

THE **LADY OF LINSHUI** **PACIFIES DEMONS**

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL



TRANSLATED BY **KRISTIN INGRID FRYKLUND**

INTRODUCTION BY **MARK EDWARD LEWIS AND BRIGITTE BAPTANDIER**

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ANNOTATIONS BY BRIGITTE BAPTANDIER

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the novel, single women are called “Miss,” and married women “Madame.” In China women do not take their husband’s name upon marriage; husband and wife therefore do not have the same surname.

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INTRODUCTION

MARK EDWARD LEWIS AND BRIGITTE BAPTANDIER

The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons (Linshui pingyao) recounts the life, great deeds, and divinization of Chen Jinggu, Lady of Linshui, one of the major goddesses still venerated in Fujian, Taiwan, and other places in South-east Asia to which the cult has emigrated. She is worshipped at the center of the triad of the Three Ladies (Sannai) as the protector goddess of women during pregnancy and childbirth, and of children passing through the major diseases that mark the road to adulthood. Her story can be read as a dramatic narrative, as a rich source for religious history, and as a meditation on the position of women in the society of late imperial China.

On the Nature of the Text

The Ruicheng Shuju edition, on which this translation is based, classifies *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* as an “old vernacular novel” (*guben tongshu xiaoshuo*). There is no mention of the author’s name, and it is not in fact a “novel,” in the conventional sense of an artfully composed, relatively long prose narrative. Rather, it compiles the mythic episodes that were created over a substantial period in the process of establishing and developing the Lady of Linshui’s cult and of elaborating the rituals of the Mount Lü sect of Daoism. The text thus resembles similar books that trace the great deeds of other divinities such as the Buddhist goddess Guanyin in *The Complete History of Guanyin of the South Seas* (Nanhai Guanyin quan zhuan) or Mazu in *The Biography of the Celestial Imperial Mother* (Tianfei Niangma zhuan). Written in vernacular prose, such works first appeared around the sixteenth

century and became a significant feature of many cults dedicated to major deities.

The stories compiled in this manner usually came from hagiographic texts containing liturgy and homilies, the traditions of performers who told stories of the divinities, and plays dramatizing the deities' myths suitable for performance during their festivals. It is likely that oral versions of the legend circulated widely, until the episodes were finally written down and printed first as manuscripts and lithographs, and then as extended narratives. Judging from references to names of political units and titles, several of which do not occur until the beginning of the Qing dynasty, the currently available editions appear to date, in their definitive versions, to the seventeenth century.¹ While the editors of these works may have added some degree of artistic expression and structural unity, they never entirely escaped the episodic nature produced by the process of their creation.

The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons thus appears as a juxtaposition of stories that seem to have no relation to one another, or at the very least could stand independently. It skips from one story to another with no preliminary transition, except for telling the reader that one topic has ended and another will now be addressed. In this apparent incoherence, however, readers can recognize the authenticity of the text as a product entangled in the foundation and development of the cult, whose members were both the intended audience and, to some degree, the collective authors of this story. The work also offers exciting narratives in both its overall story and individual episodes, and a set of themes that provide considerable insight into both the nature of religion and the social position of women in late imperial China.

Overview of the Story

The story takes place at the time of the kingdom of Min (909–45), blending the account of Chen Jinggu (who other sources say was born in 766–67) with the legendary history of this state.² The episodes trace her miraculous birth from a drop of blood of the goddess Guanyin; her divinely assisted flight from her home to avoid marriage; the life-threatening beating inflicted on her parents as part of that flight; her education in Daoist arts at Mount Lü; her departure from the mountain after refusing to learn the arts associated with childbirth; her healing of her parents with pieces of her own flesh; her forced marriage; her career pacifying the demons of Min, in the process

of which she created a cultic community of women followers; her participation in the conflicts of the kingdom; her death in the course of removing a fetus (*tuotai*) from her own womb—a mythic form of an abortion—in order to perform a ritual for rain to benefit the country; and finally her consequent divinization as the Lady of Linshui (Linshui Furen).³

The Parallel Lives of Chen Jinggu and the White Snake

Within the profusion of events hinted at above, the text achieves an underlying structure by presenting Chen Jinggu as simultaneously the alter ego and archrival of the White Snake Demon. It recounts their combat from their twin births as emanations of the body of Guanyin—a drop of blood and a strand of white hair—up to their reunion in the death and divinization of Chen Jinggu, when the White Snake becomes both her mount and the demon guardian of her temple. The rivalry of Chen Jinggu and the White Snake takes the form of two complementary lives converging at the pivotal moments that defined the classical career of a woman in Chinese society: birth, marriage, childbirth, and death. One additional episode in their combat is tied to Chen Jinggu's public role in a battle to preserve the fertility of the kingdom of Min. At each moment of crisis the two figures are opposed as embodiments of two fundamental roles of women: the wife and mother versus the passionate lover. However, as will be discussed below, both were also imperfect versions of their roles.

A Twin Birth

The joint birth of Chen Jinggu and the White Snake from the body of Guanyin resulted from the latter's helping the prefect of Quanzhou, Cai Xiang, construct Luoyang Bridge.⁴ Guanyin stood in a boat, promising to marry whoever succeeded in striking her with a coin, and all the coins that were hurled filled the empty coffers of the prefect. A man named Wang Xiao'er managed to strike her with the help of Lü Dongbin, a celebrated prankster and one of the Eight Immortals, but Guanyin immediately disappeared, and Wang drowned himself out of frustration. Chen Jinggu was born of a drop of Guanyin's blood that she sent to be incarnated to honor her promise of marriage. Despite her vows to not marry and to devote herself to Buddhism, Chen Jinggu was finally forced to marry Liu Qi, the reincarnation of Wang Xiao'er, to redeem Guanyin's pledge. The White Snake was the strand of white hair of the bodhisattva touched by the coin thrown by Wang. Having

fallen into the river, the hair turned into a white female python, the manifestation of an embittered desire and a betrayed promise. Thus the nature of their “births” dictated that one become an unwilling wife and mother and the other a creature of constant, unfulfilled passions.

Battle over a Shared Husband

Refusing her family’s efforts to force her into the predestined marriage to Liu Qi, Chen Jinggu fled to Mount Lü to study Daoist arts, leaving her parents suffering torments from a beating inflicted by a spirit who helped her escape.⁵ After three years of study, she learned of her parents’ agony and decided to go home. Before departing, she refused to learn the ultimate ritual art that would have allowed her to penetrate the secrets of pregnancy, protect expecting women, and preside over birth. As she departed, her master, Xu Zhenjun, warned her that she would not be able to defy her parents, and when pregnant at the age of twenty-four, she would no longer be able to practice the ritual arts to protect herself. After returning home and healing her parents with her own flesh (*gegu*), she devoted herself to exorcising the country of Min and, in so doing, gathered a community of “sworn sisters” consisting both of those who assisted her and of conquered demons.⁶

Her fiancé, Liu Qi, was kidnapped and delivered to the White Snake, who, in the guise of a beautiful young woman, welcomed him. When he proved faithful to his engagement and his karmic destiny, the White Snake attempted to consume his vital essence. However, she was immediately struck by a great pain due to her own karmic tie to Liu Qi / Wang Xiao’er, and thus could not harm him. Chen Jinggu subsequently rescued him with the help of the shamanic arts she had learned at Mount Lü, and after healing Liu Qi with herbal potions and restoring him with the help of talismans she finally had to consent to be married.

Hacking Up the White Snake on the Emperor’s Bed and Reviving the Fertility of Min

The White Snake then resolved to kidnap the empress of Min and assume her form. Taking advantage of her new position, she consumed the thirty-six royal consorts (*Pojie*), who were responsible for the fertility of the state. To forestall any interference, she feigned an illness and demanded to consume Chen Jinggu’s heart, which could cure her since they were of “the same nature.” However, Chen Jinggu used her magical powers to cause the White

Snake to resume her true form and then cut her into three pieces on the king's bed, thus transforming the bed into a sacrificial altar. Still, the White Snake did not die, and the three segments of her body were imprisoned by Chen Jinggu.

Using talismans and a ritual of "salvation through refinement or transmutation" (*liandu*), Chen Jinggu revived the thirty-six consorts from the piles of their bones, although they could only remain alive through her ongoing magical intervention.⁷ The king offered the consorts to her as disciples, to whom she taught the ritual arts of Mount Lü, and they became her loyal followers in life and standard figures in her later cult.

Chen Jinggu's Aborted Pregnancy and Death

When Chen Jinggu had reached the critical age of twenty-four and become pregnant, just as her master had predicted, the ritual pollution of her pregnancy meant that she could not practice ritual arts. However, a great drought afflicted Min, and the king threatened to burn the Daoist masters alive if they failed to bring rain. Chen Jinggu's cousin, Chen Shouyuan, who was the chief of the state's Daoist officials, begged her to save him and his fellows.⁸ She agreed to disregard the warnings of her master to save the kingdom, thus putting her own life and that of her fetus at risk by carrying out a ritual dance to bring rain. At her mother's house, she removed the fetus from her womb and hid it by making it invisible under a lake of lotuses. However, the ruse was penetrated by the White Snake's servant, the Ravine Demon, who stole the fetus and fed it to his mistress. Thus the fetus passed from Chen Jinggu's body into that of the White Snake, a perversion of pregnancy and the birth process in which the fetus died.

The Ravine Demon and the White Snake then went to the Min River to kill Chen Jinggu, who was dancing on the stars of the Northern Dipper, magically visible on a mat floating on the water.⁹ Torrential rain fell while Chen Jinggu hemorrhaged due to the death of her aborted fetus, and she was pulled into the river by the two demons. Xu Zhenjun rescued his rebellious disciple and cleansed her of the impurity of the blood she had shed, but he could only temporarily forestall her death.

The Posthumous Inclusion of the White Snake in Chen Jinggu's Cult

Temporarily preserved by her master, Chen Jinggu pursued the head of the White Snake, whose incomplete body (a frequent trait of demons) reduced

her mobility, thereby making it impossible for her to escape. Chen Jinggu climbed astride the head and used her own magic to bring both the snake and herself to Linshui Palace in Gutian, where they died reunited in this chimerical form. After her death, Chen Jinggu returned in spirit to Mount Lü to finally learn from her master the ritual arts of childbirth that she had disdained, and the lack of which was linked to her bloody death. Her body was laid out in majesty, “mummified” and lacquered by a famous artist in Linshui Palace, which became her temple.¹⁰ She thus assumed her protective role as goddess, with the head of the White Snake enclosed in a small cavity that can still be seen under Chen Jinggu’s seat. The goddess and the demon were thus indissolubly joined in the cultic image.

Major Themes

The pairing of the goddess and the demon is not merely a function of the narrative of *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons*, but also deeply embedded in the structures of late imperial Chinese religion and society. Most divinities in this period were not transcendent beings, but humans who had suffered a violent, premature death that blocked their routine incorporation into the normative role of “ancestor.” As a consequence, they were spirits that could become malevolent, demonic powers unless they were domesticated through being offered sacrifices in a temple cult. In the case of Chen Jinggu, this threat was intensified by the fact that her death ultimately resulted from her lifelong attempts to avoid marriage and then the pollution of childbirth, which were the defining roles of women in this society.

This parallel of the divine and the demonic is carried forward in numerous aspects of the story. Thus the sworn sisterhood gathered by Chen Jinggu is composed of repentant demons and human women who ultimately joined in her pantheon through suicide. As her pantheon they trace out the dangers of childbirth and the diseases and crises of childhood that menace the conventional life path. Again, the emergence of her cult narrated in the novel creates a sacred geography of Fujian marked out by the taming and incorporation of demonic powers. Finally, the story also hints at an “alchemical” reading in which the female body, as a cosmic mandala and microcosm of the universe, transforms the threatening powers of ritual pollution into the fertility of lineage and state.

The Bad Death

People who died violently before the end of their allotted life spans remained bound to the world and, depending on how they were treated, could become demons or deities. Because she received sacrifice from communities in Fujian, Chen Jinggu became a goddess—specifically, the protector of women in the process of pregnancy and childbirth, even though she had adamantly refused marriage and motherhood. This seeming paradox is tied to the nature of a bad death that leads to divinization: one is made a deity for the failure that brought about one's death, one's "sin" as defined by social orthodoxy.¹¹ Chen Jinggu's behavior had entailed defying her Daoist master, who tried to teach her the secrets of maternity, and rebelling against the precepts of filial piety to her own parents and to the lineage of the man she was finally forced to marry.

The deviant aspect of her nature is symbolized in the establishment of her temple, the Linshui Palace at Gutian (Song dynasty), on the site of the White Snake's grotto, where previously the demon had demanded an annual offering of children.¹² This spatial doubling of the goddess with the White Snake, and the veiled absorption of a cult of child sacrifice into one of child protection, shows how Chen Jinggu's story follows the pattern of rebellious Chinese women mystics and warriors who were marginalized in a society where their only proper position was that of wife and mother, and who could be incorporated only through becoming goddesses.¹³

Goddesses, Demons, and the Roles of Women

This doubling of the goddess and the demon in both narrative and cult also expresses how the two of them escaped the normative roles assigned to women in late imperial China. In *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons*, as in other celebrated accounts of the White Snake—such as *The Precious Scroll of Thunder Peak* (Leifeng baojuan)—she is characterized as being devoted to passionate love, even loving the victims she ultimately destroys. In pursuing her passions, this femme fatale destroys families, regions, and nearly the state before finally being eliminated.¹⁴ In the *Record of a Journey to the Sea* (Hai you ji), Guanyin stops Chen Jinggu from killing the White Snake, instead holding the demon prisoner in a punishment that echoes the immuring of Madame Bai—the White Snake's human form—under Thunder Peak

in the precious scroll cited above. In Chen Jinggu's cult, the demon is symbolically interred beneath the goddess's temple. Thus the savage, female sexuality embodied by the demon is ritually mastered by both the family and the state to incorporate its fertile energies.

Erring in the opposite direction, Chen Jinggu sought to devote her life to ritual asceticism and self-refinement, which required refusing the standard female roles of marriage and maternity. This led to her ruin and to her condemnation by orthodox society, whose rules concerning the place of women she had flouted. Thus, the ritual play *The Biography of the Nurturess* (Nai-niang zhuan) depicts her case before the king of hell, Yanluo Wang, who—despite her master's intercession on her behalf—condemns her betrayals of him and her family.¹⁵ As a marriage resister and self-abortionist, she could be co-opted by proper society only after her bad death, when she became a goddess who employed the arts she had refused in life to uphold the role of motherhood she had similarly sought to escape. The story thus dramatizes the tensions in the nature of women in a patrilineal society, which could be resolved only in mythic narrative and temple ritual—where social deviance could be mobilized to defend orthodoxy, and the bloody consequences of an abortion gone wrong could generate magic powers in defense of childbirth.

The Gathering of Her Sworn Sisters and Preservation of the State

The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons is also the story of the gathering of a community of women whom Chen Jinggu receives as her “sworn sisters” during her exorcisms in the kingdom of Min. These women themselves become masters of ritual magic, which they are taught by Chen Jinggu in her Linshui Palace. They are shamans (*wu*) and warriors (*wu*) who link maternity and ritual war under the guise of exorcisms. The two most important are Lin Jiuniang, the magician of the trigrams and the nine palaces, who captures the Ravine Demon under the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers; and Li Sanniang, who with the help of Chen Jinggu saves her father from the mirage of the Pure Land, which in reality was a carnivorous clam.

Along with Chen Jinggu, Lin Jiuniang and Li Sanniang form the triad of the Three Ladies, namesakes of a ritual tradition that served as a local version of the Mount Lü sect. This sect of the Three Ladies, whose statues sit in all her temples, was syncretically forged by grafting borrowings from different branches of Daoism and esoteric Buddhism onto a local shamanic or

spirit medium substrate.¹⁶ *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* preserves embedded in its episodes many rituals of this sect still practiced today.

Other women accepted by Chen Jinggu were orphans or widows who wished to receive her teaching, or daughters of local officials of the kingdom of Min who preferred to join this ritual community of women rather than the royal harem. Each has a role as protector of an aspect of maternity or childhood, and above all as healers of childhood diseases. A major example is Miss Jiang (also called “Tigress Jiang” or “Tiger Courage Jiang” because of her demonic tiger nature), who protects against smallpox and other eruptive illnesses of childhood that before the age of seven expel the “poisons of the womb” (*taidu*).¹⁷ *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* describes the relationship of these “sworn sisters” in detail, as well as the ritual, comparable to a marriage rite, that joins them.¹⁸ This swearing of elective sisterhood is particularly significant in the case of Miss Jiang, since the ritual links not only Chen Jinggu and Miss Jiang, but also their two ritual traditions: the Mount Lü and the Mount Li sects.¹⁹

This community also received repentant demons, such as the Rock Press Women (Shijia Furen), originally a rock on Blackstone Mountain at Fuzhou split by lightning into two pieces. Absorbing the vital energies of the goddess of the moon, they cultivated their life (*yangsheng*) to take on human form. However, lacking a master to guide them, they engaged in deviant practices, pressing to death those who entered their grotto, until Chen Jinggu made them her disciples. Later they were deified, and until recently a temple was dedicated to them at Blackstone Mountain, where people entrusted their children to them for protection. These and other demons incorporated into Chen Jinggu’s ritual community and temple reiterate the theme of pairing the goddess and the demon snake that was discussed above. Of course, there were also demons who were incapable of repentance, and hence consigned to destruction at the hands of Chen Jinggu and her followers.²⁰

The thirty-six royal consorts given to Chen Jinggu by the king also formed part of her community, and they figure in her temple as statues surrounded by children. Each is identified by a tablet with her name and place of origin. Together, they make visible a map of the cult of Chen Jinggu as the religious structure of the kingdom of Min. The other sworn sisters who made up Chen Jinggu’s ritual community are also situated in space, and are thereby instrumental in creating a sacred landscape.²¹

Ritually Taming the Landscape of Min

The text's version of forging this sacred landscape differs from other accounts of the goddess. Thus while the *Hai you ji* dramatizes her elimination of the old cults of Min, especially those involving snakes, *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* portrays her expulsion of vampiric demons who nourished their lives in a deviant manner, such as the Rock Press Women discussed above. Quelling these demons entailed taming a female sexuality that challenged motherhood and the lineage, so Chen Jinggu's battles with demons pitted the maternal role against the erotic female driven by her sexual urges, as in the case of the White Snake. This taming of aberrant sexuality also targets male demons, as in the castration of a monkey demon and the aforementioned sacrifice of the Ravine Demon at the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers. This link between taming demons and domesticating landscape is also indicated by the fact that most of the battles take place in the mountains or on the waters that mark the limits of civilization.

The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons is also unique among accounts of Chen Jinggu in that its ritual landscape dramatizes both sharing among the diverse ritual traditions of the region and conflicts between them. The Mount Lü (or Three Ladies) sect is under the mastery of Xu Zhenjun, who transmits to Chen Jinggu the rituals of Mount Lü, especially those of the Five Thunders and the dance on the stars of the Northern Dipper, with which she performs the ritual for rain. She also leads the spirit army of the Five Thunders, of which Xu Zhenjun is again the master. This ritual technique is also carried out, in its alchemical mode, within the body. At various points people solemnize an oath by swearing it "on the Five Thunders." Moreover, some episodes evoke the aforementioned "mandala of the womb," which figured both in tantric Buddhism and in rites of the Northern Dipper.²²

Relations between ritual traditions are also dramatized by introducing characters from rival traditions. Thus in *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* Chen Jinggu is the cousin of the historically attested Daoist master Chen Shouyuan. He was in the Zhengyi tradition of the celestial masters, which was close to the tradition of the Heart of Heaven (Tianxin Zhengfa).²³ Chen Jinggu's links to this tradition are demonstrated by the fact that she heals and exorcises by means of talismans, herbal potions, and magic formulas, all in the manner of the Heart of Heaven. She also performs rites of "salvation

through refinement or transmutation” (*liandu*): for her child; for a Madame Yao who died in childbirth; and for a Madame Shen, a suicide, whose soul she tried to recover (*huanhun*). This is likewise a familiar practice in the tradition of the Heart of Heaven.

In contrast, Chen Jinggu is the sworn enemy of Yuan Guangzhi, an adept of the “sinister way,” the tradition of Mount Mao.²⁴ Significantly, in the *Hai you ji* it is the White Snake Demon who is admitted to Mount Mao.²⁵ Yuan Guangzhi, returning from his apprenticeship at Mount Mao, falls into the lascivious trap of Mengyü, the Butterfly Demon, born of a painting by the prince of Teng. Chen Jinggu fights against them in a battle of magic, with Chen Jinggu surrounded by all her sworn sisters, who have been transformed into female soldiers. This battle thus dramatizes the rivalry between their respective ritual traditions.

Throughout the text there is also a slippage between Daoism of all traditions and forms of Buddhism. Chen Jinggu, as a “drop of Guanyin’s blood,” is an emanation of the bodhisattva, and thus linked to the diverse Buddhist traditions that invoked the patronage of this figure. But as noted above, she is also the disciple of Xu Zhenjun and the Mount Lü sect. Moreover, the presence in her temple of the Lady of the Birth Register links her to the ritual practices of the Old Mother of Mount Li (i.e., the teacher of Miss Jiang), and through this woman to the ancient goddess Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West), who dates back to the preimperial era and had become a high divinity of Daoism.

The Female Body as Cosmic Mandala

There is also an alchemical reading of Chen Jinggu’s story, in which the female, maternal body becomes a cosmic mandala of the trigrams.²⁶ These figure at the origin of the *Yijing* (“give birth to the ten thousand created things”) and are inscribed on the womb of every woman. The birth chamber in Chen Jinggu’s disguised home became the entire universe, covered by a lake of lotuses, the Buddhist symbol of purity and enlightenment. This image of the birth chamber as a realm of purity contradicts the customary representation in Buddhism and Chinese popular religion of the birth process, with its profusion of blood, as a deeply polluting event that required extensive cleansing through rituals. However, in *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons*, the master of Mount Lü, Xu Zhenjun, sees in these polluting forces a “marvelous benefit.” This expresses an idea shared by popular Buddhism

and a version of filial piety articulated in the *Canon of Women* (Nüren jing), which was composed through spirit medium writing and claimed to transmit the instructions of Guanyin to her followers.²⁷ The relation between the maternal matrix of the womb and the cosmic matrix, the Northern Dipper, is clearly established when Chen Jinggu performs the ritual of “activating” the constellation (*xing beidou*). At different points in the text she dances on the stars of the Dipper to carry out the ritual for rain, to combat an evil monk in a struggle over arranging the same trigrams that figured in the womb, and to lead the spirit soldiers of the Five Camps arranged in a snake formation, which again represented the arrayed trigrams.

The Ravine Demon called himself “brother Kui” when he stole Chen Jinggu’s fetus, thereby invoking the demon of this cosmic matrix, the Northern Dipper, whose name is also Kui.²⁸ He was finally captured by Lin Jiuniang, the magician of the trigrams who mastered the “heavenly web” (*tianluo*), represented in the story by her long hair. Following a trial by Chen Jinggu after her death, he was sacrificed and dismembered for his crimes on the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers, the place of every birth that she oversees in her role as a goddess. The thirty-six consorts are projected on this same cosmic cloth, becoming masters of the time of pregnancy who, in the rituals of Chen Jinggu’s temple, can untie children’s embryonic knots (*jiejie*) that embody predestined childhood diseases, thereby helping children get through the “passes” (*guan*) that mark the dangerous moments in the process of maturation.²⁹ These consorts also correspond to the thirty-six stars (*gang*) that surround the Big Dipper and are responsible for activating the cosmic matrix.

The Emergence of the Cult and Its Canonization

In the classical manner, the cult of the Lady of Linshui was consecrated after Chen Jinggu’s bad death, when her son was aborted and then devoured during her ritual dance. This emergence of a cult from a bad death depends on the existence of a community that recognizes the merits of the deceased, to whom it will make offerings that sustain the recipient as a divinity. Here, the community comprised women and children. The pantheon surrounding the goddess also consisted of women, having been formed by the post-death reunion of the sworn sisters who killed themselves upon learning of Chen Jinggu’s death so that their souls could rejoin her and the royal consorts in the world of the dead.

As the base for the cult, Linshui Temple was built over the grotto of the White Snake. The White Snake thereby became the demon foundation of this temple, sacrificed on the domain of a new cult in the “investiture of the demon” (*mingmo*). Thus, at the central location of the new cult, the overlapping themes of domesticating women and mastering the landscape converged in the erection of a building where both the demon and the goddess found their place in the service of the society they had defied in life.

The state canonization of the cult—which in *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* is depicted as resulting from the initiative of the king of Min—was actually made official through inscription in the imperial Register of Sacrifices (between 1241 and 1253), as attested in the memoir of the scholar Zhang Yining.³⁰ As noted above, Chen Jinggu received many official titles, and up to the present day her cult continues to flourish in Fujian and Taiwan. It is also found in Zhejiang (Chen Shisi qizhuan), Hunan (Hai you ji), and even Vietnam, where it has been carried on by the Yao people and the San Diu (Shan You).³¹

Other Literature Featuring Chen Jinggu

The history of Chen Jinggu gave rise to different genres of stories. First are the “novels” (*xiaoshuo*), such as the *Hai you ji* (Ming dynasty), set in Hunan. Its text includes a masked theatrical Nuo ritual to exorcise the worn-out energies of the completed year.³² Second are the “strange stories,” such as *The Strange Story of Chen Shisi* (Chen Shisi qizhuan) set in Zhejiang, or certain chapters of the vast mythological canvas of *The Legendary Records of the Capital of Min* (Mindu bieji; Qing dynasty). In this work the history of Chen Jinggu merges with other histories of the present-day maritime province of Fujian, located in southeastern China.³³ Third are the retellings of local legends, such as those Shi Hongbao recounts in his *Miscellaneous Notes on Min* (Min zaji; 19th c.).³⁴ There are also plays for actors or puppets, staged during local festivals by the ritual masters (*shigong* or *kuilei shi*), which are punctuated by actual ritual sequences and are themselves considered to be rituals. They take place on the square in front of a temple, sometimes over the course of several days, and enact the powers of the goddess Chen Jinggu, in her role as the principal adept of the Mount Lü sect.³⁵ There are also sutras, such as *The Sutra of the Three Nurturers* (Sannai jing) and *The True Sutra of How Yulin Shunyi Aids in Giving Birth* (Yulin shunyi dutuo chan ruozhenjing),

originating at the Gutian temple; and morality books (*shanshu*) that circulate among the believers. Finally, as in every local cult, the steles erected in front of the temples contain tales and images of the goddess and her cultic community provided by local histories and collections of the divinities' stories.³⁶ Also employing a visual medium, the ritual masters (*fashi*) of the Mount Lü sect possess ritual paintings that show the whole pantheon and its relation to birth, death, and the initiation of adepts.³⁷

This teeming diversification of genres and texts, much like the episodic narration of *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons*, vividly testifies to the vitality and protean nature of Chen Jinggu's cult over the centuries. However, while it articulates basic characteristics of the society and religion that produced it, *The Lady of Linshui Pacifies Demons* remains a gripping narrative full of high drama and emotions. Most evident is the excitement produced by the repeated battles with demons. Similarly, twisting through the narrative are titillating accounts of the sexual passions that motivate so many of the actions of demons and humans alike. At the same time, the text contains many humorous accounts, primarily of domestic affairs, as in the tales of Chen Jinggu's thwarted wedding, the deluded follies of the elderly relatives who will fall prey to the Clam Fiend, or the series of blunders by Chen Jinggu's mother that strip away all the illusions guarding her daughter's fetus. Finally, one of the most prominent emotions is the pathos elicited by the central event—Chen Jinggu's final dance to the death atop the water—and more broadly all the accounts of brutal childbirths and of violent deaths that serve to define the human condition. Ultimately this richness of incidents and passions creates a text that should best be read as a novel.

THE LADY OF LINSHUI PACIFIES DEMONS

CHAPTER 1

Wang Yanbin Builds Luoyang Bridge / Duanming Scholar Cai Completes the Work and Returns to the West

IT IS SAID THAT IN THE TANG DYNASTY, AT THE TIME THAT THE Huang Chao rebellion threw everything into chaos, the ruler of Min, in Fuzhou, was a man surnamed Wang, whose given name was Shenzhi. His second son, Wang Yanbin, came to take up the office of prefect of Quanzhou Prefecture in Fujian. In his territory, at a distance of twenty-five *li* from the East Gate, there was a river called the Luoyang.¹ In *The Ji Commandery Chronicle* (Jijun zhi) there is a legend that when the High God of the Dark Heaven of the Northern Bourne (Beiji Xuantian Shangdi) attained incarnation as a buddha, he cut open his belly and threw his entrails into this river. His entrails turned into two monsters, a turtle and a snake; the turtle turned into a ferryboat and the snake its steersman.² All the time, under the pretext of ferrying passengers across the river, they carried them to the middle of the river, overturned the boat, and devoured all the traveling merchants. When Prefect Wang Yanbin heard of this, he was so troubled that he wanted to build a bridge as a way to save people. But Luoyang River was so deep as to be bottomless, and the tidal current was swift, making it difficult to bring the work to completion; the ends of the bridge were always washed away, so that it could not be completed. Time and again the gold and silver in the state treasury were exhausted, to the tune of a hundred million thousand cash. He was at his wits' end.

At that time the Dragon King of the Four Seas went to wish Guanyin, the Buddha of the South Sea, a long life. She was sitting on a lotus pedestal in the Purple Bamboo Grove.³ Gazing into the distance with her eye of wisdom she saw a trail of demonic vapor rising into the clouds.⁴ She asked, “What is this called?”

The Dragon King replied, “It is a demonic vapor.”

Before he had finished speaking, there was a flash, and the Dragon King of the South Seas, Aolian, reported to the Buddha, “Now, on Luoyang River, there are two monsters: a turtle and a snake. On the river they have harmed many living beings. Prefect Wang Yanbin wants to find a way to save travelers, and he is supervising the construction of Luoyang Bridge in order to benefit the coming and going of merchants, so that they can avoid being harmed by these two monsters. But the tidal current is turbulent, and the violent waves are difficult to hold back, so that the bases of the pillars never reach solid ground. The amount of labor has been colossal, and considerable wealth has been spent.”

Guanyin said, approvingly, “It’s wonderful that even in the mortal world there is this sort of good person who desires a way to save the common people! As Prefect Wang is an ordinary mortal, how could he achieve anything? Wait while I work a spell to call up the boat of mercy to assist him, since he is working all alone.” Then she chanted the true scriptures and incantations, and summoned the local god of Luoyang.

When the local god heard the summons from Guanyin, he immediately went to bow at her pedestal. The bodhisattva Guanyin then came down from her pedestal and went into the Purple Bamboo Grove, where she picked a single bamboo leaf and a branch of willow. With the local god she rode an auspicious cloud, and in a flash had arrived at Luoyang River. There she took from her sleeve the bamboo leaf and blew on it with her buddha wind, turning it into a brightly colored boat. The local god turned into a boatman and the willow wand into a punting pole, while Guanyin herself turned into a beautiful woman. They punted the boat into the middle of the river and in a moment brilliant colors shone forth, enveloping the boat.⁵

Just then Prefect Wang happened to stroll down to the riverbank, where he saw the brilliant light shining in the middle of the river. Not knowing the cause, he immediately sent someone to investigate. In a short while the servant returned, and reported, “Within the brilliant light there is a brightly colored boat, and in the boat there is a beautiful woman. It is said that

having learned of your noble sir's virtuous government and righteous desire to build a bridge across the Luoyang, and your inability to succeed, she made a vow on the boat that any nobles or wealthy people right on down to commoners could throw coins at her. She will marry anyone who succeeds in striking her. If no one is able to strike her with a coin, all the gold and silver can be added to your funds to build the bridge.⁷⁶

When Prefect Wang heard this report, he was overjoyed. He promptly posted an announcement telling the common people that any and all could come to Luoyang River to throw coins at the beautiful woman. Within a day this set the people astir, and one and all brought their money, each hoping to carry off the beautiful wife. Availing themselves of this occasion to throw coins at the beauty, the elite and common people from all around flung coins, sending their money flying. Wang Yanbin was delighted beyond all expectation, and immediately called for several dozen little boats to encircle the brightly colored boat. From that moment, the little boats returned each day filled with the tossed coins, and the money was turned over to the treasury. Prefect Wang was elated. But when joy reaches its extreme, it turns into sorrow.

By coincidence Master Pure Yang Lü (Lü Chunyang), the Great Immortal of the Eight Grottos, was returning from riding the clouds beyond the sea, on his way back to Penglai, the Isle of the Immortals.⁷ From within the cloudy brightness, he saw rosy clouds soaring up into the sky above Luoyang River. With his cloud whisk he brushed aside the clouds to take a look, and in no time at all knew the cause.

Now we will turn to the city of Quanzhou where there was a certain Wang Xiao'er, who was by nature upright and honest. People had given him the nickname Elder Brother Scallion, because early every morning he carried vegetables to the market. He was frugal and thrifty, and led a quiet life. Originally he had hoped to take a wife, carry on the family name, and continue the sacrifices.⁸ He came to the bank of the Luoyang, where there was a large crowd of people who had come to throw coins at the beautiful woman.

At this time Elder Brother Scallion, too, brought all the coins he had saved up and hurled them into the river; however, no matter how he pitched the coins, he could not hit the target. As a result, he could neither eat nor sleep, and became despondent. As luck would have it, he ran into Master Pure Yang Lü on the road by the river. Master Lü saw Elder Brother Scallion tossing coins till midday. Never hitting the target, he kept sighing, frustrated

and furious, so Master Lü came to his aid. With a flick of his cloud whisk, he parted the beauty's cloudy defenses. She was unable to raise her defenses in time, and in an instant a coin struck the topknot of her hair. Elder Brother Scallion was overjoyed at his luck, which seemed to have come out of the blue. But in the blink of an eye, both the brightly colored boat and the beautiful woman sank into the river. Seeing this, Elder Brother Scallion ground his teeth in rage; he thought and thought, but could not come up with a plan. Then he hurled himself into the river. His soul remained intact and traveled to Luoqie Mountain.⁹ We won't speak of this any further.

As we take up our tale anew, Guanyin opened wide her eye of wisdom and saw Pure Yang Lü standing on top of the cloud. She cursed him, saying, "A dumb beast like that has no sense of propriety!" Then she sent the Five Thunders (Wu Lei) to strike him. The Immortal Ancestor Lü saw them coming and for an instant was helpless with fright. Unable to escape back to his mountain, he hastily fled to Liang Hao's study.¹⁰

He called to Licentiate Liang, "In a moment of distraction, I offended the Heavenly Court, which has dispatched the Five Thunders to strike me. Save me!" As he spoke, the sound of thunder rolled violently. Liang Hao was so frightened that his hands and feet were like ice, and he was unable to reply. Pure Yang Lü said, "If you are willing to rescue me, then that would give this poor Daoist a place to hide." Liang Hao agreed with alacrity. Pure Yang Lü then turned himself into a tiny insect, ran under Liang Hao's fingernail, and hid himself. He waited for an hour and three quarters, until the thunder no longer rolled. There was nothing the Five Thunders could do, so they were obliged to go back to the Purple Bamboo Grove, having failed to carry out the Buddha's orders. At this time, an hour and three quarters having already elapsed, Pure Yang Lü resumed his original form. He thanked Liang Hao and returned to Zhong Mountain, as he did not dare remain in these harrowing circumstances any longer.¹¹

Merciful Guanyin's compassion was aroused. She took Wang's wandering soul and ordered the Powerful Guardian of Luoqie Mountain to escort it to Gutian County in Fuzhou Prefecture, to be reincarnated in the Liu Tong family. There it transmigrated into another body, with the name Liu Qi. Guanyin then bit her finger. A drop of her Buddha's blood fell into the Chen Chang family in Xiadu in Fuzhou, and was reincarnated as a girl, with the name Chen Jinggu. We will speak of this later.

We now return to Luoyang Bridge to take up our story. From the time that Wang Yanbin of the Tang dynasty built the bridge up to the time of Emperor Renzong of the Song dynasty it was altogether 240 years, and the bridge had become damaged.¹² As before, the two monsters—the turtle and the snake—were once again killing living beings on the river.

On one occasion the mother of Cai Xiang, Madame Weng, was in the boat of these two monsters. They were about to kill her, when they heard a command from the sky: “Top Scholar Cai is now in the boat. Do not kill anyone!” Everyone on the boat heard this voice, but careful investigation revealed that there was no one named Cai. How could they know that a flower-selling girl on board was pregnant? Her husband’s surname was Cai, and his given name was Fu.

The flower-selling girl instantly made a vow, saying, “If the baby I am carrying is a boy, and if in future he is indeed the Top Scholar, I will rebuild Luoyang Bridge.” She was already ten lunar months pregnant, and that very day she gave birth to a boy, whom she named Cai Xiang. Later he indeed became Duanming Scholar (Duanming Xueshi) Cai. He was by nature extremely perceptive, and before long he made the top of the list of candidates. He was assigned the office of prefect of his home prefecture.

His mother explained to him, “Previously on Luoyang River I vowed that if my son came first on the list of scholars, I would rebuild the bridge over the river.”

Cai Xiang wished to carry out his mother’s vow, and immediately began construction work to rebuild the bridge. But because the tide was deep, the piers were dashed to pieces each time, and construction could not get under way. Prefect Cai thought long and hard, but couldn’t come up with a plan. Then he formally ascended the hall of his yamen, summoned three divisions of runners, and in his booming official voice asked, “Is there one among you who is able to go under the sea (*xia de hai*)?”

In fact, there was a runner who went to kneel at the foot of the steps to the upper hall. He reported, “Noble Sir, I am Xia Dehai [“Sea of Virtue Xia,” his name being homophonous with “Able to go under the sea”].”

When Prefect Cai heard this, he said with delight, “If you are indeed able to go under the sea, I will give you five taels of silver as a reward.”¹³ He ordered the secretary to prepare a message, which he gave to Xia Dehai to take to submit to the Water Office of the Dragon King of the South Seas.

When Xia Dehai saw the silver, he was extremely happy, but when he saw the document, he was terrified. He said, “My surname is Xia and my given name is Dehai, but it is certainly not the case that I can go under the sea!”

When Prefect Cai heard this, he shouted in a loud voice, “Nonsense!” Then from his raised platform he threw the document down to Xia Dehai in the lower hall, and withdrew.

Xia Dehai picked it up and went home, weeping bitterly. When his wife asked why he was weeping, he explained the reason from beginning to end. His wife argued, “Lucky people naturally of themselves obtain Heaven’s assistance. There is no need to be alarmed.”

Xia Dehai took the silver he had received as a reward and prepared wine and delicacies. When he was intoxicated with food and drink he went to the seashore, planning to throw himself into the sea and commit suicide. He stretched out on the beach, thinking that the tide would rise and he would float away, and fell fast asleep. In a short while he was snoring thunderously. His snoring disturbed a Water Office soldier, who went straight to the Crystal Palace to report to the Dragon King, saying, “Prefect Cai Xiang of Quanzhou has sent runner Xia Dehai to deliver a message. Please instruct me how to deal with it.”

The Dragon King answered, “This evening prepare a document in reply to put in its place.”

When day broke, Xia Dehai’s drunkenness had worn off. He patted his chest and the document was still there, so he took it out to have a look. It wasn’t the original! His heart leaping with joy, he rushed back to the yamen. Just then the prefect ascended the hall, and Xia Dehai presented the reply. Cai Xiang opened it and had a look. There was nothing but the single graph “vinegar” (*cu*) and that was all! He thought that it surely meant between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. (*you*) on the twenty-first day of the month. He waited until this time—between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. on the twenty-first day—arrived.¹⁴ Then he immediately began construction work. The seawater suddenly retreated, leaving the ground dry. Cai Xiang was delighted, and promptly rewarded Xia Dehai by making him leader of his division. He ordered runners to go all around to recruit artisans and stonemasons, and waited for them all to arrive. Then Cai Xiang personally supervised the construction and restoration, and with such a labor force the piers were finished in no time at all. Prefect Cai was overjoyed. In less than a day the horizontal beams were likewise complete, ready for inauguration.

Cai Xiang then chose an auspicious day for it. He summoned all the civil and military officials, the gentry and the elders, and all the villagers who had both good fortune and longevity, and together they crossed the bridge. That day they employed the imperial soldiers. The common people, the gentry, and the officials all thought to themselves that if this day went without mishap the bridge would surely not fall into decay for ten thousand years.

Cai Xiang, along with the crowd, began to cross the bridge. When they reached the middle, they saw descend from the sky a god whose appearance was extraordinary, and form terrifying, who shouted, "I am the celestial Ninth Dragon Star!"

Prefect Cai replied, "I am the earthly Prefect Duanming Scholar Cai."

Just at this moment the imperial soldiers advanced from the head of the bridge, while Prefect Cai descended from the opposite end. After a few steps, Prefect Cai thought to himself that Ninth Dragon Star's appearance was indeed extremely bizarre; he was just about to turn his head for another look when the imperial soldiers' god struck him, causing him to stumble and fall down unconscious. His face was purple and his eyes red, his body lifeless and cold. The crowd of runners saw this, and quickly used a sedan chair to carry him to the yamen, but he was already dead. In order to construct the bridge over the Luoyang, respected Duanming Scholar Cai had not only exhausted his family's wealth, he had also lost his life. It was indeed a great pity! We won't speak of this any further.

To continue our story, Luoyang Bridge was built so low that when the water rose, it covered the bridge to a depth of three feet. During the previous dynasty [the Ming], in Chidian Village in Jin Jiang County in Quanzhou Prefecture,¹⁵ there was a very wealthy man whose surname was Li and whose given name was Wu. His family was immensely rich. He had accidentally harmed his father's younger brother, and he had also beaten a servant to death. He was about to go to the Autumn Assizes of the Ministry of Justice to answer for his crimes.¹⁶

When he set out, he had to cross Luoyang Bridge. At this exact moment a high tide surged over the bridge, and Li Wu, sitting inside the prison cart, was completely covered by the water. He quickly made a vow, saying, "If I, Li Wu, get out of this, and am not guilty and return home to Quanjun Prefecture, I vow to raise the height of this bridge by three feet."

To continue our story, Chen Jinggu had grown up. She was a beautiful girl, her speech solemn and never careless. Each day in the embroidery room

she cultivated herself in tranquility, chanting sutras and bowing to the Buddha from dawn to dusk. She did not concern herself with trivial matters.

Liu Qi, too, had grown up. It happened that this was the time when Fuzhou was holding its civil service exams.¹⁷ Liu Tong took his son, Liu Qi, to Fuzhou to enter the exams. They found temporary lodgings in the house of Lin Bashu, a seller of sundries, who was the next-door neighbor of Chen Chang, Chen Jinggu's father. One day, when they had some free time, Liu Tong took his son to the countryside to relax. They were nearly home when there was a sudden downpour, and Liu Tong and his son took shelter from the rain under the eaves of Chen Chang's house.

