备矣。乃悟军师之词，乃象戏行马之势也。既而焚之，遂平其地，多得宝贝，皆墓内所畜者。顺阅之，恍然而醒，乃大吐，自此充悦。宅亦不复凶矣。时宝应元年也。





laid out with the chess pieces in position — all gold. That was the wars, and it suddenly occurred to them that what the chief-of-staff had spoken was the guiding rules of elephant chess.¹⁷ Then they burned down the grave and filled up the pit.

Cen was awakened by the discovery. He felt a tightness in his stomach as he thought of the delicious food he had enjoyed, and vomited violently. The treasure they retrieved from the tomb provided him with an easy life through his remaining years, and the cottage was no longer haunted.

All this happened in the first year of Baoying reign.





士人甲

晋元帝世，有甲者，衣冠族姓，暴病亡。见人将上天，诣司命，司命更推校，算历未尽，不应枉召。主者发遣令还。

甲尤脚痛，不能行，无缘得归。主者数人共愁，相谓曰：“甲若卒以脚痛不能归，我等坐枉人之罪。”遂相率具白司命。司命思之良久，曰：“适新召胡人康乙者，在西门外，此人当遂死。其脚甚健，易之，彼此无损。”主者承敕出，将易之。胡形体甚丑，脚殊可恶，甲终不肯。主者曰：“君若不易，便长决留此耳。”不获已，遂听之。主者令二并闭目。倏忽，二人脚已各易矣。仍即遣之。





Gentleman A

During the reign of the first emperor of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, there was a Gentleman A of a noble clan who died of a sudden illness and was brought to the celestial court. As the heavenly judge reviewed his case, it was discovered that his life span was not yet completed; it was a mistake to have summoned him. The prosecutors were told to send him back, but he had hurt his feet on his way there; the pain was so sharp he was unable to stand on his feet, much less walk all the way home. The prosecutors were annoyed. "If he can't go home," they said to each other, "and should die here because of his foot trouble, we would be accused of a miscarriage of justice." So they turned to the judge for advice. After lengthy contemplation, the judge at last hit upon an idea and said, "We've just summoned a barbarian named Kang B. Right now he's waiting outside the western gate, and he's destined to die this very moment. He has a pair of good strong feet. Why not have them exchange theirs? Neither will suffer a loss by this."

The prosecutors retreated from the hall, very pleased with the idea. They told A to prepare himself for the swap, but the barbarian looked so ugly, his feet in particular, that A objected.

"If you don't," threatened the prosecutors, "you'll be confined here forever."

Seeing no alternative, he finally consented.

The prosecutors told the two of them to shut their eyes. Straight away, their feet were switched. Without delay A was dispatched home,

豁然复生，具为家人说。发视，果是胡脚，丛毛连结，且胡臭。甲本土，爱玩手足。而忽得此，了不欲见。虽获更活，每惆怅，殆欲如死。旁人见识此胡者，死犹未殡，家近在茄子浦。甲亲往视胡尸，果见其脚著胡体，正当殡敛，对之泣。胡儿并有至性，每节朔，儿并悲思，驰往，抱甲脚号咷。忽行路相逢，便攀援啼哭。为此每出入时，恒令人守门，以防胡子。终身憎秽，未尝误视，虽三伏盛暑，必复重衣，无暂露也。





where he came back to life. He told his family what had happened, and as they lifted his coverings, they did discover a pair of barbarian feet, hairy and smelly.

As a gentleman, he had taken particular care of his hands and feet. Now that he had acquired such a pair of feet, he felt too ashamed even to glance at them. The fact that he regained his life could not console him for his loss of pride. He lived like the dead.

Someone who knew the barbarian told him that the man lived nearby Eggplant Bend and was not buried yet. So A went in person to have a look at the corpse. Indeed, it was his feet that were on the dead man's body. He cried over the pair of feet which had once been his, while people dressed and placed the corpse into the coffin.

The barbarian turned out to have a very filial son. On the first day of each new month, and on every festival, he would ride over to A's place, clasp his father's feet and wail for hours. Even if they met on the road, he would cling to A and make a show of tears. Therefore, A had to place a guard at his gate to fend off the young man.

All through the rest of his life, his abhorrence of his feet never abated, and on no account would he let his eyes wander in their direction. Even on the hottest days of high summer he would don layers of clothes so his feet would not be exposed to light.



贾 偶

汉建安中，南阳贾偶字文合，得病而亡。时有吏将诣太山，司命阅簿，谓吏曰：“当召某郡文合，何以召此人？可速遣之。”

时日暮，遂至郭外树下宿，见一少女子独行，文合问曰：“子类衣冠，何乃徒步？姓字为谁？”女曰：“某三河人，父见为弋阳令。昨被召而来，今得却还。遇日暮，惧获瓜田李下之讥。望君之容，必是贤者，是以停留，依冯左右。”文合曰：“悦子之心，愿交欢于今夕。”女曰：“闻之诸姑，女子以贞专为德，洁白为称。”文合反复与言，终无动志。天明各去。





A Chance Meeting in Limbo

During mid Jian'an reign of the Han Dynasty there was a man named Jia Ou in Nanyang Prefecture who died of an illness — a nether courier had come to bring him to Mount Tai, where all souls return. The nether judge fumbled through his records but could not match them with Jia's dates and address. Finally he turned to the courier and scolded him for fetching the wrong person — it must be a namesake from another prefecture, and the one he snatched should be immediately released.

As the day was already getting dark when he was escorted out of the town gate, Jia decided to spend the night under a big tree. Soon he saw a lone maiden hurrying along the path. "Who is it over there?" he called out as she approached. "Judging from your elegant appearance and fine clothes, you ought to belong to the high class. How come you're trudging on foot? May I have the honor of knowing your name?"

"I'm a native of Sanhe County. My father is the magistrate of Yiyang County and I was summoned here yesterday, but today they told me to go back. I know, a prudent young woman should shun the company of men to avoid rumors, but as I see you're a gentleman and it's getting late, I hope you won't mind my staying with you under this tree."

"I have a liking for you. Why don't we make love?"

"My aunts told me that the virtue of a maiden lies in her chastity,



文合卒已再宿，停丧将殓，视其面有色，扪心下稍温，少顷却苏。文合欲验其事，遂至弋阳，修刺谒令，因问曰：“君女宁卒而却苏耶？”具说女子姿质服色，言语相反复本末。令人问女，所言皆同。初大惊叹，竟以女配文合焉。





and her name cannot afford to be stained.”

In spite of his coaxing and pleading, she did not give in. At day-break they went on their respective ways.

Jia had been dead for two days and was laid out on the bier ready to be coffined. His family then discovered that color was returning to his face and, placing a hand over his heart, they felt his body warming. In a while, he came around.

Intending to check out whether his nether experience had been real, he made a trip to Yiyang County and requested an interview with the magistrate.

“Has Your Excellency’s daughter just recovered from death?” he asked, substantiating his bluntness with a careful description of her looks and dress, and the conversation they had. The magistrate went in to question his daughter and received a similar account. After the initial shock, the magistrate consented to their marriage.





刘氏子妻

刘氏子者，少任侠，有胆气，常客游楚州淮阴县，交游多市井恶少。邻人王氏有女，求聘之，王氏不许。后数岁，因饥，遂从戎。

数年后，役罢，再游楚乡，与旧友相遇，甚欢。常恣游骋，昼事弋猎，夕会狹邪。因出郭十余里，见一坏墓，棺柩暴露。归而合饮酒。时将夏夜，暴雨初止。众人戏曰：“谁能以物送至坏冢棺上者？”刘秉酒恃气曰：“我能之。”众曰：“若审能之，明日，众置一筵，以赏其事。”乃取一砖，同会人列名于上，令生持去，余人饮而待之。生独行，夜半至墓。月初上，如有物蹲踞棺上，谕





The Corpse on the Coffin

The young son of the Lius was a daring tough who had spent most of his adulthood in Huaiyin County associating with the town thugs. Once, he took a fancy to the daughter of the Wangs, his next-door neighbor. But when he asked for her hand, he was flatly turned down.

Things went on uneventfully for a few years. Then famine struck the land, forcing him to enlist in the army in order to get daily rations. When he was demobilized several years later, he returned to Huaiyin County to seek out his old pals. Together, they roamed the country, hunting during the day and carousing through the night.

It was a warm summer night and a storm had just rolled past. As the gang sat drinking, someone casually suggested a bet on anyone who dared to go at that late hour to the nameless grave which they had come across during the day's hunting. It was a dilapidated tomb three or four miles out of town and part of the coffin was exposed.

Emboldened by wine, Liu offered to go. The gang hoorayed and promised to throw a banquet in his honor if he had the guts to do it. To prove his accomplishment, he had to place a brick on the coffin, on which each of them carved his name. Liu strode out into the night as the group went on with their drinking.

It was near midnight when he reached the tomb. The moon had just risen over the horizon, revealing the silhouette of a figure crouching on the coffin. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. It was a woman



视之，乃一死妇人也。生舍砖于棺，背负此尸而归。

众方欢语，忽闻生推门，如负重之声。门开，直入灯前，置尸于地。卓然而立，面施粉黛，髻发半披。一座绝倒，亦有奔走藏伏者。生曰：“此我妻也。”遂拥尸致床同寝。众人惊惧。

至四更，忽觉口鼻微微有气。诊视之，即已苏矣。问所以，乃王氏之女，因暴疾亡，不知何由至此。未明，生取水，与之洗面濯手，整钗髻，疾已平复。乃闻邻里相谓云：“王氏女将嫁暴卒，未殓。昨夜因雷，遂失其尸。”生乃以告王氏。王氏悲喜，乃嫁生焉。众咸叹其冥契，亦伏生之不惧也。





corpse. He slapped the brick on the coffin lid, picked up the body, and carried it on his back.

The gang was still in a noisy revel when they heard a heavy thump against the door. The door flew open and Liu came straight into the lamplight and stood the corpse upright. There she stood, her face powdered pale and her hair hanging loose. The throng was stunned, some even dashed for cover. "She shall be my wife," Liu announced as he carried the corpse over to the bed and lay down beside it. The mob was glued to the ground.

When the cock crowed, Liu imagined that the corpse was breathing faintly. Taking her pulse, he realized that she was coming to. Soon she was able to talk and he learned that she was none other than the daughter of the Wangs. She seemed confused to find herself in such company. For all she remembered, she died of a sudden attack of illness. Liu fetched water to wash her face and helped her make up her hair, and soon she was fully recovered.

It was now broad daylight outside. People in the streets were excitedly talking about the missing corpse of Wang's daughter, who had died of a sudden illness on the verge of her marriage. The corpse, laid out on the bier for final services, was lost during last night's thunderstorm.

Liu went over to tell the Wangs about what had happened. The news swept away their sorrows and they ungrudgingly allowed him to marry their daughter.

If that was not a predestined marriage bond, it must have been a reward for his bravery.

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PDG

圆 观

圆观者，大历末，洛阳惠林寺僧。能事田园，富有粟帛。梵学之外，音律贯通。时人以富僧为名，而莫知所自也。李谏议源，公卿之子，当天宝之际，以游宴歌酒为务。父愷居守，陷于贼中。乃脱粟布衣，止于惠林寺，悉将家业为寺公财。寺人日给一器食一杯饮而已，不置仆使，绝其知闻。唯与圆观为忘言交，促膝静话，自旦及昏。时人以清浊不伦，颇招讥诮。如此三十年。

二公一旦约游蜀州，抵青城峨嵋，同访道求药。圆观欲游长安，出斜谷；李公欲上荆州，出三峡。争此两途，





The Two Friends¹⁸

In late Dali reign, living in Wisdom Woods Temple in the East Capital, Luoyang, was a monk named Yuanguan, a versatile man. Besides being a scholar of the Buddhist scriptures, he was also versed in music and farming. The practicality of the latter yielded much grain and silk and earned him the nickname “rich monk.” Nevertheless, nobody really knew where he was from.

Also living in the temple was a layman named Li Yuan, son of a Court official. In his youth he was known as a man-about-town, wallowing through drinking bouts and all-night parties. But after his father was taken prisoner and killed by the rebellious army of An Lushan and Shi Siming while defending the city, he swore off silk and delicacies for rough cloth and plain food, and, as an assertion of will, donated his entire family property to the temple in return for mere shelter and board. Like a recluse, he severed himself from all contact with the outside world, keeping no servants, not even a handmaid. Yuanguan was his only friend, and they would chat through the day over a cup of tea. Though to many it seemed an unlikely mixture, their friendship stretched over three decades.

Then one day they decided to make a journey to Shu.

Together, they visited the sacred religious sites in the Qingcheng and Emei Mountains in quest of the ultimate Way and the magic art of refining longevity pills. After that, Yuanguan intended to travel north via the Xiagu Pass to the West Capital, Chang’an, while Li suggested going east down the Yangtze River through the Three Gorges to



半年未决。李公曰：“吾已绝世事，岂取途两京？”圆观曰：“行固不由人，请出从三峡而去。”遂自荆江上峡。

行次南泊，维舟山下。见妇女数人，幄达锦铛，负瓮而汲。圆观望而泣下曰：“某不欲至此，恐见其妇人也。”李公惊问曰：“自此峡来，此徒不少，何独泣此数人？”圆观曰：“其中孕妇姓王者，是某托身之所。逾三载，尚未娩怀，以某未来之故也。今既见矣，即命有所归。释氏所谓循环也。”谓公曰：“请假以符咒，遣某速生。少驻行舟，葬某山下。浴儿三日，亦访临。若相顾一笑，即其认公也。更后十二年，中秋月夜，杭州天竺寺外，与公相见之期也。”李公遂悔此行，为之一恸。遂召





Jingzhou. Half a year passed and they still could not agree on which route to take.

“After shunning official circles for so many years, I don’t feel like going to the capital again,” Li insisted.

“All right, one’s way is always predestined,” Yuanguan finally gave in with a sigh. “Let’s take the Three Gorges.”

Down through the Gorges they sailed. Mooring at the foot of a mountain one evening, they saw a group of women with tinkling bracelets and earrings filling their water jars at the riverside.

“I told you I didn’t want to come this way, because I don’t want to meet these women,” Yuanguan mumbled with trickling tears.

Startled by his friend’s sudden burst of emotion, Li asked in concern, “What’s the matter? On our way through the Gorges we’ve encountered many women like these. What’s so special about this group that makes you cry?”

“Among them is a pregnant one of the Wang family. The baby in her stomach is my soul’s next residence. She has been in a family way for three years now without giving birth. You know why? Because I haven’t arrived. Once I see her, my present life is ended. That’s what we call the transmigration of the soul. Better pray for me and wish me an easy and quick passage. You may also do me a favor by staying here a few days longer and see to it that my discarded body is properly buried, won’t you? Three days after the child is born, you can pay the family a visit. If the newborn should give you a big smile, that would be me showing recognition. Twelve years from now, on the full-moon night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, we shall have a chance to cross paths in front of Tianzhu Temple in Hangzhou City.”

Choked with remorse for having been so insistent, Li bade his friend a tearful farewell. Then he called the pregnant woman over and



妇人，告以方书。其妇人喜跃还家。顷之，亲族毕至，以枯鱼酒献于水滨。李公往为授朱字，圆观具汤沐，新其衣装。是夕，圆观亡而孕妇产矣。李公三日往观新儿，襁褓就明，果致一笑。李公泣下，具告于王。王乃多出家财，厚葬圆观。明日，李公回棹，言归惠林，询问观家，方知已有理命。

后十二年秋八月，直诣余杭，赴其所约。时天竺寺，山雨初晴，月色满川，无处寻访。忽闻葛洪川畔，有牧竖歌竹枝词者，乘牛叩角，双髻短衣，俄至寺前，乃圆观也。李公就谒曰：“观公健否？”却问李公曰：“真信士矣。与公殊途，慎勿相近。俗缘未尽，但愿勤修。勤修不堕，即遂相见。”李公以无由叙话，望之潸然。圆观又唱竹枝，步步前去。山长水远，尚闻歌声，词切韵高，莫知所谓。初到寺前歌曰：“三生石上旧精魂，赏月吟风不要论。惭愧情人远相访，此身虽异性长存。”又歌曰：“身前身后事茫茫，欲话因缘恐断肠。吴越溪山寻已遍，却回烟棹上瞿塘。”后三年李公拜谏议大夫。二年亡。





gave her a prescription for smooth delivery. She held it to her bosom and went joyfully home. Shortly, her whole family gathered at the riverside to offer an oblation of dried fish and wine.

Yuanguan bathed and changed into new clothes. That very night, he passed away and the pregnant woman gave birth.

Three days later Li went to visit the family. Holding the infant to the window, he saw the baby smile at him. Tears welled up in his eyes as he told the Wangs of Yuanguan's reincarnation. The family then provided for a decent burial.

Next day, Li started on a return trip to Wisdom Woods Temple. When he announced Yuanguan's death, he learned that Yuanguan had written a will predicting his death.

It was the eighth lunar month twelve years later. Li had traveled over half the country to Hangzhou to fulfill his appointment. A shower had washed the hills and a full autumn moon was shedding its silvery light over Tianzhu Temple and the slopes. He was just wondering where he could find Yuanguan when he caught a soft tune floating over from the dale. A buffalo appeared around the hill and a boy in a short coat whose hair was combed into double buns was singing on its back, beating time on the horns. As the boy approached, Li thought he could distinguish certain features of Yuanguan. He stepped forth and greeted, "How have you been doing, Master?"

"What a faithful man!" remarked the buffalo boy, avoiding a direct answer. "Don't come too close to me, for we now live in different realms and your mortal life is not yet over. Keep cultivating your moral character and never let it slip. In that way, the day will come when we can meet again, person to person."

Seeing it was impossible to strike up a conversation, Li saluted his former friend with tearful eyes. The boy picked up his song as he turned around the bend of the hill, his tune trailing in the crystal air.

李邕

刘晏判官李邕，庄在高陵。庄客欠租课，积五六年。邕因罢归庄，方将责之，见仓库盈美，输尚未毕。邕怪问。悉曰：“某久为盗，近开一古冢，冢西去庄十里，极高。入松林二百步，方至墓。墓侧有碑，断倒草中，字磨灭不可读。初旁掘数十丈，遇一石门，锢以铁汁。累日洋粪沃之，方开。开时，箭出如雨，射杀数人。众惧欲出。某审无他，必设机耳，乃令投石其中。每投，箭辄出。投十余石，箭不复发。因列炬而入。至开重门，有木





An Ancient Tomb

Li Miao, a government official, had a manor house on the high ground. His tenants were half a dozen years behind in their land rent, but being away from home, he did not have the time to deal with them till his term of office expired and he returned to his farm, ready to press for the delayed rent.

On arriving home, he was surprised to find that all his store-rooms were richly filled, and yet the tenants were still carrying loads of produce into the yard. His curiosity aroused, he asked for an explanation.

“For years,” a tenant told him, “we’ve lived by plundering. Not long ago we opened up an ancient tomb about three miles west of our village. It lies amidst a grove of pine trees about four hundred yards across and has a magnificent mound. There is an inscribed stele by the mound, but having collapsed into the wild grass, the words on it are illegible. We started by digging a slant tunnel. About a hundred yards down we came upon a stone door sealed with melted iron. For several days we kept it drenched with steaming-hot stool wastes until it was finally corroded.

“As it opened, arrows shot out like rain, killing several of my comrades on the spot. Frightened, those who survived thought of quitting. I fancied that it could not be the work of spirits but rather some mechanism. So I told them to throw stones into the open doorway. Every throw, at first, invited a shower of arrows, but after a dozen times no more arrows came out. With lighted torches we cautiously

人数十，张目运剑，又伤数人。众以棒击之，兵仗悉落。四壁各画兵卫之像。南壁有大漆棺，悬以铁索，其下金玉珠玕堆积。众惧，未即掠之。棺两角忽飒飒风起，有沙扑人面。须臾风甚，沙出如注，遂没至髀。众惊恐退走，比出，门已塞矣，一人复为沙埋死。乃同酹地谢之，誓不发冢。”

《水经》言越王句践都琅玕，欲移尤常冢。冢中生风，飞沙射人，人不得近，遂止。按汉旧仪，将作营陵之内方丈，外设伏弩伏火弓矢与沙。盖古制有此机也。





entered the grave. There was a second door. Upon its opening, scores of wooden figures goggled their eyes and brandished their swords, wounding some more of us. We fought them with clubs and fended off their weapons. Only then were we able to look around. On all four sides, the walls were painted with warriors as if they were the owner's honor guard. Against the southern wall lay a big lacquered coffin suspended on chains. Below the coffin were heaps of pearls, jade ware, and gold pieces. As we were not yet recovered from the shock we experienced, we hesitated. All of a sudden, a wind sprang up from the sides of the coffin, whirling sand into our faces. The wind rose with momentum, sand came down in sheets and in less than no time immersed our knees. We fled for dear life, and by the time we managed to get out, the doorway was clogged with sand. Another comrade was buried alive. To atone for our profanity, we made a libation and vowed that we would never again break into graves."

*

According to the book *Water Systems and Local Life*, the king of Yue once attempted to move his father's grave, but had to give up because of the wind-borne sand. There are also written records from the Han Dynasty that when the civil engineers constructed a tomb, they would have such devices as arrows, bows, fire and sand built into the underground chambers. So, this was an ancient tradition.





陈鸾凤

唐元和中，有陈鸾凤者，海康人也。负气义，不畏鬼神，乡党咸呼为后来周处。海康者，有雷公庙，邑人虔洁祭祀。祷祝既淫，妖妄亦作。邑人每岁闻新雷日，记某甲子。一旬复值斯日，百工不敢动作。犯者不信宿必震死，其应如响。时海康大旱，邑人祷而无应。鸾凤大怒曰：“我之乡，乃雷乡也。为神不福，况受人奠酹如斯，稼穡既焦，陂池已涸，牲牢殫尽，焉用庙为！”遂秉炬焚之。

其风俗，不得以黄鱼彘肉，相和食之，亦必震死。是日，鸾凤持竹炭刀，于野田中，以所忌物相和啖之，将有所伺。果怪云生，恶风起，迅雷急雨震之。鸾凤乃以刃上





The Rain Master

In Yuanhe reign there was a man called Chen Luanfeng in Haikang County, Canton. He was a bold man, who neither feared ghosts nor respected deities, but in the eyes of the locals he was once looked upon as a hooligan.

Haikang boasted of a temple to the thunder god, which the local folks revered and were diligent in their sacrificial rituals. But the more you prayed to it, the more you were bounded. For example, people had to remember the Heavenly Stem of the day on which the first thunder of the year crashed, and throughout the year all work had to cease whenever it fell on that particular Heavenly Stem in the ten-day cycle. Should anyone try to work on that day, he would be hit by thunder in a day or two, for death was as certain as an echo.

One year, Haikang was suffering a terrible drought. People prayed and prayed at the temple but no rain fell. Luanfeng was enraged. "Our county is the home of the thunder god. Since he has received so many gifts from us, how can he ignore our pleas?! Our crops are scorched, our ponds are dried, and our farm animals are all sacrificed. What use is this temple?" He took a torch and burned down the temple.

As was prohibited by local customs, pork could not be eaten together with fish. Should anyone do that, he would be struck dead by thunder. That day Luanfeng took a machete and went to an open field where he savored a dish of cooked pork and fish and then stood waiting. Soon ugly clouds gathered in the distance and a boisterous



挥，果中雷左股而断。雷堕地，状类熊猪，毛角，肉翼青色，手执短柄刚石斧，流血注然，云雨尽灭。鸾凤知雷无神，遂驰赴家，告其血属曰：“吾断雷之股矣，请观之。”亲爱愕骇，共往视之，果见雷折股而已。又持刀欲断其颈，啗其肉。为群众共执之曰：“霆是天上灵物，尔为下界庸人。辄害雷公，必我一乡受祸。”众捉衣袂，使鸾凤奋击不得。逡巡，复有云雷，裹其伤者，和断股而去。沛然云雨，自午及酉，涸苗皆立矣。遂被长幼共斥之，不许还舍。于是持刀行二十里，诣舅兄家，及夜，又遭霆震，天火焚其室。复持刀立于庭，雷终不能害。旋有人告其舅兄向来事，又为逐出。复往僧室，亦为霆震，焚





wind sprang up. A storm broke over him. He wielded his machete above his head and, as it happened, slashed off the left leg of the thunder god. A thing fell to the ground. It was like a cross between a pig and a bear, with a pair of hairy horns, fleshy wings, a dark body, and a short-handled stone axe in each hand. Blood poured out from its wound, and the storm immediately ceased. The thunder god was vulnerable! Luanfeng rushed home to spread the news and invited his kinsfolk to go and see with their own eyes. People were shocked and terrified. They went over and saw that the thunder god had really lost a leg. Luanfeng raised his machete to cut its throat and suggested they eat its meat.

People held him back. "Don't!" they beseeched. "The thunder god is a celestial deity and you're but an earthly mortal. Should you kill it, our whole clan would be punished." They grabbed him by the sleeves and arms so that he was unable to make the final hit.

Moments later, another storm approached and swept up the wounded one and its severed leg. A good rain fell from noontime till dusk and the crops were quenched.

Now the whole clan, from the old to the young, were reluctant to keep his company, and they drove him out of the village. Unable to return home, he, with his machete, went to his wife's elder brother's place seven miles away.

That night, thunder raged. Lightning hit and lit up the room in which he was staying. He went out and stood in the courtyard with his machete. Thunder boomed but didn't strike. Someone then informed his wife's brother about his doing and he was driven out again. This time he went to stay in a temple, and like what happened the night before, thunder followed and burned down the room.

Nowhere to turn to, the following night he took a torch and

蒸如前。知无容身处，乃夜秉炬，入于乳穴嵌孔之处，后雷不复能震矣，三暝然后返舍。

自后海康每有旱，邑人即醮金与鸾凤，请依前调二物食之，持刀如前，皆有云雨滂沱，终不能震。如此二十余年，俗号鸾凤为雨师。至大和中，刺史林绪知其事，召至州，诘其端倪。鸾凤云：“少壮之时，心如铁石。鬼神雷电，视之若无当者。愿杀一身，请苏万姓，即上玄焉能使雷鬼敢骋其凶臆也！”遂献其刀于绪，厚酬其直。





went to hide among the stalagmites in a calcific cave where thunderbolts could not find and strike him. Three nights later he went home.

From then on, every time Haikang was suffering a drought people would chip in to buy pork and fish for him and beg him to eat the two things together and wield his machete in an open field; and every time a good rain would fall. The thunder god never dared to challenge him again. Twenty years of such miraculous potency won him the nickname Rain Master.

In Taihe reign his fame even reached the prefect, who summoned him to the prefectural office for an interview. "When I was young," he told the prefect, "my heart was as staunch as iron. I was not afraid of anything, neither ghosts nor deities, thunder or lightning. As I was ready to give up my own life to save the lives of thousands, I guess heaven wouldn't allow any being to hurt such a person." He offered his machete to the prefect, who gave him a handsome reward in return.





侯 适

隋开皇初，广都孝廉侯适入城。至剑门外，忽见四广石，皆大如斗。适爱之，收藏于书笼，负之以驴。因歇鞍取看，皆化为金。适至城货之，得钱百万，市美妾十余人，大开第宅，又近甸置良田别墅。

后乘春景出游，尽载妓妾随从。下车，陈设酒肴。忽有一老翁，负大笈至，坐于席末。适怒而诟之，命苍头扶出。叟不动，亦不嗔恚，但引满啖炙而笑云：“吾比来，求君偿债耳。君昔将我金去，不记忆乎？”尽取适妓妾十余人，投之书笈，亦不觉笈中之窄，负之而趋，走若飞





The Lucky Stones

In the early days of the Sui Dynasty, Hou Yu, a young scholar of the Confucian school, set out from his native place in Shu to Chang'an, the capital. As he drew near a mountain pass called Sword Gate, he saw four lovely stones by the roadside, each the size of one's head. Being fascinated, he picked them up and placed them in his rattan bookcase on the donkey's back.

The first thing he thought of at his next stop was to take out the stones for further inspection. To his surprise, the stones had turned into gold ingots. He sold them in the capital for a good price. With that money he bought a dozen pretty girls, built a grand mansion and purchased rich farmlands in the suburbs.

One pleasant spring day he took all his mistresses and a train of servants with him for a picnic in the country. Food and wine were laid out when an elderly man with a big willow box seated himself at the other end of the rug. Enraged by this rudeness, he reproached the man and ordered the servants to drag him away. The old man did not budge, neither did he appear to be annoyed at all. He poured out wine for himself and grabbed thick slices of the roasted meat.

"I came," he laughed, "to collect the debt you owe me. You haven't forgotten about the gold ingots you took from me, have you?"

Thus speaking, he seized Hou's mistresses and threw them all into his box, which seemed to have an infinite capacity. Carrying the box on

鸟。通令苍头驰逐之，斯须已失所在。自后通家日贫，却复昔日生计。

十余年，却归蜀，到剑门，又见前者老翁，携所将之妾游行，宾从极多。见通皆大笑。问之不言；逼之，又失所在。访剑门前后，并无此人，竟不能测也。





his back, he scudded away as swiftly as a bird. The servants gave chase, but soon lost track of him.

After that, Hou's business declined till he became as poor as he had been before his acquisition of the lovely stones. After some ten years, he finally decided to return to his hometown. At Sword Gate, he was just in time to catch sight of the elderly man parading through the street with his former mistresses and a multitude of servants. They all laughed at him, and none answered his questions. When he tried to stop them, they simply vanished.

In spite of his dogged search in and around the area, no one seemed to have ever heard of such an old man.



吕生

大历中，有吕生者，自会稽上虞尉调集于京师，既而侨居永崇里。尝一夕，与其友数辈会食于其室，食毕，将就寝。俄有一姬，容服洁白，长二尺许，出于室之北隅，缓步而来，其状极异。众视之，相目以笑。其姬渐迫其榻，且语曰：“君有会，不能一命耶，何待吾之薄欤？”吕生叱之，遂退去。至北隅，乃亡所见。且惊且异，莫知其来也。明日，生独寤于室，又见其姬在北隅下，将前且退，惶然若有所惧。生又叱之，遂没。

明日，生默念曰：“是必怪也。今夕将至，若不除之，必为吾患不朝夕矣。”即命一剑置其榻下。是夕，果是北隅徐步而来，颜色不惧。至榻前，生以剑挥之。其姬





The Old Midget

In Dali reign, Mr Lü, a former official of Shangyu County, was staying in a rented house in Yongchong District of the capital. He had been recalled to Court for reassignment.

One evening he invited several friends over to his new residence. They had finished their dinner and were about to turn in when a very old woman, less than two feet tall, emerged from the foot of the northern wall. Her face was as pale as her spotless white dress. As she swaggered slowly forward, Lü and his friends could not help grinning at each other at this unusual sight. She approached Lü's couch and said, "Sir, since you're having a party, why didn't you send me an invitation? Am I to be so looked down upon?" At his rebuke, she retreated till she was lost in the northern wall. All were amazed, and no one could tell who she was.

The next evening Lü was at home by himself when he once again caught sight of the old midget at the foot of the northern wall. She seemed rather indecisive, as if she were afraid of something. He reproached her as he did the previous night and she disappeared without further ado.

She must be some kind of goblin, he thought in the morning, and it was most likely that she would come again at night. If he could not get rid of her once and for all, she would probably haunt him night after night. So he hid a sword under the mattress. As expected, she did walk out of the northern wall that night, seemingly more confident



忽上榻以臂搵生胸。余又跃于左右，举袂而舞。久之，又有一姬忽上榻，复以臂搵生。生遽觉一身尽凜然若霜被于体，生又以剑乱挥。俄有数姬，亦随而舞焉。生挥剑不已。又为十余姬，各长寸许，虽愈多而貌如一焉，皆不可辨，环走四垣。生惧甚，计不能出。中者一姬谓书生曰：“吾将合为一矣，君且观之。”言已，遂相望而来，俱至榻前，翕然而合，又为一姬，与始见者不异。生惧益甚，乃谓曰：“尔何怪？而敢如是挠生人耶！当疾去！不然，吾求方士，将以神术制汝，汝又安能为耶？”姬笑曰：“君言过矣。若有术士，吾愿见之。吾之来，戏君耳，非敢害也。幸君无惧，吾亦还其所矣。”言毕，遂退于北隅而没。

明日，生以事语于人。有田氏子者，善以符术除去怪魅，名闻长安中。见说喜跃曰：“是我事也，去之若爪一蚁耳。今夕愿往君舍，且伺焉。”

至夜，生与田氏子俱坐于室。未几而姬果来，至榻





than before. When she came within reach, he quickly pulled out his sword and made a swing at her. The old midget leaped onto his couch and smacked him on the chest. As she skipped and danced around him, another old dame sprang onto the couch and gave him one more stroke on the chest. He felt as if he were struck by frost. He wielded his sword frantically only to have more and more dames join in the dance. Their numbers increased with every futile stroke while their sizes shrank to an inch or less, each having exactly the same appearance. He could no longer tell which was the original one. Panic caught hold of him as he saw the little figures closing in on him. There was no escape! Just then, one of the miniatures spoke, "Behold sir, I'm going to merge back into one." So speaking, all the diminutive figures converged before his couch and massed into the old midget whom he had seen before.

"What kind of goblin are you?" he muttered in escalating fear. "How dare you harass a living person! Better leave me now, or I'll call in a sorcerer to subdue you with his magic arts. Then it'll be too late for you to regret."

"You're misplacing your confidence, sir," remarked the old dame with a sarcastic smile. "If such sorcerers as you believe do exist, I would certainly like to meet them. I was just having a little fun with you, with no intention of doing harm. Don't be alarmed. I'll leave you right now." So saying, she retreated into the northern wall.

The next day he related his experience to others. A Mr Tian, well known in the capital for his magic arts in expelling evil spirits, was delighted to hear of the story. "That's my business," he told Lü. "It's as easy as catching an ant. Tonight I'll go to your place and wait for her."

That night, Lü and Tian sat in the room waiting. Before long, the midget appeared and moved up to the couch they were sitting on.



前。田氏子叱曰：“魅疾去！”姬扬然其色不顾，左右徐步而来去者久之。谓田生曰：“非吾之所知也。”其姬忽挥其手，手堕于地，又为一姬甚小，跃而升榻，突入田生口中。田生惊曰：“吾死乎！”姬谓生曰：“吾比言不为君害，君不听。今田生之疾，果何如哉？然亦将成君之富耳。”言毕，又去。明日，有谓吕生者，宜于北隅发之，可见矣。生喜而归，命家僮于其所没穷焉，果不至丈，得一瓶，可受斛许，贮水银甚多。生方悟其姬乃水银精也。田生竟以寒栗而卒。





“Evil spirits off!” commanded Tian.

The old dame simply ignored him. Pacing indifferently before the couch, she slowly said to Tian, “You’re really disappointing!”

All of a sudden, she waved a hand. It snapped off and dropped to the ground, turning into a tiny old dame like herself. It hopped onto the couch, and before Tian had time to shut his shocked mouth, it jumped in and down his throat. “I’m finished!” cried Tian, gasping.

“I promised I wouldn’t hurt you,” reproached the old dame, “but you didn’t believe me. Now Tian is ill, can it be helped? However, you’ll profit by this.” So saying, she withdrew herself.

The next day he was advised to excavate the spot where the midget emerged so as to find and eradicate the source of evil. He appreciated that idea and directed his servants to dig and search. Ten feet down they discovered a big jar more than half filled with mercury. Only then did he realize that the old midget was a mercury spirit. Poor Tian died from that chill.





宝珠

咸阳岳寺后，有周武帝冠，其上缀冠珠，大如瑞梅，历代不以为宝。天后时，有士人过寺，见珠，戏而取之。天大热，至寺门易衣，以底裹珠，放金刚脚下，因忘收之。

翼日，便往扬州收债，途次陈留，宿于旅邸。夜闻胡斗宝，摄衣从而视之，因说冠上缀珠。诸胡大骇曰：“久知中国有此宝，方欲往求之。”士人言已遗之。胡等叹恨，告云：“若能至此，当有金帛相答。今往扬州，所债几何？”士人云：“五百千。”诸胡乃率五百千与之，令还





The Pearl

In Xianyang City there was a temple built to commemorate Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou Dynasty. Inlaid in the crown on the statue's head was a pearl of the size and shape of a spring plum. Generations of visitors had seen it there but no one seemed to have given it much thought.

During the reign of Empress Wu, a passing merchant dropped in at the temple. Taken by a whim, he plucked the pearl off the crown. As the day was growing warmer, he removed some clothes and, wrapping them around the pearl, he tucked the bundle beneath the huge foot of one of the four warrior statues at the gate. By the time he was leaving the temple he had clean forgotten the bundle, and the pearl as well. The very next day he went on to Yangzhou to collect some overdue debts.

Spending a night at an inn in a small town called Chenliu, he overheard a group of Persians next door bragging about the rare treasures they had seen in their life. Intrigued, he slipped on his clothes and went over to join them. For his part, he boasted of the plum-shaped pearl in Emperor Wudi's crown. The mere mention of the pearl silenced the group. They had long heard China harbored such a treasure, they told him, and as a matter of fact, had come to hunt for it. That he had lost it made them sigh and fret. If he could recover it, they said earnestly, they would load him with gold and silk. How much did he say those people in Yangzhou owed him? Five hundred thousand? They imme-



取珠。士人至金刚脚下，珠犹尚存，持还见胡，胡等喜抃。饮乐十余日，方始求市。因问士人，所求几何。士人极口求一千缗。胡大笑云：“何辱此珠！”与众定其价，作五万缗。群胡合钱市之。及邀士人，同往海上，观珠之价。

士人与之偕行东海上，大胡以银铛煎醍醐，又以金瓶盛珠，于醍醐中重煎。甫七日，有二老人及徒党数百人，赍持宝物，来至胡所求赎，故执不与。后数日，复持诸宝山积，云：“欲赎珠。”胡又不与。至三十余日，诸人散去。有二龙女，洁白端丽，投入珠瓶中，珠女合成膏。士人问：“所赎悉何人也？”胡云：“此珠是大宝，合有二龙





diately counted out the coins for him and asked him to go back right away to find the pearl.

The pearl was still safely tucked beneath the statue's foot. So happy were the Persians to lay their eyes on the pearl that they danced and drank for a whole fortnight before they asked the man to name a price.

"One million," the merchant said offhandedly, which he thought, though impossibly high, would gain him a good bargaining position.

The Persians almost split their sides with laughter. "You're insulting this pearl," they whooped. After a brief discussion among themselves, they offered him fifty million, which they pooled and handed over on the spot.

Then they invited the man to go with them to the sea and see for himself how much the pearl was actually worth.

They sailed out into the East Sea. A senior Persian, who seemed to be their leader, set up a silver pot on the deck, built a fire under it, and filled it with a creamy substance. Next he placed the pearl in a gold bottle and steeped the bottle in the simmering cream.

On the seventh day, two venerable-looking elders appeared with hundreds of attendants carrying a myriad of treasures, which they laid before the Persians to ransom the pearl, but their offer was flatly rejected.

Several days later, they arrived again, this time with mountains of jewelry, which the Persians ignored as before.

The stalemate lasted more than thirty days, and the treasure bearers finally withdrew themselves. Then, out of the sea emerged two charming white dragon virgins, who threw themselves into the gold bottle. Together with the pearl they melted into an ointment.

"Why were they so anxious to ransom the pearl?" asked the merchant in amazement.

"This pearl is the treasure of all treasures," replied the senior Persian,

女卫护。群龙惜女，故以诸宝来赎。我欲求度世，宁顾世间之富耶？”因以膏涂足，步行水上，舍舟而去。诸胡各言：“共买此珠，何为独专其利？卿既往矣，我将安归？”胡令以所煎醍醐涂船，当得便风还家。皆如其言。大胡竟不知所之。





“and it is guarded by the two dragon virgins you’ve just seen. The dragon king is so fond of his daughters that he would pay any price. But to me, worldly treasures are of little value. What I’m after is immortality.” So saying, he applied the ointment to the soles of his feet and jumped overboard. To everyone’s surprise, he walked away on the waves.

“We shared the price of the pearl,” the other Persians exploded in protest. “How can you reap all the benefit! Now that you’re leaving, what is to become of us?”

“Apply the cream to the hull of the boat,” the senior Persian shouted back, “and a favorable wind will send you all the way home.”

It turned out as he had said, but where he was heading remains a mystery.





瞻波异果

瞻波国有人牧牛百余头。有一牛离群，忽失所在，至暮方归，形色鸣吼异常。牛主异之。

明日遂独行，主因随之。入一穴，行五六里，豁然明朗，花木皆非人间所有。牛于一处食草，草不可识。有果作黄金色。牧牛人窃将还，为鬼所夺。又一日，复往取此果。至穴，鬼复欲夺。其人急吞之，身遂暴长。头才出，身塞于穴。数日化为石。





The Golden Berry

One day, a herdsman in India discovered that a cow was missing from his pasture, and when it rejoined the herd at dusk it looked rather spirited, even its mooing sounded somewhat different.

His curiosity aroused, the herdsman kept a close eye on the cow the next day, and saw it stray off again. He traced it into a deep cave. After a couple of miles in, the tunnel suddenly brightened up and a world of exotic trees and flowers greeted his eyes. The cow was grazing on a patch of unnamable grass bearing golden berries. He plucked some to bring home, but before he was able to leave the cave they were snatched away by some invisible demon.

On another trip to get the berries, the demon sprang for them again. In the flurry of the moment the herdsman threw one into his mouth and swallowed it. Instantly he felt his body expanding, so fast that he only had time to get his head out of the cave before his body choked the tunnel. In just a few days, he turned into stone.





卢虔

东洛有故宅，其堂奥轩级甚宏特，然居者多暴死，是以空而键之且久。故右散骑常侍万阳卢虔，贞元中为御史，分察东台，常欲贸其宅而止焉。或曰：“此宅有怪，不可居。”虔曰：“吾自能弭之。”

后一夕，虔与从吏同寝其堂，命仆使尽止于门外。从吏勇悍善射，于是执弓矢，坐前轩下。夜将深，闻有叩门者，从吏即问之。应声曰：“柳将军遣奉书于卢侍御。”虔不应。已而投一幅书轩下，字似濡笔而书者，点画纤然。虔命从吏视其字云：“吾家于此有年矣。堂奥轩级，皆吾之居也；门神户灵，皆吾之隶也。而君突入吾舍，岂





General Willie

There was a noble old house with spacious rooms, large windows and broad stone doorsteps in the East Capital, yet it had been unoccupied and locked up for many years because strange deaths would befall those who ventured to live in it.

In spite of friendly warnings that the house was haunted and not fit to live, Lu Qian, commissioner of the supervisory committee during Zhēnyuan reign, was thinking of buying it. He claimed that he could get rid of the evil spirits, if there were any at all. So, late one afternoon he moved in, bringing with him only one adjutant who was courageous and an accurate marksman. All the other servants were left outside.

The adjutant seated himself in the foyer facing the door and windows with a ready bow. The night advanced when suddenly a knock was heard on the door and he demanded who it was.

“General Willie sends a note of greeting to Commissioner Lu,” a voice answered.

As Lu didn't pick up the conversation, the creature dropped a slip of paper in through the window. The characters were slender and faint, as if written by licking a dry brush. Lu asked the adjutant to read it:

“I have been living here for many many years. The rooms, the steps and the whole courtyard all belong to me. The deities patronizing the doors and windows are all my subordinates. And now for no reason at all you are intruding upon my premises. How do you justify

其理耶?假令君有舍,吾入之,可乎?既不惧吾,宁不愧于心耶?君速去,勿招败亡之辱。”读既毕,其书飘然四散,若飞烬之状。俄又闻有言者:“柳将军愿见卢御史。”已而有大力至,身长数十寻,立庭,手执一瓢。其从吏即引满而发,中所执,其厉遂退,委其瓢。久之又来,俯轩而立,俛其首且窥焉,貌甚异。从吏又射之,中其胸,厉惊,若有惧,遂东向而去。

至明,虔命穷其迹,至宅东隙地,见柳高百余尺,有一矢贯其上,所谓柳将军也。虔伐其薪,自此其宅居者无恙。后岁余,因重构堂室,于屋瓦下得一瓢,长约丈余,有矢贯其柄,即将军所执之瓢也。





yourself? Suppose you have a house and I should force my presence onto you. Would you like that? You may not be afraid of me, but aren't you ashamed of your deeds? Better leave immediately, or you'll bring disaster upon yourself." As soon as it was read, the paper decomposed like ashes.

Presently a voice spoke out again, "General Willie would like to speak to Commissioner Lu in person." Then a monster many times the height of an ordinary man appeared in the courtyard, holding in one hand what looked like a long ladle. The adjutant drew his bow to its full and let fly an arrow. It must have hit the object, for the monster dropped it to the ground and backed away.

Before long it approached again, stooping over the house to peep into the window. It had a strange look. The adjutant shot again, this time hitting the creature in the torso. That seemed to have taken it by surprise and daunted it, for it retreated toward the east.

Soon after daybreak Lu ordered his servants to look for traces, which led them to a vacant lot east of the house. There stood a hundred-foot-tall willow tree with an arrow sticking out of its trunk. So, that was the so-called General Willie. Lu had it chopped down into firewood and the house became habitable again.

In the following year while the house was under renovation, a dried bottle-gourd about ten feet long with an arrow through its neck was found beneath the tiles among the rafters.



光化寺客

兖州徂徕山寺曰光化。客有习儒业者，坚志栖焉。夏日凉天，因阅壁画于廊序。忽逢白衣美女，年十五六，姿貌绝异。客询其来，笑而应曰：“家在山前。”客心知山前无是子，亦未疑妖。但心以殊尤，贪其观视。且挑且悦，因诱致于室，交欢结义，情款甚密。白衣曰：“幸不以村野见鄙，誓当永奉恩顾。然今晚须去，复来则可以别矣。”客因留连，百端遍尽，而终不可。素宝白玉指环，因以遗之曰：“幸视此，可以速还。”因送行。白衣





The Lily

Far away from worldly hustle and bustle, up on Culai Mountain was a Buddhist temple named Guanghua. Once, a young man of the Confucian school took up residence there to concentrate on his books, brushing up for the imperial examination.

One cool summer day while he was perusing the murals on the temple walls, he bumped into a beautiful girl in pure white about sixteen years of age.

“Never seen you around here,” he said admiringly. “Are you from afar?”

“No. I live just down the hill,” she smiled back.

The answer amused him, for he knew there was no such girl living there, and yet that didn’t set off an alarm in his mind. Her features were too appealing, and he felt the urge. What with teasing and what with seriousness, he led her to his room. Before long, they became glued to each other.

“I appreciate it very much that you didn’t treat me like a low-bred country lass,” she cooed. “I swear I’ll be at your service for the rest of my life, but tonight I must leave. Next time I come, I’ll be able to live with you forever.”

Though he exhausted his gift of scholarly eloquence to make her stay, it seemed she could not be swayed. He took off the white jade ring he was wearing and handed it to her. “Hope this ring will remind you to return soon,” he said.

曰：“恐家人接迎，愿且回去。”客即上寺门楼，隐身目送。白衣行计百步许，奄然不见。

客乃识其灭处，径寻究。寺前舒平数里，纤木细草，毫发无隐，履历详熟，曾无踪迹。暮将回，草中见百合苗一枝，白花绝伟。客因刷之，根本如拱，瑰异不类常者。及归，乃启其重付，百叠既尽，白玉指环，宛在其内。乃惊叹悔恨，恍惚成病，一旬而毙。





At the gate of the temple compound, she insisted that they part. "No further, dear. My parents may come at any moment to meet me."

He then ascended the gate-tower and hid behind a pillar to see where she was heading. After having walked a hundred steps or so, she suddenly disappeared off the face of the earth. He made a mental mark of the place and traced her steps.

The temple lay on a stretch of flat incline. The young trees and tender grass could not hide anything. He paced the distance many times but could not make out how she could have vanished altogether.

Night was descending and he was about to give up when he noticed a remarkably beautiful white lily among the grass and he pulled the plant out. Unlike ordinary lilies, its corm was large and perfectly round. Back in his room he peeled open the layer and layer of clustered leaves, which disclosed in their grip the white jade ring he had just given the girl!

How surprised he was! And how he hated himself for destroying the flower! He dropped into a trance and died in less than a fortnight.





李靖

唐卫国公李靖，微时，尝射猎灵山中，寓食山中。村翁奇其为人，每丰馈焉，岁久益厚。忽遇群鹿，乃逐之。会暮，欲舍之不能。俄而阴晦迷路，茫然不知所归，怅怅而行，因闷益甚。极目有灯光，因驰赴焉。

既至，乃朱门大第，墙宇甚峻。扣门久之，一人出问。靖告迷道，且请寓宿。人曰：“郎君已出，独太夫人在，宿应不可。”靖曰：“试为咨白。”乃入告，复出曰：“夫人初欲不许，且以阴黑，客又言迷，不可不作主人。”邀入厅中。有顷，一青衣出曰：“夫人来。”年可





Li Jing the Demigod

When Li Jing, a celebrated general and strategist in the early days of the Tang Dynasty, was still an unknown figure living in obscurity, hunting trips into Mount Ling was his favorite pastime. On such trips he used to put up at a certain mountain village. His elderly host, who seemed to have perceived something unusual in him, treated him with great respect, and that respect grew as their acquaintance developed.

Once, Li spotted a herd of deer which he chased and traced until he lost both the herd and his way in the thickening darkness. Dispirited, he gave the reins to his horse and wondered where he might spend the night.

A light appeared in the distance. He spurred his steed and came into sight of a grand mansion enclosed with high walls and broad, red double gates. He knocked and a long while passed before someone answered. He explained that he was lost and asked for permission to stay the night. It might be improper, the servant said, for his masters were out and only Her Ladyship, the dowager, and womenfolk were home. Li begged him to convey his appeal to the dowager and see what she would say.

Presently, the servant returned. She didn't like to have strangers in the house, especially at night, but considering his situation, she thought it better to host him.

Li was shown into the reception hall. A maid came in to announce the presence of the dowager. The lady was in her fifties, wear-



五十余，青裙素襦，神气清雅，宛若士大夫家。靖前拜之，夫人答拜曰：“儿子皆不在，不合奉留。今天色阴晦，归路又迷。此若不容，遣将何适？然此乃山野之居，儿子还时，或夜到而喧，勿以为惧。”既而食，颇鲜美，然多鱼。食毕，夫人入宅。二青衣送床席褥褥，衾被香洁，皆极铺陈，闭户系之而去。

靖独念山野之外，夜到而闹者何物也？惧不敢寝，端坐听之。夜将半，闻扣门声甚急，又闻一人应之。曰：“天符。报大郎子当行雨，周此山七百里，五更须足。无慢滞，无暴厉。”应者受符入呈。闻夫人曰：“儿子二人未归，行雨符到，固辞不可，违时见责。纵使报之，亦以晚矣。僮仆无任专之理，当如之何？”一小青衣曰：“适观





ing a cloud-white blouse over a sea-blue gown. She carried an air of nobility as if she were not a village dame but a lady of aristocratic birth. Li stepped forth and bowed.

She curtseyed in return. "You must understand, sir, that it's inadvisable to invite a man in while my sons are away. But as you've strayed to our place at this late hour, it's inappropriate to deny you shelter. Hope you won't mind the coarseness of our mountain life. If you do hear some commotion at night, don't be alarmed. That'll be my sons coming home."

Dinner was served. The food was excellent, with many fish courses. It was quite unusual for alpine fare.

After dinner, the dowager retired to her quarters and Li was led by two maids to a guestroom. The room was stately and the bedding clean. Having made the bed, they withdrew and shut the door behind them.

Li, however, was unable to sleep. In this remote mountain village, who would make a fanfare returning home at night? He sat bolt upright with ears pricked.

Approaching midnight, urgent knocks were heard at the gate and someone responded. "Heavenly mandate!" another voice blared. "Big son, immediately produce rain in the two hundred mile area around this mountain till four o'clock in the morn. No delay, no deluge!"