By chance, Chen Chang opened the door and saw the two cultured guests, one old and one young. Claspings his hands together, Chen Chang bowed politely and began to speak. "You two noble sirs are seeking shelter from the rain. Come into my lowly cottage for a time and have some tea."

When Liu Tong heard this, he beamed. He bowed in return, saying, "This foolish man and his son are total strangers to you. How could we dare accept your invitation?" When he had finished speaking, they entered, went to the upper hall, and carried out the rituals of guest and host. Only after all this did they have tea.

While this was going on Lin Bashu had gone into the street to get more goods to restock. When he returned to his shop, he didn't see Liu Tong and his son, so he asked his assistant about them. The assistant replied, "They just took shelter from the rain at Chen Chang's house next door." Lin Bashu then went to Chen Chang's upper hall. The two bowed to each other and sat down, and Chen Chang ordered his wife to prepare wine to entertain them.

While they were drinking the wine, Lin Bashu said to Chen Chang, "Previously Elder Brother Liu Tong wanted to take your beautiful daughter as a wife [for his son], but it didn't work out. Today, by chance, the fate of Heaven brings them together again. My friend Elder Brother Liu's son is young and erudite. He is now at the provincial examinations, where the golden roster of successful candidates will surely bear his name. Furthermore, he is well matched in age for your daughter. It is just the right time for a wedding. If you two don't reject me, I am willing to take charge of the arrangements in order to achieve the matrimonial happiness of your two families. I don't know what you two elder brothers think of this."

When Chen Chang heard this he was overjoyed. Liu Tong, too, was happy to go along, and said, "No day is better than today." Then he took a gold

armlet from Liu Qi's arm. Offering it with both hands, he presented it to Lin Bashu, saying, "This is to reward you for all your trouble in bringing our families together. I will not forget it even at the end of my days, when I am old and toothless."¹⁸

Beaming, Lin Bashu accepted the armlet. He turned to Chen Chang and said, "I hope that your daughter and the son of my very old friend will grow old and white-haired together."

Chen Chang was grateful. He took his leave of the future father-in-law and of Lin Bashu, and went directly back into the inner rooms. He said to his wife, Madame Ge, "Dear wife, many times we have talked about the fact that our daughter is grown up but not yet happily married. Today Heaven has sent us a marvelous, predestined relationship. Our neighbor Lin Bashu has a good friend from Gutian. For many generations without interruption, the men in the family have been literati. The future father-in-law is surnamed Liu, and his personal name is Tong. The future son-in-law is young and talented and, furthermore, he is both well-mannered and handsome. For him to marry our daughter would indeed be a marriage made in Heaven, and would fulfil our most cherished dream."

Madame Ge saw how happy her husband was. She knew their future son-in-law was a person of exceptional ability. Then she took a gold hairpin and gave it to Chen Chang, who went directly out of the hall. He thanked Lin Bashu, saying, "My wife has heard that we could get such an outstanding son-in-law, and that it is all due to your suggestion. We are extremely grateful." Then he presented the gold hairpin to Lin Bashu.

Bashu in turn gave it to Liu Tong, saying, "My sole hope is that your worthy son, Liu Qi, will be the top candidate in the exams and that they will soon be a harmonious couple." Liu Tong accepted the hairpin and tucked it into his sleeve. He instructed his son to change chairs and, inviting Chen Chang to sit on the higher one, thanked the future father-in-law. Chen Chang declined three times, and only accepted Liu Qi's two bows. Liu Qi's family, along with the go-between, then bowed again and took their seats at the banquet. Joyfully, they drank to their hearts' content, and by dusk they were all drunk. Only then did the banquet end, and they went home to bed.

A few days later it happened that the Great Master (Zongshi) Li Tongren arrived in Min to hold an exam to select scholars.¹⁹ When Liu Qi heard of this, he followed the crowds to enter the lists. In a short time the exam topic was announced, and when Liu Qi saw it he was extremely happy; he wrote

an essay and was very satisfied with it. When it was time for the Great Master to post the list of successful candidates, Liu Qi was the eleventh Cultivated Talent (Xiucui) in Gutian.²⁰

When Liu Qi saw the list, he was thrilled. He dressed up according to custom, and only then did he pay his respects to the Great Master to thank him. When this duty was completed, Liu Tong took Liu Qi to Xiadu. After they had finished paying their respects to the bride's parents, they took leave of their relatives by marriage. They also said goodbye to Lin Bashu and returned to Gutian.

When Liu Tong saw his wife and son, he said, "Our son and the Chen family are now relatives by marriage. Furthermore, Liu Qi has taken up his responsibilities as a Cultivated Talent." When he finished speaking, his wife, Madame Li, was very happy. They hung up lanterns and colorful festoons for the celebration. Guests came in throngs to congratulate them, and they gave a banquet and paid their respects to the guests.

On that day Lin Bashu, too, set out for Gutian to carry out some business. Liu Tong gave Lin Bashu his son's horoscope card and betrothal gifts to take with him to give to Chen Chang. Chen Chang accepted the son's horoscope card and reciprocated with his daughter's, which he gave to Lin Bashu to take to Gutian to give to Liu Tong.²¹

From this time three years passed. Liu Qi went to Fuzhou to await selection as police chief for Luoyuan.²² On the day appointed for him to take up his post, Liu Qi registered as police chief and returned to Gutian. It happened that Lin Bashu was spending the night at the Lius' home. They prepared the betrothal gifts, chose an auspicious day for the wedding, and entrusted Lin Bashu to take the gifts to the Chen family. The day was agreed on to go to the door to receive the bride and take her [to her new] home. Behind the bridal chamber Liu Tong and his son packed their bags. Then Liu Qi departed first, in order to take up his official post, and Lin Bashu took the gifts and schedule and gave them to the Chen family. He explained to Chen Chang that he should accept the gifts, and they settled on the wedding day.

Now we will return to Chen Jinggu, who was upstairs. When she heard that her mother had betrothed her to Liu Qi of Gutian, she wept in secret every day, saying, "Earlier I vowed before the Buddha never to marry, to observe Buddhist rules, and to serve the Buddha all my life. How could I have known that my parents would promise to give me in marriage? I'm afraid that these two old people have miscalculated."

In a short while the wedding day arrived, but Jinggu paid no heed. In appearance, she looked just as if she were not a bride. Rather, she was calm, and she deliberately remained upstairs reciting sutras. The Liu family came to receive the bride. Loud music filled the air, and the bridal sedan chair arrived along with all the people, who waited in the hall. Anxiously, Chen Chang and his wife urged Jinggu to come downstairs, get dressed, and climb into the sedan chair.

First they spoke moderately to mollify her. Then they used protocol to persuade her. And then they used principles to berate her. Who could have known that Jinggu's heart was as hard as iron? Not yielding, she only recited sutras. Chen Chang was very impatient—it was urgent! Still, Jinggu would not obey her parents. How could she not have known that disobeying her parents was the very definition of being unfilial? How could she continue to serve some Buddha or other, continuing to recite some sutra or other?

Losing his temper, Chen Chang tore down the ink drawing of Guanyin that hung on the wall and trampled it to shreds. The couple moved to grab Jinggu; however, just as they took hold of her, Lokapala (Hufashen), angered by their destruction of the image, grabbed a stick and struck them.²³ He hit Chen Chang on the back, and with the other end he struck Madame Ge. The two old people screamed and fell to the floor unconscious. In an instant Guanyin (Fozu) dispatched Shancai and Liangnü.²⁴ Carrying Jinggu up into the sky, they departed. Chen Chang and his wife still lay unconscious. The crowd of relatives and neighbors rushed upstairs, but all they saw was the two old people lying on the floor; they had no idea what had happened. The crowd revived them, and the old couple moaned and groaned without stopping.

When the relatives asked them in detail what had happened, Chen Chang explained, "We were telling our daughter to come downstairs and get dressed, but she refused to listen. She kept reciting sutras in front of the Buddha. When I saw that she wouldn't obey, I lost my temper, tore down the picture of Guanyin, and trampled it. Suddenly I saw a god dressed in armor holding a stick. He beat me on the back, and it hurt so much I thought I would die. Hurry! Take my unfilial daughter and get her dressed."

The relatives said, "We've just come upstairs, but we don't see Jinggu." They searched the upstairs, but there was no trace of her. Nor had they seen her come downstairs. Where could she have gone? Chen Chang and his wife didn't see their daughter, and they felt their backs hurt even more. All they

could do was cry and wail. The relatives and the whole family, old and young alike, rushed around in panic. The go-between, Lin Bashu, also had no idea what had happened. He heard the whole family clamoring and wailing. In short, the happy fate of the two families ended in ill will and bitterness, their happiness turned into sorrow and tears. They didn't yet know where Jinggu was or how this marriage would end. To see how it is resolved, you will have to read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Chen Jinggu Studies Magic at Mount Lü / The Ravine Demon Takes on Illusory Forms at Xue Mountain

UPON NOT SEEING THEIR DAUGHTER, THE CHENS WERE THROWN into a panic, crying and wailing. Some relatives said, “Wasn’t that god dressed in gold armor some sort of demon who dragged her off somewhere?”

Others said, “Wasn’t it some sort of sorcerer disguised as a gold-armored god who took her off somewhere?”

At this time the whole household was in an uproar, crying and wailing. The Liu family relatives who had come to meet the new bride saw this extraordinary situation and were very distressed. They distributed the gongs and drums and the festooned sedan chair to return home.

Chen Chang saw that things hadn’t worked out. Originally, he had accepted the wedding gifts. He said to Lin Bashu, “I am sorry to trouble you, elder brother, to explain things to the other party, but I prefer to return to the Lius the one hundred gold pieces that I accepted.” Bashu took the money and, along with the decorated sedan chair and the crowds, returned home. When he saw the crowd of relatives, he recounted what had happened. All of Gutian talked about the Chen family’s bizarre affair and spread it all around. Only at dusk did they stop.

Shortly afterward Lin Bashu arrived at the Lius. He said, “It’s a strange matter of extraordinary rarity. Your relatives by marriage have entrusted

me to return the wedding money to you. They beg you to take it back, and with your wife choose another, better, daughter-in-law.”

Before Liu Tong could reply, Liu Qi, standing at his side with a very proper expression on his face, said, “Among great gentlemen, who has ever discarded a first wife and chosen another? To do so would be to behave like the birds and beasts. Will you please do us the favor of returning the original money to the Chen family? I am now going to Luoyuan to take up my post. Tell them to take all the time they need to search for her, and if there comes a day when she is found, our happy fate will still be there. If she doesn’t return, I will never take another wife.” When Liu Tong heard these words from his son he had no choice but to go along. On the next auspicious day, Liu Qi went with his family to Luoyuan to take up the post of police chief.

When Lin Bashu received this order, he again carried the money and gifts back to the Chens. He explained the other’s position to Chen Chang. When Chen Chang heard this, he was very pleased and said, “This is rare indeed!” Then he took the money and gifts, and charged his relatives and friends with the task of searching everywhere for Chen Jinggu. He sought divine guidance by drawing lots and consulting fortune-tellers, all without effect. Everyday Chen Chang moaned with pain. His back, where he had been struck by the god in gold armor, swelled and festered and became ulcerated. Where his wife, Madame Ge, was injured when she was struck also stiffened up, and ulcers appeared on her hands. Day and night the old couple cried from the pain. A doctor was sent for to treat them, but they did not recover. Chen Chang had a nephew, who came to attend them.

To return to our story, Shancai and Liangnü, under orders from Guanyin, took Chen Jinggu from the Chen household to the mountain facing Haijiu Peak, beyond Zhen North Pass, and there they set her down and roused her. Startled and alarmed, Chen Jinggu asked, “Who are you? Why did you bring me here?”

Shancai and Liangnü replied, “We are none other than Shancai and Liangnü from Guanyin’s side. Consequently, the Dharma Gate of Mount Lü is open. Because you were pressured to marry but did not, on her orders we have brought you to Mount Lü to study magic.¹ When you have mastered the arts, you can still return to see your parents. How will that be?” When Jinggu heard this, and saw that Liangnü was a female companion, she relaxed. Then they went on together.

To take up our story, behind Wangbeitai Peak was Great Ravine Mountain.² To the side of that mountain there was a foul miasma from a swampy, water-filled ditch. Subjected to the essence of the sun and moon, the mixture congealed into a certain Ravine Demon. This Ravine Demon was a hideous monstrosity: on his head grew a single horn, he had three fingers, his face was indigo blue, his hair like red sand, he was over thirty feet tall, his shoulders broad, his nose hooked, his eyes enormous, his huge mouth had long fangs, he had a red beard, and veins ran through his body right to the source. Whether it was broad daylight or darkest night, he would either turn into a young woman or a handsome youth. At either Great Ravine Mountain or around Wangbeitai Peak he would bewitch male and female travelers.

This Ravine Demon was a demon among demons. He had made a very good friend at Panther Head Mountain, to the west of Bian Cheng outside the South Pass.³ On the mountain was a cave where monkeys dwelled. A thousand-year-old red monkey from this cave, with red fur and golden eyes, often assumed human form.⁴ He frequently roamed Wangbeitai Peak, concealing himself in ditches, or he would go to Panther Head Mountain. By nature he was debauched. Often he and the Ravine Demon would roam around together to amuse themselves.

One day he and the Ravine Demon took the forms of two young students. Just then, on Wangbeitai Peak in the distance, they saw Jinggu and Liangnü coming. The Ravine Demon became agitated. The red monkey, nicknamed Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage,⁵ tugged at him, saying, "Elder brother, look! Over there two living prizes are approaching." When Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage saw that it was two beautiful young women, his high spirits redoubled. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage said to the Ravine Demon, "These two beauties, you and I can each take one of them, and my lifelong wish will be fulfilled."

The Ravine Demon replied, "A pair of gifts is coming our way. How could we let them slip away?"

Before he had finished speaking, the two women arrived in front of them. The Ravine Demon blocked their way, and asked, "Where are you two young ladies from? Where are you going that you pass through here?"

Seeing that it was two young men, Jinggu replied, "I am from Xiadu. My father is surnamed Chen and his given name is Chang. I am going to Mount Lü to study the Way."

The Ravine Demon replied, "Mount Lü is all name and no substance. I see that you two young ladies are still very young, so how could you know what

road to take to reach Mount Lü? I am afraid that you have bitten off more than you can chew. Contrary to your hopes, it will do you no good. We two are none other than students of Celestial Master Zhang of Dragon Tiger Mountain in Guixi County in Jiangxi.⁶ Having studied Daoist magic, we can command gods, mobilize spirit generals, set ghosts to task, and cause demons to submit. If you two young ladies study our magic, we will pass on to you the magic we have acquired over an entire lifetime. I don't know if you will agree to this or not."

Chen Jinggu replied, "I am going to Mount Lü, so you should not block our way and detain us." The Ravine Demon then embraced Jinggu, and held her tight. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage was about to embrace Liangnü, when she perceived that they were a monster and a demon.

She cursed them loudly, saying, "Monkeys should not be without manners! Behold my Dharma Jewel!"⁷ Then she brandished the fragrant pearl, and hurled it at Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage. The pearl turned into a ball of red light, and brilliant flames soared up. Set on fire by the flames, Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage's skin peeled and his fur smoldered, and he ran for his life all the way back to Panther Head Mountain to seek refuge in the monkey cave. There he rested quietly while his skin and fur healed.

When the Ravine Demon saw the fire burning and the flames leaping, he quickly fled, escaping through the veins of the earth. Liangnü saw the two demons flee and called back her magic jewel. Jinggu asked, "Those two students just now, what sort of people were they?"

Liangnü replied, "One was a thousand-year-old monkey devil, and the other was the Ravine Demon; the one a monster, the other a demon. They are always up to no good, by nature devoted to debauchery. When I threw my precious pearl at them, the monkey was burned so that his skin peeled and his fur smoldered. This worked to the Ravine Demon's advantage, so he escaped from me."

When Jinggu heard her say that it was a monster and a demon, totally lacking all decency, she took a gold hairpin from her head, thrust it into the mountain, and vowed, "If I get to Mount Lü and successfully master the magic arts, I swear that I will exterminate these two monsters."⁸ Her oath concluded, she continued on to Wangbeitai Peak with Liangnü.

Again they encountered a man, whose surname was Yuan and given name Guangzhi, who was just over twenty years old. His hometown was Mingqing.⁹ He, too, was on his way to Mount Lü to study magic, but didn't

know the way. Running into the two young ladies was Heaven sent! Yuan Guangzhi hurried up to them and bowed. He wanted to go on in the company of the two young women to Mount Lü to study magic, but Jinggu said, "That cannot be allowed. Since there can be no physical contact between a man and a woman unless they are married, how could we travel together? It would be improper."

Yuan Guangzhi asked, "Why are you talking like this? I only know that since we will study with the same teacher, we are brother and sister under the same master. We belong to the same family, so what is improper?"

Liangnü said, "If you want to go to Mount Lü to study magic, either you walk ahead or behind. As long as you follow at a distance, that is permissible. But if you want the three of us to travel together, that is absolutely out of the question."

Yuan Guangzhi said, "Since you put it this way, I will follow a few steps behind." The two women hurried ahead, and Yuan Guangzhi followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Mount Lü was originally at Dragon Pool Ravine.¹⁰ They followed the Hao River to Fan Chuan Pu, along the water, passing Tian Ning temple, where mountains faced each other. It connected to various small tributaries, which led to a great river that reaches the sea. They went through the magic gate, which was near the town. People wanting to study magic came one after another. Those who were not sincere were not accepted, nor were those who did not have the proper karma.¹¹ There was a constant commotion and no peace, so Mount Lü was moved to Ruanchen, where it was sunk beneath the water, only its southern terrace floating on the surface of the river. Consequently, the only trace remained at Goulong Terrace, which was originally on Jiangxin island.

They passed beneath Wu Mountain. From the northeast they went around to Guanxiapu in the southeast, and stopped at Dragon River.¹² After Liufan, they crossed the river and anchored at Jinjiang. At Sizhou they reached the watery region of Longtan and Bosi. It is still Jiangpu Hezhou. (These three names are still in existence.) Precisely because malignant, poisonous vapor rose into the sky, the Daoist master had decided to submerge Mount Lü beneath the water, so that only the southern terrace floated on the water. But all the magic gates and other such places led to exactly where they did before. It was another Mount Lü, not the same as the ordinary one.

Earlier, Mount Lü had taken in the two generals, Huang and Yang, and accepted a student named Zhang Sha from Fuqing, who was all alone in the world.¹³ For generations his ancestors had been Daoist masters, and in his family were those who served the ancestral Lingbao master.¹⁴ One night he dreamed that he saw a god with a long beard, wearing a Daoist cap and clothing, who called himself the Lingbao Daoist master. Expressly for him, Mount Lü opened the Dharma Gate. Crowds quickly made their way to Dragon Pool Ravine at White Dragon River in Fuzhou. On the river small boats followed one after the other. Hurry! Hurry! No one wanted to miss this unique opportunity. When Zhang Sha woke up, he half believed and half doubted what he had dreamed. At dawn, he again asked the god for some sign. The spirit medium said, “If you succeed in reaching Mount Lü to study magic, prostrate yourself and supplicate the Three Sages. Then sequentially strike your head before them.”¹⁵

Zhang Sha was very happy. His mind at rest, he bundled up his things, and closed and locked the door. He went directly to Fuzhou. When he had gone part way, he met a man who asked him, “Elder Brother Zhang, where are you going?”

Zhang Sha saw that it was a neighbor, Liu Yuan, with whom he had often worked as a hired laborer, and told him the truth. Liu Yuan said, “That’s just where I am going! I, your younger brother, am also alone. Elder brother, let’s go together to seek instruction in magic from the master. I don’t know if you are willing or not.”

Zhang Sha replied, “Why not? With a companion on the road, I won’t be lonely. What could be better?”

Zhang and Liu arrived at White Dragon Pool Ravine in Fuzhou, where there was a small boat. Zhang Sha asked the ferryman, “Where did your little boat come from?”

He replied, “The Daoist master of Mount Lü sent the two generals, Huang and Yang, to transform themselves into a boat for you. You want to go to Mount Lü to study magic, and I have especially come to Dragon Pool to pick you up.” The ferryman saw that Zhang and Liu had an auspicious karma, so he told them, “My boat is headed for Mount Lü.”

When Zhang and Liu heard that he was going to Mount Lü, they were overjoyed, and said, “Mount Lü is just where we want to go to study magic. Quickly, let us board the boat; there is no need to formally receive us.”

With a few punts, they left the secular world and entered a mountainous landscape. Before them they saw a lofty peak. On the side stood a great stele, engraved on which were several large graphs. Written in the Dragon Pool Phoenix Seal were the words “Mount Lü Great Academy of Magic.” On the side of the stele were written five small graphs: “Opens Once Every Thirty Years” (San Shi Nian Yi Kai).

The two ascended the mountain and walked several *li* until they reached the grotto gate. They entered and bowed before the Perfected Lord, the Daoist master Perfected Lord Xu. Seeing that it was two villagers, he said, “You two have just entered the Dharma Gate, and don’t yet know the rules of my grotto. In the grotto we eat a *dan* of rice per day.¹⁶ You two have just reached the Dharma Gate. For the time being, go to the rear garden to prepare rice. I will transmit the law to you after this.” Then he gave instructions to his attendants to accompany Zhang and Liu to the rear garden to pound rice.¹⁷

The two men obeyed his instructions and entered the rear garden, where all they saw was a stone mortar placed in the center along with a pair of pestles. Every day they ground rice, and before they knew it three years had passed. Liu Yuan said to Zhang Sha, “I feel that the Daoist master is treating us like slaves. It’s been more than three years since the two of us entered the mountain, but he hasn’t taught us a single art. Every day our only companion is this mortar. Wouldn’t it be better to return home? Doing a lowly task like this, we’d at least get half the day off. Just now the master has gone out of the grotto, so the two of us could go home right now.”

They had taken only a few dozen steps when their hands began to itch. Liu Yuan said to Zhang Sha, “Our hands and feet itching horribly like this is probably because we didn’t always wash them clean, giving rise to itchy sores.”

Zhang Sha replied, “The master once said that if it should itch, then rubbing with ink will make the itching stop.” So they took some ink and rubbed it into the itchy spots, and felt the itching stop.

Zhang Sha said, “This ink is actually a wonder drug, so we should hide the rest on our persons to use later. This stone mortar and wooden pestles are big and heavy, and if we take them home with us, what use would they be? We’ve been at Mount Lü for three years. If we take them with us, and the hometown people see them, won’t they laugh at us?”

Liu Yuan said, "What you say is reasonable. Let's throw them down the mountain."

The two of them took the stone mortar and the wooden pestles and threw them off the mountain. In a flash flames leaped into the air, thunder rolled, and the earth shook. The two men looked at each other in alarm. How could they have known that they were magic treasures?¹⁸ They rushed down the mountain to pick them up, but when they drew near, the mortar and pestles rolled uphill. As soon as they caught up with them, they rolled down. Again and again they rolled away. Zhang and Liu wanted only to retrieve them, caring nothing for their lives. They fell up and they fell down, following the flames. But when they finally caught them, they were just two utensils, which they carried back up the mountain.

Who would have guessed that all that falling up and falling down would cause the itchy spots that had been rubbed with ink to all fall off? When they examined themselves repeatedly, they were shocked. All the places where the spots had fallen off had turned into eyes! Their hands, arms, legs, and feet were covered with hideous eyes! Zhang Sha said to Liu Yuan, "How is it that our bodies are covered with eyes?"

Liu Yuan replied, "Quick, let's take the mortar and pestles back. When we see the master we will ask him why."

Zhang Sha and Liu Yuan, holding the mortar and pestles, again had an audience with Perfected Lord Xu. The master laughed and said, "I foresaw that having departed, you would inevitably return. You can use those eyes to look up at the sky." The two walked to a clearing. When they looked up, they could see right up to the Celestial Offices and the Palace of the Void, and when they looked down, they could see the high hidden peaks in the earth.

When they finished looking, Perfected Lord Xu said, "Those eyes are not ordinary eyes. By examining bodily shapes and facial expressions they can distinguish evil demons among spirits and the good and bad among men. The work of the mortar and pestle is the art of the Five Thunders. There's no need for you to leave. You can guard the magic gate of Mount Lü. If someone comes to the mountain to study magic, if it's an evil spirit or ghost then don't let them in, and don't let in those who are debauched."

Zhang and Liu obeyed the order. Perfected Lord Xu instructed them to guard the misty mountain peak. People who came to the mountain called the one on the left King Zhang Sha and the one on the right General Liu.

Then Perfected Lord Xu ordered the Daoist masters to make lions to lie by the altar. As for the pictures hanging on either side [today], the feet, hands, back and eyes are those of King Zhang Sha and General Liu.

To return to our story, Chen Jinggu and Liangnü arrived at Dragon Pool, where a small boat was already waiting. They stepped into the boat and punted with the current. Liangnü saw Jinggu onto the boat. When they reached Mount Lü, they stepped ashore. Entering the grotto, they called on the master, who was delighted and admitted them. From this time Jinggu stayed at Mount Lü to study the magical arts. Liangnü said goodbye and returned to the South Sea.

Yuan Guangzhi was only a few steps behind them, but he could not catch up. By the time he had caught up, their boat had vanished. Another man punting a boat asked, "Where is it that you want to go?"

Yuan Guangzhi replied, "I want to go to Mount Lü."

The boatman said, "Young gentleman, I have never heard of any Mount Lü around here. You must either go upstream four heights to Yanjian Shaoding, or downstream four breadths to Fuxing Quantan. This little boat of mine can only go back and forth between the two banks here."

Yuan Guangzhi asked, "How is it that you don't know Mount Lü?"

The boatman replied, "I've heard people of the older generation speak of it. Mount Lü is submerged under Dragon Pool Ravine. But you and I are only ordinary people, so how could we go there? Young gentleman, you must ask another boatman, as my boat can't go there." Then he punted his boat back to the bank of Dragon Pool River. When Yuan Guangzhi heard that Mount Lü was submerged under the water, he thought he was out of luck. In the end, he took back the boat fare and went to Wangbeitai Peak to dispel his low spirits.

To return to our story, the Ravine Demon had escaped being burned by the fiery pearl thrown by Liangnü by concealing himself in the earth. And Jinggu had pulled out a hairpin and vowed to capture the two evildoers. But having overheard her, the Ravine Demon felt that he should probably go away for a long time. Only then did he emerge from hiding in the mountain, and, transforming himself into a young scholar, went for a stroll on Wangbeitai Peak. He thought to himself, "Just now Jinggu made a vow that after going to Mount Lü to master the magical arts she would exterminate Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage and me. If she comes back, she will certainly make trouble for me. But when the time comes I can try to deal with things."

Just as he was speaking, he saw someone approaching. The Ravine Demon asked the stranger, "Where are you going, elder brother?" Yuan Guangzhi told him the whole story of how he had met two women on the road and they had taken a ferryboat to Mount Lü, but when he tried to follow them their boat was already too far away and so they had vanished.

The Ravine Demon thought to himself that Yuan Guangzhi's original idea of going to Mount Lü to study the magical arts was not as good as telling him to go to Mount Mao to pay his respects to Master Mao.¹⁹ "Later, after Guangzhi has mastered the Way, he could be an adversary of that cheap tramp, Chen Jinggu, and so be of assistance to me. Wouldn't that be a good idea?" So he said to Yuan Guangzhi, "How could the magic of Mount Lü possibly be better than that of Mount Mao? The arts taught at Mount Mao all transform nature: casting beans to become soldiers, cutting grass to make horses, raising sandstorms, making rocks walk, summoning up wind and rain. These arts are far superior to those of Mount Lü. Since you didn't succeed in going to Mount Lü, how about if I take you to Mount Mao?"

Guangzhi asked, "Where is Mount Mao?"

The Ravine Demon said, "It's a long story. Mount Mao is fifty *li* southeast of Jurong County in Jiangnan, where there is an ancient mountain called Crooked Mountain (Qu Shan). After the master of Mount Mao attained the Way of the immortals, he changed the name to Mount Mao. The grotto is called Huayang Grotto of the Palace of the Primal Tally (Yuanfu Gong Huayang Dong)."

Guangzhi said, "Jiangnan is a separate province. It's very far away, so how could we go there?"²⁰

The Ravine Demon said, "I'm only afraid that you won't go, but if you want to go, we can be there in an instant."

Guangzhi said, "A distance of a thousand *li*, how could it be so easy?"

The Ravine Demon replied, "I have already studied the magical arts of Mount Mao. If you want to go there, all you need is the Five Concealments of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. If you have these Five Concealments, in the space of half an hour we'll be there."²¹

Guangzhi said, "That would be truly marvelous. Shall we go here and now?"

The Ravine Demon said, "Why not? Close your eyes tight. Follow me and we'll go using the method of Earth Concealment."

Guangzhi closed his eyes. He heard only the sound of wind in his nose and ears, and in less than an hour they arrived at Mount Mao. When they left the Earth Concealment, the Ravine Demon told Guangzhi to open his eyes. Opening them and looking around, he saw a great mountain. The Ravine Demon instructed him, "If you enter, just say you came by land, that you have come here in all sincerity to do obeisance and seek learning. But you absolutely must not say that I brought you." Then he moved to the side of the grotto, saying, "You can go in; I'm leaving. After three years, I'll see you again." Thereupon the Ravine Demon went back using the Earth Concealment Method.

When Guangzhi looked up, he saw the three characters "Huayang Grotto" on the plaque on the gate to the grotto. Seeing that the gate was ajar, he boldly slipped in. It happened that the true master of Mount Mao was in the hall expounding the law when he saw Yuan Guangzhi come in. He inquired about his background, and therewith enrolled him in the grotto for instruction.

Now we will return to the Ravine Demon, who, having led Guangzhi to Mount Mao to study the magical arts, had again used the Earth Concealment Method to go back. The Ravine Demon muttered resentfully, "I figure that Mount Lü, opening for study once every thirty years, doesn't need to open again for several cycles, as those who study magic are ever more numerous."

From Dragon Pool Ravine he used the Water Concealment Method to go to Mount Lü. There he saw that the gate to the grotto was tightly closed. On the plaque were written five large graphs: "Mount Lü Great Academy of Magic." To one side was a note: "Opens Once Every Thirty Years." Then the Ravine Demon pressed the single horn on his head above the character "ten" (*shi*). Pressing hard, he drew a stroke, changing the character "ten" into the character "one thousand" (*qian*), so that it told everyone that the academy opened once every three thousand years.

As he finished drawing the stroke, King Zhang Sha and General Liu, alarmed, hurled the mortar and pestle at the Ravine Demon. How could they have known that the Ravine Demon had no regard for his own life? At this point he fled. The two kings Zhang and Liu saw only a small demon, and thought nothing of it. Retrieving the mortar and pestle, they resumed guarding the magic gate. We won't speak of this any further.

We will pick up our story. When the Ravine Demon had the mortar and pestle thrown at him by the two kings, Zhang and Liu, he used the Earth Concealment Method to escape. Heedless of the direction, he simply ran for his life. This escape route led straight to Gutian.²² But that is another story. There will be separate tales of demons and monsters deluding people by producing evil spirits, and of immortals of the true Way who exorcise these demons and monsters by brandishing their weapons. If you want to know what the Ravine Demon did in Gutian, read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Jiang Shanyu Renounces Her Selfhood to Obtain the Way / Chen Jinggu Cuts Out a Piece of Her Flesh to Save Her Parents

TO RESUME OUR STORY, THERE WAS AN OLD MAN IN XIHE WHOSE surname was Jiang and whose given name was Qing.¹ He had taken a wife from the He clan, who had not yet had a child. Of late, however, she had become pregnant and was already in her tenth lunar month. When she was about to give birth, there was a blaze of light, and they heard a prolonged commotion outside. When Jiang Qing heard the noise, he quickly opened the door to have a look, and saw several dozen people, each clutching a knife or wooden cudgel. They were going to all sides of Great King Mountain to surround a fierce tiger with a white forehead. Raising their voices and shouting loudly, the crowd had almost reached the door when Jiang Qing closed it tight. More than a dozen men rushed to Jiang Qing's door in pursuit. Raising their voices they shouted, "It sprang inside!"

They shouted to Jiang to open the door; afraid, he sought to protect the people inside. The mob of people urgently banged on the door, shouting and yelling without cease. Alarmed, they said, "This is truly strange. We all clearly pursued it right here. We saw the huge, wild beast hurl itself against the door and go inside. How is it that there is no trace of it?"

The crowd dispersed in astonishment. When Jiang Qing closed the door and went inside, in the inner court he heard a baby's cry.² The midwife reported, "Congratulations, Master! You have a daughter." When Jiang Qing heard that a girl had been born, his feelings were a mixture of alarm and happiness. He feared that the tiger had come inside and would harm people, and he was happy that the birth had been without mishap. As a result, when the baby was a month old, she was given the name Mountain Birth (Shanyu).³ She was also called Tiger Courage (Hudan).

When Shanyu reached fifteen years of age, her nature was as violent as thunder. If any villager or neighbor slighted her, she slapped them right in the face. For those who were slapped it was no small matter: at first their faces merely felt hot, but before long there appeared the marks of her five fingernails. Everyone was afraid of her. When she was sixteen, her parents both died.⁴ Shanyu resolved not to marry, and quietly cultivated herself at home.

One day an old nun descended from the sky. She walked up to Shanyu and said, "Since we parted, have you been well?"⁵ Miss Jiang was dumbfounded. When she saw that it was an old nun, she asked, "Shifu [Master], why have you come?"

The old nun replied, "Because for you, Miss Jiang, to cultivate yourself all alone is very lonely. I have come especially to give you a little book that will dispel your sorrows."

Then, from her sleeve, she took out a tiny book. On the cover was written "Secret Arts" (Mishu). Shanyu took the book and asked, "What marvelous arts does it have that I can use?"

The old nun replied, "This book of mine can cure all the contagious diseases of childhood, such as plague, smallpox, and all sorts of noxious evils. With higher cultivation, it can heal the eruptions of smallpox."⁶

When Miss Jiang heard that there were these two medical arts, she was delighted. She asked, "Shifu, what nunnery are you from? What is your Buddhist name?"

The old nun said, "My nunnery is at the summit of Flag Mountain.⁷ My Buddhist name is Spontaneously Empty (Zikong). If you don't consider it beneath you, someday let's go together for a visit."

Miss Jiang said, "If we can go together, of course I would like to go to your nunnery to pay a visit."

The old nun said, "Since you have agreed, one day I will invite you, I promise." And she said to Miss Jiang, "I'm leaving now. The day after tomorrow I will come to see you again."

Miss Jiang said, "Since you have come here, stay for a few days. Why must you say goodbye?"

The old nun said, "That little volume, I'd best give it to you to read in peace. Of course I share your feelings about temporarily parting, and within a few days I will come again." When she had finished speaking, she stepped into the rear garden and pulled out of her sleeve a fine, white silk handkerchief. With a shake in the air, it turned into a white crane. Then mounting the crane, she flew off into the sky.⁸ Miss Jiang saw her off from the rear garden, and went inside only when the crane had disappeared from sight.

Thereafter, each day she carried the book with her and used it to assuage her melancholy. When she had read the first half of the volume, she had completely memorized the secret arts; within a few days she had become completely familiar with the magical arts in the second half. Two days later, the old nun descended from the sky astride the white crane, bringing at her side a fierce, golden tiger. Together they came right into Miss Jiang's house.

When Miss Jiang saw the old nun arrive, and saw the fierce golden tiger following her, tossing its head and lashing its tail, it was very frightening. She asked, "Shifu, why have you brought this lord of the mountains here today?"

The old nun answered, "Expressly in order to invite you to go with me to my nunnery. I'm only afraid that the road is long and the mountains rugged, making the journey a difficult one. For this reason, I have especially brought this tiger for you to ride."

Miss Jiang replied, "I'm afraid I'm not accustomed to riding tigers."

The old nun said, "There's nothing to be afraid of. Once you are astride him, he will go slowly as a matter of course. Furthermore, unlike ordinary tigers, he can call back the soul of a terror-stricken child and draw out poison.⁹ He doesn't harm good people, as his nature is very good."

Miss Jiang said, "I hadn't realized that all along it had these marvelous attributes." She packed a few pieces of clothing, locked the door, and she and the old nun went into the rear garden. The old nun first led the golden tiger and had Miss Jiang climb astride it. As before, she turned her handkerchief

into a crane, and mounted it. With a shout, they departed, one bird and one beast, and flew into the clouds and mist.

In a short while, they alighted on the top of a high mountain. They took several steps and there was the nunnery. Miss Jiang dismounted the golden tiger and accompanied the old nun into the nunnery. It was secluded and elegant, peaceful and quiet, and all the articles laid out were implements of the immortals. A Daoist acolyte came out carrying two cups of fragrant tea. The old nun sat down according to the custom of guests and host.

Miss Jiang said, "My parents are dead, and I have no relatives, so I am all alone. But I am young. Today I have followed you, Shifu, to this nunnery, and I am completely happy. My desire is to join Shifu here to study magic. I don't know if you are willing to accept me or not."

The old nun said, "Since we like each other, of course I will grant your request. If there is anything you don't understand in that book, I will certainly teach it to you." From this time on Miss Jiang was at the nunnery as a companion to the old nun. We won't talk about this further.

Now we will take up the story of Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage, who was earlier burned by the fiery jewel at Wangbeitai Peak so that his skin peeled and his fur smoldered. He had fled to the cave where monkeys dwelled at Panther Head Mountain to recuperate while his skin and fur healed. It had already been more than a year, and his skin and fur were as before.

One day he again transformed himself into a young scholar and traveled to West River, where he saw a young man who was very handsome and refined. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage approached him and asked, "Elder brother, where are you going? What is your hometown, and where do you come from?"

The young man replied, "Your younger brother's [i.e. my] family lives in Yangzhou.¹⁰ My surname is Yang and my given name is Shichang. I have come to Fuzhou on business and am staying at Nantai Houpu in your honorable town. I arrived here yesterday and am looking for an old friend. Because he has gone to Suzhou in search of a relative and hasn't yet returned, I haven't yet met up with him."¹¹

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage asked, "Elder brother Yang, who are the members of your family?"

Shichang replied, "My old mother is still alive. Serving and waiting on her is my wife, whose surname is Shen."

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage asked, "How long have you been here, elder brother?"

Shichang replied, "Because last month I was newly married, the first thing I did was consummate the marriage. Half a month later I came here. Why do you ask, respected elder brother?"

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage answered, "Precisely because I have a relative there, too, in your honorable town. For this reason, when I perceived that you were from Yangzhou, I was anxious to speak with you. Please don't take it amiss." Then, with his hands clasped together, he bowed and departed.

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage thought to himself about all that Shichang had said. Then he transformed himself so that his clothes and appearance and features were exactly like Shichang's, and, facing north, somersaulted onto a cloud and rode off. When he arrived in Yangzhou he made secret inquiries about Yang Shichang's family. After finding out everything through thorough investigation, he went to the gate and knocked. When Madame Lin hurried out to open the gate, she saw that her son had returned. Overcome with happiness, she asked, "My son, you said that you were doing business in Fuzhou. Was it profitable? How is it that you have returned so soon?"

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage knew that this was Shichang's mother. Putting on a smile, he said, "I went to Fu, where I turned over all my goods to the guild head to sell for me, and within a few days all had been sold. The capital and interest were borrowed by the guild head to use temporarily. He agreed to repay it at his convenience, when he will send it back. For this reason I have returned first."¹²

Madame Lin said, "Since that is the case, go in and see your wife."

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage went into the chamber. There he saw a young woman whose beauty was like flowers and jade. Secretly feeling very pleased, he said, "When I, your husband, was away, it must have caused you, my dear wife, to feel very lonely." Madame Shen saw that her husband had returned, and she felt so happy! From this moment, Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage lived comfortably in the Yang household. But by chance, only five days later the real Yang Shichang of Fuzhou packed up, returned home, and knocked on the door. At this time Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage was sleeping peacefully in Madame Shen's bed, and Madame Shen was knitting in the room. When Madame Lin heard the knock at the door, she hurried to open it to see who was there and, once again, she saw her son!

Astonished, she asked, "When did you come back?"

The real Shichang said, "I, your son, just returned today."

Madame Lin was greatly alarmed. Terror-stricken, she said, "Five days ago you came home and you are now sleeping in your wife's room."

When the real Shichang heard this, he immediately became very angry and rushed into Madame Shen's chamber, where he saw a man sleeping soundly. In a rage, the real Shichang slapped him. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage awoke with a start from his dream and saw that the real Shichang had returned. Defiantly, he demanded, "Who are you? What place is this that you recklessly enter another person's house in such a way? You pay no attention to what's right or wrong. You swagger into my chamber, and you even dare to wake me up. How do you justify this? Surely you wouldn't claim that there is no law!"

The real Shichang said, "I am none other than Yang Shichang. From childhood I grew up here, and everyone knows me. You are a fiend from what place? What evil art are you employing that you dare to transform yourself into my likeness and come here and brazenly appropriate my wife? You even dare to argue with me. How could I be willing to give up and leave you here?"

The two Shichangs, each claiming that the other was an imposter, carried on arguing. The wife, Madame Shen, looked at the two men: there was no difference in their appearance, and their speech and voices were identical, so it was impossible to distinguish who was real and who was false. Not even Shichang's mother could tell the difference. She just stood there dumbfounded, watching the two of them quarrel.

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage said, "In this peaceful and just world it is outrageous that such a thing could happen. What excuse could there be for a wicked fiend like you?"

To Madame Lin he said, "Mother, you and my wife needn't worry. I am going to take him to the magistrate to get to the bottom of this." When he had finished speaking, he grabbed the real Shichang. Using his demon strength he shoved him several times, pushed him out the door, and, raising his fists, struck the real Shichang on the back several times. The real Shichang, unable to withstand his enemy, could only wail and take to his heels.

When Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage had driven the real Shichang away with his blows, he returned to the house very pleased with himself. To Madame Lin and his wife he said, "That there could be a fiend like that in broad daylight! If I hadn't come back from Fuzhou, this fiend would have

taken my wife. If I hadn't beaten him, he would still be violently disputing and falsely claiming her." The old woman and her daughter-in-law only saw that one had come back, the false one having simply run away after being beaten, and their minds were at ease.

Now we will turn to the real Shichang, who had run away wailing after being beaten by the imposter. He recalled that the imposter had said that he was going to go to the magistrate to argue the matter and request an investigation. "I will also go to the magistrate and beat the drum and bring this injustice to his attention," he said. Then he rushed to the county yamen and beat the drum. When the yamen runner heard the sound of the drum, he hurried to seize the man who was beating it. The magistrate ascended the hall, and the yamen runner escorted in Yang Shichang, who knelt down.

The magistrate pounded on the table and berated him, "What grievance do you have that you dare to beat the yamen drum?" Yang Shichang wept till his face was covered with tears. Then he recounted the whole story about the false Shichang. The magistrate was shocked, and said, "Since there is this fiend, I will immediately order eight runners to go to the Yang house and seize the false Shichang and Madame Lin and Madame Shen and bring them here. I will hold a hearing to determine who is genuine and who is the imposter."