A servant must have passed on the billet, for Li heard the dowager say, "It couldn't have come at a worse moment. Neither son is home yet. Even if messengers were dispatched right away, they would not be able to return in time. Any negligence of duty or delay of action would be reprimanded, and it certainly is inappropriate to have a servant execute the heavenly mandate by proxy. What shall we do now?"

"The guest we entertained this evening seemed to have some ex-



厅中客，非常人也。盍请乎？”夫人喜。因自扣其门曰：

“郎觉否？请暂出相见。”靖曰：“诺。”遂下阶见之。夫人曰：“此非人宅，乃龙宫也。妾长男赴东海婚礼，小男送妹。适奉天符，次当行雨，计两处云程，合逾万里。报之不及，求代又难，辄欲奉烦顷刻间。如何？”靖曰：“靖俗人，非乘云者，奈何能行雨？有方可教，即唯命耳。”夫人曰：“苟从吾言，无有不可也。”遂敕黄头，鞞青骢马来。又命取雨器，乃一小瓶子，系于鞍前。戒曰：“郎乘马，无勒衔勒，信其行。马跑地嘶鸣，即取瓶水中水一滴，滴马鬃上。慎勿多也。”

于是上马腾腾而行，倏忽渐高，但讶其隐疾，不自知其云上也。风急如箭，雷霆起于步下，于是随所跃，辄滴之。既而电掣云开，下见所憩村。思曰：“吾扰此村多





traordinary traits. Perhaps we can ask him to do it." It sounded like a maid's voice.

It seemed that the idea appealed to the dowager, for she came in person and tapped on his door. "Are you awake, sir? Can I have a word with you?"

Li responded and came out.

"You might have realized that ours is not a human abode. As a matter of fact, you are in a dragon palace. My elder son has gone to the East Sea to attend a wedding ceremony and my younger son is escorting his sister to her husband's. Just now we received a heavenly mandate to produce rain. As both sons are thousands of air-miles away, it's impossible to call them back in time, and what's more, I can't find a gentleman surrogate. I wonder if I can enlist your immediate assistance."

"I'm just an ordinary man. I can't ride the clouds. How can I produce rain? But, if Your Ladyship can teach me how, I'm at your service."

"I'll tell you what to do. It's not as difficult as you think." She ordered the groom to saddle the piebald and fetch the rain-producer, which turned out to be a fairly small bottle. Hanging the bottle on the pommel, she said, "Ride this horse. Just give it a free rein. When it paws and neighs, pour out a drop from the bottle onto its mane. Remember, one drop is enough."

He mounted and the piebald cantered off. Not realizing that he was already on the clouds, he wondered at the smoothness of the ride. High winds whistled like arrows; thunderbolts flashed from beneath the hoofs. He poured out a drop wherever the horse indicated. All of a sudden, the clouds split apart and he saw right below him the village where he used to sojourn. For years, the villagers there had been very



矣，方德其人，计无以报。今久旱，苗稼将悴，而雨在我手，宁复惜之？”顾一滴不足濡，乃连下二十滴。

俄顷雨毕，骑马复归。夫人者泣于厅曰：“何相误之甚！本约一滴，何私下二十尺之雨？此一滴，乃地上一尺雨也。此村夜半，平地水深二丈，岂复有人？妾已受谴，杖八十矣。”但视其背，血痕满焉。“儿子亦连坐，奈何？”靖惭怖，不知所对。夫人复曰：“郎君世间人，不识云雨之变，诚不敢恨。只恐龙师来寻，有所惊恐，宜速去此。然而劳烦，未有以报。山居无物，有二奴奉赠，总取亦可，取一亦可，唯意所择。”于是命二奴出来。一奴从东廊出，仪貌和悦，怡怡然；一奴从西廊出，愤气勃然，拗怒而立。靖曰：“我猎徒，以斗猛事。今但取一奴，而取悦者，人以我为怯也。”因曰：“两人皆取则不敢。夫人





nice to him and he had been torn by the thought that he was not in a position to repay their hospitality. Now that he was in charge of rain and their crops were scorched by a severe drought, why should he grudge giving them a little extra? What was one tiny drop of water to such thirst? So he sprinkled out twenty drops.

In a while his job was done and he trotted back triumphantly.

The dowager met him at the hall with teary eyes. "Why did you let me down? I told you one drop would be enough. How could you have acted on your own and meted out twenty! One drop from this bottle means a foot of rain on the ground. You made a flood of twenty feet in the dead of the night. Do you think anyone can survive that? I've already been punished. Look, eighty lashes across my back!" Blood was oozing through the back of her blouse. "My sons were punished, too," she sighed.

He was too ashamed to mumble out a reply.

"You're only mortal and have no idea how heavenly things work. I don't blame you, but I'm afraid my sons won't be so happy to see you here. Better leave now. However, since I've requested your service, I'm not going to send you away empty-handed. Though we don't have treasures hoarded in this mountain residence, I may offer you two slaves. You can take both, or pick one as you please."

At her beckoning, two slaves emerged. One stepped forth from the east chamber, beaming amiably; the other stalked out from the west chamber, his face dark with anger. To take both is certainly impolite, he reasoned with himself. I'm a hunter and take pride in physical strength. If I should choose the amiable one, people would laugh behind my back, ridiculing me as chicken-hearted. So he said, "Thank you, ma'am. One would be enough. If I can choose, I'll take the angry fellow."

既赐，欲取怒者。”夫人微笑曰：“郎之所欲乃尔。”遂揖与别，奴亦随去。出门数步，回望失宅，顾问其奴，亦不见矣，独寻路而归。及明，望其村，水已极目，大树或露梢而已，不复有人。

其后竟以兵权静寇难，功盖天下，而终不及于相，岂非取奴之不得乎？世言关东出相，关西出将，岂东西喻邪？所以言奴者，亦下之象。向使二奴皆取，即极将相矣。





“He is yours,” said the dowager with an elusive smile.

He made his farewell and left with the slave. Several steps out of the gate, he glanced back. The mansion and walls were all gone. He swirled round to question the slave, and the slave had vanished too.

By dawn, he managed his way back to where the village once stood. A vast expanse of water greeted his eyes, only the tops of a few big trees remained above surface. No one could have survived.

Later, Li became a seasoned general and helped the new emperor quell many revolts and border incidents. His feats were unsurpassed, and yet, he never reached the position of prime minister. Isn't it because he didn't pick the right slave? A popular saying has it that prime ministers are born in the more cultured east, while great generals arise from the rougher west. Isn't that what the chambers imply? “Slave,” too, can be suggestive, symbolizing loyal service to His Majesty. What if he had taken both slaves? Could his career have been reshaped?



释玄照

释玄照修道于嵩山白鹤谷，操行精悫，冠于缙流。常愿讲《法华经》千遍，以利于人。既讲于山中，虽冱寒酷热，山林险邃，而来者恒满讲席焉。

时有三叟，眉须皓白，容状瑰异，虔心谛听。如此累日。玄照异之。忽一旦，晨谒玄照曰：“弟子龙也，各有所任，亦颇劳苦，已历数千百年矣。得闻法力，无以为报，或长老指使，愿效微力。”玄照曰：“今愆阳经时，国内荒馑，可致甘泽，以救生灵，即贫道所愿也。”三叟曰：“召云致雨，固是细事。但雨禁绝重，不奉命擅行，诛责非细，身首为忧也。试说一计，庶几可矣。长老能行





The Three Dragon Disciples

Living in the White Magpie Valley of Mount Song was a Buddhist monk whose religious name was Xuanzhao, a man of high character and great learning. It was his lifetime ambition to preach the saddharmapundarika sutra one thousand times. And despite the fact that his temple was deep in the mountains, the halls were always packed on lecture days, no matter whether it was in broiling summer or freezing winter. Among the audience he had noticed three old men with unusual looks, their flowing beards and thick eyebrows all silvery white. They came day after day to the lectures and were very attentive.

One morning, the three approached him. "To be frank with Your Reverence, we're dragons," they said. "Each of us is responsible for a large region. That's a very demanding task, and we've been doing that for centuries and centuries. Now we'd like to thank you for enlightening us to the Buddhist sutra and would like to do something for you in return."

"We've been suffering a long period of dry weather; the crops are parched and people are starving. A good rain can save many lives. I'd appreciate it if you can produce some rain."

"That's exactly what we're good at, but the time and amount of rain are strictly controlled by His Almighty. The consequence of unauthorized rains could be serious and it may cost us our heads. But we have an idea that might work. Would Your Reverence like to listen?"

"Please say it," Xuanzhao said.

之乎？”玄照曰：“愿闻其说。”三叟曰：“少室山孙思邈处士道高德重，必能脱弟子之祸，则雨可立致矣。”玄照曰：“贫道知孙处士之在山也，而不知其所行，又何若此邪？”三叟曰：“孙公之仁，不可诊度，着千金翼方，惠利济于万代，名已籍于帝宫，诚为贵真也。如一言救庇，当保无恙。但长老先与之约，如其许诺，即便奉依。”即以拯护之方，授于玄照。

玄照诣思邈所居，恳诚祗谒，情礼甚谨。坐定久之，乃曰：“处士以贤哲之度，济拔为心，今者亢阳，寸苗不植，嗷嗷百姓，焦枯若此，仁哲之用，固在于今。幸一开恩，以救危歉。”思邈曰：“仆之无堪，遁弃山野，以何功力，济于人也？苟有可施，固无所吝。”玄照曰：“贫道昨遇三龙，令其致雨。皆云，不奉上帝之命，擅行雨者，诛罪非轻。唯处士德尊功大，救之则免。特布腹心，仰希裁度。”思邈曰：“但可施设，仆无所惜。”玄照曰：





“There is a venerable hermit, Sun Simiao,¹⁹ living in Shaoshi Mountain. If he promises to save us, we can produce rain immediately.”

“I know Mr Sun lives in this mountain, but I didn’t know he has such power. How is it that he can save you?”

“Why! His benevolence is immeasurable! As generation after generation will benefit from his book, *A Golden Collection of a Thousand Prescriptions*, his name is registered in heaven and he has a very prestigious position there. If he could put in a good word for us, we would be safe. So, we’d like Your Reverence to secure his help in advance. If he gives his word, we’ll carry out your wish without delay.” And then they told Xuanzhao about their plan.

Xuanzhao went to the hermit’s place, very respectful in manner.

“Sir,” he said after they were seated, “a drought is raging and laying waste the fields. People are starving and dying. As wise and benevolent a man as you are, it’s time to do something. It’d be most charitable if you can take action to alleviate the situation.”

“I’m old and useless,” the hermit replied. “That’s why I’m taking refuge in the mountains. How can I relieve a drought? Of course, if I could, I certainly wouldn’t grudge doing it.”

“I just happened to make the acquaintance of three dragons,” Xuanzhao explained, “so I asked them to make rain. They agreed but said that anyone who produces rain without a decree from His Almighty would be severely punished. Only Your Honor can save them because of your enormous reputation in heaven. And that’s the purpose of my visit today. I hope you’ll give it a favorable consideration.”

“If only I could be of help, I would gladly oblige.”

“After making rain,” Xuanzhao went on, “the three dragons have



“既雨之后，三龙避罪，投处士后沼中以隐。当有异人捕之，处士喻而遣之，必得释罪矣。”思邈许之。

玄照归，见三叟于道左，玄照以思邈之旨示之。三叟约一日一夜，千里雨足。于是如期泛洒，泽甚广被。翌日，玄照来谒思邈。对语之际，有一人骨状殊异，径往后沼之畔，喑哑叱咤。斯须，水结为冰。俄有三獭，二苍一白，自池而出。此人以赤索系之，将欲挈去。思邈召而谓曰：“三物之罪，死无以赎。然昨者擅命，是鄙夫之意也，幸望脱之。兼以此诚上达，恕其重责也。”此人受教，登时便解而释之，携索而去。

有顷，三叟致谢思邈，愿有所酬。孙曰：“吾山谷之中，无所用者，不须为报。”回诣玄照，愿陈力致效。玄照曰：“山中一食一衲，此外无阙，不须酬也。”三叟再





to go into hiding and they'll lie low in the pond behind your house. A strange-looking man will come to catch them. All you need to do is plead for their release so that they won't be punished."

Having secured the hermit's word of honor, Xuanzhao took leave. The three old men were waiting by the roadside. He told them about the hermit's promise and they agreed on raining a full day and night over a thousand-mile area.

Rain fell in due course, bringing relief to millions of people.

The next day, Xuanzhao went over to Simiao's place again. While they were chatting, they saw a man of extraordinary build going past the house straight to the pond and shouted in a harsh angry voice. In a moment, the pond started to freeze over. Three otters, one white and two gray, emerged from the pond. The man tethered them with a piece of red cord. Simiao beckoned to him just as he was about to lead them away.

"I know they have committed a crime that even capital punishment would seem lenient," Simiao said, "but what they did was actually at my order. I hope you can release them and convey my wish to His Almighty that they be pardoned."

The man immediately untied the otters and went away with his red cord.

Shortly after, the three old men came in to thank Simiao and offered to repay his kindness.

"You don't have to repay me," Simiao said. "Living in the mountains, I don't have much need for anything."

The dragons then turned to Xuanzhao and offered their service.

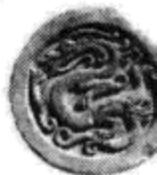
"Except for the gown I wear and simple meals, I have no use for anything else," Xuanzhao replied. "You don't need to repay me."

The three insisted on doing something and after some thought

为请。玄照因言：“前山当路，不便往来，却之可否？”三叟曰：“固是小事耳。但勿以风雷为责，即可为之。”是夕，雷霆震击。及晓开霁，寺前豁然，数里如掌。三叟复来，告谢而去。

思邈至道，不求其报，尤为奇特矣。





Xuanzhao said, "The cliff in front of my temple makes passage difficult. I wonder if you can have it removed."

"That's easy," they replied. "But please excuse us for the disturbance of a storm. We'll do that right away."

That very night, a thunderstorm broke out. The morning, however, dawned fresh and clear, and the ground in front of the temple rolled out for miles, as flat as one's palm. The three old men reappeared to bid a final farewell.

What a great man Sun Simiao is, a man who seeks no reward!



刘贯词

唐洛阳刘贯词，大历中，求丐于苏州，逢蔡霞秀才者精彩俊爽。一相见，意颇殷勤，以兄呼贯词。既而携羊酒来宴。酒阑曰：“兄今泛游江湖间，何为乎？”曰：“求丐耳。”霞曰：“有所抵耶，泛行郡国耶？”曰：“蓬行耳。”霞曰：“然则几获而止？”曰：“十万。”霞曰：“蓬行而望十万，乃无翼而思飞者也。设令必得，亦废数年。霞居洛中左右，亦不贫，以他故避地，音问久绝。意有所恳，祈兄为回。途中之费，蓬游之望，不掷日月而





The Brass Bowl

Liu Guanci, a native of Luoyang, met a young gentleman named Cai Xia in Suzhou City while he was looking for a patron during Dali reign. As Cai was an easy-going and pleasant man, a friendship was soon struck up between the two and Liu was regarded as an elder brother since he was senior in age.

One day Cai brought lamb and wine to Liu's place.

"Why are you lingering in the south?" Cai asked when they were high on wine.

"I'm looking for a patron," Liu answered.

"Do you have a particular person in mind, or are you simply taking chances?"

"I drift where the wind leads."

"How much are you aiming at?"

"A hundred strings, perhaps."

"A hundred strings of coins? And you don't even have a letter of recommendation! Isn't that like someone thinking of flying while he doesn't even have wings? Even if you can make it, haven't you considered the years you'll have to put in? My family lives in the Luoyang area too, and we're quite well off, but I haven't had any correspondence with them for years since I have to stay away in order to shun some bad fortune. I wonder if you can go back to Luoyang for me. I'll provide for your traveling expenses, and you can get the sum you need in days rather than in years. What do you say?"

得。如何？”曰：“固所愿耳。”霞于是遗钱十万，授书一缄，白曰：“逆旅中遽蒙周念，既无形迹，辄露心诚。霞家长鳞虫，宅渭桥下，合眼叩桥柱，当有应者，必邀入宅。娘奉见时，必请与霞少妹相见。既为兄弟，情不合疏。书中亦令渠出拜。渠虽年幼，性颇慧聪，使渠助为主人，百缗之赠，渠当必诺。”贯词遂归。

到渭桥下，一潭泓澄，何计自达？久之，以为龙神不当我欺，试合眼叩之。忽有一人应，因视之，则失桥及潭矣。有朱门甲第，楼阁参差。有紫衣使拱立于前，而问其意。贯词曰：“来自吴郡，郎君有书。”问者执书以入。顷而复出曰：“太夫人奉屈。”遂入厅中。见太夫人者年四十余，衣服皆紫，容貌可爱。贯词拜之，太夫人答拜，且谢曰：“儿子远游，久绝音耗，劳君惠顾，数千里达





“That would be really nice.”

Cai then gave him a letter and a hundred strings of coins. “It’s my luck to have met you at a difficult time. Since we’re now bosom friends, there’s something I must let you know. My family belongs to the scaly. We live under the bridge on the Wei River. Close your eyes, knock on the railing of the bridge, and someone will answer and lead you to my house. When my mother receives you, remember to ask for the presence of my younger sister. I’ve made that a special point in my letter. Since we’re brothers, she’s as good as your own sister. Young as she is, she can handle things quite well. With her presence, you’re sure to get a hundred strings’ worth in reward.”

Liu then set off on a return trip.

At the Wei River bridge he found that the water beneath was much deeper than he had thought, and stood there wondering how anyone could reach Cai’s home. Yet he thought that deities such as a dragon couldn’t be cheating. So he closed his eyes and knocked. Suddenly he heard a response and opened his eyes to find himself facing, instead of the bridge and river, a red gateway to a great complex of buildings behind high walls. A servant in a purple gown was standing before him with his hands raised in salutation.

“I came from Suzhou,” he replied to the man’s inquiry. “Your young master asks me to carry a letter home for him.”

The servant took the letter in and returned in a moment. “Her Ladyship invites you in,” he said.

He followed the man into the hall and saw a gracious woman in a purple robe, who looked no more than fifty. He bowed respectfully.

The lady returned his bow and said, “Thank you very much for carrying this letter over hundreds of miles. My son has been away



书。渠少失意上官，其恨未减，一从遁去，三岁寂然。非君特来，愁绪犹积。”言讫命坐。贯词曰：“郎君约为兄弟，小妹子即贯词妹也，亦当相见。”夫人曰：“儿子书中亦言。渠略梳头，即出奉见。”俄有青衣曰：“小娘子来。”年可十五六，容色绝代，辨慧过人。既拜，坐于母下。遂命具饌，亦甚精洁。

方对食，太夫人忽眼赤，直视贯词。女急曰：“哥哥凭来，宜且礼待。况令消息，不可动摇。”因曰：“书中以兄处分，令以百缗奉赠，既难独举，须使轻贲。今奉一器，其价相当，可乎？”贯词曰：“已为兄弟，寄一书札，岂宜受其赐？”太夫人曰：“郎君贫游，儿子备述。今副其请，不可推辞。”贯词谢之。因命取镇国碗来，又进食。未几，太夫人复瞪视眼赤，口两角涎下。女急掩其口曰：“哥哥深诚托人，不宜如此。”乃曰：“娘年高，风





from home for years and I haven't heard from him all that time. He had offended his superior and hasn't been pardoned yet. That's why he fled town and has been living in hiding in the past three years. The letter you brought along is a great relief to me." She offered him a seat.

"Xia and I are sworn brothers, and his sister is as good as my own. Could I meet her?"

"My son has also mentioned that in his letter. She's refreshing herself and will join us in a moment."

Shortly, a maid came in to announce the presence of the young mistress. She was a girl about sixteen. Even at that young age, she already showed the makings of a beauty and looked very intelligent. She made a curtsy and sat beside her mother. A dinner was laid out and the food was elaborately prepared. Before the first course was over, however, the lady's eyes became bloodshot and she kept staring at him.

"He's brother's friend," the girl said hastily. "We should treat him with respect. Don't forget he's here to help us remove a problem."

"My brother said," the girl turned to him, "that we should give you a hundred strings of coins in reward. But I'm afraid that's too cumbersome for you to carry along. I'm thinking of giving you something lighter in weight but no less in worth. Is that all right?"

"I did no more than carry a letter, and we're brothers," he replied. "Reward or not is not important."

"My son said that you are looking for a patron to continue with the imperial examinations," the lady picked up. "He asked us to help you. There's no need to be shy about that."

He bowed, and the lady sent for the treasured bowl. While more courses were served, the lady once again stared intensely at him with bloodshot eyes, saliva trickling down from the corners of her mouth. Her daughter hurriedly covered her mouth and whispered, "Don't!



疾发动，祇对不得，兄宜且出。”女若惧者，遣青衣持碗，自随而授贯词曰：“此罽宾国碗，其国以镇灾厉。唐人得之，固无所用。得钱十万，可货之，其下勿鬻。某缘娘疾，须侍左右，不遂从容。”再拜而入。

贯词持碗而行，数步回顾，碧潭危桥，宛似初到。视手中器，乃一黄色铜碗也，其价只三五铤耳，大以为龙妹之妄也。执鬻于市，有酬七百八百者，亦酬五百者。念龙神贵信，不当欺人，日日持行于市。及岁余，西市店忽有胡客来，视之大喜，问其价。贯词曰：“二百缗。”客曰：“物宜所直，何止二百缗？且非中国之宝，有之何益？百缗可乎？”贯词以初约只尔，不复广求，遂许之交受。





He's brother's trusted friend!"

"Please excuse her," the girl apologized. "My mother is getting old and I guess it's another fit of her face-muscle spasm. Sorry that we must send you away like this." She looked as if she was deeply worried.

She hurried him out, with a maid following with the bowl. "This bowl is the national treasure of Jibin, a country in the Western Regions. They believe it can prevent natural disasters and epidemics, but we have no use for it in our country. You can take it to the market and sell it for a hundred strings of coins, but don't sell it for anything less than that. Since my mother is ill, I have to attend to her. I'm sorry I can't see you further off." She bowed and retreated.

He took the bowl and went away. When he looked back, there was only the bridge and the river as he'd first seen it. He studied the vessel in his hand. It was just an ordinary brass bowl, which couldn't be worth more than a handful of coins. The dragon girl must be bragging, he thought.

Anyway he took the bowl to the market and was offered seven to eight hundred coins, sometimes even as few as five hundred. Thinking that the dragons should have a good reason in setting the price, he took the bowl to the market every day.

One day a year later, he came across a Persian in the west market, who was excited to see the bowl and asked the price.

"Two hundred strings of coins," Liu said offhandedly.

"That's a fair price," the Persian said, "and it's worth even more than that. But in your country, it's useless. What do you say to one hundred strings?"

As one hundred strings of coins was the price set by the dragon girl, he agreed and the bargain was made.

"This bowl," the Persian emphasized, "is the national treasure of

客曰：“此乃罽宾国镇国碗也。在其国，大穰人患厄。此碗失来，其国大荒，兵戈乱起。吾闻为龙子所窃，已近四年，其君方以国中半年之赋召赎。君何以致之？”贯词具告其实。客曰：“罽宾守龙上诉，当追寻次，此霞所以避地也。阴冥吏严，不得陈首，藉君为由送之耳。殷勤见妹者，非固亲也，虑老龙之馋，或欲相啖，以其妹卫君耳。此碗既出，渠亦当来，亦消患之道也。五十日后，漕洛波腾，滄溟晦日，是霞归之候也。”曰：“何以五十日然后归？”客曰：“吾携过岭，方敢来复。”贯记之，及期往视，诚然矣。





Jibin. It can keep off bad fortune for her people. Ever since they lost this bowl, they have been suffering poor harvests and insurgences. I hear it was stolen by a young dragon about four years ago. Their king is offering a reward of half the country's annual revenue to anyone who can bring it back. May I beg to know how you came into possession of it?"

He explained.

"The dragon responsible for the welfare of Jibin brought the case to the celestial court and they're searching for the culprit. That's why Cai Xia fled from home. Their law is strict and the criminal would not be pardoned even if he should give himself up. So he intended to give it back through you. That's really a clever way to get out of his trouble. You know why he insisted on you meeting his sister? It was not because he was treating you like a member of the family, but because he was afraid that you might be eaten up. His sister's presence could protect you. Now that the bowl is returned, I guess he'll come back home. Fifty days from now, you'll find the river roiling with towering waves that would even obscure the sun. That'll be Cai Xia's home return."

"Why does he need to wait fifty days?" Liu asked.

"That's the time it takes me to carry this bowl over the Five Ridges to the seaport. He won't dare to return until the bowl is out of the country."

Liu kept the Persian's word in mind and returned to the river on the predicted day. Waves were indeed surging high.





韦氏

京兆韦氏，名家女也，适武昌孟氏。唐大历末，孟与妻弟韦生同选，韦生授扬子县尉，孟授阆州录事参军，分路之官。韦氏从夫人蜀，路不通车舆，韦氏乘马，从夫至骆谷口中，忽然马惊，坠于岸下数百丈。视之杳黑，人无人路。孟生悲号，一家恸哭，无如之何。遂设祭服丧舍去。

韦氏至下，坠约数丈枯叶之上，体无所损，初似闷绝，少顷而苏。经一日，饥甚，遂取木叶裹雪而食。傍视有一岩罅，不知深浅，仰视坠处，如大井焉。分当死矣，忽于岩谷中，见光一点如灯，后更渐大，乃有二焉。渐





Ms Wei's Dragon Ride

Ms Wei was married into the Meng family. Toward the end of Dali reign, her husband and her brother qualified in the same round of imperial selection, and both were assigned to official positions.

Her husband was appointed chief secretary of Lang Prefecture in the southwest, her brother lieutenant of Yangtze County in the southeast. So they parted and Ms Wei went along with her husband.

The southwestern regions were mountainous. Roads soon became too narrow and steep for carriages, compelling her to continue on horseback. They were passing through a craggy valley when her horse shied and threw her down the ledge. Peeping down the fathomless cliff, one could only see shadows of darkness, and there was no way down. All her husband could do was cry and moan, and offer her a quick libation before the column had to move on.

In the meantime, Ms Wei had fallen on a cushion of dead leaves dozens of feet thick. The impact knocked her out, but she was unhurt and soon regained her consciousness.

A day elapsed and hunger seized her. She rolled up some leaves with snow and ate them, thus giving herself a little strength to look around. Beside her was a fissure in the rocks. There was no telling how deep it might be. Above, only a patch of sky could be seen, as if one were gazing up from the bottom of a well, no hope of climbing out. Suddenly, she seemed to see a faint candle light in the depth of the crevice. The light kept growing, and soon she was able to descry two



近，是龙目也。韦惧甚，负石壁而立。此龙渐出，可长五六丈，至穴边，腾孔而出。顷又见双眼，复是一龙欲出。韦氏自度必死，宁为龙所害，候龙将出，遂抱龙跨之。龙亦不顾，直跃穴外，遂腾于空。韦氏不敢下顾，任龙所之。如半日许，意疑已过万里。试开眼下视，此龙渐低，又见江海及草木。其去地度四五丈，恐负入江，遂放身自坠，落于深草之上，良久乃苏。

韦氏不食，已经三四日矣，气力渐惫，徐徐而行。遇一渔翁，惊非其人。韦氏问此何所，渔翁曰：“此扬子县。”韦氏私喜，曰：“去县几里？”翁曰：“二十里。”韦氏具述其由，兼饥渴。渔翁伤异之，舟中有茶粥，饮食之。韦氏问曰：“此县韦少府上未到？”翁曰：“不知到未。”韦氏曰：“某即韦少府之妹也。倘为载去，至县当厚相报。”渔翁与载至县门，韦少府已上数日矣。





separate lights instead of one. They continued to move in her direction. They were the eyes of a dragon! Terrified, she pressed her back against the rock wall to make way for the dragon. It gradually emerged from the crack and shot up into the sky, its body stretching fifty to sixty feet long. Then, she saw another pair of eyes coming. She would rather fall prey to a dragon than die a protracted death in this abyss, she convinced herself. So when the second dragon was pulling itself out of the crevice, she flung her arms around its neck and mounted it. The dragon soared up without bothering to pause. Too frightened to open her eyes, she held tightly onto the dragon, resigning herself to its wishes.

Hours seemed to pass until she sensed the dragon descending. She ventured to open her eyes and take a look. Beneath her, trees and watercourses could be clearly distinguished. Now, she couldn't be more than fifty feet above the ground. Fearing the dragon was going to plunge into the river, she let go of it and fell into the tall grass along the bank.

She came to after a long while. Weak from the three or four days of living on leaves, she could barely walk. Then, she came upon a fisherman, from whom she learned that she was in Yangtze County. What luck! She congratulated herself. Furthermore, it was only six miles from the county seat. She told the fisherman of her extraordinary experience and begged for food. However strange her story might have sounded, the fisherman offered her some porridge without raising a question.

"Has the new county lieutenant, a Mr Wei, assumed office yet?" she asked.

"Sorry ma'am, I don't know."

"I'm his sister. If you ferry me to town, I promise you a fortune."

So the fisherman paddled up to the town gate. The new lieutenant had been in office for several days already, she was informed.

韦氏至门，遣报孟家十三姊。韦生不信，韦曰：“十三姊随孟郎入蜀，那忽来此？”韦氏令具说此由。韦生虽惊，亦未深信。出见之，其姊号哭，话其逆厄，颜色痿痺，殆不可言。乃舍之将息，寻亦平复。韦生终有所疑。后数日，蜀中凶问果至，韦生意乃豁然，方更悲喜。追酬渔父二十千，遣人送姊入蜀。孟氏悲喜无极。

后数十年，韦氏表弟裴纲，贞元中，犹为洪州高安尉，自说其事。





“How on earth can my sister be here? She is with her husband in Lang Prefecture!” her brother exclaimed when the bailiff announced her presence at the gate. Though very much suspicious of her identity, he decided to receive her.

Except for her pale face and haggard appearance she otherwise looked exactly like his sister, but her tears and her account of the miraculous deliverance did not have him thoroughly convinced. It was not until a few days later when the obituary of his sister's death arrived from his brother-in-law that his doubts were swept away and the happiness of their reunion was fully savored. He looked up the fisherman and rewarded him with twenty thousand coins.

Later on, he had his sister safely escorted to her husband's side.

This story was told by Ms Wei's cousin, Pei Gang, who served as lieutenant of Gao'an County during Zhenyuan reign.



傅黄中

唐傅黄中为越州诸暨县令。有部人饮大醉，夜中山行，临崖而睡。忽有虎临其上而嗅之，虎须入醉人鼻中，遂喷嚏声震。虎遂惊跃，便落崖，腰胯不遂，为人所得。



A Powerful Sneeze

Fu Huangzhong, magistrate of Zhuji County in the Tang Dynasty, recounted a true story that happened to one of his former subordinates.

The man was quite drunk after a party, but he insisted on walking home alone through the night. Following a familiar mountain path, he dropped asleep on the brink of a precipice.

A tiger came sniffing at the smell of man. Its whiskers somehow poked into the man's nostrils, setting off such a violent sneeze that the big cat jumped with a start and fell off the cliff. It sprained its waist and was caught by the drunkard.



峡口道士

开元中，峡口多虎，往来舟船皆被伤害。自后但是有船将下峡之时，即预一人充饲虎，方举船无患。不然，则船中被害者众矣。自此成例，船留二人上岸饲虎。

经数日，其后有一船，内皆豪强，数内有二人单穷，被众推出，令上岸饲虎。其人自度力不能拒，乃为出船，而谓诸人曰：“某贫穷，合为诸公代死。然人各有分定，苟不便为其所害，某别有恳诚，诸公能允许否？”众人闻其语言甚切，为之怆然，而问曰：“尔有何事？”其人曰：“某今便上岸，寻其虎踪，当自别有计较。但恳为某留船滩下，至日午时，若不来，即任船去也。”众人曰：“我等如今便泊船滩下，不止住今日午时，兼为尔留宿。俟明日若不来，船即去也。”言讫，船乃下滩。

其人乃执一长柯斧，便上岸，入山寻虎。并不见有人





The Tiger at the Yangtze Gorges

During Kaiyuan reign, the Yangtze Gorges were infested by tigers. Passengers going either upstream or downstream often fell prey to the man-eaters. Then it began – nobody knew when – that each passing boat would leave one passenger on shore for the tiger before it sailed through the Gorges. That practice would guarantee a safe voyage, otherwise more than one life might be lost. And that became an implicit rule among the boats.

So once there came a boat of rich passengers, all rich except one, who was unanimously elected to be the tiger's next meal. Aware that one tongue could not argue against so many, the poor guy agreed to go ashore.

“As a poor fellow,” he said, “I understand I must sacrifice myself for you gentlemen. Each man's fate, however, is on the books. Just in case I'm not destined to die at the tiger's jaws, I hope you gentlemen will grant me one, and only one, request.”

Somewhat touched, the group asked what his last wish was.

“Now I'm going ashore to look for the tiger. I know full well what I'm doing. Yet, I beg you to wait here for me till noon. If I don't return by then, you may set sail and go on your way.”

“We'll do more than that,” the group chorused. “We'll stay here throughout the day and spend the night here as well. We'll wait for you till tomorrow morning.”

The boat moored and the poor man went ashore with a long-handled ax.



踪，但见虎迹而已。林木深邃，其人乃见一路，虎踪甚稠，乃更寻之。至一山隘，泥极甚，虎踪转多。更行半里，即见一大石室，又有一石床，见一道士在石床上而熟寐，架上有一张虎皮。其人意是变虎之所，乃蹑足，于架上取皮，执斧衣皮而立。

道士忽惊觉，已失架上虎皮。乃曰：“吾合食汝，汝何窃吾皮？”其人曰：“我合食尔，尔何反有是言？”二人争竞，移时不已。道士词屈，乃曰：“吾有罪于上帝，被谪在此为虎，合食一千人。吾今已食九百九十九人，唯欠汝一人，其数当足。吾今不幸，为汝窃皮。若不归，吾必须别更为虎，又食一千人矣。今有一计，吾与汝俱获两全，可乎？”其人曰：“可也。”道士曰：“汝今但执皮还船中，剪发及须鬓少许，剪指爪甲，兼头面脚手及身上，各沥少血二三升，以故衣三两事裹之。待吾到岸上，汝可





He went into the mountains. There were no trails made by man but there were sporadic traces of a tiger. The woods grew denser when he came upon a well-tramped beat. He followed it to a mountain pass. The ground was wet and tiger paws could be clearly discerned. Further on, he spotted a cave in the rocks. Peeping in, he saw a Taoist priest sleeping soundly on a couch-shaped flagstone, a tiger skin hanging beside him on a dead branch. This must be the lair, where the priest used the skin to change himself into a tiger, he thought to himself. He tiptoed over, grabbed the skin and draped it over his shoulders. He stood beside the couch with a ready ax.

The priest woke up suddenly, only to find the man in possession of the skin.

“You’re ordained to be my prey,” said the priest. “Why steal my skin?”

“You’re fated to fall prey to me,” contended the man. “Why call me a thief?”

They argued on and on, and the priest finally gave up. “Well,” he sighed, “I’d offended god and was banished to the Gorges to be a tiger. I’ve got to eat one thousand people just to redeem myself, and so far I’ve finished off nine hundred ninety-nine. You’re the one thousandth. Bad luck for me today to have you steal my skin. If you don’t give it back to me, I’ll have to start all over again and devour another thousand people. Listen, I’ve got an idea that could save both of us. Do you want to hear it?”

“Go ahead.”

“Now, you take my skin back to your boat. Cut off some of your hair, beard and finger nails. Wrap them up with two or three pieces of your old clothes and then smear them with blood from your



抛皮与吾。吾取披已，化为虎，即将此物抛与。吾取而食之，即与汝无异也。”

其人遂披皮执斧而归。船中诸人惊讶，而备述其由。遂于船中，依虎所教待之。迟明，道士已在岸上，遂抛皮与之。道士取皮衣振迅，俄变成虎，哮吼跳踯。又抛衣与虎，乃啗食而去。自后更不闻有虎伤人。众言食人数足，自当归天去矣。



face, arms, legs and other parts of your body. When you see me on the bank tomorrow, throw me my skin so that I can change back into a tiger. Next, toss me that bloody bundle. That'll be as good as having you to eat."

The man agreed and returned to the boat with the tiger skin and ax.

The passengers aboard were more than surprised to behold him alive. He explained what had happened and prepared a bundle as the priest had told him to. As day broke, the priest was seen on the bank. The man tossed the skin ashore. The moment the priest put it on, he turned into a roaring man-eater. The man then hurled the bloody roll onto the bank, which the tiger gripped in its teeth and bounced away.

Ever since, the Gorges have been free of tigers. It is assumed that having eaten its destined share, it must have returned to heaven.



申屠澄

申屠澄者，贞元九年，自布衣调补濮州什邠尉。之官，至真符县东十里许遇风雪大寒，马不能进。路旁茅舍中有烟火甚温煦，澄往就之，有老父妪及处女环火而坐。其女年方十四五，虽蓬发垢衣，而雪肤花脸，举止妍媚。父妪见澄来，遽起曰：“客冲雪寒甚，请前就火。”澄坐良久，天色已晚，风雪不止。澄曰：“西去县尚远，请宿于此。”父妪曰：“苟不以蓬室为陋，敢不承命。”澄遂解鞍，施衾褥焉。其女见客，更修容靓饰，自帷箔间复出，而闲丽之态，尤倍昔时。

有顷，妪自外挈酒壶至，于火前暖饮，谓澄曰：“以





Mr Shentu's Wife

In the ninth year of Zhenyuan reign, Shentu Cheng, a commoner, was appointed lieutenant of Shifang County in Shu. On his way to assume office he encountered a heavy snowstorm several miles east of Zhenfu, so heavy that his horse could not plow through. Not far from the road he saw a thatched hut which seemed to be full of life and warmth, so he made for it.

An aged couple and a girl fourteen or fifteen years old were sitting around a fire. Her shabby clothes and uncombed hair did not eclipse her soft alabaster skin, petal-like cheeks, and the kindling fire in her eyes. The old couple hurried to their feet as they saw him enter. "Please come in and warm yourself by the fire," they said. "It's harsh weather for traveling."

The afternoon waned but the storm showed no sign of letting up. "Town is still far off to the west. May I put up here for the night?" he asked since he saw little hope of resuming his travel.

"If you don't mind the simplicity of our place, we would be honored to have you stay with us," said the old couple. He thus unsaddled his horse and took in his baggage.

Seeing that he would stay, the daughter went in to put on powder and rouge. When she returned from behind the corn-stalk screen, he found that she was much more beautiful than he had imagined.

The old woman came in from somewhere with a flask of wine and warmed it up over the fire. "Traveling through snow can be

君冒寒，且进一杯，以御凝冽。”因揖让曰：“始自主人。”翁即巡行，澄当婪尾。澄因曰：“座上尚欠小娘子。”父姬皆笑曰：“田舍家所育，岂可备宾主。”女子即回眸斜睨曰：“酒岂足贵，谓人不宜预饮也。”母即牵裙，使坐于侧。澄始欲探其所能，乃举令以观其意。澄执盏曰：“请征书语，意属目前事。”澄曰：“厌厌夜饮，不醉无归。”女低鬟微笑曰：“天色如此，归亦何往哉？”俄然巡至女，女复令曰：“风雨如晦，鸡鸣不已。”澄愕然叹曰：“小娘子明慧若此，某幸未昏，敢请自媒如何？”翁曰：“某虽寒贱，亦尝娇保之。颇有过客，以金帛为问。





freezing," she said. "Please have a drink to drive off the cold."

"It's most kind of you," he said with a bow. "Mr Host first, please."

The old man picked up the flask and took a sip, then passed it on. When it was his turn, Shentu said, "Why isn't the young lady joining us?"

"Country girls are unaccustomed to having guests," smiled the old couple.

"Why grudge a cup of wine?" the girl flashed her eyes defiantly. "If you think I'm not entitled to a drink, just say so." Her mother tugged at her skirt and motioned her to take a seat beside her.

Curious to sound out the depth of this country lass, he suggested they play a drinkers' word game. "We shall quote from the poems to describe our present situation." Holding up his cup, he took the lead:

*On such a tedious night,
Leave not until you're tight.*

Lowering her eyes, the girl smiled and carried on,

*Weather and night forbid,
Where go you, had you wished?*

Now it was her turn to lead.

*Though cloud and storm aggress,
Cocks crow nevertheless.*

The quote took him by surprise.²⁰ "You're unbelievably talented!" he exclaimed. "Thank heaven that I'm not married yet." Turning to the old man he asked, "Would you accept it if I should propose to her on my own behalf without first sending over a matchmaker?"

"Humble as we are," replied the old man, "we do treasure her. To be frank, quite a few passers-by have offered gold and silk for her hand. We turned them down because we were reluctant to part with



某先不忍别，未许。不期贵客又欲援拾，岂敢惜？”即以托。澄遂修子婿之礼，祛囊以遗之。姬悉无所取，曰：“但不弃寒贱，焉事资货。”明日，又谓澄曰：“此孤远无邻，又复湫溢，不足以久留。女既事人，便可行矣。”又一日，咨嗟而别，澄乃以所乘马载之而行。

既至官，俸禄甚薄。妻力以成其家，交结宾客，旬日之内，大获名誉，而夫妻情义益浹。其于厚亲族，抚甥侄，洎僮仆厮养，无不欢心。后秩满将归，已生一男一女，亦甚明慧，澄尤加敬焉。常作赠内诗一篇曰：“一官惭梅福，三年愧孟光。此情何所喻，川上有鸳鸯。”其妻终日吟讽，似默有和者，然未尝出口。每谓澄曰：“为妇之道，不可不知书。倘更作诗，反似姬妾耳。”





her. Now that you're proposing, I don't think we can hold her back any longer. She is yours." With that permission, Shentu knelt and performed the initial ceremonies of a son-in-law, and gave them as a betrothal gift all he had with him.

"It's enough of a solace to know that you don't mind our low and impoverished conditions," said the old woman, declining his offer. "We have no desire for gifts or money."

The next day, the old woman said to him, "This is a desolate place, and our house is very inconvenient, so we're not going to retain you for long. Since she's now married to you, take her away." With lots of tears and good wishes the young couple set off the following morning, the bride on horseback, the bridegroom leading the reins.

His salary as a county official was meager, but his wife managed quite well. Within weeks she had acquired many new friends and a good reputation. They lived in ever-increasing happiness. Her kindness was also extended to relatives and to servants. Everyone liked her.

By the end of his third year in office, they had a son and a daughter. Very lovely kids. He was all praises for her, and to her he dedicated a poem:

*As modest as my status be,
Your management has made us free.
To what shall I compare our love?
A couple of mandarin ducks.*

His wife savored the poem. Her lips mumbled thoughtfully every time she read it to herself, but she never came up with a corresponsive one. "To be the wife of a gentleman," as she had often put it, "one can't be ignorant of books. But if one should overdo her part by starting to write poems, she would be degrading herself like a courtesan."



澄罢官，即罄室归秦。过利州，至嘉陵江畔，临泉藉草憩息。其妻忽怅然谓澄曰：“前者见赠一篇，寻即有和。初不拟奉示，今遇此景物，不能终默之。”乃吟曰：“琴瑟情虽重，山林志自深。常忧时节变，辜负百年心。”吟罢，潸然良久，若有慕焉。澄曰：“诗则丽矣，然山林非弱质所思。倘忆贤尊，今则至矣，何用悲泣乎？人生因缘业相之事，皆由前定。”

后二十余日，复至妻本家，草舍依然，但不复有人矣。澄与其妻即止其舍。妻思慕之深，尽日涕泣。于壁角故衣之下，见一虎皮，尘埃积满。妻见之，忽大笑曰：





At the expiration of his term of office, Shentu decided to bring his whole family back to his hometown. Through Lizhou Prefecture, they came to the Jialing River. Resting on the grass by the river, his wife suddenly let out a heavy sigh. "On the day you presented that poem to me," she admitted, "I improvised one in response to yours. I'd intended to keep it to myself. Today's scene, however, makes it too hard for me to hold it back any longer. Here it goes:

*Though we're attuned like lute to harp,
I can't reject the mountains sharp.
What if there comes a change of fate
That shall our bright future negate?"*

Having thus declaimed it to the accompaniment of trickling tears, she sat motionlessly for a long while, as if her soul had wandered off.

"A good poem indeed," he remarked, "but mountain life doesn't seem fit for one so delicate as you. If it's because you miss your parents, why those tears? You should be happy rather than sad, for we're approaching your native place. One's fate is always predestined. Don't let that worry you."

In another twenty days they reached his wife's maiden home. The thatched hut was still there as it had been, but it was deserted. They unpacked and put up in the hut. His wife became lost in thought, weeping from dawn to dusk. Beneath a pile of worn clothes in one corner of the room they found a dust-covered tiger skin. At the sight of it, his wife burst into laughter. "I really didn't expect to see this skin again!" she exclaimed. As soon as she wrapped it around her shoulders, she changed into a tigress. Roaring and pouncing, she dashed out of the door, leaving Shentu stupefied with fright.

“不知此物尚在耶！”披之，即变为虎，哮吼拿攫，突门而去，澄惊走避之。携二子寻其路，望林大哭数日，竟不知所之。





Carrying the two children, he traced her in vain into the mountain depths. They wept and cried for days at the edge of the trackless forest, but she did not return.





马拯

唐长庆中，有处士马拯性冲淡，好寻山水，不择险峭，尽能跻攀。一日居湘中，因之衡山祝融峰，诣伏虎师。佛室内道场严洁，果食馨香，兼列白金皿于佛榻上。见一老僧眉毫雪色，朴野魁梧。甚喜拯来，使仆挈囊。僧曰：“假君仆使，近县市少盐酪。”拯许之。仆乃挈金下山去，僧亦不知去向。

俄有一马沼山人亦独登此来，见拯，甚相慰悦。乃告拯曰：“适来道中，遇一虎食一人，不知谁氏之子。”说其服饰，乃拯仆夫也。拯大骇。沼又云：“遥见虎食人尽，乃脱皮，改服禅衣，为一老僧也。”拯甚怖惧，及沼见僧曰：“只此是也。”拯白僧曰：“马山人来云，某仆使





Man-Eaters

In Changqing reign, there was a man named Ma Zheng, who was a quiet man and had a strong love for the great outdoors. No heights or precipices could daunt him.

Once, while traveling in the area of Mount Heng, he decided to climb up its main peak, Zhurong, to visit a monk known as Master Tiger Tamer.

The temple was clean and tidy. The air was filled with the sweet smell of fruits and food offerings on the altar, and there was an array of shiny silverware in front of the statues. The monk, whose eyebrows were as white as snow, was burly and robust. He was obviously delighted to see Zheng and his bag-carrying servant. "May I ask your servant to make a trip to town to help me buy some salt and cheese?" he asked. At Zheng's consent, the servant took the money and went off. The monk excused himself too.

Another lone climber appeared, who introduced himself as Ma Zhao and seemed much relieved to see Zheng. "On my way up just now," he said, "I saw a tiger devouring a man. I wonder who that poor guy was." To Zheng's horror, his description of the victim's attire matched his servant's. "When the tiger finished the man," Zhao continued, "I saw it peel off its skin and put on a monk's gown. It changed into an old monk right away!" Zheng was dumbfounded.

"It's him," Zhao whispered as the monk reappeared from somewhere.



至半山路，已被虎伤，奈何？”僧怒曰：“贫道此境，山无虎狼，草无毒螫，路绝蛇虺，林绝鸱鸢。无信妄语耳。”拯细窥僧吻，犹带殷血。

向夜，二人宿其食堂，牢扃其户，明烛伺之。夜已深，闻庭中有虎，怒首触其扉者三四，赖户壮而不隳。二子惧而焚香，虔诚叩首于堂内土偶宾头卢者。良久，闻土偶吟诗曰：“寅人但溺栏中水，午子须分艮畔金。若教特进重张弩，过去将军必损心。”二子聆之而解其意，曰：

“寅人虎也，栏中即井，午子即我耳，艮畔金即银皿耳。”其下两句未能解。

及明，僧叩门曰：“郎君起来食粥。”二子方敢启关。食粥毕，二子计之曰：“此僧且在，我等何由下山？”遂诈僧云：“井中有异。”使窥之。细窥次，二子





Zheng greeted the monk. "This Mr Ma said that my servant fell prey to a tiger halfway. Could that be true?"

"There are no tigers or wolves in this mountain," the monk retorted angrily, "not even scorpions in the grass, snakes on the trails, or owls in the woods. Don't believe such nonsense!"

Zheng scanned the monk's face and discerned a smudge of dark blood on his lips.

As night settled in, the two Mas took up quarters in the dining hall of the temple. They bolted the door tightly and kept the candles burning. Deep into the night they heard the growling of a tiger in the courtyard. Several times it butted its head furiously against the door. Luckily the planks were sturdy and secure. Petrified, the two could only offer incense and kowtow to the clay statue in the room. After some time they thought they heard the statue hum four lines of verse:

Yin man will drown in liquid fold;

Wu men can share the paler gold.

If bull resets the crossbow trip;

The general's heart shall be ripped.

It was a word riddle. *Yin* was the third of the twelve Earthly Branches that stood for tiger, they figured. Liquid fold must be referring to the water-well. *Wu* was the seventh of the twelve Earthly Branches and was represented by the horse – that was what their family name Ma meant. Paler gold was euphemistic for silver. But they couldn't make out the meaning of the last two lines.

At dawn the monk knocked on their door and called, "Time to get up, gentlemen. Porridge is ready."

It was only then that the two dared to open the door. Breakfast was soon over, but they kept wondering how they could get away under the monk's close watch. "The porridge has a queer taste," they complained. "It



推僧堕井，其僧即时化为虎，二子以巨石镇之而毙矣。二子遂取银皿下山。近昏黑，而遇一猎人，于道旁张弰弓，树上为棚而居。语二子曰：“无触我机。”兼谓二子曰：“去山下犹远，诸虎方暴，何不且上棚来？”二子悸怖，遂攀缘而上。

将欲人定，忽三五十人过，或僧，或道，或丈夫，或妇女，歌吟者，戏舞者，前至弰弓所。众怒曰：“朝来被二贼杀我禅和，方今追捕之，又敢有人张我将军。”遂发其机而去。二子并闻其说，遂诘猎者。曰：“此是侏鬼，被虎所食之人也，为虎前呵道耳。”二子因征猎者之姓氏。曰：“名进，姓牛。”二子大喜曰：“土偶诗下句有验矣，特进乃牛进也，将军即此虎也。”遂劝猎者重张其箭，猎者然之。





must be the water.” Thus they were able to induce the monk to the well. As the monk leaned forward to look, they pushed from behind. The monk fell headlong into the well and immediately turned into a tiger. The two rolled over a huge rock to seal the mouth of the well. Then they collected the silverware and started to descend the mountain.

At dusk they met a hunter who was setting up a crossbow trip by the trail. He had built a cabin in a big tree overlooking the place.

“Look out!” he warned the two. “Or you may trigger my crossbow. There’s still a long way before you can get out of the mountain, and tigers roam the area. Why don’t you spend the night with me up in the tree?”

Their nerves already frayed, the two climbed up to join the hunter.

They had just settled down when they saw dozens of people coming along the trail. Among the horde were Buddhist monks, Taoist priests, peasants and women, some singing, some dancing. They were angry to detect the crossbow. “This morning two scoundrels killed His Reverence,” they clamored. “We haven’t found those two yet and now someone is thinking of ambushing our general!” They touched off the tripwire before they went on.

“They’re what we call decoy ghosts,” the hunter explained when the two pestered him with questions. “The ghosts of those eaten by the tiger would become its accomplices. They would clear the way for the tiger and serve as lures.”

The two asked the hunter of his name.

“My name is Jin and my family name is Niu,” the hunter replied.

“Now we understand the hidden meaning of the clay statue’s last two lines!” the two burst out gleefully. “Doesn’t Niu mean ‘bull’? And the so-called general must be another tiger.” They urged the hunter to reset the crossbow. Shortly after the hunter had climbed back to the

张毕登棚，果有一虎哮吼而至，前足触机，箭乃中其三班，贯心而踣。逡巡，诸侏奔走却回，伏其虎，哭甚哀曰：“谁人又杀我将军？”二子怒而叱之曰：“汝辈无知下鬼，遭虎啣死。吾今为汝报仇，不能报谢，犹敢恸哭。岂有为鬼，不灵如是？”遂悄然。忽有一鬼答曰：“都不知将军乃虎也，聆郎君之说，方大醒悟。”就其虎而骂之，感谢而去。及明，二子分银与猎者而归耳。





tree house a tiger came roaring along. Its foreleg touched the tripwire and the arrow shot out – right through its heart.

In a moment the decoy ghosts returned and cried over the dead tiger. “Which damned guy assassinated our general?” they howled.

“You fools!” the two shouted. “You were killed by tigers and we’ve avenged you. But instead of being grateful, you shed tears for man-eaters! People say ghosts know everything. How can you be so muddled?”

The horde fell silent. Then a voice muttered, “We didn’t realize the general was a tiger. Thank you for awaking us.” They cursed the dead tiger and cheerfully dispersed.

The sun rose up. The two shared their silver with the hunter and went home.



安南猎者

安南人以射猎为业，每药附箭镞，射鸟兽，中者必毙。开元中，其人曾入深山，假寐树下，忽有物触之，惊起。见是白象，大倍他象，南人呼之为将军，祝之而拜。

象以鼻卷人上背，复取其弓矢药筒等以授之。因尔遂骋行百余里。入邃谷，至平石。迴望十里许，两崖悉是大树，围如巨屋，森然隐天。象至平石，战惧，且行且望。经六七里，往倚大树，以鼻仰拂人。人悟其意，乃携弓箭，缘树上，象于树下望之。可上二十余丈，欲止，象鼻直指，意如导令复上。人知其意，径上六十丈。象视毕走去。其人夜宿树上。





The Hunter and the White Elephant

People living on the southern frontiers gained a livelihood by hunting and they put poison on arrowheads to ensure that every hit would be deadly.

In mid Kaiyuan reign, a hunter ventured into the remote mountains alone. He was taking a nap under a tree when he felt a push. He jerked open his eyes to see a white elephant, several times the size of an ordinary one, nudging him with its trunk. It was the kind that hunters called “the leader.”

Seeing him awake, the leader wrapped him in his trunk and carefully lifted him onto its back. Then one by one it picked up his arrows, bow and poison pouch, placed them in his hands, and stumped off in haste. After many many miles, they entered a ravine. On both sides ancient trees as thick as towers blocked out the sun. Before long, they came into sight of an enormous table rock in the middle of the valley. The hunter could feel his mount trembling beneath him as it approached the rock, its eyes wandering in all directions. It finally halted beside a giant tree overlooking the rock and gestured upward with its trunk. In a gleam of comprehension, the man climbed up the tree with his bow and quiver. He stopped halfway to look down. The animal was gazing at him intently, its trunk raised straight up as if commanding him to go even higher. Nearing the top, he peered down again. This time the elephant seemed satisfied and trudged away, leaving him alone to spend an uneasy night in the tree.

至明，见平石上有二目光。久之，见巨兽，高十余丈，毛色正黑。须臾清朗，昨所见大象，领凡象百余头，循山而来，伏于其前。巨兽躩食二象。食毕，各引去。人乃思象意，欲令其射。因傅药矢端，极力射之，累中二矢。兽视矢吼奋，声震林木，人亦大呼引兽。兽来寻人，人附树，会其开口，又当口中射之。兽吼而自掷，久之方死。俄见大象从平石入，一步一望，至兽所。审其已死，以头触之，仰天大吼。顷间，群象五六百辈，云萃吼叫，声彻数十里。

大象来至树所，屈膝再拜，以鼻招人。人乃下树，上其背。象载人前行，群象从之。寻至一所，植木如陇，大象以鼻揭楂，群象皆揭，日旰而尽，中有象牙数万枚。象载人行，数十步内，必披一枝，盖示其路。讫，寻至昨寐之处，下人于地，再拜而去。





By the first rays of dawn, he perceived two glossy eyes on the rock. Gradually he was able to make out the body of a massive jet-black shaggy beast. It must be over a hundred feet long. As the mist rose he saw in the distance the white elephant leading a herd of hundreds filing into the ravine toward the rock. They went down on their knees before the beast, which snatched two out of the herd and tossed them into its mouth. Satiated, it seemed ready to leave. At that moment it suddenly occurred to him why the leader had carried him all the way to this place. He dipped his arrows in the pouch, drew his bow to full length, and let the arrows fly. Two hit the beast, prompting deafening roars, probably more out of anger than out of pain, that made the trees vibrate. He yelled back in an attempt to lure the beast to his side, which did turn around to face him. Clinging to a stout bough, he waited patiently till the beast opened its mouth, and shot right down its throat. The beast rolled onto its sides, moaned and kicked, and finally lay still.

When all was quiet, the leader reappeared. It hesitantly made its way toward the beast, pushed it with its head, and when it was absolutely sure that the beast was dead, it raised its head and trumpeted a prolonged cry. All of a sudden the whole valley reverberated in a chorus of bellows.

The leader came to kneel by the tree and beckoned with its trunk for the man to descend. With the hunter mounted, it marched off with the whole herd in procession. They reached a wooded mound and the leader used its trunk to push aside the dead leaves and dirt. The herd bent their heads to do the same. By the time the sun declined toward the west the top earth was cleared, revealing thousands upon thousands of tusks.

The leader carried the hunter off again. Every hundred steps or so it would snap off a branch as if blazing a trail. At last, they arrived

其人归白都护，都护发使随之，得牙数万，岭表牙为之贱。使人至平石所，巨兽但余骨存。都护取一节骨，十人舁致之。骨有孔，通人来去。





at the spot where the man was found napping the day before. The leader bent down on its knees once again as if kneeling and bowing in gratitude, and left.

The hunter returned to town to tell the garrison commander of his adventure. A task force was assigned to him to bring back the tusks. Because of such a stockpile, ivory depreciated in the south.

As a souvenir for the commander, a bone of the beast was removed from the skeleton. It took ten hefty soldiers to lift and carry it. The bone had a hole in it, through which a man could easily pass.





升平入山人

晋升平中，有人入山射鹿，忽堕一坎，窅然深绝，内有数头熊子。须臾，有一大熊人来，瞪视此人。人谓必以害己。良久，出藏果栗，分与诸子，末后作一分，以置此人前。此人饥久，于是冒死取啖之，既转相狎习。熊母每旦觅食果还，辄分此人，此人赖以延命。

后熊子大，其母一一负将出。子既尽，人分死坎中，穷无出路。熊母寻复还，人坐人边。人解意，便抱熊之足，于是跳出，遂得毋他。





The Mother Bear

In Shengping reign of the Jin Dynasty, there was a man who stumbled into a deep pit during a deer hunt in the mountains. Down in the murky recesses he found himself not alone, but in the company of several bear cubs.

His plight soon worsened when the mother bear returned. Her inimical gaze made him shudder. At long last she looked away, and retrieved from some secret nook a hoard of fruit and nuts. Separating them into small piles, she gave each cub its share, and, after a deliberative pause, pushed the last pile over to the man. His craving for food had been so sharp that he grabbed and ate, dismissing all thoughts of consequences.

As days passed, familiarity developed between the man and beasts. Every morning, the mother would go out to collect food and return to share her harvest. In that way, the man managed to survive.

The cubs grew slowly but steadily bigger. Then came the day when, instead of going out to seek food herself, she carried the cubs, one at a time, out of the pit. Pretty soon, only the man was left at the bottom. Trapped as he was, he despaired. However, the mother returned and sat beside him in such a way that made him catch the idea. He seized one of her legs and, with one mighty jump, she carried him out.

He thus lived to tell of his adventure.

知不足齋
印
PDG

欧阳纆

梁大同末，遣平南将军蒯钦南征。至桂林，破李师古、陈彻。别将欧阳纆略地至长乐，悉平诸洞，深入险阻。纆妻纤白，甚美。其部人曰：“将军何为挈丽人经此？地有人，善窃少女，而美者尤所难免，宜谨护之。”纆甚疑惧，夜勒兵环其庐，匿妇密室中，谨闭甚固，而以女奴十余伺守之。

尔夕，阴雨晦黑，至五更，寂然无闻，守者怠而假寐。忽若有物惊寤者，即已失妻矣。门扃如故，莫知所出。出门山险，咫尺迷闷，不可寻逐。迨明，绝无其迹。





The White Ape

In the Liang Dynasty, troops were once sent to the barbarian south to subdue rebellions there. During that operation, Ouyang He, captain of a small detachment, led his men into the virgin mountains and successfully brought the cave-dwelling tribes to their knees.

When the aboriginals saw his pretty, fair-skinned wife in camp, they were very much disturbed. "How can Your Excellency bring such a beauty into this region?" they muttered their concern. "This is a dangerous place for young women. There is a woman-chaser at large. He steals them from their homes, especially those with good looks. Your Excellency must look out."

Half alarmed and half convinced, he intensified security, and at night had a special squad patrol the bungalow in which he hid his wife. As a further precaution he had her accompanied by a dozen slave girls.

It was a murky and wet night, yet it seemed to be passing peacefully for it was almost daybreak. Suddenly, the tired sentries were alerted by a slight stir. They checked and were surprised to find that the captain's wife was already gone, though the doors and windows were as tightly locked as before. It was a mystery how anyone could have gotten through without being noticed. The morning fog was dense in that craggy area, obscuring everything. Search teams were withheld until there was light enough, and they didn't even find a trace.

The extremely grieved captain vowed that he would not withdraw from that area until he found his wife. He stationed his troops

纆大愤痛，誓不徒还。因辞疾，驻其军，日往四遐，即深凌险以索之。既逾月，忽于百里之外丛莽上，得其妻绣履一只，虽雨浸濡，犹可辨识。纆尤凄悼，求之益坚，选壮士三十人，持兵负粮，岩栖野食。

又旬余，远所舍约二百里，南望一山，葱秀迥出。至其下，有深溪环之，乃编木以渡。绝岩翠竹之间，时见红彩，闻笑语音。扞萝引绳，而陟其上，则嘉树列植，间以名花。其下绿芜，丰软如毯，清迥岑寂，杳然殊境。有东向石门，妇人数十被服鲜泽，嬉游歌笑，出入其中，见人皆漫视迟立。至则问曰：“何因来此？”纆具以对。相视叹曰：“贤妻至此月余矣。今病在床，宜遣视之。”

入其门，以木为扉，中宽辟若堂者三。四壁设床，悉施锦荐。其妻卧石榻上，重茵累席，珍食盈前。纆就视之，回眸一睇，即疾挥手令去。诸妇人曰：“我等与公之





there on the excuse of illness. Day after day he would go out in every direction and search high and low for his wife.

A month thus passed when one day he found an embroidered shoe in the bush some thirty miles from camp. Though it had been exposed to harsh weather, he had no difficulty in recognizing it was his wife's. That finding brought him renewed pain and yet made him more determined than ever. To penetrate deeper into the uninhabited mountains, he selected a team of thirty tough soldiers and carried provisions for longer trips.

Ten days later they were about sixty miles from base when they saw a luxuriant peak to the south. Reaching its foot, they found it was moated by a rushing stream. They had to build a raft. Landing on the opposite bank, they spotted flickers of red among the verdant bamboo growth atop the looming cliffs and caught floating notes of light-hearted laughter. With the help of ropes and vines they climbed up. Different from the surrounding area, the trees atop seemed to have been planted by hand and there were many beautiful and rare flowers. The grass was as well kept as a lawn. It was a kind of exotic solitude. A stone gate faced east. Dozens of brightly dressed women moved in and out, singing and playing. They didn't seem to be embarrassed by strangers, and when the captain approached them, they simply asked, "What brought you here?" Hearing his explanation, they glanced at each other and sighed. "Your wife has been here for more than a month," they told him. "She's sick in bed."

They led him through a wicker door into a cave. There were three large chambers with beds lining the walls and the bedding was either silk or wool. His wife was lying on layers of plushy mattresses on a stone bed. Delicious dishes were laid out within her reach. As he bent over her, she gave him a quick glance and urgently waved him away.

妻，比来久者十年。此神物所居，力能杀人。虽百夫操兵，不能制也。幸其未返，宜速避之。但求美酒两斛，食犬十头，麻数十斤，当相与谋杀之。其来必以正午，后慎勿太早。以十日为期。”因促之去，纆亦遽退。

遂求醇醪与麻犬，如期而往。妇人曰：“彼好酒，往往致醉，醉必骋力。俾吾等以彩练缚手足于床，一踊皆断，尝纫三幅，则力尽不解。今麻隐帛中束之，度不能矣。遍体皆如铁，唯脐下数寸，常护蔽之，此必不能御兵刃。”指其旁一岩曰：“此其食廩，当隐于是，静而伺之。酒置花下，犬散林中。待吾计成，招之即出。”如其言，屏气以俟。

日晡，有物如匹练，自他山下，透至若飞，径入洞中。少选，有美髯丈夫长六尺余，白衣曳杖，拥诸妇人而出。见犬惊视，腾身执之，披裂吮咀，食之致饱。妇人竞以玉杯进酒，谐笑甚欢。既饮数斗，则扶之而去。又闻嬉笑之音。





"This is the home of a superman," the women put in. "We and your wife are all in his hands. Some of us were caught ten years ago. He has enormous strength and can easily break a man's neck. A hundred soldiers with all their weapons would not be his match. You're lucky he's not back yet. Better leave right away. If you want to rescue your wife, come again with two jars of the best wine, ten fat dogs and several dozen pounds of hemp. We'll help you kill him. But don't be here too early. Noontime will be all right. Now you have ten days to get things ready." So saying, they hurried him away.

He went back to collect the things and returned on the tenth day.

"He loves good wine, and every time he drinks he gets drunk," an older woman told him. "That makes his body go limp. Even so, if we try to tie his hands and feet to the bedposts with lengths of silk, he might still break it. We must twist it with hemp. Perhaps that's the only way we can tie him down. His body is as hard as cast iron. Knives cannot hurt him, but he often takes care to shield a spot several inches below the navel. That must be his soft spot." She pointed to a rock and said, "That's where he keeps his food. You can hide there and wait quietly until I call for you. We'll place the wine by the flowers and set the dogs free in the woods." The captain held his breath and waited.

The sun declined toward the west. Suddenly, something white cascaded from the heights and flowed right into the cave. Presently, a man over six feet tall with a flowing beard emerged from the cave. He was clad in white, with a stick in one hand and the other hand on the shoulder of one of the women. The dogs gave him a pleasant surprise. He leaped and grabbed, tore off a leg, sank his teeth into the juicy meat and sucked. The women vied with one another to fill his jade cup. He seemed most content and stumbled back into the cave, leaning on the shoulders of the women. Sounds of billing and cooing poured out

良久，妇人出招之，乃持兵而入。见大白猿，缚四足于床头，顾人蹙缩，求脱不得，目光如电。竞兵之，如中铁石，刺其脐下，即饮刃，血射如注。乃大叹咤曰：“此天杀我，岂尔之能！然尔妇已孕，勿杀其子，将逢圣帝，必大其宗。”言绝乃死。

搜其藏，宝器丰积，珍羞盈品，罗列几案。凡人世所珍，靡不充备。名香数斛，宝剑一双。妇人三十辈，皆绝其色，久者至十年，云色衰必被提去，莫知所置。又捕采唯止其身，更无党类。且盥洗，著帽，加白衿，被素罗衣，不知寒暑，遍身白毛，长数寸。所居常读木简，字若符篆，了不可识，已则置若磴下。晴昼或舞双剑，环身电飞，光圆若月。其饮食无常，喜啖果栗，尤嗜犬，咀而饮其血。日始逾午，即剡然而逝。半昼往返数千里，及晚必归。此其常也。所须无不立得。夜就诸床鬪戏，一夕皆





from the cave among chuckles and gurgles. After a long while, the older woman appeared at the door, beckoning the captain in.

A giant white ape lay sprawled out on a bed, his four limbs tied down. He frowned when he saw the captain, his eyes flaring like thunderbolts, though he could not break free. The captain's sword seemed to be hitting iron and rock. Then he remembered and stabbed below the navel. The blade sank in and blood spouted from the wound.

"It's heaven that kills me, not you!" he bellowed. "Anyway, your wife is pregnant. Don't kill the child. He'll bring glory to his ancestors." And that was his last breath.

The captain studied the place. There were hoards of jewelry and treasure that filled tables. What humans treasured, he had more than plenty. There were more than thirty women and all could be called beautiful without exaggeration. The longest held captive had been there ten years. They said that when one's beauty faded he would carry her away to where no one knew. He did all the hunting and collecting by himself. It seemed he was the only one of his kind. In the morning he would wash his face and put on clothes like a human being, always wearing a hat and a white lined-robe. Seasonal changes didn't seem to affect him. His body was covered with thick white hair several inches long. When at home, he would often read books inscribed on wood strips, the words of which were illegible. He kept his books under a flagstone. On fine days he might practice his paired swords for a change. He could whirl them into a solid patch of glistening light. His diet included a variety of things, mostly fruits and nuts. Dog meat was his favorite, however. As soon as it passed high noon he would disappear like a flash of light and used to return before sunset, often traveling over hundreds of miles during those few hours. He could always get what he needed. At night he would make love from bed to bed. He

周，未尝寐。言语淹详，华音会利，然其状即猥獯类也。今岁木落之初，忽怆然曰：“吾为山神所诉，将得死罪。亦求护之于众灵，庶几可免。”前此月生魄，石磴生火，焚其简书，怅然自失曰：“吾已千岁而无子，今有子，死期至矣。”因顾诸女，洊澜者久。且曰：“此山峻绝，未尝有人至。上高而望，绝不见樵者，下多虎狼怪兽。今能至者，非天假之何耶？”

纆取宝玉珍丽及诸妇人以皆归，犹有知其家者。纆妻周岁生一子，厥状肖焉。后纆为陈武帝所诛，素与江惣善，爱其子聪悟绝人，常留养之，故免于难。及长，果文学善书，知名于时。





hardly slept. Though he could speak our language fairly well, he looked more like an ape than a human. In early fall this year, for no reason at all he let out a deep sigh, saying that he was charged by the mountain god and could be punished by death. To elude that fate he said he had to solicit the help of divine spirits. On the day of the past new moon he built a fire on the flagstone and burned his books, murmuring as if in a trance that he had lived a thousand years without having a son, and now that he was about to have one he was going to die. He gazed long at us, from one face to another, with choked sobs. At last he spoke out, "This mountain peak is most inaccessible to outsiders. You haven't even seen a woodcutter, have you? Anyone that can reach this place must have been sent by heaven."

The captain returned to camp with the treasures and the women. Some of them still had a home waiting for them.

A year later his wife gave birth to a boy who seemed to have taken after the ape. The captain was later killed by the new emperor of the Chen Dynasty. His son, however, grew up to be a famous literary figure of his time.²¹





李参军

唐兖州李参军拜职赴上，途次新郑逆旅，遇老人读《汉书》。李因与交言，便及姻事。老人问先婚何家？李辞未婚。老人曰：“君名家子，当选婚好。今闻陶贞益为彼州都督，若逼以女妻君，君何以辞之？陶李为婚，深骇物听。仆虽庸劣，窃为足下羞之。今去此数里，有萧公，是吏部璇之族，门地亦高，见有数女，容色殊丽。”李闻而悦之，因求老人介绍于萧氏。其人便许之，去久之方还，言萧公甚欢，敬以待客。李与仆御偕行。

既至萧氏，门馆清肃，甲第显焕。高槐修竹，蔓延连亘，绝世之胜境。初，二黄门持金倚床延坐。少时，萧





Lieutenant Li's Wife

On his way to take up his new office in the prefectural government of Yan, Lieutenant Li of the Tang Dynasty stopped at an inn in Xinzheng County, where he saw an old man reading *The History of the Han Dynasty*. A conversation was struck up and their talk somehow got around to marriage. The old man asked him which family his wife was from and Li replied that he was not even engaged.

“You’re from a distinguished family,”²² the old man said, “so your wife’s family must be of equal status. The present governor of Yan, I hear, is Tao Zhenyi. What if he should suggest you marry his daughter? You wouldn’t dare to turn him down, would you? And yet, it would be a scandal to hear a Li marry a Tao. Even my humble self would be ashamed of you. There’s a Lord Xiao living a couple of miles from here. He’s a relative of Xiao Xuan, a cabinet minister and head of the Personnel Ministry. Theirs is a respectable family. Lord Xiao has several daughters. They’re all beauties.”

Elated, Li begged the old man to make an introduction for him. The old man agreed and went off. After some time he returned and told Li that Lord Xiao was quite pleased and was willing to meet him. So Li and his attendants followed the old man.

Xiao’s place was magnificent and well tended. Tall trees and bamboo groves surrounded the compound, giving it a look of exotic serenity. Two servants offered them gold armchairs to sit on. Presently, Xiao came forth, wearing a purple linen shirt and holding a walking

出，著紫蜀衫，策鸠杖，两袍袴扶侧，雪髯神鉴，举动可观。李望敬之，再三陈谢。萧云：“老叟悬车之所，久绝人事，何期君子，迂道见过。”延李入厅。服玩隐映，当世罕遇。寻荐珍膳，海陆交错，多有未名之物。食毕觞宴。老人乃云：“李参军向欲论亲，已蒙许诺。”萧便叙数十句语，深有士风。作书与县官，请卜人克日。须臾卜人至，云：“卜吉，正在此宵。”萧又作书与县官，借头花钗绢兼手力等，寻而皆至。其夕，亦有县官来作宾相。欢乐之事，与世不殊。至入青庐，妇人又姝美。李生愈悦。暨明，萧公乃言：“李郎赴上有期，不可久住。”便遣女子随去。宝钮犍车五乘，奴婢人马三十匹，其他服





stick with a carved turtledove head, two attendants at his sides. His beard was snow white and his eyes shone, a man demanding respect. Li was very much impressed and thanked him for his invitation.

"I'm old and retired," Xiao said, "and live in virtual seclusion. It's my honor that you've made this detour to pay me a visit." So speaking, he invited Li into the sitting room, which was decked out with rare pieces of art and jewelry. Soon a banquet was laid out. Food from the mountains and seas were served and there were many dishes which Li couldn't even name.

After the dinner, the old man brought up the topic, "Lieutenant Li wishes to marry your daughter, and I think you've agreed."

They talked on for a while, and Xiao proved to be a very cultured man. Then he wrote to notify the county government and sent for a fortuneteller to decide on an auspicious date for the wedding. In a moment the fortuneteller arrived. "Tonight is most auspicious," he calculated. Xiao wrote again to a government office to borrow wedding objects and sedan-chair carriers. Before long, everything was ready.

That evening there was a county official serving as the master of ceremonies and the occasion was as grand and elaborate as any family could desire. Back in the bridal chamber Li was thrilled to find that his wife was more beautiful than he had dreamed of.

The next morning Lord Xiao said, "We won't keep you here for long since you have a reporting date to meet." So he sent them off with a generous gift of five ox-drawn carriages, thirty horses and thirty servants, trunks of clothes, and many other things. Watching their procession, people would think with admiration that it was the wedding of a princess.

Two years thus passed. Then Li was dispatched to Luoyang on official business. With him away his wife and serving maids changed



玩，不可胜数。见者谓是王妃公主之流，莫不健羨。

李至任，积二年，奉使人洛，留妇在舍。婢等并妖媚蛊冶，眩惑丈夫，往来者多经过焉。异日，参军王颙曳狗将猎。李氏群婢见狗甚骇，多骋而入门。颙素疑其妖媚，尔日心动，径牵狗入其宅。合家拒堂门，不敢喘息，狗亦掣挛号吠。李氏妇门中大诟曰：“婢等顷为犬咋，今尚遑惧。王颙何事牵犬入人家？同官为僚，独不为李参军之地乎？”颙意是狐，乃决意排窗放犬，咋杀群狐。唯妻死，身是人，而其尾不变。颙往白贞益，贞益往取验覆，见诸死狐，嗟叹久之。时天寒，乃埋一处。

经十余日，萧使君遂至。入门号哭，莫不惊骇。数





into seductive clothes and haunted the streets. Men were seen streaming in and out of their house.

That day, Lieutenant Wang Yong was taking his dogs out for hunting. At the sight of the dogs, Li's serving maids scuttled back into the house. Wang had long suspected that they were foxes in disguise, and their panic further confirmed his belief. He led his pack straight into Li's courtyard. The maids bolted the door of the house and held their breath. The dogs growled and leaped. Behind the door Li's wife scolded out loud, "Wang Yong, how dare you bring your dogs into other people's house? My maids were bitten by dogs and they are still scared. You and my husband are colleagues. Don't you know this is his private property?"

Now Wang was more certain than ever that they were foxes. He pried open the window to let the dogs in, and a whole pack of foxes were killed. Among the dead, only Li's wife had acquired a human body, but her fox tail remained unchanged.

Wang made a report to Tao Zhenyi, the governor, who went in person to examine the bodies and was filled with amazement at the sight of the dead foxes. It was winter then, and they had the bodies buried in a pit.

Some ten days later Lord Xiao arrived at Li's place. His wailing and moaning astonished the neighborhood. Then he appealed to the governor. His venerable looks and convincing argument won Tao's respect. Wang was arrested, but he insisted that what he killed were foxes and proposed to test Xiao with his dog. At that time Xiao and Tao were sharing a table at dinner. When Xiao saw the dog he picked it up and placed it on his lap to stroke and feed it. The dog didn't show a trace of alarm.

A few days later Li returned from his mission. He cried for days



日，来诣陶闻诉。言词确实，容服高贵，陶甚敬待。因收王颙下狱。王固执是狐，取前犬令咋萧。时萧陶对食，犬至，萧引犬头膝上，以手抚之，然后与食，犬无搏噬之意。后数日，李生亦还。号哭累日，剡然发狂，啮王颙身尽肿。萧谓李曰：“奴辈皆言死者悉是野狐，何其苦痛！当日即欲开瘞，恐李郎被眩惑，不见信。今宜开视，以明奸妄也。”命开视，悉是人形。李愈悲泣。贞益以颙罪重，锢身推勘。颙私白云：“已令持十万，于东都取咋狐犬，往来可十余日。”贞益又以公钱百千益之。其犬既至，所由谒萧对事，陶于正厅立待。萧入府，颜色沮丧，举动惶扰，有异于常。俄犬自外人，萧作老狐，下阶走数步，为犬咋死。贞益使验死者，悉是野狐。颙遂见免此难。





on end. Delirious with grief, he bit Wang until the latter was swollen all over.

“Everybody says they were foxes,” Xiao told Li. “What an insult that is! I intended to open up the grave the day I arrived, but on second thought I was afraid you might be fooled by what others tell you and doubt my words. So I’ve put it off till now. Let’s open it up to find out the truth.”

The grave was dug up and the remains were all human bodies. The sight grieved Li even more and convinced the governor that Wang was guilty of felony. Wang was securely locked up and interrogated, yet he told Tao in private that he had already ordered a servant to the East Capital with a hundred thousand coins to buy a fine breed of fox-hunting hound. It would take a fortnight before his servant could come back. Tao threw in another hundred thousand from the government coffer to ensure that the best hound was bought.

The hound arrived. The governor sent for Lord Xiao while he waited at his office. Xiao came without his usual confidence. As soon as the hound was led in, Xiao turned into an old fox, but before it managed to run down the steps it was caught and bitten dead by the hound. The coroner was summoned again and this time the entombed bodies turned out to be dead foxes.

Wang was released from jail.



田氏子

唐牛肃有从舅常过澠池，因至西北三十里谒田氏子。去田氏庄十余里，经岌险，多栎林，传云中有魅狐，往来经之者，皆结侣乃敢过。舅既至，田氏子命老竖往澠池市酒馔。

天未明，竖行，日暮不至。田氏子怪之。及至，竖一足又跛。问何故。竖曰：“适至栎林，为一魅狐所绊，因蹶而仆，故伤焉。”问何以见魅。竖曰：“适下坡时，狐变为妇人，遽来追我，我惊且走，狐又疾行，遂为所及，因倒且损。吾恐魅之为怪，强起击之。妇人口但哀祈，反谓我为狐，屡云：‘叩头野狐！叩头野狐！’吾以其不自





Who Is the Fox?

Business once took a distant uncle of mine to Mianchi, and he seized the opportunity to visit an old friend, a Mr Tian, who was living some ten miles northwest of town. To get to the village one had to scale a steep and thickly wooded ridge. The oak forest, if one believes the local legend, was haunted by fox vampires. People were so scared that they would usually gather into groups to cross the woods.

Having a guest, Tian dispatched his old butler to town to shop for groceries and wine. The man left early in the morning, but did not return until late afternoon, and limping badly.

“What happened to you?” his master asked in concern.

“I was not far into the woods,” the butler mumbled in reply, “when a fox vampire tripped me. I fell and hurt my ankle.”

“How do you know it was a fox vampire?” Tian asked incredulously.

“Once down the hill, I looked back and saw it had changed into a woman. She was chasing me! I ran, and she ran, too. She quickly caught up with me. I dropped to the ground and was hurt. I knew if I didn’t strike back, I would be her prey. So I gathered myself up and fought. You guess what, she called me a fox, and begged for mercy. ‘Have mercy, Lord Fox. Have mercy, Lord Fox,’ she kept whining. How cunning she was! But little tricks like that can’t fool me. I punched and punched till my hands were sore. And that’s how I escaped death.”



知，因与痛手，故免其祸。”田氏子曰：“汝无击人，妄谓狐耶？”竖曰：“吾虽苦击之，终不改妇人状耳。”田氏子曰：“汝必误损他人。且入户。”

日入，见妇人体伤蓬首，过门而求饮。谓田氏子曰：“吾适栎林，逢一老狐变为人。吾不知是狐，前趋为伴，同过栎林，不知老狐却伤我如此。赖老狐去，余命得全。妾北村人也，渴故求饮。”田氏子恐其见苍头也，与之饮而遣之。





"If you had a brawl with someone in town, just say so. Don't throw the blame on a fox," coaxed his master.

"It was real strange," the butler rambled on. "No matter how hard I beat her, I couldn't make her show her true colors."

"I'm afraid you were mistaken, but for the present get back to your room and have a good rest."

The sun had sunk below the horizon. A haggard woman in torn clothes and with blackened eyes appeared at the gate, begging for a bowl of water.

"I was entering the forest," she explained to Tian, "when I saw an old man not far ahead. I thought he would make good company to cross the woods together. I didn't suspect anything when I approached him, but he turned out to be a fox vampire in man's form. See how I was beaten up. Thank heaven that he seemed to have some more urgent call, or I wouldn't be able to keep body and soul together. I live in the village to the north. Can I have some water? I'm dying of thirst."

Fearing that she might recognize the butler, Tian himself fetched her a ladle of water and hastily sent her on her way.





僧晏通

晋州长宁县有沙门晏通修头陀法，将夜，则必就藁林乱冢寓宿焉。虽风雨露雪，其操不易；虽魑魅魍魉，其心不摇。

月夜，栖于道边积骸之左。忽有妖狐踉跄而至，初不虞晏通在树影也，乃取髑髅安于其首，遂摇动之。倘振落者，即不再顾，因别选焉。不四五，遂得其一。岌然而缀，乃褰擷木叶草花，障蔽形体，随其顾盼，即成衣服。须臾，化作妇人，绰约而去。乃于道右，以伺行人。

俄有促马南来者。妖狐遥闻，则恸哭于路。过者驻骑问之，遂对曰：“我歌人也，随夫人奏。今晓夫为盗杀，掠去其财，伶俜孤远，思愿北归，无由致。脱能收采，当





The Fox Vampire

In Changning County, Jin Prefecture, there was a Buddhist monk named Yan Tong who practiced *dhuta*, an ascetic way of living. One of the twelve requirements was spending nights in the open, especially in the wilderness or in a graveyard. Be it rain or snow, his exercise was never interrupted; be he among ghosts or demons, his mind never wavered.

One moonlit night he was reposing by a roadside heap of skeletons when he saw a fox vampire staggering along his way. It didn't notice him, because he was in the shade of a tree. It picked up a skull from the heap, slipped it over its head, and gave it a violent shake. If the skull disintegrated, it would simply try another one. Having thus tested four or five, it chanced upon a durable one, which it donned joyously. Then it plucked leaves and flowers to cover its body. At the touch of its vision they turned into flower-patterned clothes and in no time the fox turned into a young woman and walked off to the roadside swinging its hips. There it waited for late travelers.

Before long, the clattering of hoofs was heard coming along the road and the fox affected a noisy cry. The rider halted to make an inquiry.

"I'm a singer," replied the fox in a flood of tears. "My husband and I were summoned to perform in the palace, but he was killed by a gang of bandits in the morning and all our possessions were seized. I'm alone and helpless. I'd like to return north, but I don't have the



誓微躯，以执婢役。”过者易定军人也，即下马熟视，悦其都冶，词意叮咛，便以后乘挈行焉。晏通遽出谓曰：“此妖狐也，君何容易。”因举锡杖叩狐脑，髑髅应手即坠，遂复形而窜焉。





means. If you take me along, I pledge my word I'll be a good serving maid."

The rider happened to be a soldier stationed in the north. He dismounted and looked the woman up and down. It seemed that he was rather pleased with her figure. After exchanging a few more words, he helped her up to sit behind him. Just as they were about to ride off, Yan jumped out from the shade and shouted, "Look out, man! This is a fox vampire. How can you be so trusting!" With one stroke of his walking stick he knocked off the skeleton skull. The fox changed back into its original form and fled.



李令绪

李令绪即兵部侍郎李纾堂兄，其叔选授江夏县丞，令绪因往觐叔。及至坐久，门人报云：“某小娘子使家人传语。”唤入，见一婢甚有姿态，云：“娘子参拜兄嫂，且得令绪远到。”丞妻亦传语云：“娘子能来此看儿侄否？”又云：“妹有何饮食，可致之。”婢去后，其叔谓令绪曰：“汝知乎，吾与一狐知闻逾年矣。”

须臾，使人赍大食器至。黄衫奴舁，并向来传语婢同到，云：“娘子续来。”俄顷间，乘四辂金饰舆，仆从二十余人至门，丞妻出迎。见一妇人，年可三十余，双梳云髻，光彩可鉴。婢等皆以罗绮，异香满宅。令绪避入，其





Li Lingxu and His Fox Aunt

Li Lingxu, a cousin of the vice minister of defense, Li Shu, had an uncle who was the deputy magistrate of Jiangxia County. So there he went for a visit.

He was sitting with his uncle when a janitor came in to report: "Her Ladyship has sent over a maid with a message."

The maid was summoned in. "My mistress," said the maid, who was quite a charming girl, "sends her greetings to brother and sister-in-law and her welcome to nephew Lingxu."

"Would she like to come over to meet her nephew?" his aunt asked. "If she happens to have some nice food, she may bring it along."

"Can you believe it?" his uncle said after the maid was gone. "I've been friends with a fox for more than a year!"

Before long the maid returned with a yellow-shirted servant carrying a large food hamper. "My mistress will be here in a moment," the maid announced.

Shortly, a gilded coach surrounded by some twenty servants and maids arrived at the gate. His aunt went out in person to welcome the guest. A woman in her thirties stepped down from the coach, her hair done up in double buns. What a graceful figure she had! Even her maids were clad in silk and satin and their presence filled the room with the scent of perfume. As he was a stranger, he withdrew into a side room.



妇升堂坐讫，谓丞妻曰：“令绪既是子侄，何不出来？”令绪闻之，遂出拜。谓曰：“我侄真士人君子之风。”坐良久，谓令绪曰：“观君甚长厚，心怀中应有急难于众人。”令绪亦知其故。谈话尽日辞去。后数来，每至皆有珍馐。

经半年，令绪拟归东洛，其姑遂言：“此度阿姑得令绪心矣。阿姑缘有厄，拟随令绪到东洛，可否？”令绪惊云：“行李贫迫，要致车乘，计无所出。”又云：“但许，阿姑家自假车乘，只将女子两人，并向来所使婢金花去。阿姑事，令绪应知，不必言也。但空一衣笼，令逐驼家人，每至关津店家，即略开笼，阿姑暂过歇了，开笼自然出行，岂不易乎？”令绪许诺。及发，开笼。见三四黑影入笼中，出入不失前约。至东都，将到宅，令绪云：“何





The woman took a seat in the hall. "Lingxu is a member of the family," she said to his aunt. "He doesn't need to shy away." So he came out and bowed. "My nephew looks every inch of a scholar and a gentleman," she observed when she saw him.

They sat and chatted through the day. "You seem rather reserved," she turned to Lingxu and said. "I guess you're somewhat embarrassed."

He knew what she was referring to but didn't take up the topic. She left at sundown. He found out later that her visits were frequent and each time she would bring along some delicious food.

"I think I know what's on your mind," his fox aunt said as he was thinking of returning to the East Capital a half year later, "but I can't help you now, because at this moment I myself am threatened by adversity. Do you mind if I go with you to the East Capital?"

"But look at my condition," he stammered in surprise. "To say the least, I don't have a coach and horses for you."

"Your permission will be enough," she replied. "You don't have to worry about my coach and horses. I'll only bring along two maids and Gold Bloom. She's the one you always see with me. I guess you already know something about me, so I don't have to explain, right? All you need to do is empty out one clothes-pannier for us and tell your camel driver to open the lid a crack when you put up at an inn for the night so that I can have a break. And before you continue your journey, don't forget to open the pannier again. Isn't that easy?"

He agreed. So he had the pannier opened before he set off and saw four shadows slip in. Opening and closing the pannier that way, they reached the East Capital.

"How shall I accommodate you?" he asked as they approached home.



处可安置？”金花云：“娘子要于仓中甚便。”令绪即扫洒仓，密为都置，唯逐驼奴知之，余家人莫有知者。每有所要，金花即自来取之，阿姑时时一见。后数月云：“厄已过矣，拟去。”令绪问云：“欲往何处？”阿姑云：“胡璿除豫州刺史，缘二女成长，须有匹配，今与渠处置。”

令绪明年合格，临欲选，家贫无计，乃往豫州。及入境，见榜云：“我单门孤立，亦无亲表，恐有擅托亲故，妄索供拟。即获时申报，必当科断。”往来商旅，皆传胡使君清白，干谒者绝矣。令绪以此惧，进退久之，不获已，乃潜入豫州，见有人参谒，亦无所得。令绪便投刺，





“Your storeroom would be quite convenient for us,” Gold Bloom answered.

He had the storeroom cleaned and arrangements made, and kept it a secret even to his family. Only the camel driver knew about it. Every time something was needed, it would be Gold Bloom coming to fetch it. During all that time he only saw his fox aunt occasionally.

“My ill fortune has passed over,” she confided to him several months later. “We’ll be leaving.”

“Where do you plan to go?” he asked.

“Hu Xuan was recently appointed prefect of Yu,” she said. “His two daughters are of marriage age and I’m going to make arrangements for them.”

Next year, it was time again for the imperial examination. As Lingxu was too poor to cope with the expenses, he decided to make a trip to Yu Prefecture.

Once he set foot in Yu prefecture, a poster on the wall caught his eye, which read:

“For successive generations my family line is carried down on single sons. Neither do I have relatives on the maternal side. Therefore, he is an imposter who tries to extort money or goods in the name of the prefect’s relative. Apprehend him and report to the prefectural government immediately. He shall be punished.” It was signed by the prefect.

The incorruptibility of the prefect was lauded by locals and travelers alike, and no one dared to approach him for favors. That daunted Lingxu, and yet as he had no one else to turn to, he went into town after some hesitation and hung outside the gate of the prefectural office. Despite the warning of the poster he did see some people go in, but they all came out disappointed. He sent in his name card for a try, and to his surprise, he was immediately summoned in. The prefect seemed



使君即时引入，一见极喜，如故人。云：“虽未奉见，知公有急难，久伫光仪，来何晚也！”即授馆，供给颇厚。一州云：“自使君到，未曾有如此。”每日入宅欢宴，但论时事，亦不言他。

经月余，令绪告别，璿云：“即与处置路粮，充选时之费。”便集县令曰：“璿自到州，不曾有亲故扰。李令绪天下俊秀，某平生永慕，奉昨一见，知是丈夫，以此重之。诸公合见耳。今请赴选，各须与致粮食，无令轻鲜。”官吏素畏其威，自县令以下，赠绢无数十匹以下者。令绪获绢千匹，仍备行装，又留宴别。

令绪因出戟门，见别有一门，金花自内出云：“娘子在山亭院要相见。”及入，阿姑已出，喜盈颜色。曰：





overjoyed to see him, as if he were a long separated old friend.

“Although we’ve never met before, I know that you’re in dire need,” the prefect said. “I’ve been waiting to receive you. What has kept you so long in coming?”

He was nicely accommodated and well provided for.

“Ever since the prefect took office, no one has been treated like that,” the surprised locals remarked.

Every day he was invited to feast with the prefect. At the table they talked about many issues, but not a word was mentioned about his needs.

He decided to leave after a month.

“No haste,” the prefect said. “I’ll get you the funds for your traveling and examination right away.”

So he summoned all the county magistrates under his jurisdiction and said, “I believe not a single relative or friend of mine has troubled you since I assumed office. But this Mr Li Lingxu is exceptional. He’s a learned man, the kind of man I hold in esteem. I knew that the first time I met him, and that’s why I treated him with respect. I think you too would like to meet him. Now he’s going to the capital to sit for the imperial examination, I hope each of you will lend him a supportive hand. Show me your generosity.”

As his subordinates used to stand in awe of his authoritative sternness, none dared to offer less than ten bolts of silk. With more than the worth of a thousand bolts of silk, Lingxu was ready to set off, and the prefect arranged a grand farewell party in his honor.

Coming out from the prefect’s compound, he saw Gold Bloom emerging from a gate next door. “My mistress is in the pavilion garden,” she said. “She’d like to see you.”

There he went and his fox aunt was already waiting for him in the

“岂不能待嫁二女？”又云：“令绪买得甘子，不与令姑，太怪也。”令绪惊云：“实买得，不敢特送。”笑云：“此戏言耳。君所买者不堪，阿姑自有上者，与令绪将去。”命取之，一一皆大如拳。既别，又唤令绪回云：“时方艰难，所将绢帛行李，恐遇盗贼，为之奈何？”乃曰：“借与金花将去，但有事急，一念金花，即当无事。”

令绪行数日，果遇盗五十余人，令绪恐惧坠马。忽思金花，便见精骑三百余人，自山而来，军容甚盛，所持器械，光可以鉴。杀贼略尽，金花命骑士却掣驰，仍处分兵马好去。欲至京，路店宿，其主人女病，云是妖魅。令绪问主人曰：“是何疾？”答云：“似有妖魅，历诸医术，无能暂愈。”令绪云：“治却何如？”主人珍重辞谢，乞相救：“但得校损，报效不轻。”遂念金花，须臾便至，具





yard. "Why can't you stay till the wedding of the girls?" she greeted him with a beaming smile. "You've bought some oranges, haven't you? Are you too stingy to give me a few?"

"Indeed I bought some oranges," he stammered in embarrassed surprise. "I didn't dare bother you with such trivial things."

"I was just joking. The oranges you bought were no good. I've got some choice ones. Take some with you." She asked a maid to fetch the oranges and hers was as large as fists.

He had bid her farewell and was out of the gate when she called him back. "It's hard times now and you're carrying so much silk and baggage with you. Aren't you afraid of bandits?"

"Probably I can lend you Gold Bloom," she continued after a pause. "If you run into trouble, the moment you think of her, she'll come to your help."

It was several days later when he had his first encounter with a gang of bandits, some fifty strong. In panic he fell from his horse. At that moment he thought of Gold Bloom and he saw some three hundred brightly-uniformed cavalymen charging down the slope, their weapons shining in the sunlight. They wiped out the bandits and at Gold Bloom's order, lined up and withdrew.

Putting up at an inn near the West Capital one night, he learned that the landlord's daughter was suffering a mysterious illness. She seemed to be possessed by an evil spirit, he was told, for no doctor could cure her, whatever methods they tried.

"What if I can cure her?" he asked.

Hearing that, the landlord begged for his help and promised a handsome reward even if it was only some slight improvement.

Gold Bloom appeared the moment he thought of her. He told her about the landlord's daughter and she went in to have a look. "That's

陈其事。略见女之病，乃云：“易也。”遂结一坛，焚香为咒。俄顷，有一狐甚疥疔，缚至坛中。金花决之一百，流血遍地，遂逐之，其女便愈。

及到京，金花辞令绪，令绪云：“远劳相送，无可赠别。”乃致酒饌。饮酣谓曰：“既无形迹，亦有一言，得无难乎？”金花曰：“有事但言。”令绪云：“愿闻阿姑家事来由也。”对曰：“娘子本某太守女，其叔父昆弟，与令绪不远，嫁为苏氏妻，遇疾终。金花是从嫁，后数月亦卒，故得在娘子左右。天帝配娘子为天狼将军夫人，故有神通。金花亦承阿郎余荫。胡使君即阿郎亲子侄。昨所治店家女，其狐是阿郎门侧役使，此辈甚多，金花能制之。”云：“锐骑救难者，是天兵。金花要换，不复多少。”令绪谢之云：“此何时当再会？”金花云：“本以姻





easy," she said as she came out from the patient's room.

She built an altar and ascended it to offer incense and chant an incantation. Presently, a scabby fox in fetters was brought into sight. She punished it with a hundred strokes till blood soaked the ground. The landlord's daughter recovered the moment the guilty fox was expelled.

Arriving in the capital, Gold Bloom came forth to bid him farewell.

"Thank you for accompanying me all the way," Lingxu said. "I really don't know how to express my gratitude. Just let me throw you a farewell party." After several rounds of toasts, he ventured, "You and your mistress are so unusual. I've long harbored a question but I'm not sure whether it's proper to ask."

"Just say it," Gold Bloom said.

"Could you tell me something about your mistress?"

"She was the daughter of a prefect," Gold Bloom replied. "Her uncle and you are kin. She was married to the family of Su, but her life was cut short by a fatal illness. I was her maid whom she brought along from her maiden home and I just happened to die a few months later so that I could be with her. The Lord of Heaven re-married her to General Sky Wolf. That's how she obtained magic powers, and I was able to pick up some power too. Prefect Hu is the general's nephew. The fox that possessed the landlord's daughter is a footman to my lord. There are so many of its like roaming the world, and in my position I have authority over them. The cavalry that had come to your rescue were celestial soldiers. I can have thousands of them at my bidding."

"So when shall we meet again?" he asked.

"Everything is decided by fate, and our affinity ends right now. So, farewell. Our future paths are separated."

缘运合，只到今日。自此姻缘断绝，便当永辞。”令绪惆怅良久，传谢阿姑，千万珍重。厚与金花赠遗，悉不肯受而去。胡璿后历数州刺史而卒。





It was saddening to hear that. He asked her to pass on his sincere well-wishing to her mistress. Gold Bloom left without accepting any of the presents he offered.

Hu Xuan served as prefect of several prefectures before he died.





姚 坤

太和中，有处士姚坤不求荣达，常以钓渔自适。居于东洛万安山南，以琴尊自怡。其侧有猎人，常以网取狐兔为业。坤性仁，恒收赎而放之，如此活者数百。

坤旧有庄，质于嵩岭菩提寺，坤持其价而赎之。其知庄僧惠沼行凶，率常于阒处凿井深数丈，投以黄精数百斤，求人试服，观其变化。乃饮坤大醉，投于井中，以砮石咽其井。坤及醒，无计跃出，但饥茹黄精而已。

如此数日夜，忽有人于井口召坤姓名，谓坤曰：“我狐也，感君活我子孙不少，故来教君。我狐之通天者，初





Sealwort

In Taihe reign, there was a scholar named Yao Kun living at the southern foot of Wan'an Mountain south of the East Capital. He had no interest in seeking name or fame, but took to fishing and playing musical instruments. Among his neighbors was a hunter, who made a living by trapping hares and foxes. Yao, being a kind-hearted man, often bought the hunter's catch and released them back into the mountains. The money came from his country estate which he had mortgaged to Bodhi Temple in Mount Song. In that way he managed to save the lives of hundreds of animals.

The abbot of Bodhi Temple, whose religious name was Huizhao, was a sinister man. In a secluded courtyard of the temple he had sunk a deep well in which he stored hundreds of pounds of sealwort, a medicinal herb which, according to popular belief, could make one weightless and live long, and he was looking for poor souls to take the experiment to prove those magic effects.

It happened one day that he was able to make Yao drunk. Then he dropped him into the well and covered the well mouth with a heavy millstone. When Yao regained his senses, he found he was trapped and there was only the herb to satiate his hunger.

Several days later, he heard someone whispering his name at the well mouth. "I'm a fox," the voice said. "I'm indebted to you, for you've saved many of my offspring. Now I've come to save you. I've acquired the ability to ascend to the sky. Let me tell you how. I used to

穴于冢，因上窍，乃窥天汉星辰，有所慕焉。恨身不能奋飞，遂凝盼注神。忽然不觉飞出，蹶虚驾云，登天汉，见仙官而礼之。君但能澄神泯虑，注盼玄虚，如此精确，不三旬而自飞出。虽窍之至微，无所碍矣。”坤曰：“汝何据耶？”狐曰：“君不闻《西升经》云：‘神能飞形，亦能移山。’君其努力。”言讫而去。坤信其说，依而行之。

约一月，忽能跳出于硃孔中。遂见僧，大骇，视其井依然。僧礼坤诘其事，坤告曰：“但于中饵黄精一月，身轻如神，自能飞出，窍所不碍。”僧然之，遣弟子，以索坠下，约弟子一月后来窥。弟子如其言，月余来窥，僧已毙于井耳。





live in a tomb. There was a crack in the dome so that I could see the stars and constellations. I was filled with curiosity and wished I could fly. Night after night, I gazed and gazed with all concentration. Then a day came when all of a sudden I felt myself lifting up and rising higher and higher into heaven. I found I could ride the clouds and rub shoulders with the celestial beings! Now, if you fix your gaze on the sky, eliminate all distracting thoughts and concentrate only on flying, in less than thirty days you shall be able to float up and get out of here, no matter how small the crack is.”

“How can I believe that?” Yao asked.

“Haven’t you read the scripture of *Western Ascent*? It says, ‘Mental power can make things fly; it can even move mountains.’ Try it.” Then the fox was gone.

Yao took his word and tried. In about a month, he was able to leap out through the eye of the millstone.

The monk was astonished to see him. He hurried to the well. The millstone was still firmly over the well mouth. In all humbleness, he asked Yao how he managed to get out.

“Just eat the sealwort,” Yao replied, “and in a month you’ll feel yourself getting weightless. Then you’ll be able to fly up and out through any crack.”

The monk eagerly embraced the idea. He told his disciples to get a rope and lower him into the well, and made arrangements that they come back for him a month later.

When his disciples returned at the appointed time, they found him at the bottom of the well – dead.

Yao couldn’t have been home for ten days when a young woman appeared at his door. She introduced herself as Peach Blossom and

坤归旬日，有女子自称夭桃，诣坤。云是富家女，误为年少诱出，失踪不可复返，愿持箕帚。坤见其妖丽冶容，至于篇什书札俱能精至，坤亦念之。后坤应制，挈夭桃入京。至盘豆馆，夭桃不乐，取笔题竹简，为诗一首曰：“铅华久御向人间，欲舍铅华更惨颜。纵有青丘今夜月，无因重照旧云鬟。”吟讽久之，坤亦矍然。

忽有曹牧遣人执良犬，将献裴度。入馆，犬见夭桃，怒目掣锁，蹲步上阶，夭桃亦化为狐，跳上犬背抉其目。大惊，腾号出馆，望荆山而窜。坤大骇，逐之行数里，犬已毙，狐即不知所之。坤惆怅悲惜，尽日不能前进。及





said she was the daughter of a rich family. She was seduced from home by a young man, who later abandoned her, and she had no face to go back to her parents. She would like to serve him as a wife. She was pretty and could read and write. Yao accepted her.