Shichang was turned over to be held by runners. The eight runners hurried to the Yang house and went in. They seized Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage, Madame Lin, and Madame Shen, and brought them to the yamen, where the magistrate ordered the two Shichangs to be brought in for interrogation. When the real Shichang ascended the hall, the magistrate saw that the two Shichangs were identical in appearance. He called Madame Shen and asked, "Of these two Shichangs, which is genuine?" Madame Lin and Madame Shen believed that the imposter was the real one. As before, the entire family of mother and wife had no doubt. When the yamen runners reported to the magistrate that the imposter had disappeared, the magistrate said, "The fiend is going back to the Yang house." Then he ordered the real Shichang to be brought in, and the runner escorted him in. The magistrate said, "That fiend has escaped, and I figure that he is once again in your house. You, however, can't go back, because I'm afraid that he will try to harm you again. This magistracy will give you five taels of silver. You can go elsewhere and appeal to someone who has magic powers to seize this fiend. Only in this way will you be able to protect the lives of your family."

Yang Shichang took the silver. Wailing continuously, he bowed to the court and said, "I have a home I can't return to, and a state I can't rely on to protect me. Where am I supposed to find someone with magic powers?" Crying and wailing, he had no alternative but to thank the magistrate and go. He left the yamen but did not dare return home. When it got to be evening, he spent the night at the Five Brilliant Spirit-Officials Temple in the city.¹³ That night he was all alone, with no one for company. Thinking of the family he could not return to, he felt cold and lonely, and couldn't stop two tears from rolling down his cheeks. In front of the table at the Spirit-Officials temple, Shichang sobbed out the whole story of how the fiend had usurped his wife and home.

When he finished his account, he fell asleep with his head on the table, where he slept till the third watch. The Spirit-Officials sent the Peach and Willow Generals to Shichang in a dream. The two generals helped him up and said to him, "The fiend in your household is inflicting a curse on it and is scheming to appropriate your wife. You can go to Xiadu in Fuzhou to request the help of Chen Jinggu, who can drive out this fiendish monster. She has just left the magic school at Mount Lü. Moreover, this fiend is her nemesis. Eliminate this fiend and you will preserve your whole family intact."

When they finished speaking, Shichang awoke with a start, his entire body drenched in sweat. He remembered everything that was said in the dream and expressed his thanks, saying, "The enlightened spirits have instructed me what to do. It goes without saying that there is indeed this extraordinary person. I will go to Fuzhou immediately and search high and low for her." Then he bowed in thanks to the Spirit-Officials, left the temple, and set out for Fuzhou. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Chen Jinggu, who was studying magic at Mount Lü. Perfected Lord Xu taught her how to make lightning strike and thunder roll, how to summon the wind and pray for rain, how to shrink distances and soar into the sky, how to move mountains and overturn seas, how to drive out diseases and expel fevers, how to decapitate fiends and seize demons, how to smelt bones to perfect people, and how to snatch back souls and return them to their bodies. She had mastered all of these magical arts, but there still remained to be taught the arts of helping fetuses, rescuing women in childbirth, protecting infants, and aiding children.

Jinggu said, "I, your disciple, made a vow to never marry, so studying a further three [years] would be of no benefit. I am adamant that I will never marry."

Perfected Lord Xu said, "You say you will not marry, but how can you defy your parents' command to do so?"

Jinggu replied, "I have neither elder brothers nor younger brothers. I will not leave my parental home to marry, rather I will stay there to take care of them. This is certainly not unfilial."

Master Xu saw that she was adamant about not studying these things, and said to her, "Since you won't learn how to help fetuses and save women in childbirth, I won't force you. But refusing to marry up until now is also your karma. It has already been three years, and you have completely mastered various arts. But your parents are now in trouble at home. You may go to save them from calamity, in order to preserve their lives. But men bring a wife into the home, and women leave home to marry. This is the way of the world, so you will not be able to defy your parents' command."

When Jinggu heard Master Xu say that her parents were in trouble, she turned pale with alarm. She knelt before the master and begged him to tell her what arts could save them. The master said, "Your father has a carbuncle on his back, and your mother has an ulcer on her hand. What's needed is for you to cut from your left arm a piece of flesh to patch their wounds. Then they will heal." The master himself wrote a talisman, and burned it so that the ashes fell into water. "Use the ashy water to rub into the place where you cut out the piece of flesh, and it will be healed forthwith." Then he gave her a sword for decapitating fiends, a register of talismans, a rope for binding demons, and other such treasures.¹⁴

Jinggu put the sword on her back, took the talisman register and other items, and wrapped them in a cloth that she carried over her shoulder. She looked exactly like an immortal maiden. She wiped the tears from her eyes and said goodbye to her teacher. The master sent the two Great Protectors, Wang and Yang, to secretly lead five divisions of spirit soldiers and five hundred horses to go along with her as an escort to carry out the missions she commanded.¹⁵ When Jinggu heard about these bodyguards—the two Great Protectors, Wang and Yang—and that they would bring spirit soldiers and horses and obey her command, she was overjoyed. She bowed to the master and said goodbye.

Jinggu put the sword on her back, took her leave, and went out the gate to the mountain. The master followed her as far as the gate, where he said to her, "Proceed straight ahead, and don't look back. When you reach the bank of the river there will be a boat. Now go!"

Jinggu saw that the master had come to see her off, and said, "I am very fortunate that you, Master, didn't turn me away. I am an ordinary disciple, so I have no way to repay you. I can't bear to leave you." She kowtowed and took her leave of the master.

The master repeated, "As I said, go straight along the path."

Jinggu replied, "Then I will now say goodbye to you."

After taking twenty-four steps, fearing that the master had not yet gone back into the grotto, she turned to look back. Sure enough, she saw that he had not yet gone in. She said, "Master, please first go in. I should go." The master nodded. Having seen that Jinggu had taken twenty-four steps before looking back, he beckoned to her. Seeing his gesture, Jinggu hurried back to him, saying, "Your disciple, having already set out, is very fortunate to be called back by you. What lesson do you have for me?"

The master said, "I called you back for no other reason than because you have not learned the arts of aiding fetuses, saving women in childbirth, protecting infants, and helping children. For this reason I called you back. Wait a few days, then go. In the course of things, learning these arts will be of use."

But at this time Chen Jinggu was very anxious to return home to save her parents from calamity, so she said, "Your disciple has been very fortunate to receive your instruction. I have mastered all of the arts, with the exception of these four. These I will not learn."

Master Xu said, "Learn these arts, as they have marvelous uses, and learning them will be to your advantage. And you will not be turning your back on everything you have achieved in the three years since you arrived at Mount Lü."

Jinggu replied, "Your disciple is very fortunate to have been taught by you in this way. I have already internalized many marvelous things. How could all the marvelous effects be in these four arts? I greatly fear entering the polluted childbirth chamber, so learning these arts is not appropriate for me."

Master Xu turned this over in his mind and said to himself, "Jinggu's heart is like iron or stone. She refuses to learn these arts." He sighed and said to himself, "I don't dare divulge the secrets of Heaven." To Jinggu he said,

“Since you refuse to study these four arts, I won’t try to compel you. But when you reach twenty-four years of age you will no longer be allowed to use the magic implements, nor will you be permitted to chant incantations, or write talismans, and so on. You will be just as you were before you studied magic. You will live quietly, and keep yourself safe and sound.”

Jinggu kowtowed, and said, “I sincerely respect the master’s command.”

When Master Xu finished with his instructions, he ordered her to return home, and went back into the grotto. When Jinggu saw that he had gone back inside, she set out with her mind at ease. When she reached the foot of the mountain a dragon boat was there waiting, and she embarked. In a short while she had crossed to Dragon Pool Pass, where she set out for Xiadu and home.

When Jinggu arrived at the doorstep, she saw that the door was ajar. She went inside and entered her parents’ bedroom, where she saw her mother and father lying in bed, moaning and crying out with pain. Jinggu knelt at their bedside and cried, “Mother, Father, your daughter has come home!”

Chen Chang opened his eyes and looked at her. Astonished, he asked, “Are you really none other than our daughter, Jinggu?”

To which Jinggu replied, “Indeed, I am.”

Her mother, Madame Ge, was overjoyed. She quickly got out of bed and, helping Jinggu to her feet, said, “Daughter, it’s been three years since you ran away. Where did you go? That year just when I was urging you to get dressed, I suddenly saw a god in gold armor brandishing a cudgel. When he beat your father on the back, the other end of the cudgel grazed my hand, and we both fainted and fell to the floor. All of the relatives and neighbors heard the commotion and came upstairs to rescue us. When we two old people regained consciousness, we searched everywhere for you, but you were nowhere to be seen. Some suspected that a fiend had dragged you off, while others speculated that you had fled to the ends of the earth. At that time, the Liu family had come to meet you, the bride, and escort you to your new home, but when they saw this remarkable state of affairs, they had no choice but to return home empty-handed. Later, your father handed over to Lin Bashu the full one hundred pieces of silver and the betrothal money from the Lius, and he went to Gutian. On account of this bizarre affair, he begged the Lius to take back their gifts and betroth their son to a better family. Who would have guessed that the Liu family’s son had a heart as resolute as iron or stone? They wouldn’t take back the betrothal gifts! They said they would

extend the time limit for our family to find you, and if our daughter never came back, he would never again take a wife. If you came back, the marriage bond would still be there. But first he would go to Luoyuan to take up his post, so he handed back all of the original betrothal gifts to Lin Bashu to bring back. In Luoyuan they asked friends and relatives to search for you, but there was no news. Where did you go? It's been three years and only now have you come back. You can tell your mother the truth."

Jinggu then told her the whole story of how she had been taken to Mount Lü by Liangnü to study magic. She told how the two of them had traveled to Wangbeitai Peak and had been assaulted there by a fiend and a demon, how Liangnü had thrown a fiery pearl at them, and how only in this way were they able to escape. She told how she pulled out a hairpin and made a vow to go study the magic arts and then come back. She told how she had sworn to capture the fiendish monster and the demon spirit; and after she had arrived at Mount Lü to study magic, how fortunate she was to be accepted as a pupil by Perfected Lord Xu, who taught her all the various magic arts. Of how, yesterday, when she heard the master's instructions and he told her that her parents were in trouble, she had taken her leave, bowed in thanks to the master, and come home in order to save them.

Then she approached the bed and said, "Father! I can heal the carbuncle on your back. You and Mother needn't worry."

Her father said, "But you refused to marry and ran away! We lost face! Furthermore, we two old people have no son. We only have you, a daughter. You will be the death of us. It's as if we never gave birth to you. Why did you return? No one knows about it yet. Go back right away! There's no need to stay home. It will only cause trouble. If the Liu family in Gutian hears about it, then they will immediately come to claim you as a bride, but you have already vowed never to marry. What good people the Lius are! Don't stay here. Avoid causing them to bring an accusation in court, provoking a big fight. If you go away you can avoid a disaster that would grievously harm your parents. If you don't leave immediately, you might as well just go buy some arsenic and kill the two of us old people. Then, with us dead, you can do as you like."

When Jingu heard what her father said, she threw herself at his feet. Drenched in cold sweat, she said through her tears, "Father! Your daughter is unfilial to cause you and Mother to worry like this. If I were again to commit such an offense, it would be unforgivable. I'm willing now to marry, and no

longer dare oppose you. It's only that when I was studying magic, I took a pin from my hair and vowed that when I had completed my studies I would capture the fiend and demon, in order to revenge myself. I would like to wait a few months. Only then will I dare to comply with your wishes."

When Chen Chang heard his daughter say that she was willing to marry, he rejoiced. He said to her, "If you are willing to marry, the Liu family has already waited three years, so a few more months should not be a problem. Even if it's as much as a year and a half, they would be willing. Enough said! Stop your wailing!"

Jinggu asked her mother, "While I was away for three years studying magic, who did you call on to manage the household affairs?"

Madame Ge replied, "For major tasks outside the household, such as finding a doctor and buying medicine, it was all your cousin Shouyuan. For minor tasks within the house, we always called on An Tong. Right now your cousin Shouyuan is out buying medicine. He, too, studied to be a Daoist master. He has hung up a sign saying 'Elevating the Left Behind.'"

Jinggu said, "There's no need to take medicine. I can heal you myself." Then she ordered An Tong to place an incense table in the hall and light candles and incense. She let down her hair, put on a cap, and around her waist tied a magic skirt. In her left hand she grasped the sword, and in her right hand a horn. With her steps she traced out the Big Dipper, chanted sutras, and carried out Daoist procedures. She kowtowed to Master Xu of Mount Lü. Then she took the sword and pressed it on her father's back. She cut away the filthy blood, quickly taking a piece of flesh from her own arm to cover the wound. With the water that contained the ashes of the burned talisman, she sprayed her father's back, and in an instant it was healed.

Then she cut out a small piece of flesh from her right hand. She went into the bedroom, and from her mother's right hand she cut out the infected tissue of the ulcer, and covered it with the piece of her own flesh. Again she sprayed the burned talisman water onto the graft. It, too, was entirely healed and no longer hurt! Only then did she leave the hall. She chanted incantations over the bowl of talismanic water, and applied it to the spot where she had cut out her flesh. Leaving neither blood nor a scar, it was just as if she had never cut it. The two old people, back and ulcer healed, got out of bed and moved around. They were exactly as before! Chen Jinggu then sent An Tong to collect the incense table and various articles. She wrapped up all her Daoist implements neatly and tidily, and put them away.

Suddenly someone burst into the room and was about to speak. At this point there is something to tell you. Her magic saved Fujian and left a thousand ancient traces. Her spirit power spread throughout Fujian, and, ever after, her statues were revered. For ten thousand years incense and candles have been burned in her honor.

If you want to know who the person was who burst in, then read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Cinnabar Cloud Is Captured and Converts to Buddhism to Earn Good Karma / Madame Shen Is Rescued by Being Given a Soul Taken from a Dead Person

LET US RETURN TO CHEN JINGGU, WHO HAD CUT OFF PIECES OF her own flesh to patch her father's carbuncle and her mother's ulcer. She was busy packing up her magic implements when someone burst in. Overjoyed, this person said, "Are you really my younger cousin Jinggu? Where have you been for the three years since you left?"

Jinggu realized that it was none other than her elder cousin Shouyuan. She stepped forward, and bowing deeply, said, "I was far away for three years, because Guanyin sent Shancai and Liangnü to take me to Mount Lü to study magic. Since my parents have been seriously ill, I am deeply grateful to you for looking after them morning and night. Elder brother, please step up to receive your younger sister's obeisance."

Chen Shouyuan quickly bowed in return, saying, "You are too humble, worthy little sister. We are cousins, and your father and mother are like parents to me. What reason is there to feel gratitude?"

As they were speaking, another person entered. Beaming, he said, "When

did you get back?” Chen Chang saw that it was their neighbor Lin Bashu, who traded in assorted goods.

Chen Chang welcomed him and said with a smile, “She has just now returned!”

Lin Bashu said, “Earlier I heard that you were crying out with pain, but now you’re dressed and seem to be in good health!”

Chen Chang told him the whole story of how his daughter had been carried off by a god to Mount Lü to study magic for three years and had only just returned, and how she had cut out pieces of her own flesh to heal her father’s carbuncle and her mother’s ulcer. When Lin Bashu heard this he was delighted. “Now it’s the greatest of good fortune that she has returned! But the son of the Liu family of Gutian County is now fulfilling his duties as police chief in Luoyuan, and I calculate that his three-year posting is nearly up. He often sends letters to Gutian County asking for news of your daughter.”

Chen Chang said, “My daughter is now willing to obey her two aged parents, but she wants to wait for a few more months in order to capture the fiendish monster and demon spirit of Wangbeitai Peak. Only then will she be able obey.”

Lin Bashu said, “They have already waited for three years, so what difficulty could there be in waiting a few more months?” We will say no more about the reunion of Chen Chang and his daughter.

Now we will return to Yang Shichang, who on instructions from the god had come to Fuzhou, where he stayed at the guild at Houpu. In the morning he set out for Xiadu. Encountering a man there, he inquired, “Is this Xiadu? Has Chen Jinggu returned from studying magic at Mount Lü?” Then he asked for directions to the Chen house, screwed up his courage, and knocked on the door.

At that very moment, Jinggu was in the hall describing to her mother and father what Mount Lü looked like. When they heard the urgent knocking on the door they ordered An Tong to open it, and Shichang came in. When he saw the two women, he quickly fell to his knees and asked, “Of you two immortal maidens, which one is the Daoist master Chen Jinggu?”

Astounded, Madame Ge asked, “Who are you?” She helped him to his feet. “What is it you want to ask Jinggu about?”

Yang Shichang described how a fiendish monster in his house had assumed his likeness and usurped his wife, and how he had gone to the

yamen to make an accusation. "Because the fiend was still assuming my likeness, the magistrate was unable to make a ruling, and sent away my mother and my young wife together with the fiend. Afterward, I was given five taels of silver and told that I couldn't return home for fear that I would be harmed by the monster. That night, having no home to return to, I spent the night before the altar of the Five Brilliant Spirit-Officials Temple in the city. All alone, I rested. Although I have a home, I couldn't return to it, and I was so cold and lonely! Then in the hall of the Spirit-Officials Great God I unburdened myself. That night, in a dream, the Spirit-Officials Great God told me what to do. He told me I had to go to Xiadu, which is on the southern terrace of Fuzhou, and there seek out the Great Immortal, and only then would I be able to rid myself of this fiendish monster. He also said that there is long-standing enmity between the fiend and the Immortal, so if I sought her help, she would surely come. I hope the Immortal Maiden will take pity on me for the great disaster the fiend has brought on me. If you are able to capture this fiendish monster and thereby preserve the life of my family, it will be as if my parents were brought back to life and I was brought into the world a second time."

When Shichang finished speaking, he knelt and prostrated himself on the floor, sobbing pitifully. Jinggu comforted him, saying, "Never mind. Please get up and sit down. Where are you from? What is your surname and what is your given name?"

Yang Shichang answered, "I am from Yangzhou. My home is five *li* from the western gate of the city, the local name of which is the Yang Family Village.¹ My surname is Yang, and my given name is Shichang. I beseech the Daoist Master Immortal Maiden to set out. I will go hire a long-distance sedan chair. Please start right away!"

Jinggu went inside. She took her bag of treasures and opened her book of incantations. In vermilion ink she wrote three talismans, which she gave to Shichang, saying, "I have three spirit talismans. You make your way back with all haste. Burn one of the talismans at the Great King Temple in your hometown, burn one in front of the door to your house, and take one talisman into the city and burn it at the Spirit-Officials Temple where he came to you in a dream.² Before you reach home, I will already have arrived there. Hurry! Don't wait any longer!" Shichang took the talismans and put them away for safekeeping. He kowtowed in thanks, and immediately left for Yangzhou.

Let us now turn to Madame Ge, who said to Jinggu, “How could you deceive him like that? What are you up to? What’s more, it’s a very long way to Yangzhou, a distance of one thousand *li*. You are just a girl with tiny bound feet, so how could you possibly go there?”

Jinggu replied, “Mother, how could you know that your daughter is one who saves people when they are in danger? Why would I have any reason to deceive him? Because I was at Mount Lü, I learned the art of shrinking distances, so I can move along veins in the earth. It won’t take even a moment, and I’ll be there. I gave him the vermilion talismans and instructed him to go back first. I will delay for half a day and then depart.”

Madame Ge explained all this to her husband, Chen Chang, and both were very happy. After comforting her parents, Jinggu packed up her magic implements, prepared her bag of treasures, and put it on her shoulder. Next she instructed her cousin, Shouyuan, to take charge of the household matters during her absence, and said goodbye to her mother and father. She secretly ordered her two bodyguards, Yang and Wang, to lead the five divisions of spirit soldiers and horses to accompany her. When they heard the order, they gave a shout in the direction of Yangzhou and departed, and in an instant they had disappeared. Mr. Chen and his wife were greatly astonished to see this. The magic of Mount Lü was indeed marvelous! We won’t speak any more of Chen Jinggu’s going to Yangzhou to capture the fiend.

Now we will return to Police Chief Liu Qi, whose three-year term of appointment was up. A dispatch had been sent for his replacement, and the new official had already arrived to take up his duties, so that very day Liu Qi turned over the seal and the official stationery to the newly arrived police chief. Liu Qi got the carrying pole and his suitcases ready, and asked the sedan chair bearer to take him to Fuzhou. When he reached Military Commissioner Wang Shenzhi, he had an audience with him, the commissioner having already received the directive. Since Liu Qi’s three-year term was up, he was to return to Gutian and wait there to be transferred to a vacancy. He received the directive and returned to Gutian.

That same day Lin Bashu of Xiadu also went to Gutian on business, where he heard that Liu Qi had returned home, having completed his term of office. He first went to the Liu family to pay his respects, and Teacher Liu invited him to stay for a meal. After Liu Qi sat down opposite his host at the table, the teacher addressed Lin Bashu, saying, “We haven’t seen you for three years. I don’t know if your business continues to flourish as previously.”

Lin Bashu replied, "I'm busy and overworked. How can I compare to you, elder brother, a scholar at leisure? But speaking of business, I'm just barely making ends meet. Today I heard that your son completed his term of office and has returned home in glory. First, I have come to pay my respects. Second, I have come especially to report some happy news."

The teacher laughed, "You've come to spread gossip."

Lin Bashu replied, "Would I, your younger brother, dare to joke? Three years ago when your worthy daughter-in-law was about to be married, she was carried off, leaving no trace. Who would have guessed that she had an immortal fate? Everyone said that she had been carried off by a fiend, but it turns out that the bodhisattva Guanyin sent Liangnü to take her to Mount Lü to study magic, and there she mastered all the arts. She returned just a few days ago!"

Then he told what had happened, how she had cut out a piece of her flesh and used it to patch her father's carbuncle and heal his back. When the teacher and his son heard the detailed account, they were happy beyond measure. Beaming, they asked, "Since she has returned from studying magic, the timing couldn't be better. This very day let us choose an auspicious day for the wedding."

Lin Bashu stopped him, saying, "There's no rush! There's something I haven't told you. When your worthy daughter-in-law returned, she recounted to her parents how earlier, when she first entered Mount Lü, a fiendish monster and a demon spirit blocked her way and tried to harm her, and she was only able to escape after Liangnü threw her fiery pearl at them. Your daughter-in-law thought to herself that she had only narrowly escaped assault. She then pulled a pin from her hair, stuck it into the earth at the side of the road, and vowed that if she mastered magic she would certainly capture the fiend and the demon. When she returned, she was asked to go to Yangzhou to capture a fiend, and left just a few days ago. According to what your worthy daughter-in-law said, she wants to wait a few more months, and only then will she be able to obey."

The teacher laughed and said, "Elder brother Lin, you are joking! Yangzhou is more than a thousand *li* from Min! She's just a girl with tiny bound feet, so how could she get there?"

Lin Bashu laughed in return and said, "How could I deceive you to your face? I, too, didn't believe it. Your worthy daughter-in-law said that she had studied magic at Mount Lü, and learned how to shrink distances. She

mastered the five methods of escaping, and of these methods she used the veins of the earth. Although Yangzhou is far away, it won't take half a moment for her to get there. When she set out for Yangzhou a few days ago, her father and mother and others followed her into the back garden to watch. After your daughter-in-law instructed her cousin, Shouyuan, to serve her parents in her absence, with a twist of her body into the earth, she suddenly disappeared. Isn't this real magic? For this reason I believe it is true." When Teacher Liu heard this, the whole family rejoiced. If this were the case, they would wait for her to return from Yangzhou. Only then would they select an auspicious day for the wedding.

And then Lin Bashu came and went as before, on business. When it came to the marriage joining the two families, he also went back and forth. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Yang Shichang, who at this time was hurrying back to Yangzhou. There he took the three talismans and burned them as he had been instructed. He looked all around, watching intently. In the distance he saw Jinggu coming, dressed like a Daoist master, with her sword on her back. Only when she drew near did he know that it was her. He rushed to meet her, going ahead to lead the way. When they reached his door, Jinggu first sent the local earth god to ask which fiend was in the Yang house.³ When the local god said it was the Red Monkey spirit from Panther Head Mountain in Fuzhou, Jinggu knew it was her nemesis.

First she ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to lead the five divisions of spirit soldiers and horses to surround the house. Bodyguard Wang guarded the front door, while Bodyguard Yang guarded the back door. When the preparations were complete, she opened her cloth bundle and took out the demon-binding rope. Brandishing the demon-decapitating sword, with a twist of her body she entered the house, where she saw another Yang Shichang, whom she recognized was the fiend. In a loud voice she shouted, "Evil creature, today is the day you die! Do you know who I am?"

Cinnabar Cloud was drinking wine with Madame Shen in the bedchamber, when he saw a woman burst into the room. He looked at her in astonishment and asked, "What family are you from? What are you doing here?"

Before he had finished speaking, Jinggu began to revile him, saying, "You don't recognize Jinggu? Well, I recognize you! How is it that you don't recognize me? Remember three years ago at Wangbeitai Peak in Fuzhou how you and the Ravine Demon blocked my way and took liberties, and how you ran

away when the fiery pearl was thrown at you? I want to ask you: Where did the Ravine Demon escape to?"

When Cinnabar Cloud heard Jinggu's explanation, he was stunned. "I don't know you, so there's no use asking so many questions." Jinggu said. "Since you don't recognize me, please step into my rope." From her sleeve she pulled out the demon-binding rope, threw it over Cinnabar Cloud, and, with a shout, tied him up. Seeing that it was a magic rope, Cinnabar Cloud tried to escape, but could not extricate himself. He was already trussed into a bundle by the rope, unable to move. Jinggu ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to keep him prisoner. Then she called Yang Shichang into the bedchamber. Madame Lin and her daughter-in-law saw that it was exactly what Yang Shichang had said, and they knew that he had gone to Fuzhou to seek the help of the Daoist master. Only then did they know that it was a fiend.

The mother, daughter-in-law, and son all wept and bowed before Jinggu in gratitude for being saved. Jinggu helped Madame Jiang to her feet.⁴ "There's no need for this," she said. Then she said to Cinnabar Cloud, "Fiend, you are tightly bound. Why don't you return to your original form? What are you waiting for?" Then she took a bowl of water and on the surface wrote a talismanic spell. Taking a mouthful of the talismanic water, she sprayed it on Cinnabar Cloud. "Make yourself visible!" she shouted, and Cinnabar Cloud manifested himself in his original form—a red-haired monkey.

Cinnabar Cloud begged Jinggu to spare his life, saying, "That day on Wangbeitai Peak, when your way was cut off and liberties were taken, that was all the Ravine Demon's doing; this vile creature had nothing to do with it at all! For a thousand years I will cultivate myself through suffering. I won't harm people. I loved your beauty and therefore offended you, Great Immortal. I beg you to take pity on me and spare my life. I will never again dare to behave recklessly."

Jinggu said, "With a monkey such as this, if I relent, he will inevitably harm people, so how can I show mercy?" When she finished speaking, she seized her sword and moved to cut his head off.

Cinnabar Cloud tearfully implored her, "Master, don't be hasty. Please permit this creature to clarify the situation. I will hide away and cultivate myself for a thousand years. I will prostrate myself and chant sutras, knowing only hardship. If you will show me mercy, I will become a Buddhist disciple. I will reform my evil ways and return to the correct."

When she heard his self-appointed mission, Jinggu said, "If sages have the virtue of loving life, how could I not love life? But it is difficult to escape the consequences of your criminality. Of your myriad crimes, lasciviousness is the principal and original one. If you want to live and become a Buddhist, then you must be purified of your lust. Only then can you be spared. If you are not willing to cut out the root of your lust, this magic sword will seek its vengeance here and now."

At this moment Cinnabar Cloud wanted only to live. What did he care about having his cock cut off? So he declared, "Master, don't raise your sword! This creature is willing to be castrated and to become a Buddhist disciple." Jinggu then ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to escort Cinnabar Cloud out, and ordered the spirit soldiers to cut off his male organ. The monkey bore the pain, his body purified.

The two bodyguards then escorted him into Jinggu's presence, where he knelt at her feet and swore an oath. Jinggu ordered the rope to be untied, saying, "Having now obeyed my commands, if you ever again do anything bad or evil, or fail to follow orders, I will carry out my original oath."

Cinnabar Cloud knelt down. He swore an oath to Heaven, saying, "If I ever do anything evil again, if I fail to obey orders, may the Five Thunders strike me dead."

When Jinggu heard this, she was very pleased. To Cinnabar Cloud she said, "Go back to Panther Head Mountain in Fuzhou to the cave where the monkeys dwell, and recuperate there. You will in due course attain the correct karma. When I have use for you, I will send an order. Go!" Cinnabar Cloud bowed his head in acquiescence and kowtowed to Jinggu three times. Then, with a somersault, he departed for Fuzhou.

Among the sculptures in the present-day Monkey King Temple, on the left there is a statue of the Monkey King and on the right there is a statue of a man. The one who did such things as have sex with commoner women and offend against the Monkey King was in each instance Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage. It was not the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong. We'll talk about this later.

Once the fiend Cinnabar Cloud had been captured, Yang Shichang, his family, and neighbors stood astounded in a circle watching. Suddenly, they heard a heart-rending cry from inside. Startled, Jinggu asked the reason for it, and the family and neighbors ran into the house. It was because when Madame Shen saw Daoist Master Jinggu capture the monkey spirit, she

realized that for more than a month he had been her husband, and she had been debauched by him. How could she ever face her husband again?

When she saw her husband and mother-in-law in front of the hall and saw Jinggu capture the fiend, Madame Shen went into the house and hanged herself. At this moment Shichang entered the house and found the door tightly closed. He went in and found Madame Shen hanging from a beam. He rushed to call family and neighbors to quickly untie the rope and let her down, but she had already stopped breathing. The whole family, with no thought for Jinggu in front of the hall, all went inside. The sound of weeping was heartbreaking. When Jinggu heard that Madame Shen had hanged herself, she went inside.

"There's no need to cry," she said. "According to the correct principle of death, I can bring your wife back to you with her original appearance." Then she ordered all of the people to immediately leave the room, and they all dispersed. Shichang held Madame Shen's body tightly in his arms, crying loudly and bitterly. "For you I attacked the fiend. Wretch that I am, I traveled a great distance over land and water, and begged the Daoist master to come to our house to capture the fiend. On the very day that we were reunited, how could I know that you were thinking of ending your life?"

He wept unceasingly. Jinggu comforted him, saying, "There's no need to be so distressed. With no effort I can return your wife to you with her original appearance."

When Shichang heard this, he wiped his tears and asked, "Since she has already died, how can she be brought back to me in her original appearance?"

Jinggu replied, "I can bring her back to you as a matter of course. Quickly carry the body into the back hall. The period of two hours cannot be exceeded, so if that period has passed, I'm afraid there could be an error."⁵

Some of the relatives and neighbors believed her, while others did not believe, or half believed and half disbelieved. The crowd was both suspicious of and amazed by Jinggu. Jinggu urged Shichang to go into the rear hall and spread out a bed cover, and the body was placed on the bed. Jinggu counted on her fingers.⁶ Regretfully, she said, "Having missed the two-hour period, I'm afraid it will be difficult to bring back the original soul."

She laid out her magic implements and told Shichang to burn incense in the hall. Jinggu put on her cap, unbound her hair, and, grasping her sword, traced a talisman in the air. She ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and

Yang, to go after Madame Shen's original soul and bring it back. Obeying the order, Wang and Yang set off.

Jinggu walked into the back hall. She blew her horn and used alchemy on the corpse to bring back the breath. After performing a sword dance, she pressed shut the openings of the body, closing off the routes of death.⁷ When almost half an hour had gone by and still she did not see the two bodyguards returning, she felt sure that it had been impossible to catch the original soul. She quickly took one of the talismans and secretly commanded the two bodyguards, "Since Madame Shen's original soul can't be caught, take the soul of any woman who has just died and bring it back, and I will put it into Madame Shen's corpse. Hurry! Hurry!" The messenger received the order and left. Jinggu once again used alchemy on the corpse and chanted incantations.

In just a few moments, the two bodyguards seized the soul of the daughter of a certain Wang Jin of Jiangnan. She was about twenty-eight years of age and had married three months earlier. Her husband had died, and Madame Wang, grieving day and night, had hanged herself on the very day that Madame Shen died. As her soul floated in the air, the two bodyguards encountered it by chance and captured it. They reported to Jinggu, who took the retrieved soul and pressed it into Madame Shen's chest.

On the body she burned the spirit talisman for returning the soul and preserving the body. When she had sprayed it with talismanic water, twice with her hand she struck a tablet with the command on Madame Shen's chest.⁸ Then she cried, "I can't get the soul back in!" She called for a quilt, with which she covered Madame Shen, and told Shichang to quickly go heat some ginger soup in order to warm up her liver, spleen, and bowels.⁹ Jinggu again counted on her fingers. With a smile, she said, "The soul is in the body." Then she lifted the bedcovers and saw that there was breath in Madame Shen's nostrils and a slight moaning sound. Jinggu called for the ginger soup to be brought, and poured it into her mouth. Madame Shen swallowed several mouthfuls, and her entire body became warm.

At this time the whole family saw that Madame Shen had died and been brought back to life. Wild with joy, they came to stand around the bed and stare. Jinggu collected her magic implements and, after binding up her hair, went to Madame Shen. She saw that her eyes were open wide, and she was looking all around. Frightened, Madame Shen asked, "What family is this? Who are you? Why are you standing around me? Quick, call my father!"

Shichang was under the covers, holding her tight. Madame Shen turned her head and saw that it was a young man holding her. She pulled herself away and rebuked him, saying, "Who are you? To behave like this is to behave entirely without propriety. From ancient times it has been said that the hands of men and women should not touch. Why are you holding me in your arms?"

Shichang said, "Darling wife, please calm down. I am none other than your husband!"

Madame Shen struck the bed in anger, and again rebuked him, saying, "Nonsense! It was just three months ago that my husband took me as his wife. He fell sick and died. How could I have a husband? How can you say that I am your wife?"

Madame Lin, Shichang, and all the relatives were shocked. Shichang asked, "Where are you from? What is your family name and what is your given name? What was your husband's name? What other members of your family are there?"

Madame Shen replied, "I am from Jiangnan. My father is Wang Jin. My mother, Madame Li, died long ago. I was their only child. My father chose Su He as a husband for me. He, too, was an only child. Unfortunately, he died three months after I entered his household, so I returned to my family to take care of my father. I felt that my fate was a poor one and continuing to live was useless, so I decided to end my life. But you brought me back to life. You saved my life, but how is it that you seized the wrong soul?"

Jinggu said, "We called you because we could wait no longer. I was afraid there might be a mistake, because the period of two hours had elapsed, and the original soul couldn't be retrieved. Therefore I took Madame Shen's corpse and put your soul into it."

Then she whispered a few words in Madame Shen's ear, who only then understood. She sighed deeply and said, "All right, I will go along with your plan." Then she got out of bed and took several steps, walking into the middle of the room. The relatives gave a banquet so that Shichang could start his new life.

Now we will return to Chen Jinggu, whose task of capturing the fiend and using the soul of one dead person to revive the body of another was complete. She collected her magic implements, said goodbye to Shichang, and was about to set off for Fuzhou. Yang Shichang tried earnestly to persuade her to stay. The best he could do was to give her fifty taels of silver in thanks,

but Jinggu would not accept anything at all, so Shichang and his mother could only kowtow. Shichang said, “Daoist Master, for you to save us from calamity in this way, to rid us of the fiend and bring my wife back to life, our gratitude is as deep as the ocean. This is only a small recompense to thank you. And if you further refuse to accept anything, how can we—mother and son—go on bearing such a burden of gratitude?”

Jinggu replied, “There’s absolutely no need to thank me.” Then she ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to mobilize the spirit soldiers and follow her back to Fuzhou. Again, she helped Madame Lin and her son to their feet. Jinggu set off in the direction of Fuzhou, and in an instant she had vanished from sight. Madame Lin and Yang Shichang watched in amazement. Facing the empty spot where she had been, they completed all their kowtows of thanks, and that was all they could do.

We now return to Chen Jinggu, who went back to Fuzhou City through the veins of the earth. When she left the earth vein, she went into the city to look around. Two famous mountains stood on the outskirts. She summoned the local earth god and asked him, “What are the names of these two lofty mountains?”

The earth god replied, “The one on the left is Nine Immortals Mountain and the one on the right is Black Stone Mountain. They are at the side of Xue Lao Peak.¹⁰ Nearby are two fiends, who often bewitch people. From time to time they transform themselves into a pair of beautiful sisters. When there is a young man, elegant and fond of women, they drain his essence and blood, and eat his flesh. We don’t know how many people they have killed. From ancient times to the present, people have often come to Nine Immortals Mountain for excursions, but because there are these sort of fiends on Black Stone Mountain no one dares set foot there.”

When Jinggu heard this, she was extremely angry. “This is a very lively place, and yet there are these fiends! If I don’t capture them, who will?” Then she summoned her two bodyguards, Yang and Wang, as well as the local earth god. She instructed them to go enjoy the scenery and while doing so to capture the two Rock Press Women.

Now we will take up the story of the two fiends in Rock Press Grotto. When they encountered a man, they lured him between the rocks. Then they squeezed his body to pieces and ate his blood and flesh. We don’t yet know how the matter of ridding Black Stone Mountain of its fiends turned out. You will have to read the next chapter in order to find out.

At Lingxiao Pan the Rock Press Women Are Captured / At Guojie Mountain We Meet Jiang Hupo

NOW WE WILL RETURN TO CHEN JINGGU, WHO, AFTER SUMMONING the earth god, went straight to Antai Bridge.¹ Suddenly her older cousin Shouyuan clapped her on the shoulder from behind, saying, “Worthy little cousin, what are you doing here?”

Jinggu turned to look. It was none other than her elder cousin. She asked, “Elder cousin, what are *you* doing here?”

Shouyuan replied, “Yesterday I performed a Rite of Cosmic Renewal (Jiao) for the Hu family of this locality at Pingyuantai (present-day Jiugao Mountain). It was for expelling the bloody and poisonous malevolent forces. Because I lacked paper, I’ve come here especially to buy some to use.² The day before, I heard that my worthy little cousin had gone to Yangzhou to exorcise a monster. Why are *you* here?”

Jinggu then told him in detail about capturing Cinnabar Cloud in Yangzhou. She said, “Cousin, go home. Could I trouble you to let my parents know that I have heard there are fiends at Black Stone Mountain? I am going there now to capture them, and will return tomorrow. Since you, elder cousin, have work to do, please go ahead first. I, your younger cousin, must now travel in another direction.”

When Jinggu arrived at Black Stone Mountain, she saw that the grass was deep and the people few, so that it felt desolate. She summoned the

mountain god to ask him about the fiends. He answered, "By day the fiends hide themselves in the Rock Narrows, so it's very hard to see them. You have to wait until dusk, when the two fiends turn into beautiful women and beguile people, luring them to the mouth of the grotto. Then the two rocks suddenly come together, crushing the victim between them. The two fiends squeeze out the thick blood and pieces of flesh, and eat their fill. When the two rocks open, the victim who has been crushed to death looks just like a flattened magpie."

When Jinggu had heard the whole story, she again questioned the mountain god, asking, "What is the name of the mountain below this place?"

He answered, "It's Panther Head Mountain. There's a grotto where monkeys lodge. One of them is a red-haired monkey fiend who calls himself Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage, but never once have I heard that he harms people. All day long he cultivates himself."

Jinggu was delighted to hear this. "So that is Panther Head Mountain," she said. Then she ordered the mountain god to go to the grotto to convey a message to Cinnabar Cloud.

In an instant, Cinnabar Cloud arrived, bowed to Jinggu, and said, "Daoist Master, you have already arrived. I, your slave, was not able to go out to meet you. But what instructions do you have for me?"

Jinggu said, "At Black Stone Mountain there are two fiends who kill living souls. I want to send you ahead to secretly lie in ambush at the side of Xue Lao Peak. When the fiends come out, intercept them on their way."

Cinnabar Cloud received the order and immediately started up the mountain. He uprooted a mulberry tree, stripping off its branches and leaves to make a weapon. Then he went to lie in ambush. Jinggu ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to conceal themselves next to the Rock Narrows, and when they met the fiends trying to escape to cut off their escape route and absolutely not let them get away. The two bodyguards received their orders and went to lie in ambush.

Jinggu disguised herself as a young man. Hidden on her person she carried the demon-binding rope and the demon-slaying sword. The other magic implements she entrusted to the mountain god for safekeeping. Then she pretended to go sightseeing. On either side of the Rock Narrows at Xue Lao Peak she heard the sound of happy laughter. Jinggu thought to herself that it was surely the fiends approaching, and in a moment she saw two young women, aged around sixteen or seventeen. Both were very refined; they were

as beautiful as Xi Shi and Feiyan, like flowers and jade.³ If you matched them against a flower, the flower would not dare to open; and in comparison to jade, it would be flawless jade. Truly their appearance was such that it would cause the moon to hide and put blossoms to shame; their faces would cause fish to drown, and wild geese to fall from the sky; their eyes were like autumn water, their eyebrows like spring mountains. They were lovely! Truly it was an instance of:

Even for a thousand cash one could not buy Bao Si's smile;
Wang Zhaojun went off ten thousand *li* to make peace with the barbarians.⁴

The two women approached Jinggu. "Sir, why do you come here?" they asked.

Jinggu replied, "I have come to wander here in order to dispel my melancholy, because I admire the beauty and elegance of mountain scenery. Please tell me, what are you two young women doing here?"

The fiends said, "We are sisters. Our father's name was Shi Zhen (Rock Shaking) and our mother was Madame Yan (Large Rock). Both died long ago. When our father was still alive, he loved landscapes and pleasing vistas. We sisters were born here, and our house is by Xue Lao Peak. Since you have come, if you look on us with favor, we would like to invite you to tea. Then you would not have come to see the scenery in vain. It would be a pleasure."

Jinggu, hoping to spy out their lair, replied, "But I am not a relative, so how could I dare trouble you?"

The two women said, "Don't be so humble. You have come here, sir, in order to admire the mountain scenery. You are indeed a refined scholar. Since you encountered the two of us, what reason is there for you to go back in vain? We must offer you tea in order to express our sincerity."

Jinggu answered, "Having already accepted your kind regards, I have no alternative but to do as you say."

The two women of the Rock clan invited Jinggu to come to Lingxiao Tai-pan, where there was a very narrow door.⁵ The Rock fiends said, "Inside is our miserable house. Please go in first." It was already dusk and Jinggu, seeing that the cave was extremely narrow and small, figured that it was so deep as to be bottomless. Furthermore, it was dark, and there was no light at all.

She asked, "It's so dark, how can I go in?"

One Rock sister said, "There's no problem. You only need to take a few steps. Inside there is a lamp for your aid."

Jinggu came to a stop and proceeded no further. She said, "Since there is a lamp inside, why don't you bring it out to light the way? How can you be so impolite?"

The two Rock sisters said, "Since you don't know the way, let the two of us lead you in together, how would that be?"

And the Rock sisters took hold of her hands. Jinggu quickly caught the hands of the two sisters, and tightly pressed them at the pulse.⁶ She thought to herself, "If now is not the time to act, when is?"

The two Rock sisters, their hands grasped tightly by Jinggu, could only try to trick her into entering the Rock Narrows; then she would be done for. How could they have known that Chen Jinggu would press the pulses of their hands with her fingers and, with all her might, in one pull drag the two Rock sisters outside the Rock Narrows to the front of Xue Lao Peak? She shouted, "Cinnabar Cloud, where are you?"

Cinnabar Cloud heard her call and promptly arrived. "What is your command?" he asked.

Jinggu looked down at her two hands, but the two fiends weren't to be seen! Instead, in her hands she held two stone eggs. Furious, she said to Cinnabar Cloud, "What powerful fiends! They were still able to get away! One moment I had hold of the two fiends with my hands. How could they turn into two stone eggs and slip away?" Summoning her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, and Cinnabar Cloud, she told them, "These fiends can only be captured through guile, not by force. All of you stay at the foot of the mountain, and tonight I will search for their tracks. Only in this way can they be dealt with."

The two bodyguards and Cinnabar Cloud led the spirit soldiers down the mountain to wait. That night was the middle of the lunar month, so the moon was as bright as a painting. Jinggu put her sword on her back and, alone, stealthily searched the side of Black Stone Mountain and all around Xue Lao Peak. When she reached the back of Xue Lao Peak, she heard the sound of people talking. She opened her supernatural eyes wide and spotted them far in the distance. It was none other than the two Rock clan fiends. Making herself invisible, Jinggu hid behind them. When they drew near, she flung her arms wide and shouted, "Now where do you think you're going?"

Frightened, the two fiends took to their heels with Jinggu in pursuit, running toward the front of Xue Lao Peak. At the side of the peak, Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage lay in ambush; in the distance he saw them coming, pursued by Jinggu. Grasping his mulberry club, he quickly moved to cut them off. The two fiends saw the hairy monkey blocking their escape; unable to either advance or retreat, while still keeping their distance, they escaped to the side of Xue Lao Peak. There they transformed themselves into two vertical slabs of rock standing side by side.

When Jinggu caught up with them, she saw Cinnabar Cloud barring the way. She said to him, "Just now the two fiends I was chasing came this way. Why didn't you cut off their escape route?"

Cinnabar Cloud replied, "Just now I saw two fiends being pursued. I brandished my club in order to kill them, when they suddenly vanished without a trace."

"I suspect these two fiends haven't gone far," Jinggu said and, employing her supernatural illumination, she searched all around, but didn't see them. When she reached the side of Xue Lao Peak, she saw two rocks standing erect that resembled human forms. She ordered Cinnabar Cloud monkey to use a stone as a chisel to break the two rocks to pieces. In his left hand Cinnabar Cloud held a hammer, and in his right hand the chisel.

The two Rock clan fiends inside the slabs of stone tearfully entreated Jinggu, "Daoist Master, don't use the chisel! Remember that we fiends have already assumed human form, but we are unable to convert to Buddhism. Now, we beg you, Daoist Master, not to kill us. We want to throw ourselves at your feet as slaves."

Jinggu commanded Cinnabar Cloud monkey to stay his hand. She said to them, "Then I won't kill you for the moment. You should transform yourselves once again into human form. There are things I want to ask you."

The two Rock clan fiends then took the forms of two women and prostrated themselves before Jinggu, imploring, "Master, if you would be willing to receive us sisters as disciples, it would be our great good fortune."

Jinggu asked, "In fact, what thing magically affected you that you could transform yourselves into human shapes? Speak up!"

The two women of the Rock clan said, "We two sisters were originally one body, that is to say a rock that was split in two by a bolt of lightning. Then, stirred by the qi of yin and yang, we obtained the essence of Sanshan. Receiving the soul of the moon, and emulating the body of Chang E, we were able

to take human form.⁷ We wanted to seek refuge in the true teaching to perfect the fruits of its dharma, but we had no way to get into it. Now it has happened that you, Great Master, have come here. If you will accept us as disciples, we will be your servants and obey your commands.”

Jinggu replied, “I am none other than a master of the true teachings of Mount Lü. I was instructed that when I met a fiend, I should capture it, and when I encountered a monster, I should seize it. You are not human, and you constantly like to harm people so, in principle, I should kill you. How could I take you on as disciples?”

The two women of the Rock clan tearfully beseeched her, saying, “We servants have not yet obtained the true dharma, so we still don’t understand anything. We have offended you, Master. Today we have found a master to guide us out of our errors. It is as if the weeds have been pulled from our brains, as if we have awakened from a dream. We ought to learn your teaching and cultivate the true Way. How could we dare do wrong? We beg you, Master, take pity on us two sisters. We are like rebellious ministers who have lost their ruler, like runaway dogs who have lost their families.” With these words, they wept pitifully.

Jinggu said, “Since you have agreed to embrace my laws and regulations, first, you are not allowed to harm the children of good families. Second, you are not allowed to harm the neighbors. Third, you are not allowed to wander around causing trouble. You are only allowed to cultivate the true Way here on Black Stone Mountain. If you obey these three rules, I will accept you as sisters. If you do not obey, my magic sword is right here. You’ve heard what I have to say. Now it’s up to you.”

The two women of the Rock clan together assented, saying, “These three principles are the true instructions for cultivating the Way. How would we dare not follow them?”

Jinggu said, “Since you have agreed to obey these three matters, you ought to swear to do so before Heaven.” The two women of the Rock clan then swore an oath before Heaven, saying, “We are none other than the sisters of the Rock clan. Now that we have a master who has accepted us as disciples, we resolve to cultivate the true Way at Black Stone Mountain. If we ever have evil intentions or again harm people, may the Five Thunders destroy us.”

When Jingu saw that they had completed their oath, she sent Cinnabar Cloud back to Panther Head Mountain. When Cinnabar Cloud heard his assignment, he accepted his instructions and took his leave. Jingu then

ordered the two Rock Press Women, "You two sisters stay here and cultivate yourselves. Wait for me to return. When I have need of you, of course someone will be dispatched." The two Rock Press Women assented and departed. Jinggu said, "I will leave now." She ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to lead the spirit soldiers back to Xiadu. Kneeling, the two Rock Press Women saw her off. When Jinggu reached the foot of the mountain, she went to the mountain god to collect her bundle of magic implements and, using the technique of traveling through the earth, returned to Xiadu.

From this time on, the two Rock Press Women of Black Stone Mountain cultivated themselves on the mountain. They gave up their evil ways, returned to the correct path, and no longer harmed people. Several months later, they conveyed a message through a dream to a rural medium that they would aid women suffering difficult childbirth and fetuses in peril.⁸ The people, responding to this stimulus from the northwest, burned incense without cease, and obtained miraculous responses. They were collectively called the Rock Press Grandmothers.

Now we will take up the story of Miss Jiang of West River. From the time she found a teacher in order to study the Way at Flag Mountain, she practiced diligently from morning till night, mastering the true and marvelous Daoist arts. One day, wandering at leisure, she reached the rear mountain, but did not see the golden-haired tiger at its foot. She did not know when it had run away, and reported it to her teacher. She wanted to search every mountain in order to capture it. Acceding to her wish, her teacher gave her a magic sword and a tiger-binding rope. Miss Jiang took the rope, put the magic sword on her back, said goodbye to her teacher, and went down the mountain, searching everywhere for the golden-haired tiger.

Let us now turn to the golden-haired tiger, which had secretly run away down the mountain. It went due south to Guojie Mountain in Nantai, where it nourished itself in secret. In the evening, it would go down the mountain to look for food. In each and every neighborhood in the vicinity many pigs, sheep, chickens, and dogs were eaten by it. The villagers knew that there was a tiger in the mountains, so people from several villages joined together to prepare gongs and drums, firecrackers and pitchforks, and other weapons. They surrounded the tiger, and were just about to capture it, when it opened its mouth and they felt a gust of demon wind spring up, and it vanished. Alarmed, the crowd of people looked among themselves, but still there was no trace to be found.

Consequently, the villagers from this time on, family by family, moved to their relatives or fled to other places, and in this way it became a deserted countryside. Moreover, a villager wrote a notice warning people not to go there. The notice was put up everywhere, and Guojie Mountain became lonely and deserted. Any travelers had to wait until they could form a group and set out together. If a solitary traveler set out alone, he was eaten by the tiger every time. It often harmed people, but there was no way to capture it.

One day two students named Zhang and Li were taking the road through the mountains to go to the provincial exams. The tiger saw the two men approaching and transformed itself into a young girl of about seventeen or eighteen years of age. With almond eyes and peach cheeks, she was arousingly beautiful. Blocking their way, she wept pitifully. Student Li approached to have a look, and saw that the girl was very beautiful. He asked her, "Young lady, why are you crying so piteously?"

The girl replied, "I am suffering from pains in my heart. Now the pain is such that I can't walk even a single inch. Young gentleman, if out of compassion you will give me your arm and help me home, then I will be deeply grateful. I don't know if you are willing."

Student Zhang caught up with them and saw Li chatting with the young woman. He cried, "Men and women must never touch each other! What are you talking about here?"

Student Li said, "Nothing of any importance." He said to the girl, "I will give you my arm to help you home. Who else is in your family? What will they give me as thanks?"

The girl replied, "My mother died long ago. My father tired of the noisy city and loves retirement, living as a recluse. For this reason we moved here. I have no brothers or sisters. Yesterday my father and a retired friend went out to travel around looking at the scenery of famous mountains, and will return only after several days." Student Li gave her his arm and they set off.

Student Zhang cried, "Speaking to each other is not suitable! Moreover, walking arm in arm is completely unacceptable! How can you behave in such a manner in broad daylight? Not to mention that it is entirely out of keeping with the law of the land!"

Student Li pretended not to notice. To the girl he said, "Since your father is far away and you have no brothers and sisters, that leaves only you spending the night deep in the mountains. Aren't you lonely and miserable?"

The girl replied, "As long as one knows how to live, how can one be lonely?"

When Li heard her say this, he was as happy as he could be. Holding her by the arm, he caressed her. He said, "Doing this is knowing how to live. When I do this, you don't dislike me? Tonight, let us keep each other company. How would that be?"

The girl replied, "If you, young gentleman, are willing to be my companion, that would be my great good fortune."

When student Zhang, who was following behind, heard this, it was intolerable to his ears. He loudly scolded Li, shouting, "Talking such nonsense, what sort of insanity is it?"

Li, feigning deafness, did not answer. To the girl he said, "If I keep you company tonight, that means you will sleep with me."

The girl said, "Of course! I, too, can't wait till tonight. When we reach my house, I will teach you to enter my belly to sleep."

When Li heard that she would show him how to enter her belly to sleep, he felt even happier, and he caressed her again and again. When they were halfway up the mountain, the tiger fiend could no longer stand Li's groping, and let out a great roar that rocked the mountain and shook the earth. Then it appeared in its original form: a golden-haired tiger! Terror-stricken, the two students Li and Zhang tumbled down the side of the mountain. The tiger took Li in its mouth and shook him back and forth, playing with him but not eating him. Then it put him down, and paced back and forth on the mountain, watching from a distance as Li regained consciousness.

Having been tossed senseless by the tiger, and turned head over heels on the mountain, Li gradually came to. Little by little he felt his entire body tremble all over with terror. He saw that the tiger was gone, and had no alternative but to risk his life crawling down the mountain, as he was unable to walk. He had crawled half a *li* when the golden-haired tiger again seized him going down the mountain. Holding Li in its mouth, it put him down in the original spot and played with him, shaking him back and forth.

Now we will take up the story of Jinggu, who had captured the two women of the Rock clan, and returned to Xiadu by means of the Earth Vein Method. She emerged from the earth vein and slowly set off. Before she had reached home, she saw that a notice was pasted on the wall at the corner of the lane. She went to see what it said and exclaimed with alarm, "This is extraordinary!" When she had finished reading it, she hurried home.

After she had seen her parents, she asked about the matter of the tiger fiend on Guojie Mountain. Her father, Chen Chang, said with surprise, "Daughter, you've only just returned! How did you know about this?"

Jinggu replied, "Just now on my way back I saw a notice posted at the side of the road. That's how I learned about it."

Chen Chang was astonished and said, "The tiger fiend has injured many people. It is difficult to live in the countryside, so everyone has moved far away."

When Jinggu heard his explanation she was very angry. She vowed, "If I don't eliminate this evil, I will never come home." Then she collected her rope, took her magic sword, and set out for Guojie Mountain. Her parents tried to stop her, but she did not obey.

Jinggu reached Guojie Mountain just as the tiger fiend was tossing Li back and forth. She concealed her sword and rushed forward, shouting, "Evil tiger fiend, drop Student Li immediately!" She pulled out her sword and stabbed the tiger, which immediately retreated. Using all her strength, Jinggu attacked fiercely, stabbing the tiger three more times. The tiger's strength failed, and it thrashed around in confusion. Jinggu threw her demon-binding rope, and with a shout bound it fast. All you could see was the tiger, right there, rolled into a ball on the ground, its four legs tied together.

Speaking human language, it begged Jinggu, "Master, spare my life!"

Jinggu replied, "Evil creature, where are you from that you hide out and dare to harm people here? Tell the truth!"

The tiger said, "I live on Flag Mountain. Originally, I didn't hurt people. Only when the Old Woman of Li Mountain came to live at Flag Mountain and accepted pupils was I subdued.⁹ When Miss Jiang of West River became a disciple, I was given to her as her mount, and every day she rode me back and forth on the mountain for amusement. In the past I lived on Flag Mountain. At first, I was completely unconstrained, and from morning till night I wandered freely. But from the time I was subjugated, how I have been restricted! Because I was kept running to the point of exhaustion, I ran away, and have been staying for the time being on this mountain. Today I met you, the great Master, here. I only beseech you who love life to spare mine."

Jinggu said, "This is nothing but deceitful talk. I certainly love life, but you entirely lack the sense of loving life. Today with my own eyes I saw you dragging a man and eating him greedily, as if it were a game. If I had arrived any later, these two students would have been a tasty meal for your belly."

Then she ordered the two students Zhang and Li to leave at once. Zhang and Li, having escaped with their lives, ran down the mountain as fast as they could. When Jinggu saw that the two were gone, she said to the tiger, "In running away you turned your back on your master. That is an unforgivable crime. It also involved harming people, so there is absolutely no way to excuse it."

When she finished speaking, she took her sword intending to kill it, when she heard a shout from above. Raising her sword, she looked up. The voice said, "Worthy younger sister, wait! Not so fast! I will briefly explain the circumstances."

When Jinggu heard the voice, raised her sword, and looked up, she saw a Daoist young woman come down from the sky, holding in her hand a yak-tail whisk. She was around seventeen or eighteen years of age, delicate and pretty. She came forward and bowed to Jinggu, saying, "Worthy older sister, aren't you the Miss Chen who studied magic at Mount Lü?"

Jinggu was dumbfounded. She quickly put her sword away and replied, "I was just about to ask what Daoist master of what famous mountain taught you the arts. What is your name? Why have you come here? How did you know my name?"

The young woman replied, "My ancestral home is West River. My late father was Jiang Qing and my mother was Madame He. Both died long ago. I was fortunate that the Old Mother of Li Mountain passed on to me her marvelous arts and accepted me as a disciple. I stayed for a time at Flag Mountain Hall. When I heard my teacher say that you had been taught the true arts of True Lord Xu of Mount Lü, and since leaving the academy have been capturing fiends and saving people, I so regretted that I had no chance to meet you. Only a few days ago I came into the mountains because my tiger mount had run away. I was afraid I'd lost all trace of it. As ordered by my teacher, I searched everywhere in order to capture it. How could I have known it was here? And to unexpectedly have the chance to meet you! It is the greatest possible good fortune of Daoism."

Jinggu said, "Truly, it is fate to have the opportunity to meet you. Let us become sworn sisters, and only in this way will we not disappoint the good fortune of our Daoist schools. There is fate in good fortune that we cannot allow to slip away. I don't know if you will consent."

Miss Jiang said, "If you will accept me, it would be my great good fortune."

Then the two sisters each took a pinch of earth and before Heaven swore that Chen Jinggu, being older, would be the elder sister, and Miss Jiang, being younger, would be the younger sister. Thereupon, they became more than even full sisters. Jinggu said, "Little sister Jiang, my home isn't far from here. Let us go together and I will serve you tea."

Miss Jiang replied, "I would like very much to go to your home and pay my respects to your parents. Let us trouble the god of this mountain to keep an eye on this evil creature." And then she went home with Jinggu.

Miss Jiang paid her respects to Chen Chang and Madame Ge. After they had tea, Miss Jiang said, "Today I was very lucky to meet you, worthy elder sister. I would like to go with you to Flag Mountain for a day of sightseeing, but I don't know if you will agree."

Jinggu said, "Of course I will, first, to call on the Old Mother and, second, to see the scenery." Miss Jiang was delighted to hear this, and took her leave of her new parents. Jinggu informed her parents of their plans, and with Miss Jiang returned to Guojie Mountain. There she untied the golden-haired tiger and had Jinggu mount it, while she herself followed the tiger.

Soaring through the air, they arrived at Flag Mountain, and in a moment they alighted on the mountain peak, where a disciple was waiting to meet them. Miss Jiang turned over the golden-haired tiger to the disciple to look after. Then she and Jinggu entered the Buddhist convent, and Jinggu went in to call on the master. The Old Mother asked her to take a seat. Once the disciple had offered tea, the Master said, "Since you, Master Chen, studied the Way at Mount Lü, I've heard that you have exterminated fiends and saved people all over. Truly it is the great good fortune of Daoism. I don't yet know which fiends have been eliminated."

Jinggu replied, "Shortly after I left Mount Lü I captured the red monkey spirit of Panther Head Mountain, who styles himself Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage. Then I captured the two Rock Press Women of Lingxiao Pan at Black Stone Mountain. They all converted to Buddhism as my pupils. All the other fiends you have heard of did not recognize the true Way, so there was no way to recruit them."

The Master said, "Eliminating fiends and capturing demons, saving people from disease, and helping those in danger, these are precisely the correct principles of our school of magical arts. I constantly observe the north-eastern corner. There is an atmosphere of poisonous vapor, which does not go beyond this single mountain range. I don't know what fiend is haunting

the area. Tomorrow you take Miss Jiang with you and capture it and rid the people of harm. I don't know whether you can do this."

Jinggu said, "How could I, your disciple, not obey the command of the master?" Miss Jiang then asked Jinggu to go out of the convent with her to go view the mountain scenery.

Jinggu saw the beautiful cliffs nestled in forests, the emerald grass, the rocks, and pines. Birds took wing and deer roamed. It was tranquil and lovely, and Jinggu repeatedly expressed her admiration. The mountains of this place truly were the realm of immortals and hermits in their retirement from the world. Before they had finished sightseeing, a disciple arrived to say, "The Master sent me to come invite you two to a meal." Miss Jiang asked Jinggu to return from the rear mountain to the convent. When they had an audience with the Master, she invited them to the West Hall, where a table of delicacies had been laid out.¹⁰ They were all the extraordinary flavors of the immortals. With wines of the hues of agate and jade, it was all inexpressibly beautiful.

Her hands clasped before her, Jinggu bowed to the Old Mother and said, "For me to have the opportunity to call on you is the greatest good fortune. And to be invited by you, Master, to come here, to be so magnificently and generously entertained, I, your disciple, haven't even the slightest means with which to show my respect. I only trespass on your hospitality, and really do not deserve this."

The Master said, "You are one of the noble disciples of Mount Lü. As we are of the same rank, I am duty-bound to treat you accordingly. The mountain is a vast empty wilderness. How could this merit any special politeness on your part? I am embarrassed to the utmost. I would have liked to keep you company but, remember, I long ago gave up food and drink, and no longer eat cooked food.¹¹ Therefore I am unable to serve you. Please do not find fault with me." She bade Miss Jiang to drink with Jinggu, and when she had finished speaking went into the inner hall.

Miss Jiang gave the guest's seat to Jinggu, and she herself played the role of host. At their side, a disciple poured out the wine. The two sworn sisters toasted each other and drank to their hearts' content until the golden crow—the sun—sank in the west, and the Jade Rabbit—the moon—rose in the east. Jinggu said, "Miss Jiang, worthy little sister, your foolish older sister is really drunk."

Miss Jiang answered, "I got the chance to meet you, and we are of the same school, so I would like to persuade you to drink three more cupsful."

Three cups were filled, and she handed them to Jinggu. Jinggu could not refuse, so one by one she drank the three large cups of wine, and only then did the feast end. A disciple cleared the table, whereupon Miss Jiang and Jinggu went inside together and spent the night.

At dawn the next day, Miss Jiang and Jinggu got up. After they had combed their hair and washed, a disciple offered them tea. In a moment the disciple had laid out their breakfast. When the two of them had finished eating, Jinggu called on the Master. She declared, "I have been out capturing fiends for a long time and am afraid my parents are anxious. Now I will go with younger sister Jiang to the mountains in the northeast to capture the fiend, and within a few days I will return home to serve my parents. I am very fortunate that the Master has entertained me in such a manner, beyond my merits. On another day I will come again to call on you and await your teaching."

The Master replied, "I had hoped that you would stay for several more days, but since you have things on your mind, I must comply with your wish."

To Miss Jiang she said, "You and your elder sister go together to capture the fiend. Once you have captured it, you must come back. Now I will give you a magic sword and a paper soldier. If you should find yourselves in a precarious situation, burn the paper soldier.¹² Soldiers will be dispatched to help you in an emergency wherever you are, and at that moment there will automatically be a response." The Master's instructions completed, Miss Jiang and Jinggu paid their respects to her and went down the mountain. The Old Mother saw them off, watching until she could no longer see them. Only then did she go back inside the convent. Truly it was:

Two teachings transmitted together become a single school;
Twin peaks bestow their magic and respond to the entire world.

This time, to know which fiend the two Buddhist young women captured in the end, read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

The Spider Fiend Is Captured and Dies / The Ravine Demon Uses a Stratagem to Seek Refuge

TO RESUME OUR STORY, NEAR SHUIKOU CLIFF THERE WAS A FIEND, a spider of a very great age.¹ Its body was the size of a bamboo basket, and its legs were more than two feet long. Each time it floated its tenacious silken threads into the air anyone who ran into them was entangled and yanked upward. The Spider Fiend would then gorge itself on the entrails of its victim. Or it would spread its web at the side of the road, and anyone who stepped on it would be ensnared, dragged off, and saved for a future meal. Or when it wanted amusement, on the mountain cliffs to the left it would conjure up a brilliantly colored house, with silver and silk, screens of pearl, jade pillars and jade walls, everything extravagantly beautiful. The spider would then transform itself into a lovely girl with a beautiful appearance and sit all alone in the splendid house, weaving silk and spinning hemp.² If a talented and handsome young man happened by while on a stroll, the fiend would treat him as a guest with great politeness. When it got hungry, then taking the guest as a filling meal, it ate him. One day, right on the cliff the spider conjured up a splendid house, dressed itself in blue-black clothing, and sat beside a tree under the cliff, alone, spinning hemp.³

Now we will return to Jinggu and Miss Jiang, who were on their way down the mountain. Together they used the Earth Vein Method to go to Shuikou Cliff. Jinggu said to Miss Jiang, "Worthy little sister, since we

arrived here so quickly my bodyguards and the spirit soldiers have yet to catch up, so now I would like to borrow your paper soldier.”

Miss Jiang gave the paper soldier to Jinggu, who chanted some incantations. Next to the ear of the soldier she spoke several sentences.⁴ When she had finished speaking, she blew a single buddha breath on it, burned it, and in a moment the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, appeared, leading the spirit soldiers, who in the air awaited their orders. Now that Jinggu had her bodyguards, she and Miss Jiang entered the cliff to call on the fiend. When they reached the middle of the cliff, the girl dressed in blue-black who was spinning silk and weaving hemp beside the tree stopped her spinning. Holding up a big piece of hemp in her hand, she stepped forward and asked, “Where are you two young women going?”

Jinggu and Miss Jiang looked at the girl. Knowing that she was a fiend, they answered, “We sisters heard that there is a fiend here who harms people. We have especially come here to search out its lair, in order to rid the people of harm.”

The fiend said, “You two are just girls. What abilities could you have that you dare to boast like this? You don’t know the extent of the fiend’s supernatural powers, or its inexhaustible transformations. You two wouldn’t even make a meal for it.”

Miss Jiang said, “Even if it has supernatural powers and transformations, it can never escape the category of fiend, demon, and so on, but we have correct magic.”

When the fiend heard this, it was filled with apprehension. It asked, “Where are you two young women from? What are your names that you boast in such a way?”

Jinggu replied, “You don’t know my name. Since you ask, I am Chen Jinggu of Fuzhou. I am in the habit of capturing fiends and eliminating monsters, to say nothing of little tiny fiends, on behalf of people!”

When she had finished speaking, and was about to pull out her sword and behead the fiend, how could she have known that it would throw over them the tangle of spun threads it held in its hand, completely enveloping them? Already Jinggu and Miss Jiang were caught right in the middle, so that, above and below, on all four sides, it was as if they were surrounded by walls of iron. No matter how they attacked it, they could not break through, and no matter how they struck it they could not create an opening.

The blue-black-clad girl had already resumed her original form: she was a huge spider! To the two women she said, "Earlier you boasted like that. If it is your custom to rid people of fiends and monsters, why don't you manifest your supernatural powers and skills? Please put my magic power to the test." When she had finished speaking, the fiend was about to pick them up and eat them.

Jinggu's expression did not change. To Miss Jiang she said, "Worthy little sister, stay calm. With this fiend we have no choice but to use cunning to capture it. We can't do it with physical strength."

Jinggu said to the fiend, "We two sisters are now caught in your web. It seems to me that it will be difficult for us to escape with our lives, so don't be in such a rush to devour us. Wait, and I will explain something to you. You will still have plenty of time to eat us. What supernatural powers do you possess? Do you dare pit your magic against mine? If I lose, you can eat me at your will, and I will have no cause for complaint. In this manner, your having taken us by surprise and caught us in your web doesn't make me recognize your superiority, even if you eat us. Now, if you remove the web and contest with me for victory or defeat, only then will each of us display our supernatural techniques. If I lose, I am willing for you to eat me, and we two will die without regret."

The Spider Fiend said, "Don't you two try to trick me! You've already fallen into my web, so why would I be willing to let you go again? Do you think that just because I was very hungry I trapped you two to satisfy my hunger? It happens that I don't want to eat you right now, because I still have leftovers. I will go get them to eat and you can watch. Only then will you know how ferocious I am." The Spider Fiend went inside and dragged out her leftovers: half a human body. Holding it, she began to take large bites out of it.

When Jinggu saw that the fiend wasn't going to eat her, she knew she was saved. To the fiend she said, "As you said, you are indeed ferocious. We sisters didn't know the limitlessness of your highness's great powers, but now we are willing to submit to you. But I beg you to remember that my parents are still alive, and I have not yet repaid them. I beg you to make a tiny hole in the web, in order to let me stick out a finger, so that I can repay my debt of gratitude to my parents for raising me. I don't know if you are willing."

The spider replied, "Knowing my ferocity, you beg me to bestow on you the ability to stick out a finger, but I will even let you stick out your head. What does it matter?" The Spider Fiend then clawed open a hole. Jinggu was secretly delighted. She quickly bit her middle finger, causing fresh blood to flow. Then she flicked a drop toward the middle of the hole. The single drop turned into a cloud of blood that rose into the sky and flew off.

Now we will speak of the original Mount Lü gods who protect the dharma: the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, who led the five divisions of spirit soldiers. Encamped in midair, they awaited their orders. When they saw a cloud of blood rise up into the air and fly toward them, they knew that Jinggu was in trouble. They immediately ordered the spirit soldiers to rush to the place where the cloud of blood was rising up in order to have a look. It was a huge, round spider web! The two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, realizing that their master was trapped in the web, led the spirit soldiers to attack, and in an instant broke through the web and pulled Jinggu and Miss Jiang out.

When the spider saw that reinforcements had arrived, she was enraged. The web already torn, she again used her fine silk strands to bind them every which way. The strands filled the air and covered the fields. There were threads everywhere, and the soldiers, too, were bound tight. But when the two bodyguards released divine fire to burn it, the Spider Fiend, seeing that things were not going well, dropped its web and fled. Jinggu took up her sword and set off in pursuit, with Miss Jiang following behind.

Calculating that it could not escape with its life, the Spider Fiend performed some contortions with its body, in an instant turning into tens of thousands of little spiders. Turning back, they came to meet the pursuers, biting the heads of the troops. Jinggu then exhaled a demon-killing whirlwind, and, in an instant, the tens of thousands of little spiders had been whirled into a ball, and the threads twirled to wrap them up. The Spider Fiend again changed into ten thousand, and the ten thousand into a billion, but they were held in place by the whirlwind, and the billion again became a single ball. Even the huge spider was caught in her own web. When Jinggu and Miss Jiang saw that the Spider Fiend was caught in her own web, they laughed and asked, "You said that your supernatural powers were vast and your magic arts were limitless. No one would dare to make you submit and capture you. How is it that you have now been ensnared?"

How is it that you have no fiendish tricks, just these ordinary sorts of things?”

The Spider Fiend said regretfully, “Stop already! I lost my wits for a moment. If I had eaten you two earlier, I would not have been taken in by your beguiling words and tricked into making a hole. I allowed you to stick your head out so that you could repay your debt of gratitude to your parents. Who knew that you would summon your troops to the rescue? If I hadn’t made the hole, your celestial soldiers and fierce generals would not have been able to respond and save you.”

Jinggu whispered something in Miss Jiang’s ear, who, having received her orders, departed. Jinggu said to the Spider Fiend, “Earlier, when you caught me in your web, I was very lucky that you made a hole to let me stick my finger out. Now that I have caught you, I am going to completely remove the web and give you the opportunity to escape. This is using the big to repay the small. What do you think?”

The Spider Fiend said, “It’s a good idea. If I don’t succeed in escaping, even if I die I won’t complain.”

Jinggu ordered the spirit soldiers to remove the web. When the Spider Fiend fled, who knew that Jinggu had in advance placed in ambush Miss Jiang and the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, with the demon-binding rope, blocking the pass and cutting off the spider’s way? When the Spider Fiend reached the pass, it was cut off by the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang. They shouted, “Evil fiend, where do you think you’re going?” The spider was stymied, and calculated that it would be difficult to cross the pass. Turning back, it tried to flee toward the west, but it was too late. Miss Jiang had already thrown the demon-binding rope, and she trussed the fiend up into a ball. Having caught the spider alive, she escorted it to see Jinggu.

When Jinggu saw that the fiend had been caught, she said, “Deadly monster, I let you go. How is it that you have been caught again? Now when you die, will you have any complaints?”

The Spider Fiend replied, “Twice caught, I indeed have no complaints. I beg you, master, to show mercy. If you will spare my life, from now on I will never again dare to harm living beings, and I will abide by my duty.”

Jinggu said, “While all other categories can be pardoned, only your type of vile insect—without self-reflection and cultivation, stealthily spreading

your webs, hurting I don't know how many living creatures, and we two sisters coming within a hair's breadth of being in your belly—cannot. Since this is the case, to leave alive such a cunning insect would be without benefit.”

Then she sent her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to order the spirit soldiers to behead the evil insect. With a shout of assent, the spirit soldiers cut the Spider Fiend into pieces. From its belly, Jingu extracted a pearl about the size of a wine goblet. Elated, she put it away, and said to Miss Jiang, “You can't catch the cubs without entering the tigress's den.”

The two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, saw how happy Jingu was, and asked, “Master, what treasure did you obtain?”

Jingu replied, “I got her pearl. Come spring and summer, I will hang this pearl among the bed curtains in my room. When mosquitoes, flies, and other insects come near they will die. Moreover, when I travel by boat, it will calm the wind.” After showing the pearl to the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, she put it away. She ordered the spirit soldiers to burn up the Spider Fiend's nest and destroy it, and gave the two bodyguards an order to lead the spirit soldiers to secretly stand guard in the air. They received the command and departed, leading the spirit soldiers with them.

Jingu and Miss Jiang used the means of traveling through the veins of the earth to go into Fuzhou City. When they emerged from the earth vein, they strolled around. Jingu said to Miss Jiang, “This place is called Black Stone Mountain. Let's meet the Rock sisters there, how would that be?” Miss Jiang assented, and the two walked into the mountains. Seeing Jingu, the two Rock sisters hurried to welcome her. In turn, they told their situation after they had parted, and Jingu told them about going to Shuikou Cliff and about eliminating the Spider Fiend. On her way back, she had especially come to pay her respects to her worthy younger sisters.

The two women of the Rock clan said, “We didn't know you were coming, so we did not have the chance to go out to meet you. Our offence is a serious one.” And, pointing, they asked Jingu, “Who is this elder sister?”

Jingu replied, “This is none other than a disciple of the Old Mother of Li Mountain, worthy little sister Miss Jiang, who cultivates herself in tranquility behind Flag Mountain. We especially came to invite you two to return home with us, so that we can visit for a few days.”

The two sisters of the Rock clan answered, “Since you invite us, would we dare to disobey your command?” Availing themselves of the method of

traveling through the earth, they departed for Jiangnan Bridge. The four sisters emerged from the earth vein, and together arrived at Jiangnan Bridge. (It is the present-day Nantai Yancang Bridge.) They strolled around, viewing the sights of the Tai River.

While they were strolling, abruptly a man blocked their way. He asked, “You four Daoists masters, each carrying a precious sword on your back, which one of you is Master Jinggu of Xiadu?”

Miss Jiang said, “Why do you ask?”

The man said, “I am from Changfu County.⁵ My surname is Wu and my given name is Shan. My wife is Madame Qiu. We have only one child, a daughter, whose name is Chunjiao, ‘Spring Tenderness.’ She is just short of seventeen years of age, and is not yet married. This is only because last month, while picking flowers in the rear garden, somehow a fiend raped her. We don’t know what sort of monster it is.

“When she was first violated, it would come once every two to three days, or every three to five days. Our daughter gradually lost her appetite, and sleeps all day in her room. When we ask what is the matter, she tells us the truth. She says that in the evening a student with a pale complexion enters from the sky, who bewitches her and sleeps with her. When my wife and I heard this—that during the night he sleeps with her—how could we know that this fiend would use clay tiles or rocks or some such thing to throw into the room? We parents were right next door, but we didn’t dare go in to see what was happening. Up to now, he constantly occupies our daughter’s chamber and has his filthy way with her. He has taken our pure and beautiful daughter and made her so utterly yellow and scrawny that it will be hard to preserve her life. Can I request from you a way to expel it? There’s nothing else to be done! When I recently heard that the dharma master had returned from studying magic at Mount Lü and was willing to expel evil monsters for other people, I went a few days ago to your home, but they said that you had gone to Flag Mountain and hadn’t yet come back. I was obliged to stay with relatives and wait for a few days to try to find you when you returned, so that we could go together to my home to rescue my daughter from this calamity. Now, fortunately, I have come upon you four masters, all bearing precious swords on your backs. I felt sure that one of you was Chen Jinggu, so I screwed up my courage to ask.”

Jinggu said, “There has been no harm done.” Wu Shan kowtowed to express his gratitude, and they all returned to Xiadu. Jinggu knocked on the

door and entered. She invited Miss Jiang and the two women of the Rock clan to come in.

Miss Jiang said, "Wu Shan is waiting now. Why not send him back first? Tomorrow the two Rock sisters and I will go to rid them of the fiend. Wouldn't that be a good idea?"

Jinggu replied, "That is an excellent idea." Seeing Wu Shan off first, she agreed to come the following day.

An Tong came to invite them to eat, and the sisters all went to the West Hall, where a banquet had been laid out. Miss Jiang and the two Rock sisters hurried to invite Jinggu's mother to take the host's seat, and took their seats to her left and right. Jinggu urged everyone to drink. During the feast, her mother asked where they had gone on their travels, and Miss Jiang told her all about getting rid of the Spider Fiend. When she had finished her account, Jinggu took out the spider's pearl to show her mother. She mentioned by name the two women of the Rock clan, saying, "These are my younger sisters from the Rock family of Black Stone Mountain."

Before she had finished speaking, An Tong entered. To Jinggu's mother he said, "Outside, Lin Bashu has come with a visitor. He says it is the steward of old master Liu of Gutian, who has come especially to bring the marriage schedule. He wants to ask you and your husband to come out to talk, and is waiting in the outer hall."

Jinggu's mother left the banquet and went with her husband to the hall. The messenger bowed and said, "I received an order from the family patriarch to especially bring the marriage schedule. He said the young lady returned more than a month ago. Even if she were eliminating fiends and capturing monsters, that's all finished. I now await the gentleman's reply."

Chen Chang and his wife invited the messenger to sit down while they went into the West Hall and addressed their daughter, saying, "Today the Liu family of Gutian has sent the marriage schedule here. You need not go on a long journey. If you stay home this can all be taken care of. We will wait for an auspicious wedding day for them to come fetch you."

Jinggu asked, "Why are you rushing me like this? In any case, right now the Wu family of Changle is in great danger, and I promised to go rid them of it. When I come back, I may not be in time for the wedding day. Would that not make a mess of this blessed event?"

Chen Chang replied, "Since you want to go to Changle to capture the fiend, go right ahead. We will tell the messenger to go back. But I can't decline again."

Jinggu asked, "What harm is there in that? Just wait for me to say the word, and it will be all right."

She left the hall and went to speak to the messenger, asking, "Are you the Liu family's steward?"

The messenger answered, "That's right."

Jinggu handed the marriage schedule to the messenger, saying, "Please go back and report to your master that Jinggu herself gave these instructions. I am now going to Changle to eliminate a fiend. When I return, I will myself come to your master's house and consent to the marriage. There is no need to rush me like this. I don't have time to write a letter, so may I trouble you to convey the message?" When the messenger heard her instructions, he had no choice but to comply, and set out for Gutian. Having told the messenger to go, Jinggu went in to inform her parents. In a moment the banquet ended, and all the sisters were settled for the night. The next day, the four sisters took their leave of Mr. and Mrs. Chen, and left to go to the family of Wu Shan in Changle. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Guanyin. At the time that she was on the river near Luoyang Bridge, where she had transformed herself into a beautiful woman and joined together with Prefect Wang, and the gold and silver coins thrown at her were used to construct Luoyang Bridge, she was struck on her topknot by a coin thrown by Wang Xiao'er. Guanyin pulled out the strand of hair that had turned white after being struck, and threw it into the river. Who could know that this strand of white hair, having turned into a white female python, would depart for the northwest? Guanyin already knew that the python would later inevitably harm people, so she bit her middle finger and let a drop of fresh blood fall into Xiadu in Jiangnan. [This would become] Chen Jinggu, who would eliminate the python. Wang Xiao'er was reincarnated as Liu Qi of Gutian. Now he and Jinggu would become husband and wife, in order to fulfill the promise made in the middle of the river concerning the throwing of coins, as already explained in the first chapter.

Now we will take up the story of the White Snake, who had departed for the northwest, where she searched for a nest in which to cultivate herself. In Gutian there was a cave called Linshui Grotto. The grotto was very narrow

on the outside, but inside it was spacious and roomy. To the side were mountain cliffs and wilderness, and in front was a deep stream. The White Snake took possession of this grotto and couldn't have been happier with it. In a little over a year she had gathered around her many small fiends; the White Snake was their leader. All the small fiends would leave the grotto from dawn till dusk, searching for pigs and sheep, as well as mountain birds and wild animals, which they would bring to present to the White Snake. She was very happy. All day long she drilled the little demons in fighting techniques. She often turned herself into a young woman and called herself the Great Queen. How comfortable she was!

Now we will take up the story of the Ravine Demon of Nantai. After Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage had accosted Jinggu at Wangbeitai Peak and run away when Liangnü threw her burning pearl at him, he heard that Jinggu had returned from studying magic at Mount Lü, and was saying that she was going to have her revenge on him for accosting and toying with her. She was looking everywhere for him. Furthermore, he had heard that Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage of Panther Head Mountain had already been defeated by Jinggu and had his cock cut off, and had converted to Buddhism as her disciple and awaited her command, thereby preserving his life.

The Ravine Demon said to himself, "When she asked Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage about the matter of accosting and toying with her that day, the monkey spirit blamed everything on me. So, Chen Jinggu is even more unwilling to let me rest. Moreover, Jinggu is in Xiadu, very near Great Ravine Mountain. If she comes looking for me and captures me, I won't be able to escape having my cock cut off, too. This punishment is no joke! Now I've also heard that Jinggu has recently joined up with Miss Jiang, as well as the two women from the Rock clan from Black Stone Mountain, to form a sisterhood. Both inside and outside Fuzhou City, they are all her people. If I'm found out, how could it turn out well? It seems that here in Fuzhou it will be difficult for me to keep my body intact, so I had better take myself somewhere far off and out of the way. Only in this way can I hide myself."

Then he went to pay a visit to Linshui Grotto at Gutian. The head of the grotto, the White Snake, was the Great Queen. She excelled at magic, and her transformations were inexhaustible. Furthermore, she had gathered around her more than a hundred little demons. Since it seemed that it was a place where he could shelter himself and avoid disaster, he would seek refuge with her. If she wouldn't take him in, he would look for another plan.

Considering it from every angle, he clapped his hands and laughed. "I've got it! As the Great Queen must be a female snake, she is surely fond of sex, so I will find a handsome young official as a gift."

Having decided on this, the Ravine Demon traveled through a vein of the earth to Linshui in Gutian. There he invited a surpassingly handsome young official and, casting a spell on him, dragged him to Linshui Grotto, where he troubled the little fiends to report his arrival. In a short time, the Great Queen commanded the Ravine Demon to enter for an audience. The Ravine Demon and the young official prostrated themselves on the ground. The Ravine Demon said, "Great Queen on High, I've especially brought you a fat pig as a small expression of my filial piety and respect. I only ask that the Great Queen kindly accept me for employment. I want to be your slave. From morning till night I will serve your every command."

The Great Queen asked, "Where did you come from? What is your name?"

The Ravine Demon answered, "I am the Ravine Demon of Great Ravine Mountain in Nantai in Fuzhou. Chen Jinggu of Xiadu and I have a score to settle. But she went to Mount Lü to study the true magic, and her supernatural powers are vast. Furthermore, she has forged a sisterhood with several women, and each of them is looking for me. I, however, am all alone and have no companions, so I have repeatedly been in a tight spot. I've heard, Great Queen, that you excel in magical power and your supernatural abilities are vast. I made a special trip here to seek refuge with you and distance myself from this disaster."

The Great Queen was very pleased, and accepted the Ravine Demon as a slave. She carefully looked over the young official he had presented. He was indeed very good-looking; moreover, he was young. Unconsciously, the Great Queen's lustful thoughts were aroused. She then transformed the rock grotto into a great hall and ordered the Ravine Demon to be the chief servant. All the little fiends were turned into female servants, such as lowly servants and boy servants, while she transformed herself into a surpassingly beautiful young woman. Then she roused the unconscious young official with a spray of water, planning to tell him that she was the wealthy daughter of a government official who had invited him to be his son-in-law. When the young official regained consciousness, he saw the gorgeous hall bedecked with red lanterns. The brilliant room was beautiful, and obviously the home of an official. Since being summoned to be his son-in-law was indeed a happy event, how could he be unwilling to consent? He followed the young lady,

and after performing the kneeling rituals of the wedding ceremony they entered the bedchamber and became man and wife.