Later on Yao decided to go to the capital to attend the imperial examination. He took Peach Blossom along. At a posthouse called Pandou, Peach Blossom seemed to have sunk into a melancholy mood. She took up a brushpen and wrote a poem on a bamboo slip, which read:

*Years have accustomed me to lead and rouge;
To give them up would make me pale and blue.
Although the moon may shine above the mound,
My good old days will never come around.*

And she chanted the poem over and over to herself, so absorbed was she that Yao was alarmed. Just at that moment, a man arrived at the posthouse with a purebred hound. He was a special envoy of a local governor and the dog was a gift to the then prime minister Pei Du. The dog growled at the sight of Peach Blossom and leaped onto the steps, straining against its leash. Instantly, Peach Blossom turned into a fox, jumped onto the hound's back and clawed out its eyes. The terrified hound howled painfully and dashed out of the courtyard into the mountains. Yao, taken aback, ran after them. Several miles out he found the hound, having bled to death, but there was no trace of the fox.

Yao was so saddened by the incident that he felt in no mood to continue his journey. That evening, a venerable-looking man called on him with a flask of good wine, who introduced himself as an old friend. But all through their drinking, Yao couldn't recall when or where he had met that person before. The bottle emptied, the man bowed his

夜，有老人挈美酝诣坤，云是旧相识。既饮，坤终莫能达相识之由。老人饮罢，长揖而去，云：“报君亦足矣，吾孙亦无恙。”遂不见，坤方悟狐也。后寂无闻矣。



farewell, saying, "I reckon I've sufficiently repaid your kindness. Don't worry about my grandchild. She's all right."

It was only after the man had gone that Yao realized he was the old fox. And that was the last time it ever appeared.



邛都老姥

益州邛都县有老姥，家贫孤独，每食，辄有小蛇，头上有角，在盘之间。姥怜而饲之，后渐渐长大丈余。县令有马，忽被蛇吸之，令因大怒，收姥。姥云：“在床下。”遂令人发掘，愈深而无所见，县令乃杀姥。其蛇因梦于令曰：“何故杀我母？当报仇耳！”自此每常闻风雨之声。三十日，是夕，百姓咸惊相谓曰：“汝头何得戴鱼？”相逢皆如此言。是夜，方四十里，与城一时俱陷为湖，土人谓之邛河，亦邛池。其母之故宅基独不没，至今犹存。鱼人采捕，必止宿。又言此水清，其底犹见城郭楼榭宛然矣。





A Granny in Qiongzdu County

In Qiongzdu County there was a poor granny living alone. Every time she had a meal, a small snake with tiny horns would crawl over to her feet to keep her company, and she would share her food with it. As years went by, it grew to a dozen feet.

One day, the county magistrate's horse was swallowed by the snake. The enraged magistrate had the granny arrested and interrogated.

"It lives under my bed," she said.

They dug very deep but found no snake. So the magistrate ordered her execution.

That night, he had a dream. The snake said to him, "Why kill my mom? She shall be avenged!"

After that, he often heard the rumbling of a storm in his ears. In the late afternoon of the thirtieth day, people suddenly began a strange way of greeting. "Why are you wearing fish on your head?" one would say to another.

That night, the county town and its surrounding area of a dozen miles caved in and became a huge lake, which the locals later named Lake Qiongz. Only the granny's house remained above water, and its foundation is preserved to this day. Fishermen often spend the nights there. People say they can see town walls and buildings in the clear waters.

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担 生

昔有书生，路逢小蛇，因而收养，数月渐大。书生每自担之，号曰担生。其后不可担负，放之范县东大泽中。四十余年，其蛇如覆舟，号为神蟒。人往于泽中者，必被吞食。

书生时已老迈，途经此泽畔。人谓曰：“中有大蛇食人，君宜无往。”时盛冬寒甚，书生谓冬月蛇藏，无此理，遂过大泽。行二十里余，忽有蛇逐。书生尚识其形色，遥谓之曰：“尔非我担生乎？”蛇便低头，良久方去。

回至范县，县令问其见蛇不死，以为异，系之狱中，断刑当死。书生私忿曰：“担生，养汝翻令我死，不亦剧





The Snake on the Shoulder-Pole

Once upon a time, a young scholar saw a small snake lying on the road. He picked it up and fed it. In a few months, it grew so big that he had to carry it in a basket on his shoulder-pole. He nicknamed it "my shoulder-pole baby." Gradually, it grew too heavy even to carry on his shoulder. So he released it into the vast swamp east of Fan County.

Forty years slipped by and the snake grew to the size of an overturned boat. People called it "the holy python." Anyone who ventured out into the swamp would be swallowed. It just happened that the scholar, now at a doddering age, once again traveled past that place. People warned, "Don't try to go through the swamp. A man-eating python lives there."

It was freezing winter then. The scholar replied, "Snakes hibernate in winter. They won't come out." So he went ahead. About six miles into the swamp, he suddenly noticed a snake chasing him. He thought he could still recognize the pattern and color of its coat. "Aren't you my shoulder-pole baby?" he cried out. The snake dropped its head. After a good while, it turned away.

The scholar reached Fan County, and so did his story of near escape. The magistrate conjectured that anyone who could have survived an encounter with the snake could not but be a sort of sorcerer. Upon that accusation the scholar was thrown into jail with a death sentence. In anger, he mumbled, "My shoulder-pole baby, I fed you and raised you, and you should cause me my death! Isn't that rather ironic?"

哉!”其夜，蛇遂攻陷一县为湖，独狱不陷，书生获免。

天宝末，独孤暹者，其舅为范令。三月三日，与家人于湖中泛舟，无故覆没，家人几死者数四也。





That night, the entire county was sunk by the snake and turned into a boundless lake. Only the prison was not engulfed. The scholar went free.

Toward the end of Tianbao reign, the magistrate of Fan County was an uncle of Mr Dugu Xian. He and his family went boating on the lake on the third day of the third lunar month. The weather was fine but their boat capsized, drowning many.





户部令史妻

唐开元中，户部令史妻有色，得魅疾，而不能知之。家有骏马，恒倍刍秣，而瘦劣愈甚。以问邻舍胡人。胡亦术士，笑云：“马行百里犹倦，今反行千里余，宁不瘦耶？”令史言：“初不出入，家又无人，曷由至是？”胡云：“君每入直，君妻夜出，君自不知。若不信，至入直时，试还察之，当知耳。”

令史依其言。夜还，隐他所。一更，妻起靓妆，令婢鞍马，临阶御之。婢骑扫帚随后，冉冉乘空，不复见。令史大骇。明往见胡，瞿然曰：“魅信之矣，为之奈何？”胡令更一夕伺之。





The Official's Wife

This happened in Kaiyuan reign. An official of the Ministry of Revenue had a beautiful wife, and he also had a fine steed. For no obvious reason at all his wife contracted an unusual disease and his horse suddenly started to eat twice as much as it used to, but was growing ever thinner.

The puzzled official went to see his next-door neighbor, a Persian who was reputed to be something of a sorcerer. When asked, the Persian chuckled, "Ten miles will exhaust a horse, won't it? Not to speak of racing a thousand miles a day. It couldn't but be reduced to bones."

The official protested that he seldom rode out, and there was no other male in his house.

"Every time you were on the night shift," confided the Persian, "your wife would go out. Well, if you don't believe me, you may make an unexpected return next time you're supposed to be on duty, and see for yourself."

The official took the advice and returned one evening, hiding out at a neighbor's. When night fell, his wife started to make up, and ordered the maid to saddle the horse. Then she came out onto the steps and mounted. The maid straddled a broom and followed. They rode up into the starry sky and disappeared from sight. The stunned official went to see the Persian early in the morning, announcing that he was now fully convinced, and begged for further advice. He was told to



其夜，令史归堂前幕中。妻顷复还，问婢何以有生人气。令婢以扫帚烛火，遍然堂庑。令史狼狈入堂大瓮中。须臾，乘马复往，适已烧扫帚，无复可骑。妻云：“随有即骑，何必扫帚。”婢仓卒，遂骑大瓮随行。令史在瓮中，惧不敢动。须臾，至一处，是山顶林间，供帐帘幕，筵席甚盛。群饮者七八辈，各有匹偶，座上宴饮，合昵备至，数更后方散。妇人上马，令婢骑向瓮。婢惊云：“瓮中有人。”妇人乘醉，令推著山下；婢亦醉，推令史出。令史不敢言。乃骑瓮而去。

令史及明，都不见人，但有余烟烬而已。乃寻径路，崎岖可数十里方至山口。问其所，云是阆州，去京师千余里。行乞辛勤，月余，仅得至舍。妻见惊问之久何所来，





make another secret return.

That night when his wife was out, the official slid home and hid himself behind the hall curtains. All of a sudden, his wife reentered and asked the maid why there was the smell of a living person in the house. The maid lit the broom and used it as a torch searching from room to room. In a pinch, the official slipped into the big vat in the hall and replaced the cover above his head. Presently, his wife jumped onto the horse and was ready to set off again. As the broom had been burned up, this time the maid had nothing to ride.

“Broom or no broom, it’s all the same. Ride whatever is at hand!” his wife commanded.

In haste, the maid got onto the vat and followed. The official inside was numbed with fear.

Before long they landed at an opening in a forest on a hill top. There, in front of a tent, a rich banquet was laid out. A group of seven or eight young men were sitting at a table, each holding a belle on his lap. The feast continued into the small hours of the night. Then his wife got up, mounted the horse, and ordered the maid to get onto the vat.

“There’s a man in the vat!” the maid shrieked in surprise.

Sodden with wine, his wife told the maid to push the man down the hill. The maid, also drunk, dragged the official out of the vat and rode away. The official was too frightened to say a single word.

Day broke. All was quiet and there was nothing but smoking ashes at the site to remind one of the midnight revels. The official had to find his way out the mountains. It was only when he finally reached a human habitation that he learned he was in Lang Prefecture, hundreds of miles from the capital. It took him more than a month before he begged his way home. His wife asked in amazement where he had been for so long. He made up a pretext, and went straight to the Per-



令史以他答。复往问胡，求其料理。胡云：“魅已成，伺其复去，可遽缚取，火以焚之。”闻空中乞命。顷之，有苍鹤堕火中，焚死，妻疾遂愈。





sian for help. The Persian told him that next time his wife was going, he should be able to catch the evil spirit possessing his wife and throw it into a fire.

The moment came. A voice was heard in the sky pleading for mercy. Then a gray crane fell out from the blue and dropped dead in the bonfire. His wife recovered immediately.



鸚鵡救火

有鸚鵡飞集他山，山中禽兽辄相贵重。鸚鵡自念，虽乐不可久也，便去。

后数日，山中大火。鸚鵡遥见，便入水濡羽，飞而洒之。天神言：“汝虽有志，意何足云也？”对曰：“虽知不能，然尝侨居是山，禽兽行善，皆为兄弟，不忍见耳。”

天神嘉感，即为灭火。





A Parrot Fights a Mountain Fire

There was once a parrot living on a mountain. He was well respected by his fellow birds and beasts. Though that seemed an ideal place to inhabit, the parrot thought he should not be stuck there all his life, so he flew away.

A few days later, a terrible fire broke out on the mountain. Seeing this from afar, the parrot dipped his wings in a water hole and flew over to drench the fire. God said, "Determined as you might be, what use will your efforts come to?"

"I know this is of little use," answered the parrot, "but as I once lived there as a member of a congenial brotherhood, I can't watch them suffer unmoved."

God was so impressed that He extinguished the fire.





南人捕雁

雁宿于江湖之岸，沙渚之中，动计千百，大者居其中，令雁奴围而警察。南人有采捕者，俟其天色阴暗，或无月时，于瓦罐中藏烛，持棒者数人，屏气潜行。将欲及之，则略举烛，便藏之。雁奴惊叫，大者亦惊，顷之复定。又欲前举烛，雁奴又惊。如是数四，大者怒啄雁奴。秉烛者徐徐逼之，更举烛，则雁奴惧啄，不复动矣。乃高举其烛，持棒者齐入群中，乱击之，所获甚多。昔有淮南人张凝评事话之，此人亲曾采捕。





Catching Wild Geese

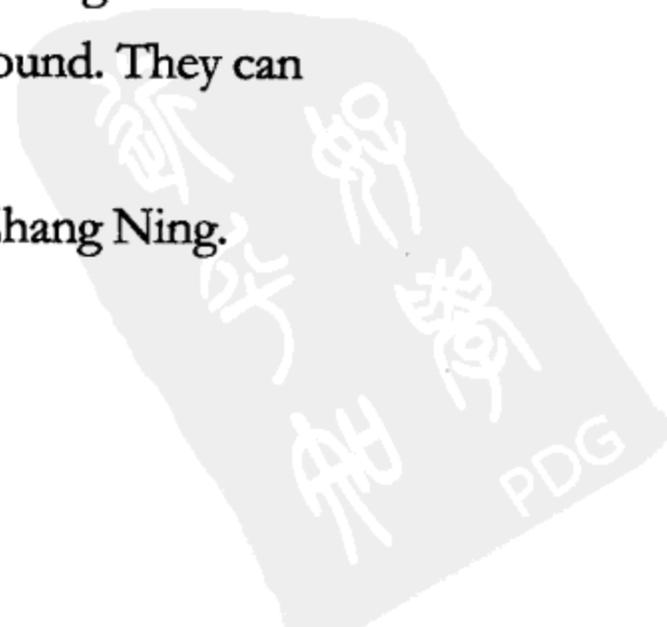
Migrating wild geese come in flocks of hundreds and thousands, spending nights on the shore or sand bars. The larger ones stay in the center, while those of lower status serve as sentries on the outskirts.

Hunters in the south act under cover of darkness; moonless nights are especially preferred. They usually work in an organized way, taking clubs with them as they stealthily approach the flock. One of them will take along a lit candle hidden in a clay jar. Coming upon the geese's resting place, the man will lift the candle slightly, and briefly, above the rim of the jar. The sentry geese will not fail to notice the light and give an alarm, waking up the whole group. And as nothing happens, they will calm down in a moment.

The hunter will then lift the candle again, and again the sentries will stir up the whole flock. After three or four more provocations, the leaders will get angry with such false alarms and peck the sentries, while the candle carrier sneaks up on them.

Before long, the sentries will simply ignore the candlelight, afraid of being pecked. Then the hunter will raise the candle high and the others will dash into the flock and wield their clubs around. They can always count on a big catch.

I learned this from an experienced man named Zhang Ning.



乌君山

乌君山者，建安之名山也，在县西一百里。近世有道士徐仲山者，少求神仙，专一为志，贫居苦节，年久弥励。与人遇于道，修礼，无少长皆让之。或果谷新熟，辄祭，先献虚空，次均宿老。乡人有偷者坐罪当死，仲山诣官，承其偷罪；白偷者不死，无辜而诛，情所未忍；乃免冠解带，抵承严法。所司疑而赦之。

仲山又尝山行，遇暴雨，苦风雷，迷失道径。忽于电光之中，见一舍宅，有类府州，因投以避雨。至门，见一锦衣人，顾仲山，乃称此乡道士徐仲山拜。其锦衣人称监门使者萧衡，亦拜。因叙风雨之故，深相延引。仲山问曰：“自有乡，无此府舍。”监门曰：“此神仙之处，仆即监门官也。”俄有一女郎，梳绾双鬟，衣绛赭裙青文罗衫，左手执金柄麈尾幢旄，传呼曰：“使者外与何人交通，而不报也？”答云：“此乡道士徐仲山。”须臾，又传呼云：“仙官召徐仲山人。”向所见女郎，引仲山自廊进。

至堂南小庭，见一丈夫，年可五十余，肤体须发尽



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Mount Raven

Taoist priest Xu Zhongshan had been dreaming of becoming an immortal ever since his youth, and as his years advanced he was increasingly obsessed with the idea.

Once, traveling along the trails in a mountain some thirty miles west of the county seat of Jian'an, he was caught in a heavy downpour. Driven by the shifting winds and blinded by the sheets of rain, he soon lost his way. Suddenly, by a flash of lightning, he saw a grand mansion ahead where he ran for cover. He was greeted by a man in splendid feathered livery at the gate. After a brief introduction and an explanation of his obvious plight, he was invited in.

"How come I didn't know there was such a mansion around here?" he wondered aloud.

"You're at the abode of immortals," said the man in livery. "My humble self is their janitor."

A girl appeared at the second gate wearing a spotted aqua blouse and an auburn skirt. In her left hand she held a gold-handled deer-tail whisk. "Who are you talking to out there?" she demanded. "Why didn't you report we're having a guest?"

"This is Mr Xu Zhongshan, the local Taoist priest," the janitor replied.

Presently, a voice announced from within, "His Excellency invites Mr Xu in." The girl he had seen came to lead him through a maze of verandahs to a small yard in the south. There stood a handsome man in



白，戴纱搭脑冠，白罗银镂帔，而谓仲山曰：“知卿精修多年，超越凡俗。吾有小女颇闲道教，以其夙业，合与卿为妻，今当吉辰耳。”仲山降阶称谢拜起，而复请谒夫人。乃止之曰：“吾丧偶已七年，吾有九子，三男六女。为卿妻者，最小女也。”乃命后堂备吉礼。既而陈酒肴，与仲山对食讫。渐夜闻环珮之声，异香芬郁，荧煌灯烛，引去别室。

礼毕三日。仲山悦其所居，巡行屋室。西向厂舍，见衣竿上悬皮羽十四枚，是翠碧皮，余悉乌皮耳。乌皮之中，有一枚是白乌皮。又至西南，有一厂舍，衣竿之上，见皮羽四十九枚，皆鸂鶒。

仲山私怪之，却至室中。其妻问其夫曰：“子适游行，有何所见，乃沉醉至此？”仲山未之应。其妻曰：“夫神仙轻举，皆假羽翼。不尔，何以倏忽而致万里乎？”因问曰：“乌





his fifties, his hair and beard all silvery, his skin cream-pale, with a snow white cloak wrapped around his shoulders and a plumed crest on his head. "We hear you've been practicing Taoism for many years," he said, "and have raised yourself well above the ordinary folk. My young daughter is quite interested in Taoism, too. By the consequences of karma, she is to be your wife, and today just happens to be an auspicious day for a wedding."

Xu bowed his gratitude and, out of politeness, asked for permission to pay his respects to his future mother-in-law.

"My dear wife died seven years ago," said the lordly man, "leaving me three sons and six daughters. Your bride is my youngest."

At his order a nuptial banquet was laid out in the inner court. The brisk clinks of bracelets and fragrance of perfumed bodies floated in with the deepening night air. He was ushered into the bridal chamber by a train of candle lights.

On the third day he emerged from the chamber to take a look around the place. In a shed facing west he saw many feathered cloaks hanging on bamboo racks. Fourteen were of kingfishers, the others, with the exception of a white one, were of black ravens. He rambled southwest, and discovered in another shed an additional forty-nine such cloaks on the racks. But this time all were of owl feathers. He returned to his room with puzzled eyes.

"What took my lord so long?" his wife asked. "Did you find anything interesting?" As he made no response, she continued, "Celestial beings can travel in heaven and cover great distances in a wink, can't they? How do you think they can make it without wings and feather?"

"Then, who wears the white raven cloak?" he made bold to ask.

"That's my father's."

"Who wears the kingfishers?"



皮羽为谁？”曰：“此大人之衣也。”又问曰：“翠碧皮羽为谁？”曰：“此常使通引婢之衣也。”“又余乌皮羽为谁。”曰：“新妇兄弟姊妹之衣也。”又问鸛鹞皮羽为谁。曰：“司更巡夜者衣，即监门萧衡之伦也。”

语未毕，忽然举宅惊惧，问其故。妻谓之曰：“村人将猎，纵火烧山。”须臾皆云：“竟未与徐郎造得衣。今日之别，可谓邂逅矣。”乃悉取皮羽，随方飞去。即向所见舍屋，一无其处。因号其地为乌君山。





“The maids.”

“Who are the other raven cloaks for?”

“They’re for me and my brothers and sisters.”

“How about the owl cloaks?”

“They’re the livery of the nightmen and guardsmen like the janitor you met at the gate.”

Just then, the whole household broke out in a commotion. “What’s up?” he questioned.

“The villagers are coming to hunt. They’ve set fire to the mountain,” she explained.

“Oh, my! We didn’t have time to make a cloak for the bridegroom!” he heard chirpings outside.

“It seems fate has brought us together only for a transitory tryst. Farewell, my lord,” his bride said.

They each grabbed their feathered cloaks and flew off. The entire mansion disappeared before his eyes.

The mountain thus acquired its name of Mount Raven.





南海大鱼

岭南节度使何履光者，朱崖人也，所居傍大海，云：亲见大异者有三：

其一曰，海中有二山，相去六七百里。晴朝远望，青翠如近。开元末，海中大雷雨，雨泥，状如吹沫，天地晦黑者七日。人从山边来者云，有大鱼，乘流入二山，进退不得，久之。其鳃挂一崖上，七日而山拆，鱼因尔得去。雷鱼声也；雨泥是口中吹沫也；天地黑者，是吐气也。

其二曰，海中有洲，纵广数千里。洲上有物，状如蟾蜍数枚。大者周回四五百里，小者或百余里。每至望夜，口吐白气，上属于月，与月争光。

其三曰，海中有山，周回数十里。每夏初，则有大蛇





Sea Giants

He Luguang, the garrison commander of Canton Military Region, was born in a village by the South Sea. He said that in his life he had seen with his own eyes three mysterious things.

One was that there had been two islets about two hundred miles offshore. On fine mornings they looked distinct and near, luxuriant with growth. In late Kaiyuan reign, a severe thunderstorm broke out on the ocean. But instead of rain, what fell down was mud, a kind of light, foamy mud. For seven days the sky was darkened. Fishermen passing by the islets said that a giant fish, carried by the current, was caught between the two islets. Somehow one of its gills was hooked to a crag. The thunder was its roar; the mud rain was produced by its gasping; and the darkness was caused by the air it spurted out. On the seventh day, however, the crag collapsed and the fish escaped.

Another mystery was that there was an immense patch of land in the sea, thousands of miles in circumference. Crouching on that "island" were several warty creatures shaped more or less like toads, only much larger. The bigger ones could be more than a hundred miles around, and even the smaller ones were no less than scores of miles. On full moon nights, they would breathe out a kind of white luminous vapor into the sky, which virtually outshone the moon.

The third strange thing usually happened in early summer. Colossal snakes would appear by the mountain peaks in the sea. The snake could erect itself so high that its tail was often lost in the clouds. In late

如百仞山，长不知几百里。开元末，蛇饮其海，而水减者十余日，意如渴甚。以身绕一山数十匝，然后低头饮水。久之，为海中大物所吞。半日许，其山遂拆，蛇及山被吞俱尽。亦不知吞者是何物也。



Kaiyuan reign, one of those snakes came to drink at the sea. It coiled itself around a peak and lowered its head to suck the sea water. It seemed to be extremely thirsty, for the sea level dropped for more than a dozen days straight. Subsequently, it looked as if it was being swallowed by an even larger creature in the sea. In half a day the mountain crumbled and both the snake and mountain were engulfed. There was no way to imagine what kind of monster was hidden in the ocean.





永康人

吴孙权时，永康有人入山遇一大龟，即逐之。龟便言曰：“游不良时，为君所得。”人甚怪之，载出，欲上吴王。

夜泊越里，缆舡于大桑树。宵中，树呼龟曰：“劳乎元绪，奚事尔耶？”龟曰：“我被拘繫，方见烹臠。虽尽南山之樵，不能溃我。”树曰：“诸葛元逊博识，必致相苦。令求如我之徒，计从安出？”龟曰：“子明无多辞，祸将及尔。”树寂而止。

既至，权命煮之。焚柴百车，语犹如故。诸葛恪曰：“燃以老桑方熟。”献之人仍说龟树共言。权登使伐取，煮龟立烂。今烹龟犹多用桑薪。野人故呼龟为元绪也。





The Turtle and the Mulberry Tree

In the reign of Sun Quan, king of Wu in the Three Kingdoms period, a man in Yongkang County caught a giant turtle in the mountains.

"It was the wrong time for me to take a stroll," sighed the turtle, "otherwise I wouldn't have been caught by you."

Surprised that a turtle could talk, the man decided to carry it out of the mountains and offer it to the king. At nightfall he moored his boat to a big mulberry tree on the shore. Deep in the night the mulberry called out to the turtle, "Had a long trip, Mr Round Shell? How come you've fallen into such a disgraceful state?"

"Just a stroke of ill luck," replied the turtle, "and I guess they want to make soup of me. But no one will be able to have me cooked, even if he should burn up all the firewood in the mountains."

"Watch out for a Mr Zhuge Ke, a learned counselor of the king. You may suffer at his hand. What if he should send for venerable people like myself?"

"Shut up!" snapped the turtle. "If you can't hold your tongue, your days are numbered." The tree fell silent.

The turtle was brought to the palace, and the king ordered his men to boil it. A hundred cartloads of firewood were burned, but the turtle remained unscathed and talkative. Mr Zhuge Ke came forth and said, "Cook it with the wood of an old mulberry tree." The man then told of the conversation he overheard between the turtle and the tree. At the king's mandate, the tree was chopped down. Once its wood was fed into the fire, the turtle was cooked.

That is why people now prefer mulberry wood to cook turtle broth.



长须国

唐大足初，有士人随新罗使，风吹至一处，人皆长须，语与唐言通，号长须国。人物甚盛，栋宇衣冠，稍异中国，地曰扶桑洲。其署官品，有正长戢波日没岛逻等号。士人历谒数处，其国皆敬之。

忽一日，有车马数十，言大王召客。行两日，方至一大城，甲士门焉。使者导士人人，伏谒。殿宇高广，仪卫如王者，见士人拜伏，小起。乃拜士人为司风长，兼驸马。

其主甚美，有须数十根。士人威势烜赫，富有珠玉，然每归，见其妻则不悦。其王多月满夜则大会，后遇会，士人见嫔姬悉有须，因赋诗曰：“花无叶不妍，女有须亦丑。丈人试遣惣无，未必不如惣有。”王大笑曰：“驸马竟未能忘情于小女颀颌间乎？”





The Long-Beard Kingdom

In the early days of Dazhu reign, a scholar of the Confucian school went along with an envoy to Silla. A storm carried their ship to a strange place where people all grew long beards, from which the country acquired its name. The kingdom seemed prosperous and the people there spoke the same language as on the mainland, though the style of their attire and buildings was slightly different. The scholar was well received wherever he visited, and one day a train of carriages came to pick him up, announcing that the king was inviting him to the palace.

After two days of traveling, he arrived at a large walled city with armored soldiers at the gates. He was led to a magnificent palace attended by a splendid royal honor guard. He kowtowed to the king, who rose from his throne in acknowledgment and dubbed him the Minister of Winds. The king also married him to the princess who was quite beautiful except for a cluster of long beard. Now a royal son-in-law, he enjoyed high social status and became rich in pearls and coral, but he hated to go home to see his wife.

It was a custom of the king to throw a monthly banquet on the night of the full moon. On his first attendance at such an occasion, the scholar quickly discovered that all the noble ladies and courtesans had beards, for which he wrote this doggerel:

*Leaves make the blossoms red;
Beards make the beauties dread.
Dad fails to have it gone,*



经十余年，士人有一儿二女。忽一日，其君臣忧蹙，士人怪问之。王泣曰：“吾国有难，祸在旦夕，非驸马不能救。”士人惊曰：“苟难可弭，性命不敢辞也。”王乃令具舟，令两使随士人，谓曰：“烦驸马一谒海龙王，但言东海第三汉第七岛长须国，有难求救。我国绝微，须再三言之。”因涕泣执手而别。

士人登舟，瞬息至岸。岸沙悉七宝，人皆衣冠长大。士人乃前，求谒龙王。龙宫状如佛寺所图天宫，光明迭激，目不能视。龙王降阶迎，士人齐级升殿。访其来意，士人且说。龙王即命速勘。良久，一人自外白：“境内并无此国。”士人复哀祈，具言长须国在东海第三汉第七岛。龙王复叱使者细寻勘，速报。经食顷，使者返曰：“此岛虾合供大王此月食料，前日已追到。”龙王笑曰：





So better have it on.

The king laughed aloud when he heard the verse and said soothingly, "Why let a few hair on the chin and cheeks stand in your way to happiness?" A decade thus passed and a son and two daughters were born.

Then one day, a cloud of gloom seemed to fall over the Court. The scholar, annoyed, eagerly inquired about the cause.

"My country is in imminent danger," said the king with tears welling up in his eyes, "and our lives hang upon your help."

Taken aback, the scholar promised that if he could be of any help, he was ready to sacrifice even his life.

"We are most grateful to you then," said the king. "May we beg you to go and pay our respects to the Dragon King? Please tell him that the seventh island in the third trench of the East Sea is at peril and is imploring his mercy. Our country, however, is trivial, and could be easily overlooked. Only your perseverance will save us."

A boat was already prepared, and they parted in tears.

In less time than he had imagined his boat reached shore. The beach was a field of pearls and gems, and the people there were tall and well dressed. He hastily sought an audience with the Dragon King.

The palace shone like that in paradise as depicted on the temple murals. The Dragon King descended the marble steps to extend his welcome.

He explained his mission and the king decreed an immediate investigation. After a long while, someone reported that there was no such country within the king's territory. The scholar pleaded once more and specified the exact location. The king demanded a more careful search. After what might be the time for a meal, an officer returned to say that the shrimps of that island were rationed to be the king's food



“客固为虾所魅耳。吾虽为王，所食皆禀天符，不得妄食，今为客减食。”乃令引客视之。见铁镬数十如屋，满中是虾。有五六头，色赤，大如臂，见客跳跃，似求救状。引者曰：“此虾王也。”士人不觉悲泣。龙王命放虾王一镬，令二使送客归中国。一夕至登州，顾二使，乃巨龙也。





for the month, and they were just brought in yesterday.

“Sir,” the king chuckled, “you have been bewitched by those shrimps. You must understand that although I am the king of the ocean, what I eat is pre-arranged by heaven. I do not have much choice, but I can manage to eat less this month for your sake.”

The scholar was led to the kitchen storage. There stood rows of huge room-size iron pots full of shrimps. Five or six of the shrimps were crimson and as large as a man’s arm. They hopped about when they saw the scholar as if bowing and begging for life. A chef said those were the shrimp king and his family. The scholar couldn’t help shedding tears.

The Dragon King ordered the shrimps in that particular pot be released into the sea, and appointed two attendants to send the scholar back to the mainland. Next day, the scholar was on the shore of Deng Prefecture. He looked back and saw two dragons on the waves.



薛伟

薛伟者，唐乾元元年，任蜀州青城县主簿，与丞邹滂、尉雷济、裴寮同时。其秋，伟病七日，忽奄然若往者，连呼不应，而心头微暖。家人不忍即殓，环而伺之。经二十日，忽长吁起坐，谓家人曰：“吾不知人间几日矣？”曰：“二十日矣。”曰：“即与我覩群官，方食脍否？言吾已苏矣，甚有奇事，请诸公罢箸来听也。”仆人走视群官，实欲食脍，遂以告，皆停餐而来。

伟曰：“诸公敕司户仆张弼求鱼乎？”曰：“然。”又问弼曰：“鱼人赵干藏巨鲤，以小者应命，汝于苇间得藏





A Carp's Story

In the first year of Qianyuan reign, the chief of staff of the Qingcheng County government was a man named Xue Wei. Among his colleagues were Zou Pang, the deputy magistrate, and Lei Ji, Pei Liao, both county lieutenants.

It was autumn and Xue had been ill for days. On the seventh day he passed out and calls and pinches could not revive him, but as his body remained warm, his family stayed around him and refused to lay him in a coffin.

Twenty days thus passed. He suddenly exhaled a long breath and sat up in bed.

"How long has it been?" he asked his family.

"Twenty days."

"Go and have a look at my colleagues. See if they're eating fish. Tell them I've recovered and have got a strange story to tell. Let them put down their chopsticks and come."

His servant went out and found that his colleagues were about to eat fish. He announced his master's recovery and request. They stopped eating and gathered around Xue's bed.

"Did you guys ask the finance chief's servant, Zhang Bi, to go and buy fish?" he asked.

"Yes, we did."

"A fisherman, his name was Zhao Gan, had hidden up a big fish and was trying to fool you with smaller ones, right?" he turned to



者，携之而来。方入县也，司户吏坐门东，纠曹吏坐门西，方弈棋。人及阶，邹雷方博，裴啖桃实。弼言干之藏巨鱼也，裴五令鞭之。既付食工王士良者，喜而杀乎？”递相问，诚然。众曰：“子何以知之？”曰：“向杀之鲤，我也。”众骇曰：“愿闻其说。”

曰：“吾初疾困，为热所逼，殆不可堪。忽闷忘其疾，恶热求凉，策杖而去，不知其梦也。既出郭，其心欣欣然，若笼禽槛兽之得逸，莫我知也。渐入山，山行益闷，遂下游于江畔。见江潭深净，秋色可爱；轻涟不动，镜涵远虚。忽有思浴意，遂脱衣于岸，跳身便入。自幼狎水，成人以来，绝不复戏，遇此纵适，实契宿心。且曰：‘人浮不如鱼快也，安得摄鱼而健游乎？’旁有一鱼曰：‘顾足下不愿耳。正授亦易，何况求摄？当为足下图之。’决然而去。





Zhang Bi and asked. "And you found the big one hidden among the reeds. You snatched it by the gill and carried it back to the county office. At the gate you saw your boss and the supervisory chief playing chess. Your boss was sitting on the east side, and the supervisory chief was sitting on the west. When you reached the steps of the hall, Mr Zou and Mr Lei were engaged in a game, and Mr Pei was eating a peach. You told them about Zhao Gan and Mr Pei ordered a whipping. And then you gave the fish to the chef Wang Shiliang. Wang was happy to see such a big fish, and he butchered it. Right?"

They looked at each other in amazement and nodded. "How did you know?" they asked.

"The carp you killed was me!" Xue said.

"How could it be you?" the astounded group gasped.

"It must have been the fever. My body was burning and I couldn't stand it. My senses grew dim. I wanted to find a cool place so I picked up my walking cane and went out. It didn't seem like a dream to me. Out of town, I felt released. I guess an animal out of the cage couldn't have felt better. I walked on into the mountains, but a heaviness was still weighing on me. I descended into the valley and found a deep and limpid pool with the distant autumn hills reflected in its tranquility. I felt like taking a bath. I took off my clothes and plunged into the water. You know, I learned how to swim when I was a boy, but since adulthood I've never dived into the water again. I felt I was back in my carefree youth. However, I thought that compared to fish man is really no swimmer. How wonderful it would be if I could become a fish! Just then a fish swimming beside me opened its mouth and said, 'I'm afraid you don't want to. If you really do, it's not that difficult, much less just for a change. I can manage that for you.' And it quickly swam away.



“未顷，有鱼头人长数尺，骑鲩来，导从数十鱼，宣河伯诏曰：‘城居水游，浮沉异道，苟非其好，则昧通波。薛主簿意尚浮深，迹思闲旷，乐浩汗之域，放怀清江；厌嶮嶮之情，投簪幻世。暂从鳞化，非遽成身。可权充东潭赤鲤。呜呼！恃长波而倾舟，得罪于晦；昧纤钩而贪饵，见伤于明。无或失身，以羞其党，尔其勉之。’听而自顾，即已鱼服矣。于是放身而游，意往斯到；波上潭底，莫不从容；三江五湖，腾跃将遍。然配留东潭，每暮必复。

“俄而饥甚，求食不得，循舟而行，忽见赵干垂钩，其饵芳香，心亦知戒，不觉近口。曰：‘我人也，暂时为鱼，不能求食，乃吞其钩乎？’舍之而去。有顷，饥益甚，思曰：‘我是官人，戏而鱼服。纵吞其钩，赵干岂杀我？固当送我归县耳。’遂吞之，赵干收纶以出。干手之将及也，伟连呼之，干不听，而以绳贯我腮，乃系于苇





“Before long, a large fish several feet long with a human body came riding on the back of a salamander with dozens of other fish in its wake. The large one announced a decree issued by the river god:

‘To live on land or to live in water are different lifestyles. One never ventures into water unless it strongly appeals to him. Chief of Staff Xue admires a floating life and a freedom from weight. He prefers the boundlessness and purity of the element to the jagged ups-and-downs of the land and career, and wants a change. He therefore is granted permission to be a fish – a provisional change. Let him be a carp in the east pool. Alas! If you think you are the master of the waves and tease the boat, you are wrong; if you ignore the hook and fall pray to desire, you are unwise. To be a fish is nothing to be ashamed of. Let your colleagues be ashamed. Enjoy this opportunity.’

“As I listened, I found myself already changed into a fish. Then I let go of myself and swam. I could go wherever my mind directed, surfacing or submerged. All the rivers and lakes were accessible, but as I was decreed to belong to the east pool, every night I must return.

“Then I felt hungry, but couldn’t find food. I followed a boat and saw Zhao Gan angling. The bait smelled delicious. I was drawn to the bait even though I warned myself that danger lingered there. I’m a human, I said to myself, and it’s only temporary to be a fish. However hungry I am, could I lower myself to swallow the hook? Then I swam away. But soon my hunger grew worse. I’m an officer, I argued, and it was on a mere whim that I took the shape of a fish. Even if I were caught, how dare Zhao Gan kill me? He must send me back to the county office. So thinking, I swallowed the bait and hook.

“Zhao Gan pulled me out of the water. He was about to lay his hands on me when I hollered at him, but he pretended not to hear. He



间。既而张弼来曰：‘裴少府买鱼，须大者。’干曰：‘未得大鱼，有小者十余斤。’弼曰：‘奉命取大鱼，安用小者？’乃自于苇间寻得伟而提之。又谓弼曰：‘我是汝县主簿，化形为鱼游江，何得不拜我？’弼不听，提之而行。骂亦不已，弼终不顾。

“入县门，见县吏坐者弈棋，皆大声呼之，略无应者，唯笑曰：‘可畏鱼，直三四斤余。’既而入阶，邹雷方博，裴啖桃实，皆喜鱼大，促命付厨。弼言干之藏巨鱼，以小者应命。裴怒，鞭之。我叫诸公曰：‘我是共同官，而今见杀，竟不相舍，促杀之，仁乎哉？’大叫而泣，三君不顾，而付脍手王士良者，方砺刃，喜而投我于几上。我又叫曰：‘王士良，汝是我之常使脍手也，因何





went on to thread a string through my gill and tied me to a reed. Presently, I saw Zhang Bi coming. 'Get me a big fish,' I heard him say. 'It's for Lieutenant Pei!'

"'Haven't got any big fish today,' Zhao replied. 'There're only about ten pounds of small ones.'

"'My order is to buy a big fish. Small ones won't do.' He searched among the reeds and found me.

"'I'm your boss, the chief of staff,' I yelled at Zhang Bi. 'Why don't you salute me?! This fish look is only a fancy wear for a better swim.'

"He wouldn't listen and took me by the string. I grumbled and cursed but he seemed deaf to my words.

"As he reached the gate of the county office, I saw two officers playing chess. I called out for help and they seemed most insensitive. All they said was: 'Wow! What a big fish! Could be over four pounds.'

"Coming up the steps of the hall I saw Zou and Lei at a game and Pei was nibbling at a peach. You were all pleased to see such a big fish and told Zhang Bi to take me to the kitchen. Bi reported on Zhao Gan's attempt to cheat with minnows. Pei was angry and would have Zhao whipped.

"'I'm your colleague,' I cried out to you. 'Now I'm in danger and none of you would help! And worse still, you all want me killed and cooked. Is that the benevolence you were taught?' I could no longer hold back my tears, but it didn't move you.

"So I was handed to the chef Wang Shiliang. He had just finished honing his knife. He was delighted to see me and threw me onto the chopping block.

"'Wang Shiliang!' I shouted at the top of my lungs. 'How often



杀我？何不执我白于官人？’士良若不闻者，按吾颈于砧上而斩之。彼头适落，此亦醒悟，遂奉召尔。”

诸公莫不大惊，心生爱忍。然赵干之获，张弼之提，县司之奔吏，三君之临阶，王士良之将杀，皆见其口动，实无闻焉。于是三君并投脍，终身不食。伟自此平愈，后累迁华阳丞，乃卒。





you cooked for me! You should know me well. How dare you kill me? Why don't you tell those guys who I am?"

"My screams seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. He held me down by the neck on the chopping block and with a swing of the knife my head fell off and I woke up. Then I sent for you guys."

The group was shocked and horrified by their lack of pity and compassion. Yet no matter whether it was Zhao Gan who angled him, Zhang Bi who bought him, the officers who were playing chess, the officers on the steps, or Wang Shiliang who killed, they only saw its mouth moving without a sound. His three colleagues threw away the dish they were eating and abstained from fish through the rest of their lives.

Xue fully recovered. He lived to receive several promotions and died at the position of deputy magistrate of Huayang County.





淳于棼

东平淳于棼，吴楚游侠之士。嗜酒使气，不守细行，累巨产，养豪客。曾以武艺补淮南军裨将，因使酒忤帅，斥逐落魄，纵诞饮酒为事。家住广陵郡东十里，所居宅南有大古槐一株，枝干修密，清阴数亩，棼于生日与群豪大饮其下。唐贞元七年九月，因沉醉致疾，时二友人于坐扶生归家，卧于堂东庑之下。二友谓生曰：“子其寢矣，余将秣马濯足，俟子小愈而去。”

生解巾就枕，昏然忽忽，仿佛若梦。见二紫衣使者，跪拜生曰：“槐安国王遣小臣致命奉邀。”生不觉下榻整衣，随二使至门。见青油小车，驾以四牡，左右从者七八，扶生上车。出大户，指古槐穴而去，使者即驱入穴中。生意颇甚异之，不敢致问。





The Southern Bough

A couple of miles to the east of Yangzhou City lived a celebrated gallant named Chunyu Fen. He was very much devoted to the bottle. Wine used to flame up his blood and loosen his mind, and that was how he offended his superior and was dismissed from the army. After that he remained at home, lavishing his immense wealth on wine and banquets.

South of his house stood a massive Sophora tree, its branches extending far and wide. Almost every day he would feast his friends in its verdant shade, and during one such spree on a fine autumn day in the seventh year of Zhenyuan reign he got drunk and sick. Two of his friends supported him back to the house and laid him on a couch on the east-wing verandah. "Lie down a little while," they said. "We'll feed the horses and wash our feet while waiting for you to recover. We won't leave till you feel better."

He untied his headwear and rested his swimming head on the pillow. His senses clouded as if falling into a dream. He saw two envoys in purple come and kneel before the couch, saying, "We're ambassadors from the Great Sophora Kingdom. His Majesty invites Your Excellency for a visit." He felt himself getting off the couch and smoothing his crumpled clothes. He followed the two toward the gate, where he saw a coach-and-four painted in glossy black and attended by half a dozen liveried servants. They helped him aboard and the coach rolled out of the gate toward the ancient Sophora. To his surprise,



忽见山川风候，草木道路，与人世甚殊。前行数十里，有郭郭城堞，车舆人物，不绝于路。生左右传车者传呼甚严，行者亦争辟于左右。又入大城，朱门重楼，楼上有金书，题曰“大槐安国”，执门者趋拜奔走。旋有一骑传呼曰：“王以驸马远降，令且息东华馆。”因前导而去。俄见一门洞开，生降车而入。彩槛雕楹，华木珍果，列植于庭下；几案茵褥，帘帟肴膳，陈设于庭上。生心甚自悦。

复有呼曰：“右相且至。”生降阶祇奉。有一人紫衣象简前趋，宾主之仪敬尽焉。右相曰：“寡君不以弊国远僻，奉迎君子，托以姻亲。”生曰：“某以贱劣之躯，岂敢是望。”右相因请生同诣其所。行可百步，入朱门，矛





it did not stop at the tree but drove right into a hole at its root. He ventured neither an objection nor a question. Peeping out of the window, he found that the entire view had changed: The road, the trees, the landscape were all different. After ten miles or so a walled city came into sight and the road became crowded with traffic and people. He heard the servants shouting authoritatively, and the pedestrians jumped aside. Then there was a wide red gate and a magnificent gate-tower with words inscribed in shining gold above the arch: The Great Sophora Kingdom. The guards at the gate bowed at the sight of the coach. A mounted messenger came galloping toward them and announced that at the king's order, the royal son-in-law was to be accommodated at the state guesthouse to refresh himself from the exhausting journey.

He was led to a big courtyard whose gates were thrown wide open. He stepped off and entered. The balustrades, pillars, window frames, and even the eaves were all delicately carved and brightly painted. Beautiful flowers and trees bearing rare fruits adorned the yard. The hall was richly furnished with writing desks and cushioned chairs, screens and curtains. He was basking in that rare delight of luxury when someone announced that the right-hand premier was at the gate. He hurried down the hall steps and waited respectfully. A man in a purple robe holding an elephant-tusk slab strode toward him. After an exchange of greetings, the premier said, "Notwithstanding the remoteness of our humble kingdom, His Majesty took the liberty to invite Your Excellency to join him. He wishes you will grant him the honor of establishing family relations by marrying one of his daughters."

"The honor should be mine!" he replied. "I'm but a rough man and never dreamed of relating myself to the royal family." He was then invited to the palace.

A hundred steps led him into a red gate. Ceremonial weapons of



戟斧钺，布列左右，军吏数百，辟易道侧。生有平生酒徒周弁者，亦趋其中。生私心悦之，不敢前问。右相引生升广殿，御卫严肃，若至尊之所。见一人长大端严，居正位，衣素练服，簪朱华冠。生战栗，不敢仰视。左右侍者令生拜。王曰：“前奉贤尊命，不弃小国，许令次女瑶芳奉事君子。”生但俯伏而已，不敢致词。王曰：“且就宾宇，续造仪式，有旨。”右相亦与生偕还馆舍。生思念之，意以为父在边将，因没虏中，不知存亡。将谓父北蕃交通，而致兹事。心甚迷惑，不知其由。

是夕，羔雁币帛，威容仪度，妓乐丝竹，肴膳灯烛，车骑礼物之用，无不咸备。有群女，或称华阳姑，或称青溪姑，或称上仙子，或称下仙子，若是者数辈。皆侍从数千，冠翠凤冠，衣金霞帔，彩碧金钿，目不可视。邀游戏



all kinds were arrayed in the courtyard. Hundreds of officers stood obediently on both sides of the paved path leading up to the hall. He was thrilled to see among the crowd the familiar face of Zhou Bian, one of his closest wine pals, but he checked the impulse to go over and speak to him.

The premier led him up into a spacious audience-hall where guards stood in solemn silence. On the throne sat a tall man of regal dignity, wearing a white robe and a crown studded with rubies. He lowered his eyes in awe while the guards shouted him down to his knees.

“Thanks to your father’s recent proposal,” he heard the king say, “His Excellency never belittled us, we are pleased that our second daughter, Yaofang, will be your lady of the house.”

Not knowing what to reply, he kept his head bent.

“Preparations of the wedding ceremony are underway,” the king continued. “For the time being, please take a brief rest at the guesthouse. Mr Premier will conduct you there.”

The incidental mentioning of his father baffled him. He had lost contact with his father ever since the frontier fell into the hands of barbarians. As a garrison officer, his father might have died on the battlefield or been captured. Had peace been negotiated that he now could make this arrangement?

That evening gifts of gold and silk, lambs and wild geese were sent to his quarters, as well as a guard of honor and banners, musicians playing various instruments, tablefuls of food graced with thick red candles, horses and carriages. Then came an assemblage of ladies with such names as Aunt Sunny, Aunt Brook, Fairy Itty, Fairy Bitty, and so on, each waited on by a multitude of servants. They wore emerald coronets, gold bracelets, and flimsy cloaks glistening like the morning rays of the sun that blazed the eye. Thus they entered the house in a

乐，往来其门，争以淳于郎为戏弄。风态妖丽，言词巧艳，生莫能对。复有一女谓生曰：“昨上巳日，吾从灵芝夫人过禅智寺，于天竺院观右延舞婆罗门，吾与诸女坐北牖石榻上。时君少年，亦解骑来看。君独强来亲洽，言调笑谑。吾与穷英妹结绛巾，挂于竹枝上。君独不忆念之乎？又七月十六日，吾于孝感寺侍上真子，听契玄法师讲观音经。吾于讲下舍金凤钗两只，上真子舍水犀合子一枚。时君亦讲筵中，于师处请钗合视之，赏叹再三，嗟异良久。顾余辈曰：‘人之与物，皆非世间所有。’或问吾民，或访吾里，吾亦不答。情意恋恋，瞩目不舍。君岂不思念之乎？”生曰：“中心藏之，何日忘之？”群女曰：“不意今日与君为眷属。”

复有三人，冠带甚伟，前拜生曰：“奉命为驸马相者。”中一人，与生且故，生指曰：“子非冯翊田子华





hubbub of jolly noise. They poked fun at him, teasing him so coquettishly that he felt tongue-tied in defending himself.

“Remember that day at the Temple of Zen Wisdom?” one of them said. “It was the third day of the third lunar month. Lady Truffle and I went to the temple to watch a Brahman dance. We were sitting on a stone bench by the north window when you came riding by on a fine steed — you were much younger then. When you saw us, you dismounted and forced your presence on us, teasing us with your obscene jokes. Sister Qiongying and I tied a knotted pink handkerchief to a bamboo stem. Don’t you remember? And on another occasion, that was the sixteenth of the seventh lunar month, Fairy Itty and I went to the Temple of Filial Force to listen to Master Qixuan’s lecture on the Bodhisattva Scriptures. I donated a pair of gold hairpins and Fairy Itty contributed a rhino-horn jewel case to the altar. You were also among the audience. Do you remember you stepped forth and begged the monk for a look at those objects? You turned them round and round in your palm with the most eloquent admiration. You leered at us and said, ‘Such rare handicrafts and such beautiful creatures cannot but belong to another world.’ You asked our names and addresses. We didn’t give you a chance, but you just wouldn’t let up. Your eyes were riveted on me. Has all that slipped your mind?”

“In heart it buries; for e’er there tarries,” he quoted two ancient lines from *The Book of Poetry* in reply.

“Isn’t it marvelous that we’re now to be related?” they chorused.

Just then three exquisitely dressed men stepped forward and bowed to him, saying that they were chosen by the king to be his best men at the wedding. One of them looked rather familiar.

“Aren’t you Mr Tian Zihua from Pingyi?” he asked.

Indeed he was.

乎？”田曰：“然。”生前，执手叙旧久之。生谓曰：“子何以居此？”子华曰：“吾放游，获受知于右相武成侯段公，因以栖托。”生复问曰：“周弁在此，知之乎？”子华曰：“周生贵人也，职为司隶，权势甚盛，吾数蒙庇护。”言笑甚欢。

俄传声曰：“駙马可进矣。”三子取剑佩冕服更衣之。子华曰：“不意今日获睹盛礼，无以相忘也。”有仙姬数十，奏诸异乐，婉转清亮，曲调凄悲，非人间之所闻听。有执烛引导者亦数十，左右见金翠步障，彩碧玲珑，不断数里。生端坐车中，心意恍惚，甚不自安。田子华数言笑以解之。向者群女姑姊，各乘风翼辇，亦往来其间。至一门，号修仪宫，群仙姑姊，亦纷然在侧。令生降车辇拜，揖让升降，一如人间。彻障去扇，见一女子，云号金枝公主，年可十四五，俨若神仙。交欢之礼，颇亦明显。





"How come you're here?" he beamed, clasping Tian's hand eagerly in his.