Who could have known that the White Snake possessed the magical efficacy of Buddha power? A fiend of transformations is not the same as other fiends. Its natural disposition was ingenious, its mind intelligent, and it could read and write essays. The young official dragged in by the Ravine Demon was very handsome on the outside but, regrettably, he was entirely lacking in knowledge. They had sexual intercourse, but after not much more than half a month, she rejected him in disgust when his physical strength could not be raised, and she ate him. Again she ordered the Ravine Demon to bring in another victim. He didn't dare refuse, and searched everywhere for handsome young men to lure into the grotto, always saying that they were invited to be the son-in-law.

The Great Queen from that time on seduced young men, infatuating them and toying with them. Either she became sentimentally attached to the young officials who were lured in or, if the handsome men who were lured in were not up to the standard of the previous victims, they were swallowed whole into her belly. She had sex with the talented and handsome young men captured. She instructed the Ravine Demon that she wanted a young man who was impressive in both talent and appearance. Consequently, the Ravine Demon was kept busy all day long, seeking everywhere for victims he could entice. If he found one with talent, he was not handsome; if handsome, he had no talent. Those who were both talented and handsome were very few.

One day, however, he caught a young man who was impressive both in talent and beauty, and presented him to the Great Queen, who was highly pleased. From morning till night she drank wine with him and recited poetry. He was well versed in both ancient and modern learning, the very type of a handsome and talented man. She would never hurt him. It was just that after having sex for a while, before long his energy and blood were exhausted and dried up, and his body emaciated. When he could no longer raise his energy, she became bored with talking with him, and buried him in her snake's belly.

Over the years, it's impossible to say how many were summoned. When she got to be old, she was still solitary and all alone, and the cold grotto was without youth and sex. So she ordered the Ravine Demon to assiduously concentrate on finding a young man who was both talented and handsome.

Day and night, the Ravine Demon searched without stopping. He searched in the east, and he searched in the west, and for a long time he didn't dare return. He didn't really want to go on searching, but he feared she would not let him stay, so he had no choice but to keep looking everywhere. If it were just a question of youth and appearance, that was easy. But those whose learning was comprehensive and appearance handsome were hard to find. In the end, what sort of person did the Ravine Demon find? You will have to read the next chapter to find out.

CHAPTER 7

Bringing an End to the Auspicious Period, Jinggu Eliminates the Fiend / Meeting Misfortune, Liu Encounters a Demon

LET US SPEAK OF THE RAVINE DEMON, WHO FROM MORNING TILL night had no rest. Acting under the Great Queen's orders, he didn't dare stop for long. One day, by coincidence, the Ravine Demon paid a visit to an opera troupe from Suzhou, called the Jade Blessing Troupe. It performed either Beijing or Anhui style, and had just arrived to perform in Fuzhou. Their route passed through Gutian, where they would stay to give a performance. Their gowns and hats were new.

The Ravine Demon found out that in the troupe there was a young man who played female roles and whose appearance was flawless. The Ravine Demon supposed that he was a disciple of the Pear Orchard tradition, and therefore surely had talent.¹ He thought it through and made up his mind. When it was almost dusk, it happened that the young man went to the lavatory to empty his bowels. The Ravine Demon dragged him to the grotto and presented him to the Great Queen, who, when she saw him, was delighted, as he was very much to her taste. She ordered water to be sprayed in his face to revive him. She herself pretended to be a wealthy young lady and that he was summoned to be the son-in-law. Then they accomplished the matter.

This time, having won the Great Queen's perfect satisfaction, the Ravine Demon asked her to record his meritorious deed. The Great Queen replied, "This doesn't yet count. Although outwardly he is beautiful, if inwardly he lacks talent, I will temporarily record merit, and will reward you on another occasion." Then she ordered the Ravine Demon to go to the opera troupe and get the headgear and dress of a bride and other articles, and bring them back. "I have use for them," she told him. On her orders the Ravine Demon went into the opera troupe. Using magic to make himself invisible, he stole several outfits of gowns and hats and so forth, returned to the grotto, and presented them to the Great Queen. When she saw each article, she was delighted. She put on a nine-phoenix pearl hat and a red-dragon snow gown. To the Ravine Demon she said, "I am the queen! I enfeoff you as my dragon minister." The Ravine Demon was thrilled, and kowtowed to show his gratitude. Putting on the minister's hat, he wrapped himself in the red gown and put on the black boots. He was completely happy!

Now we will return to the Jade Blessing Troupe. The young man who played female roles had disappeared, and clothing, boots, and caps were missing. Alarmed, people searched everywhere, but there was no news of him. The opera troupe entirely depended on the young man to make money, and now he had simply vanished! What's more, with many articles of costume missing, they didn't go to Fuzhou but returned to Suzhou.

Now we will speak of the Great Queen. From morning till night she was very happy with the young actor. Sometimes they sang, and sometimes they danced. In just over a month, she had worn the beautiful young man out with lust, and he had become unbearably yellow and thin. The Great Queen complained of his lack of energy; since he was unable to carry on the affair, she was about to eat him. But she couldn't bear to give up his beautiful appearance, and, moreover, he could both sing and dance. Thinking thereby to dispel her gloom, she didn't eat him. She sent him to the back hall to recuperate, and waited for him to recover his original magnificence so that she could once again enjoy him.

Again she ordered the Ravine Demon to entice another victim. He had no alternative but to accept her order to search high and low. Where was there a young man with both talent and good looks? When the Great Queen saw young men impressive in neither talent nor appearance, she angrily rebuked the Ravine Demon, saying, "It's useless to go on like this. The ones you have

dragged in are only good for a meal. What do you think you are doing? If you continue to be so incompetent, you absolutely cannot stay.”

When the Ravine Demon heard the two words “cannot stay,” he hastily knelt and pleaded, “Enlightened Great Queen on High, if you want someone impressive in both talent and appearance, you must extend the deadline by several days. Wait while I carefully search.” The Great Queen said, “Given what you have just said, I’ll give you ten more days. But when the deadline is reached, there will be no extension. I absolutely will drive you out and not keep you.” Having gained an extension, the Ravine Demon left the grotto to search. We will speak no more of this.

Now we will return to the Liu family steward. After taking the marriage timetable to Xiadu, he had received Jinggu’s instructions to take the timetable back home and give it to the Liu patriarch, to whom he reported Jinggu’s instructions one by one. Liu Tong, his wife Madame Li, and their son Liu Qi listened, and could not help laughing grimly. They said, “This is outrageous! That stupid girl! What she said was rubbish about waiting for her to come back. We should just choose another auspicious wedding day, and that’s it!”

Now we will return to Chen Jinggu, Miss Jiang, and the two Rock Press sisters, who used an earth vein to go to Wu Shan’s house in Changle, where Wu Shan treated them with the courtesy of a host to his guests. After tea, Jinggu asked in detail about what had been going on. Then she went into the rear chamber to have a look. She was not prepared; she only heard the sounds of bricks and tiles being unceasingly thrown in the room, and beat a hasty retreat. To Miss Jiang and the Rock sisters she said, “The fiend is extremely wild. I had only just gone in when I saw it stirring, and it threw a brick. Fortunately, I was able to quickly dodge it and wasn’t hit in the head.”

Miss Jiang said, “Elder sister, with what strategy can we capture it?”

Jinggu answered, “What’s difficult about it? Capturing this fiend is no harder than taking something out of a bag.” Then she instructed Miss Jiang, “Now make yourself invisible and go inside and lure it. You will only have to fight a few rounds with that fiend, then pretend to be defeated and run out of the room. I will as a matter of course have the arts with which to catch it.”

Accepting the plan, Miss Jiang made herself invisible and went inside. Holding her sword, she thrust it, while the fiend spirit raised his club to parry it. Miss Jiang fought several rounds. Then, seemingly defeated, she fled from the rear hall. Victorious, the fiend went back to the room, but his lover had disappeared! Just as he was searching for her, he saw in the room a

three-headed, six-armed, blue-faced, fang-toothed, red-mustached being holding in its hands six weapons, coming to attack him.² The fiend hastily took up his club to resist the enemy, and they fought more than sixty rounds in the air. The three-headed, six-armed being fled, defeated.

The fiend heard that the three-headed being stopped when it reached a big mountain, where it vanished. The fiend was about to return to the bedroom to find his sweetheart when he heard the sound of weeping at the foot of the mountain. It was very tender and lovely, so he made his way downhill to have a look. It was none other than his beloved! How could she be here? He went up and asked, "Who are you?"

A second woman replied, "This is my younger sister. As a consequence of coming to see me, she was dragged off here by one with three heads and six arms."

When the fiend heard this he was delighted. He said, "That she is already here is even more marvelous! But I fought to exhaustion with the three-headed six-armed one. Could I trouble you two sisters to massage me a bit?"

The two sisters said, "We can do that." Then they stood on either side, with the fiend between them. The two women suddenly changed into two big rocks and pressed the fiend between them so tightly that he couldn't escape. Jinggu and Miss Jiang both arrived and, using the demon-binding rope, bound the fiend. Then the two sisters of the Rock clan moved apart and resumed their human bodies. To the fiend they said, "This is your good luck. If Elder Sister Chen had arrived any later, you would already have been crushed into a meat patty."

Jinggu said, "Fiend, you still have not resumed your original form." Having spoken, she clapped the fiend on the back several times, and it changed into a white male fox. It jerked its head, as if it were begging for its life. Jinggu said, "For someone like you, who took by force a girl of a good family, execution is too good." Then she ordered Miss Jiang to kill the fox. As soon as the order was issued, she cut it in two. Then they carried the corpse of the male fox to Wu Shan's house.

When the whole village heard what had happened, holding the old by the arm and the young by the hand, everyone came to look. Jinggu said, "The fiend has been eliminated, but the rescued person must still be saved completely. You can help your daughter into her room, so that we can exorcise the demon vapor. You must wait for seven days, and only then will she be completely back to normal." Wu Shan thanked her again and again. Jinggu,

Miss Jiang, and the Rock clan sisters were all in Wu Shan's house. Do you know who that three-headed six-armed creature was? It was none other than a transformation of Jinggu. She had lured the demon out to fight, so as to wrest from him the girl, whom she put in another room. In advance she had ordered the two Rock Press sisters to take on the likeness of the Wu daughters on the side of the mountain, planning thereby to capture him. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will turn to the Ravine Demon in Gutian County. He had received the order of the Great Queen of Linshui Grotto to lure in a young man impressive in both talent and appearance within ten days. He searched everywhere, but he did not find even a single suitable one. One day, he found Teacher Liu's son Liu Qi. He learned that he had already been police chief in Luoyuan, and having completed his term of office, he was now living at home at leisure. If you considered his talent, it did not fail to measure up to that of Zijian; if you considered his appearance, it was not inferior to that of Pan An.³ And he was young. If he dragged him in and presented him to the Great Queen, surely he would be perfectly suitable. The only problem was that Liu Qi rarely left the house, as he was usually in his study studying poetry. The Ravine Demon wanted to get inside, but Liu Qi regularly made offerings to the statue of the Wen Qu Star, so there was no way for him to make a move.⁴ All day the Ravine Demon hung around Patriarch Liu trying to find out about his son.

One day, he learned that Liu Qi was going to a friend's house for a literary get-together. The Ravine Demon was secretly very pleased, since he figured that when Liu Qi returned home from the party, he would have to pass by Linshui Grotto. He said, "I will wait there for him to come, then drag him in for the Great Queen." His mind made up, he returned to inform the Great Queen so that she could make her preparations for that evening. The Great Queen was overjoyed! She transformed the cave into a splendid room, and hung up lanterns and festoons, while the Ravine Demon waited at the grotto.

Now we will take up the story of Liu Qi, who was at his friend's house writing poetry. In the afternoon he walked home alone, carrying with him his own poems. When he passed by Linshui Grotto, the Ravine Demon spotted him and, turning himself into a black-turbaned soldier, went up to him saying, "I've been waiting here for a long time. I want to invite you inside,

young gentleman. Can I have a look at your compositions? I have something to say to you, young gentleman.”

Astonished, Liu Qi asked, “What is your master’s name?”

The black-turbaned soldier replied, “Come in, and then you will know. Why do you have to ask?”

Liu Qi looked and saw that the house was magnificent. Without knowing what government official’s it was, he went in. The Ravine Demon drew him into the hall, and he saw that it was ablaze with lights. The Ravine Demon said, “Young gentleman, please have a seat, and wait while I go in and report to my master. In a moment he will come out to meet you.” Liu Qi gave his compositions to the Ravine Demon to take in.

The Ravine Demon reported to the Great Queen, “Now I have brought a talented and handsome young man, entirely in line with your wishes. His appearance is more handsome than the previous ones. Regarding his inner talents, he has the learning of a Principal Graduate in the imperial examination, and he has just held the office of police chief. Today he went to a literary gathering at a friend’s house. His poems and collected writings are all here. Please, Great Queen, take a look at his talent. Then look at his appearance. If he isn’t just what you want, it would take a long time to find such another.”

The Great Queen took the writings, looked at them, and, greatly pleased, couldn’t stop praising them. She said, “His talent is like that of Zijian. If only he is as handsome as Pan An! Wait while I have a look at him.” The Great Queen took a peek and clapped her hands in delight. “His appearance is superior to that of Song Yu.”²⁵

At this time the White Snake’s happiness knew no bounds. She gave the Ravine Demon instructions on how to proceed, and he left the hall in accordance with the plan. He said, “The master has looked at your excellent sentences and can’t stop praising them. But because he is not well, he cannot wait on you himself.”

The servants urged the young gentleman, saying, “The master does not yet have a son. He has only a precious daughter, whose beauty is unrivalled, and wants to invite you to be his son-in-law. This evening we must first complete the wedding, and on another day you can return home together. Now I would like to ask you, young gentleman, to marry the daughter of the house here and now.”

When Liu Qi heard this, he was aghast. He said, "Go back in immediately and tell your master that I already have a wife, so I don't dare obey. His daughter should choose someone from a better family."

Then he turned to leave. The Ravine Demon hurried to stop him and said, "You can enter, but you can't leave. You absolutely are not allowed to leave. You can go in and speak face to face with the daughter. No one will pass on a message for you."

Liu Qi had not yet replied when the Ravine Demon took him by the arm and pushed him into the rear hall. The Ravine Demon pointed to the Great Queen and said, "Here is the daughter. She wants to meet you, so if you have something to say, you can say it yourself. I, however, don't know." When he finished speaking, he went out.

Liu Qi had been pushed by the Ravine Demon into the rear hall, where he saw a young girl standing to one side. Her clothing was of the expensive fashion of an official's family. He hastily bowed, saying, "Remember, I already have a wife, so I don't dare comply with your wishes. I beg you to forgive my offence."

The Great Queen said, "If you want to live, then quickly submit. If you don't want to live, then do as you like. Think it over carefully."

Liu Qi said, "In other things it could still be all right, but in this serious matter of marriage how can there be any justification for compulsion? I would rather die than submit."

When the Ravine Demon heard this, he was furious. The Great Queen ordered the Ravine Demon to suspend Liu Qi upside down from a beam so that the blood would rush to his head and she could extract it and drink it like wine.⁶ The Ravine Demon stepped forward and urged Liu Qi, saying, "You have landed in this place, and if you don't comply, don't blame me for taking action. When you are suspended upside down, it will be no joke."

Liu Qi said, "Then go ahead and hang me upside down. Can there be no justice in this peaceful world? Moreover, I am an official on imperial orders. I have not broken the law. I have only not gone along with a marriage, and that's all. What is serious about that? If you want me to carry out this wedding, I really am unable. I would rather die than consent!"

The Ravine Demon said, "As talented and handsome as you are, if you die, wouldn't that be really regrettable?"

Liu Qi shouted angrily, "A real man looks upon death as returning home. How could there be any question of regret? Today I was tricked into coming in here. Do whatever you like!"

The Ravine Demon said, "Since it is impossible to persuade you, you can't blame me." Then he took out a rope, bound Liu Qi tight, and dragged him out of the rear hall. He suspended Liu Qi from a beam, with his head down and his feet up. Instantly the Great Queen felt her heart begin to pound and her gallbladder tremble. She hastened to order the Ravine Demon to place a cushion under Liu Qi's head, so that he was half suspended and half resting, as she did not want to kill him. The Ravine Demon carried out her order, and the Great Queen's heart and gallbladder no longer pained her.

What was the reason for this? It was because Liu Qi was none other than the reincarnated vegetable seller, Wang Cheng Xiao'er of Luoyang, and the Great Queen was the strand of Guanyin's hair that was struck by Wang Cheng's coin. Guanyin had pulled out the strand of hair and it had turned into the White Snake. Therefore, when Liu Qi was hung upside down, the White Snake's heart and gallbladder both pained her. Now that Liu Qi was half hanging, she no longer suffered so much.

The Ravine Demon both pleaded with him to comply and gave him food and drink. But no matter what, he refused to give in. The Great Queen flirted with the young actor in front of him, and they had sexual intercourse to arouse him. Who could have known that Liu Qi's heart was like iron or stone? He was not in the least aroused. So she ordered the Ravine Demon to drag in a boy, and in front of Liu Qi she cut him, causing him to cry out, in order to frighten Liu Qi. But Liu Qi was not even a little bit frightened. In the end, there was nothing she could do to him, so she had no alternative but to instruct the Ravine Demon to urge Liu Qi to consent, saying, "Wait for him to change his mind. If he submits, there will be a handsome reward."

Now we will speak of Teacher Liu, whose son had gone out very early in the morning to a literary party and still hadn't returned home when the sun was setting in the west. He ordered the steward to make inquiries of the friends at the party, who told him that after the party ended everyone went home. When Teacher Liu heard this, he was alarmed; his eyes twitched and his heart pounded. He ordered the steward to go to the homes of relatives and friends to ask after him. Again, there was no news. Liu Tong and his family were alarmed and distraught.

At dusk a little old man arrived at the gate. To Liu Tong he said, "There's no need to rush around in confusion. Quickly, go ask for rescue. If you are too late, then he will die."

Teacher Liu urgently asked the old man, "How could you possibly know where he is?"

The old man replied, "When your young gentleman passed by Linshui Grotto on his way back from the party, he was dragged off by the White Snake, who turned everything inside the cave into an illusion, and invited him to marry her. You should go to Fuzhou and ask your daughter-in-law to come back immediately. The young gentleman can be saved, and the fiend exterminated. But if you are too late, then it will be difficult to save him." When the Teacher wanted to inquire further, the old man suddenly vanished. He knew then that the old man was a transformation of the family earth god. Since there was no time to write a letter, he ordered the steward to set out that very night for Xiadu in Fuzhou to ask Jinggu to come and help in this emergency.

By the afternoon of the next day, the Liu family steward had reached Xiadu in Fuzhou. Receiving him, Chen Chang asked why he had come, and the messenger told him the whole story about how Liu Qi had been dragged off by a fiend. Chen Chang explained that his daughter was still at Wu Shan's house, in Changle, where she was capturing a fiend and hadn't yet returned. He immediately ordered the steward to go to Changle to urge Jinggu to return.

The steward didn't dare rest for long. He went forthwith to Wu Shan's house in Changle to ask for Jinggu, saying that it was an urgent matter. Wu Shan went in to inform her, and Jinggu came out to see him. It was none other than the steward who had on a previous occasion brought the marriage timetable. When he saw Jinggu, he said, "I have come on the order of my master. I traveled by night with all haste to request that you immediately return to Gutian to help in this emergency. The young master has been dragged off by the White Snake of Linshui Grotto, who has taken him in order to marry him. Now he is suspended upside down. Since the master had no time to write a letter, he ordered me to come here the same night to ask you, Jinggu, to hurry back. Any later and you won't be in time."

Jinggu thought the steward was making it all up in order to force her to go back and get married. She replied with a laugh, "If you save someone, you must save him completely. I will be here for two days, after which I will as a matter of course go back. Why try to deceive me like this? I'm not a fool."

When she had spoken, she turned to go inside, but the messenger informed her in detail, "It's not a trick, it's the truth!"

Jinggu said, "You say it's the truth. Well, I'd like to ask you, you say you have just rushed from Gutian to Changle with all possible speed. That's almost four days. If I go back now to rescue him, it's another four days. In all, that makes eight days. You say the fiend has hung Liu Qi upside down, in order to get the fluid from his brain. If you wait for me to go to rescue him, even if we set aside the taking of his brain fluid, when he has hung upside down for eight days even if I go it will be of no use."

The messenger said, "If he dies from being suspended upside down, won't you want revenge?"

Jinggu said, "If it's a matter of revenge, then it doesn't matter if it's early or late. Waiting another two or three days to go won't do any harm." The messenger wept and wept as he pleaded. Still Jinggu didn't believe him. There was nothing the messenger could do, and he had no alternative but to return to Gutian and make his report to Teacher Liu—that is to say, Liu Tong.

When the Liu family heard his report, they were distraught. The next day he and Chen Chang themselves hurried to Wu Shan's house. Wu Shan welcomed them and invited them into the hall. He went in and informed Jinggu, who quickly came out to greet them. When Chen Chang saw his daughter, he scolded her angrily, "You foolish creature! When other people suffer calamity and come calling for help, you go immediately! Right now your own husband is suffering the calamity of being suspended upside down, and in great haste a messenger hurried here, traveling through the night. You nonetheless turned a deaf ear and paid no heed whatsoever, with the result that we two have made a long and difficult journey to get here. What possible justification is there for this?"

Jinggu said, "I suspected that it was just a way to force me to go back and get married, a trumped-up story to deceive me. If it had been nothing, I would have been mocked. For this reason I didn't go back immediately. Now that you have come, Father, how would I dare not go? But what fiend is it that snatched him away and suspended him upside down? Only if you tell me the whole story will I be willing to go rescue him."

Because Liu Tong was nearby, he overheard the conversation between father and daughter. Then he told them how Liu Qi had been dragged away by the fiend, how they had searched for him and found no trace, and, luckily, how their own family earth god had explained the reason for the situation.

He continued, "The god told me to send someone to ask my worthy daughter-in-law to go rescue him, saying that if she arrived too late, he could not be saved. Today I brought a long-distance sedan chair, and I request that my worthy daughter-in-law set out with all possible speed to rescue Liu Qi from being suspended upside down. Please do not delay!"

When she heard this, Jinggu turned and went inside. To Miss Jiang and the Rock sisters she said, "You worthy younger sisters stay here with Wu Shan's daughter until she is calm. After seven days go back to your mountains. I will now go to Gutian to eliminate the fiend and save Liu Qi from calamity. If anyone outside asks, may I trouble you to answer for me? I must take my magic implements and go by means of an earth vein."

Outside, Chen Chang and Liu Tong, the two senior members of the families to be related by marriage, watched Jinggu go inside. After a long time she still had not yet come out. Chen Chang was about to shout to her when Wu Shan came to invite them to take an early meal. Chen Chang wanted to tell Jinggu to set out, but Miss Jiang said, "She left a long time ago."

Chen Chang said, "I didn't see her come out. From where did she go? Can it be that she departed from the back door? At present the long-distance sedan chair is outside, and she didn't get in. How could she choose to walk such a long way?"

Miss Jiang answered, "By now my elder sister is already at Linshui Grotto in Gutian. She went to eliminate the fiend monster."

The two old gentlemen Liu and Chen were astounded, and asked, "How could she get there so quickly?"

Miss Jiang replied, "She traveled through an earth vein." When Chen and Liu heard this, they were elated and, taking leave of Wu Shan, went home.

The two Rock sisters and Miss Jiang stayed until the seven days were up. Then they said to Wu Shan, "Your daughter's spirit has returned to its original state, so we sisters will return home." Declining Wu Shan's gifts, the Rock sisters and Miss Jiang used an earth vein to return to their mountains. Wu Shan prepared generous gifts and went to Xiadu to pay a visit to express his gratitude. We won't speak of this further.

Now we will return to Linshui Grotto in Gutian, where Liu Qi had been suspended upside down by the monster. Five days had already gone by. Every day the Ravine Demon tried to persuade him, but his exhortations were to absolutely no avail, and Liu Qi would not give in. To the Great Queen the Ravine Demon said, "Since he won't give in, it's up to you to go kill him. For

five days I've urged him, but he won't yield. Keeping him is of no use. It's better to kill him." Thereupon the Ravine Demon received the order to do so. He took a knife and said to Liu Qi, "You really won't give in?" Liu Qi said, "Tied up like this, I feel terrible! Hurry up and kill me!" Just when the Ravine Demon raised the knife and was about to strike, he heard the sounds of heaven falling and the earth splitting come rumbling in. The Ravine Demon hastily threw down his knife and fled to the back of the grotto. Truly it was:

The man's brain not yet having drained out, the cave was breached.

Demons and monsters indulge in trickery; Heaven does not.

In the end, how could the Ravine Demon and the Great Queen withstand Chen Jinggu? You must read the next chapter, where it will be recounted in detail to all you ladies and gentlemen.

CHAPTER 8

The Snake Monster Having Been Expelled, Future Calamity Is Left Behind / The Husband Having Been Saved, Their Prior Karma Is Assisted

NOW WE WILL RETURN TO CHEN JINGGU, WHO AT WU SHAN'S HOUSE in Changle used an earth vein to go to Linshui Grotto. There she ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to stay at the entrance to the grotto and not let the Snake Fiend escape. They sealed the back of the mountain to destroy the lair, and then led the spirit soldiers, each of them releasing yellow smoke and sprinkling realgar.¹ Shouting "Kill!" loudly enough to reach the sky, they burst into the grotto.

The Ravine Demon ran into the inner cave and urgently reported that the girl had found them out. They were just about to come out to confront them when they smelled the realgar smoke. The stinking smoke was pervasive, obscuring the sky like a fog, and they rushed all around in a panic. The White Snake's four limbs became like jelly and couldn't support her. Unable to take care of the little snakes, she fled for her life. Falling to the ground, she writhed around, intending to find a small hole at the back of the grotto and escape.

Now we will turn to the Ravine Demon, who charged forward brandishing a big axe. But when he saw Jinggu, he was so frightened that his soul left

his body, and he, too, tried to escape from the back of the grotto. Jinggu rushed in to kill them, slaughtering all the little fiends. She continued slaughtering right to the back of the grotto but didn't see the White Snake, the ringleader. She searched carefully, and only then did she realize that the White Snake had escaped through the small hole.

Jinggu turned and saw a man hanging upside down, and recognized her husband, Liu Qi, in whom only a single breath remained. With her sword, she cut the rope, and untied his hands and feet. As he could not walk on his own, Jinggu helped him out of the grotto. After ordering the two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to look after him, she went back into the grotto and was searching with great care when she saw someone standing by a rock, crying for help. "Who are you?" Jinggu asked.

"I am a junior disciple of Pear Orchard of Suzhou," he said. "The troupe's name is the Jade Blessing Troupe. Because we were on our way to the capital of Fuzhou, we passed through Gutian. The villagers enthusiastically invited us and we performed for three days. One night a black-turbaned soldier dragged me in here to be a son-in-law. I don't know why heaven and earth just shook. I beg you to save me."

Jinggu asked, "What is your name? When did you enter to become a son-in-law? In the troupe, what role did you play?"

He answered, "My name is Sheng Tao. In the troupe I play female roles. I've been here half a month, so I don't know if the troupe is still in Fuzhou."

Jinggu said, "I will rescue you from the grotto, and find someone to escort you back to the troupe in Fuzhou. How would that be?" The young actor was overjoyed by this unexpected good luck and bowed to Jinggu in thanks. She turned Sheng Tao over to her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to look after. Then, unleashing her supernatural fire, she burned up the grotto.

When she returned home, assisting Liu Qi to walk, Teacher Liu had not yet returned. Only Madame Li, his wife, was at home, and that's all. When she caught sight of her son supported by a young girl, the whole family was deliriously happy. The wife asked, "Who is this?"

The family servant who had taken the marriage schedule knew that it was Chen Jinggu, and said to the wife, "It's none other than Jinggu."

When the wife heard this, she was both astonished and happy. Then, with a smile, she welcomed her. "So, it's our worthy daughter-in-law. Come in!" Jinggu said, "Quickly prepare a bed and bedding for your son to sleep." She also told the family steward, "Outside there is a young actor, who was also

dragged into the grotto by the snake spirit, and I also rescued him. You should take him in and let him convalesce for a few days. Then send him to Fuzhou to rejoin his troupe.”

Jinggu at this time had saved her husband from disaster, but she did not escape suspicion. When the wife saw her son sleeping on the bed, looking as if he were dead, she was grief-stricken and began to wail loudly. To Jinggu she said, “The way my son looks, I don’t think it will be possible for him to survive. I’m afraid you have labored in vain. You rescued him from the grotto, but it was all for nothing.” She wept without stopping.

Jinggu said, “Mother-in-law, there’s no need to cry. Do not say that your son is lacking qi—that is, that he will die. As your daughter-in-law, I will do my utmost to bring him back to life, so you needn’t be alarmed. Forgive me, but I’ve only just come here, so I don’t know where to find the pots and stove and well. Could I trouble you to bring a cup of water? A daughter-in-law as a matter of course should be useful.”

When the wife heard this, she stopped crying and fetched a bowl of water, which she gave to Jinggu. Holding the bowl of water in her hand, Jinggu quickly wrote a talisman and chanted an incantation, reciting the true words. Then she sprayed the water on Liu Qi’s face. In an instant his spirit had awakened, and he could recognize people; after a short time, his heart had calmed down and his appearance returned to normal. He sat up and walked around as before. It was just that the fiend’s vapor had not yet entirely worn off. The wife was very happy, and asked him what it was like in the grotto.

“Inside the grotto it was absolutely horrible,” Liu Qi said. He explained the whole matter about being beguiled, and how fortunate he was to be rescued by this Daoist master. Otherwise, he would certainly have met with disaster, and his life would have come to an end.

The wife said, “This Daoist master is none other than your original bride. When you went to Linshui Grotto, the black-turbaned soldier and young girl were both transformations of the fiends. If my son were not upstanding, if he’d been forced to submit, then he would surely have ended up in the snake fiend’s belly.”

When Liu Qi heard her say that it was the White Snake Fiend, he was horrified. He said, “If I had known then that it was a transformation of the Snake Fiend, I would have died of fright.” He bowed to Jinggu, saying, “If my worthy wife hadn’t rescued me, then my mother and I wouldn’t have seen each other ever again.”

Jinggu modestly replied, "There's a man outside. He's also one whom the snake spirit in the form of a girl enticed to be her husband. He is emaciated." When Liu Qi heard this, he went out of the hall to welcome him. He saw Sheng Tao looking so dreadfully sallow and scrawny that it was truly frightening. Liu Qi asked about his circumstances, just making ordinary conversation and inquiring about his background. The man was a member of the Pear Orchard Troupe. Then Liu Qi instructed a servant, "Take this Sheng Tao and let him convalesce for a few days."

Now let's return to Chen Jinggu, whose many tasks were completed, except that she hadn't yet entirely restored Liu Qi from the fiend's vapor. Thereupon, she said goodbye to the wife, telling her, "Your foolish daughter-in-law is going back now."

When the wife heard Jinggu say that she was going home, she urgently tugged at Jinggu's sleeve and said, "Worthy daughter-in-law, since you have come to our house, what reason could there be to go back? Wait for your father-in-law to return, and we'll see what he says. There's no rush to go back again. Furthermore, you spoke about this before. A few days ago a servant took the timetable to your home. You said to his face that you would come back after going to Changle to eliminate the fiend, and then you would marry our son. There would be no need for drums and music, a flower sedan chair or an auspicious day. Now abide by those words! You want to go back, but wait for your father to come, and then we'll decide."

Jinggu had listened to the wife, who had talked to the point that there was nothing Jinggu could say in reply. She thought to herself, "I was just joking before. I didn't know that in the end it would become a prophecy to be fulfilled. This is Heaven going along with human wishes, and one can't oppose Heaven. But my husband still hasn't yet entirely shaken off the fiend's vapor."

She said, "Mother-in-law, since you insist on keeping me here, I have no choice but to obey. Furthermore, the young gentleman is not yet entirely free of the fiend's poison." When the wife heard her consent, her mind was finally at ease, and she chose a clean chamber for Jinggu to sleep in. Everyday Jinggu burned talismans and chanted over the water, which she ordered the servant girl to take to Liu Qi to drink to cleanse himself of the fiend's vapor.

To take up the story of the fiend, she had fled and met up with the Ravine Demon. "What good luck!" they each exclaimed. The White Snake ordered the Ravine Demon to make inquiries to find out why someone had come there to destroy the grotto. Having received the order, the Ravine Demon secretly went

to investigate. After a short time he returned to report to the White Snake. He said that the person who destroyed the grotto was none other than the often-mentioned Chen Jinggu, the disciple of True Lord Xu of Mount Lü, explaining, "Liu Qi, whom I lured into the grotto a few days ago, is Chen Jinggu's husband. When she heard that her husband was suspended upside down and his brains were being drained out, she came to destroy the grotto and rescue him. Gutian, his hometown, is very near Linshui. If we return to Linshui Grotto to live, then we will inevitably be captured by her, and our lives will be hard to preserve. Now we must abandon Linshui Grotto."

The White Snake said, "If we abandon Linshui, we will have to find another place to live!"

The Ravine Demon said, "It will be difficult to find a place in a short time where you can live happily. I have a lair where I live in Great Ravine Grotto on Great Ravine Mountain at Nantai in Fuzhou." The White Snake was very happy to hear this, and she and the Ravine Demon used the method of traveling through an earth vein to go there to seek refuge.

Their daily food was wine and meat that the Ravine Demon went everywhere to steal. With this hideout, the White Snake didn't lack food and drink, so she was carefree and at leisure. In ancient times people had a saying: "Being full and warm gives rise to wanton desire; suffering from cold and hunger gives rise to thoughts of theft." Once the White Snake had peace and happiness, she ordered the Ravine Demon as before to lure in a young man for her carnal pleasure. The Ravine Demon had no choice but to act on these orders and entice someone for the White Snake's pleasure.

Now we will return to Teacher Liu and Mr. Chen, who hurried back to Gutian from Changle. When they reached the gate, Liu Qi came out to meet them. When the teacher saw his son come out to greet him, he was both astonished and delighted. He went in to ask when he had been rescued and inquired, "Is the daughter-in-law here?"

His wife smiled and replied, "I am keeping our worthy daughter-in-law in the rear chamber." Then she told him all about the situation at Linshui Grotto. When the teacher learned of this he was delighted.

He went out of the hall to tell the elder Chen all about the matter of his son's rescue, saying, "Your daughter is being kept in an inner room by my wife, waiting for the father of the bride to come and choose an auspicious day to accomplish the great event of her lifetime with my son. Now she will submit to her father. Stay for a few days and wait for your daughter to

complete the marriage ceremony. Then I will see you back to your home. I have not yet asked what you think about this.”

When the elder Chen heard this, he replied, “As for the marriage, we should carry it out early in accordance with your order. I am fortunate that you have tolerated the long wait. Now, since the occasion presents itself, by right we should comply and settle the big event of their lifetime. How could I have any reason not to go along with this? It’s only that the bride’s trousseau is not ready. I’m truly ashamed.”

The teacher replied, “There’s no need to be humble.” Then he instructed the in-law to be treated generously and Mr. Chen to select an auspicious day. Lanterns and festoons were hung, and relatives, neighbors, and friends all came to wish them happiness. Jinggu, all dressed up, came out of the hall, and assisted in the guest rituals. After husband and wife bowed to Heaven and Earth, they bowed to Liu Qi’s parents and to Jinggu’s relatives. After paying their respects to everyone, the couple entered the bedchamber, drank the nuptial cup of wine, and became husband and wife. (This fulfilled the destiny of the couple created by the coins thrown into the river by Wang Xiao’er to complete the construction of Luoyang Bridge.)

Several days after the ceremony when Liu Qi had completed the marriage, Mr. Chen took his leave of Mr. Liu to return home. Jinggu said, “Father, since you are going home, could you please escort back to Fuzhou the young actor who is in the great hall so that he can rejoin the Jade Blessing Troupe?”

“What reason is there for that?” Mr. Chen asked.

After Jinggu told him the whole story of rescuing him from Linshui Grotto, she told the young actor to come in. When Mr. Chen saw how handsome he was, he told him to wait outside the door. To Jinggu he said, “Your aged father has no son. You are my only child. Having seen this actor, both young and handsome, I want to take him as an adopted son. What do you think about this?”

Jinggu quickly stopped him, saying, “That is not a good idea. I’ve looked at this person, and, although his appearance is very handsome, his inner character is extremely inauspicious. If you are frequently near him, you will inevitably suffer harm. Father, you must heed my words. You absolutely cannot adopt him.” Mr. Chen listened to what Jinggu said. Then he thanked her and left, taking the actor Sheng Tao with him.

When they returned to Fuzhou City they searched for several days, but there was no trace of the Jade Blessing Troupe, so he took Sheng Tao home

with him. He saw his nephew, Shouyuan, who asked him, "Uncle, you went to Gutian and now you've returned. Jinggu's husband was carried off. What happened? How is it that Jinggu hasn't yet returned?"

Mr. Chen explained to his wife and nephew, Shouyuan, the matter of Jinggu at Gutian. They laughed and said, "What the crazy girl spontaneously said in fact matched her earlier vow."

"Who is the young man outside?" Shouyuan asked.

Mr. Chen replied, "He is a young actor from the Jade Blessing Troupe. He, too, was dragged into the grotto by the fiend, where he was rescued by your younger cousin Jinggu, who entrusted me to take him to Fuzhou and return him to his troupe. Who would have guessed that there isn't a trace of this troupe? You should take him and search at your leisure." Shouyuan consented, and he and Sheng Tao went home.

Shouyuan, too, was single; both of his parents had died long ago, and he had no brothers. His household was so poor that he could not take a wife. For the last two years he had stayed at the Daoist priests' house, where his job was to carry the implements. This Shouyuan was very clever, and after a while he was able to work as a Daoist priest. At his house he hung up a sign saying "Exorcist Who Dispatches Malignant Deities." Like Jinggu, who had returned after studying magic at Mount Lü, he himself had learned several formulas for retrieving souls that had been snatched away. In addition, he had a sonorous voice, and his skills were excellent.² As soon as he rang a bell over a sick person, the illness was expelled. One person told ten, ten told a hundred, a hundred told a thousand. As a result, an endless stream of people came to request his help. He turned over the house to Sheng Tao, who was also the receptionist at the door, as Shouyuan was out from morning until night doing a booming trade as a Daoist priest.

Now we will return to Liu Qi of Gutian. After he and Jinggu had married, one day he received an official document from the king of Min, Wang Shen-zhi.³ Liu Qi opened the document and read it. It was his order to go to Luoyuan, to again fill the vacancy of police chief, and he had to set out within the day. Old Mr. Liu and his wife were delighted. To Liu Qi they said, "Since the king of Min has again assigned you to your original post, you must bring your wife when you go to take up the post. You don't have to worry about family matters. Your father will handle them. Hurry! Pack your clothes and get started. Don't miss the deadline."

Liu Qi obeyed the order. The next day, with Jinggu and servants of the family, he said goodbye to his parents and set out to take up his post. They traveled to Xiangzhuweng in Lianjiang Zhou, which bordered on Luoyuan.⁴ Jinggu rode in a large sedan chair hung with transparent gauze. She saw that many of the travelers on the road were young men, holding in their hands large banners and precious umbrellas, fragrant flowers, and lanterns with candles. They walked in columns, at the head of which were four Daoist priests, each sounding his instrument. Following them were five elders, fifty or sixty years of age. They were dressed differently from the crowd: on their heads they wore lotus leaves and undyed, soft turbans; on their bodies they wore blue-green brocade Daoist robes with gold borders; and on their feet they wore priest's shoes. With their mouths they recited "Amitufo." Behind them were many men and women, each carrying incense. It looked as if they were all crying, weeping, and in deep grief, as they walked along the main road. When Jinggu saw them, she did not know what was going on, or where they were going. At first, she wanted to make inquiries, but it seemed inappropriate. Still, she kept thinking about it.

Before they had traveled half a day, they arrived at Luoyuan, where a secretary was waiting to escort them into the city to the yamen. Liu selected and announced a day to sit in court. After reviewing the servants of the four detachments and eight groups, he went to the city god's temple to burn incense.⁵ On the way back, Jinggu saw many people carrying long banners, and suspected there was a reason. "I will go myself to try to find out what in the world the explanation for this is," she said.

When Liu Qi was sleeping in the bedroom, she told a servant, "I'm going out to look into the customs of this place, then I'll come back. If my husband wakes up and asks, you can tell him this." Jinggu then traveled through an earth vein to the outskirts of Luoyuan. When she emerged from the earth vein, she went to a village. She saw that the village had only forty or fifty families living in it. From a small house on the left, there came the heart-rending sound of weeping.

Jinggu thought to herself, "Here there is surely a matter of extreme suffering, to be as grief-stricken as this." She listened carefully to the sound—it was the voice of a woman. Jinggu stood for a time. Abruptly, the sound of crying stopped, and a woman came out. She was wearing mourning clothes and looked like a new widow. Jinggu quickly went up to her and said, "Elder sister, I'd like to use your house to rest briefly, then I'll go."

The woman replied, "Since you need lodging after a long journey, how could I dare not assent? Please come in and have some tea."

She led Jinggu inside. Offering her a cup of tea and inviting her to drink, she asked, "Where do you come from? Where are you going?"

Jinggu answered, "I've come from Fuzhou, and I'm on my way back to Luoyuan."

The woman exclaimed, "Fuzhou is a two-day journey from here! How could you have walked here?"

Jinggu answered, "It was by long-distance sedan chair. I accompanied my husband when he came to take up his post of police chief in Luoyuan. Today I came here looking for a family member, but because the road was long, I availed myself of this as a resting point. Only then did I hear you weeping so wretchedly, and I don't yet know what is the matter, that you are so distressed."

The woman said, "I think my fate is perverse and paper-thin. Last season I lost my husband. Above, I have no parents-in-law, and neither aunts nor uncles. Below, I have no siblings, and no children to depend on. I have no alternative but to return to my mother's family to live. My mother died long ago, leaving only my father, who is almost seventy years old. Because the Ghost Festival last year was the time fixed to ascend to the Realm of the Immortals, many men and women of the older generation went to the Realm of Supreme Happiness, the Western Paradise, to become buddhas and wander at leisure.⁶ But as my father couldn't bear to leave me, he wasn't able to go to the Realm of the Immortals to enjoy the Western Paradise. Because my fate is unlucky, it has ensnared him. How could I not weep bitterly?"

When Jinggu heard her mention ascending to the Realm of the Immortals, it was precisely the band of people carrying banners she had seen the day before, and she couldn't help asking for an explanation. She asked, "What immortal realm did your father want to ascend to? How can ordinary people become buddhas to enter the Realm of Supreme Happiness?"

The woman replied, "I can't talk about it. I don't think you, elder sister, know that at Luoyuan port many people make offerings to the Lotus School.⁷ Any village men and women can make offerings, chant scriptures morning and evening, pray to Buddha, and eat only vegetarian food. When they meet red meat they don't accept it. When they encounter it, they don't eat it. Each year, at the Ghost Festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the earth official changes bad luck into long life, saving myriad lives, and they

enter Paradise. Wherever there are good men and believing women, and they are vegetarians, and have lived to more than sixty, and have been vegetarians for more than ten years, they can ascend to the Realm of the Immortals. Those who have reached the age of sixty but have been vegetarians for less than ten years must wait until this requirement has been fulfilled. On the night of the fifteenth, at Lian River port, a Buddhist gentleman appears on the surface of the sea and conjures a tower paradise, within which lantern lights flash and reflections of candles shine brilliantly. All is precious stones and jade articles. Multicolored festoons are tied together. High up in the tower there is the music of pipes and flutes. In the tower are Buddhist pilgrims standing along the rail on either side, and at the center of the building is a golden bridge that leads straight to the shore of the port, by which people ascending to Paradise can enter. The long bridge has handrails on either side. The old people, men and women, ascending to Paradise clasp their hands and chant scripture, and cross the bridge to enter Paradise. The sons and daughters, relatives, and friends who come to see them off kneel on the shore. The Daoist priests who invited them are no longer to be seen.”

When Jinggu heard this account, it exactly tallied with the events of the day. She said, “The day before, when I was on the road passing through Zhouyang, I saw a band of men, each holding a long banner. In front of them were Daoist priests, and behind them were these five old people. They were going from village to village. These were precisely the ones you mentioned who had received the teaching.”

The woman said, “Just so. They left yesterday. All the relatives said goodbye.”

Jinggu laughed and said, “This is outrageous! Eat vegetarian food for ten years, and then you can ascend to Paradise? I’m afraid some fiend or demon has set up this tower. It is an illusion to deceive people into becoming its meal. Those are all ordinary people, ignorant people who are harmed by the fiend demon, meeting with disaster and being buried in its belly. How sad that they have suffered practicing ten years of vegetarianism! When they reach old age they don’t get a good end. It really is abominable. Just wait! In future I will eliminate this fiend demon.”

The woman asked, “Elder sister, what martial arts do you have that you boast that you can eliminate this monster?”

Jinggu looked the woman over carefully. To herself she thought, “Although this woman’s fate is unlucky, and she is young and a recent widow,

from the remarkable nature of her facial physiognomy obviously she is a woman of pure qi. I should teach her the magical arts. I will capture this fiend and save the lives of many people. How could this not be good?" Then she replied, "If it's a matter of martial arts, then I have none at all. If it's a matter of eliminating fiends, then it's as easy as taking something out of one's pocket."

Then she asked, "What is your name?"

The woman replied, "My husband's family name is Tao, and my father's family name is Li. From childhood I have been called Third Elder Sister."

Chen Jinggu said, "Elder sister, I will truthfully explain everything to you. I am from Xiadu in Fuzhou, and my name is Chen Jinggu. In earlier years at Mount Lü I studied magic, exterminating fiends, and capturing ghosts. Those are my skills. I am married to Liu Qi of Gutian, who is police chief in Luoyuan. The day before, when I saw on the road the boisterous procession of people ascending to Paradise, I felt very suspicious and didn't understand what it meant. For this reason I came here today to make inquiries, and to find out the explanation. I am very fortunate that you explained everything so clearly. Truly it is the greatest good fortune that now you have made clear to me this matter that I was concerned about. What you have described is obviously a fiend demon indulging in evil and causing trouble to harm living souls. Isn't it sad?"

When Madame Li heard that it was the wife of the local police chief who had come to her house, she was very flustered. At once she bowed down before her and said, "So it's the police chief's wife! I have really neglected you. I heard that in Fuzhou there is a Jinggu who returned from studying magic at Mount Lü, who constantly rids people of scourges. You are none other than the Madame Chen who is able to eliminate demons and monsters! I admire and respect you."

Jinggu replied that it was indeed her and said, "But the incidents relate to Fuzhou, so how is it that people here, also, know the name Jinggu?"

Madame Li said, "The common saying puts it very well: 'People like to hear accounts of distant places.' I've only heard of you, but I had never met you. Today I am lucky to meet you face to face. It is truly my family's great good luck. I intend to prostrate myself at your door as your servant. From morning till night I will listen to your lessons. I don't know if you will accept me or not."

Madame Chen said, "Why must you be so modest? What is this nonsense about being a servant? Since we are fond of each other, we ought to become

sworn sisters.” Li Sanjie was delighted. She acknowledged Jinggu as her elder sister and herself as younger sister. When the two had pledged themselves sworn sisters and invoked a prayer, they requested Madame Li’s father to come out. They bowed to him and explained everything.

Madame Chen got up, saying, “I have deceived you and your father. I came here secretly to make inquiries into the story about ascending to Paradise. Now I’ve already delayed too long, so I must say goodbye. Worthy younger sister, you can make arrangements in advance for your family to take a trip. Go with your father to the police chief’s yamen. I will explain the details of the matter and teach you the magical arts.”

Madame Li said, “Since I am fortunate not to be abandoned, and to be sworn sisters with you, I beg you to stay for the noon meal, after which you can go. It won’t be too late.”

Madame Chen said, “What need is there for such politeness? I’m afraid that if I wait too long, the police chief will know when I return and it won’t be good. I must go at once.” No sooner had she finished speaking than she left, and in an instant she had disappeared without a trace. Madame Li, both astonished and happy, went in to explain the matter to her father.

Now we will take up the story of Chen Jinggu, who used an earth vein to return to the yamen. Inside, the female servant met her. Jinggu inquired, “Did the master of the house question you?”

The servant replied, “The master is still in there sleeping. He has been sleeping from the time you left, and has not yet awakened.” Madame Chen was very pleased. She told the servant to go out and notify the yamen personnel that if a woman surnamed Li came looking for her to quickly report this in the yamen and let her know. The servant went out to instruct the yamen personnel and transmit the order. Chen Jinggu was secretly pleased. Moreover, the master still hadn’t gotten up. Since she had gone out on her own, it was even better.

Now we will return to Madame Li. The next day, as instructed, she thoroughly cleaned the house and made arrangements for her father. She put on mourning clothes and walked to the police chief’s yamen, where she explained to the doorman that she wanted to see Madame Chen. He went into the inner office and reported to the servant, who in turn informed Madame Chen, who requested that Madame Li come into the inner yamen. As soon as Madame Li saw her, she said, “Elder sister on high, please accept my full respects.”

Madame Chen laughed, and said, "We are sisters from the same family! Why act like this? From now on, I will treat you, Madame Li, as if we were one flesh and blood. The matter is settled."

Formerly, it was said that in Luoyuan there was a retired country gentleman who had left government service, whose name was Lin Chen. He once went as prefect to Dongdu.⁸ His wife was a Madame Xu, and they had two sons and a daughter, and several servants. Because of burdensome court business, Lin Chen resigned his position and returned to his hometown. His daughter was called Jiuniang. She was about seventeen years of age, both kind and beautiful. From the time she was young she read books, and was fond of discussing the *Zhou Changes*.⁹ From morning till night she always had a book in hand. With all her heart she studied the principles of divination and magical numbers, but there was no one with superior understanding to teach her and she often felt depressed. She accompanied her father when he returned to his hometown.

One day when they were staying at an inn, an old man with a snow-white beard and hair and an extraordinary appearance approached Mr. Lin. "Your daughter, Jiuniang, wants to study the principles of divination and divine numbers," he said. "I have now especially brought a volume titled *Luo River Divine Numbers*. I hope you will give it to her, as it can teach her the inner mysteries."¹⁰

Mr. Lin was delighted. He thought to himself, "My daughter is fond most of all of divinatory numbers. Now having obtained this book, I will give it to her to thoroughly familiarize herself with it, and it will certainly fulfil her heart's desire." He promptly took the book and went inside without even asking the old man's name or thanking him. He gave the book to Jiuniang, who opened it and looked: inside were the instructions for the most esoteric information. In a short time she had thoroughly understood them, and was able to know the principles of the *Changes* and to arrange the trigrams. Jiuniang told her father that she knew it all, and sent him out to thank the old man.

Mr. Lin hurried out, but the old man had disappeared. Asking the young servant, he learned that when he himself had turned away, the old man had changed into a pure wind. The servant didn't know where he had gone. Mr. Lin and his daughter were both astonished, and bowed in thanks.

From that time on, Jiuniang knew how to work transformations and marvels and the principles of arranging the trigrams. From dawn to dusk, she

practiced without stopping. After they returned, one day she was in her room during the first watch laying out the changes of the numbers of the eight gates and the eight harms, and harmonizing them from within. The transformations were limitless. Just when she was in doubt, a very fierce man burst in from the sky. Greatly startled, she cried out.

The man descended into the palace of trigrams, and when Jiuniang looked again, he had changed into a thumb-sized paper man!¹¹ Jiuniang thought to herself, "It is surely a violent man who is working this evil magic, depositing this paper man in order to delude me. It's a good thing I hadn't yet gone to sleep, was arranging the trigrams here, and discovered it. If it had happened while I was sleeping, I would surely have suffered the poison of this malevolent man. My fate is certainly a happy one. It is the achievement of a spirit of good fortune."

She took the paper man and pressed it into the female palace trigram. The male was Heaven and the female was Earth, with the female palace as the door to the earth. She continued to gaze at the trigrams, afraid that he would return. She kept guard until the second watch when, again, a voice sounded in the air, and another man arrived. Greatly alarmed, Jiuniang again shouted. The man descended and turned into a paper man two inches tall. Once again, Jiuniang pressed it into the female palace trigram. By the fifth watch, altogether five paper men had come. All of them had been shouted down by Jiuniang and pressed into the trigram. The first paper man to come held in his hand a rope, while the others wielded knives or brandished swords.

At dawn, Jiuniang told her parents about the paper men during the night. She was about to burn the five paper men in order to cut off the fiend when Lin Chen stopped her, saying, "You can't destroy the five lives one after the other. That certainly would not be auspicious. For the moment, treat them with leniency. Wait while I look into what fiendish man sent them here and why. If the fiendish man who sent them to do harm comes seeking to rescue them, rebuke him and let him go. It should be all right."

Then he sent out servants everywhere to make thorough inquiries, but there was no news. They only learned that there was a man of a particular school who frequently sent out disciples to lure in beautiful women. He belonged to a large temple on White Pagoda Peak, where there was an abbot who used fiendish evil arts. The servants returned home and made their report. Lin Chen said to Jiuniang, "This is the evil magic of a fiend priest.

Wait for him to come to rescue [the trapped paper men], and see what he has to say.”

Now let us turn to White Pagoda Peak, on the border of Luoyuan. On the peak was White Pagoda Temple with an abbot named Iron Head Monk, and in the temple there were more than a hundred disciples. This Iron Head Monk had marvelous magic, so everyone was afraid of him, and even the local gentry and officials all respected him. Only Police Chief Liu, who had twice been appointed there as an official, and Prefect Lin, who had now finished his term of service and returned home, had not gone to call on him.

For this reason, the fiend monk harbored resentment. He heard that Prefect Lin had a daughter called Jiuniang, and that she was very beautiful. Intending to use his evil magic to lure Jiuniang into the temple for his wanton pleasure, Iron Head Monk had manifested his remarkable power. That night he dispatched disciples one after another to lure her, until there were five. But in the end, not even one reported back, and he had misgivings.

The next night, he himself secretly slipped into Prefect Lin's house. Only then did he learn that Jiuniang herself was able to arrange the trigrams, and that his five disciples were all pressed into the female palace. Iron Head Monk burst out laughing and said, “Jiuniang, although you are able to arrange the trigrams, you are not capable of carrying out their magic. As a general principle, the male is the gate of Heaven and the female is the gate of Earth, the *xun* trigram is the human world, and the *gen* trigram is the way of the ghosts. These four gates of activity, I figure you can't handle them.” He continued, “You only know the numbers of the Posterior to Heaven order of the ‘Yellow River Chart’ and the ‘Luo River Writing.’ You only know this, but you don't know the transformations of the Heavenly One producing water and the Earthly Six receiving it. These are the marvelous numbers of the dragon and horse carrying on their backs the River Charts.”¹² Then he went back to the White Pagoda Temple.

In the end, to see how Iron Head Monk saved the lives of his disciples, read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

In the Old Temple the Fiend Monk Works His Evil Magic / The Lian River Clam Monster Creates a Spectral Tower

LET US TAKE UP THE STORY OF IRON HEAD MONK, WHO ON THIS night was in the meditation hall arranging the solemn and illustrious divination numbers of Fu Xi, with the *qian* at the head and the *kun* at the feet. The five phases were precisely five stones, placed in the five directions.¹ He set out five earthenware dishes covered with five earthenware basins, arranged with attention to every detail. Then he ordered five Buddhist novices to each stand guard, one over each basin. He instructed them, "Each of you must be attentive. You will each watch over one basin, and you absolutely must not peek inside."

His orders completed, he took with him the six armored spirit generals of the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and eleventh Terrestrial Branches, in combination with the second and fourth Terrestrial Branches.² They slipped into the Lin house just before the family had gone to sleep. Jiuniang sat alone in a room, guarding the image in the center of the trigrams. All around her were lanterns and candles, so light filled the room. Iron Head Monk ordered five of the spirit generals to enter the Gate of Heaven, go to the Mansion of Earth, and steal back the five disciples.³ The monk would then take the five disciples back to the temple.

Once again he went out, deploying the art of illusion. He ordered one armored god to change into a seal script image and smash Jiuniang's trigrams.⁴ Then he ordered a disciple to carry Lin Jiuniang back to the temple. Next he ordered four of them to go to the Lin house and carry off the provincial governor, his wife and children, all four of them. And that night the five disciples were ordered to go to the Lin house and smash the trigrams.

Jiuniang had dozed off for a moment, and was quickly carried off by one of the disciples back to the temple, where she was turned over to Iron Head Monk, who put her into a basin and covered it. At the same time, the other four took the provincial governor and his wife and children and carried them off to the temple, where the monk imprisoned each of them in an earthenware basin. In all there were five basins and five Buddhist novices to keep watch over them. The monk thought to himself, "The trigrams have been smashed and the five people are all imprisoned in the basins." Then he ordered six *ding* and six *jia* spirit generals each to return to the center of the Fu Xi layout and keep guard, and he himself went into the meditation room to rest.⁵

Now we will take up the story of the Buddhist novices guarding the basins. They kept guard till midnight. Then one of the novices said, "The master ordered us to guard these basins, and we accepted the order. We were instructed not to peek, but I don't know why. There must be some marvelous magic inside, and for this reason he ordered us not to peek. If I peek to see what is inside, the master will not necessarily know." Then he lifted the lid, and the other four novices came to look. All they saw was an empty basin with nothing at all inside, so they all laughed, "The master has deceived us. He had no reason to tell us to go a whole night without sleep, guarding empty basins here." After laughing for a while, they put the lid back on the basin.

The next day the monk came to the meditation room to check on the five covered dishes. Seeing that the five novices were all there, he examined the five basins and the people imprisoned inside. Greatly alarmed, he said, "How is it that only four of these five basins contain a person? Why is there no one in this basin?" Only after closely questioning the five novices did he find out the truth. Angrily, he said, "The others have not left. Only Lin Jiuniang is gone." Then he ripped the clothes off the novice, hung him upside down from a rafter, and beat him several hundred times, stopping only when the novice was almost dead. He thought he would wait until midnight and then go and cast an evil spell over Jiuniang to get her back.

Now we will return to Lin Jiuniang, who had been carried off and imprisoned in the basin. Luckily, she got the chance to escape when the basin was opened. She examined the trigrams. Only then did she know that the layout had been smashed and the paper men had escaped. Her father, mother, and elder and younger brothers had all disappeared! She felt forlorn when she realized that she had suffered a counterattack by the fiend monk's extraordinary magic, and her whole family had been carried off. She herself had been fortunate to get the chance to escape, and now she had to think of a way to rescue her parents and brothers. She thought and thought, but could not come up with a clever plan. She turned it over in her mind. Since she had no way to save them, it would require the government legal apparatus to preserve her parents and brothers.

Jiuniang settled on a plan. She rushed to the police chief's yamen, beat the drum, and shouted for help. When Police Chief Liu heard her, he instructed the court to sit, and a yamen runner escorted Jiuniang before the bench. When he asked her why she beat the drum and shouted for help, Jiuniang recounted the whole story of the extraordinary magic of the fiend monk, and begged the police chief to hurry and rescue her family in order to avoid the grief of the deaths of four people.

When Police Chief Liu heard the case, he was alarmed, and at his wit's end. He withdrew from the court, went inside, and informed his wife, Lady Chen. She ordered a black-turbaned soldier to go out and bring the plaintiff into the yamen, where Lady Chen asked for her name and details about the incident. Jiuniang replied, "Iron Head Monk of White Pagoda Peak first ordered paper men to come carry me off, but I pressed them into the middle of the trigram layout. That night he smashed the layout and snatched away the five paper men. What's more, my whole family was carried off! Fortunately, I escaped and returned. As for my parents and brothers, now I have no plan that can save them, and for this reason I came here to submit a request to quickly rescue them."

When Lady Chen heard the circumstances, she looked Jiuniang over carefully, and, seeing that she had the air of the virtuous power of the Way, wanted to make her a sister. "You needn't worry," she said. "Since you already thoroughly understand the principles of the *Changes*, now you must learn true magic. If you want to capture this monk, how hard can that be?"

Jiuniang said through her tears, "My parents and brothers have been carried off by the fiend monk, and I don't know if they are dead or alive. If I wait

until I have completed studying magic, their four lives will come to an end. I earnestly beg your favor to quickly use the royal law to punish him.”

The Lady replied, “If I use the royal law, it will be of no use. Tonight you can’t go back home, because I’m afraid that during the night the fiend monk will certainly come. If you are again taken away by him, then your parents and brothers will all be nothing.”

Jiuniang wept, “If I don’t go home, tell me, where shall I sleep?”

The Lady answered, “There’s no need to weep and wail. Tonight, stay in our yamen. Wait while I tell my husband to issue a warrant for a runner to go to White Pagoda Temple to search for the four of them and seize the fiend monk.”

Thereupon Police Chief Liu issued the warrant, and a runner took it and departed. When he arrived at White Pagoda Temple he searched all around, but there was no trace of the four, so he didn’t dare arrest the fiend monk. Instead, the monk sent the messenger back to make an accusation to Police Chief Liu! “That family is not prudent to let their daughter do bad things. She kidnapped five disciples and hid them in her room for wanton sex and didn’t let them go. I request that you seize the whole Lin family and settle the issue.”

When Lady Chen saw that the monk had made a counteraccusation against Provincial Governor Lin, she said to Jiuniang, “As for what I’ve planned, what do you think?”

Jiuniang wept and said, “If this is the case, then I will never see my parents and brothers again,” and she felt a terrible grief.

Lady Chen consoled her, “Worthy younger sister, there is no need to be heartbroken. As for your father and mother, I foresee that there will be no problem. I think the fiend monk will certainly come tonight to look for you. You can arrange the hexagrams as before, and I will be at your side to help you. Tonight when that bald ass comes, I guarantee I’ll capture him, and in doing so show off my powers.”⁶ Then they set up a table in the West Flower Hall, where Jiuniang fetched red beans and laid out the hexagrams. The Lady secretly brought out her magic implements, and summoned her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to await the fiend monk’s arrival.

Now we will turn to the monk, who, after Jiuniang escaped, was very unhappy. When night fell, he used evil magic to go to the Lins’ house. Seeing that there was no one around, he thought to himself, “They must certainly be in the police chief’s yamen,” so he turned to enter the yamen.

There he saw that the first and second gates were both wide open, with no one on guard. Stealthily, he slipped inside. He saw only the West Flower Hall, brilliantly lit with lanterns and candles, and Jiuniang arranging hexagrams. At her side stood a very beautiful woman. The bald-ass monk's heart was extremely happy. "After all," he thought, "there are two beautiful women! This is my good fortune!" Then he stole a look at the hexagrams she had laid out.

It was identical to the one that had previously been smashed! Just as he was thinking that he would smash her hexagram layout as before and easily carry off the two women back to his temple so that everyone could take turns having their pleasure from dawn to dusk, and was about to strike, the Lady shouted, "Fiend monk, stop your wanton behavior!" At that moment she threw the demon-binding rope, and with a shout ensnared him. Already, Wang and Yang, the two bodyguards, were pulling the rope tight. They tied up the fiend monk and suspended him from a rafter.

The Lady said, "Fiend monk, you dare to come and work your evil magic! Obviously, you carried off the parents and brothers of the Lin family, and came back to bring false charges against other people. Tonight you brazenly dare to come do evil things, and I have caught you! What justification do you have for yourself? Speak up!"

The monk hurriedly recited a spell to loosen the rope, hoping to free himself. Who could have known that Lady Chen's magic was the true magic, so that the more he recited, the tighter the rope became? He thought to himself that it was no good. Facing his enemy once again, he demanded, "Who are you? Why are you helping this person who is arranging the hexagrams?"

Lady Chen answered, "I expect you don't know me, since you dare to display your slight skill before an expert. Now I will speak and you will listen. I am the daughter of Mr. Chen of Xiadu, and the wife of the current police chief in Luoyuan. My name is Jinggu. Now do you know me?"

The monk thought to himself, "So it's her!" Then he said, "Earlier, I truly didn't recognize you. Now that I've heard your famous name, I beg you to let me go. I am willing to send the four back. In this way it will be greatly to your convenience."

Lady Chen laughed and said, "First send the four back, and only then I will be willing to release you. I don't care what is convenient or not."

The monk said, "Now that I am held here by you, how I am supposed to release the other four?"

Lady Chen replied, "You want me to first release you? That is absolutely out of the question! What fiendish magic did you use on Jiuniang's parents and brothers? Where did you hide them? Tell the truth! If you don't tell the truth, I'll hang you upside down for a year and a half, and never let you go. If you have fiendish magic, use your skills to the utmost. I have true magic to deal with you." The monk was desperate to extricate himself, and said, "I haven't hurt the four. I used four earthen basins with lids, which I am keeping in the West Meditation room in the temple."

Lady Chen immediately ordered Wang and Yang, her two bodyguards, to go to the temple and bring them back. Receiving the order, the two bodyguards went to the White Pagoda Temple's West Meditation room, where they saw a covered earthen basin on the floor next to the wall. They lifted the lid of the basin and, as expected, Jiuniang's parents and brothers were inside. Using a spirit wind to lift them, they took them back to the police chief's yamen. Lady Chen quickly sprayed talismanic water to cause the fiend's vapor to dissipate. When they saw Jiuniang, they wept in each other's arms. Only then did Lady Chen let the monk go back. To Jiuniang and the others she said, "You can all stay in the yamen for the time being. Wait until I have eliminated the monk, and then you can go home."

Jiuniang and her family couldn't thank her enough. Jiuniang saw that the Lady possessed true magic, and begged the Lady to teach her. She wanted to be her servant till the end of her life, attending on the Lady. The Lady replied with a laugh, "That's absurd. You are the daughter of an official of the fifth rank. How could you be a servant? But we could be sworn sisters. That would be reasonable."

She ordered a servant to set up an incense burner table and, facing Heaven, they became sworn sisters. Because the Lady was older, she was the elder sister, and Jiuniang, being younger, was the younger sister. Then the Lady paid her respects to Provincial Governor Lin and his wife. She taught the true magic to Jiuniang, who studied diligently.

Now we will return to Iron Head Monk, who had gone back to the temple after being hung upside down. He was very unhappy, and longed to take revenge, but had no ingenious plan. Alone he sat in the meditation room, his rumblings of hatred unceasing. At nightfall, he was finally quiet. After reciting incantations, drawing talismans, and summoning magic, he went straight out of the meditation room. Facing two clay vajras he chanted several incantations and cast several spells.⁸ The vajras immediately began to

move, and descended the mountain, each wielding a precious sword. The monk went back into the meditation room to sit in meditation and wait for good news.

Now we will return to Lady Chen, who that night in the West Hall was expounding magic to Jiuniang, teaching her the art of shrinking distances, as well as that of flying daggers, and so on. At the second watch of the night, they heard a violent wind rise up. A gust shook the earth and rocked the mountain, so that the room swayed back and forth. Jiuniang was frightened. The Lady said, "It's the fiend monk's magic art. He's coming back to settle a score with his enemies."

Then she went out of the hall. In the courtyard she saw two huge men standing there, their height and size without match.⁹ Their heads were as big as large wine containers; their waists had the circumference of twenty arms; they had hooked noses and round eyes, and beards that fell below their necks; they had long fangs and golden bodies. In their hands they grasped precious swords, which they brandished. They spoke not a word.

When the Lady saw them, she went back inside and said to her two younger sisters Lin and Li, "Just as I expected, it's that bald-ass monk I hung upside down; he is not willing to let it go. Using his evil magic again, he has sent these two giants to come here to take revenge on his enemies."

The two younger sisters asked, "Who are those two giants?"

The Lady replied, "They are only the vajras who guard the gate to the mountain, so there's no need to be alarmed. Wait while I deploy my skills against them."

Lady Chen took up her sword, jumped down from the porch, and hacked at the two earthen vajras. Because the vajras were tall, the eaves low and their swords long, with their lower halves near the ground and their upper halves in the sky, it was not easy for them to engage in battle. Moreover, because they were made of clay, they couldn't move as nimbly as could people. Their legs and bellies were soon slashed by the Lady, and they resumed their original appearances, the clay falling away from their legs. She heard the sound of clanging, just like a mountain collapsing or the earth splitting. The vajras could no longer stand upright and fell under the porch.

The Lady laughed and said, "Using these earthen, wood-carved things, what can he do to me?" When she had spoken, she went inside. They chatted until the third watch, when again they heard a noise like a mountain collapsing or the earth splitting. Black vapor filled the sky, and they saw herds of

cows and packs of dogs burst into the West Hall. Making no distinction between north, south, east, and west, they indiscriminately dashed around biting. There were more and more of them, and the sound was like that of tremendous thunder. The Lady quickly ordered her two younger sisters to withdraw.

She unbound her hair. With loosened hair, she brandished her sword, and blew her spirit horn. The mass of cows and dogs did not dare advance, but huddled in their herds and packs. The Lady paced out the steps of the Big Dipper, chanted the spirit text, and performed her true magic. Then she sprayed talismanic water from the basin at the cows and dogs. Instantly, they resumed their original form, which was nothing but paper cutouts! On the paper, which was black on one side and yellow on the other, were drawn cow and dog heads. The Lady blew her spirit wind on them, and they whirled around and fell down, covering the ground with paper. She halted her magic, swept up the paper cows and dogs, and tied up her hair.

The two younger sisters were astounded. The Lady said angrily, "The bald-ass monk is this abominable! He uses these cows, dogs, and ferocious animals to come harm us. If it had been a quarter of an hour later, we would have been hurt.¹⁰ I must avail myself tonight of his being off guard to go to the temple to kill him, in order to relieve my hatred." Then she ordered Third Elder Sister Li to keep watch over the yamen. She herself left with Jiuniang, each bearing a precious sword, and by means of an earth vein they went to White Pagoda Temple. To Jiuniang she said, "Worthy younger sister, wait here. I will order Wang and Yang, my two bodyguards, to assist you. You can come with me into the temple to kill the monk."

Then she went into the meditation room where she saw the fiend monk sitting on a mat. In her hand she held magic, and with her mouth she chanted incantations. Brandishing a flying sword, she shouted, "Bald-ass monk, don't flee! Eat my sword!" She raised her hand and the sword fell. But the bald-ass monk had vanished! Greatly astonished, the Lady said, "The fiend monk was clearly on the meditation mat. As soon as I hacked at him with my sword, how could he disappear just like that?"

Just as she was trying to figure out what had happened, she saw the shiny-headed monk with a meditation rod in hand coming to fight. Hearing the sound of wind, the Lady raised her head to look, quickly using her sword to parry the blow. There was now one fiend monk and one Daoist young woman contesting their magic in the temple. Although the monk's energy and

temper were fierce, he was no match for the Lady's sword arts. Like dragon and tiger they fought until the sky turned light in the east, when the monk's strength failed and his rod technique disintegrated.

Calculating that it would be difficult to withstand his enemy, the monk fled the White Pagoda Temple and went down the mountain.¹¹ It never occurred to him that Jiuniang would be lying in ambush at the base of the mountain, sword in hand. When he reached the base, Jiuniang saw him pause to catch his breath, and slashed at him with her sword. The fiend monk hurried to parry the blow with his meditation rod. In pursuit, the Lady also came down the mountain. Behind the bald-ass monk's back she brought her sword down right onto his neck, and his head fell to the ground. His body fell on top of a large rock at White Pagoda Peak, and his blood flowed out, covering the ground.

It was already daybreak when the Lady decapitated the monk. She went into the temple with Jiuniang and proclaimed the crimes of the fiend monk, saying, "Now I have killed him in order to pacify the meditation temple and correct its ways of learning." The monks all expressed their thanks. The Lady also ordered the novice who had accidentally released Jiuniang by surreptitiously opening the earthenware basin to return to the correct Way.

From the temple, the Lady recovered more than ten women—all villagers from the vicinity who had either entered the temple to burn incense or had passed by it, and been abducted by the fiend monk, who had hidden them in an underground vault. She ascertained each woman's name and address, and ordered the monks to escort them home. Once the orders were issued, she and Jiuniang returned to the yamen.

When Luoyuan, Ningde, and other places heard that the Lady had eliminated the fiend monk, there was no one who did not sing her praises.¹² Today, there is a rock "Banlingshi at Qifu on White Stone Peak in White Stone District in Luoyuan County in Fuzhou Prefecture, one corner of which was hacked off by Jiuniang. The mark of the sword and the bloodstain remain on the rock, while the head of Iron Head Monk is on a rock on top of the peak. People have seen these things when the sky is dark and gloomy.

Now let us return to the Lady, who had decapitated Iron Head Monk. The three sisters recited scriptures from dawn to dusk in order to transmit the true teachings of Mount Lü. Whenever Police Chief Liu encountered this sort of case without any clues, in every instance it was the Lady who assisted

him with her miraculous powers of investigation and judgment. The people were at peace and things flourished.

At that time it was early autumn. The Lady said to Miss Li, "Now it is the time for ascending to the Realm of the Immortals. I am going to look around to see where there are fiends who could harm people. Worthy younger sister, you first go home. If your father wants to enter Paradise, you go with him." Miss Li consented. She made her preparations for the journey, and took her leave of the Lady and Jiuniang.

When Miss Li arrived home, she went to see her father. She told him in detail how the Lady had treated her like a sister, loving her as her own flesh and blood, and had transmitted to her the magical arts, and moreover had saved Jiuniang's whole family. Her father said, "You, my daughter, have the affection of the Lady, so you will be safe. Therefore, as your father, I am no longer tied down. It is the seventh month, the time for ascending to the Realm of the Immortals. Now that you have a secure refuge, as your father I want to go to the Realm of the Immortals, the world of supreme happiness and leisure, to not lose the fruit of cultivating my heart and mind my entire life."

Miss Li replied, "I have my suspicions that the Realm of the Immortals is not necessarily real. I fear that it is a fiend's illusion."

Her father said, "You really are a fool! The practice of ascending to the Buddhist realm has gone on for years right up to the present. I don't know how many millions of people have been saved. A fiend's illusion? What a preposterous idea!"

Miss Li saw that her father was bewitched, so she said nothing more. She recalled the Lady's detailed instructions to only make for her father a Daoist gown and Daoist cloth shoes and socks, and so on, and to do nothing until the evening of the fifteenth day of the seventh month. In every locality, men and women, old and young, went to their relatives' families a day in advance to say goodbye. That night the moon was as bright as day. Miss Li and her father, just the two of them, went to their relatives and friends to say goodbye. That night Miss Li helped her father put on his clothes and get ready, and went with him to the port. As expected, it was bustling with excitement.

That evening the Lady was in the inner yamen, where she instructed Lin Jiuniang to look after things there. She herself waited until her husband had gone to sleep. Hiding in her sleeve her demon-binding rope and wearing at her waist her magic sword, she shrank into an earth vein. In a moment she arrived at the port, where she saw a tremendous crowd of people. In the port

a half *li* from the shore a huge, tall tower had appeared. Inside, it was ablaze with lights that glittered brilliantly. From top to bottom were colorful festoons, on the two sides there were jade railings, and to the left and right stood ten Buddhist novices. Claspng their hands in front of them, they chanted the Buddha's name. Above on both sides hung two large glass lamps, as bright as the sun and moon. If you listened closely, there was the sound of flutes and drums. A long bridge ran between the railings, the head of the bridge reaching the shore of the port. On either side there was a handrail with carved flowers and gold paint, with towers at the side. To the left and right rare flowers and extraordinary grasses were arranged.

At this time, the people who were arriving were both men and women, old and young of every age. There was also a group of monks and Daoist priests standing on either side. To the left of family members who were ascending to the Realm of the Immortals, if they were kindred sons and grandsons, they offered incense, standing behind the old people. There was also a group of onlookers, standing to either side, waiting until the people of each prefecture and county had all arrived. Then each and every one offered incense, and each of those ascending the tower of the Realm of the Immortals bowed. The monks recited scriptures and urged the world not to kill living souls, and to take care to cultivate tranquility in order to return to bliss. They also chanted the words of *The Hidden Power of Lord Wenchang* as a means of passing the time as they waited for people from more distant places to arrive.¹³

Now let us speak of Lady Chen, who was looking all around. She knew that a fiend spirit had created this illusion. She saw Miss Li arrive, supporting her father, and said to her, "I perceive that this Realm of the Immortals is really a bewitching illusion created by a fiend, but I don't know which fiend it is. Worthy younger sister, take your father and wait over there. He absolutely must not enter the Realm of the Immortals. Wait for me to investigate and determine which fiend it is, as only then will I be able to deal with it."

Miss Li followed her instructions. The Lady took her sword and soared into the air. Drawing near the tower, she deployed her supernatural radiance to look it over carefully. Smiling coldly, she said to herself, "I said it wasn't any kind of Realm of the Immortals. What they are calling the 'Paradise of Supreme Happiness' is in fact an evil fiend's conjuring up of an illusion in order to fill its belly. The common people have no idea! They foolishly hope for the Realm of the Immortals. Who would have thought that this fiend is a huge sea clam?"

The spit in its mouth could turn into a mirage. This is what ordinary people call a sea tortoise spouting waves. This sea creature floats on the surface of the sea, opening its huge mouth wide and turning it into a tower, with the clam inside. From a distance, it looks like jade railings along the sides. It sticks out its tongue to form a long bridge that reaches the shore. Then it takes its two long whiskers and passes them along the sides of the bridge right up to the shore, forming the two handrails. Above, the two horns on its head form two strangely shaped immortal rocks. Below its cheeks, a tangled mass of green beard spreads out in all directions, like bluish-green grass and green lichen. Its two eyes, round as cartwheels and even more brilliant and clear, form large glass lamps ablaze with light. All around, it is as bright as daylight. The two rows of twenty teeth are transformed into Buddhist novices who, divided along the two sides, clasp their hands together and pray to Buddha. The sound of breathing in the Clam Fiend's nose harmonizes with the sound of the wind and waves, so that from far away it is like the music of flutes and drums.

When the Lady finished looking, she sighed and said, "This fiend is seeking food in this way. From ancient times up till now, as a fixed rule every year at this time it has harmed who knows how many living souls." Before she had finished speaking, from everywhere people came in throngs to enter the Realm of the Immortals. When they had finished chanting the scriptures, the clanging of cymbals sounded. After offering incense and prayers, the people mounted the bridge to enter Paradise.

The Lady saw that the crowd was already on the bridge. She pressed her sword on the throat of the clam fiend and, using the spirit force of the True Law, thrust it in. The fiend spirit was wounded by the thrust, and in a flash retracted its tongue and rolled over. Turning head over tail, it knocked the Lady into the water, and she came up using the Water Method. The first ten or twenty old people on the bridge to the Realm of the Immortals were happily walking straight ahead, so that when the clam fiend hastily pulled back its tongue and turned a somersault, they fell into the water. In an instant the tower was entirely submerged and Paradise had disappeared! The people on the shore panicked, and the scores of old people who had not yet mounted the bridge were frightened out of their wits.

Now we will speak of the clam fiend, whose throat had been cut and who was thrashing around in the water. In a short time the dead clam fiend was floating on the surface, while the Lady was in the air. She saw the people who

had fallen into the water, and ordered others to pull them onto the shore and for each one's relatives to identify them and take them back. Then she returned to the surface of the water and stirred up a gust of spirit wind to blow the clam fiend to the shore, where she ordered the people to pull it onto dry land. The people didn't know what was happening. The Lady explained how the clam fiend's expelled breath formed a tower. The foolish people didn't know that those people they had thought were ascending to Paradise over the years were providing a meal for the fiend, which each year enjoyed one big feast.¹⁴ They thought that the fiend's belly was the realm of supreme happiness. "I have now killed this fiend, forever eliminating future trouble. Each of you identify your relatives and go home." The crowd of men and women, old and young, kowtowed in thanks.

When Miss Li heard the Lady's words, she was at the back with her father, who had not yet dared to mount the bridge. When she saw the Lady, she came forward to kowtow her thanks, saying that if it hadn't been for her having been all alone without any place to be settled, two years ago her father would have been buried in the fish's belly. While they were talking, day broke. The Lady told Miss Li to take her father home and get him settled, and then to come to the yamen, saying, "I will return first and wait." When she finished speaking, she shrank into the earth and returned home.

The crowd on the shore all had grandfathers, uncles, and members of the older generation who had fallen into the water when they were ascending to Paradise. They were very lucky that the Lady had saved them by bringing them to the shore. They each changed into dry clothing, and, with spoonfuls of ginger soup, little by little were restored to consciousness. Among them there were those able to survive and those whose lives had been cut off. There were also some who were searched for without result. All said that the Lady had spirit powers and magical arts, so why hadn't she saved them by bringing them to the shore? They hurried to cut open the clam fiend's belly with knives in order to search it; they never thought that those who had gone first had entered its belly, their lives already cut off. Truly it was:

All thought that by being vegetarian they would enter Paradise.

Who knew that their lives would be given to the clam fiend?

If you don't know what happened after Lady Chen killed the fiend and returned to the yamen, then read the next chapter to find out.

CHAPTER 10

As the Old Ruler Is on His Deathbed, the People Grieve / The New Lord Inherits the Throne, and the Common People Encounter Misfortune

NOW WE WILL TAKE UP THE STORY OF LADY CHEN AT THE MOUTH of the river at Lianjiang. Having eliminated the Clam Fiend, she returned to the yamen. At the port of Lianjiang, many of the people who had watched those “ascending to Paradise” saw the clam fiend. They dragged its body, weighing several thousand catties, onto the shore. The people came to sell the flesh of the fiend fish in order to get revenge and purge their hatred.

At that time, in Luo and Lian and other places, there were those who were adherents of the White Lotus teaching, and whose grandfathers and uncles had “ascended to Paradise” in the past. Only now did they know that they had been eaten by the clam fiend, and they all felt deeply distressed. When they heard that the fiend had been killed and that some people had dragged it onto the land to sell its flesh, the descendants of those who had been swallowed came to sell, cook, and offer it before the spirits of their ancestors. Then they threw the fiend’s bones into a cesspool. Although the fiend weighed more than a thousand *dan* it didn’t take more than half a day for it to be completely sold.¹ We won’t speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Miss Li’s father. From the evening of the day for entering Paradise, when with his own eyes he had seen the Lady capture and

kill the clam fiend, he returned home awakened to the truth. He no longer ate vegetarian food or chanted scriptures, but instead he drank wine and ate meat every day.

One day, Miss Li said goodbye to her father and went out. When she reached the gate, seeing that her cousin Miss Ou had come, she greeted her and invited her in. Miss Li asked, "Worthy younger sister, what do you have to tell me?"

Miss Ou answered, "I've heard that you have thrown your lot in with the yamen, and are studying the true magic of Mount Lü with Lady Chen. The other day I also heard that the Lady captured and killed the clam fiend at the port, saving many people. Everywhere, people feel gratitude to her. When I heard this, I admired her with all my heart. Unfortunately, my life, like yours, is a bitter one. Early, I lost my husband, and I vowed not to remarry.² When I think that right up to the end of my days there will be no one to rely on, I desire to trouble you to remember your sisterly affection for me and bring me to Lady Chen's school to study the true magic with you. I don't know if you are willing to introduce me or not."

Miss Li said, "Worthy younger sister, since you want to study magic, I will of course introduce you."

When they had finished talking, the two women set out. When they arrived at the yamen, Miss Ou met with the Lady and immediately prostrated herself. The Lady quickly helped her to her feet, saying, "In my house we are all sisters. Why employ such ceremony?" Then she asked who she was.

Miss Li replied, "This is my cousin. She lost her husband early on, and her family consists only of a fifty-year-old paternal aunt, her, and her mother. Yesterday, when she heard that the Lady had killed the clam fiend and saved many living souls, she realized that the Lady had learned the true magic of Mount Lü, and especially pleaded with me to introduce her to you. She honors you as a teacher and entreats you to accept her."

When she finished speaking, she and Miss Ou again prostrated themselves. The Lady looked Miss Ou over very carefully. She was indeed young and beautiful, and her physiognomy was out of the ordinary. She said, "Since you want to study magic, why would I not accept you? We will become sworn sisters. How would that be?"

Miss Ou said, "If you are willing to accept me, it would be my great good fortune, but how could I dare be sisters?"

The Lady replied, "There's no need to be so modest. From now on we will address each other as sisters. At this time the four of us are Chen, Li, Lin, and Ou. Although our surnames are different, our affection is like that of flesh and blood." From dawn till dusk they discussed scripture and magic. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will turn to the ruler of Min, Wang Shenzhi. From the first years of the Guanghua reign period of Zhaozong of the Tang dynasty, he was military commissioner.³ He was thrifty and temperate, wore only a hemp and cotton gown, and was loved by the people. Everyone praised his carrying out of the office of commissioner. In the twelfth lunar month of the third year of the Lingguang reign period of Emperor Zhuangzong (r. 923–26), he was at the royal residence due to illness.⁴ When he died, the people were inconsolable.