"I rambled around and my talents happened to be recognized by Marquis Duan, the Right-hand Premier, so here I stayed," Tian answered.

"Zhou Bian is also here. Do you know that?"

"Oh, yes. He's now a man of consequence. He's commander of the capital's garrison force. That's a very powerful position. He's exerted his influence to help me on several occasions."

And so they chatted and chatted.

Soon it was announced that it was time for the wedding. The three helped him put on a ceremonial robe, jade badges and ribbons, and a decorative sword.

"Lucky for me to be present at your great time," Tian said. "Hope you won't forget your old friends."

A large band of pretty girl-musicians appeared, playing soul-touching tunes, sweet and somewhat sentimental, such tunes as he had never heard before. Dozens of attendants holding lanterns and candles led the way. Screens in a rainbow of colors lined the road. It was a splendid sight, and yet he sat bolt upright in the carriage nervous with anticipation and uncertainty. Tian spoke to him several times, trying to make him relax. The ladies who were to become his relatives were also in the procession in their respective carriages.

Then they arrived at a palace called Hall of Etiquette. The aunts and itties were waiting at the door. They conducted him through the ceremonial procedures, which were very much like those of the human world. When the bride was finally unveiled, he discovered a girl in her teens, more lovely than a fairy. She was addressed as Princess of Golden Bough.

It was a successful marriage. Their love grew with each passing



生自尔情义日洽，荣曜日盛。出入车服，游宴宾御，次于王者。王命生与群寮备武卫，大猎于国西灵龟山。山阜峻秀，川泽广远，林树丰茂，飞禽走兽，无不蓄之。师徒大获，竟夕而还。

生因他日启王曰：“臣顷结好之日，大王云奉臣父之命。臣父顷佐边将，用兵失利，陷没胡中，尔来绝书信十七八岁矣。王既知所在，臣请一往拜覲。”王遽谓曰：“亲家翁职守北土，信问不绝。卿但具书状知闻，未用便去。”遂命妻致馈贺之礼，一以遣之。数夕还答，生验书本意，皆父平生之迹。书中忆念教诲，情意委曲，皆如昔年。复问生亲戚存亡，闾里兴废。复言路道乖远，风烟阻绝。词意悲苦，言语哀伤。又不令生来覲，云岁在丁丑，当与汝相见。生捧书悲咽，情不自堪。

他日，妻谓生曰：“子岂不思为政乎？”生曰：“我放





day, as well as his wealth and popularity. His guard of honor when he set out, the extravagance of his banquets when he entertained his guests, were second to none but the king himself.

Not long after his wedding the king asked him and all the courtiers to join in a grand hunting game at Tortoise Hill west of the capital. It was a beautiful mountain, thick with vegetation and sprinkled with sapphire lakes. Game of many kind abounded and their carts were loaded with prey when they returned in the evening.

One day he asked the king, "On the day of my marriage, I remember Your Majesty mentioned that it was the wish of my father. The last I heard of him was that his troops were overwhelmed in a border conflict, and he was either trapped in enemy territory or killed. I've had no news from him in the past seventeen or eighteen years. Since Your Majesty knows his whereabouts, I beg for the permission to go and see him."

"Your father is dutifully guarding the northern territory," the king emphasized quickly. "We were never out of contact with each other. You can send him a letter if you wish, but there is no need for you to go in person." So he asked his wife to pack a box of gifts as a filial offspring should do, and sent it along with his letter.

Several days later a reply came from his father. He checked the handwriting carefully. It was indeed his father's. As he read along, trembling tears spattered down on the sheets. The fatherly care and advice were as warm as of old. In his letter, his father also inquired about family members and neighbors. He sounded melancholy and lonely when he mentioned the rough roads and insurmountable distance that made traveling impossible, yet he didn't seem eager to see him. "We'll meet again in the year of Fire and Ox,"²³ he wrote in conclusion.

"Aren't you thinking of pursuing a political career?" his wife remarked casually one day.

荡，不习政事。”妻曰：“卿但为之，余当奉赞。”妻遂白于王。累日，谓生曰：“吾南柯政事不理，太守黜废，欲藉卿才，可曲屈之，便与小女同行。”生敦授教命。王遂敕有司备太守行李，因出金玉锦绣，箱奩仆妾车马列于广衢，以饯公主之行。生少游侠，曾不敢有望，至是甚悦。因上表曰：“臣将门余子，素无艺术。猥当大任，必败朝章。自悲负乘，坐致覆餗。今欲广求贤哲，以赞不逮。伏见司隶颍川周弁忠亮刚直，守法不回，有毗佐之器；处士冯翊田子华清慎通变，达政化之源。二人与臣有十年之旧，备知才用，可托政事。周请署南柯司宪，田请署司农。庶使臣政绩有闻，宪章不紊也。”王并依表以遣之。

其夕，王与夫人饯于国南。王谓生曰：“南柯国之大郡，土地丰壤，人物豪盛，非惠政不能以治之。况有周田





"I'm sort of happy-go-lucky and not used to politics," he replied.

"Don't worry. I'll help you," his wife assured him. So she went to speak to her father about it.

At an audience a few days later the king told him, "I have dismissed the prefect of Southern Bough from office because he had been rather disappointing. I hope you will bend your talents to its administration by accepting that position. The princess will go with you."

He accepted graciously and a prefect's outfit was made ready. Gold and silk, trunks of various sizes, liveries and maids, and carts and carriages lined the thoroughfare waiting for the princess and the new governor. He had adored heroism in his youth, but never imagined himself becoming a public figure. And now he felt pleased with his new fortune. In that elated state of mind, he presented a memorial to the king. "Although I was born in an army officer's family," he wrote modestly, "I myself have neither military endowments nor governing qualities. I fear that my inability to hold such an important position as prefect might impair our national interests. Therefore I would like to recommend garrison commander Zhou Bian, who is most loyal to Your Majesty and a rigid law enforcer, to be head of the prefectural security department; and Tian Zihua, who is a master hand at politics and very diplomatic, to be head of the prefectural finance department. I have known both of them for over ten years and they have my trust. With their assistance, I believe I can exercise my duties faultlessly."

The king granted his request and ordered Zhou and Tian to accompany him to Southern Bough.

That very evening, the king and the queen held a grand farewell banquet outside the south town gate. "Southern Bough is one of our biggest prefectures," the king told him. "It has a large population and

二赞，卿其勉之，以副国念。”夫人戒公主曰：“淳于郎性刚好酒，加之少年。为妇之道，贵乎柔顺。尔善事之，吾无忧矣。南柯虽封境不遥，晨昏有间，今日睽别，宁不沾巾？”生与妻拜首南去，登车拥骑，言笑甚欢。

累夕达郡，郡有官吏僧道耆老，音乐车舆，武卫銮铃，争来迎奉。人物阗咽，钟鼓喧哗不绝。十数里，见雉堞台观，佳气郁郁。入大城门，门亦有大榜，题以金字，曰“南柯郡城”。见朱轩棨户，森然深邃。生下车，省风俗，疗病苦，政事委以周田，郡中大理。自守郡二十载，风化广被，百姓歌谣，建功德碑，立生祠宇。王甚重之，





vast resources, but these will not be advantages unless it is governed benevolently. Now that you have Mr Zhou and Mr Tian helping you, we look forward to your success.”

“Mr Chunyu is sometimes too fond of the cup,” the queen at the same time imparted her private concerns to the princess, “and his youth makes his temper even more fiery. You need to be most tactful and dutiful as a good wife should be. With you at his side, we can put our hearts at ease. However, I’ll miss you a lot, though Southern Bough is not very far away. I don’t know how I can bear that!”

They kowtowed to the king and queen, and the train of carriages and carts lumbered south among a legion of guards.

Having traveled several days in each other’s happy company, they approached the City of Southern Bough. The local functionaries, together with the clergy and gentry, had been awaiting their arrival miles out of town. Musical bands and dramatic troupes lined the road. Bells chimed and drums boomed. The entire population seemed to have turned out. The gate-tower loomed high against the azure sky and flags fluttered over the battlements. A board hanging over the archway bore four large words in gold: City of Southern Bough. In a while, their carriage pulled up before the first of a row of stately mansions. The entrance-hall was flanked with a whole set of ceremonial weapons. This was the prefect’s official residence.

As soon as he assumed office, he set out to investigate the situation and relieved the peasants of their sufferings. Thereafter, he left all the daily administrative duties to Zhou and Tian. Thus he governed for twenty years, and Southern Bough became a happy and prosperous place. People extolled his benevolence. They raised steles eulogizing his achievements and built temples with his statue on the altar. The king also had a high opinion of him. A fiefdom and many titles were be-

赐食邑锡爵，位居台辅。周田皆以政治著闻，递迁大位。生有五男二女，男以门荫授官，女亦娉于王族。荣耀显赫，一时之盛，代莫比之。

是岁，有檀萝国者，来伐是郡，王命生练将训师以征之。乃表周弁将兵三万，以拒贼之众于瑶台城。弁刚勇轻进，师徒败绩。弁单骑裸身潜遁，夜归城，贼亦收辎重铠甲而还。生因囚弁以请罪，王并舍之。是月，司宪周弁疽发背卒。生妻公主遭疾，旬日又薨。生因请罢郡，护丧赴国。王许之，便以司农田子华行南柯太守事。

生哀恻发引，威仪在途，男女叫号，人吏奠饌，攀辕遮道者，不可胜数，遂达于国。王与夫人素衣哭于郊，候灵輿之至，谥公主曰顺仪公主，备仪仗羽葆鼓吹，葬于国东十里盘龙冈。是月，故司宪子荣信亦护丧赴国。





stowed on him. His status rose as high as the premier. Zhou and Tian were also promoted several ranks for their managerial abilities. During those years, five sons and two daughters were born. His sons were born noblemen and his daughters were married into the royal household. He had all the wealth and fame one could desire.

Then, the Red Sandalwood invaded his land. The king ordered him to organize a counter-attack. He named Zhou Bian commander-in-chief and placed a thirty-thousand-man force under his command to meet the enemy at Nephrite Heights. Zhou, being overconfident of his personal valor, acted rashly and was so badly defeated that of the thirty thousand troops only he himself managed to escape back to town under the cover of night — in his underwear! The enemy returned to their country with loads of trophies.

He had to throw Zhou Bian in jail and send a memorial of self-reproach to the king. Though the king pardoned them both, Zhou did not survive the month and died of an infected ulcer on the back. As misfortunes never come singly, the princess also fell ill, and died before a fortnight. He offered his resignation so as to escort his wife's remains back to the capital, which the king accepted, and Tian Zihua replaced him.

The hearse set out among wailing crowds. His colleagues pitched tents along the road offering memorial services, and ordinary folks poured into the streets in farewell tears. All along the way, peasants blocked his carriage, trying to make him promise that he would return. The king and queen came out of town in mourning to receive the hearse. A posthumous title was conferred on the princess, and an enlarged guard of honor accompanied the hearse to the royal burial ground at Sleeping Dragon Hill east of the capital. In the same month, Zhou Bian's remains were also escorted back to the capital by his son Zhou Rongxin.

生久镇外藩，结好中国，贵门豪族，靡不是洽。自罢郡还国，出入无恒，交游宾从，威福日盛。王意疑惮之。时有国人上表云：“玄象谪见，国有大恐。都邑迁徙，宗庙崩坏。衅起他族，事在萧墙。”时议以生侈僭之应也。遂夺生侍卫，禁生游从，处之私第。

生自恃守郡多年，曾无败政，流言怨悖，郁郁不乐。王亦知之，因命生曰：“姻亲二十余年，不幸小女夭枉，不得与君子偕老，良用痛伤。”夫人因留孙自鞠育之。又谓生曰：“卿离家多时，可暂归本里，一见亲族。诸孙留此，无以为念。后三年，当令迎生。”生曰：“此乃家矣，何更归焉？”王笑曰：“卿本人间，家非在此。”生忽若昏睡，瞢然久之，方乃发悟前事，遂流涕请还。王顾左右以送生。生再拜而去，复见前二紫衣使者从焉。





Having been the prefect of one of the major prefectures for so many years, he had established close relations with members of the Court and the army. There was hardly a nobleman who was not his friend. Since he was relieved of duty and now living in the capital, he enjoyed plenty of freedom and became more popular than ever. Even the king started to feel his prevalence. Just at that time, someone submitted a memorial saying, "The constellations show signs that a catastrophe is to befall our kingdom. Our ancestral temple will be destroyed; the capital will have to be relocated. All this is because of an alien being close by." According to popular understanding, it was his wanton excesses that caused the omens in heaven. The king removed his personal guards, forbade him from associating himself with high officials, and finally ordered him to stay at home.

He felt crestfallen. He had made Southern Bough stable and prosperous, and during his twenty years as governor he had taken no false steps, but now he was stung and humiliated by slanders. The king seemed to know his feelings, so one day he said to him, "It is too bad that my daughter should have passed away so early, leaving you alone in this world. You have been with us over twenty years. Why don't you take this opportunity to go home and see your own folks? I will send someone to pick you up in three years. You can leave your children in my palace. They will be taken good care of."

"Home? This *is* my home," he said. "Where are you sending me?"

"You belong to the human world," the king laughed. "This is not your home."

He seemed to be in a dream. After a long while, he felt awakened out of a stupor and remembered many things. Tears rolled down his

至大户外，见所乘车甚劣，左右亲使御仆，遂无一人，心甚叹异。生上车行可数里，复出大城，宛是昔年东来之途，山川原野，依然如旧。所送二使者，甚无威势，生逾快快。生问使者曰：“广陵郡何时可到？”二使讴歌自若，久之乃答曰：“少顷即至。”俄出一穴，见本里闾巷，不改往日，潜然自悲，不觉流涕。二使者引生下车，入其门，升自阶，已身卧于堂东庑之下。生甚惊畏，不敢前近。二使因大呼生之姓名数声，生遂发寤如初。见家之僮仆，拥彗于庭，二客濯足于榻，斜日未隐于西垣，余樽尚湛于东牖。梦中倏忽，若度一世矣。

生感念嗟叹，遂呼二客而语之。惊骇，因与生出外，寻槐下穴。生指曰：“此即梦中所惊人处。”二客将谓狐狸木媚之所为祟，遂命仆夫荷斤斧，断拥肿，折查栝，寻





cheeks as he pleaded to go home. The king told his attendants to take him back. He kowtowed and left.

It was the same two envoys in purple that brought him here, but the coach waiting outside was in the shabbiest condition. He was further dismayed to find that his own servants and drivers were nowhere in sight. Once out of town, the coach retraced the way from which he had come long ago. The hills and streams were the same as they had been, but the two envoys had lost their air of importance. The journey became unbearably depressing. He asked the two when they would arrive at Yangzhou. They didn't even care to interrupt the vulgar tune they were humming. "We'll be there in time," they grumbled through their teeth.

Gradually, the coach drove out of a tunnel into the familiar streets of his hometown. Nothing had changed. A sadness overcame him and tears trickled down his cheeks. The two envoys led him into his own courtyard and up the doorsteps. So surprised was he to see his own body lying on a couch on the east-wing verandah that his legs turned rigid. "Chunyu Fen! Chunyu Fen!" the two shouted several times and he suddenly woke up. Glancing around, he saw the houseboys were sweeping the yard, his two friends were sitting on a bench washing their feet, and the half empty glass of wine which he left on the window sill was still rippling in the slanting rays of the sun. How could time have passed so fast in a dream? He had spent a lifetime there!

Heaving a deep sigh, he motioned his two friends to his side and told them about his strange dream. They were fascinated, so that they followed him to the big Sophora tree and detected a hole. "This is the very hole I drove down in my dream," he pointed and said. Thinking that it might have been a fox vampire or some tree spirits' mischief, his friends called for the servants to bring spades and axes to chop away at



穴究源。旁可袤丈，有大穴，根洞然明朗，可容一榻。上有积土壤，以为城郭台殿之状。有蚁数斛，隐聚其中。中有小台，其色若丹，二大蚁处之，素翼朱首，长可三寸。左右大蚁数十辅之，诸蚁不敢近，此其王矣，即槐安国都也。又穷一穴，直上南枝可四丈，宛转方中，亦有土城小楼，群蚁亦处其中，即生所领南柯郡也。又一穴，西去二丈，磅礴空朽，嵌窞异状，中有一腐龟壳，大如斗，积雨浸润，小草丛生，繁茂翳荟，掩映振壳，即生所猎灵龟山也。又穷一穴，东去丈余，古根盘屈，若龙虺之状，中有小土壤，高尺余，即生所葬妻盘龙冈之墓也。追想前事，感叹于怀。披阅穷迹，皆符所梦。不欲二客坏之，遽令掩塞如旧。是夕，风雨暴发，旦视其穴，遂失群蚁，莫知所去。故先言国有大恐，都邑迁徙，此其验矣。





the gnarled roots and shrubs. Digging along a tunnel for about ten feet they hit upon a large underground cavity, so large that it could probably hold a bed. In it were millions upon millions of ants. There was also piled earth in the shapes of walls, houses and palaces. In the center was a small platform of cinnabar red, occupied by two giant ants about three inches long, with red heads and white wings. Surrounding them were dozens of large ants, and ants of ordinary size kept themselves at a respectful distance. The giant couple must be the king and the queen, and this must be the capital of the Great Sophora Kingdom.

A tunnel led southward. Tracing some forty feet of winding path, they reached another cavity which was located right under the southern bough of the tree. There was also a square rise in the center with what looked like buildings and streets. Many ants lived there. No doubt, this was the Southern Bough Prefecture where he had governed so long.

Another large cavity was found about twenty feet to the west. Wet with pockets of water, it looked somewhat like a deserted cellar. There lay a rotten tortoise, its shell big as a hat and covered with flourishing green mold. This could be none other than the so-called Tortoise Hill where he and the king had hunted. Ten feet in the opposite direction they discovered a cavern around a stretch of twisted roots of the old tree, in which there was a mound of loose earth several inches high. Wasn't that the Sleeping Dragon Hill where he buried his dear wife?

Piece by piece, these findings brought back the details of his dream, making him sigh and lament over his momentary past. Unwilling to let his friends destroy the holes, he told the servants to cover them up again. That night a storm broke out. In the morning he went to inspect and found that all the ants had moved away — to where nobody knew. "Our ancestral temple will be destroyed; the capital will have to be relocated." Those omens in his dream had come true. He remem-



复念檀萝征伐之事，又请二客访迹于外。宅东一里，有古澗涧，侧有大檀树一株。藤萝拥织，上不见日。旁有小穴，亦有群蚁隐聚其间。檀萝之国，岂非此耶？

嗟乎！蚁之灵异，犹不可穷，况山藏木伏之大者所变化乎。

时生酒徒周弁、田子华，并居六合县，不与生过从旬日矣。生遽遣家僮疾往候之，周生暴疾已逝，田子华亦寝疾于床。生感南柯之浮虚，悟人世之倏忽，遂栖心道门，绝弃酒色。后三年，岁在丁丑，亦终于家，时年四十七，将符宿契之限矣。

公佐贞元十八年秋八月，自吴之洛，暂泊淮浦，偶覩淳于生棼。询访遗迹，翻覆再三，事皆摭实，辄编录成传，以资好事。虽稽神语怪，事涉非经，而窃位著生，冀将为戒。后之君子，幸以南柯为偶然，无以名位骄于天壤间云。





bered the invasion from the Red Sandalwood. He sent for his two friends and asked them to join him again in a search.

Half a mile to the east of his house was a dried-up brook. By the brook stood a mighty red sandalwood tree with dense leaves and clinging ivy around its trunk. There was an ant hole beside it. Many ants crawled about the place. What could they be but the Red Sandalwoods?

Alas! If such small beings as ants could have a world to themselves, what about those bigger creatures living in the deep mountains or thick jungles? Could we even imagine what their lives were like?

He suddenly thought of Zhou Bian and Tian Zihua, both of them living in the vicinity of Yangzhou, and yet they hadn't shown up at his feasts for probably ten days. He immediately dispatched servants to call on them, and learned that Zhou had died a few days before of a sudden illness and Tian Zihua was seriously bedridden.

The dream under the southern bough was nothing but hollow, and yet wasn't human life as transient as a dream? He decided to give up drinking and wanton desires, and to devote himself to Taoism. Three years later, in the year of Fire and Ox, he died peacefully at home at the age of forty-seven.

*

On my way from Wu to the East Capital in the eighth lunar month of the eighteenth year of Zhenyuan reign, I made a stopover at where the Huai River pours into the Yangtze. There I made inquiries about Chunyu Fen and examined all the relics associated with him. However weird and absurd his story might have seemed, it turned out to be authentic. So I had it written down for people who like to read. I hope those in power and those seeking power can take example from this story, for their power and wealth is nothing to brag about. Mr Li

前华州参军李肇赞曰：“贵极禄位，权倾国都，达人视此，蚁聚何殊。”





Zhao, ex-lieutenant of Hua Prefecture, made a very insightful observation. He said: Position and power, money and material, in the eyes of the wise, are but the gains of ants.





新罗

新罗国有第一贵族金哥，其远祖名旁缶，有弟一人，甚有家财。其兄旁缶，因分居，乞衣食。国人有与其隙地一亩，乃求蚕谷种于弟。弟蒸而与之，旁缶不知也。至蚕时，止一生焉。日长寸余，居旬大如牛，食数树叶不足。其弟知之，伺间，杀其蚕。经日，四方百里内蚕，悉飞集其家。国人谓之巨蚕，意其蚕之王也。四邻共燥之，不供。谷唯一茎植焉，其穗长尺余，旁缶常守之。忽为鸟所折，衔去。旁缶逐之，上山五六里，鸟入一石罅。日没径黑，旁缶因止石侧。至夜半月明，见群小儿，赤衣共戏。





Stories from the Kingdom of Silla

Kim is the noblest family name in Silla. Its earliest ancestor can be traced back to Pangyi.

Pangyi had a younger brother who was quite affluent, while Pangyi himself was poor without a livelihood. Someone gave him a small piece of deserted land and he begged his prosperous brother for wheat seeds and silkworm eggs.

Unknown to Pangyi, his brother steamed the seeds and eggs before he gave them to him. So when spring arrived, only one silkworm hatched. However, it gained several inches a day, and in a fortnight it grew to the size of a calf. Leaves from a grove of mulberry trees were not enough to feed it. Envious of its fabulous growth, his rich brother took the first opportunity to have it killed. Within days, silkworms from the surrounding areas thronged to Pangyi's house. The whole neighborhood came to help reel silk from the cocoons. People believed that the giant silkworm was a king.

As for the wheat seeds, only one survived to sprout. Its ear was heavy and more than a foot long. Pangyi watched it closely, but one day it was snapped and carried off by a bird. Pangyi chased the bird into the mountain, but the bird disappeared into a crack in the rocks. The sun had set behind the hills and the trails along which he had come were shrouded in darkness, so he decided to spend the night by the crack.

By midnight, a full moon had risen to cast its light on the slopes.



一小儿曰：“汝要何物？”一曰要酒，小儿出一金锥子，击石，酒及樽悉具。一曰要食，又击之，饼饵羹炙，罗于石上。良久，饮食而去，以金锥插于石罅。旁邑大喜，取其锥而还，所欲随击而办。因是富侔国力，常以珠玑贍其弟。弟云：“我或如兄得金锥也。”旁邑知其愚，谕之不及，乃如其言。弟蚕之，止得一金如常者。谷种之，复一茎植焉。将熟，亦为鸟所衔。其弟大悦，随之入山。至鸟入处，遇群鬼，怒曰：“是窃余锥者。”乃执之，谓曰：“尔欲为我筑糖三版乎？尔欲鼻长一丈乎？”其弟请筑糖三版。三日，饥困不成，求哀于鬼。鬼乃拔其鼻。鼻如象而归，国人怪而聚观之，惭恚而卒。其后子孙戏锥求狼粪，因雷震，锥失所在。





Pangyi was awakened to see a group of children, all clad in red, amusing themselves in the moonlight. One said, "What do you want?" Another answered, "Wine." The first boy then took out a gold hammer and knocked on a rock. Wine and drinking vessels appeared. Still another asked for food. The first boy knocked again, and pancakes, roast meat and soup surfaced on a table rock, around which the children sat and feasted themselves. Then they stowed away the hammer in the crack and left.

Delighted, Pangyi took the hammer home. With it he could get whatever he desired, and before long he became as rich as a king. From time to time he would share his pearls and jade with his brother.

His brother, however, was not satisfied and wished to acquire a magic gold hammer for himself. Although Pangyi knew it was a silly scheme, he could in no way dissuade him. So he did as his brother had done to him — giving him steamed seeds and eggs. Just as before, only one silkworm hatched, but it was nothing more than an ordinary worm. And only one wheat seed sprouted. When it was almost ripe, a bird came to snatch it off. The brother was exhilarated. He followed it into the mountain to the crack, but what he met was a host of demons.

"This is the one who stole our gold hammer!" they shrieked. "Which punishment do you prefer, to stew three caldrons of sugar syrup for us, or to have a nose ten feet long?"

The brother chose the former, yet on the third day he was too exhausted and hungry to carry on. In spite of his pleading, the demons pulled at his nose till it looked somewhat like the trunk of an elephant. People crowded the streets to have a peep at his long nose. Their ridicule was too much to bear and he soon died of shame.

Generations passed. One frivolous descendent of Pangyi's used the hammer to strike for wolf's droppings. A loud thunder cracked



又天宝初，使赞善大夫魏曜使新罗，策立幼主。曜年老，深惮之。有客曾到新罗，因访其行路。客曰：“永徽中，新罗日本皆通好，遣使兼报之。使人既达新罗，将赴日本国。海中遇风，波涛大起，数十日不止，随波漂流，不知所届。忽风止波静，至海岸边。日方欲暮，时同志数船，乃维舟登岸，约百有余人。岸高二三十丈，望见屋宇，争往趋之。有长人出，长二丈，身具衣服，言语不通。见唐人至，大喜，于是遮拥令人宅中，以石填门，而皆出去。俄有种类百余，相随而到，乃简阅唐人肤体肥充者，得五十余人，尽烹之，相与食啖。兼出醇酒，同为宴乐，夜深皆醉。诸人因得至诸院，后院有妇人三十人，皆前后风漂，为所掳者。自言男子尽被食之，唯留妇人，使





and the hammer was forever lost.

*

In the early years of Tianbao reign, Lord Wei was appointed special envoy to Silla to crown the new king. Old and unused to ocean voyages, he anxiously inquired about the place and learned the following story from a recent traveler to that country.

During Yonghui reign when China was on good terms with Silla and Japan, there was an imperial envoy who had completed his mission in Silla and was going across the sea to Japan when he and his fleet were caught in a severe storm. The waves were high and the wind was strong. For more than ten days they drifted with the currents and soon lost their bearings. Then one day at sunset the wind suddenly dropped and he and his crew found themselves near land. They anchored and went ashore, about a hundred of them. The bank consisted mostly of sheer cliffs rising nearly thirty rods, but as houses were spied atop, they climbed up eagerly.

They were met by a man about twenty feet tall who, though properly clothed, spoke an unknown language. He seemed more than pleased to see the Tangmen²⁴ and ushered them into a big house. When they entered, he rolled over a huge rock to block the gate, and left. Presently, he returned with a hundred more of his like. They examined the Tangmen and picked out those who looked plump and soft. About fifty of the captives were thus selected, whom they cooked and ate with wine and music. Late into the night, they were all stone drunk, so the remaining Tangmen were able to probe around the house.

In a backyard room they found some thirty women. The women, too, as they soon learned, were victims of storms, and had fallen captives to the tall men. Their menfolk were eaten while they were kept alive to make clothes.



造衣服。汝等今乘其醉，何为不去？吾请道焉。众悦，妇人出其练缕数百匹负之，然后取刀，尽断醉者首。乃行至海岸，岸高，昏黑不可下。皆以帛系身，自缢而下，诸人更相缢下。至水滨，皆得入船。及天曙船发，闻山头叫声。顾来处，已有千余矣，络绎下山，须臾至岸。既不及船，虓吼振腾。使者及妇人并得还。”



“Now they’re drunk,” the women said, “it might be our only chance to escape. We know the way about.”

The men favored the idea and they set to work. The women collected the cloth they had woven and tied it onto their backs; the men found knives and cut the throats of the drunken giants. They ran out from the courtyard toward the shore.

The shore was craggy and the sky was dark, obscuring the trails. They twisted the cloth into ropes and lowered themselves down the cliff. When they finally reached their ships, the east was pale. Terrifying roars could be heard atop the cliff. They looked back to see hundreds of tall men following them, some already on their way down. Soon the tall men reached the waterside. They yelled and jumped angrily up and down the beach, but the ships had set sail and were off the shore. The envoy with his attendants and the women safely returned to the mainland.





李娃传

汧国夫人李娃，长安之倡女也。节行瑰奇，有足称者。故监察御史白行简为传述。

天宝中，有常州刺史荥阳公者，略其名氏，不书，时望甚崇，家徒甚殷。知命之年，有一子，始弱冠矣，隽朗有词藻，迥然不群，深为时辈推伏。其父爱而器之，曰：“此吾家千里驹也。”应乡赋秀才举，将行，乃盛其服玩车马之饰，计其京师薪储之费。谓之曰：“吾观尔之才，当一战而霸。今备二载之用，且丰尔之给，将为其志也。”生亦自负视上第如指掌。

自毗陵发，月余抵长安，居于布政里。尝游东市还，自平康东门入，将访友于西南。至鸣珂曲，见一宅，门庭不甚广，而室宇严邃，阖一扉。有娃方凭一双鬟青衣立，





Life of Mistress Li

Lady Qianguo was a singer in the capital. Her maiden name was Li. As her life story was quite unusual, supervisory commissioner Bai Xingjian thinks she deserves a biography.

*

In Tianbao reign, the prefect of Chang was a man from Xingyang – excuse me for letting slip his name. His was a large and illustrious family. At fifty, he had a son who had just attained adulthood, his favorite, for the young man showed every sign of promise in learning, which stood him out among his peers and won him praises from the literary circles. “He’ll go places,” the proud father often asserted.

The prefect then decided to send the young man to the capital for the imperial examination. Horses and carriage, clothes for all seasons and occasions, necessities of all kinds, and a large sum of money were prepared for the journey. “In my opinion,” he said to his son, “you’ll succeed at your first attempt, but I’ve prepared enough to last you two years at least, just to guarantee your success.”

The young man also thought highly of his talents. To him, passing the exam and winning an official position seemed like easy grabbing.

A month later he arrived in the capital and rented a house in Buzheng District in the northwestern part of the city.

Back from the east market one day, he entered Pingkang District through its east gate to visit a friend living in its southwestern part. Passing through Jade Chimes Lane, he saw a gorgeous young woman



妖姿要妙，绝代未有。生忽见之，不觉停骖久之，徘徊不能去。乃诈坠鞭于地，候其从者，敕取之，累眄于娃。娃回眸凝睇，情甚相慕，竟不敢措辞而去。生自尔意若有失，乃密征其友游长安之熟者以讯之。友曰：“此狭邪女李氏宅也。”曰：“娃可求乎？”对曰：“李氏颇贍，前与通之者，多贵戚豪族，所得甚广，非累百万，不能动其志也。”生曰：“苟患其不谐，虽百万，何惜！”

他日，乃洁其衣服，盛宾从而往。扣其门，俄有侍儿启扃。生曰：“此谁之第耶？”侍儿不答，驰走大呼曰：“前时遗策郎也。”娃大悦曰：“尔姑止之，吾当整妆易服而出。”生闻之，私喜。乃引至萧墙间，见一姥垂白上僂，即娃母也。生跪拜前致词曰：“闻兹地有隙院，愿税以居，信乎？”姥曰：“惧其浅陋湫隘，不足以辱长者所





with one hand on the shoulder of a maid standing at the half-opened gate of a small but well-tended compound. Her unusual beauty seemed to have arrested his heart and his horse. To linger around, he deliberately dropped his horsewhip and took the moment to steal glances at the woman while waiting for his servant to pick it up. The woman looked back, her eyes beaming sweetness. However, he didn't have the courage to speak to her.

After that chance encounter, he felt bewitched and lost. He made secret inquiries of friends who knew the city well. "That's Mistress Li's place," a friend told him. "She's a woman of the profession."

"Do you think she's available?" he asked.

"She's one of the most celebrated, and of course most costly. Her clients are mainly nobles and lords. Without a million, you can hardly expect to win her heart."

"What of one million! If only I can have her!"

So days afterward, he spruced up with stylish new clothes and went to her place with all the pomp he could muster. A maid opened the gate.

"May I see the master of the house?" he asked.

Without answering, the maid turned on her heels and cried out, "The whip dropper has come!"

Miss Li was overjoyed. "Hold him there a minute," she told the maid. "I need some time to redo my makeup and change clothes."

That was a good sign, he thought cheerfully. He was led around the screen wall to meet a hunched, gray-haired woman. She was Li's mother.

"I hear you have vacant rooms. Can I rent one?" he knelt and asked.

"I'm afraid my place is too cramped and shabby for a person like



处，安敢言直耶？”延生于迟宾之馆，馆宇甚丽。与生偶坐，因曰：“某有女娇小，技艺薄劣，欣见宾客，愿将见之。”乃命娃出，明眸皓腕，举步艳冶。生遽惊起，莫敢仰视。与之拜毕，叙寒燠，触类妍媚，目所未睹。复坐，烹茶斟酒，器用甚洁。

久之日暮，鼓声四动，姥访其居远近。生给之曰：“在延平门外数里。”冀其远而见留也。姥曰：“鼓已发矣，当速归，无犯禁。”生曰：“幸接欢笑，不知日之云夕。道里辽阔，城内又无亲戚，将若之何？”娃曰：“不见责僻陋，方将居之，宿何害焉？”生数目姥，姥曰：“唯唯。”生乃召其家僮，持双缣，请以备一宵之馔。娃笑而止之曰：“宾主之仪，且不然也。今夕之费，愿以贫窶之家，随其粗粝以进之。其余以俟他辰。”固辞，终不许。





you even to step in, let alone demanding rent.” So saying she led him into the sitting room, which was sumptuously furnished. “My daughter is young and ignorant,” she continued after they were seated. “However, she has learned a few skills and would like to entertain you.”

The young mistress was called forth. Her eyes were shiny, her wrists creamy, and her hips swung with every step. Shocked by such beauty, he sprang to his feet but didn't dare to raise his eyes. They bowed to each other and exchanged a few words in greeting. The way she moved and the way she talked were all pleasantly new to him. They sat down to tea and wine. The porcelain services were all sparkling clean and exquisite.

The sun had sunk below the horizon and the first drum started to boom. The mother asked him where he lived.

“I live several miles outside Yanping gate,” he lied, hoping the distance would be a good reason for him to stay for the night.

“Better go now,” the mother said. “It's the first drum and it'll soon be curfew time.”

“I really appreciate your hospitality,” he said, “and didn't realize night has already descended. It's late and I don't have relatives in town to put me up. What shall I do?”

“If you don't mind our humbleness,” Li cut in, “you can spend the night at our place. Just now you mentioned you'd like to rent a room here, didn't you?”

He stole several glances at the mother.

“Okay,” she finally consented.

He told his servant to take out a bolt of silk and offered it to the mother for a dinner.

“It's on the host,” Li stopped him with a smile. “You're a guest of the house. If you don't mind the simplicity of our food, you can



俄徙坐西堂，帷幕帘榻，焕然夺目；妆奁衾枕，亦皆侈丽。乃张烛进馔，品味甚盛。彻馔，姥起。生娃谈话方切，诙谐调笑，无所不至。生曰：“前偶过卿门，遇卿适在屏间。厥后心常勤念，虽寝与食，未尝或舍。”娃答曰：“我心亦如之。”生曰：“今之来，非直求居而已，愿偿平生之志，但未知命也若何？”言未终，姥至，询其故，具以告。姥笑曰：“男女之际，大欲存焉。情苟相得，虽父母之命，不能制也。女子固陋，曷足以荐君子之枕席！”生遂下阶，拜而谢之曰：“愿以己为厮养。”姥遂目之为郎，饮酣而散。及旦，尽徙其囊橐，因家于李之第。

自是生屏迹戢身，不复与亲知相闻，日会倡优侪类，狎戏游宴。囊中尽空，乃鬻骏乘及其家僮。岁余，资财仆马荡然。迺来姥意渐息，娃情弥笃。他日，娃谓生曰：“与郎相知一年，尚无孕嗣。常闻竹林神者，报应如响，





have dinner with us. If you really want to give us a treat, save it for another occasion." However hard he insisted, she just wouldn't accept his silk.

Shortly, he was ushered into a room in the west wing. The curtains and screens, cushions and upholstery were all splendid. The bed was a luxurious nest. Candles were lit and food was served, appetizing and delicious.

The mother left after the meal. So they felt freer to chat and joke. "Ever since I saw you last time, you standing at the gate," he said, "your image has been haunting me, even in my sleep or during my meals."

"Me the same," she replied.

"I came today not to rent a room, but to fulfill a lifelong dream. I wonder what is awaiting me."

Just then the mother returned. She asked what they were talking so heatedly about. He laid open his heart.

"The need for a mate is just like the need for food," she smiled. "If man and woman fall in love, even their parents can't hold them back. But I'm afraid my homely daughter is no match for you."

He left his seat and bowed toward the old woman, "I would like to provide for you."

The old woman accepted him, and they had a hearty drink.

The next morning, he moved his baggage over and settled down at Li's place. Since then he shied away from friends and relatives and wallowed in the company of pleasure-girls and actresses. After he exhausted his cash, he first sold his horse and then his servants. In a year, he became low on means. The mother started to give him the cold shoulder, but Mistress Li became more and more devoted to him.

"We've been living together for a whole year," Li said to him one

将致荐酌求之，可乎？”生不知其计，大喜。乃质衣于肆，以备牢醴，与娃同谒祠宇而祷祝焉，信宿而返，策驴而后。至里北门，娃谓生曰：“此东转小曲中，某之姨宅也，将憩而觐之，可乎？”生如其言，前行不逾百步，果见一车门。窥其际，甚弘敞。其青衣自车后止之曰：“至矣。”生下，适有一人出访曰：“谁？”曰：“李娃也。”乃入告。俄有一姬至，年可四十余，与生相迎曰：“吾甥来否？”娃下车，姬逆访之曰：“何久疏绝？”相视而笑。娃引生拜之，既见，遂偕入西戟门偏院。中有山亭，竹树葱茜，池榭幽绝。生谓娃曰：“此姨之私第耶？”笑而不答，以他语对。俄献茶果，甚珍奇。

食顷，有一人控大宛，汗流驰至曰：“姥遇暴疾颇





day, "but there's still no sign of a child. I hear the god of Bamboo Grove Temple has magic powers and all prayers are answered. Let's go to offer sacrifices and pray before the god. What do you think?"

He was pleased with the idea. Without suspecting anything, he sold his clothes to buy sacrifices. There they went and prayed, and returned after a two-night stay, he riding a donkey behind her carriage.

"I have an aunt living in the lane not far to the east," Li said when they arrived at the north gate to their district. "Why don't we drop in on her?"

He followed her and in about a hundred yards, they came upon a big wide gate. Judging by its size it was a grand compound. The mistress' maid called out to him from the back of the carriage that they had arrived. As he dismounted, a janitor approached and asked, "Who is it?"

"It's Mistress Li."

The man went in and soon an older lady in her forties came to the gate. "Is it my niece?" she asked.

Mistress Li climbed down the carriage and the lady stepped forth to meet her. "You haven't been here for ages!" she exclaimed. They looked at each other and smiled. Li introduced him to her aunt. Then they entered a side yard through a gate on the west side. In the yard there was an artificial hill with a pavilion on the top and a pond surrounded in bamboo groves.

"Is this your aunt's private house?" he asked Li, who only smiled and prattled about something else.

In a moment tea and fruit were served. The fruits were rare and exotic. They had hardly finished tea when a messenger came galloping on a fine sweating steed. "Your mother was struck down by a sudden illness," he reported to Li. "She's sunk into a delirium. You'd better hurry home."



甚，殆不识人，宜速归。”娃谓姨曰：“方寸乱矣，某骑而前去，当令返乘，便与郎偕来。”生拟随之，其姨与侍儿偶语，以手挥之，令生止于户外，曰：“姥且歿矣，当与某议丧事，以济其急，奈何遽相随而去？”乃止，共计其凶仪斋祭之用。日晚，乘不至。姨言曰：“无复命何也？郎骤往视之，某当继至。”

生遂往，至旧宅，门扃钥甚密，以泥缄之。生大骇，诘其邻人。邻人曰：“李本税此而居，约已周矣。第主自收，姥徙居而且再宿矣。”征徙何处，曰：“不详其所。”生将驰赴宣阳，以诘其姨，日已晚矣，计程不能达。乃弛其装服，质馔而食，赁榻而寝。生恚怒方甚，自昏达旦，目不交睫。质明，乃策蹇而去。既至，连扣其扉，食顷无人应。生大呼数四，有宦者徐出。生遽访之：“姨氏在乎？”曰：“无之。”生曰：“昨暮在此，何故匿





“My heart is torn,” she said to her aunt. “I must ride back immediately, and then I’ll send the carriage back to pick up you and my man.”

He wanted to go with her, but her aunt exchanged a few words with the maid and stopped him just outside the door with a wave of hand. “Her mother is dying. The best way to help her is to stay so we can discuss and prepare for the funeral. How is it that you’re running after her?”

So he stayed and they calculated the fees and expenses needed for the rituals and funerary objects. The sun was setting and there was still no sign of the carriage and horse coming to pick them up.

“What happened?” her aunt remarked. “Why doesn’t she send the carriage back, not even a message? You’d better hurry home to have a look. I’ll follow you.”

He returned to Li’s place only to find the gate locked and sealed with mud. In total astonishment he made inquiries at neighbors.

“The Lis were tenants and their lease had just expired,” a neighbor told him. “The landlord came to reclaim the house and the old woman moved away two days ago.”

“Where did she move to?” he asked, but nobody knew. He intended to go back to Xuanyang District to question her aunt but figured that he couldn’t reach her place before curfew. All he could do was take off a piece of clothes to barter for a meal and a bed. He was so angry with the Lis and with himself that all night he was not able to take a wink. As soon as the day dawned, he mounted his donkey and went to her aunt’s place. He knocked on the gate for the time one could have taken a meal but nobody answered. He shouted and yelled, and finally a butler came slowly to the gate. He asked for the woman but the man told him there was no such person.



之？”访其谁氏之第，曰：“此崔尚书宅。昨者有一人税此院，云迟中表之远至者，未暮去矣。”生惶惑发狂，罔知所措，因返访布政旧邸。邸主哀而进膳。生怨懣，绝食三日，遘疾甚笃，旬余愈甚。邸主惧其不起，徙之于凶肆之中。绵缀移时，合肆之人，共伤叹而互伺之。

后稍愈，杖而能起。由是凶肆日假之，令执穗帷，获其直以自给。累月，渐复壮，每听其哀歌，自叹不及逝者，辄呜咽流涕，不能自止，归则效之。生聪敏者也，无何，曲尽其妙，虽长安无有伦比。初，二肆之佣凶器者，互争胜负。其东肆车舆皆奇丽，殆不敌，唯哀挽劣焉。其东肆长知生妙绝，乃酹钱二万索顾焉。其党耆旧，共较其所能者，阴教生新声，而相赞和。累旬，人莫知之。其二





“I was with her right here yesterday till dusk,” he said furiously. “How can you deny the fact?” And then he asked whose house this was.

“This is Prime Minister Cui’s residence,” the man replied. “Yesterday a man came to rent the side yard. He said he would like to have this place to receive a visiting cousin from the provinces. They left before dark.”

He was mad with anger and yet he didn’t know what to do. He returned to the house in Buzheng District where he stayed before. The owner took pity on him and gave him food, but gripped with remorse and revulsion he could hardly swallow a bite and in three days he was down with illness. In ten days he became dangerously sick. Afraid that he might die on his premises, the owner disposed him of at a funeral home. There he lingered in a state of stupor for many days. The undertakers were sympathetic and they took turns feeding him. Then he was able to get up and walk with the help of a stick. Later he was given a part in the funeral procession to help hold the shrine tent so that he could earn his own food. Months later, he was fully recovered. Every time he heard the dirge, he couldn’t help shedding tears and groaning. He would sigh with self-pity and wish that he were the deceased instead. Back at the funeral home he would hum the tunes over and over again to himself. As he was a cultured man, he soon learned all the dirges by heart and became the best dirge singer of the team.

In the capital there were two major rivals in the funeral business. The one in the eastern part of the city had better equipment, but their singing was poor. Hearing about his unusual quality, the head of the house offered twenty thousand for his service. For months the senior undertakers of the house joined hands to teach him their repertoire and their skills. He was the house’s secret.



肆长相谓曰：“我欲各阅所佣之器于天门街，以较优劣。不胜者，罚直五万，以备酒馔之用，可乎？”二肆许诺，乃邀立符契，署以保证，然后阅之。士女大和会，聚至数万。于是里胥告于贼曹，贼曹闻于京尹。四方之士，尽趋趋焉，巷无居人。

自旦阅之，及亭午，历举辇舆威仪之具，西肆皆不胜，师有惭色。乃置层榻于南隅，有长髯者，拥铎而进，翊卫数人，于是奋髯扬眉，扼腕顿颡而登，乃歌《白马》之词。恃其夙胜，顾眄左右，旁若无人。齐声赞扬之，自以为独步一时，不可得而屈也。有顷，东肆长于北隅上设连榻，有乌巾少年，左右五六人，秉翣而至，即生也。整衣服，俯仰甚徐，申喉发调，容若不胜。乃歌《薤露》之章，举声清越，响振林木。曲度未终，闻者歔歔掩泣。西





The heads of the two houses then agreed to a competition. "Let's display our equipment on Tianmen Street for people to judge," one suggested. "The loser shall be fined fifty thousand for a banquet in honor of the winner. What do you say?" The other accepted the deal. So a contract was drawn up and witnesses were invited to sign the paper.

On the appointed day, thousands upon thousands of men and women flocked to the place. The constables made reports to the lieutenant and the lieutenant reported to the mayor. The whole city virtually turned out to view the exhibition.

From dawn to noon the funerary objects were meticulously compared and the eastern house won every item. The head of the western house looked ashamed. He erected a temporary platform in the southern corner by stacking up tables. Several husky men escorted an old man with flowing beard through the crowd. Holding a bell in one hand with the other hand supporting the wrist, his head nodding with every step, the old man mounted the platform and started to sing a dirge called "The Magic White Horse." From the haughty look in his eyes and the sneer on his lips one could tell that he had won many a glorious day. The crowd burst out in cheers and he seemed all the more confident of his voice.

Moments later, the eastern house joined tables into a platform in the northern corner. A young man wearing a black headgear and holding a feather fan mounted the platform in the company of half a dozen others. It was our young hero. He smoothed his clothes, slowly straightened himself and cleared his throat, as if he was already crushed by mourning. His tune was called "Dew on the Leaf," his voice ringing with sadness. The trees quivered at the sound; the crowd wept with the tune.

肆长为众所诮，益惭耻，密置所输之直于前，乃潜遁焉。四座愕眙，莫之测也。

先是天子方下诏，俾外方之牧，岁一至阙下，谓之人计。时也，适遇生之父在京师，与同列者易服章，窃往观焉。有老竖，即生乳母婿也，见生之举措辞气，将认之而未敢，乃泫然流涕。生父惊而诘之，因告曰：“歌者之貌，酷似郎之亡子。”父曰：“吾子以多财为盗所害，奚至是耶？”言讫，亦泣。及归，竖间驰往，访于同党曰：“向歌者谁，若斯之妙欤？”皆曰：“某氏之子。”征其名，且易之矣，竖凛然大惊。徐往，迫而察之。生见竖，色动回翔，将匿于众中。竖遂持其袂曰：“岂非某乎？”相持而泣，遂载以归。





The western house was jeered at and rejected. The head of the house was deeply embarrassed. To the surprise of the gathering, they found he had stealthily left the fifty thousand bet on the table and sneaked away.

On the other hand the emperor had recently decreed that local governors should make an annual report to the central government in person. So it happened that at that time the young man's father was in the capital. He and his colleagues had changed into plain clothes and secretly came to watch the competition. There was an old servant among his retinue, who was the husband of the young master's wet nurse. The young singer's looks and gestures just reminded him of the young master. Though he didn't venture to go and ask, he kept wiping away secret tears. The prefect was surprised by that and asked.

"That youthful singer looks so much like your late son," he explained.

"My son was killed by bandits because of the large amount of money he had with him. How could it be him!" Tears welled up in the prefect's eyes.

After they returned to their quarters, the old servant slipped out to the funeral home. "Who was that young singer?" he asked the people there. "His singing was so touching."

"He's the son of a prefect," they told him.

He asked for his name, but the young man seemed to be using a false name. As he searched among the group, his eyes suddenly fell on the young singer. He pressed closer. The singer saw him too. His face changed colors and he tried to hide behind others. The old servant caught him by the sleeve and demanded, "Aren't you my young master?"

They cried in each other's arms. The servant took him onto the carriage and brought him to the prefect's accommodation.



至其室，父责曰：“志行若此，污辱吾门，何施面目，复相见也？”乃徒行出，至曲江西杏园东，去其衣服，以马鞭鞭之数百。生不胜其苦而毙，父弃之而去。其师命相狎昵者，阴随之，归告同党，共加伤叹，令二人赍苇席瘞焉。至则心下微温，举之良久，气稍通。因共荷而归，以苇筒灌勺饮，经宿乃活。月余，手足不能自举，其楚挞之处皆溃烂，秽甚。同辈患之，一夕弃于道周。行路咸伤之，往往投其余食，得以充肠。十旬，方杖策而起。被布裘，裘有百结，褴褛如悬鹑。持一破瓿巡于闾里，以乞食为事。自秋徂冬，夜入于粪壤窟室，昼则周游麀肆。

一旦大雪，生为冻馁所驱，冒雪而出，乞食之声甚苦，闻见者莫不凄恻。时雪方甚，人家外户多不发。至安





“See how low you’ve sunk!” the father fumed. “You’re a disgrace to our family! How do you have the face to come and see me?”

He led his son out to Apricot Garden west of the River Bend Park, where he stripped him and whipped him with a horsewhip. The young man fell dead under several hundred strokes. The father just abandoned him there.

When he was led away by the old servant, the head of the house had sent two of the young man’s friends to follow them. Seeing him whipped dead, the two hurried back to the funeral home to inform the others. They all felt sad for him. Another two were dispatched with a reed mat to bury him. As his body was not thoroughly cold, they helped him up and after a long while his breath returned. Then they carried him back to the funeral home and spoon-fed him through a reed pipe inserted in his mouth. It was a whole night before he finally came around. Yet, even after a month his arms and legs were still unable to move, and what was worse was that his wounds had begun to fester and reek. They decided to give up and dropped him in the street. Passers-by pitied him and gave him some leftovers from time to time so that he managed to survive. It was after probably a hundred days that he was able to stand on his feet again with the support of a stick. His clothes knotted rags, he begged from door to door with a cracked bowl in hand. From autumn to winter he spent the day in the streets and nights in the trash sheds.

There was a heavy snowfall. Yet forced by hunger, he ventured out into the deep snow. His begging cries were a pity to the ear. In such terrible weather, the gates of big houses were mostly shut tight. He entered Anyi District through its east gate and walked north along the wall. He dragged himself past half a dozen houses before he came



邑东门，循里垣，北转第七八，有一门独启左扉，即娃之第也。生不知之，遂连声疾呼：“饥冻之甚。”音响凄切，所不忍听。娃自阁中闻之，谓侍儿曰：“此必生也，我辨其音矣。”连步而出。见生枯瘠疥疠，殆非人状。娃意感焉，乃谓曰：“岂非某郎也？”生愤懣绝倒，口不能言，颌颐而已。娃前抱其颈，以绣襦拥而归于西厢。失声长恸曰：“令子一朝及此，我之罪也。”绝而复苏。姥大骇奔至，曰：“何也？”娃曰：“某郎。”姥遽曰：“当逐之，奈何令至此？”娃敛容却睇曰：“不然，此良家子也，当昔驱高车，持金装，至某之室，不逾期而荡尽。且互设诡计，舍而逐之，殆非人行。令其矢志，不得齿于人伦。父子之道，天性也。使其情绝，杀而弃之，又困蹶若此。天下之人，尽知为某也。生亲戚满朝，一旦当权者熟察其





upon one that had its gate half open. That was Miss Li's latest residence, though he didn't know it.