Luckily, the commissioner had five sons, and two adopted sons. The eldest was named Yanshu; he participated in the military administration. The next eldest was named Yanbin; he was prefect of Quanzhou. The third son was named Yanwu, and the fourth Yanwang; they assisted in the most crucial affairs of state. The fifth was named Yanyi; he was still a minor. The eldest adopted son was named Yanbing; he held the office of prefect of Jianzhou.⁵ His disposition was unyielding and forthright. The second adopted son was named Yanzheng; he was the military general responsible for training. There was a former general Cheng Bin, who was the Commander Who Raises Up the Emperor, and Meng He was the Commander Who Masters Awesomeness. These officials all rushed home for the funeral. The Wang family set out the coffin, and temples and monasteries held rituals for penance. When the seven periods of seven days had been completed, they selected a burial to the south of the sacred peaks of Mount Lü.⁶

When mourning was completed, the civil and military officials proposed to establish the eldest son, Yanshu, as ruler.⁷ They all petitioned Emperor Zhuangzong to request that he succeed his father's position. When Zhuangzong heard that Shenzhi had died, he sighed repeatedly. He would not permit the title of king, instead sending down a proclamation enfeoffing Yanshu as Wei Wu General Commissioner.⁸

When the proclamation arrived in Fuzhou, Yanshu was extremely angry, and proceeded to proclaim himself king of Min state. He began to build a palace, and ordered all the officials to prepare materials for the ceremonies

and insignias of a Son of Heaven. He destroyed people's houses to construct the Mingwei Hall and Daming Palace. To the left he built Changchun Palace and Donghua Palace; to the right he built the Ziwei and Yuelong Palaces. Inside, he built the civil and military Great Hall and Taifu Hall, while outside were Zichen Gate, Qisheng Gate, Yingtian Gate, and Wuchao Gate. He ordered the Luo Wall in Min to be destroyed (this is the present day Jin Gate).⁹ When the towers and walls were built, Nine Immortals Mountain and Black Stone Mountain were enclosed within the walls, and the name was changed to Jia Wall.¹⁰

This was the time of major construction projects. Seven gates were built in the wall. The east gate was named Yan Gate; the west gate was named Yi'ai Gate; the north gate was named Jinxian Gate; the southeast gate was named Shuibu Gate, also known as Shanhua Gate; the northeast gate was called Tang Gate, also known as Yansheng Gate. The northwest gate was named Jinglou Gate; it was also called Tian Gate.

When the construction was completed, Yanshu was even more arrogant and cruel. He was fond of the art of gathering female yin energy to replenish his yang energy, everywhere selecting girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty from among the common people. All were to be sent to the inner palace. If any were hidden from him, punishment would extend to ten families in the neighborhood, so the people's complaints filled the streets. Families with girls had no alternative but to send them as gifts. Those who were debauched complied, while those who were honest and virtuous committed suicide. No one knows how many died.

Going back to when commissioner Wang Shenzhi was alive, his wife had a maidservant named Chen Jinfeng, who was nineteen years old.¹¹ She was sweet and charming, elegant and refined. Her eyes were like autumn water, her eyebrows like spring mountains. After the commissioner died, this young woman prostrated herself before a Madame Yan, who had been the wet nurse to Yanshu and Yanbin, as her adoptive mother. Madame Yan's husband had died earlier, leaving a son who was already eighteen years old. His name was Gui Lang, and his style name was Shouming.¹² The mother and son both lived in the Wang residence.

When Yanshu declared himself king and Madame Yan admonished him, Yanshu flew into a rage and wanted to kill her. To himself he thought, "In ancient times there were the mourning duties which one owed to the three

categories of fathers and eight categories of mothers. To avoid killing her, she and her family are expelled from the palace.”

When Jinfeng saw her foster mother being driven out, she hugged her and wept; it was hard to part from her. She said to Madame Yan, “I saw Yanshu dizzily engaging in licentiousness, a tyrant. I want to go with you, my foster mother, out of this residence.”

Madame Yan consented. Jinfeng changed her makeup, dressed up as a man, and they both fled the palace. When they had gone part way, by chance they ran into her son, Gui Lang, and together they went to a house in East Street Alley, where the three of them talked it over. “This place is very close to the Wang residence. If rumor leaks out that a court lady is being harbored, the punishment won’t be trivial,” Jinfeng said. “I have a fellow clansman whose name is Kuangsheng,¹³ who lives at Gaogai Mountain outside the south pass.¹⁴ In his family is a Miss Li, an elderly aunt who has many fellow clansmen who do business in Changle, the ancestral homeland. What’s more, this Gaogai Mountain is a very out-of-the-way place. We could hide there for the time being, and wait with my mother’s younger brother for news. Then I will return to East Street Alley.”

After the three of them talked it over and decided that it was suitable, Gui Lang went to the riverbank and hired a small boat. Once the boat rental was settled, he returned home, took fine clothes and valuables, put them in suitcases and trunks, carried them out, and locked the door. With his mother and Jinfeng he went to Maoying Bridge to row the boat, and, before long, they reached Gaogai Mountain.

When the three arrived at Kuangsheng’s house, Miss Li inquired, “Worthy niece, you were in the palace of the king of Min, so what brings you here today? I haven’t seen you for years. You have grown up.”

Jinfeng replied, “I have a very bitter fate. When young I lost my parents and I have no brothers. Earlier I was fortunate that you, Aunt, took pity on me so that I was able to make it to adulthood. And I was fortunate that I also received the affection of the ruler of Min, who regarded me as his own child, and I had a place where I could enjoy peace. In the twelfth month last year, because the previous king fell ill and died, and his eldest son Yanshu ascended the throne, all the old servants and concubines were driven out. What’s more, he had young women brought into the palace. It was only for this reason that I, your niece, was able to come home.”

Miss Li said, "Since you've come home, that's fine." Pointing to Madame Yan, she asked, "Who is this?"

Jinfeng answered, "This is my foster mother, who was a wet nurse in the palace. Because the new king inherited the throne and had no use for old acquaintances, she has come with me to your house to stay for a few months. I beg you to let us stay."

Miss Li then pointed at Gui Lang and asked, "And who is he?"

Madame Yan answered, "He is my youngest son."

When Miss Li heard that they were all members of her family, she said to Jinfeng, "Your uncle is still in Changle on business, and hasn't yet returned. You and your foster mother can certainly have a place of refuge." Then she prepared a clean room for Madame Yan and Jinfeng to rest, while Gui Lang bought firewood, rice, vegetables, and other daily necessities. He, however, went to the East Street Alley house. He was busy from dawn to dusk, always coming and going.

Gui Lang had seen how beautiful Jinfeng was, and that she was at his mother's side. As if she were his own sister, she did not avoid him, and his desire was aroused. Jinfeng always called Gui Lang "little brother, little brother," and was very affectionate. Gui Lang saw that Jinfeng was very attractive and wanted to make a move, but his mother and aunt were always at her side, and their room so small and narrow that it was hard to get a chance.

One day, when Madame Yan and Miss Li were going to Gaogai Mountain to amuse themselves, they left Jinfeng sitting at home all alone with nothing to do, so she went into the garden to take a walk. There she saw several pots of balsam, while outside the wall there was a laurel. This wall had collapsed, so that she could also see that there was a flower garden with many flowers and trees. The orchids and laurels were in full bloom, their scent overpowering. When Jinfeng saw it, the scene aroused her emotions. She went to fetch the Four Treasures of the Study, and at the table in front of the window of the rear hall she began to write a poem.¹⁵

She had only written the first line when Gui Lang happened by. Seeing that his mother and aunt weren't there, he walked into the garden, where he saw Jinfeng writing in the rear hall. When Jinfeng saw him, she smiled, and said, "Little brother, you've come back."

Gui Lang asked, "Where did my mother and aunt go?"

Jinfeng replied, "They went on an excursion to Gaogai Mountain."

When Gui Lang heard this, he was secretly pleased, and thought to himself that if he didn't act now, when would there ever be a better time? Smiling, he said, "Elder sister, what well-turned phrases are you writing?" Jinfeng was just about to collect her things, but Gui Lang had already seen what she had written. He read her line of poetry aloud: "The golden phoenix is lovable" (*Jinfeng jiu kan qin*). Gui Lang said, "Elder sister, you write very well. What scenery have you chosen?"

Jinfeng said, "You've seen the garden beyond the wall. The laurel and orchids are both in full bloom. Your foolish elder sister has thoughtlessly written a single line. Don't laugh, younger brother."

Gui Lang said, "Elder sister, you have this line of poetry, and I would like to use my poor skill to continue your unfinished poem. I hope you won't make fun of me." He continued, saying, "Laurel and orchid, one can certainly have tender regard for them."

Jinfeng laughed and replied, "Indeed, one can have tender regard for laurel and orchid."

Gui Lang said, "Although laurel and orchids are lovable, they cannot be compared to the beauty of a golden phoenix (*jinfeng*), which is even more lovable." Now, *gui lan* (laurel and orchid) and Gui Lang are similar in sound, and *jinfeng* was Chen Jinfeng's name.

Jinfeng then wrote the third line: "Beyond the wall, sun and shadow move."

Then she gave the brush to Gui Lang, and he wrote the fourth line, "Flying and falling, golden eternal spring."

Jinfeng said, "The 'flying' character is not appropriate, as only remnants of flowers fly. If you changed it to 'don't fly' it would be better."

Gui Lang said, "If they 'don't fly and fall,' how can they come together?"

Jinfeng said, "You fall, I don't fall."

Gui Lang replied, "If you don't fall, elder sister, then I play the role of a butterfly to pick your flower heart. Then you will fall." While talking, he embraced Jinfeng and kissed her, holding her tight and arousing lascivious feelings in her.

She said, "You and I address each other as brother and sister, so how can we behave like this?"

Gui Lang said, "This is just adding intimacy to kinship."

When he had spoken, he carried her inside and they had sex. They were both very young; sharing the same pillow, they were mutually affectionate and vowed to live and die together. When Gui Lang had finished with all these affectionate intimacies, he still was not willing to leave the bed. Jinfeng said, "Our days of shared happiness will be very long, so why be greedy for a moment of pleasure? I am afraid that aunt and your mother will come back and find us. That would not be good."

Gui Lang got dressed and got out of bed. He said, "Now I will go to meet my mother and aunt. If I come, do as follows." Once the two of them had talked things over and were all set, Gui Lang went out and, after going part way up the mountain, returned with his mother and aunt. Pretending, Jinfeng said, "Younger brother, you're back!"

Gui Lang equally falsely answered, "I must go back to East Street Alley."

From this time on, Gui Lang often came and went. The neighbors and local toughs knew about it. They speculated that the Chen family harbored a young girl, who was very beautiful and that she daily had contact with a young man. If he wasn't an adulterer, then he was a thief.

One day when Gui Lang returned, the villagers surrounded the Chen house. They beat on the door and shouted, "Catch the whore in her hideout!" Madame Yan, greatly alarmed, said, "This matter has leaked out. To secretly harbor a palace concubine is no small matter. We must find a place to hide Jinfeng."

Gui Lang asked, "Who does the empty place behind the rear wall belong to?"

Miss Li said, "It is Minister of Education Hong's flower garden. His conduct is excellent." Gui Lang then told Jinfeng to go through the hole in the wall to hide for a time. She was to wait until the mob had left, and only then come out. Miss Li said, "We should do as follows." Madame Yan hurried to help Jinfeng go hide, and only then did Gui Lang come out to open the door. The band of toughs swarmed in and searched everywhere, but all they saw was the two old people. There was no young woman.

Miss Li angrily demanded, "What have you all come to my house looking for? I am poor and have nothing. When the old woman's son is not at home, you come here to bully her in broad daylight. This is unjustifiable and lawless." She gave them a good scolding, and the band of toughs ran out the door.

They retorted, "Who wants your things? Because you are hiding a commoner woman, that's why we came searching. We want to take her to the yamen." When they had finished speaking the band dispersed.

Now we will speak of Minister of Education Hong, who was the father-in-law of Wu Taishou of Jiutian Mountain. Hong's wife was Madame Ji, and they had one son, named Chengmo, who was in the capital, where he was in charge of matters at the Ministry of War, and one daughter, who was Wu Taishou's wife. In the Hong's home there were only old servant men and women to order around, and no able-bodied adults. Because Yanshu, the king of Min, everywhere selected young women from among the common people, Wu Taishou thought they could have his daughter escape by reaching the house of an official. For this reason, the Wus hid their daughter Wu Yaoqin (the Hong's granddaughter) in the Hong's house. No one knew about it.

At this moment Jinfeng entered the house from the flower garden. The two old people saw the young girl and asked her why she had come. Jinfeng explained, "I accompanied my mother to Uncle Kuangsheng's house to visit my aunt. We were bullied by toughs from the neighborhood who wanted to seize me and take me to the yamen for punishment. There was nothing I could do, so I entered your garden by slipping through a hole in the wall. I beg you two to protect me."

Minister of Education Hong could tell that she wasn't a common woman. He said, "Since you are a relative of our neighbor, why should we have any reason not to hide you? If you have nothing against it, you can be a companion to our granddaughter." Then he called Yaoqin to come meet her. In speech and temperament they were alike, and the two of them became sworn sisters.

Now we will return to Madame Yan. Once the toughs had dispersed, she went with Miss Li to the Hong family to thank them. She wanted to bring Jinfeng back home, but Mr. Hong and his wife said, "There are so few people in our family that we'd like your daughter to stay as a companion to our granddaughter. She can also thereby avoid being bullied by the toughs." Miss Li and Madame Yan thanked him over and over, said goodbye, and returned home. From this time on, Jinfeng lived peacefully with the Hong family, but Gui Lang found it very hard to give her up. Although Jinfeng thought of her lover, Yaoqin kept her there and would not let her go, so she had no choice but to exercise restraint.

One day the two of them were waiting on Minister of Education Hong, listening as he expounded a text. Minister of Education Hong explained the *Han Shu*, where the hegemon king of Chu (Xiang Yu) was in desperate straits at Gaixia.¹⁶ The minister told the two young women that when Xiang Yu reached the Wu River, “Xiang Yu had returned. He still had Chu.”

The two women said that Minister of Education Hong had given the first line of a couplet. Jinfeng then matched it: “Since Wen Ji [Xiang Yu’s concubine] was forced out, she lost her home.”

Yaoqin also contributed a line: “Bo Yi, even if he died, wouldn’t follow the Zhou.”¹⁷

Minister of Education Hong was shocked. To himself he thought, “In the future one of these two women will be chaste and one will be wanton.” When Jinfeng heard Yaoqin’s comparatively chaste couplet, she felt ashamed. Yaoqin also thought that Jinfeng would certainly remarry in the future and regretted becoming sworn sisters, but she kept it to herself. Truly it was:

Don’t show happiness or anger in your expression;
Only let chastity or wantonness be manifest in your heart.

If you want to know what happened after the two women wrote poems, read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11

Wang Yanbing Is Routed at Fuzhou City / Chen Shouyuan Proposes to Build the Baohuang Palace

NOW LET US RETURN TO LIU QI, WHO HAD HEARD THAT WANG Shenzhi, the ruler of Min, had died. When Wang Shenzhi's eldest son, Yanshu, did not receive the emperor's appointment, he declared himself king of Min.¹ As for his bureaucracy, he imitated the rituals and institutions of the Son of Heaven, seized and destroyed people's houses to build palaces, and everywhere collected young women for carnal pleasure, thinking that their yin could nourish his yang.

When Lady Chen heard about this, she urged her husband to resign his office, and Liu Qi submitted a memorial to resign. Yanshu approved it, and appointed the sheriff of Luoyuan to take his place. Liu Qi prepared men and horses, and chose a day to set out. Since the three sworn sisters Li, Lin, and Ou couldn't bear to be separated, they preferred to return to Gutian with Lady Chen. She was very happy with this decision, and instructed them to ask their parents' permission. All were willing, and thereupon all three sisters went to Gutian.

In Linshui Grotto they built a great hall, a project carried out on a huge scale. In a few months it was complete. It was a realm of peace and quiet, in which Lady Chen and her three sisters expounded the Law from dawn to dusk in Linshui Grotto.

Now let us first discuss the tyranny of Yanshu. Gathering the commoner women of Fuzhou had not been enough. He also promulgated a decree to go to Zhang[zhou], Quan[zhou], Xing[zhou], Yan[zhou], Men[zhou], and Shao[zhou], and ordered the civil and military officials there to select women between the ages of sixteen and twenty. At that time the prefect of Quanzhou was Wang Yanbin, the younger brother of the ruler of Min, Yanshu.² He had heard that his elder brother was tyrannical, everywhere seizing commoner women, his licentiousness intolerable. Yet Yanshu continued to proclaim that every place had to select women and send them up, and decreed that any delay was unacceptable.

The prefect of Jianzhou, Wang Yanbing, who was Shen zhi's eldest adopted son, had a nature like a raging fire.³ He heard that the tyrannical ruler of Min had proclaimed that his subordinates were to select commoner women to present to him. When he saw the proclamation, he was extremely angry, and that night wrote a letter to sharply remonstrate with Yanshu, sending a subordinate, Zhang Ren, as his messenger.

At the time that Zhang Ren took the letter to Fuzhou, Court Calligrapher Wu Zui, having seen that Yanshu was tyrannical, was staying at home on the pretext of illness. Regional Military Commissioner of Gongchen Cheng Bin and Regional Military Commissioner of Yanhe Meng Wei, among others, had gone to the palace to sternly remonstrate. In a fit of rage, Yanshu had imprisoned them both. None of the remaining officials dared to again remonstrate until Zhang Ren presented Yanbing's letter of admonishment.

When Yanshu saw the letter he was enraged. He wanted to cut off the messenger's head and destroy the letter, but recalled Yanbing's hotheaded nature. If Yanbing heard that he had killed his messenger and destroyed his letter, he certainly would not give in. Then he thought of a plan. He ordered the palace censor, Libationer of the Directorate of Education Wen, to go to Gao'an Peak in the western outskirts to prepare a feast as a farewell send-off [for the messenger], and ordered that the wine be poisoned in order to kill Zhang Ren. Yanshu hoped thereby to dispel his resentment over the letter that Zhang Ren had brought.

Having accepted the order to prepare wine for the farewell dinner, Libationer Wen went to Gao'an Peak in the western outskirts to wait. He thought of how much the former ruler, Wang Shen zhi, had loved the people when he was alive, and how his benevolence and virtue had spread everywhere. Now with Yanshu on the throne, it was tyranny like this. Wen said to himself, "He

ordered me to poison the wine to kill the messenger so as to avoid the calamity of war. If I don't poison Zhang Ren, it will be impossible to report to my superior that the assigned mission is accomplished. Both courses are perilous." He continued, "It would be better for me to take the poison myself, in order to avoid the extreme of fratricidal war."

His mind made up, he drank the poisoned wine and died on Gao'an Peak. When Zhang Ren arrived, Libationer Wen had already breathed his last. Only then did Zhang Ren know that it was poisoned wine and that because Wen was unwilling to harm him, he had drunk it himself and died. He was deeply moved, and set out that very day to return to Jianzhou. There he had an audience with Yanbing and told him the whole story about the ruler of Min's rage, how he had ordered Libationer Wen to prepare wine for the farewell banquet and put poison in it to kill the messenger, and that because Wen was not willing to do this, he had taken the poison himself, dying on Gao'an Peak in the western outskirts.

When Yanbing heard this he was furious. He drilled his troops, selected generals, and joined forces with the prefect of Quanzhou, Yanbin, to dispatch troops and together send a punitive expedition against Yanshu. He raised an army of three thousand soldiers in Jianzhou and twenty-four brave generals. They set out for Fuzhou by night, and on the way they did not cause the slightest trouble to the people, going straight to the checkpoint outside Fuzhou, where they set up artillery and bivouacked the troops.

In the morning a scout reported that the ruler of Min had gone into his palace, and gathered together all the civil and military officials to discuss the strategy for sending out troops.⁴ The Vice Minister of the Military Bureau, Zhou Yuan, stepped forward from the ranks and reported, "Yanbing of Jianzhou's true temperament is unyielding and courageous; his soldiers are outstanding and his provisions are sufficient. You should issue a decree to release Cheng Bin and Meng Wei from prison to lead two thousand soldiers against the enemy." Yanshu immediately gave the order to release the two generals to lead the troops and to open the city gate to engage the enemy in battle.

When Yanbing saw the troops arrive, he personally led his soldiers to advance, shouting, "Kill!" Cheng Bin and Meng Wei, having been in prison, had no will to fight. After fighting only a few engagements, they fled defeated into the city, with Yanbing's soldiers in pursuit. Seeing that the city gates

were tightly closed, Yanbing ordered the use of scaling ladders to climb the walls. His soldiers killed and dispersed the troops guarding the walls, opened the gates wide, and with a great clamor entered the palace.

When Yanshu heard that his army had been defeated and the walls breached, he panicked. Frightened out of his wits, he hid at the base of the wall, where he was captured by the soldiers, who tied him up and presented him to Yanbing. They then proclaimed his ten evil crimes: (1) violating the previous ruler's teaching of loving the people; (2) not accepting the emperor's enlightened decree and declaring himself ruler of great Min; (3) destroying the people's houses to build palaces; (4) ordering the officials to create and perform imperial rites and institutions; (5) taxing the people heavily; (6) everywhere selecting young women from among the common people for his wanton pleasure; (7) driving out the wet nurses; (8) not heeding sincere remonstrances and going against his elder brother's words; (9) using poisoned wine to kill the messenger; (10) and not using older servants in the palace and newly selecting commoner women, harming them by separating them from their families. Then he had Yanshu's head cut off in the marketplace and a placard with his crimes posted at the four gates.⁵

When it was reported that Yanbin had arrived, Yanbing welcomed him, saying, "Because Yanshu was licentious, he could not be the ruler of the people. He committed ten wicked crimes, and has already been decapitated. But a state cannot be without a ruler for even a single day, so your arrival, younger brother, is fortunate. You can inherit the position." Only after first declining did Yanbin ascend the throne.⁶

Yanbing said, "Since you have inherited the throne, younger brother, you must follow the correct path. Don't make me come again." When he finished speaking, he led his soldiers back to Jianzhou.

When Wang Yanbin inherited the throne, he released the imprisoned officials, restored them to their original posts, and appointed an official to fill the vacant post of prefect in Quanzhou. Then he wrote a memorial to the court that he had inherited the position of king.

Now we will take up the story of Chen Jinfeng, who had been kept by the Hong family as a companion to Yaoqin. Jinfeng longed for Gui Lang but wasn't able to meet him. She was devoted to him heart and soul but, fortunately, she was with Yaoqin from dawn to dusk, so she could get through the day. Gui Lang longed for Jinfeng, his longing such that he neglected sleeping and eating. When from time to time he came to see his mother, he would

always go to the garden of the Hongs and gaze longingly for a time, before going into the Chens' house to see his mother. When he made the return trip, it was the same.

Now we will speak of Madame Yan at the Chen house. Although Gui Lang came and went morning and evening, her mind was at rest. One day, hearing that Yanshu had been put to death and Yanbin had inherited the throne, she was jubilant! She had been *his* wet nurse, as well. Now that she heard he had ascended the throne, she called Gui Lang to come discuss returning to the palace. When Jinfeng heard that Miss Yan wanted to return to the palace, she couldn't stop crying. Miss Yan said, "Daughter, there's no need to cry so bitterly. You can stay with the Hongs for a time, and after I enter the palace, I will send someone to fetch you."

Jinfeng dried her tears and went back to the Hong residence to keep Yaoqin company. After waiting for two days, when her son still had not come, Madame Yan ordered a sedan chair. She said goodbye to Miss Li and consoled Jinfeng. Then she got into the sedan chair and went to the king's palace, where she had an audience with Yanbin, the ruler of Min, who was delighted and kept her in the palace. Madame Yan then recommended Gui Lang and Jinfeng. Yanbin gave his consent, sent someone to summon them, and Gui Lang entered the palace. Yanbin also ordered the court astronomer to select a day to go fetch Jinfeng. Madame Yan thanked him for his favor.

Now we will return to the White Snake, who formerly at Linshui Grotto in Gutian had called herself the Great Queen. Lady Chen had rescued her husband from the White Snake and destroyed the grotto. The White Snake had thought that she would like to pit her magic against the Lady, so she had spewed out poison vapor, but how could she have known that the Lady had already used strong alcoholic spirits mixed with realgar to counter snake poison? The smell had penetrated deep into the grotto, a smell that the White Snake could not bear. She had resumed her original form and was about to be decapitated, but luckily for her there was a hole in the back of the grotto through which she had escaped. By chance, she had met up with Ravine Demon Zhang, and the two of them had fled to the old grotto at Great Ravine Mountain at Nantai in Fuzhou, where they had hidden themselves.

The Ravine Demon's mountain was near Gaogai Mountain. As before, he was the White Snake's slave. From time to time the White Snake would order him to search everywhere for human victims to eat.

One day Gui Lang was going to Gaogai Mountain to see his mother. He had not yet entered the Chens' house, because the person on his mind was at the Hongs'. For this reason, when gazing from outside the wall, he ran into the Ravine Demon carrying out the order to search everywhere for young victims. The Ravine Demon saw that Gui Lang was very handsome, and promptly went to work; he couldn't have been happier! He approached Gui Lang, bewitched him, and dragged him into Great Ravine Grotto. When the White Snake saw him, she was delighted. She transformed the grotto into a splendid room and herself into a beautiful woman, while the Ravine Demon turned into a servant. When everything was ready, she sprayed water on Gui Lang to revive him.

When Gui Lang regained consciousness, he opened his eyes, looked around, and said, "How did I get here?" He saw a beautiful woman standing over him, with a servant at her side. He stood up, silently pondering.

The Ravine Demon demanded, "Who are you? How dare you come peeping into my younger sister's house! You are certainly a thief!"

Gui Lang said, "My surname is Gui, my given name is Lang, and my style name is Shouming. I am a resident of the city. I came with my elder sister to Minister of Education Hong's house at Gaogai Mountain to visit relatives. Because they had gone out for a stroll, I unwittingly entered your house. I hope you won't blame me."

The White Snake said, "So, you are my cousin," and ordered the Ravine Demon to apologize.

Gui Lang said, "No apology is necessary. Please tell me your name, young lady. Where are you from?"

The White Snake said, "My surname is White. I am related to Minister of Education Hong, since his wife is my cousin. My father and elder brother are away on business, and only a servant and I are at home. My father's disposition is very strange. He keeps us apart from any dealings with our relatives, so we are not acquainted." When Gui Lang heard this he was very happy. The White Snake then ordered the Ravine Demon to prepare wine and set out a feast in the inner chamber for them to drink together, to talk about old times, and to chat about the present.

While they feasted, Miss White sent endearing messages with her bewitching eyes, and Gui Lang's lascivious thoughts were aroused. They drank till midnight, by which time they were already seven- or eight-tenths drunk. Gui Lang teased her, saying, "Earlier I offended you, but fortunately,

you forgave me. Now we are close relatives, indeed, cousins. But your style name, would you be willing to change it together with me to ‘cousin’? If you are willing to change it, even if my skeleton were burned to ashes, I would not be able to repay you.”

When the White Snake heard this, her lustful thoughts were aroused. She thought to herself, “This person’s social skills are not very good, but I wonder about his learning. If he has both talent and looks, then we could be husband and wife permanently, and I would never hurt him. But if his learning is crude, I will first satisfy my sexual desire, and then eat him out of disappointment. Now I will test him to find out if he is good or bad.”

She said to Gui Lang, “The two of us have been drinking wine to dispel our boredom. I have one line of a couplet. Could I trouble you, cousin, to complete it?”

Gui Lang said, “Please produce your line.” The White Snake recited, “I am not your equal.”

Gui Lang replied, “You are my little wife.” When he had finished speaking, he went to her and embraced her. The White Snake half pushed him away and half yielded. Then they went to bed and had sex, amusing themselves all day long. Without realizing it, he stayed for several days, and in the end he forgot his lover at Gaogai Mountain.

One day, the White Snake ordered the Ravine Demon to again prepare cups and dishes to drink to her heart’s content with Gui Lang. And when they looked in the dish, the fish was not a yellow fish. All day they ate without stopping. Without being aware of it, his old emotions were aroused by the sight. He recited two lines of Du Fu’s poem:

Every family raises black turtles;
At every meal they eat yellow fish.⁷

During this time the Ravine Demon was at their side waiting on them, and, hearing these lines, he became angry. He had cooked the fish they been eating all day, so when he heard Gui Lang recite these two lines he thought Gui Lang was making fun of him. He went inside and hid in an inner room; one moment Gui Lang saw the servant, and the next moment he had disappeared.

“Where has the servant gone?” he asked. Miss White smiled and said, “The reckless fellow thought you were making fun of him. Cousin, don’t

laugh. Wait for me to continue the next two lines.” She composed a verse, which she recited:

Don't say that there's no extraordinary flavor;
The flavor is in the writing in the belly.

When Gui Lang heard this, he pounded on the table and exclaimed that this was unsurpassable! The White Snake was smug and self-satisfied. She called to the Ravine Demon, “‘Eating yellow fish at every meal,’ that would be really tedious. You can kill several of the birds in the cage for us to eat.”

The Ravine Demon had no alternative but to go back in, where he pretended to make the sound of sharpening a knife. Gui Lang heard the sound of knife-sharpening, and, since killing without reason was a very great sin, he rushed inside. Seeing a large cage of live birds, and the Ravine Demon holding them to kill them, Gui Lang lunged to seize the knife. He was already nine-tenths drunk, his eyes wide with anger. To the White Snake he said, “In former times Yang Bao rescued a titmouse. Later he became one of the three highest-ranking officials.⁸ I urge you not to indulge in rashly killing living souls to satisfy your cravings. If you capture and release them, there will be a karmic reward.”

The White Snake turned her face, waved her hand, and said, “Don't praise Yang Bao saving the titmouse.”

Gui Lang was very angry. Taking the knife, he pounded on the table saying, “If you don't praise Yang Bao saving the titmouse, I will imitate Liu Bang cutting the white snake in half.”⁹ When the White Snake heard this, she was very alarmed. Furthermore she saw that Gui Lang looked extremely angry and was holding a sharp knife, which frightened her. She had already changed into her original form, and hastened inside, the splendid room once again a cave.

When Gui Lang saw this, he, too, was greatly alarmed. Half running and half stumbling he rushed out of the cave, finding his way to the Chens' house at Gaogai Mountain. Only then did he calm down. He thought to himself, “What good luck! I first said ‘black turtle,’ infuriating the servant.¹⁰ If Heaven hadn't made her produce the line about the titmouse, how could I, with my inferior skill, have matched it with ‘cutting the white snake in half’? That is what frightened her into resuming her original form. I was lucky to escape with my life! If it had gone on for a few more days, I would have been

nothing but bones, unable to do anything.” The more he thought, the more horrible it seemed.

He asked Miss Li, “Where has my mother gone?”

Miss Li replied, “The court has a new ruler. Your mother waited for you, but since you didn’t come, three days ago she took a sedan chair to the court.”

Gui Lang further inquired, “What about Jinfeng?”

Miss Li said, “She’s still at the Hong’s.” When Gui Lang heard this, he took his leave of Miss Li and hurried back to the city. When he got to Minister Li’s residence, he asked for news of his mother. He was told that Madame Yan had entered the court, had an audience with the new ruler, and was staying at the palace, so Gui Lang immediately went to the court to see her. He also prostrated himself before Yanbin, the ruler of Min, who sent him to Gaogai Mountain to bring Jinfeng back to the palace. When Jinfeng saw Gui Lang with the decree coming to fetch her, she was very happy. She thanked Minister of Education Hong and his wife, and said goodbye to Yaoqin. Each felt that it was hard to part.

Now we will speak of Jinfeng, who traveled by sedan chair to the palace. There she and Madame Yan were reunited. Madame Yan then took Jinfeng to have an audience with the ruler of Min, who was delighted with her and accepted her as a concubine.¹¹ She was favored without rival.

Now we will turn to Emperor Mingzong of the Tang.¹² He sent a decree to Min making Yanbin ruler of the kingdom, enfeoffing him as military commissioner of Kaiming, and making Wang Jiyao prefect of Fuzhou. Later, in the eighth month of the fourth year of the Tiancheng reign period of the Tang dynasty, the principal wife of Wang Yanbin, the ruler of Min, was the wicked woman Madame Liu.¹³ She had two sons, whose names were Jipeng and Jitao. From the time that Jinfeng entered the palace, Madame Liu fell out of favor. Yanbin saw that Jinfeng was elegant and captivatingly beautiful, everything he desired in a woman. Moreover, Jinfeng had a keen ear for music, and, from the time she entered the palace, the servants taught her joyous dancing. All day there was feasting and music, and Yanbin was completely satisfied.

In the city there was a Dingyuan Bridge (now called Tieban Bridge). Cao Zhi had later made a channel from the North Water Gate through to West Lake. Along its bank there were more than one hundred buildings, which together were called Water Crystal Palace. Yanbin sometimes took Jinfeng

and the palace concubines from the rear gate on excursions to enjoy West Lake. Colorfully festooned boats carried them to the lake.¹⁴ The ruler of Min and Jinfeng would sit in the Water Crystal Palace feasting, while in rows to the left and right the palace concubines danced and sang and played musical instruments. Only when it was late would they return home.

One day the ruler of Min asked Jinfeng, "What other members are there in your family?"

When Jinfeng was asked this question, she wept and said, "My fate is bitter. Early I lost my parents. Moreover, I have no brothers. From the time I was small, I was brought up in the house of my fellow clansman Chen Kuangsheng and my paternal male third cousin, Shousi. There is also my aunt Miss Li. I have no other relatives." When the ruler of Min heard this, he sent a messenger to summon Kuangsheng and Shousi to the ruler's residence, and enfeoffed them as palace commanders.

Now we will speak of the ruler of Min, who, because he was often sick, turned the affairs of court over to Jinfeng to decide and manage. When the State Military Commissioner Yanbing heard that the ruler of Min was entrusting Jinfeng to manage all the matters large and small while he himself dissolutely feasted all day, he was extremely angry, and wrote a letter sternly admonishing him. He ordered a messenger to take the letter to Fuzhou to present to him. The ruler of Min was furious, took the letter of admonishment, tore it to shreds, and had the messenger decapitated in the marketplace.

When Yanbing heard this, he ordered the prefect of Jianzhou, Wang Jixiong, to lead three thousand crack troops and several brave generals, while Yanbing himself led one thousand crack troops. They joined together and came to Fuzhou.¹⁵ Already a scout had reported back to the king's residence, and the ruler of Min gathered the civil and military officials to deliberate. Minister of War Zou Zhun stepped out of the ranks to memorialize, saying, "Yanbing is courageous, but he has no strategy. We should use a clever plan to triumph by means of strategy, since we cannot match him in strength. We should order Turreted Boat Commander Wang Renda to go out of the city and pretend to surrender, so that in the middle of things he can act decisively. Only in this way can we succeed."

The ruler of Min approved the memorial. Then he secretly announced that Wang Renda should come up to the palace. Having received the plan, Wang Renda left to lead the men and horses under his command to camp

outside the city. Through surveillance he learned that Wang Jixiong had arrived leading his soldiers, and led his own soldiers to surrender. Since Jixiong had not put men on guard, as he stood by his horse Renda cut his head off with a knife.

Yanbing's troops were thrown into confusion. Renda again urged his soldiers to attack. Yanbing hurried forward to meet the enemy, and fought more than forty engagements with Renda. Yanbing's strength exhausted, he fled in defeat. Renda pursued the troops for several *li*. Yanbing again deployed his horses and fought a great battle with Renda, in which they clashed more than thirty times. No longer having the will to fight, the Jianzhou troops fled in all directions. Renda then surrounded Yanbing, and again engaged him in battle. He reviled him, saying, "Traitor, for no reason your troops have attacked Min Province, but now you are surrounded. What do you have to say in your defense?"

Yanbing reviled him in return. "You traitorous dog! Your ruler has fallen into licentiousness and tyranny. He did not heed my admonishment. On the contrary, he killed the messenger, and you dare assist a tyrant to carry out his cruelty! In the natural course of things, you will be decapitated first." When he finished speaking, he brandished his sword and flung himself straight at Renda. Again they fought ferociously. Renda then ordered his officers and men to surround Yanbing. From early morning until afternoon they battled, but he couldn't fight his way out. Suddenly, Yanbing's horse broke a hoof and fell, throwing him off, whereupon he was seized by the soldiers and bound tightly. Renda then assembled his soldiers to return to the city, and imprisoned Yanbing in the palace.

Yanbin visited the captured Yanbing. He said, "As I said the other day, I have indeed troubled you, elder brother, to come here again."

When Yanbing heard this he gnashed his teeth and swore, saying, "You're a beast who violates his father's teachings and is infatuated with wine and women. Acting in this way, it's difficult to avoid impending calamity."

Yanbin also swore at him, declaring, "Formerly you monopolized power and acted recklessly. Without waiting for me to come, you arbitrarily killed our elder brother. Now, again, you abuse me. Your troops attacked Min City, and you have been captured by me; what do you have to say for yourself? Now I will revenge our elder brother." Then he ordered his officers and men to take him out and decapitate him.

When the people of Min heard that Yanbing had been decapitated, they grieved without end. Since Yanbin had killed Yanbing, he promoted Wang Renda to be a full general and invited him to dine with him. He generously rewarded the troops, as well as the meritorious officers. He also sent his younger brother Yanzheng to fill the post of Commissioner of the Wei Wu Army of Jianzhou.¹⁶

From this time on Yanbin was completely without restraint. He wallowed in luxury, and worshipped gods and buddhas, altogether ordaining and supporting more than twenty thousand monks. For this reason, the temples and convents of Min Province increased in number by the day. He chose Daoist master Chen Shouyuan of Xiadu, south of the [Min] River, to be the Daoist official. Chen Shouyuan became famous everywhere. Both inside and outside the city, all said that his voice was clear and resonant and his diction precise. He could perform shamanic arts and summon gods, who spoke through his mouth. He was able to determine what was auspicious and inauspicious, calamitous or fortunate for people, and was never wrong.

One day Chen Shouyuan memorialized the throne, saying, "In Fuzhou there are multicolored clouds and vapor signaling the appearance of a Son of Heaven. This means you should obtain the position of emperor." He therefore requested that the ruler construct the Baohuang Palace at Nine Immortals Mountain in order to welcome the auspicious vapors and clouds.¹⁷ The ruler of Min read the memorial. He summoned Shouyuan and asked, "By what means do you know that there are the vapors and clouds of an emperor in Fuzhou?"

Shouyuan reported, "I heard what the Celestial Master said, but I did not dare not report it."

The ruler of Min asked, "In what dynasty did this Celestial Master appear? What was his name? What Daoist art did he have that he was able to recognize that this place would have the vapor and clouds of a Son of Heaven?"

Shouyuan reported, "The Celestial Master was an eighth-generation descendent of Marquis Liu of the Han dynasty, whose name was Zhang Liang, and whose style name was Zifang. The Celestial Master's name was Zhang Daoling, and he was born at Eye of Heaven Mountain. He learned the arts of longevity and lived a retired life on Dragon Tiger Mountain in Guixi County in Guangxin Prefecture in Jiangxi.¹⁸ In the Han dynasty the two emperors Zhang and He summoned him.¹⁹ Each time he did not come. He

traveled all around visiting famous mountains, and when he arrived at Yunjin Grotto, inside which was an immortal rock, he refined cinnabar. In just under three years, he had a green dragon and a white tiger.²⁰ They stood guard to the left and right of the mountain. The cinnabar became his nourishment. At that time, though he was sixty years old, his vigor increased and he looked more youthful. He attained supernatural powers and the ability to work transformations, expelling wicked ghosts and demon spirits. Later he lived in Call of the Cranes Mountain in Sichuan, where he refined cinnabar and cultivated the Way, and mastered the secret writings of Laozi. He took on disciples Zhao Sheng and Wang Zhang, who came to the Cloud Terrace. Later he again refined cinnabar, and ingested it.”

Shouyuan continued, “In the reign period of Yongshou of the Han dynasty, his efforts were successful and his Way complete.²¹ He raised his body halfway up the cliff, leaped into the middle wall of the cliff, and emerged from the top. Following on this, he opened up two lofty cliffs. Each was half of the immortal grotto. On the ninth day of the ninth month of that year, he took the various esoteric records, the demon-decapitating sword, as well as the Jade Records and Jade Seal, and handed them over to his eldest son, Heng. He and his wife, Madame Yong, together ascended Cloud Terrace Peak, and in broad daylight they ascended to Heaven. In that year he was 122 years old. Later, his fourth-generation descendant Zhang Sheng dwelled on Dragon Tiger Mountain. Generation by generation the teachings were transmitted, right down to the present. His descendants are as long-lived as heaven and earth. We all cultivate their Daoist arts.

“For this reason the other day when I ran into the Celestial Master, and he said that in Fuzhou there were the vapor and clouds of a Son of Heaven, which emerge as auspicious omens, I did not dare conceal it. I could only present a memorial to the ruler of Min that he should construct the Baohuang Palace on Nine Immortals Mountain. In this way I would not turn my back on the Celestial Master’s words.”

Yanbin inquired further, “Since you had already encountered the Celestial Master, why didn’t you memorialize the throne earlier? You waited until I had received you into the palace in order to request from you the arts of long life.”

Shouyuan again reported, “I encountered the Celestial Master in a spot in the wilds of the mountain. Once he finished speaking, he departed. The kings of the previous dynasties often summoned him, but he did not

come. How could he be willing to enter the palace and teach the arts of longevity?"

When the ruler of Min heard this memorial he felt very pleased. In accordance with what Shouyuan had said, he set out to build the Baohuang Palace. He ordered Shouyuan to draw a chart of it aligned with the directions and, according to the model, erect it. Within a few days the Baohuang Palace was completed. Then he ordered that a statue of the Jade Emperor be carved and placed on top of the central building. On the four sides were Daoist buildings, and in front was the Palace of the Altar of the Three Pure Ones. On either side were Palaces of the Divine Creation, and to the rear the Galloping Horse building, outlined with green stones. Railings penetrated into the inner palace, with flying red cinnabar and flowing green jade soaring up to the sky. It was the ultimate in magnificence. (This is the present-day Jade Emperor Pavilion at Nine Immortals Mountain.) When construction was completed, Ministry of Works Service Officer Huang Qian went to the court to report it. When the ruler of Min heard that the Baohuang Palace was finished, he was delighted, and ordered Chen Shouyuan to take up residence there.

The ruler of Min had been deluded by Shouyuan, so that he believed in the arts of the spirits and immortals. The Baohuang Palace was filled with incense smoke and lighted candles. Coincidentally, behind the North Pass, a dragon soared out of a well in the house of Censor Aide Zhen Feng. When Shouyuan heard this he immediately reported it to the emperor and congratulated him, saying, "The hibernating dragon has ascended to Heaven. Ascending to Heaven is an auspicious omen, which directly corresponds to our ruler ascending to a great position. In addition, I observed heavenly signs: the Purple Tenuity, the sun, and stars shining over Fuzhou.²² It stands to reason that it corresponds to your immediately ascending to the position of emperor in order to establish the great plan for the myriad people."

When Yanbin, the ruler of Min, heard what Shouyuan said, he beamed. He said to Shouyuan, "Really, has the hibernating dragon soared up to Heaven? And the sun shines and the stars shimmer?"

Shouyuan replied, "How would I dare to report irresponsibly? If you, my ruler, do not believe me, you could decree that Censor Zhen should come to the palace and you could question him. Then you would know that it is true."

The ruler of Min sent a messenger to order Censor Zhen to enter the palace, and in a short time he arrived. When the rituals of greeting were

completed, the ruler of Min questioned him, “I heard that a hibernating dragon soared out of your well. Did this really happen?”

The censor replied, “This matter is indeed true. But I don’t know what this omen presages.”