"Help! Help! I'm starving and freezing!" he hollered, his voice plaintive and piercing, and painful to hear.

Mistress Li caught the sound in her room. "This must be him!" she said to her maid. "I know his voice well."

She dashed out and saw a bony, scabby figure beyond recognition. "Aren't you my former patron?" she said with a touch of sympathy.

His hate and shame surged back and nearly overpowered him. He couldn't speak, but gave a slight nod of recognition. She threw her arms around his neck and burst out crying. "It was all my fault that you're suffering so!" She wrapped him in her embroidered coat and helped him into her room in the west wing. She almost cried herself into a coma.

Her cries alarmed her mother, who dashed over to see what had happened.

"He's my former man," she said.

"How can you bring him in here?" the mother barked. "Better send him away."

"No," she held back her tears and replied firmly. "He's from a good family. The other day he came to our place riding a decorated carriage with silver and gold, and in no time he was down on his last penny. As if that wasn't enough, we plotted against him and threw him out. That was really inhumane. Because of us, his course of life was altered and he lives in humiliation. Father and son are bonded by nature, but because of us, he was disowned and beaten dead by his father. People in the streets all know it is because of us that he has sunk so low. His family has relatives in every department of the Court. Once they know the head and tail of his fall, we're finished. We're actually courting

本末，祸将及矣。况欺天负人，鬼神不佑，无自贻其殃也。某为姥子，迨今有二十岁矣。计其费，不啻直千金。今姥年六十余，愿计二十年衣食之用以赎身，当与此子别卜所诣。所诣非遥，晨昏得以温清，某愿足矣。”

姥度其志不可夺，因许之。给姥之余，有百金。北隅四五家，税一隙院。乃与生沐浴，易其衣服，为汤粥通其肠，次以酥乳润其脏。旬余，方荐水陆之馔。头巾履袜，皆取珍异者衣之。未数月，肌肤稍腴。卒岁，平愈如初。异时，娃谓生曰：“体已康矣，志已壮矣。渊思寂虑，默想曩昔之艺业，可温习乎？”生思之曰：“十得二三耳。”娃命车出游，生骑而从。至旗亭南偏门鬻坟典之肆，令生拣而市之，计费百金，尽载以归。因令生斥弃百虑以志学，俾夜作昼，孜孜矻矻。娃常偶坐，宵分乃寐，





trouble, for the gods up there won't bless those who cheat heaven and others.

"You've raised me for twenty years. By estimate, that means you've probably spent a thousand ounces of silver on me. Now you're sixty. I'd like to give you twenty years of living expenses just to buy myself free. Then I'd rent a house and live with him. We wouldn't move far away and we would still be able to look after you. That's all I wish."

Judging that she couldn't be dissuaded, the mother agreed, and after paying her price Miss Li still had several hundred ounces left. She rented a house four or five doors to the north. She bathed him and put him in new clothes, fed him first with porridge and soup, and later with milk and more solid food. It was only after some ten days that she offered him the best of foods and wear. In a few months the scabs and scars disappeared, and in a year he was returned to his former health.

"Now you're fit and sound," she said to him one day, "how about your studies? Can you remember what you've learned?"

"I guess only two or three out of ten are left," he figured.

She immediately called for her carriage and told him to follow her on a horse. They went to the book market beside the city's south gate and she told him to pick the books he needed, a hundred ounces of silver in total worth, which they loaded onto the carriage and carried home.

She told him to put all worldly matters aside and concentrate on the books. He studied diligently day after day and she often accompanied him late into the night. When he felt tired or bored she would encourage him to compose poems as a diversion. In two years, he had perused all the classics and became a learned man again.

"I think I can sign up for the examinations now," he announced.

"Not yet," she said. And she told him to read more widely and

伺其疲倦，即谕之缀诗赋。二岁而业大就，海内文籍，莫不该览。生谓娃曰：“可策名试艺矣。”娃曰：“未也，且令精熟，以俟百战。”更一年，曰：“可行矣。”于是遂一上登甲科，声振礼闱。虽前辈见其文，罔不敛衽敬羨，愿友之而不可得。娃曰：“未也。今秀士苟获擢一科第，则自谓可以取中朝之显职，擅天下之美名。子行秽迹鄙，不侔于他士。当磨淬利器，以求再捷，方可以连衡多士，争霸群英。”生由是益自勤苦，声价弥甚。其年遇大比，诏征四方之隽。生应直言极谏策科，名第一，授成都府参军。三事以降，皆其友也。

将之官，娃谓生曰：“今之复子本躯，某不相负也。愿以残年，归养老姥。君当结媛鼎族，以奉蒸尝。中外婚媾，无自黷也。勉思自爱，某从此去矣。”生泣曰：“子若弃我，当自刭以就死。”娃固辞不从，生勤请弥恳。娃曰：“送子涉江，至于剑门，当令我回。”生许诺。





carefully so that he would be able to face any difficult questions. In another year, she said it was time to go. And he did come off with flying colors. People of status started to notice him. Even the big names in the literary circles praised his essays and would be proud to have him as a friend.

“It’s not your time yet,” she warned him. “Most people believe that once they pass the imperial examination, they can both make a name for themselves and get a coveted position, but you’re different. You have an inglorious past. So you must sharpen your tools and win even greater fame before you can compete with the best minds and be truly successful.”

He then studied even harder and his fame rose and spread.

The following year happened to be the regular national exam held once every three years, a call for all students and scholars across the country. He signed up for the essay test and came out number one in the exam. He was appointed to the position of lieutenant of Chengdu Prefecture. By then he had won many friends in Court.

“Now I’ve placed you back on your proper course,” Li said to him as he was going to take up his office, “I no longer owe you anything. I’d like to spend the rest of my life attending on my mother. As for you, you should take a wife from a reputable family so that you won’t disgrace your ancestors. Whether she is from a big family in the capital or the prefectures, don’t tarnish your name. You’ll always have my best wishes. Now let’s part.”

“If you turn your back on me like this I’ll cut my throat,” he implored tearfully.

She insisted, but he pleaded. “Well,” she finally said in compromise, “I’ll see you across the river as far as Sword Gate Pass. We shall part then and there.”

月余，至剑门。未及发而除书至，生父由常州诏入，拜成都尹，兼剑南采访使。浹辰，父到。生因投刺，谒于邮亭。父不敢认，见其祖父官讳，方大惊，命登阶，抚背恸哭移时，曰：“吾与尔父子如初。”因诘其由，具陈其本末。大奇之，诘娃安在。曰：“送某至此，当令复还。”父曰：“不可。”翌日，命驾与生先之成都，留娃于剑门，筑别馆以处之。明日，命媒氏通二姓之好，备六礼以迎之，遂如秦晋之偶。娃既备礼，岁时伏腊，妇道甚修，治家严整，极为亲所眷尚。

后数岁，生父母偕歿，持孝甚至。有灵芝产于倚庐，一穗三秀，本道上闻。又有白燕数十，巢其层甍。天子异





He agreed.

They reached Sword Gate in a month. But before they parted news came that his father was promoted from the prefect of Chang to the mayor of Chengdu Metropolis and concurrently the high commissioner of the Region South of Sword Gate. About ten days later his father arrived at the posthouse. When the young man sent in his name card his father was too surprised to believe his eyes. But the names and titles of his father and grandfather in his resume left no room for doubt. The mayor immediately summoned him, and hugged him for a long time with raining tears.

“So we’re father and son again!” the older man exclaimed and asked how he could be at Sword Gate. He poured out his story. The mayor was fascinated and inquired about the woman.

“At the moment she’s right here with me, but I’ve promised to let her return to the capital.”

“No, you shouldn’t send her back,” the father said.

They found a house for Li and asked her to stay at Sword Gate for a few more days, while they went ahead to Chengdu. And as soon as they settled down they hired a matchmaker and conducted all the proper procedures of engagement. A grand wedding ceremony was held for the son and Miss Li.

After her marriage, Li proved to be a very prudent and competent wife. She managed the house well and won the approval of her parents-in-law.

A few years later, his parents died. He and his wife observed strict mourning and a glossy ganoderma sprouted beside their mourning hut with three flowers on the spike. Also there were dozens of white swallows nesting among the eaves of their house. Those unusual auspicious signs were reported to the throne. The emperor, very much



之，宠锡加等。终制，累迁清显之任。十年间，至数郡。娃封汧国夫人，有四子，皆为大官，其卑者犹为太原尹。弟兄姻媾皆甲门，内外隆盛，莫之与京。

嗟乎，倡荡之姬，节行如是，虽古先烈女，不能逾也。焉得不为之叹息哉！予伯祖尝牧晋州，转户部，为水陆运使，三任皆与生为代，故谙详其事。贞元中，予与陇西公佐，话妇人操烈之品格，因遂述汧国之事。公佐拊掌竦听，命予为传。乃握管濡翰，疏而存之。时乙亥岁秋八月，太原白行简云。





impressed, bestowed many favors on him. When his mourning period was over, he was in office again and rose through frequent promotions. In ten years' time he had been the prefect of several prefectures and his wife was conferred the title of Lady Qianguo. They had four sons, all in high positions – the lowest of them was Mayor of Taiyuan Metropolis. Their wives were all from distinguished families, thus making the clan one of the most influential in the country.

*

Alas! It is most admirable that a woman of the profession could have such integrity that can match any of the exemplary model women in the past. My grandfather's brother had been the Prefect of Jin, served in the Ministry of Revenue and as the chief of the transportation bureau, preceding or succeeding the hero of our story so that he knew him well.

In Zhenyuan reign I once had a discussion with Mr Li Gongzuo on the virtues of women, and I told him the story of Lady Qianguo. He listened attentively and suggested that I write it down. I was therefore prompted to take up my pen and put down her story in black and white.

Bai Xingjian from Taiyuan in the eighth month of the eleventh year of Zhenyuan reign.





无双传

唐王仙客者，建中中朝臣刘震之甥也。初，仙客父亡，与母同归外氏。震有女曰无双，小仙客数岁，皆幼稚，戏弄相狎，震之妻常戏呼仙客为王郎子。如是者凡数岁，而震奉孀姊及抚仙客尤至。

一旦，王氏姊疾，且重，召震约曰：“我一子，念之可知也，恨不见其婚室。无双端丽聪慧，我深念之，异日无令归他族，我以仙客为托。尔诚许我，瞑目无所恨也。”震曰：“姊宜安静自颐养，无以他事自挠。”其姊竟不痊。仙客护丧，归葬襄邓。服阕，思念身世，孤子如此，宜求婚娶，以广后嗣。无双长成矣，我舅氏岂以位尊官显而废旧约耶？于是饰装抵京师。





Life of a Girl Named Peerless

Liu Zhen, a Court official in Jianzhong reign, had a daughter named Peerless. Also in his household were his widowed elder sister and her young son, who had come to live with them since the death of her husband. Her son, Wang Xianke, was just a couple of years older than Peerless. The two children played and grew up together, unrestrained by the social separation of the sexes. Zhen's wife would affectionately call Xianke "Sonny Wang," and Zhen was ever so scrupulously attentive to the needs of his sister and nephew. Thus they lived for several years.

It happened that his sister became seriously ill. "I have only this son," she called Zhen to her bedside and said. "You know how I treasure him. I'd hoped I could live to see him married, but... Peerless is a sweet and gracious girl. She's dear to my heart too. Don't marry her to an outsider. Now I'm entrusting Xianke to your care. If you can see to their marriage, I would die with nothing to regret."

"Don't worry about such things, sister. Just take care of yourself and you'll recuperate in good time," Zhen replied. But his sister did not recover.

Xianke accompanied his mother's coffin back to the family cemetery in Xiangyang. "Now I'm the only one left," he thought to himself after observing the three-year mourning as was required by custom. "I'd better get married to extend the family line. Peerless is of age now. I hope uncle wouldn't go back on his promise because of his newly



时震为尚书租庸使，门馆赫奕，冠盖填塞。仙客既覲，置于学舍，弟子为伍。舅甥之分，依然如故，但寂然不闻选取之议。又于窗隙间窥见无双，姿质明艳，若神仙中人，仙客发狂，唯恐姻亲之事不谐也。遂鬻囊橐，得钱数百万，舅氏舅母左右给使，达于厮养，皆厚遗之。又因复设酒馔，中门之内，皆得入之矣。诸表同处，悉敬事之。遇舅母生日，市新奇以献，雕镂犀玉，以为首饰。舅母大喜。又旬日，仙客遣老姬，以求亲之事，闻于舅母。舅母曰：“是我所愿也，即当议其事。”又数夕，有青衣告仙客曰：“娘子适以亲情事言于阿郎，阿郎云：‘向前亦未许之。’模样云云，恐是参差也。”仙客闻之，心气俱丧，达旦不寐，恐舅氏之见弃也，然奉事不敢懈怠。

一日，震趋朝，至日初出，忽然走马入宅，汗流气





acquired position." He packed up and made for the capital.

By that time Zhen had become a cabinet minister in charge of national revenue, a very prominent position. Carriages of dignitaries thronged his gate.

Xianke was put up at the family school with the other young relatives of the Liu family. The relation between uncle and nephew was as cordial as ever, but no word was mentioned about the marriage.

Xianke chanced to see Peerless through the window. She had grown into a real beauty — a fairy on earth. That drove him mad, afraid that she might be married to someone else. He sold his assets for several million, which he used lavishly to tip the maids and attendants of his uncle and aunt, even the bond-servants. He paid dutiful respects to the cousins he lived with and threw frequent banquets for all those who may have a chance to talk with his uncle. On his aunt's birthday he bent over backward to buy the choicest presents, turning precious jade and rhino horn into ornaments of various kinds. His aunt was pleased.

A fortnight afterward, he dispatched a matchmaker to his aunt to ask for Peerless' hand. "I have no objection," his aunt said. "I'll talk it over with your uncle."

Several days later, one of his aunt's maids came to tell him that his aunt had just talked with his uncle about his proposal, but his uncle retorted that he had never made such a promise. And judging from that his hopes of marrying Peerless was slim.

Xianke was shattered by the news. He failed to sleep in the night, pondering over and over his uncle's opinion of him. Yet, during the day, he didn't dare to show any slack of respect.

One day Zhen went to Court as usual, but returned even before the sun was high, galloping right through the gate into the yard, sweating and panting hard. "Bolt the gate! Bolt the gate!" was all he said,

促，唯言“锁却大门，锁却大门”。一家惶骇，不测其由。良久乃言：“泾原兵士反，姚令言领兵入含元殿，天子出苑北门，百官奔赴行在。我以妻女为念，略归部署。”疾召仙客：“与我勾当家事，我嫁与尔无双。”仙客闻命，惊喜拜谢。乃装金银罗锦二十驮，谓仙客曰：“汝易衣服，押领此物，出开远门，觅一深隙店安下；我与汝舅母及无双，出启夏门，绕城续至。”仙客依所教，至日落，城外店中待久不至。城门自午后扃锁，南望目断，遂乘驄，秉烛绕城，至启夏门，门亦锁。守门者不一，持白棂，或立或坐。仙客下马徐问曰：“城中有何事如此？”又问：“今日有何人出此？”门者曰：“朱太尉已作天子。午后有一人重戴，领妇人四五辈，欲出此门。街中人皆识，云是租庸使刘尚书，门司不敢放



throwing the whole household into a nameless panic. After a long while catching his breath, he muttered, "The Jingyuan army revolted while passing by the city and General Yao has taken the palace. His Majesty has escaped through the city's north gate and the whole Court has fled to the transitory palace in Fengtian. I came home only because I'm worried about you. I must make some quick arrangements. Send for Xianke at once. I've got a task for him."

"I'll marry you to Peerless," he told the overjoyed young man, who bowed and beamed in a flood of excitement. At the same time Zhen had had the household valuables loaded onto twenty draft animals. "Now change your clothes," he continued, "and escort this team out of the city's northwest gate. Find an out-of-the-way inn and wait there. Your aunt, Peerless and I will go through the southeast gate and circle the city to meet you."

Xianke did as he was bidden. He waited in the inn till sunset, but despite his constant scans toward the south his uncle and family did not show up. Martial law was proclaimed in town and all the city gates had been locked up since noontime.

He mounted his horse, took a torch and detoured to the southeast gate. That gate was also locked. There was a miscellaneous group of guards with raw sticks and rods, some sitting, some standing. He dismounted and asked politely, "What happened in town? Why is the gate locked?" "Anybody came out of this gate today?" he continued after a pause.

"General Zhu has ascended the throne," one of the guards told him. "In the afternoon a man wearing a black broad-brimmed hat came with four or five womenfolk, but people in the streets recognized him. They say he was Lord Liu, the revenue commissioner. Our sergeant didn't dare to let him out. Toward dusk, mounted soldiers came and herded them back into town."



出。近夜追骑至，一时驱向北去矣。”仙客失声恸哭，却归店。三更向尽，城门忽开，见火炬如昼，兵士皆持兵挺刃，传呼斩斫使出城，搜城外朝官。仙客舍辎骑惊走，归襄阳，村居三年。

后知克复，京师重整，海内无事，乃入京，访舅氏消息。至新昌南街，立马彷徨之际，忽有一人马前拜。熟视之，乃旧使苍头塞鸿也。鸿本王家生，其舅常使得力，遂留之。握手垂涕，仙客谓鸿曰：“阿舅舅母安否？”鸿云：“并在兴化宅。”仙客喜极云：“我便过街去。”鸿曰：“某已得从良，客户有一小宅子，贩缯为业。今日已夜，郎君且就客户一宿，来早同去未晚。”遂引至所居，饮饌甚备。至昏黑，乃闻报曰：“尚书受伪命官，与夫人皆处极刑，无双已入掖庭矣。”仙客哀冤号绝，感动邻里。谓鸿曰：“四海至广，举目无亲戚，未知托身之所。”又问





Xianke burst out in tears and returned to the inn. Just after midnight, the city gates were thrown open. Torches lit up the sky as troops brandishing spears and broadswords poured out of town. They were search teams looking for the run-away Court members. Xianke fled without having time to pack the animals.

He fled all the way back to his home village in Xiangyang, where he stayed for three years before he learned that the rightful emperor had recovered the throne and the capital was flourishing again. The war was over. So he returned to the capital to look for his uncle.

He was just wandering down the street inside the city's east gate when someone kneeled before his horse. He recognized his former servant Saihong. Saihong was a born slave of his family, but since his uncle took a liking of him, he later became his uncle's servant. Claspng Saihong's hands with blinking tears, he asked, "Do you have any news about my uncle and aunt?"

"They've taken up residence in Xinghua District."

"Let's go to see them right now," Xianke said excitedly.

"It's already late. Why don't you spend the night at my humble place? We can go over tomorrow morning. I'm now a free man. I have a small house and a small business dealing in silk." He led Xianke to his place. The food and drink was quite acceptable.

Night fell. Suddenly word came that Minister Liu and his wife were both executed and their daughter was degraded to a palace maid because it was found out that Liu had served in the rebel government. Xianke wailed and whined so bitterly that even the neighbors were moved.

"Big as the world is, now I don't have even one relative left. With whom can I share my life?" he said to Saihong. "Any of the family servants left?"

曰：“旧家人谁在？”鸿曰：“唯无双所使婢采苹者，今在金吾将军王遂中宅。”仙客曰：“无双固无见期，得见采苹，死亦足矣。”由是乃刺谒，以从侄礼见遂中，具道本末，愿纳厚价，以赎采苹。遂中深见相知，感其事而许之。仙客税屋，与鸿苹居。塞鸿每言郎君年渐长，合求官职，悒悒不乐，何以遣时？仙客感其言，以情恳告遂中。遂中荐见仙客于京兆尹李齐运，齐运以仙客前御为富平县尹，知长乐驿。

累月，忽报有中使押领内家三十人往园陵，以备洒扫，宿长乐驿，毡车子十乘下讫。仙客谓塞鸿曰：“我闻宫嫔选在掖庭，多是衣冠子女，我恐无双在焉，汝为我一窥，可乎？”鸿曰：“宫嫔数千，岂便及无双？”仙客曰：“汝但去，人事亦未可定。”因令塞鸿假为驿吏，烹茗于帘外，仍给钱三千。约曰：“坚守茗具，无暂舍去，忽有





“Only Peerless’ former maid Caiping is in town. She’s now a maid in General Wang Suizhong’s house, a general of the garrison force.”

“Since it’s impossible to see Peerless again, to see Caiping can be a sort of comfort.”

So he sent in a visiting card asking for an interview in the name of a nephew paying respects to an uncle.²⁵ He told the general the whole story and said he would like to pay a high price to redeem Caiping. The general was sympathetic and agreed. Thereupon Xianke rented a house, where he lived with Saihong and Caiping.

“Master, you’re of age now,” Saihong would often say. “You should look for a position rather than moping around.”

Persuaded, Xianke asked General Wang for help, who recommended him to the mayor of the capital. Since Xianke’s father had been the magistrate of Fuping County, the mayor made him steward of Changle posthouse which lay on the eastern boundary of the capital.

Months later, a notice came that eunuch envoys were to escort some thirty banished palace maids to the royal mausoleums for menial work. They would make a stopover at Changle posthouse.

They arrived in ten felt covered carriages. “I learned,” Xianke told Saihong, “that those palace maids who are dispatched to the mausoleums are usually girls from disgraced officials’ families. Peerless might be among them. Keep an eye on them for me, would you?”

“There are thousands of palace maids, how can you be so sure that Peerless is among those picked out?” Saihong argued.

“Anything may happen. You just do your part.” He gave Saihong three thousand coins and told him to disguise himself as a posthouse attendant and serve tea outside the house. “Don’t leave your stove and

所睹，即疾报来。”塞鸿唯唯而去。宫人悉在帘下，不可得见之，但夜语喧哗而已。至夜深，群动皆息，塞鸿涤器构火，不敢辄寐。忽闻帘下语曰：“塞鸿塞鸿，汝争得知我在此耶？郎健否？”言讫呜咽。塞鸿曰：“郎君见知此驿，今日疑娘子在此，令塞鸿问候。”又曰：“我不久语，明日我去后，汝于东北舍阁子中紫褥下，取书送郎君。”言讫便去。忽闻帘下极闹，云：“内家中恶，中使索汤药甚急。”乃无双也。塞鸿疾告仙客，仙客惊曰：“我何得一见？”塞鸿曰：“今方修渭桥，郎君可假作理桥官，车子过桥时，近车子立，无双若认得，必开帘子，当得瞥见耳。”仙客如其言，至第三车子，果开帘子，窥见，真无双也。仙客悲感怨慕，不胜其情。塞鸿于阁子中褥下得书，送仙客。花笺五幅，皆无双真迹，词理哀切，叙述周尽。仙客览之，茹恨涕下，自此永诀矣。其书后



kettle even for a moment. Should you see her, come and tell me immediately." Saihong bowed his way out.

As the palace maids were kept behind heavy curtains, there was no way to see their faces. One can only hear them talking. Gradually, all noises died down as the night grew deep. Saihong, who dared not take a wink, was attending to the stove and washing up the utensils when someone called from behind the curtains, "Saihong, Saihong! How do you know I'm here? How is Xianke?" The words ended in suppressed sobs.

"My master is now the steward of this posthouse. He suspects that you might come, so he asked me to wait here for you."

"I can't talk with you now. After we leave in the morning, you go to the room in the northeast corner and look for my letter to Xianke under a purple mattress." Silence fell again.

Suddenly there was a great hubbub behind the curtains. Somebody called out, "A maid fainted!" The eunuchs pressed for medicine. It was Peerless.

Saihong hurried to tell Xianke, who exclaimed, "How can I see her?"

"The bridge on the Wei River is now under repair," Saihong suggested. "You can pretend to be an officer supervising the job, and stand close by as the caravan passes through. If she recognizes you, she may be able to lift the curtain and you can have a glimpse of her."

Xianke took the advice and waited at the bridge. When the third carriage rolled past, the curtain was lifted a corner and he did see Peerless there. The sight saddened him even more.

Meanwhile, Saihong found a letter beneath the mattress. There were five sheets in Peerless' handwriting, in which she gave a detailed account of her pathetic life. Helpless tears rolled down his

云：“常见敕使说，富平县古押衙，人间有心人，今能求之否？”仙客遂申府，请解驿务，归本官。遂寻访古押衙，则居于村墅。

仙客造谒，见古生。生所愿，必力致之，缯彩宝玉之赠，不可胜纪。一年未开口。秩满，闲居于县，古生忽来，谓仙客曰：“洪一武夫，年且老，何所用？郎君于某竭分，察郎君之意，将有求于老夫。老夫乃一片有心人也，感郎君之深恩，愿粉身以答效。”仙客泣拜，以实告古生。古生仰天，以手拍脑数四曰：“此事大不易，然与郎君试求，不可朝夕便望。”仙客拜曰：“但生前得见，岂敢以迟晚为限耶？”半岁无消息。一日扣门，乃古生送书，书云：“茅山使者回，且来此。”仙客奔马去，见古





cheeks as Xianke read through the lines, thinking that this was the last of ever seeing her. There was a postscript to the letter, saying, "I caught the envoys talking about an Officer Gu in Fuping County. They say he's a man of great resources. Can you secure his help?"

Xianke handed in a petition to the municipal government to be relieved of his present duty and be transferred to the Fuping County government. The transference made it expedient for him to look up that mysterious Officer Gu, who was living in seclusion. He then paid Gu a courtesy call and showered him with gifts of silk and jewelry during his subsequent visits without ever mentioning anything about Peerless. In a year his term of office expired and he was living idly in the county town when one day Gu came to pay him a return visit for the first time.

"I'm just a rough soldier," Gu said, "now old and useless. But from the way you treated me, it seems you want my help. I'm a man of honor and I'm very much indebted to your kindness. I'd like to place my life at your service."

Xianke bowed deeply with sprinkling tears. He poured out his heart to Gu, who raised his eyes to the sky and tapped his forehead several times. "This," he said thoughtfully, "is no easy matter, but I'll try. Don't expect any quick results."

"If only I can meet her before I die!" Xianke bowed in reply. "How can I press for a deadline!"

Half a year thus passed without any tidings from Gu.

Then one day a messenger knocked on the door with a one-line note from Gu: "The agent is back from Mount Mao. Come to my place." There he galloped. They met, but Gu said nothing. He asked about the agent. "I've killed him," Gu said succinctly. "Help yourself to tea."



生，生乃无一言。又启使者，复云：“杀却也，且吃茶。”夜深，谓仙客曰：“宅中有女家人识无双否？”仙客以采苹对，仙客立取而至。古生端相，且笑且喜云：“借留三五日，郎君且归。”后累日，忽传说曰：“有高品过，处置园陵宫人。”仙客心甚异之，令塞鸿探所杀者，乃无双也。仙客号哭，乃叹曰：“本望古生，今死矣，为之奈何？”流涕歔歔，不能自己。

是夕更深，闻叩门甚急，及开门，乃古生也，领一篋子入，谓仙客曰：“此无双也，今死矣，心头微暖，后日当活。微灌汤药，切须静密。”言讫，仙客抱入阁子中，独守之。至明，遍体有暖气。见仙客，哭一声遂绝，救疗至夜方愈。古生又曰：“暂借塞鸿，于舍后掘一坑。”坑稍深，抽刀断塞鸿头于坑中。仙客惊怕。古生曰：“郎君



As the night grew deep, Gu blurted out, "Is there anyone among your womenfolk who knows Peerless?"

Xianke mentioned Caiping and she was immediately sent for.

Gu examined her closely and broke out with a satisfactory smile. "Let her stay with me three or four days. You may go back now," he said.

Several days later, rumor spread that a high official had been to the mausoleums to carry out executions of palace maids. The news so agitated Xianke that he sent Saihong into the streets to make inquiries. The executed maid turned out to be none but Peerless. Xianke burst into a heart-breaking wail. "I'd counted on Mr Gu, but now she's dead. What shall I do?" He gave vent to hysterical fits of tears.

In the depth of that very night, there came urgent knocks at the door. He opened the door to see Gu standing in front of him with a tightly wrapped backpack. "Here's Peerless," Gu announced. "Although she seems dead right now, her body is not thoroughly cold. She should wake up in two days. Give her some herb extraction and keep everything quiet."

Xianke carried Peerless into the bedroom, taking care of her himself. At daybreak, her limbs regained warmth. She let out a cry when her eyes fell upon him and passed out again. He tried every means to revive her and didn't bring her back until nightfall.

"Please tell Saihong to dig a pit in the backyard," Gu said to Xianke.

Soon the pit was quite deep. Gu pulled out his sword and with one stroke chopped off Saihong's head, which rolled to the bottom of the pit. Xianke was taken aback with fear.

"Don't be alarmed," Gu assured him. "Now I'm finally able to repay your trust. I learned that the Taoist priest on Mount Mao has a



莫怕，今日报郎君恩足矣。比闻茅山道士有药术，其药服之者立死，三日却活。某使人专求得一丸，昨令采苹假作中使，以无双逆党，赐此药令自尽。至陵下，托以亲故，百缗赎其尸。凡道路邮传，皆厚赂矣，必免漏泄。茅山使者及舁笕人，在野外处置讫。老夫为郎君，亦自刎。君不得更居此，门外有担子一十人，马五匹，绢二百匹，五更挈无双便发，变姓名浪迹以避祸。”言讫，举刀。仙客救之，头已落矣，遂并尸盖覆讫。未明发，历四蜀下峡，寓居于渚宫。悄不闻京兆之耗，乃挈家归襄邓别业，与无双偕老矣，男女成群。

噫！人生之契阔会合多矣，罕有若斯之比，常谓古今所无。无双遭乱世籍没，而仙客之志，死而不夺。卒遇古生之奇法取之，冤死者十余人。艰难走窜后，得归故乡，为夫妇五十年。何其异哉！





secret drug. Those who take it will die immediately, but will be able to come around in three days' time. So I sent a confidential agent there and was able to get one pill. Yesterday, I had Caiping dress up like a high-rank palace eunuch to pronounce Peerless as a member of the rebel party and order her to end her life with that pill. Then I went to the mausoleums in the name of a relative to collect her remains. I managed that by offering a hundred bolts of silk. I also bribed all the posthouse officers along the road to make sure they turn a blind eye to us. Finally I silenced the agent and sedan-bearers in the bushes. And now, I'll kill my old self to cut the last thread that may lead to you. You can't stay here any longer. There are ten porters with sedan chairs, five horses and two hundred bolts of fine silk at your disposal just outside the gate. Take Peerless with you and leave at daybreak. Change your names and keep moving around so that nobody shall be able to trace you." So saying, he raised the sword to his neck and before Xianke could withhold him, his head had fallen into the pit. Xianke buried them there.

Xianke set off with Peerless at first light. They went to Shu, sailed down the Three Gorges, and then settled secretly in the south. As there seemed to be no pursuers from the capital, he finally brought his family back to his native place in Xiangyang, where he and Peerless lived happily till old age with many children and grandchildren.

*

Gee! There have been numerous stories about doleful separations or unexpected encounters, yet rarely is one as amazing as this. Though Peerless is disgraced and enslaved in the chaotic times, nothing, not even death, has changed Xianke's love. Officer Gu's scheme is unique and intricate, but at the expense of a dozen innocent lives. And after flying and fleeing from place to place, Xianke is finally able to return to his native home with Peerless and enjoy a golden wedding of fifty years. What romance!

霍小玉传

大历中，陇西李生名益，年二十，以进士擢第。其明年，拔萃，俟试于天官。夏六月，至长安，舍于新昌里。生门族清华，少有才思，丽词嘉句，时谓无双，先达丈人，翕然推伏。每自矜风调，思得佳偶，博求名妓，久而未谐。长安有媒鲍十一娘者，故薛驸马家青衣也，折券从良，十余年矣。性便僻，巧言语，豪家戚里，无不经过，追风挟策，推为渠帅。常受生诚托厚赂，意颇德之。

经数月，李方闲居舍之南亭，申未间，忽闻扣门甚急，云是鲍十一娘至。摄衣从之，迎问曰：“鲍卿，今日





Life of Little Jade

Li Yi, a young scholar from Longxi, passed the imperial examination in Dali reign at age twenty. As he was going to attend the following year's selection examination held by the Personnel Ministry, he returned to the capital, Chang'an, in summer and rented a house in Xinchang District.

Li, who was born into an aristocratic family, showed exceptional talents at a very young age and his poems were often considered brilliant and original. Even the literary giants sang his praises. Elated by his own fame, he had been looking forward to finding an equally exceptional spouse among the beauties, and even among the pleasure-girls, but he was always disappointed.

In the capital there lived a reputed go-between called Aunt Bao the Eleventh, who had been a serving maid in a princess' household till she bought herself free about ten years ago. Having woven her way in and out of big families and royal households through her life, she had whetted an eloquent tongue and knew how to charm. As for matching up lads and lasses or scheming an amour, she was a master hand, and she was very much in Li's debt for his frequent and generous gifts.

One afternoon a few months afterward when Li was relaxing in the shade of a pavilion in his front garden, he suddenly heard urgent knocks announcing Aunt Bao at the gate. He lifted his long gown and hastened to the gate.

"What brings you here today, Sister Bao?" he asked in welcome.



何故忽然而来？”鲍笑曰：“苏姑子作好梦也未？有一仙人，谪在下界，不邀财货，但慕风流。如此色目，共十郎相当矣。”生闻之惊跃，神飞体轻，引鲍手且拜且谢曰：“一生作奴，死亦不惮。”因问其名居，鲍具说曰：“故霍王小女字小玉，王甚爱之。母曰净持，净持即王之宠婢也。王之初薨，诸弟兄以其出自贱庶，不甚收录，因分与资财，遣居于外。易姓为郑氏，人亦不知其王女。资质秣艳，一生未见。高情逸态，事事过人，音乐诗书，无不通解。昨遣某求一好儿郎，格调相称者。某具说十郎，他亦知有李十郎名字，非常欢惬。住在胜业坊古寺曲，甫上车门宅是也。已与他作期约，明日午时，但至曲头觅桂子，即得矣。”

鲍既去，生便备行计。遂令家僮秋鸿，于从兄京兆参军尚公处，假青骊驹，黄金勒。其夕，生浣衣沐浴，修饰容仪，喜跃交并，通夕不寐。迟明，巾帻，引镜自照，惟惧不谐也。徘徊之间，至于亭午，遂命驾疾驱，直抵胜





“Didn’t you have a rosy dream last night?” Bao responded with a big grin. “A goddess was banished from heaven and had just landed on earth. Wealth and property cannot touch her heart. All she desires is a man of learning. Such a rare match for you!”

He jumped to his feet, his face lit up, his heart danced. He held Aunt Bao’s hands and said with a bow, “I’m most willing to be her slave, no matter what. What’s her name? Where does she live?”

“She’s the late Prince of Huo’s youngest daughter. Her name is Little Jade. The prince doted on her. Her mother was a favorite serving maid of the prince, called Jingchi. Because of her low birth, as soon as the prince died, the prince’s sons sent the mother and daughter out of the house with a modest share of property. The mother resumed her maiden name Zheng, so nobody knows Little Jade is the daughter of a prince. My experienced eyes have never seen such beauty before. Besides her looks, she excels in grace and manners. She plays music, reads books, writes poems, and what not! Yesterday, her mother asked me to find Little Jade a suitable man. I told her about you – she has heard of your name – and she was quite satisfied. They live at Old Temple Lane in Shengye District. The house with a newly painted carriage gate is theirs. I’ve made an appointment for you at noontime tomorrow. Just ask for a maid called Osmanthus at the entrance to the lane.”

Li started to prepare himself soon after Aunt Bao had left. He dispatched a servant to an officer cousin stationed in the capital to borrow a black steed together with its gold bridle. In the evening he took a bath, combed scrupulously and changed into fresh clothes. Throughout the night he was in such an agitated state of mind that he simply couldn’t sleep. At the first light of dawn, he put on his headwear and checked his appearance in the mirror over and over again. Finally it



业。至约之所，果见青衣立候，迎问曰：“莫是李十郎否？”即下马，令牵入屋底，急急锁门。见鲍果从内出来，遥笑曰：“何等儿郎造次入此？”生调诮未毕，引入中门。庭间有四樱桃树，西北悬一鸚鵡笼，见生入来，即语曰：“有人入来，急下帘者。”生本性雅淡，心犹疑惧，忽见鸟语，愕然不敢进。逡巡，鲍引净持下阶相迎，延人对坐。年可四十余，绰约多姿，谈笑甚媚。因谓生曰：“素闻十郎才调风流，今又见容仪雅秀，名下固无虚士。某有一女子，虽拙教训，颜色不至丑陋，得配君子，颇为相宜。频见鲍十一娘说意旨，今亦便令永奉箕帚。”生谢曰：“鄙拙庸愚，不意顾盼，倘垂采录，生死为荣。”

遂命酒馔，即令小玉自堂东阁子中而出，生即拜迎。但觉一室之中，若琼林玉树，互相照耀，转盼精彩射人。既而遂坐母侧，母谓曰：“汝尝爱念‘开帘风动竹，疑是故人来’，即此十郎诗也。尔终日吟想，何如一见？”玉





was noontime. He jumped onto the horse and galloped straight for Shengye District. Indeed there was a maid waiting at the entrance to the lane, who accosted him and asked, "Are you Mr Li the poet?" He dismounted and the maid had his horse led into the shade under the eaves and locked the gate behind her.

Aunt Bao appeared at the far end of the court. "Who is this guy that enters without an invitation?" she mocked. They exchanged a few jokes and were already within the second gate. There were four cherry trees in the yard with a parrot cage hanging from the northwestern one. "Stranger come, put screen down," the parrot squawked at the sight of him.

As he was a shy man and had some misgivings about this adventure, the parrot's warning arrested his steps. Aunt Bao and Jingchi had now come down the stoop to welcome him into the parlor. They sat face to face. Jingchi was over forty, yet quite a beauty for her age, and her conversation was lively and entertaining. "We've long heard of your name," she said, "and now I see your features are as well built as your fame. I have a daughter. Though she's not as intelligent as you are, her figure is not very bad. You two would make a lovely pair. Aunt Bao has mentioned your intention several times, so from today on, let my daughter wait on you."

"Thank you for lavishing favors on someone as unworthy as myself. For such bliss, I'd give my life," he replied in modesty.

Wine and food were brought in and at the mother's bidding Little Jade appeared at a door of the adjacent east room. As he bowed toward her, he felt the whole room lit up as if unveiling a tray of shining jewels. Light radiated from her eyes as she looked around. Then she took a seat beside her mother, who said, "Remember your favorite lines: *'The breeze taps on the screen bamboo; My dearest friend, it must be you.'*"



乃低鬟微笑，细语曰：“见面不如闻名，才子岂能无貌？”生遂连起拜曰：“小娘子爱才，鄙夫重色，两好相映，才貌相兼。”母女相顾而笑，遂举酒数巡。生起，请玉唱歌，初不肯，母固强之。发声清亮，曲度精奇。酒阑及暝，鲍引生就西院憩息。闲庭邃宇，帘幕甚华。鲍令侍儿桂子、浣沙，与生脱靴解带。须臾玉至，言叙温和，辞气宛媚。解罗衣之际，态有余妍，低帏昵枕，极其欢爱，生自以为巫山洛浦不过也。

中宵之夜，玉忽流涕观生曰：“妾本倡家，自知非匹，今以色爱，托其仁贤。但虑一旦色衰，恩移情替，使女萝无托，秋扇见捐。极欢之际，不觉悲至。”生闻之，不胜感叹，乃引臂替枕，徐谓玉曰：“平生志愿，今日获从。粉骨碎身，誓不相舍。夫人何发此言？请以素缣，著





You've always wished to meet the poet in person, and here's the author himself, right before your eyes!"

Jade lowered her eyes and said with a delicate smile, "Seeing is believing. One who writes such touching lines does have handsome looks."

He rose and bowed again, "Here I am with the talent you admire, and here you are with the beauty I revere. What a perfect match of talent and beauty!" The mother and daughter glanced at each other and smiled.

After several cups, he asked Jade for a song. At first she shied, but gave in at her mother's urging. Her voice was mellow and clear, the tune was exceptionally sweet.

It was already dark when the banquet came to an end. He was led by Aunt Bao to a room in the western courtyard. It was a secluded place with a display of luxurious curtains and drapes. Two maids helped him take off his coat and boots. In a moment, Jade followed in. There was a devotion in her endearments, a coyness when she undressed. What love it could be behind the bed-curtain on the pillow! Even an affair with the goddess of beauty herself couldn't be sweeter, he told himself.

At midnight, Jade suddenly burst out in tears. "I know, as a pleasure-girl, I can't be your wife. You love me simply because of my looks. Once they fade, your love will shift. Then I would be discarded like a used fan in autumn, or a vine without the support of a bough. Even now, at the height of happiness I can't help feeling sad."

The words touched him very much. He stretched his arm below her head and murmured, "Today, you fulfilled my life-long dream for beauty. I won't leave you even in face of death. Darling, your worry is groundless. Fetch me a piece of white silk and I'll write you a pledge in black and white."



之盟约。”玉因收泪，命侍儿樱桃，褰幄执烛，授生笔研。玉管弦之暇，雅好诗书，筐箱笔研，皆王家之旧物。遂取绣囊，出越姬乌丝栏素缣三尺以授生。生素多才思，援笔成章，引谕山河，指诚日月，句句恳切，闻之动人。染毕，命藏于宝篋之内。自尔婉变相得，若翡翠之在云路也。如此二岁，日夜相从。

其后年春，生以书判拔萃登科，授郑县主簿。至四月，将之官，便拜庆于东洛。长安亲戚，多就筵饯。时春物尚余，夏景初丽，酒阑宾散，离恶萦怀。玉谓生曰：“以君才地名声，人多景慕，愿结婚媾，固亦众矣。况堂有严亲，室无冢妇，君之此去，必就佳姻，盟约之言，徒虚语耳。然妾有短愿，欲辄指陈，永委君心，复能听否？”生惊怪曰：“有何罪过，忽发此辞，试说所言，必





Jade held back her tears and told the maid to withdraw the bed-curtain, bring in a candle and the writing set. As Jade loved reading and calligraphy, the set was handy and elegant, for they were what she used while still in the prince's house. She unbundled a parcel and took out a yard of refined silk. Writing was Li's best. In a second, a pledge was done. He called on the sun and the moon to bear witness, and compared the perpetuity of their love to the mountains and rivers. The words were earnest and touching. Jade locked the silk in her jewelry box.

From then on they lived in bliss, like a pair of lovebirds in heaven. Two years thus rolled happily by without a day's incident.

In the following spring, Li succeeded in the selection examination and was appointed Chief of Staff of Zheng County, which lay to the east of the capital. He was to take office in early summer, and he planned to take that opportunity to pay a visit home at the East Capital, Luoyang. All the while he was busy going through the banquets his relatives and friends put up in his honor. Thus spring slipped away and summer was on its way.

"With your scholarly endowment and distinguished family background," said Jade at the end of one feast as they sat in the gloom of impending separation, "many families would consider it an honor to marry their daughter to you. And above all, you have a stern mother. No doubt she's eager to see you properly married. So when you go home, she'll most certainly have you engaged. I know what you said in your vow is nothing more than empty words. I won't be unreasonable. However, I have a humble wish. Would you hear me?"

"What makes you say that?" he was somewhat taken aback. "Did I in any way offend you? Name it. I'll grant any wish of yours."



当敬奉。”玉曰：“妾年始十八，君才二十有二。迨君壮室之秋，犹有八岁。一生欢爱，愿毕此期，然后妙选高门，以谐秦晋，亦未为晚。妾便舍弃人事，剪发披缁，夙昔之愿，于此足矣。”生且愧且感，不觉涕流，因谓玉曰：“皎日之誓，死生以之。与卿偕老，犹恐未愜素志，岂敢辄有二三？固请不疑，但端居相待。至八月，必当却到华州，寻使奉迎，相见非远。”更数日，生遂诀别东去。

到任旬日，求假往东都覲亲。未至家日，太夫人已与商量表妹卢氏，言约已定。太夫人素严毅，生逡巡不敢辞让，遂就礼谢，便有近期。卢亦甲族也，嫁女于他门，聘财必以百万为约，不满此数，义在不行。生家素贫，事须求贷，便托假故，远投亲知，涉历江淮，自秋及夏。生自以孤负盟约，大愆回期，寂不知闻，欲断其望。遥托亲故，不遣漏言。





"I'm eighteen and you're twenty-two," Jade continued. "There're eight more years to go before you attain thirty, the right age for family. I hope our love and happiness could last just that long. Then you can choose a wife from a respectable family. It won't be late to raise a family. I'd then abandon this worldly life, shave my head, don a drab cloak, and devote my remaining years to Buddha. That's all I wish for in this life, and I would call that a very happy one."

Both touched and ashamed, he felt tears trickling down his cheeks. "Since I asked the sun and the moon the bear witness to my vow, I'll honor it till the end of my life. I'm determined to be together with you not only in this life, but throughout eternity. How can I have other thoughts! Put your faith in me and wait patiently. I'll be back in office in autumn and then I'll send for you. Our separation won't be long." In another few days, he departed for Zheng County.

A fortnight after taking office, he asked for leave to visit his parents in Luoyang. His mother had engaged him to a distant cousin from the Lu family. As his mother had been strict with him, however reluctant, he never had the courage to contradict her. So he went to the Lus to confirm the engagement and a wedding date was set.

The Lu family was also a big name of the time. They would usually ask for a betrothal payment of a million from any family that intended to marry one of their daughters. Anything less than that would seem impossible. As Li's family was not affluent, he had to borrow for that sum. So from autumn to the following summer, he went soliciting from relatives to friends between the Yangtze and the Huai River. As he had long missed the appointed date with Little Jade and thus broken his promise, he decided to hide away from her altogether in order to sever any of her remaining hopes. By way of precaution he told all his acquaintances in the capital not to leak out his whereabouts.



玉自生逾期，数访音信。虚词诡说，日日不同。博求师巫，遍询卜筮。怀忧抱恨，周岁有余，羸卧空闺，遂成沉疾。虽生之书题竟绝，而玉之想望不移，赂遗亲知，使通消息。寻求既切，资用屡空，往往私令侍婢潜卖篋中服玩之物，多托于西市寄附铺侯景先家货卖。曾令侍婢浣沙，将紫玉钗一只，诣景先家货之。路逢内作老玉工，见浣沙所执，前来认之曰：“此钗吾所作也。昔岁霍王小女，将欲上鬟，令我作此，酬我万钱，我尝不忘。汝是何人？从何而得？”浣沙曰：“我小娘子即霍王女也。家事破散，失身于人，夫婿昨向东都，更无消息。悒快成疾，今欲二年。令我卖此，赂遗于人，使求音信。”玉工凄然下泣曰：“贵人男女，失机落节，一至于此。我残年向尽，见此盛衰，不胜伤感。”遂引至延先公主宅，具言前事。公主亦为之悲叹良久，给钱十二万焉。





As Li missed the appointed time, Jade made many an inquiry about him, but all she got were insincere answers and excuses that changed with the day. She had also sought advice from fortunetellers and divination. Rejected and cheated, she pined away in her now forsaken boudoir. In about a year she fell seriously ill. Although there was never a word from Li, she still nourished a hope. She even tried to bribe Li's friends for leads. When she had exhausted her savings in that way, she started to sell her jewelry and clothes, which she would usually do by asking a maid to take them to a Mr Hou's pawnshop in the west market.

Once she had her maid take a lavender jadeite hairpin to Mr Hou's. On her way, the maid ran into an old jade carver who had served in the palace. The old man examined the hairpin and said, "This hairpin is my work. The Prince of Huo ordered it for his youngest daughter's fifteenth birthday. I remember that quite well because he gave me a generous reward of ten thousand. Who are you? Where did you get this?"

"My young mistress *is* the prince's daughter," the maid replied. "The Huo family declined and crumbled. So my mistress had to find herself a patron, but ever since that man went east there hasn't been a single word from him. This is already the second year. That has crushed my mistress and she's now bedridden. She asks me to sell this for cash so that she can probably buy news about her man."

"What a change of fortune!" sighed the old jade carver with blinking tears. "Even the nobles can sink so low and so fast! At my age I should be callous, but this fickleness of life still grieves my heart."

So he led the maid to Princess Yanxian's house and related the story. The princess was very sympathetic and offered one hundred and twenty thousand for the hairpin.



时生所定卢氏女在长安，生既毕于聘财，还归郑县。其年腊月，又请假入城就亲，潜卜静居，不令人知。有明经崔允明者，生之中表弟也，性甚长厚。昔岁常与生同欢于郑氏之室，杯盘笑语，曾不相间，每得生信，必诚告于玉。玉常以薪刍衣服，资给于崔，崔颇感之。生既至，崔具以诚告玉，玉恨叹曰：“天下岂有是事乎？”遍请亲朋，多方召致，生自以愆期负约，又知玉疾候沉绵，惭耻忍割，终不肯往。晨出暮归，欲以回避。玉日夜涕泣，都忘寝食，期一相见，竟无因由，冤愤益深，委顿床枕。自是长安中稍有知者，风流之士，共感玉之多情；豪侠之伦，皆怒生之薄行。

时已三月，人多春游，生与同辈五六人诣崇敬寺玩牡丹花，步于西廊，递吟诗句。有京兆韦夏卿者，生之密友，时亦同行，谓生曰：“风光甚丽，草木荣华。伤哉郑卿，衔冤空室。足下终能弃置，实是忍人。丈夫之心，不





Li was back in Zheng County after he had sent in the betrothal payment. Toward the end of the year he returned to Chang'an for the wedding, as his fiancée was then living in the capital. He lived reclusively in case Jade catch wind.

Li had a cousin called Cui Yunming, a scholar too, and quite an honest man. In the happy old days he used to come with Li to Little Jade's place. They feasted and laughed together. Every time he heard of Li's whereabouts he would pass it on to Jade, and she would help him with clothes and food. He was very grateful to her. Now that Li was in town, Cui went to impart the news. "How can he be so heartless!" Jade grunted. She sought help from all her friends and explored every means to invite Li to come, but he refused to show up. For one thing, he was ashamed of having broken a promise; for another, he had learned she was seriously ill and no longer the budding beauty she used to be. To avoid being traced down he would leave his residence early in the morning and would not return till late at night. Jade sobbed dawn after dusk, forsaking her health and meals, but her wish to see him once more could not be gratified. Hate and humiliation pinned her down to bed. Her story started to circulate around the capital. Those romantic took pity on her unfulfilled affections; those chivalrous took anger at Li's cold-heartedness.

It was spring again, a time for vernal excursions into the suburbs. One day, Li and a handful of friends went to Chongjing Temple to see its famous peonies. They strolled along the western verandah and composed lines of verse. Among his friends was a local gentleman named Wei Xiaqing. "What a beautiful season this is with all the flowers in full bloom!" he remarked to Li. "But what a pitiable piece of Little Jade she is, discarded in an empty room! It really takes a man of a stone heart to drive her completely out of his mind. That's not the way a



宜如此，足下宜为思之。”叹让之际，忽有一豪士，衣轻黄纁衫，挟朱弹，丰神隽美，衣服轻华，唯有一剪头胡雏从后，潜行而听之，俄而前揖生曰：“公非李十郎者乎？某族本山东，姻连外戚，虽乏文藻，心尝乐贤。仰公声华，常思觐止，今日幸会，得睹清扬。某之敝居，去此不远，亦有声乐，足以娱情。妖姬八九人，骏马十数匹，唯公所欲。但愿一过。”生之侪辈，共聆斯语，更相叹美。因与豪士策马同行，疾转数坊，遂至胜业。生以近郑之所止，意不欲过，便托事故，欲回马首。豪士曰：“敝居咫尺，忍相弃乎？”乃挽挟其马，牵引而行，迁延之间，已及郑曲。生神情恍惚，鞭马欲回。豪士遽命奴仆数人，抱持而进，疾走推入车门，便令锁却。报云：“李十郎至也。”一家惊喜，声闻于外。

先此一夕，玉梦黄衫丈夫抱生来，至席，使玉脱鞋。惊寤而告母，因自解曰：“鞋者谐也，夫妇再合。脱者解





gentleman should behave. You'd better reconsider your relations."

While they were thus talking, they were followed by a stylish young man in elegant clothes and a yellow linen jacket who had a red slingshot under one arm and a crew-cut Tartar boy-servant in his wake. Presently, the man in yellow stepped forth and bowed to Li. "So you're Mr Li, the celebrated poet! I'm from the east of the mountain, a clansman of the empress. I'm no scholar myself but I admire the learned. I've long heard of your fame and looked forward to establishing personal friendship. It's my great honor today to meet you here. My humble residence is not far away. Would you deign to pay me a visit? I have music players and eight or nine good-looking singers. I also have a dozen fine steeds. You can enjoy yourself in whatever way you please."

Li's friends eagerly approved of such fun. So they all mounted and followed the man. In a moment they had crossed several blocks and came to Shengye District. Li stopped short as he remembered that Little Jade was living in the district. He fumbled for an excuse and was about to turn his horse around.

"My home is already in sight. You mustn't turn your back on me like this!" cried the young gallant as he caught hold of Li's reins and led forward. A moment of hesitation and they were at the lane where Jade lived. Li felt faint and whipped his horse so as to dash past. But the young man had already ordered his servants to drag him off his mount. They swept him off his feet, pushed him into the yard and closed the gate behind him. "Mr Li is here!" they shouted. Cheerful voices within the yard could be heard even in the street.

The night before, Jade had had a dream that a gentleman in a yellow jacket carried Li to her and told her to take off Li's boots. She startled from sleep and related the dream to her mother. "Boots al-



也，既合而解，亦当永诀。由此征之，必遂相见，相见之后，当死矣。”凌晨，请母妆梳。母以其久病，心意惑乱，不甚信之。龟勉之间，强为妆梳。妆梳才毕，而生果至。玉沉绵日久，转侧须人，忽闻生来，欵然自起，更衣而出，恍若有神。遂与生相见，含怒凝视，不复有言。羸质娇姿，如不胜致。时复掩袂，返顾李生。感物伤人，坐皆唏嘘。顷之，有酒肴数十盘，自外而来，一座惊视。遽问其故，悉是豪士之所致也。因遂陈设，相就而坐。玉乃侧身转面，斜视生良久，遂举杯酒酬地曰：“我为女子，薄命如斯；君是丈夫，负心若此。韶颜稚齿，饮恨而终。慈母在堂，不能供养。绮罗弦管，从此永休。征痛黄泉，皆君所致。李君李君，今当永诀，我死之后，必为厉鬼，使君妻妾，终日不安。”乃引左手握生臂，掷杯于地，长恸号哭数声而绝。母乃举尸置于生怀，令唤之，遂不复苏矣。生为之缟素，旦夕哭泣甚哀。将葬之夕，生忽见玉穗





ways come in pairs," she interpreted to her mom, "like man and wife. But taking them off means disengaging. The dream must be a cue for our reunion, and then all cares will end."

Early in the morning she had asked her mother to help her comb and make up. Her mother was not enthusiastic about it for she regarded the dream as nothing but a delirium out of prolonged sickness. They had just finished making up when Li's arrival was announced. Jade had been so weak that she couldn't even turn over in bed without help, but the moment she heard the announcement she sprang to her feet and dressed herself as if her spirit had returned. She went out to meet him and stared at him without a word, though she seemed too feeble even to bear the weight of clothes. From time to time she would raise her hand to wipe off the welling tears, but all the while she kept her gaze on him. All those present marveled and sighed.

In a moment wine and food arrived in abundance. Everyone was surprised. Then they learned it was by courtesy of a man in a yellow jacket. The table was spread. Jade sat half turned toward Li. After a long pause, she raised her cup and poured the wine on the ground as if in libation, saying, "As a woman, I can bear my unlucky fate; as a gentleman, how can you have such a cold heart? Look, I'm dying prematurely, leaving my mother unattended. Wine, music and silk are to be replaced by the sufferings in hell. All this is because of you. Mr Li, Mr Li, I'll leave you now. After my death, I'll be a ghost and haunt your wife or any girl friend of yours!"

She caught his arm in her left hand, threw the wine cup onto the floor and, with a protracted wail, dropped dead. Her mother placed her limp body in his lap and told him to revive her. But however hard he called her name, there was no response.

Li changed into mourning white and moaned bitterly over the

帷之中，容貌妍丽，宛若平生。着石榴裙，紫襜裆，红绿帔子，斜身倚帷，手引绣带，顾谓生曰：“愧君相送，尚有余情。幽冥之中，能不感叹？”言毕，遂不复见。明日，葬于长安御宿原，生至墓所，尽哀而返。后月余，就礼于卢氏。伤情感物，郁郁不乐。

夏五月，与卢氏偕行，归于郑县。至县旬日，生方与卢氏寝，忽帐外叱叱作声。生惊视之，则见一男子，年可二十余，姿状温美，藏身映幔，连招卢氏。生惶遽走起，绕幔数匝，倏然不见。生自此心怀疑恶，猜忌万端，夫妻之间，无聊生矣。或有亲情，曲相劝喻，生意稍解。后旬日，生复自外归，卢氏方鼓琴于床，忽见自门抛一斑屏钿花合子，方圆一寸余，中有轻绢，作同心结，坠于卢氏怀中。生开而视之，见相思子二，叩头虫一，发杀鬣一，驴驹媚少许。生当时愤怒叫吼，声如豺虎，引琴撞击其妻，





coffin. On the night before the burial he felt he saw Little Jade behind the tasseled drapes. She looked as alive as she used to be, wearing a garnet-red skirt, a lilac-blue gown and a red and green shawl. She was leaning coyly against the drapes, playing with her silk ribbon. "Thank you for seeing me off," he heard her say. "That proves you still have some feelings for me. I'm touched even though I'm now in another world." So saying she disappeared. He duly attended the burial service in the public cemetery the next day.

A month later he held his wedding ceremony with Miss Lu, but everything seemed to remind him of his first love and fill him with melancholy. He returned to Zheng County with the bride in early summer.

One day a fortnight afterward he was in bed with his wife when he heard somebody making a noise beyond the bed screen. Surprised, he sat up and saw a man in his twenties beckoning Lu from behind the curtains. He leaped off the bed and searched several times around but couldn't find anyone there. He began to suspect his wife and a grudge set in. Their relatives' and friends' conciliation efforts and beseeching, however, helped them patch up a little and save the marriage.

Another fortnight passed. That day he had just returned home and his wife was playing the lute on the couch when someone from beyond the wall threw into her lap a carved rhino-horn box about an inch big tied with a carefully knotted silk ribbon. He grabbed and opened it, in which there were two red beans, popularly called love beans because of their bright color, a beetle that bends at every touch like bowing, and amatory potions for both man and woman. Bellowing and fuming like an enraged tiger, he seized the lute and whacked his wife to extort a confession, but his poor wife was unable to make head or tail of it. Since then he took to beating her and putting her to various kinds

诘令实告，卢氏亦终不自明。尔后往往暴加捶楚，备诸毒虐，竟讼于公庭而遣之。

卢氏既出，生或侍婢媵妾之属，暂同枕席，便加妒忌，或有因而杀之者。生尝游广陵，得名姬曰营十一娘者，容态润媚，生甚悦之。每相对坐，尝谓营曰：“我尝于某处得某姬，犯某事，我以某法杀之。”日日陈说，欲令惧己，以肃清闺门。出则以浴斛覆营于床，周回封署，归必详视，然后乃开。又畜一短剑，甚利，顾谓侍婢曰：“此信州葛溪铁，唯断作罪过头。”大凡生所见妇人，辄加猜忌，至于三娶，率皆如初焉。





of torture. At last he went to court and had her divorced.

Without a wife he would sleep with concubines or maids, but whoever he slept with he would be consumed with a suspicion and jealousy that led him to kill several.

He had bought a famous singer from Guangling called Ying, a chubby beauty whom he liked very much. When they were together, he would take delight in recounting the fates of those girls whom he had discarded, where they were bought, why they were suspected, and in what way they were tortured to death. By repeated telling he hoped to keep her in constant fear and away from any other man. Whenever he went out he would place her under an overturned bathtub and paste the tub to the bed with strips of paper bearing his signature. Back home he would first examine the seal before removing the tub. He also carried a sharp dagger, which he often showed to the maids. "This is made of the best iron," he would tell them, "and is made to cut off the heads of traitors." It became his nature to suspect women, and neither of his succeeding two marriages fared better than his first.





灵应传

涇州之东二十里，有故薛举城。城之隅有善女湫，广袤数里，蒹葭丛翠，古木萧疏。其水湛然而碧，莫有测其浅深者，水族灵怪，往往见焉。乡人立祠于旁，曰“九娘子神”，岁之水旱被禳，皆得祈请焉。又州之西二百余里，朝那镇之北，有湫神，因地而名，曰“朝那神”。其肸蚩灵应，则居善女之右矣。

乾符五年，节度使周宝在镇日，自仲夏之初，数数有云气，状如奇峰者，如美女者，如鼠如虎者，由二湫而兴。至于激迅风，震雷电，发屋拔树，数刻而止，伤人害稼，其数甚多。宝责躬励己，谓为政之未敷，致阴灵之所谴也。至六月五日，府中视事之暇，昏然思寐，因解巾就





The Ninth Princess of the Dragon

About six miles east of the seat of Jing Prefecture lay the ruins of an ancient town called Xueju. In its corner was a lake known as the Benign Maiden. It was more than a mile across, surrounded by reeds and ancient trees, and from time to time strange creatures were observed in its fathomless, yet limpid, waters. The locals had built a temple on the shore, dedicated to a divine being called the Ninth Princess. People pray to her for rain in drought or sunshine in floods, and for many other purposes.

About sixty miles west of the prefectural seat, north of the town of Zhuna, there was another lake. The god of the lake was named after the place, who was said to have greater magical powers than the Ninth Princess.

In the fifth year of Qianfu reign, the garrison commander of Jingyuan Military Region was Zhou Bao. Starting from early summer that year, the clouds in the sky often took on odd shapes, like mountain peaks, like beautiful girls, like tigers or rats. They were formed by vapor from the two lakes. That summer, thunderstorms seemed more frequent and ferocious. Although they usually didn't last long, huge trees were pulled up and roofs blown away, ruining the crops and injuring many people. Zhou Bao thought it was a punishment from the negative forces for his failure to do his duties well.

He was working in his office on the fifth day of the sixth lunar month when he felt like taking a nap. He took off his headwear and lay

枕。寝犹未熟，见一武士冠鍪被铠，持钺而立于阶下，曰：“有女客在门，欲申参谒，故先听命。”宝曰：“尔为谁乎？”曰：“某即君之阍者，效役有年矣。”宝将诘其由，已见二青衣历阶而升，长跪于前曰：“九娘子自郊墅特来告谒，故先使下执事致命于明公。”宝曰：“九娘子非吾通家亲戚，安敢造次相面乎？”言犹未终，而见祥云细雨，异香袭人。

俄有一妇人，年可十七八，衣裙素淡，容质窈窕，凭空而下，立庭庑之间。容仪绰约，有绝世之貌。侍者十余辈，皆服饰鲜洁，有如妃主之仪。顾步徊翔，渐及卧所。宝将少避之，以候其意。侍者趋进而言曰：“贵主以君之高义，可申诚信之托，故将冤抑之怀，诉诸明公。明公忍不救其急难乎？”宝遂命升阶相见，宾主之礼，颇甚肃恭。登榻而坐，祥烟四合，紫气充庭，敛态低鬟，若有忧





down on the couch. Partially awake, he saw an armed soldier in helmet and armor standing below the steps.

"A woman guest is at the gate," he heard the man say. "She'd like to have an audience with you and is respectfully waiting for your permission."

"But who are you?" he asked.

"I'm a guard at the gate. I've been in your service for years."

He was about to inquire further when two maids in dark clothes ascended the steps and kneeled before his couch.

"Her Highness the Ninth Princess has come for an audience with you from her country home," the two said. "She asks us to announce her."

"She and I are in no way related. It would be improper for me to meet her." He was cut short by the appearance of a rosy cloud and a permeating fragrance. A young woman who looked no more than eighteen descended from the sky and stood in the courtyard. She was wearing a simple dress in light colors, yet she was a beauty with an extraordinary figure. Attended by a dozen brightly dressed maids, she had the dignity of a queen as she stepped forth.

Uncertain of her motives he intended to withdraw into the side room, but before he could move, a servant rushed up and said, "Her Highness has come to you because she regards you as a man of honor and wisdom, one whom she can trust and talk to about her troubles. Your Excellency certainly won't disappoint a woman in trouble, will you?"

Hearing that, he formally invited her in and they exchanged ceremonial greetings. As she took her seat, a soft mist closed in around her, a faint rosiness filled the whole compound. There she sat with her head lowered, her face sad and serious. He ordered a banquet and

戚之貌。宝命酌醴设饌，厚礼以待之。俄而敛袂离席，逡巡而言曰：“妾以寓止郊园，绵历多祀，醉酒饱德，蒙惠诚深。虽以孤枕寒床，甘心没齿，菟獭有托，负荷逾多。但以显晦殊途，行止乖互。今乃迫于情礼，岂暇缄藏？倘鉴幽情，当敢披露。”宝曰：“愿闻其说。所冀识其宗系，苟可展分，安敢以幽显为辞？君子杀身以成仁，徇其毅烈；蹈赴汤火，旁雪不平，乃宝之志也。”

对曰：“妾家世会稽之鄞县，卜筑于东海之潭，桑榆坟陇，百有余代。其后遭世不造，瞰室貽灾，五百人皆遭庾氏焚炙之祸。纂绍几绝，不忍戴天，潜遁幽岩，沉冤莫雪。至梁天监中，武帝好奇，召人通龙宫，入枯桑岛，以





treated her like the most distinguished guest.

Presently she stood up and straightened her clothes. "My humble self," she said, "has for many years taken up residence in your prefecture and I'm greatly indebted to you and your people's kindness for offering me a profusion of food and wine. That's why although I lead a lonely life, I'm willing to live here till the end of my days. As *yin* and *yang* go their separate ways and should not mix, I haven't come to express my gratitude, but now, pressed by the urgency of the situation, I can no longer remain shy and reticent. I'd like to pour out my troubles to you if you care to listen."

"Please tell me," he replied. "Make clear the cause and case. If it's in my power to help you, I wouldn't shrink away on grounds that we live in different worlds. If there's an injustice, I'll have it righted; if it's for a good cause, I'm ready to sacrifice my life. That is my resolve."

"For hundreds of generations my family had been living in Mao County on the shore of the East Sea," she explained. "We had our land there, and our people were buried there. But then war broke out among the humans and we suffered too. Five hundred members of my clan were burned to death by the Yu family, and that nearly terminated my family line. The survivors detested living in the same area with the enemy, so we moved inland and hid in isolated places. So far we haven't been able to avenge ourselves.

"As you know, Emperor Wudi of the Liang Dynasty had a strong fancy for mysteries. In Tianjian reign, he was looking for someone who knew the way to the dragon king's palace. He intended to send that person to Withered Mulberry Island where one of the entrances is supposed to be, and have him carry a present of roasted swallows, the dragons' most favorite food, to the seventh daughter of the dragon king, hopefully in exchange for rare pearls.

烧燕奇味，结好于洞庭君宝藏主第七女，以求异宝。寻闻家仇庾毗罗，自鄮县白水郎，弃官解印，欲承命请行，阴怀不道。因使得入龙宫，假以求货，覆吾宗嗣。赖杰公敏鉴，知渠挟私请行，欲肆无辜之害，虑其反贻伊戚，辱君之命，言于武帝。武帝遂止，乃令合浦郡落黎县欧越罗子春代行。

“妾之先宗，羞共戴天，虑其后患，乃率其族，韬光灭迹，易姓变名，避仇于新平真宁县安村。披榛凿穴，筑室于兹，先人弊庐，殆成胡越。今三世卜居，先为灵应君，寻受封应圣侯；后以阴灵普济，功德及民，又封普济王，威德临人，为世所重。

“妾即王之第九女也，笄年配于象郡石龙之少子。良人以世袭猛烈，血气方刚，宪法不拘，严父不禁，残虐视事，礼教蔑闻。未及期年，果贻天谴，覆宗绝嗣，削迹除名。唯妾一身，仅以获免，父母抑遣再行，妾终违命。王





“A man named Yu Piluo from the Township of White Water in Mao County responded to the call. He offered to give up his official position to carry out the mission. As he was in fact a descendant of our enemy, his volunteering was not without suspicious motives. If he could successfully reach the palace of the dragon king in the name of seeking treasures for the emperor, he might have a chance to annihilate my clan.

“Luckily, His Excellency Wan Jie, one of the four wise men of the time, saw through his sinister intentions and advised Emperor Wudi against him, for he might not only fail the mission but also harm the innocent. Wudi therefore commissioned another man named Luo Zichun from the Township of Oyue in Luoli County, Hepu Prefecture.

“My branch of the clan, as I said, reluctant to live with the enemy and worried about further persecution, assumed false names and moved to An Village in Zhenning County, Xinping Prefecture. Here we lived in obscurity, digging caves for new homes and reclaiming farmlands from the wilderness. In that way we’ve completely severed our ties with our ancestral home on the east coast. It has already been three generations since we moved here. My grandfather was called Sir Lingying, and later granted the title of Marquis Yingsheng. As we were benevolent and always ready to help the people, my father was promoted to Prince Omni-Benevolent. He was a very noble person and highly respected by the people. And I’m his ninth daughter.

“At sixteen I was married to the youngest son of Stone Dragon at Xiangjun Prefecture. As a hereditary aristocrat, he was arrogant and unbridled. Even his father could not discipline him. He was vicious and merciless, ignoring all moral codes. So before a year was over, heaven deprived him of his title and had him executed. I was the only one exempted. My parents wanted me to remarry and matchmakers from princes and nobles thronged my parents’ gate, but I refused. To show

侯致聘，接轸交辕，诚愿既坚，遂欲自劓。父母怒其刚烈，遂遣屏居于兹土之别邑，音问不通，于今三纪。虽慈颜未复，温清久违，离群索居，甚为得志。

“近年为朝那小龙，以季弟未婚，潜行礼聘，甘言厚币，峻阻复来。灭性毁形，殆将不可。朝那遂通好于家君，欲成其事，遂使其季弟权徙居于王畿之西，将质于我王，以成姻好。家君知妾之不可夺，乃令朝那纵兵相逼。妾亦率其家僮五十余人，付以兵仗，逆战郊原。众寡不敌，三战三北，师徒倦弊，掎角无怙。将欲收拾余烬，背城借一，而虑晋阳水急，台城火炎。一旦攻下，为顽童所辱，纵没于泉下，无面石氏之子。故《诗》云：‘泛彼柏





them my determination, I vowed to cut off my nose if they insisted on marrying me off. My parents were very angry with me, so they sent me away from home to live by myself at this remote corner of their land. I haven't heard from them for thirty-six years. Though I live without kin and friends, I've been quite happy, until recently.

"Recently, the dragon god of Zhuna has been making secret proposals to me, while to all appearances he was doing that for his bachelor younger brother. He sent me valuable presents and said a lot of sweet things. I flatly turned him down and threatened to deface myself, but even that couldn't discourage his persistence. He then tried to befriend my parents in hope they would pressure me, and he even advised his younger brother to move to the western suburbs of the capital and hostage himself to the emperor in exchange of royal approval. My parents knew that I couldn't be persuaded, so they encouraged him to use force. I collected my servants, about fifty of them, gave them weapons, and we fought at the border. Yet, as we were seriously outnumbered, we've lost three battles in succession. We're worn out and we don't have reinforcement. I've thought of gathering my remaining force to put up a last-ditch resistance by the city wall, but, you know, water and fire are merciless. Once they break into town, I can't escape the fate of being abused and disgraced. How am I to face my late husband after death?

In *The Book of Poetry* there is a poem by the widowed wife of the Prince of Wei. She vows:

*A cypress boat
In midstream rows.
His hair parted;
He I wedded,
And will love till death.*



舟，在彼中河。髡彼两髦，实维我仪。之死矢靡他。母也天只，不谅人只！’此卫世子孀妇自誓之词。又云：‘谁谓鼠无牙，何以穿我墉？谁谓女无家，何以速我讼？虽速我讼，亦不女从。’此邵伯听讼，衰乱之俗微，贞信之教兴，强暴之男，不能侵袭贞女也。今则公之教，可以精通显晦，贻范古今。贞信之教，故不为姬奭之下者。幸以君之余力，少假兵锋，挫彼凶狂，存其鰥寡。成贱妾终天之誓，彰明公赴难之心。辄具志诚，幸无见阻。”

宝心虽许之，讶其辨博，欲拒以他事，以观其词，乃曰：“边徼事繁，烟尘在望，朝廷以西邨陷虏，芜没者三十余州。将议举戈，复其土壤，晓夕恭命，不敢自安。匪夕伊朝，前茅即举，空多愤悱，未暇承命。”对曰：“昔





Oh, dear mother!

Not another!

In the court of the Prince of Shao, a woman declared:

Who says rats are toothless?

Or how they bore through walls?

Who says I am homeless?

And why take me to court?

Even if I am sued,

I will not yield to you!

The prince condemned immoral practice and upheld faith and fidelity so that no man, however violent he might be, could violate the chastity of a woman. Your Excellency's moral integrity is exemplary in both the visible and invisible world and among the past and present. You are no less a man of honor than the Prince of Shao. I wonder if you can spare me, a humble widow, a small detachment of your armed force just to beat that arrogant man. That will not only help me stand by my marriage vow but also attest to your compassion and generosity. Those are from the bottom of my heart. I hope you won't refuse to help."

At heart, he had already consented, but when he spoke he came up with an excuse, for he was surprised by her eloquence and curious to see how well she could argue her cause.

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you at this moment, though I feel most sympathetic," he replied. "You know, the situation at the borders is tense and war is imminent. We've lost more than thirty of our western frontier prefectures to the barbarians and the central government is planning a massive counter-offensive to recover the lost territory. We're making urgent preparations and orders may come any moment. Then we'll be set in motion."



者楚昭王以方城为城，汉水为池，尽有荆蛮之地。籍父兄之资，强国外连，三良内助。而吴兵一举，鸟迸云奔，不暇婴城，迫于走兔，宝玉迁徙，宗社凌夷，万乘之灵，不能庇先王之朽骨。至申胥乞师于嬴氏，血泪污于秦庭，七日长号，昼夜靡息。秦伯悯其祸败，竟为出师，复楚退吴，仅存亡国。况半氏为春秋之强国，申胥乃衰楚之大夫，而以矢尽兵穷，委身折节，肝脑涂地，感动于强秦。矧妾一女子，父母斥其孤贞，狂童凌其寡弱，缀旒之急，安得不少动仁人之心乎？”

宝曰：“九娘子灵宗异派，呼吸风云，蠢尔黎元，固在掌握，又焉得示弱于世俗之人，而自困如是者哉？”对曰：“妾家族望，海内咸知。只如彭蠡洞庭，皆外祖也；陵水罗水，皆中表也。内外昆季，百有余人，散居吴越之间，各分地土。咸京八水，半是宗亲。若以遣一介之使，飞咫尺之书，告彭蠡洞庭，召陵水罗水，率维扬之轻锐，





“In history,” she contended, “the Prince of Chu had a vast territory in the south. He built a long protective wall along his borders and even turned River Han into a moat. He had both internal and external support. But what happened when the army of Wu attacked? His troops scattered like startled birds or wind-blown clouds. The enemy was soon upon the capital and people fled like hares. National treasures were taken, his ancestral temple was defiled. His tens of thousands of chariots couldn’t even protect his ancestors’ bones. Shen Baoxu had to go and plead before the Prince of Qin. For seven days and seven nights, he cried till blood soaked the palace floor. That moved the prince, who decided to help. The Qin force repelled the Wus and saved Chu from extinction. Just think that Chu was one of the most powerful princedoms in the Spring and Autumn Period, and Shen Baoxu was a Court minister. But when they were at means end, even they had to humble themselves and seek help by kowtowing till their brains spilled out, let alone me, a mere widow ousted by her parents and bullied by an arrogant and wicked neighbor. At a moment of life and death, don’t you have the least sympathy?”

“As the Ninth Princess of the dragon king, you have divine powers. Your breaths are winds, your puffs are clouds, and we human beings are subjected to your mercy. How is it that you’re so embarrassed as to seek help from us – the weaker beings?”

“Of course you know my clan is omnipresent. For example, the dragon gods of Pengli and Dongting lakes are my maternal grandfathers. Those of River Ling and River Luo are my distant cousins. My paternal brothers add up to over a hundred. They spread out all over the country, each governing a large area. Of the eight rivers around the capital, half are my relatives. If I send a messenger to them, I can gather forces from Pengli and Dongting, Ling and Luo, corps from

征八水之鹰扬。然后檄冯夷，说巨灵，鼓子胥之波涛，混阳侯之鬼怪，鞭驱列缺，指挥丰隆，扇疾风，翻暴浪，百道俱进，六师鼓行，一战而成功。则朝那一鳞，立为齑粉；泾城千里，坐变污渚。言下可观，安敢谬矣。顷者泾阳君与洞庭外祖，世为姻戚。后以琴瑟不调，弃掷少妇，遭钱塘之一怒，伤生害稼，怀山襄陵，泾水穷鳞，寻毙外祖之牙齿。今泾上车轮马迹犹在，史传具存，固非谬也。妾又以夫族得罪于天，未蒙上帝昭雪，所以销声避影，而自困如是。君若不悉诚款，终以多事为词，则向者之言，不敢避上帝之责也。”

宝遂许诺，卒爵撤馔，再拜而去。宝及晡方寤，耳闻目览，恍然如在。翼日，遂遣兵士一千五百人，戍于湫庙之侧。是月七日，鸡初鸣，宝将晨兴，疏牖尚暗。忽于帐前有一人，经行于帷幌之间，有若侍巾栉者。呼之命烛，





the tributaries of lower Yangtze and crack troops from around the capital. Even the river gods of the Yellow River and Mount Hua, together with the god of the wave and his strange aquatic creatures, will convene to this place in armored columns. Strong winds will push up mountainous waves from all bearings of the compass, and one strike will crush that scaly thing from Zhuna, but the entire Jing Prefecture will be flooded and devastated. I'm not bragging, for there is no lack of evidence. In the past, the lord of the Jing River and the lord of Dongting were related. He married one of my maternal grandpa's girls. But the young couple fell out and he abandoned his wife, thus enraging the lord of Qiantang. The land was flooded, property damaged and crops were ruined. The lord of the Jing River was crushed between my grandpa's teeth. That incident is certainly not fictitious. It is recorded in your history books and you can still see traces of the battle along the Jing River valley. Furthermore, I courted the displeasure of heaven because of my husband's family and have not been pardoned yet. That's why I'm lying low in this out-of-the-way place and being so humiliated. If you refuse to help me on the ground that you're otherwise engaged, then, as I've said, I'll have to turn to my relatives in spite of courting the possible anger of heaven."

He immediately agreed. After the banquet, the Ninth Princess bowed her leave.

It was noontime when he woke up. He felt he could still see the princess and hear her voice.

The next day he dispatched fifteen hundred soldiers to guard the temple of the Ninth Princess.

On the seventh day of the month he woke up at the first cock-crow when it was still dark outside. Suddenly he saw someone moving among the drapes. He thought it was a servant bringing him washing



竟无酬对，遂厉而叱之。乃言曰：“幽明有隔，幸不以灯烛见迫也。”宝潜知异，乃屏气息音，徐谓之曰：“得非九娘子乎？”对曰：“某即九娘子之执事者也。昨日蒙君假以师徒，救其危患，但以幽显事别，不能驱策。苟能存其始约，幸再思之。”俄而纱窗渐白，注目视之，悄无所见。

宝良久思之，方达其义。遂呼吏，命按兵籍，选亡没者名，得马军五百人，步卒一千五百人。数内选押衙孟远，充行营都虞候。牒送善女湫神。是月十一日，抽回戍庙之卒，见于厅事之前。转旋之际，有一甲士仆地，口动目瞬，问无所应，亦不似暴卒者。遂置于廊庑之间，天明方悟。遂使人诘之，对曰：“某初见一人，衣青袍，自东而来，相见甚有礼。谓某曰：‘贵主蒙相公莫大之恩，拯





water. He told the person to light the candles but was ignored. In his anger he raised his voice.

“I’m from the netherworld. Please don’t embarrass me with candlelight,” the person replied.

Aware that something unusual was going on, he held his breath and said softly, “Are you the Ninth Princess?”

“No,” replied the shadow. “I’m Her Highness’ lieutenant. She’d like to thank you for sending troops to protect her, but since we and they belong to different worlds, we lack the means to command them. If Your Excellency really wants to help us, would you please reconsider the way you do it?”

Soon the window panes paled. He scanned the room but couldn’t see a soul. He contemplated the man’s word and the meaning suddenly occurred to him. He called for an officer and told him to look up the army register for the names of the deceased soldiers. He thus collected five hundred cavalymen and fifteen hundred foot soldiers. Among them he chose one named Meng Yuan, a former low-level officer of the guards, promoted him one rank, and made him head of the team. He then had a copy of the names sent to the temple.

On the eleventh the original detachment to the temple returned. While he was reviewing the ranks in front of his office building, a soldier suddenly fainted. His lips moved and his eyeballs rolled, but he could not make a sound. Yet he didn’t look like dying. So he was laid down on the verandah and it was not until the next morning that he regained his senses.

“At first I saw a man in a dark robe coming from the east,” he said when questioned. “He greeted me politely and said: ‘Her Highness is most grateful to His Excellency for sending troops to help, but there is still something to be desired. As you’re an intelligent man, we’d like

其焚溺，然亦未尽诚款。假尔明敏，再通幽情，幸无辞免也。’某急以他词拒之，遂以袂相牵，懵然颠仆。但觉与青衣者继踵偕行，俄至其庙，促呼连步，至于帷薄之前。见贵主谓某云：‘昨蒙相公悯念孤危，俾尔戍于弊邑。往返途路，得无劳止。余近蒙相公再借兵师，深惬诚愿。观其士马精强，衣甲铓利，然都虞候孟远，才轻位下，甚无机略。今月九日，有游军三千余，来掠我近郊。遂令孟远领新到将士，邀击于平原之上，设伏不密，反为彼军所败。甚思一权谋之将，俾尔速归，达我情素。’言讫，拜辞而出，昏然似醉，余无所知矣。”

宝验其说，与梦相符。意欲质前事，遂差制胜关使郑承符以代孟远。是月十三日晚，衙于后球场，沥酒焚香，牒请九娘子神收管。至十六日，制胜关申云：“今月十三日夜，三更已来，关使暴卒。”宝惊叹息，使人驰视之。至则果卒，唯心背不冷，暑月停尸，亦不败坏。其家甚异





you to carry a message to His Excellency. Don't let us down.' I was trying to find an excuse when he grabbed me by the sleeve and I fainted. I felt I was following him and soon we arrived at a temple. He urged me in right up to the gauze curtain before a high seat. 'His Excellency took pity on my situation the other day,' I heard Her Ladyship say, 'and sent you over to defend my land. I appreciate your efforts in marching this far. And I'm most indebted to His Excellency's kindness for sending me a second detachment. The horses and soldiers are strong-bodied and well equipped, but the rank of their leader, Meng Yuan, is too low and he's not a capable commander, especially lacking in strategy. On the ninth day of this month, three thousand enemy troops were encroaching on our territory. I ordered him to meet the enemy on the plains with his newly arrived force. It seemed he intended to lay an ambush, but instead of surprising the enemy he was surprised and beaten. I need a more competent commander. Would you please hurry back to pass on our request?' Then I bowed my way out. It all happened as if I were in a state of drunkenness. I don't remember anything else."

The soldier's story was compatible with Zhou's dreams. To fulfill his promise, he selected Zheng Chengfu, the commander of Fort Zhisheng, to replace Meng Yuan. That night, the thirteenth of the month, he offered incense and made a libation on the sports field behind his office and then burned up a memorial to the Ninth Princess, transferring Zheng to her command.

On the sixteenth a report arrived from Fort Zhisheng, saying that their commander died all of a sudden at midnight of the thirteenth. He sighed in almost disbelief. An officer was immediately sent over for confirmation. Zheng was dead indeed, but it seemed his body did not go completely cold and there was no sign of decomposition even



之。忽一夜，阴风惨冽，吹砂走石，发屋拔树，禾苗尽偃，及晓而止。云雾四布，连夕不解。至暮，有迅雷一声，划如天裂。承符忽呻吟数息，其家剖棺视之，良久复苏。

是夕，亲邻咸聚，悲喜相仍，信宿如故。家人诘其由，乃曰：“余初见一人，衣紫绶，乘骊驹，从者十余人，至门下马，命吾相见。揖让周旋，手捧一牒授吾云：‘贵主得吹尘之梦，知君负命世之才，欲遵南阳故事，思殄邦仇。使下臣持兹礼币，聊展敬于君子，而冀再康国步。幸不以三顾为劳也。’余不暇他辞，唯称不敢。酬酢之际，已见聘币罗于阶下；鞍马器甲锦彩服玩橐鞬之属，咸布列于庭。吾辞不获免，遂再拜受之。即相促登车，所乘马异常骏伟，装饰鲜洁，仆御整肃。

“倏忽行百余里，有甲马三百骑已来，迎候驱殿。有大将军之行李，余亦颇以为得志。指顾间，望见一大城，其雉堞穹崇，沟洫深浚，余惚恍不知所自。俄于郊外，备





though it was high summer, a fact that amazed his family.

Then one night, a shrieking wind rose, sweeping up sand and stones, pulling up trees, flattening houses and crops. The wind died down in the morning but throughout the day the sky remained overcast. At nightfall a powerful thunderbolt exploded, as if heaven had cracked open. Zheng suddenly let out a moan. His family lifted off the coffin lid and found he was gradually coming to. The next day he was fully recovered.

“At first,” he told his overjoyed family and colleagues, “I saw a man in an official robe and decorated with a purple sash dismounting from a fine steed at my door. He was attended by more than a dozen people. He asked to see me and we exchanged greetings. He handed me a scroll and said, ‘You were recommended to Her Highness in a dream as a man who can save a country. So following the example of Liu Bei inviting Zhuge Kongming, I’m here with gifts from Her Highness as a token of our sincerity. Please do not refuse us and make us come to invite you three times.’ I could find no excuse, but insisted that I wasn’t a person of such great ability. While we were talking, the gifts were laid out in the yard: horses and saddles, bow and arrows, colorful silk and artifacts of all kinds. As it was pointless to refuse such earnestness, I bowed acceptance. Then he asked me to mount a carriage, which was pulled by a team of spirited horses and accompanied by well-trained servants. In a flash we covered dozens of miles and I saw three hundred cavalymen on armored horses coming to meet me. With them joining my retinue, I felt quite smug, imagining myself a high-ranking general. Looking ahead, I espied the crenellated walls of a big city surrounded by a deep moat. I was disoriented, wondering where I was. Soon we were outside the city gate. Tents were set up; music and food were served. I marched into town after the feast. It



帐乐，设享。宴罢入城，观者如堵，传呼小吏，交错其间，所经之门，不记重数。及至一处，如有公署，左右使余下马易衣，趋见贵主。贵主使人传命，请以宾主之礼见。余自谓既受公文器甲临戎之具，即是臣也，遂坚辞，具戎服入见。贵主使人传命，请去橐鞬，宾主之间，降杀可也。余遂舍器仗而趋入，见贵主坐于厅上。余拜谒，一如君臣之礼。拜讫，连呼登阶，余乃再拜，升自西阶。见红妆翠眉，蟠龙髻凤而侍立者，数十余辈；弹弦握管，秣花异服而执役者，又数十辈；腰金拖紫，曳组攢簪而趋隅者，又非止一人也；轻裘大带，白玉横腰，而森罗于阶下者，其数甚多。次命女客五六人，各有侍者十数辈，差肩接迹，累累而进。余亦低视长揖，不敢施拜。坐定，有大校数人，皆令预坐，举酒进乐。酒至贵主，敛袂举觞，将欲兴词，叙向来征聘之意。

“俄闻烽燧四起，叫噪喧呼云：‘朝那贼步骑数万人，今日平明，攻破堡寨，寻已入界。数道齐进，烟火不绝，请发兵救应。’侍坐者相顾失色，诸女不及叙别，狼





seemed the whole town had turned out to look at me. Messengers shuttled back and forth among the crowd. I don't even remember the number of gates I passed through. Then I arrived at a building that looked like an office mansion. They helped me dismount and change into fresh clothes to meet with their sovereign. Her Highness sent out word that she'd like to receive me in the name of an honored guest. But I declined such distinction and insisted on wearing a serviceman's attire to the audience since I'd accepted her letter of appointment and weapons. Her Highness then said since I'm her guest, I at least may remove the weapons and be less formal. I put down my weapons, entered the hall and saluted her as a subject should before the sovereign. She asked me to sit beside her. I bowed again and took a seat on the west side. There were dozens of attendants in brightly colored clothes, their faces made up, their hair combed into the shape of coiling dragon and flying phoenix. Also in the hall were dozens of musicians in flower-patterned clothes, playing stringed and pipe instruments. Standing by the wall were quite a few in purple robes and golden belts with ornamental pins in their hair. Below the steps were many more in fur and wide jade-studded belts. Then five or six women guests filed in, each bringing a train of attendants. I kept my head bowed, my eyes lowered, not daring to look up. Last to sit were several army officers. Music rose and wine was served. Her Highness, holding her wide sleeve in her left hand, raised her cup and was about to make a welcome speech when the beacon fires reached the palace and shouts rose up: 'Tens of thousands of Zhuna troops have conquered the border forts at daybreak. Now their columns are marching toward the capital from different directions. Reinforcement is needed everywhere!' The attendants went pale; the women guests scattered without saying goodbye; the officers left the table and stood below the steps waiting for orders.



狃而散。及诸校降阶拜谢，伫立听命。贵主临轩谓余曰：

‘吾受相公非常之惠，悯其孤茕，继发师徒，拯其患难。然以车甲不利，权略是思。今不弃弊陋，所以命将军者，正为此危急也。幸不以幽僻为辞，少匡不迨。’遂别赐战马二匹，黄金甲一副，旌旗旄钺，珍宝器用，充庭溢目，不可胜计。彩女二人，给以兵符，锡赉甚丰。余拜捧而出，传呼诸将，指挥部伍，内外响应。

“是夜出城，相次探报，皆云，贼势渐雄。余素谙其山川地里，形势孤虚。遂引军夜出，去城百余里，分布要害，明悬赏罚，号令三军，设三伏以待之。迟明，排布已毕。贼汰其前功，颇甚轻进，犹谓孟远之统众也。余自引轻骑，登高视之，见烟尘四合，行阵整肃。余先使轻兵搦战，示弱以诱之。接以短兵，且战且行。金革之声，天裂地坼。余引兵诈北，彼亦尽锐前趋。鼓噪一声，伏兵尽起，千里转战，四面夹攻。彼军败绩，死者如麻，再战再奔。朝那狡童，漏刃而去，从亡之卒，不过十余人。余选健马三十骑追之，果生置于麾下。由是血肉染草木，脂膏润原野，腥秽荡空，戈甲山积。





Her Highness came out onto the balcony and said to me, 'I'm very much indebted to His Excellency. Out of great benevolence he twice sent troops to support me. But as our army was weak and inexperienced in war, we've been losing. Now His Excellency has sent you here at this critical juncture. We hope you won't let us down.' She gave me two battle steeds and a gold suit of armor. Weapons and flags filled the courtyard. Two maids brought me the command tallies, which I took with me to the camp. I gathered my officers and mobilized the troops, setting down clear delineations of rewards and punishments. One after another, scouts brought back reports that the enemy forces were gathering momentum. But I wasn't afraid, for I know the terrain well. That night, we marched out of town. Some thirty miles out, I had the troops occupy the vantage points, and laid out three rings of ambush. By daybreak, the deployment was complete. The enemy, boosted by their previous easy victories, pushed rashly ahead, probably thinking that it was still Meng Yuan in command. I took a light cavalry and set up my commanding position on high ground. The enemy was converging on us, their army well trained. I ordered the light cavalry to meet them head on. They were certainly no match for the enemy, yet they challenged them and fought while they retreated. The din of drums and gongs shook heaven and earth. We pretended to be beaten and fleeing. Their tens of thousands followed on our heels. I gave a signal and bugles blared from every fold of the hills. My ambush troops rushed out on all sides, encircling the enemy. The dead bodies of the enemy littered the ground like cut crop. They tried to fight their way out but only the Zhuna god was resourceful enough to break through the encirclement with a mere dozen of followers. I selected thirty fast horses to chase them down. Zhuna was captured and brought to my tent. The war ended. Blood dyed the grass scarlet, sweat soaked the



“贼帅以轻车驰送于贵主，贵主登平朔楼受之。举国士民，咸来会集。引于楼前，以礼责问，唯称死罪，竟绝他词，遂令押赴都市腰斩。临刑，有一使乘传，来自王所，持急诏，令促赦之。曰：‘朝那之罪，吾之罪也，汝可赦之，以轻吾过。’贵主以父母再通音问，喜不自胜，谓诸将曰：‘朝那妄动，即父之命也；今使赦之，亦父之命也。昔吾违命，乃贞节也；今若又违，是不祥也。’遂命解转，使单骑送归，未及朝那，已羞而卒于路。

“余以克敌之功，大被宠锡，寻备礼拜平难大将军，食朔方一万三千户。别赐第宅，舆马宝器，衣服婢仆，园林邸第，旌旛铠甲。次及诸将，赏赉有差。明日大宴，预坐者不过五六人，前者六七女皆来侍坐，风姿艳态，愈更动人。竟夕酣饮，甚欢。酒至贵主，捧觞而言曰：‘妾之不幸，少处空闺，天赋孤贞。不从严父之命，屏居于此三





earth, a rotten stench suffused the air, and armor and weapons stacked up like little hills. I sent the captured Zhuna to the palace in an express carriage. Her Highness ascended the gate-tower to accept the capture, while the whole town gathered at the square below. As Zhuna was pushed forward, Her Highness censured him for waging war. All Zhuna said was: 'Let me die.' So he was taken to the marketplace to be split at the waist. Just as he was about to be executed an urgent messenger arrived carrying an edict from the princess' father. It read, 'Please pardon Zhuna to relieve me of my guilt, for it was I who instigated him.' The princess was overjoyed to hear from her parents again after such a long time. 'It was my father who told Zhuna to start war on us,' Her Highness said to the officers. 'It is also my father who tells me to pardon him. I disobeyed my parents then to uphold my chastity, but if I disobey my parents this time, it will be against filial piety.' So she ordered Zhuna to be untied and given a horse to go home, alone. However, Zhuna, borne down by shame, died halfway. Her Highness showered favors on me for the victory. I was given the title of National Savior and a fief of thirteen thousand households, not to mention the houses and gardens, coaches and horses, jewelry and clothes, servants and serving maids. The officers and soldiers too were rewarded according to their merits. A grand banquet was held the following day and I was among the few who had the honor to sit at the same table with Her Highness. Those women guests who attended last time were also present, more seemly and charming than before. The banquet lasted late into the night. Her Highness toasted me, saying, 'I'm a most unfortunate woman, widowed in my youth. I was proud and would not listen to my parents so I was exiled here for thirty-six years. Life became a tedious drag for me and I'd often go without combing my hair for days. As if that wasn't enough, I was further threatened by



纪矣。蓬首灰心，未得其死。邻童迫胁，几至颠危。若非相公之殊恩，将军之雄武，则息国不言之妇，又为朝那之囚耳。永言斯惠，终天不忘。’遂以七宝钟酌酒，使人持送郑将军。余因避席，再拜而饮。余自是颇动归心，词理恳切，遂许给假一月，宴罢出。明日，辞谢讫，拥其麾下三十余人返于来路。所经之处，闻鸡犬，颇甚酸辛。俄顷到家，见家人聚泣，灵帐俨然。麾下一人，令余促入棺缝之中，余欲前，而为左右所耸。俄闻震雷一声，醒然而悟。”

承符自此不事家产，唯以后事付妻孥。果经一月，无疾而终。其初欲暴卒时，告其所亲曰：“余本机铃人用，效节戎行。虽奇功蔑闻，而薄效粗立。洎遭衅累，谴谪于兹，平生志气，郁而未申。丈夫终当扇长风，摧巨浪，摧太山以压卵，决东海以沃萤。奋其鹰犬之心，为人雪不平之事。吾朝夕当有所受，与子分襟，固不久矣。”





a neighbor, and my country was almost conquered. If it had not been for His Excellency's generosity and your valor, my general, I'd have been captured and insulted by Zhuna. I'm indebted to you all my life.' She personally poured wine into a cup made of seven treasures and passed it to me. I stood up to receive it, bowed to her and drain it. Then I thought of coming home. My eagerness must have moved her, for she allowed me a month's leave. The next day, after making my farewells, I set out for home with the thirty soldiers I had taken with me, following the route we had come. Hearing the dogs bark and the roosters crow along the road made me even more homesick. Soon I was home and saw you gathered and mourning at my funeral tent. One of my subordinates urged me to enter the coffin through the crack. With their encouragement I stepped in. Suddenly I heard a loud thunderclap and woke up."

After his recovery, Zheng, however, showed no more interest in daily affairs. He made arrangements for his wife and family, and died peacefully a month later without suffering any apparent illness.

Before he died the first time, he had said to his family, "I'm a capable man and like my army career. Although so far I haven't been able to perform any great exploits, I did make some small accomplishments. Unfortunately, my involvement in the incident demoted me here and killed whatever ambitions I might have had. A man of consequence should be able to do things like raising high winds to push huge waves, lifting Mount Tai to crush an egg, or draining the sea to irrigate dry lands. He should be able to fly like an eagle, to run like a hound, and to erase all evil and injustice. I may be offered an opportunity pretty soon, and it won't be long before I take leave of you."

On the thirteenth of that month, someone setting out from Xueju

其月十三日，有人自薛举城，晨发十余里。天初平晓，忽见前有车尘竞起，旌旗焕赫，甲马数百人，中拥一人，气概洋洋然。逼而视之，郑承符也。此人惊讶移时，因伫于路左，见瞥如风云，抵善女湫。俄顷，悄无所见。





early in the morning saw dust rising on the road ahead, and soon carriages and flags rolled toward him. Hundreds of cavalymen followed an elated general. The traveler standing by the roadside was surprised to see that the general was none other than Zheng Chengfu. They dashed past like wind sweeping dust and went straight to the lake of the Benign Maiden. Then all vanished as if nothing had happened.





郭务静

沧州南皮丞郭务静性糊涂。与主簿刘思庄宿于逆旅，谓庄曰：“从驾大难。静尝从驾，失家口三日，于侍官幕下讨得之。”庄曰：“公夫人在其中否？”静曰：“若不在中，更论何事。”

又谓庄曰：“今大有贼。昨夜二更后，静从外来，有一贼，忽从静房内走出。”庄曰：“亡何物？”静曰：“无之。”庄曰：“不亡物，安知其贼？”静曰：“但见其狼狈而走，不免致疑耳。”





The Muddlehead

Guo Wujing, a county official of Nanpi, was a muddle-headed man. Staying at an inn one night, he bragged to his colleague Liu Sizhuang that it was most adventurous to serve in His Majesty's retinue, which honor he had when he was younger. During that episode he lost his family for three whole days. He searched high and low, and finally found them at a lieutenant's place.

"Do you mean your wife was missing, too?" asked Liu.

"Sure she was. What's so unusual about it?"

After a while, he spoke again, saying that these days thieves were running riot. For instance, when he returned home around ten o'clock last night, he saw a thief sneaking out from his bedroom.

"Lost anything?" Liu asked in concern.

"No, nothing."

"Then, how do you know it was a thief?"

"Well, it was just a hunch, because I saw the man fleeing in panic."





娄师德

则天禁屠杀颇切，吏人弊于蔬菜。师德为御史大夫，因使至于陕。厨人进肉，师德曰：“敕禁屠杀，何为有此？”厨人曰：“豺咬杀羊。”师德曰：“大解事豺。”乃食之。又进鲙，复问何为有此。厨人复曰：“豺咬杀鱼。”师德因大叱之：“智短汉，何不道是獭？”厨人即云是獭。师德亦为荐之。





The Disciplinarian

Empress Wu, a believer in Buddhism, forbade the butchering of life. So her courtiers had to keep to a vegetarian diet.

Lou Shide, then head of the Disciplinary Department, once went on an inspection tour to Shan Prefecture, where the chef served mutton.

“Her Majesty forbids butchering. How can you have mutton?” demanded Lou sternly.

“The sheep was killed by a jackal, Your Excellency,” replied the chef.

“What an intelligent jackal!” remarked Lou, and he savored the mutton.

The next course was fish.

“How is it you killed the fish?” questioned Lou again.

“The jackal killed it as well.”

“What a fool you are!” shouted Lou. “Why didn’t you say it was killed by an otter?!”

“It was indeed killed by an otter, Your Excellency,” echoed the chef.

Lou finished off the fish with no qualms.





润州楼

润州城南隅，有楼名万岁楼。俗传楼上烟出，刺史即死，不死即贬。开元已前，以润州为凶阙。董琬为江东采访使，尝居此州。其时昼日烟出，刺史皆忧惧狼狽，愁情至死。

乾元中，忽然又昼日烟出，圆可一尺余，直上数丈。有吏密伺之，就视其烟，乃出于楼角隙中；更近而视之，乃蚊子也。楼下有井，井中无水，黑而且深。小虫蠖蠓蛛蝓之类，色黑而小。每晚晴，出自于隙中，作团而上。遥看类烟，以手揽之，即蚊蚋耳。从此知非，刺史亦无虑矣。





Smoke from the Longevity Tower

There was a tall building in the southern quarter of the capital of Ruen Prefecture named Longevity Tower. It was superstitiously believed that when smoke rose from the building, the prefect was to die, or at least he was to be demoted and exiled. Therefore Ruen Prefecture was considered an unlucky assignment by the officials even before Kaiyuan reign. Take for example the time when Dong Wan was the high commissioner of the lower Yangtze region, who used to have his headquarters in the city. The tower often smoked – and in broad daylight! The prefects were so upset and scared that they died in close succession.

In Qianyuan reign, smoke rose up from the tower once again – a straight column several rods high and about a foot in diameter. Out of curiosity, a clerk stole over to have a look and found that the smoke was pouring out from a crack in the corner of the building. He went closer and discovered that the smoke was actually clouds of mosquitoes and gnats. He could catch them in his hands! Further inspection disclosed that there was an ancient well beneath, now dry, but deep and dark and occupied by swarms of teeny black insects. On fine evenings they would fly out of the crack and rise up in rolling clouds. Seen from afar, it looked like a smoke column.

Thereafter, the “smoke” was no longer a dark omen haunting the prefects.





李抱贞

李抱贞镇潞州，军资匱缺，计无所为。有老僧，大为郡人信服。抱贞因请之曰：“假和尚之道，以济军中，可乎？”僧曰：“无不可。”抱贞曰：“但言择日鞠场焚身，谋当于使宅凿一地道通连。俟火作，即潜以相出。”僧喜从之，遂陈状声言。

抱贞命于鞠场积薪贮油。因为七日道场，昼夜香灯，梵呗杂作。抱贞亦引僧入地道，使之不疑。僧乃升坛执炉，对众说法。抱贞率监军僚属及将吏，膜拜其下。以俸入擅施，堆于其傍。由是士女骈填，舍财亿计。满七日，





The Monk's Immolation

Li Baozhen, garrison commander of Lu Military Region, was plagued with the shortage of military supplies. Thus he thought of an influential old monk in the prefecture and went to solicit his help. "Could Your Reverence help me raise funds for the army?" he asked.

"I don't see any reasons against that," the monk replied.

"All you need to do is make a proclamation that on a certain day you're going to commit self-immolation on the football field. I'll have a tunnel dug from my office backyard to right beneath the pyre. So once it's set to fire, you can safely slip away."

The monk gladly accepted the idea and spread the news of his immolation. At the same time the commander stored up timber and oil on the football field. He personally led the monk through the tunnel to ensure him of its safety.

It was a seven-day ritual. Joss sticks and oil lamps burned through the days and nights. Music and the chanting of scriptures filled the air. The monk ascended the altar amidst the incense smoke and preached to the congregation. The commander, together with all his subordinates, knelt below and made an impressive donation by stacking their whole year's salary at the foot of the altar. Following their examples, men and women, the rich and the poor, opened their purse and laid down millions upon millions.

On the seventh day, the monk was placed upon the pyre and oil was poured onto the wood. In the reverberation of drums and chants,

遂送柴积，灌油发焰，击钟念佛。抱贞密已遣人填塞地道。俄顷之际，僧薪并灰。

数日，籍所得货财，辇入军资库。别求所谓舍利者数十粒，造塔贮焉。



both the pyre and the monk went up in flames and were burned to ashes, for the commander had secretly had the tunnel filled up.

It took several days to cart the collected money to the army storehouse. The commander had a pagoda built to preserve what he claimed to be the monk's sarira, beads of cremated bones from who knew where.





京都儒士

近者京都有数生会宴，因说人有勇怯，必由胆气。胆气若盛，自无所惧，可谓丈夫。座中有一儒士自媒曰：“若言胆气，余实有之。”众人笑曰：“必须试，然可信之。”或曰：“某亲故有宅，昔大凶，而今已空锁。君能独宿于此宅，一宵不惧者，我等酬君一局。”此人曰：“唯命。”明日便往，实非凶宅，但暂空耳。遂为置酒果灯烛，送于此宅中。众曰：“公更要何物？”曰：“仆有一剑，可以自卫，请无忧也。”众乃出宅，锁门却归。

此人实怯懦者，时已向夜，系所乘驴别屋，奴客并不得随。遂向阁宿，了不敢睡，唯灭灯抱剑而坐，惊怖不





The Erudite Gentlemen in the Capital

A group of erudite gentlemen in the capital were holding a party when someone touched upon the topic of courage. Whether a person was brave or timid, one argued, solely depended on the physical qualities of his gallbladder. If it was positively built, then he would be fearless and, consequently, a true gentleman.

One of the guests chipped in, "Speaking of one with a positively built gallbladder, to be honest with you, I am that person."

The group roared with laughter. "All right, but it must be tested first."

Someone suggested an old house owned by a relative. Having been the stage of many dreadful incidents, it was locked up and vacant. If he could spend just one night in that house all by himself without being frightened, they would throw a banquet in his honor.

"It's agreed," replied the brave one.

There they gathered the next afternoon. The house was actually an ordinary old house — it was simply unoccupied at the moment. Having arranged for wine, food, lamps and candles, the group asked whether he would need anything else.

"Nothing," answered the man firmly. "My sword is sufficient to defend me. Put your heart at ease and have a good night's sleep." The group left the house and locked the yard gate behind them.

He tethered his riding donkey in a wing room and retired into the bedroom. Night soon descended. He blew out the lamps but, being a coward at heart, he didn't dare to close his eyes. Apprehensive and

已。至三更，有月上，斜照窗隙，见衣架头有物如鸟鼓翼，翻翻而动。此人凛然强起，把剑一挥，应手落壁，磕然有声，后寂无音响。恐惧既甚，亦不敢寻究，但把剑坐。及五更，忽有一物，上阶推门。门不开，于狗窦中出头，气休休然。此人大怕，把剑前斫，不觉自倒。剑失手抛落，又不敢觅剑，恐此物人来，床下跽伏，更不敢动。忽然困睡。

不觉天明，诸奴客已开关，至阁子间，但见狗窦中，血淋漓狼籍。众大惊呼，儒士方悟。开门尚自战栗，具说昨宵与物战争之状。众大骇异，遂于此壁下寻，唯见席帽，半破在地，即夜所斫之鸟也。乃故帽破弊，为风所吹，如鸟动翼耳。剑在狗窦侧。众又绕堂寻血踪，乃是所乘驴，已斫口喙，唇齿缺破。乃是向晓因解，头入狗门，遂遭一剑。众大笑绝倒，扶持而归。士人惊悸，旬日方愈。





panicky, he sat on the couch clutching his sword to his chest. It was midnight when the moon rose up outside the window, illuminating an owl-shaped figure perching on the coat-hanger, flapping its wings. The man plucked up his courage and swung his sword. At this stroke, the creature fell down onto the floor with a loud thud. Then there was absolute silence. The effort had drained him of whatever courage he might have had to go over and inspect his kill. He sat stiffly with his sword in hand.

In the pre-dawn quietness something slowly ascended the doorsteps and pushed against the door. As the door held, it squeezed its head through the dog's entrance. Its heavy breathing could be heard distinctively. The terrified man made a desperate swing with his sword. The violence threw him off his feet and he lost hold of the sword, but with a monster in immediate proximity, he felt it unwise to grope for it. He kept to the ground and slithered beneath the couch, where he huddled motionlessly. Sleep, however, overcame him.

At sunrise, the group returned to open the gate. At the bedroom door they were surprised to find the dog's entrance smeared with fresh blood. Their alarmed calls awakened the man, who crept out to unbolt the door. He described to the dumbfounded group the war he went through during the night, his legs still trembling in retrospect. Together they searched the floor by the window and found only a cleft straw hat. That must have been the bird-shaped figure — the breeze made the battered old hat flutter. His sword was found beside the dog flap. The blood drops led them to his donkey. Its lips were gashed and a front tooth was knocked out. It must have managed to get loose near daybreak and received that cut as it poked its head through the hole, probably looking for fodder.

The group clung to one another in convulsive fits and laughed all their way home. A fortnight passed before the brave man recovered from the shock.



振武角抵人

光启年中，左神策军四军军使王卞出镇振武。置宴，乐戏既毕，乃命角抵。有一夫甚魁岸，自邻州来此较力，军中十数辈躯貌膂力，悉不能敌。主帅亦壮之，遂选三人，相次而敌之，魁岸者俱胜。帅及座客，称善久之。

时有一秀才坐于席上，忽起告主帅曰：“某扑得此人。”主帅颇骇其言。所请既坚，遂许之。秀才降阶，先入厨，少顷而出，遂掩绾衣服，握左拳而前。魁梧者微笑曰：“此一指必倒矣。”及渐相逼，急展左手示之，魁岸者懵然而倒。合座大笑。





The Wrestler

In Guangqi reign, General Wang Bian was appointed commander-in-chief of the garrison force of Zhenwu Military Region, and a reception party was held in his honor. When the singing and dancing were through, wrestlers were called in to perform. Among them was a bulky fellow from a neighboring prefecture on a traveling tournament. He had thrown down more than a dozen of the strongest men from the garrison force. Even the new commander cheered for him. Then another three muscular soldiers were picked out from the ranks and told to fight the bulky wrestler one after another in succession. The bulky man defeated them all, winning prolonged praise from Wang and all present.

Just then, a pale young scholar stood up from among the guests and claimed that he could throw the man off his feet. The commander-in-chief could hardly believe his ears, but since the scholar was insistent, he agreed to give him a chance.

The scholar stepped down from the raised platform where the guests were feasting and headed, not for the ring, but for the kitchen. He reappeared in a moment, his robe tightened around his waist and his left fist clenched and raised.

“I can push you off with one little finger,” the bulky man laughed as he saw the scholar.

As they accosted each other, the scholar suddenly spread out his left palm. The bulky fellow staggered and collapsed as if hit directly on



秀才徐步而出，盥手而登席焉。主帅诘之：“何术也？”对曰：“顷年客游，曾于道店逢此人。才近食案，踉跄而倒。有同伴曰：‘怕酱，见之辄倒。’某闻而志之。适诣设厨，求得少酱，握在手中。此人见之，果自倒。聊助宴设之欢笑耳。”

有边岫判官，目睹其事。





the head. The audience burst out with roars of laughter. The scholar strolled off quietly to wash his hands and then went back to his seat at the table.

The commander-in-chief was fascinated. "How did you do that?" he kept asking.

"In recent years," the scholar replied, "I traveled a lot. I met that fellow once at a roadside inn and saw him stumble and fall as he walked up to the food counter. His friends said he has an instinctive dread of the pasty brown sauce made from soy beans, and swoons at the very sight of it. Because of its extraordinary nature, I remember the incident well. So, just now I first went to the kitchen and asked the chef to put a little of that sauce in my palm. It did work, didn't it? Good cheer for the banquet."

Judge Bian Xiu was present at that party.





袁继谦

晋将少作监袁继谦常说，顷居青社，假一第而处之。闻多凶怪，昏暝即不敢出户庭。合门惊惧，莫能安寝。

忽一夕，闻吼声，若有呼于瓮中者，其声重浊。举家怖惧，必谓其怪之尤者。遂于窗隙窥之，见一物苍黑色，来往庭中。是夕月色晦，睹之既久，似若狗身，而首不能举。遂以挝击其脑。忽轰然一声，家犬惊叫而去。

盖其日庄上人输税至此，就于其地而糜，釜尚有余者。故犬以首入空器中，而不能出也。因举家大笑，遂安寝。





The Shattered Specter

Yuan Jiqian, imperial carpenter of the Jin Dynasty, told of an event that occurred during his stay in the eastern provinces.

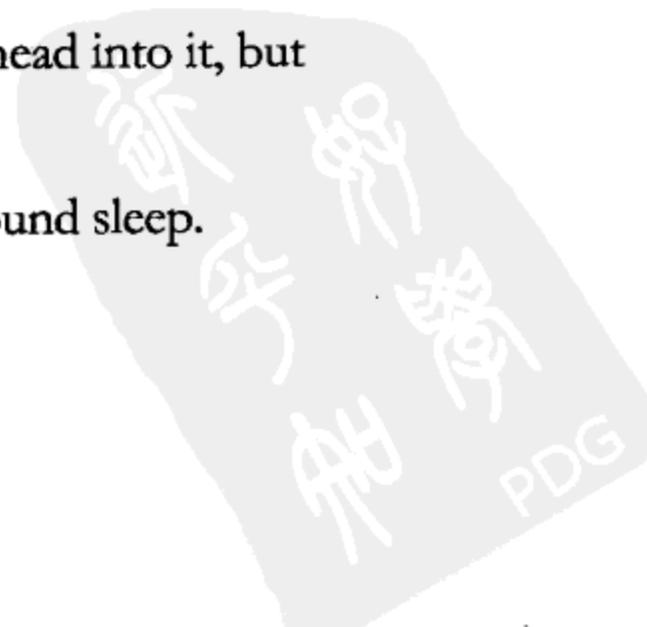
He and his family then lived in a rented house, which they later learned was rumored to be haunted. The whole family lived under the shadow of fear and they kept themselves indoors as soon as night fell. Their nerves were on edge, even in their sleep.

One night, wild, hollow howls suddenly reverberated throughout the courtyard, as if a frenzied voice was locked in a barrel. The family shook with fear, thinking that it must be the monster people had talked about. Peering out from a window, they saw a dark specter running wildly in the yard. By the dim light of an obscured moon it seemed to have the body of a dog, but had a disproportionately large, sagging head.

Yuan picked up a club and hit it hard on the head. With a loud crack and a sharp howl, their family dog bolted away.

So it was that during the day the farmhands had been bringing in the year's harvest and had dined in the courtyard. A little food was left in an earthen pot and their dog somehow pushed its head into it, but was unable to pull it out.

That night, the family had a hearty laugh and a sound sleep.





Appendix I

Dynasties and Reign Titles¹

The Qin Dynasty	221 B.C. ~ 206 B.C.		
The Han Dynasty	206 B.C. ~ A.D. 220		
The Three Kingdoms	220 ~ 280		
The Jin Dynasty	265 ~ 420		
The Northern and Southern Dynasties 420 ~ 589			
<u>The Southern Dynasties</u>		<u>The Northern Dynasties</u>	
Liu's Song	420 ~ 479	Northern Wei	386 ~ 534
Qi	479 ~ 502	Eastern Wei	534 ~ 550
Liang	502 ~ 557	Northern Qi	550 ~ 577
Chen	557 ~ 589	Northern Zhou	557 ~ 581
The Sui Dynasty	581 ~ 618		
The Tang Dynasty 618 ~ 907²			
Zhenguan	627 ~ 649	Jianzhong	780 ~ 783
Yonghui	650 ~ 655	Zhenyuan	785 ~ 805
Tianshou	690 ~ 692	Yongzhen	805
Dazu	701	Yuanhe	806 ~ 820
Shenlong	705 ~ 707	Changqing	821 ~ 824
Kaiyuan	713 ~ 741	Taihe	827 ~ 835
Tianbao	742 ~ 756	Kaicheng	836 ~ 840
Zhide	756 ~ 758	Huichang	841 ~ 846
Qianyuan	758 ~ 760	Dazhong	847 ~ 860
Baoying	762 ~ 763	Xiantong	860 ~ 874
Yongtai	765 ~ 766	Qianfu	874 ~ 879
Dali	766 ~ 779	Guangqi	885 ~ 888

¹ To keep the list simple, only the period titles of the Tang Dynasty that have appeared in the stories are listed.

² Empress Wu reigned from 684 to 705; An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion lasted from 755 to 763.



Appendix II

Glossary of Place Names¹

Anlu County: in Hubei Prov., 100 miles to the southeast of Xiangyang.

Bachuan County: Tongliang County of Chongqing City.

Beihai: a region on the Shandong peninsula. Qingzhou was its capital city.

Bianzhou City: Kaifeng City, Henan Prov., a major town east of Luoyang.

Bing Prefecture: the area around Taiyuan City, Shanxi Prov.

Blue Bridge: in Lantian County, about 70 km southeast of Xi'an.

Bohai: an area south of the Songhua River in Northeast China.

Boling County: Ding County, Hebei Prov.

Canton Region: roughly corresponding to present-day Guangdong Prov. It was a remote area at that time, where demoted officials were often exiled.

Chang Prefecture: in southern Jiangsu Prov.

Chang'an: the capital of the Tang Dynasty, now called Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Prov.

Changjiang County: in eastern Sichuan Prov.

Changle County: in Fujian Prov.

Chen Prefecture: Chenzhou City in southern Hunan Prov.

Chengde Military Region: a garrison region centered around Zhengding County, Hebei Prov.

Chenliu: near Kaifeng City, Henan Prov.

Culai Mountain: to the southeast of Mount Tai.

¹ The place name following the colon is the name used at present. If the name remains unchanged, it will not be repeated.

The distance mentioned is a rough approximation of the straight distance between two points on the map.

Prov. = Province



Cuo County: in northeastern Henan Prov.

Deng Prefecture: an area at the eastern tip of Shandong peninsula.

Dongping: an area in western Shandong Prov. by the Dongping Lake.

Duan Prefecture (Duanxi): Gaoyao County, Guangdong Prov.

Emei Mountain: in Sichuan Prov., one of the four sacred mountains of Buddhism.

Ezhu: in the suburbs of present-day Wuhan City.

Fan County: in western Shandong Prov. on the northern bank of the Yellow River.

Fengtian County: Qian County, northwest of Xi'an.

Fengxiang Prefecture: about 100 km west of Xi'an.

Fuchang County: near Luoyang City, Henan Prov.

Fuliang County: near Jingdezhen City, Jiangxi Prov.

Fuping County: about 50 km northeast of Xi'an.

Fuyang Prefecture: around Ci County in southern Hebei Prov.

Gourd Pass: between present-day Jingbian and Zhidan counties, in northern Shaanxi Prov.

Guanghan: a prefecture north of Chengdu City, Sichuan Prov.

Guangling County: in the northeastern suburbs of Yangzhou City.

Guazhou and Shazhou: areas around Dunhuang in western Gansu Prov.

Guo Prefecture: about 160 km east of Xi'an in the northwestern corner of Henan Prov.

Haikang County: in Guangdong Prov.

Han River: a major tributary joining the Yangtze at Wuhan City.

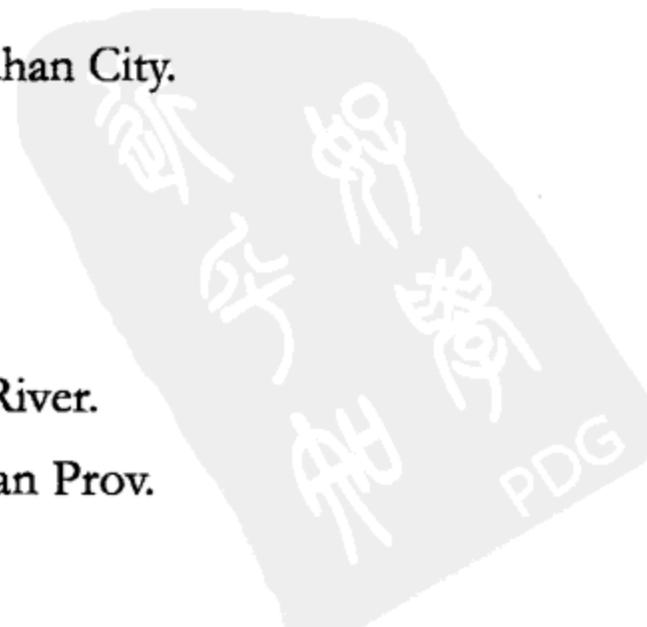
Handan (City): in southern Hebei Prov.

Hangzhou (City): now the capital of Zhejiang Prov.

Hannan: Yicheng County, in northern Hubei Prov.

Henan: an area around Luoyang south of the Yellow River.

Heng Prefecture: an area around Hengyang City, Hunan Prov.





- Hu County: to the southwest of Xi'an.
- Hu Prefecture: in northern Zhejiang Prov.
- Hua Prefecture: overlaps with Hua County in northeastern Henan Prov.
- Huai River: between and parallel to the Yellow River and the Yangtze.
- Huaiyin County: a city on the Huai River, Jiangsu Prov.
- Huan Prefecture: now in Vietnam.
- Huayang County: now part of Chengdu City, Sichuan Prov.
- Huayin County: about 100 km east of Xi'an.
- Jialing River: a major tributary of the Yangtze in Sichuan Prov.
- Jian'an County: in Fujian Prov.
- Jiang Prefecture: in southern Shanxi Prov.
- Jiangle County: in Fujian Prov.
- Jiangling Prefecture: overlaps with Jingzhou City, Hubei Prov.
- Jiangxia County: within present-day Wuhan City, Hubei Prov.
- Jiaxing County: in Zhejiang Prov.
- Jin Prefecture: Linfen City, Shanxi Prov.
- Jing Prefecture: overlaps with Jingchuan County in eastern Gansu Prov., where the Jingyuan Military Region had its headquarters.
- Jingzhou (City): a big city on the Yangtze River west of Wuhan City.
- Jinling: Nanjing City.
- Juyan: in western Gansu Prov.
- Kai Prefecture: Fengjie County in eastern Sichuan Prov.
- Laiwu County: in Shandong Prov.
- Lake Tai: in southern Jiangsu Prov. west of Suzhou City.
- Lang Prefecture: Langzhong County in northeastern Sichuan Prov. on the upper reaches of the Jialing River.
- Langya County: on Shandong peninsula.
- Lanling County: Cangshan County in southern Shandong Prov.
- Liang Prefecture: the area covering Hanzhong City in southwestern



Shaanxi Prov.

Ling Prefecture (灵州): overlaps with Lingwu City in the northern part of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

Ling Prefecture (陵州): Renshou County in Sichuan Prov.

Lintuan County: on the southwestern border of Henan Prov.

Liuhe County: about 60 km west of Yangzhou City.

Liyang County: in the northeastern corner of Henan Prov. near present-day Jun County.

Lizhou: Guangyuan County in eastern Sichuan Prov.

Longxi: in southeastern Gansu Prov.

Lotus Peak: the second highest peak of Mount Hua, renowned for its precipitous slopes.

Lujiang County: in Anhui Prov.

Lulong: a military region in northeastern Hebei Prov.

Luoyang: a major city in Henan Prov., the East Capital of the Tang Dynasty, where Empress Wu held court. It lies 300 km east of Xi'an.

Luoyuan Military Region: at the northeastern corner of Gansu Prov.

Mianchi: a town 60 km west of Luoyang.

Mount Heng: in Hunan Prov., one of China's five sacred mountains, also known as the Southern Peak.

Mount Hua: about 100 km east of Xi'an and one of China's five sacred mountains, also known as the Western Peak.

Mount Ling: in southern Shanxi Prov.

Mount Lu: in northern Jiangxi Prov., about 500 km up the Yangtze from Yangzhou.

Mount Mao: southeast of Nanjing City in southern Jiangsu Prov.

Mount Song: in Henan Prov., one of China's five sacred mountains, also known as the Central Peak.

Mount Tai: in Shandong Prov., one of China's five sacred mountains,



also known as the Eastern Peak.

Mount Yong: in Fujian Prov.

Nanpi County: in southeastern Hebei Prov.

Nanyang Prefecture: in southwestern Henan Prov.

Northern Hills: in the northern suburbs of Luoyang City.

Penglai (Isle): a legendary islet off the coast of Shandong peninsula where the immortals live.

Pingyi: in Tong Prefecture.

Qi Prefecture: Qishan County in western Shaanxi Prov.

Qingcheng County: the area around Qingcheng Mountain.

Qingcheng Mountain: a sacred mountain in Taoism, west of Chengdu City, Sichuan Prov.

Qinghe County: in southern Hebei Prov., 150 km northwest of Dongping.

Qingzhou City: the capital of Beihai.

Qinling Mountains: an east-west mountain range in southern Shaanxi Prov.

Qin Zhou City: on the Qin River in southern Shanxi Prov.

Qiongzhou County: in western Sichuan Prov.

Rao Prefecture: Boyang County, Jiangxi Prov.

Ru Prefecture: south of Luoyang in central Henan Prov.

Ruen Prefecture: an area covering Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Prov.

Runan County: in eastern Henan Prov.

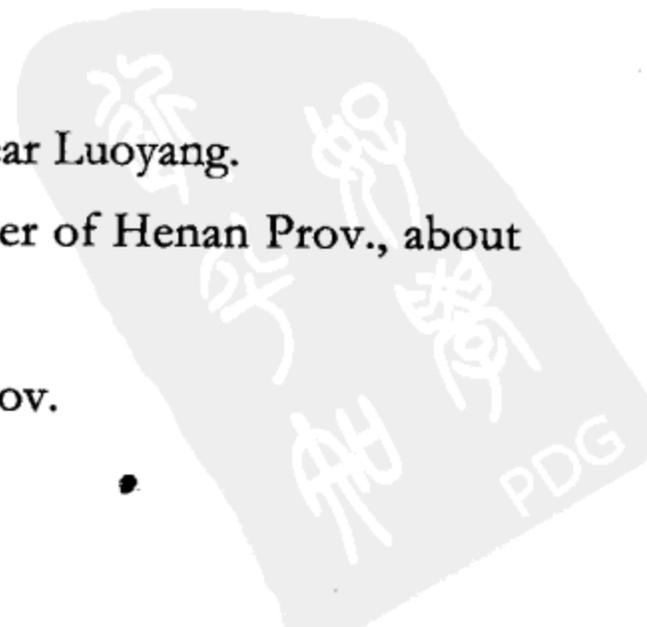
Sanhe County: in Hebei Prov.

Sanxiang: a small town on the post road near Luoyang.

Shan Prefecture: in the northwestern corner of Henan Prov., about 100 km east of Tongguan Pass.

Shanfu County: Shan County, Shandong Prov.

Shangyu County: in Zhejiang Prov.





Shaoshi Mountain: the western part of Mount Song, where the famous Shaolin Temple is located.

Shen Prefecture: overlaps with Shen County, Hebei Prov.

Shifang County: north of Chengdu City, Sichuan Prov.

Shu: another name for Sichuan Prov. (including Chongqing municipality), a geographical basin of rich soil surrounded by high mountains in southwestern China.

Silla: an ancient kingdom in the southeastern part of the Korea Peninsula.

Songzi County: in southern Hubei Prov.

Southern Mountains: a mountain range south of Xi'an.

Suzhou City: in Jiangsu Prov., also known as Wu.

Sword Gate: an important mountain pass on the northern route leading into Shu.

Taihang Mountain Range: a north-south mountain range along the western border of Hebei Prov.

Taiyuan City: the capital of Shanxi Prov. It was the North Capital of the Tang Dynasty because the House of Li originated there.

Tang'an County: Guan County, Sichuan Prov.

Tianshui Prefecture: in Gansu Prov.

Tong Prefecture: overlaps with Dali County, Shaanxi Prov.

Tongcheng County: adjoins Lujiang County on the southwest.

Tongguan Pass: a strategically important mountain pass near Mount Hua on the eastern mouth of the Wei River valley, barricading the only way to reach the capital from the east.

Wangwu Mountains: in southern Shanxi Prov.

Wei Prefecture: overlaps with Daming County in southern Hebei Prov.

Wei River: a major tributary of the Yellow River flowing through the Loess Plateau in Shaanxi, creating a stretch of rich farmlands along its valley where Chang'an, the capital, is located.



- Weinan County: about 50 km east of Xi'an on the south of the Wei River.
- Wu (County): now part of Suzhou City. It can refer to the whole city or the larger area around the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.
- Wutai Mountains: in northern Shanxi Prov., one of the four sacred mountains of Buddhism.
- Wuyuan: about 140 km west of Baotou City in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.
- Xiagu Pass: an important mountain pass in the Southern Mountains opening right onto the capital.
- Xiang Prefecture: in Hebei Prov.
- Xiangjun Prefecture: overlaps with Congzuo County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.
- Xiangyang City: a big city on the Han River north of Hannan.
- Xianyang City: an ancient city about 20 km west of Xi'an.
- Xingyang County: to the west of Zhengzhou City.
- Xinming County: Hechuan County of Chongqing Municipality.
- Xinping Prefecture: overlaps with Bin County, about 110 km northwest of Xi'an City and 70 km southeast of Jingchuan.
- Xinzheng County: to the south of Zhengzhou City, Henan Prov.
- Xu Prefecture: overlaps with Xuchang City, Henan Prov.
- Xuan County: in southern Anhui Prov.
- Xunyang: an area around Jiujiang City north of Mount Lu.
- Xuyi County: about 100 km northwest of Yangzhou City.
- Yan Prefecture: in the southern part of Shandong Prov.
- Yangtze County: in the vicinity of Yizheng County, Jiangsu Prov.
- Yangtze River: see "geography" in Appendix III.
- Yangxian County: Yixing County in southern Jiangsu Prov.
- Yangzhou City: a big city and commercial center on the northern bank of the Yangtze in southern Jiangsu Prov.



- Yanmen: an area in northern Shanxi Prov.
- Ye County: near Linzhang County in southern Hebei Prov.
- Yellow River: see “geography” in Appendix III.
- Yi Prefecture: overlaps with Yi County, Hebei Prov.
- Yilong County: bordering upon Lang Prefecture in northeastern Sichuan Prov.
- Yingchuan: another name for Xu Prefecture.
- Yixing County: in Jiangsu Prov.
- Yiyang County: Huangchuan County, Henan Prov.
- Yongkang County: in Zhejiang Prov.
- You: about 280 km south of Wuyuan in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.
- Yu Prefecture: overlaps with Ruyang County, about 60 km south of Luoyang.
- Yue: a general reference to what is now Zhejiang Prov.
- Yue Prefecture: an area around Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Prov.
- Yun Prefecture: Yuncheng, in southwestern Shandong Prov.
- Zhaoying County: Lintong District in the eastern suburbs of Xi’an City.
- Zhenfu County: Yang County in southern Shaanxi Prov.
- Zheng County: Hua County, Shaanxi Prov.
- Zheng Prefecture: overlaps with Zhengzhou City, Henan Prov.
- Zhenwu Military Region: at northern Hebei Prov.
- Zhongbu County: overlaps with Huangling County, Shaanxi Prov.
- Zhuji County: in Yue Prefecture.
- Zhushan County: Yun County in northwestern Hubei Prov., about 150 km northwest of Xiangyang.
- Zitong County: in eastern Sichuan Prov.

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Appendix III

Background Information

Administrative hierarchy

The Tang Dynasty cabinet was mainly composed of three councils (*sheng*). *Zhongshu Sheng* was responsible for policy making, *Menxia Sheng* reviewed and approved, while *Shangshu Sheng*, which was de facto the State Council supervising the six administrative ministries of personnel, revenue, rites, military affairs, justice, and construction-production, implemented the policies. The heads of these three councils were often concurrently appointed prime ministers.

Local governments were organized at two levels, the counties and prefectures. At the founding of the dynasty, the whole country was divided into 1,151 counties under 358 prefectures. All the officials holding key positions at these two levels were appointed directly by the central government. The head of the county was the magistrate and the head of the prefecture was the prefect.

In the middle period of the dynasty, however, a regional power had emerged over the prefectures, that is, the garrison commands which were originally established along the northern border in defense against the nomadic tribes. At first they were purely garrison forces abstaining from local affairs, but after An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion, a weakened central government resulted not only in the increase of their number, but also in their expanding power. The military commanders often became semi-autonomous warlords usurping local administrative powers.



Buildings

Houses in ancient China, whether peasant huts or official mansions, were usually single-storied structures surrounded by a walled or fenced courtyard.

For richer families, the compound might consist of more than one building. With the main building facing south, it could have additional buildings flanking the east and west sides, thus forming an enclosed courtyard in the center.

The nobles and lords might have a more complex structure by having two or more such courtyards within a larger compound. The outer quarters were for official business and receiving guests, the inner quarters were the living area for the family.

Festivals

The most important festival of the year is the Spring Festival, or the Chinese New Year. It usually falls in late January or early February. Other important festivals include Qingming, Zhongyuan, and Mid-autumn.

Qingming is one of the twenty-four solar terms in the Chinese lunar calendar, coming in early April about the time of Easter. It is one of the major festivals in memory of the dead, when rice, eggs, wine, and yellow money are offered. Overlapping with Qingming is the Cold Food Festival. On that day and the following two days, people do not light a fire to cook hot meals but eat cold food instead.

The Zhongyuan, or *Ullambana* Festival, was originally a religious festival. It occurs on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month. On that day the temples held grand ritual services for lost souls.

The Mid-autumn Festival comes on the 15th day of the eighth



lunar month when the moon is at its fullest. It is a time for family reunion.

Geography

China is slightly larger than the United States in area. From the Tibetan Plateau in the southwest, the land slopes down toward the east, thus the rivers mostly flow eastward into the sea. The Yangtze River, which stretches west to east, divides the land into the north and the south. North and parallel to it flows the Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilization. Farther north stands the Great Wall. Beyond the wall are mainly deserts and grasslands occupied then by nomadic tribes. At the opposite end, the deep south remained underdeveloped and inhabited by numerous national minorities.

The Silk Road starts at the capital, Chang'an, leading northwest through what is known as the Northwest Corridor, a narrow strip of land sandwiched by the almost insurmountable Qilian Mountain Range on the south and the Gobi Desert on the north, into the Western Regions. The Western Regions consisted of many small kingdoms covering a vast area of what is now the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and extending as far west as the Aral Sea.

Marriage

In ancient times, the marriage of young people was arranged by their parents. Under normal circumstances, it was a breach of social etiquette for one to propose directly. The more common practice was to have tentative proposals conveyed through a matchmaker, a role which was often filled by a silver-tongued old woman.

Monogamy has long been established as a social norm in China,



but a man was allowed to take concubines.

As life expectancy was much shorter in the past and family posterity was given supreme priority, people married at a much younger age than they do now. Girls of 16 were considered the right age for marriage. It would have been humiliating if she was not engaged or married by then. Men would usually marry before 20, unless he was too poor to afford a wife.

Measurements

The common linear measurements in China are *li*, *zhang*, *chi* and *cun*. As the measurements in the tales do not require scientific accuracy, the translation simply adopts their approximate English counterparts of mile (1 mile \approx 3 *li*), rod, foot and inch.

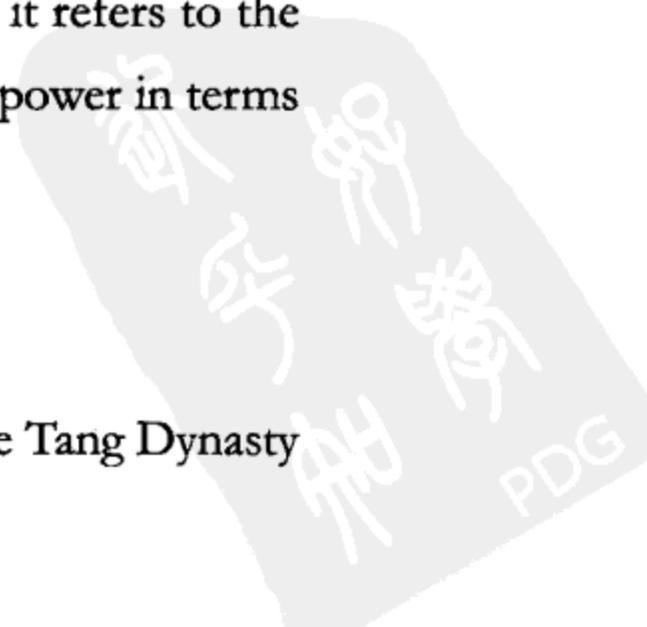
Monetary units

In ancient China, the basic monetary units were copper coins and silver pieces. Gold, being precious, was not commonly used as a currency. The silver pieces were weighed in *liang* (roughly one ounce) and *qian* (one tenth of a *liang*). Copper coins, however, were the most widely used currency for daily exchange. They were about the size of a nickel with a square hole in the center so they could be strung together into denominations of a thousand, called a “string.”

If the denomination is not mentioned in the text, it refers to the coin. It might be convenient to think of its purchasing power in terms of one U.S. dollar.

Names

The Chinese family name always comes first. In the Tang Dynasty





and earlier, the given name was usually monosyllabic. Disyllabic given names gained popularity in the later dynasties. The translation keeps to the original order of given name following the family name, even when it is prefixed by such courtesy titles as Mr.

Reign titles of the emperors

In feudal times, each emperor gave a name (or sometimes more than one name) to his reign. The years during that period were counted in numerical sequence until the next emperor ascended the throne, or until he changed the name with the idea of starting things anew.

Scholars and examinations

The word “scholar” in the stories refers to students of the Confucian school. We must remember that in the past learning was a luxury for the privileged few, and, except at the elementary level, to most scholars studying was more a matter of personal devotion than a school-room experience.

Those who could successfully pass the local examinations held by county and prefectural governments were nominated to enter the imperial examination conducted by the ministry of personnel (later by the ministry of rites) in the capital. Succeeding in that examination meant one could look forward to starting an official career. At first he would be appointed to a secondary position at the county level. After a three-year term, he could be promoted to a higher position or simply relieved, depending on his merits.

The imperial examination system was first established in the Sui Dynasty as a way to abolish the prevailing clan politics fostered through the Jin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties. The Tang Dynasty



adopted it as a way to select competent officials to govern its vast territory. The system lasted through the dynasties that followed.

Taoism

Taoism as a religion was established in the latter half of the Han Dynasty. Its theoretical base is Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*. The *Way*, a literal translation of Tao, is the ultimate awareness of the ways of the world, as well as the universe. To attain it, one must not only observe the religious rituals and cultivate his personality, but also seek facilitation by such strenuous practices as regulating the "air" in one's body, fasting, and a patient quest for the elixir of longevity. Thus, many priests were devoted alchemists, and their power to change elements inspired innumerable tales about their magic powers and how they transformed objects and even their own shapes.

Philosophically, Taoism holds a dualistic outlook on the world, which it believes is made up of the complementary forces of *yin* and *yang*. *Yang* is associated with the sun, the positive, the male, the south, etc., while *yin* is represented by the moon, the negative, the female, the north, and so on.



Appendix IV

Source Titles in Chinese

	Chinese Title	Source Book	Original Vol.
1.	张老	《续玄怪录》	16
2.	杜子春	《续玄怪录》	16
3.	薛肇	《仙传拾遗》	17
4.	阴隐客	《博异志》	20
5.	冯俊	《原化记》	23
6.	李清	《集异记》	36
7.	黑叟	《会昌解颐》	41
8.	裴航	《传奇》	50
9.	麒麟客	《续玄怪录》	53
10.	太阴夫人	《逸史》	64
11.	马士良	《逸史》	69
12.	张山人	《原化记》	72
13.	陈季卿	《慕异记》	74
14.	茅安道	《集异记》	78
15.	吕翁	《异闻集》	82
16.	张佐	《玄怪录》	83
17.	柳城	《酉阳杂俎》	83
18.	吴堪	《原化记》	83
19.	掩耳道士	《野人闲话》	86
20.	相卫间僧	《原化记》	95
21.	鉴师	《宣室志》	97
22.	赵泰	《幽冥录》	109



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23.	陈义郎	《干馘子》	122
24.	华阳李尉	《逸史》	122
25.	李生	《宣室志》	125
26.	崔无隐	《博异记》	125
27.	郑生	《宣室志》	127
28.	汪凤	《集异记》	140
29.	尉迟敬德	《逸史》	146
30.	李君	《逸史》	157
31.	定婚店	《续幽怪录》	159
32.	简雍	《启颜录》	164
33.	汉世老人	《笑林》	165
34.	杨素	《本事诗》	166
35.	蒋恒	《朝野僉载》	171
36.	苏无名	《纪闻》	171
37.	袁滋	《剧谈录》	171
38.	刘崇龟	《玉堂闲话》	172
39.	嘉兴绳技	《原化记》	193
40.	车中女子	《原化记》	193
41.	昆仑奴	《传奇》	194
42.	僧侠	《酉阳杂俎》	194
43.	聂隐娘	《传奇》	194
44.	红线	《甘泽谣》	195
45.	京西店老人	《酉阳杂俎》	195
46.	义侠	《原化记》	195
47.	黄花寺壁	《博物志》	210
48.	范山人	《酉阳杂俎》	213
49.	绛州僧	《广五行记》	220
50.	刁俊朝	《续玄怪录》	220



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52.	杨务廉	《朝野僉载》	226
53.	陈仲躬	《博异志》	231
54.	渔人	《原化记》	231
55.	荀巨伯	《殷芸小说》	235
56.	管宁	《殷芸小说》	235
57.	宁王	《酉阳杂俎》	238
58.	薛氏子	《唐阙史》	238
59.	吃人	《启颜录》	248
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61.	啮鼻	《笑林》	262
62.	李诞女	《法苑珠林》	270
63.	崔护	《本事诗》	274
64.	独孤遐叔	《河东记》	281
65.	阳羨书生	《续齐谐记》	284
66.	东岩寺僧	《通幽记》	285
67.	张和	《酉阳杂俎》	286
68.	胡媚儿	《河东记》	286
69.	中部民	《独异志》	286
70.	板桥三娘子	《河东记》	286
71.	关司法	《灵怪集》	286
72.	画工	《闻奇录》	286
73.	襄阳老叟	《潇湘记》	287
74.	纆干狐尾	《广古今五行记》	288
75.	明思远	《辩疑志》	289
76.	三卫	《广异记》	300
77.	南缙	《玄怪录》	303
78.	陈袁生	《宣室志》	306

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79.	卢佩	《河东记》	306
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81.	画琵琶	《原化记》	315
82.	谈生	《列异传》	316
83.	秦巨伯	《搜神记》	317
84.	新鬼	《幽明录》	321
85.	宋定伯	《列异传》	321
86.	张果女	《广异记》	330
87.	萧颖士	《集异记》	332
88.	黎阳客	《广异记》	333
89.	崔书生	《博物志》	339
90.	李俊	《续玄怪录》	341
91.	庐江冯媪	《异闻集》	343
92.	赵合	《传奇》	347
93.	李佐文	《集异记》	347
94.	浮梁张令	《纂异记》	350
95.	韦自东	《传奇》	356
96.	马燧	《传异记》	356
97.	蕴都师	《河东记》	357
98.	王宙	《离魂记》	358
99.	齐推女	《玄怪录》	358
100.	刘积中	《酉阳杂俎》	363
101.	僧智圆	《酉阳杂俎》	364
102.	居延部落主	《玄怪录》	368
103.	虢国夫人	《大唐奇事》	368
104.	岑顺	《玄怪录》	369
105.	士人甲	《幽明录》	376
106.	贾偶	《搜神记》	386



	Chinese Title	Source Book	Original Vol.
107.	刘氏子妻	《原化记》	386
108.	圆观	《甘泽谣》	387
109.	李邈	《酉阳杂俎》	390
110.	陈鸾凤	《传奇》	394
111.	侯遁	《玄怪录》	400
112.	吕生	《宣室志》	401
113.	宝珠	《广异记》	402
114.	瞻波异果	《酉阳杂俎》	410
115.	卢虔	《宣室志》	415
116.	光化寺客	《集异记》	417
117.	李靖	《续玄怪录》	418
118.	释玄照	《神仙感遇传》	420
119.	刘贯词	《续玄怪录》	421
120.	韦氏	《原化记》	421
121.	傅黄中	《朝野僉载》	426
122.	峡口道士	《解颐录》	426
123.	申屠澄	《河东记》	429
124.	马拯	《传奇》	430
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126.	升平入山人	《续搜神记》	442
127.	欧阳纆	《续江氏传》	444
128.	李参军	《广异记》	448
129.	田氏子	《纪闻》	450
130.	僧晏通	《集异记》	451
131.	李令绪	《腾听异志录》	453
132.	姚坤	《传记》	454
133.	邛都老姥	《穷神秘苑》	456
134.	担生	《广异记》	458



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135.	户部令史妻	《广异记》	460
136.	鸚鵡救火	《异苑》	460
137.	南人捕雁	《玉堂闲话》	462
138.	乌君山	《建安记》	462
139.	南海大鱼	《广异记》	464
140.	永康人	《异苑》	468
141.	长须国	《酉阳杂俎》	469
142.	薛伟	《续玄怪录》	471
143.	淳于棼	《异闻录》	475
144.	新罗	《酉阳杂俎》 《纪闻》	481
145.	李娃传	《异闻集》	484
146.	无双传		486
147.	霍小玉传		487
148.	灵应传		492
149.	郭务静	《朝野僉载》	493
150.	娄师德	《御史台记》	493
151.	润州楼	《辨疑志》	495
152.	李抱贞	《尚书故实》	495
153.	京都儒士	《原化记》	500
154.	振武角抵人	《玉堂闲话》	500
155.	袁继谦	《玉堂闲话》	500

Appendix V

Table of Contents of the Original Collection — Proportion and Distribution

	Categories	No. of Vols	No. of stories selected
1.	神仙 (immortals)	55	9
2.	女仙 (female immortals)	15	2
3.	道术 (Taoist arts)	5	2
4.	方士 (wizardry)	5	1
5.	异人 (legendary people)	6	5
6.	异僧 (legendary monks)	12	2
7.	释证 (revelations)	3	0
8.	报应 (retributions)	33	6
9.	征应 (omens)	11	1
10.	定数 (predestinations)	15	3
11.	感应 (divine responses)	2	0
12.	谶应 (prophecies)	1	0
13.	名贤 (famous people)	1	1
14.	廉俭 (honesty)	1	1
15.	气义 (comradeship)	3	1
16.	知人 (judgment)	2	0
17.	精察 (wise judges)	2	4
18.	俊辩 (eloquence)	2	0
19.	幼敏 (child prodigies)	1	0
20.	器量 (leniency)	2	0



Categories	No. of Vols	No. of stories selected
21. 贡举 (imperial examination)	7	0
22. 铨选 (office appointments)	2	0
23. 职官 (government offices)	1	0
24. 权倖 (favorite courtiers)	1	0
25. 将帅 (generals)	2	0
26. 骁勇 (bravery)	2	0
27. 豪侠 (gallantry)	4	8
28. 博物 (learnedness)	1	0
29. 文章 (essays)	3	0
30. 才名 (fame)	1	0
31. 儒行 (Confucian practices)	1	0
32. 乐 (music)	3	0
33. 书 (books)	4	0
34. 画 (paintings)	5	2
35. 算数 (mathematics)	1	0
36. 卜巫 (fortune-telling)	2	0
37. 医 (medicine)	3	3
38. 相 (physiognomy)	4	0
39. 伎巧 (craftsmanship)	3	1
40. 博戏 (chess)	1	0
41. 器玩 (artifacts)	4	2
42. 酒 (wine)	1	0
43. 食 (food)	1	0
44. 交友 (friendship)	1	2
45. 奢侈 (extravagance)	2	0
46. 诡诈 (cunning)	1	2
47. 谄佞 (flattery)	3	0



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	Categories	No. of Vols	No. of stories selected
48.	谬误 (blunders)	1	0
49.	治生 (fortune making)	1	0
50.	褊急 (narrow mindedness)	1	0
51.	诙谐 (humor)	8	1
52.	嘲诮 (satire)	5	0
53.	嗤鄙 (disdainfulness)	5	2
54.	无赖 (shamelessness)	2	0
55.	轻薄 (frivolousness)	2	0
56.	酷暴 (cruelty)	3	0
57.	妇人 (women)	4	1
58.	情感 (compassion)	1	1
59.	童仆奴婢 (servants)	1	0
60.	梦 (dreams)	7	1
61.	巫厌 (witch craft)	1	1
62.	幻术 (magic)	4	9
63.	妖妄 (mysteries)	3	2
64.	神 (deities)	25	5
65.	鬼 (ghosts)	40	13
66.	夜叉 (yakshas)	2	3
67.	神魂 (souls)	1	2
68.	妖怪 (demons)	9	2
69.	精怪 (spirits)	6	3
70.	灵异 (magical effects)	1	0
71.	再生 (resurrections)	12	3
72.	悟前生 (preincarnations)	2	1
73.	塚墓 (graves)	2	1
74.	铭记 (epigraphs)	2	0





	Categories	No. of Vols	No. of stories selected
75.	雷 (thunder)	3	1
76.	雨 (rain)	1	0
77.	山 (mountains)	1	0
78.	石 (rocks)	1	0
79.	水 (water)	1	0
80.	宝 (treasures)	6	3
81.	草木 (plants)	12	3
82.	龙 (dragons)	8	4
83.	虎 (tigers)	8	4
84.	畜兽 (various beasts)	13	3
85.	狐 (foxes)	9	5
86.	蛇 (snakes)	4	2
87.	禽鸟 (birds)	4	4
88.	水族 (aquatic animals)	9	4
89.	昆虫 (insects)	7	1
90.	蛮夷 (alien tribes)	4	1
91.	杂传记 (biographies)	9	4
92.	杂录 (miscellaneous)	8	7
	total:	500	155





NOTES

- ¹ Kylin: a fabled and auspicious animal said to look somewhat like a deer with a scale-covered body.
- ² Five poems have been omitted from the translation.
- ³ The word-riddle and the text of the scroll have been omitted.
- ⁴ In rural areas the kitchen is usually separate from the house.
- ⁵ There are two stories of rather similar content under the same title "Zhao Tai" in *Records of the Taiping Era*. The present translation is based on the one from *You Min Lu* in volume 109 and supplemented in two parts for more detail by the one from *Min Xiang Ji* in volume 377.
- ⁶ Yaksha: a hideous and ferocious spirit in Indian mythology and Buddhist stories, usually presented as a two-legged animal.
- ⁷ The banner referred to here is a long rectangular strip of embroidered cloth hung vertically on a post. It is employed at religious rituals to recall the lost soul.
- ⁸ The name in Chinese puns on homophones which can be translated literally as Mirror (*jing*) Round (*yuan*) Image (*ying*).
- ⁹ Master Yellow Stone: a legendary hermit toward the end of the Qin Dynasty.
- ¹⁰ The first two lines are missing from the original.
- ¹¹ Coffin hut: usually a small mud hut built in the open fields for the temporary preservation of the confined corpse.
- ¹² The god of Mount Tai, in Taoist belief, is supposed to be the Lord of Hell.
- ¹³ Legend goes that there is an island in the sea to the west of the world where phoenixes and kylins abound. Celestial beings there stew the beaks of the former and the horns of the latter together to produce a sticky substance that can rejoin



a snapped bowstring or a broken sword, so tight and fast that one may break the other parts but never the connection.

¹⁴ Phil puns on “fill.”

¹⁵ Li Ling (? - 74 B.C.), a renowned general in the war against the Mongolian nomads (*Xiongnu*). In 99 B.C. he led an expedition deep into enemy territory and was outnumbered and surrounded in the deserts beyond Juyan. He capitulated after putting up a last-ditch fight.

¹⁶ The Chinese word for ape is pronounced as *yuan*, which is homophonic to the family name Yuan.

¹⁷ Elephant chess is a literal translation of the name for Chinese chess. It is related to “elephant” because the chess pieces were originally carved out of ivory. Today, the game consists of sixteen pieces on each side, including a king, five pawns, and guards, elephants, horses, chariots, and cannons in pairs. In its earliest form, each side had only six pieces.

¹⁸ The lyrics of two songs and the postscript have been omitted from the end of the translation.

¹⁹ Sun Simiao: a famous doctor who lived during the late Sui Dynasty and early Tang Dynasty.

²⁰ The quote took him by surprise because the next lines are: *Now that my man has come, \ My joy is maximum.*

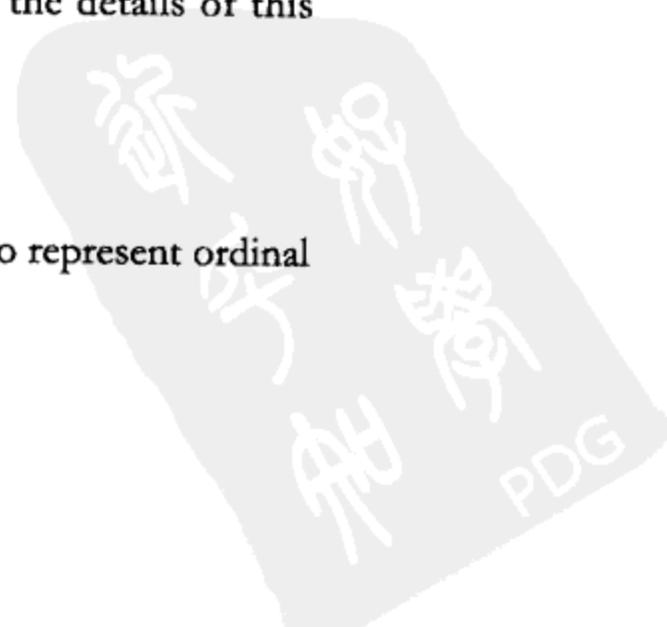
²¹ The son refers to Ouyang Xun (557-641), one of the most celebrated calligraphers of the early Tang Dynasty. He is said to have had the face of a monkey and an extremely quick wit. Such characteristics may have fostered the details of this story.

²² Li is the family name of the Tang Dynasty emperors.

²³ In ancient China, two sets of symbolic figures were combined to represent ordinal numbers.

²⁴ Tangmen: people of the Tang Dynasty.

²⁵ Because they share the family name “Wang.”





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- 2003 *A Dream Under the Southern Bough.*
Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- 2001 *The Peony Pavilion (revised).*
Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- 1998 *Into the Porcelain Pillow — 101 Tales from Records of the Taiping Era.*
Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- 1994 *The Peony Pavilion.*
Beijing: Tourism Education Press.