Shouyuan at his side directly stated, “The Honorable Zhen doesn’t know that yesterday morning on top of the Baohuang Palace I carefully observed the heavenly signs. I saw the stars of the Purple Tenuity and the sun shining on Fuzhou City. This presages your ascending to be emperor, and is truly a case of ‘responding to Heaven and according with the Human.’ How can there be any doubt?”

Censor Zhen said, “Since the sun is shining on Fuzhou and the dragon has ascended to Heaven, truly it is an auspicious omen for the state. Our ruler ought to answer Heaven, and should ascend to the imperial position.” When the ruler of Min heard this, he was delighted. He ordered the two men to withdraw temporarily, went into the palace, and then came out. Truly it was:

A snake’s bite and a bee’s sting are poisonous;
Flowerly language and cunning words are as sharp as a knife.²³

In the end, to know what the ruler of Min did after that, read the next chapter.

[Yanbin] Ascends to the
Emperorship, and All the Officials
Offer Congratulations /
[Chen Jinggu] Kills the White Snake and
Receives Her First Honorary Title

NOW LET US SPEAK OF YANBIN.¹ WHEN HE HEARD WHAT CHEN Shouyuan and Censor Zhen said, he was elated, and went into the palace to tell Chen Jinfeng. Jinfeng kowtowed and offered her congratulations, saying, “Heaven sent down auspicious omens, and a dragon soared out of the well. This means my lord should ascend to the honored position of emperor. If you hesitate, that would be going against Heaven.”

When Yanbin heard this he was very happy. He helped Jinfeng up, saying, “Dear, what you say is totally reasonable. I should respond to the omens.”

He decreed a tablet be given to Censor Zhen to hang up in his house, naming it “Leaping Dragon Palace.” Yanbin changed his name to Wang Lian.² He carefully selected Guihai in the fourth year of the Changxing reign period of the Tang as dawn of the first day of the first month. Then he personally went to the Baohuang Palace to receive the writings confirming his new position, and prepared the Ceremonial Guard in accordance with the rank of Son of Heaven. He went up to the palace, and in the position of emperor received all the civil and military officials, who had an audience

with him in order to offer their congratulations. He established the name of the country as the Great Min state with the first year as the Dragon Ascent reign period, and issued an imperial decree to go to the South Terrace to offer the suburban sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. He also appointed Jinfeng as the empress of the True Palace and Gui Shouming as Manager of the Inner Hall to take full charge of the inner palace.³

At this time, Yanbin's original wife, Madame Liu, lost favor, so the ruler of Min no longer went to her palace. Day and night she sighed with bitterness, and, having fallen despondent, she died, leaving Jinfeng as the favorite in the inner palace. In the Changchun Palace she carried on an illicit affair with Gui Lang. Even though there were people in the palace who knew about it, they didn't dare disclose it.

At this time, the ruler of Min appointed his eldest son, Wang Jipeng, as prefect of Fuzhou and his next son, Yanzheng, as prefect of Jianzhou; Wu Zui as Palace Secretary; Wu Dashou as Compiler in the Hanlin Academy, where he was in charge of writing the state history; Xue Wenjie as State Astrologer; and Chen Shouyuan as Celestial Master of the Great Min state.⁴ The other civil and military officials all received titles and promotions of one rank. After expressing their gratitude, they departed.

Among them only Xue Wenjie treacherously engaged in cunning words and fawned on the king in order to obtain his favor. He amassed gold and silver. He secretly sought out the wealthiest households inside and outside Fuzhou City, brought charges against them in order to confiscate all their household wealth, and presented it to the ruler of Min to use for state expenses. Consequently, the ruler of Min personally entrusted him with everything. Xue Wenjie employed several ferocious thugs. On the outside they went around making minute investigations, and if there was the smallest error they would lay murderous hands on the accused. In an instant the families of the wretched victims were ruined and the person destroyed. How could people bear such cruelty? For wicked ministers to rely on state power to bully and tyrannize the people is the most detestable thing. Innocent people were subjected to these harsh laws, so that those whose wealth was destroyed and who lost their lives were impossible to count.

Now we will return to the Ravine Demon and the White Snake, who had resumed their original forms. After they frightened Gui Lang away, the White Snake again ordered the Ravine Demon to entice victims. The Ravine Demon received the order, and again searched all around for victims. Those who were

handsome were numerous, those with learning few, but in the end, there wasn't a single person who was both handsome and talented. For this reason, after a couple of weeks the White Snake grew dissatisfied with those who were dragged in for her carnal pleasure, and swallowed them into her belly.

If one adds up the number of husbands the White Snake enticed during more than twenty years, there were only two who suited her fancy. One was Police Chief Liu, her enemy Chen Jinggu's husband, and the other was Gui Lang. From the time that his couplet scared her off up until the present, she had not lost her heart to anyone else. She said to the Ravine Demon, "Although you have indiscriminately dragged people in all day, they are all stupid creatures. You must search with all your might to find for me my darling Gui Lang. At this very moment where is he? Find him and quickly come back to report."

Having received the order, the Ravine Demon set out, returning only in the evening to report, "I made inquiries and learned that Gui Lang is not the unemployed official he was in the past. Now he has been appointed by the ruler of Min to the position of manager of the inner palace. He lives in the palace and, moreover, often has his illicit pleasure with Jinfeng in the Changchun Palace. Even if you want to meet your lover again, it's impossible. You must have a strategy, and only then will you be able to see him."

The White Snake said, "Deep in the palace in the inner courtyard isn't exactly a mountain wilderness, so it should be easy enough to find him. What ingenious plan do you have? You should present it to me. Naturally, I will thank you." The Ravine Demon thought for a long time.

"I've got an idea!" he said cheerfully. "Madame, you excel in magic power. To carry out this matter, what difficulty could there be? Wait till tomorrow morning. I will slip into the emperor's palace with you, bewitch Empress Jinfeng, and carry her back to the grotto. You will then transform yourself into the empress of the True Palace. If you double as Jinfeng in the palace, overtly you and the ruler of Min will be a couple, while secretly you can carry on an affair with Gui Lang. At the same time you will, on the one hand, control the great power of the inner palace and, on the other, have the respected position of being the mother of the heir apparent of the state. You will not be able to finish eating all the rare delicacies, nor will you be able to wear all the fine silks. Won't that be better than being in the grotto, cold and lonely? At that time Madame will be in the palace with the great joy of doing whatever she pleases. How could this not be good?"

As soon as the White Snake heard what the Ravine Demon said, she laughed with delight and was beside herself with joy. To the Ravine Demon she said, "In presenting me with this plan you are like Zhuge Kongming. Not even Zhang Liang and Chen Ping could match you.⁵ Of course I will proceed according to your plan."

The Ravine Demon was also very happy. To himself he thought, "All along I have been a slave, obtaining pleasure for others. Now, once this plan is implemented, she will go live happily, and I will be free and unfettered to seek pleasure. I've heard that Jinfeng is the pinnacle of beauty, and I will have unrestricted access to her."

The next day, he secretly slipped into the palace with the White Snake, the White Snake using the method of tightly closing the eyes. In the Pavilion of the Spring Scenery Imperial Park she bewitched Jinfeng. She turned her over to the Ravine Demon, instructing him, "You carry Jinfeng from the True Palace, and find a place to settle down. From morning till evening, be careful! Meticulously look into things, and come to the palace to report." No sooner had the Ravine Demon heard and understood than he carried Jinfeng off and installed her in the grotto, where from morning till night he indulged his carnal pleasure.

When the White Snake saw that the Ravine Demon had removed Jinfeng from the palace and departed, with a twist of her body she turned into the perfect likeness of Jinfeng and occupied the Changchun Palace. All day long she was happy. If she wasn't entertaining the ruler of Min, then she was happily having sex with Gui Lang. How could the people in the palace know that it was a transformation of the White Snake Demon? But the White Snake really was a demon, and her nature was vicious. In the palace the pleasures and joys were never enough to satisfy her, and she was jealous again and again.

Before she was in the palace for very long, she had the thirty-six palace concubines all imprisoned in the Cold Palace. She provided firewood and rice for the Cold Palace so that she could eat the concubines herself, not allowing the seal to be broken for them to be released. Gui Shouming saw that Jinfeng's jealousy was easily aroused, but she was the empress in charge of the palace and all the power was in her hands, so there was nothing he could do. He didn't even dare admonish her. Sometimes the ruler of Min fell sick because of his excessive sexual desire, and the affairs of state were all handled by the White Snake.

Now let us turn to the Ravine Demon, who had carried Jinfeng out of the inner palace back to the grotto. He wasn't willing to rouse Jinfeng by spraying her, so she lay in a stupor in the grotto, still dressed in her palace clothing. The Ravine Demon took the trousers off the lower part of her body and took his pleasure at will. During the day he trickled some dry food into Jinfeng's mouth to allay her hunger, so that she would not starve.

At this time, the Ravine Demon and the White Snake had each succeeded in obtaining a place where they could indulge their carnal pleasure to their hearts' content. Let us suspend this narrative for a while and turn to Chen Jinggu, who had cut off the head of Iron Head Monk of White Pagoda Mountain.

Sometime after Chen Jinggu killed the clam demon, she heard that the ruler of Min, Wang Shenzhi, loved the people. The common people all submitted out of gratitude, and the civil and military officials were at peace. When it came to Yanshu and then Yanbin succeeding to his position, laws and institutions were changed, and there were numerous alterations. They entrusted matters to the likes of Xue Wenjie, who made false accusations against rich families, so the common people were not at ease. Police Chief Liu was very disturbed in his work as an official. Lady Chen advised him to resign his post, and he returned to Gutian with her and her sisters, Lin Jiuniang, Li Sanjie, and Miss Ou.

Lady Chen refurbished Linshui Grotto as an academy of the magical arts. All day long she talked scripture and explicated the Law to the three sisters, transmitting the true magical arts of Mount Lü.

Then one day a family servant came to report, saying, "I wish to inform the Lady that her elderly father has fallen sick, and it is extremely serious. An Tong has been sent to bring you home in order to pray for his recovery and ensure his health." An Tong was waiting outside. When Lady Chen ordered him to come in he paid his respects, and, the courtesies completed, Lady Chen questioned him in detail about the cause of her father's illness, as well as various household matters.

An Tong reported, "From the time the Lady left, your father and mother were both in good health. In addition, Master Shouyuan in the last year or two has been very successful. The Daoist master is flourishing ten times more than previously. Moreover, when the ruler of Min, Yanbin, assumed the emperorship, changed his own name to Wang Lian, the name of the state to Great Min, the reign title to Dragon Ascent, and all the civil and military

officials were enfeoffed and received offices, he proclaimed the Great Master Shouyuan as the Daoist official. By imperial decree he enfeoffed him as Celestial Master of the Great Min state, and the ruler of Min greatly favors and trusts him. Now Shouyuan and Sheng Tao, the actor who played female opera roles, are in the Baohuang Palace on Nine Immortals Mountain, where Shouyuan is in charge of all the Daoists in Min and its attached territories. All are under his control. Sheng Tao also studied magic, and frequently invites down celestial sages and spirits to determine if something is auspicious or inauspicious, calamitous or beneficial. Invariably his prophecies come true, so that the ruler of Min trusts him implicitly. Whenever he has doubts or misgivings he can't resolve, he goes to the Baohuang Palace, and sages and spirits are invited to descend and pass judgement. Their decisions are immediately carried out. Having obtained the favor of the ruler of Min, how formidable Shouyuan is! Who does not grovel to him? What official doesn't greet him respectfully? The useful young Daoists at his side, some twenty or thirty in number, have more favored lamb and good wines than they can consume, and more fine silk clothes than they can wear."

As soon as Chen Jinggu heard that her cousin Shouyuan was a Daoist official, and that he had obtained the favor of the ruler of Min and been given the title of Celestial Master, she put things in order, changed her clothes, took leave of her sisters, and with An Tong hired a sedan chair to return to her family home in Xiadu.

Just as Chen Jinggu was passing through Xiadu, she saw in the distance a stream of demon vapor rising up around the city. She deployed her spirit gaze to examine it carefully, and only then did she realize that the demon vapor emanated from the women's quarters. For this reason she was anxious to hurry home to check on her father's illness. There was no time for it now, but once he had recovered, she would have to get rid of this demon. While she was lost in thought, they had already reached Jiangnan Bridge. (Today, it is the bridge in front of Cang Shan.) Again she saw that there was indeed a demon vapor lingering, but in the sedan chair she was not in a position to exterminate the demon. She thought she would wait until her task at hand was completed, and then she would come to eliminate the demons once and for all.

Just then Chen Jinggu encountered the Ravine Demon, who had transformed himself into a youth. He was amusing himself on the road, when he saw that there was a young woman in a sedan chair. She looked somewhat

familiar, but he couldn't place her. He asked An Tong, who was following the sedan chair, for an explanation. When he learned that it was Lady Chen returning to her parents' home in Xiadu, he supposed that she had surely come to capture him. He said to himself, "I must first go to the palace to inform Madame White Snake, and then we'll have to reconsider." And with these thoughts he slipped into the palace.

When the White Snake saw the Ravine Demon enter, she withdrew behind a screen and sharply commanded her retinue to depart. She then asked, "Why have you come into the palace in a panic today? What has happened?"

The Ravine Demon replied, "Something terrible has happened! I was amusing myself outside today when I saw a young woman. It was none other than that Chen Jinggu who destroyed Linshui Grotto in order to rescue Police Chief Liu. Now she has returned to her parents' home in Xiadu. When I saw her enter the city, she didn't stop to look, but she certainly saw the demon vapor coming out of the palace garden. If she goes home, once she has cured her father's illness, she will surely come into the city to capture us and finish us off once and for all. Moreover, she is our former enemy, so there is cause to fear for our lives. For this reason, I made haste to come here to inform you. We must take care and be on our guard."

When the White Snake heard this report, she was so alarmed that her face turned greenish-yellow and she fell silent. She thought to herself that Chen Jinggu excelled in magic power, so how could she oppose her? She wanted to flee in advance in order to avoid her, but it was also hard to give up the pleasures of the palace garden. Yet, if she didn't escape, she would bring disaster on herself. She couldn't make up her mind. She went back and forth between the two calamities, hesitating for some time; she really was at her wit's end.

When the Ravine Demon saw that the White Snake was deep in thought, he remained silent, knowing that she was unable to come up with a plan. He said, "I would like to propose a strategy. You needn't worry, as I have a clever plan that will ensure your happiness for a long time."

The White Snake quickly asked, "What plan? Hurry up and explain!"

The Ravine Demon then whispered something in her ear in a low voice, saying, "It will guarantee the elimination of the mortal danger of Chen Jinggu, so that you and I will have no worries for the rest of our lives." The White Snake listened, then nodded her head and pronounced the plan ingenious.

They proceeded according to the plan. She ordered the Ravine Demon to first return, saying, "I will follow this plan." The Ravine Demon warned her again and again to be careful. When he had finished instructing her, only then did he slip out of the emperor's palace and return to the grotto to have his pleasure with Jinfeng.

Now we will speak of the White Snake, who turned and entered the private quarters. Suddenly she gave a loud cry and fell to the ground, her face greenish-purple, and her lips like yellow paper. The palace concubines and court women were alarmed. Not knowing what was wrong, they hurriedly lifted her and put her on the bed. In the bedchamber they wailed. At the same time they ordered the inner servants of the palace concubines to go to the court to request the emperor to come to the palace. Having received the order, the inner servants departed. They prostrated themselves on the gold steps and asked the ruler of Min to go to the palace to see the queen, who was critically ill.

When the ruler of Min heard their report, he rushed to the palace. The queen had begun to breathe again and to cry out, "Oh, my heart hurts so much I cannot bear it!" In the dragon bed she wailed and wept without cease.

When the ruler of Min arrived, he went to the bedside himself to ask, "Dear wife, why do you have such severe heart pains all of a sudden?" He commanded the chief doctor to come to the palace, but the medical treatments and medicine he prescribed were to no avail, and her illness became critical. The ruler of Min didn't leave the side of the dragon bed, always there to ask after her and care for her, saying, "Wife, is the pain less? Are you better?"

Lying in bed, the White Snake pretended to cry weakly. In a feeble voice she said, "I have received your generous kindness and favor. I have been in the position of queen, responsible for all the palace concubines. But my good fortune is meager. I cannot bear it. Now, even if I sacrifice myself in the most painful way possible, I could not repay you even the tiniest bit. I have no alternative but to wait for a future life in which I will be a dog or horse to repay my lord for his kindness of favoring me." When she finished speaking, she burst into tears and couldn't stop crying.

With tears in his eyes, the ruler of Min tried to comfort her, saying, "Dearest wife, why talk like this? Wait for me to order the chief physician to examine you. He will select an efficacious prescription to treat you. The

fortunate are those who receive the help of Heaven. I guarantee that nothing will happen.”

The White Snake continued to weep, saying, “Last night when my heart hurt unbearably, I dreamed that I went to the Jade Emperor Palace and begged the god to spare my life. The god said that my fate had not yet come to an end, that there was an injustice, a mistake in my fate. The god also said that this illness of mine absolutely was not a disease of cold or heat or such-like.⁶ In fact, because I have heart pain, no medicine can heal it. If I am to entirely recover from this heart pain, I must eat the living heart of some other person in order to nourish my own. One must be found quickly, otherwise if it’s too late, I’m afraid it will be impossible to save my life.”⁷

When the ruler of Min heard this, he said, “What difficulty could there be in that? Wait for me to order the Three Judicial Offices to examine the convicts. There ought to be a capital case. We can hang one, cut out his heart, and give it to you to eat.”

The White Snake said, “In my dream, I replied with those very words, but the god said, how could the heart of a convict match my heart? I am the wife of the ruler of the Great Min state. The common people revere me as the most honored one, with the wisest heart-mind, so it is necessary to find a wiser and more fortunate heart. But the heart of a wiser and more fortunate person has five cavities and one hole, while the heart of an unlucky person has one cavity and no holes. There is even a kind of stupid person in whom not a single cavity is open. Furthermore, a man’s heart is easy to find, but it’s more difficult to find a woman’s. Of men in ancient times, only the heart of Chief Minister Bi Gan had seven cavities and three holes. Of women nowadays, only the heart of Chen Jinggu of Xiadu has seven cavities and three holes. It is a heart of the highest wisdom, like mine, so only it can repair mine.⁸ Quickly get it. Don’t delay. I was lucky enough that the god bestowed these instructions in a dream. I request your favor. Get it to save me.”

The ruler of Min said, “Dear, since you had this dream, tomorrow morning I will personally go to the Jade Emperor Palace and order the Celestial Master of the Religion Office to invite the god to descend from Heaven and clarify the matter. If the sage’s words are identical, then I will proceed to obtain it. You relax for the moment and take care of yourself. There is no need to worry.” When he had spoken, he went out of the side palace.

When the White Snake heard that the ruler of Min would personally go to the Jade Emperor Palace the next day to offer incense to invite the god to

descend and make known his wishes, she was afraid that the god's words would not match hers, and she would have wasted her effort. She sank into thought for a long while. Then she smiled and said, "I have a plan!" She secretly sent her confidante to take one hundred pieces of silver to give to Chen Shouyuan in the Jade Emperor Palace, to explain to him that the queen's heart ailment was extremely critical, and to tell him about last night's dream and that the next day the ruler would himself come to the palace to invite the god to descend in order to question him. It was necessary to beg the Celestial Master to pronounce the words of the god so that they would be identical to her own, to obtain Chen Jinggu's heart and liver and mix them as medicine for the queen to cure her heart ailment. Once she had recovered from her illness, there would be generous thanks.

The confidante received the order and went to the Jade Emperor Palace. She secretly explained the whole story to Chen Shouyuan and gave him the one hundred pieces of silver, saying, "This is a token of the queen's gratitude. Daoist Master, please accept it. There must be no mistake. If the matter is successful, she will reward you even more generously." When she finished speaking, she took her leave and returned to the palace.

Having taken the silver, Shouyuan wondered what to do about this matter, saying to himself, "Unfortunately, Jinggu is my cousin, so how could I take her heart and liver? Moreover, my uncle has no son. He only has this one child, and she has gone in marriage to Gutian. I've recently heard that her husband resigned his post and has gone into retirement. Because my uncle is sick, he sent An Tong to bring my cousin home. How could the queen insist on taking her heart? It must be that the queen and my cousin are enemies, and the queen wants to take her life with a trumped-up charge. There's no way Jinggu could know. If I don't look after her now, it will be difficult to preserve her life. If the ruler of Min comes to invite the god to come down to him, and it's wrong, then I expect my life will also be difficult to preserve. I had best quickly write a confidential letter to inform my cousin, to tell her to flee immediately. If she goes into hiding, she can escape this calamity."

Having made up his mind, he went inside and wrote a confidential letter. Then he ordered a Daoist subordinate to hurry to Xiadu to inform Chen Jinggu. The disciple received the order and went straight to the Chens' house in Xiadu to deliver the letter.

Jinggu was with her father, treating his illness, when she saw that a confidential letter had arrived from her cousin. She quickly broke the seal, opened the letter, and read it. When she had finished reading it, she knew that it was the demon's plan to take her life with a trumped-up charge. She laughed grimly and said to her mother, "When I returned home, as I was passing through Fuzhou City, I saw a demon vapor encircling the town, and traced it to the palace garden. Who could have known that it was this demon? Since I was busy, I had no time to deal with her then, and so I didn't go to eliminate her. Since she is so vicious, she has set about looking for me in order to obtain my heart and liver as nourishment for her own evil heart and liver. I was fortunate to already receive the confidential letter my cousin sent me, telling me to escape by fleeing far away. But now that I have this opportunity, with her waiting for me to go to the palace to see her, I'll turn her trick against her and eliminate this demon. Won't that be good?"

First Jinggu wrote a letter in reply. In it she wrote four lines of words for the god and gave it to the young Daoist to take back to Shouyuan. And she instructed him that, if the emperor came tomorrow morning to invite the god to descend, he should act in accordance with the language in the letter, and then everything would be all right. The Daoist boy took the return letter, hurried back to the Baohuang Palace, and gave it to the master, relating what Jinggu had said. Shouyuan opened the letter and read the four lines of ready-made divine speech. He was greatly alarmed and thought to himself, "I told her to flee far away. If she won't flee, then she's finished! On the contrary, she tells me to call down the sage and to exactly recite these divine words. Then she will be able to survive. How can she say that?" He sank deeply into thought for a time. Only then did he realize, "That's it! My cousin studied the true Mount Lü magic! I expect she must have some wonderful plan, so I had better do as she says in the letter." Then he memorized the four-line poem.

Early the next morning, the ruler of Min had already arranged a carriage and arrived. Shouyuan put on his gold cap and his coat of feathers, and in his hand held an ivory tablet. Accompanied by all the palace Daoist masters, he came out of the palace and knelt to receive the ruler. He prostrated himself at the foot of Nine Immortals Mountain to welcome the king's carriage and escort him up to the Three Pure Ones Hall. When the ruler of Min got out of the imperial carriage, he ordered incense to be placed on the altar, and instructed Shouyuan to request the god to descend and deliver his message.

Shouyuan prostrated himself before the god and summoned all the other gods. After the ruler of Min personally offered incense and bowed, Shouyuan went up to the god and silently prayed for clarification. In a short time his body began to sway, his head shaking and his body moving. His mouth recited the words “Ruler of Min, listen! The queen’s ailment is extremely critical; there is no medicine to treat it. Fortunately, the king is pious and respectful. Obey the words of the god! The poem says:

Chen Jinggu of Xiadu, her heart is special, unlike others.
If you want to rid the queen of danger, bestow a sword on Jinggu,
and she will carve it out.”

When Shouyuan finished reciting this poem, he collapsed on the ground. When he regained consciousness, the god had already withdrawn. Hearing the prophetic words of the divine poem, the ruler of Min was amazed and believed it. “The proclamation of the god is truly marvelous,” he said. “Like lightning, the god’s eye illuminated the matter hidden in my heart. Because I sincerely respected the god, he was moved to respond. Moreover, Chen Shouyuan’s conduct is pure and lofty, so it moved the god. This oracular poem exactly matched the queen’s dream scenario.”

The ruler of Min jubilantly returned to the palace and said to the White Snake, “What good fortune! I asked the god for instructions, and they exactly matched yours! I will send for Chen Jinggu’s heart and liver, and that’s that.” When he had spoken, he went up to the palace and issued a decree instructing the local official to have Chen Jinggu brought to the palace post-haste. The local official received the decree and immediately went to the Chen residence to explain the situation to Chen Jinggu. The ruler of Min’s decree announced that she was summoned to the court.

When Jinggu received the decree, she said goodbye to her parents and rode in a sedan chair with the local official to the court. When she reached the Wu Gate, she got out of the sedan chair and asked the local official to notify the Wu Gate official, who reported to the ruler of Min, “Jinggu is now at the Wu Gate. Please announce your decision.” The ruler of Min ordered that she be brought in, and Jinggu entered the palace to pay her respects to him.

When he summoned her directly into his presence, he said, “Are you or are you not Chen Jinggu of Xiadu?”

“Yes, I am,” Jinggu replied. “I heard that my Lord proclaimed that I should be summoned, but I don’t yet know what the imperial edict is.”

The ruler of Min said, “I summoned you for no other reason but for the sake of Queen Chen of the Zheng Palace. She has contracted a painful heart ailment. Medicines have proved ineffective, and the pain cannot be stopped. In the queen’s dream, the god indicated that your heart had seven cavities and three holes, making it a heart of superior wisdom that could save her from this illness. This morning I went to the Baohuang Palace to burn incense in order to invite the god to descend. I now have the god’s poem, which exactly matches what the queen dreamed. Your heart differs from the ordinary and can cure the queen’s ailment. I now bestow on you this sword to cut out your own heart. On the day that the queen recovers, naturally there will be a generous expression of sympathy.”

Jinggu said, “I have a very stupid heart, but if it can cure the queen’s noble ailment, that would be the greatest of good fortune. How would I dare oppose it? I only request that you give me a cup of water so that I can wash my heart clean. Then I will go to the queen’s bedside and cut out my heart. When the bloody offering has been swallowed, only then will it take effect.”

The ruler of Min was very happy to comply with her request and gave Jinggu a precious sword and pure water. Holding the water in her left hand and the sword in her right, Jinggu followed the ruler of Min into the Changchun Palace. She secretly used the point of the sword to write a talismanic spell on the water, and recited an incantation. When she found herself at the imperial bed, she again recited the true words and sprayed the magic water she held in her mouth.

The White Snake had prepared no defense at all, and continued to pretend that her heart pained her, crying out over and over again. When she was sprayed with the magic water, she realized what was happening, and was greatly upset. In her heart she was distraught, realizing that surely her enemy had come. She desperately wanted to flee, but the Heavenly Web and Earthly Net conjured up by Jinggu’s use of magic arts was impossible to escape.⁹

Pointing with her sword, Jinggu shouted, “Creature, you still do not appear in your original form! How long do I have to wait?” Before she had finished speaking, the White Snake resumed her original form, which was a huge white snake. It thrashed back and forth in the bed, but couldn’t escape. When the ruler of Min saw that the queen had suddenly turned into a white snake, coiled in the bed, the shock was so great that his *hun* soul flew off and

his *po* soul departed.¹⁰ The palace concubines were so frightened that they collapsed on the floor. Jingu grasped her sword and inquired of the ruler of Min, "What is your decision?"

The ruler of Min said, "Kill her quickly! Kill her without delay!"

Jingu took her sword and cut the White Snake into three pieces. The bed, inside and out, dripped with blood. Now that the snake was cut up, it was in agony. Using all her strength, Jingu ran it through. Only a single resounding noise was heard. Unexpectedly, the three parts flew out, smashing through the wall! Flying into the sky, they departed. With her precious sword in hand, Jingu left in pursuit, searching for traces of them.

The assembled people had no idea what had happened. The ruler of Min paused for a moment. Once his state of mind was a little calmer, he asked the crowd of palace people, "What happened? We still don't know where the real queen, Jinfeng, has gone. It must be that this snake lured the queen away somewhere, and then transformed herself into a false queen in order to obtain pleasure. All of you hurry everywhere to search for Jinfeng's whereabouts. There will certainly be a generous reward."

The assembled palace concubines all responded and went out in every direction to search for her. But there was no trace at all! The ruler of Min wanted to ask the thirty-six palace concubines where she was, but the palace people told him, "Previously, the thirty-six palace concubines were all imprisoned in the Cold Palace by the queen, and she had the palace doors locked, not allowing anyone in or out."

When the ruler of Min heard this, he was puzzled. He said, "Perhaps the queen was put under a spell in the Cold Palace by the demon snake. We don't yet know. We should quickly open the Cold Palace, and let everyone out."

The palace people received the order and immediately went to the Cold Palace and opened the door, but there was no one there! In the Cold Palace the only thing to be seen was white bones covering the floor. They rushed to report this to the ruler of Min, who was greatly alarmed and said, "We don't know where this demon came from. Those concubines were all eaten by her, and now Jinfeng also can't be found so, surely, she was eaten by the White Snake." In the palace there was confused discussion. Wasn't it the case that all along the queen was the demon monster?

At that time Gui Lang was in the palace. Although he knew the White Snake's origin, he didn't dare speak up. Just while they were discussing it, they saw that Chen Jingu had returned to the palace riding on a cloud. The

ruler of Min hurried to ask her, "Where did this demon come from? You cut her into three pieces, but she still didn't die. How could she succeed in escaping again? Please truthfully tell me the circumstances and causes."

Jinggu said, "This demon is none other than the White Snake spirit of Linshui Grotto in Gutian. I know that this demon has harmed living souls there. I originally wanted to eliminate her when I was in Gutian but, unexpectedly, she escaped from me. Now this noxious demon has carried off Empress Chen. The demon transformed herself into the false empress in order to trick my Lord, thereby doing incalculable harm. This demon is my nemesis. When she heard that I had returned to my parents' home and was intending to eliminate her, she came up with this painful heart ailment and wanted to obtain my heart to eat in order to rid herself of any future worries. If I had in fact been killed, the demon would have had no further fears. When a few days ago on my way home my sedan chair passed through the center of town, I saw that a demon vapor filled the city, encircling the palace. I had planned to enter the city to eliminate it within the next few days. Who knew that, on the contrary, she would challenge me first? Because the demon snake made up this vicious plan of carving out my heart, I went along with her own scheme in a plan to eliminate her."

When the ruler of Min heard this, he was deeply grateful for her efficacy. He said, "My family was fortunate to be saved by you. You were not harmed, but I don't yet know the power of your magic. Where did you get these teachings?"

"From the time I was young I entered Mount Lü," Jinggu replied. "I was fortunate that the magic master True Lord taught me the true magic of Mount Lü."

The ruler of Min further inquired, "Do you know where Empress Jinfeng has been taken prisoner? Can she be saved or not? And the demon that was just now cut up, in the end how can it be dealt with?"

Jinggu answered, "The demon just now was cut into three pieces, each of which has its whereabouts. I locked up the head segment in Longtan Gully at White Dragon River. The middle section is under lock and guard in the old well in the Iron Buddha Palace of Kaiyuan Temple, and the tail section is under lock and guard in Qichuan Well.¹¹ Each of the three segments of the snake is submerged at the bottom of a body of water. All are vanquished and cannot escape. As for what happened to the empress's real body, wait for me to investigate. We will find her whereabouts." Truly it was:

The three parts of the snake's body are locked up separately;
The lady receives an honorary title for the first time.

If you want to know about the matter of the true empress, read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 13

Madame Chen Retires to Linshui / Yuan Guangzhi Leaves Mount Mao for the First Time

NOW LET US RETURN TO CHEN JINGGU, WHO WAS RIDING THROUGH the air on a soaring cloud searching everywhere for Empress Chen Jinfeng. To search out the vague traces of the demon vapor, she went directly to Great Ravine Mountain, where she pressed down the head of the cloud and saw Jinfeng in the cave. Having heard that Jinggu was looking for him, the Ravine Demon had long ago fled, leaving only the unconscious Chen Jinfeng in the cave. From the time she had been put under a spell and carried out of the palace by the Ravine Demon into the cave at Great Ravine Mountain, she had slept in the grotto, where the Ravine Demon did with her as he liked, giving her food and drink so as not to kill her.

Having found the empress's true body, Chen Jinggu came out of the grotto and rode the cloud back to the palace to report to the ruler of Min what she had found. Wang Yanbin urgently asked where the empress's true body was.¹ Jinggu said, "I have already ascertained that she is in the grotto at Great Ravine Mountain at South Gate, where she was put under a spell by a demon, who has fled. I hope my Lord will quickly send someone to Great Ravine Mountain, as it is urgent to bring her back and treat her promptly."

The ruler of Min ordered several palace attendants, as well as palace manager Gui Shouming, to quickly take a small sedan chair to Great Ravine Mountain to bring the empress back; no delay would be permitted. Upon

receiving their orders they went to Great Ravine Mountain and entered the cave, where they saw Chen Jinfeng in a stupor. Lifting her, the palace attendants carried her back to the palace. Chen Jinggu sprayed her with talismanic water, commanding the poisonous vapor to retreat, and Chen Jinfeng gradually regained consciousness. It was as if she were waking from a dream: she did not know what had happened. The palace people then told her the circumstances in detail, and she thanked Lady Chen repeatedly. People were ordered to help the empress into the palace to be nursed back to health.

The ruler of Min then related the story of the palace concubines being imprisoned in the Cold Palace by the demon snake and the circumstances of their suffering. Jinggu said, "Although these palace concubines have all been eaten by the demon snake, I hope my Lord will not worry, since I learned the magic of refining bones into human form.² Where are their bones now?"

The ruler of Min took her to the Cold Palace, and Chen Jinggu followed him inside. As described, she saw white bones covering the floor. She said, "But I didn't bring my magic implements with me."

The ruler of Min said, "If you need magic implements, the Daoist official Chen Shouyuan has some with him."

Jinggu said, "That will work. Please quickly have them brought here." The ruler of Min ordered a palace attendant to ride a horse as fast as he could to the Baohuang Palace to get the magic implements from the Daoist official, and in a short time all of the various implements had been brought.

Jinggu arranged the dry bones on the floor, then let down her hair and spread it out. She blew the horn and paced the Dipper, while reciting the true words and imprecations. She cycled the energies of Heaven and Earth, carrying out the Liandu Ritual with fire and water, and recited for a time. Then they saw the white bones covering the floor return to thirty-six piles. Jinggu wrote thirty-six cinnabar talismans for protecting the body and taking form, and pressed one on top of each pile of bones. Next she tightly closed the palace doors, and again blew the horn and beat the drum, deploying the true magic of Mount Lü. A sound rang out loud and clear, and the thirty-six skeletons took on human shape, turned into the thirty-six palace concubines, and stood up, exactly like their original forms.

Chen Jinggu ordered the doors to be opened. As soon as the ruler of Min saw that the thirty-six women were all alive, he was greatly astounded and regarded it as a remarkable affair. The people asked them, "Why did you all

die? Some were eaten and some killed, leaving only skeletons. But we don't know what happened."

The thirty-six concubines explained, "We were imprisoned by the empress. We couldn't see the sky and sun. A white snake as big as a bushel came in and every day ate one person, so that in thirty-six days all of us had been eaten. There was no place to redress this injustice. Today, we don't know why, suddenly we were brought back to life."

The crowd of people pointed to Lady Chen and said, "You were saved by this person." The thirty-six women expressed their thanks to Lady Chen for having been concerned to give them life once again, and each of them paid her respects.

Since Jinggu's work of refining the bones into people was complete, she had already washed and combed her hair, and was about to return to Gutian. The ruler of Min did his utmost to make her stay, without success. He decreed that she should receive the title of Lady of Linshui (Linshui Furen). Then he conferred on each of the thirty-six palace concubines the title of Lady of Linshui's Disciple, and decreed that the Gutian local official at Linshui Grotto should rebuild the palace dressing room. He also bestowed an inscribed wooden tablet for Linshui Palace, conferred an official office on her husband, and bestowed titles on her parents. Moreover, he gave her family a stipend of colored silk, silver, and rice, which the local official delivered each month to Linshui Palace.

At this time Chen Jinggu had received her first honorary title. After leading the thirty-six palace concubines to meet the officials of their places of origin, she led them back to the palace. She herself wanted to return to her parents' home to stay for a few days before returning to Gutian. The local official received the decree and began construction on a large scale at Linshui Grotto, building a palace and chambers where the thirty-six palace concubines were settled. Then he promulgated the ruler's order for the conferment of titles, and respectfully established the Dragon Pavilion, which was of the utmost splendor.³ Madame Chen altogether received noble titles on four occasions. This was the first time she was so honored.⁴

Now let us tell about the construction of Linshui Palace, which was completed in one month. Outside there was a Great Hall, while inside there was a Hall of Magic. Along two corridors thirty-six chambers were built, and there was also a Dressing Room. Moreover, there was a Cloud Terrace for summoning and dispatching spirit generals. There was also a large flower

garden, as well as a rockery, fishpond, and other scenery. In front of the door to the Great Hall was hung the inscribed wooden tablet that had been bestowed, with the three characters Linshui Palace in gold. It was extremely beautiful.

The thirty-six palace concubines were settled to live in the two corridors, while Madame Chen and her three sisters surnamed Lin, Li, and Ou lived in the chamber to the rear. At their leisure they went to the Hall of Magic to discuss scripture and explicate the dharma. Madame Chen summoned the thirty-six palace concubines to ask each of them, "What county did you live in and what is your name?" The group of palace concubines replied one by one. Their villages and names are listed below.

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|-----------|---|
| Palace 1 | Chen Daniang. Gutian District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 2 | Huang Luanniang. Shunchang District, Yanping Prefecture. |
| Palace 3 | Fang Siniang. Ningde District, Funing Prefecture. |
| Palace 4 | Liu Channiang. Putian District, Xinghua Prefecture. |
| Palace 5 | Lu Jiuniang. Ouning District, Jianning Prefecture. |
| Palace 6 | Song Ainiang. Changle District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 7 | Lin Zhuniang. Pujiang District, Quanzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 8 | Li Zhiniang. Zhangpu District, Zhangzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 9 | Yang Ruiniang. Liancheng District, Tingzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 10 | Dong Xianniang. Taining District, Shaowu Prefecture. |
| Palace 11 | He Yingniang. Fuqing District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 12 | Peng Yingniang. Zhangping District, Sheyan Subprefecture. |
| Palace 13 | Luo Yuniang. Jianyang District, Jianning Prefecture. |
| Palace 14 | Wu Yueniang. Nan'an District, Quanzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 15 | Zhen Guiniang. Luoyuan District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 16 | Zhang Chunniang. Fuding District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 17 | Wang Qiniang. Pucheng District, Jianning Prefecture. |
| Palace 18 | Ni Fengniang. Houguan District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 19 | Bao Yunniang. Changting District, Tingzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 20 | Sun Daniang. Min District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 21 | Zhao Eniang. Ningde District, Funing Prefecture. |
| Palace 22 | Zhou Wuniang. Xianyou District, Xinghua Prefecture. |
| Palace 23 | Cheng Erniang. Lianjiang District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 24 | Ye Liuniang. Minchun District, Fuzhou Prefecture. |
| Palace 25 | Zhen Chunniang. Zhuhua District, Yongchun Subprefecture. |

- Palace 26 Yun Yanniang. Shuifu District, Fuzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 27 Nie Liuniang. Huian District, Quanzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 28 Liu Jiaoniang. Guangze District, Shaowu Prefecture.
- Palace 29 Weng Jinniang. Houguan District, Fuzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 30 Pan Cuiniang. Zhenghe District, Jianning Prefecture.
- Palace 31 Ling Yanniang. Minqing District, Fuzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 32 Deng Sanniang. Tongan District, Quanzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 33 Zhu Qiaoniang. Minqing District, Fuzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 34 Jin Xiuniang. Nanping District, Yanping Prefecture.
- Palace 35 Shu Meiniang. Anxi District, Quanzhou Prefecture.
- Palace 36 Hu Daniang. Xiapu District, Funing Prefecture.

When Madame Chen had heard the entire list, she said to her three sisters, "In accordance with their names, we should write a wooden tablet to hang over the lintel of each of the thirty-six palace concubines' chambers, which are on the two sides, so as to avoid calling on the wrong one by mistake." All the palace concubines agreed and withdrew from the hall.

Now we will speak of the ruler of Min, Wang Lian. The official title of his reign period was Dragon Ascent. He entrusted responsibility for all state fiscal matters to Xue Wenjie, who, however, was crafty and cunning by nature, and curried favor with the ruler by bringing in lots of money. Over and above incriminating rich people to confiscate their family wealth, he persuaded the ruler of Min that, in his dealings with the various palace people, he should investigate their small infractions, and then order them to be killed.

At this time there were prophetic rumors outside the court: "In the palace of the emperor of Min there is extreme cruelty. The snake pretended to be the empress, so the emperor coupled with the demon." Xue Wenjie secretly used the people of the inner palace to disseminate these prophetic verses, so that the whole palace knew about them. When the ruler of Min heard these verses, he was very angry, and rigorously investigated who had created them, searching within the inner palace. The rumors came from his eldest brother Wang Yanshu's son Wang Jitu.⁵ When the ruler of Min learned this, he decreed that he should be arrested.

Now we will speak of Wang Jitu. From the time that his parents had been admonished by his father's elder brother, Yanbing, in Fuzhou and refused to listen, they were seized after troops were led to surround Fuzhou.⁶ After they

were charged for ten crimes and executed, Wang Yanbin ascended the throne.⁷ He thought of his nieces and nephews and sister-in-law remaining in the palace. When the cunning thief Xue Wenjie fabricated and spread the prophetic rumors in the palace, Wang Jitu knew that the ruler of Min, on account of the rumors, suspected that he had fabricated them, was very angry, and was going to imprison and interrogate him, so he quickly took his wife and children and fled the palace. The ruler of Min ordered Wang Jitu to be arrested and questioned, and all his family members killed. He also decreed that the various local officials and subordinates should be arrested. Meanwhile, the various affairs of the palace were still being handled by Chen Jinfeng.

After the palace was rid of the demon snake, it lacked the thirty-six concubines and felt very lonely. The ruler of Min handed down a decree to send an official communication everywhere to select and present palace concubines, announcing that girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty would be taken; it was not permitted to hide them or to practice favoritism or to take bribes. This decree was sent down to officials in every locale. Who would dare to disobey? They all transmitted the decree to select and present girls.

When the pitiable common people heard about it, there was no one who did not tremble with fear. If they had a daughter who was already betrothed, then she was quickly married in secret. If they had daughters not yet betrothed, they hastened to betroth and then marry them within a day or two. Who knows how many of them were incorrectly matched? If a place had girls, they could not hide them; they had to be reported to the officials. Neighboring families also were not permitted to conceal anyone. All the girls who were sent to the local official were examined and selected at the yamen, and, as expected, those whose facial features were irregular or who were defective or sick were not sent for selection. The remaining ones, without exception, were registered and sent for inspection. The parents could not bear it! As they parted, the streets were filled with their wailing.

Now we will return to Madame Chen at Linshui Grotto. While she was conversing with her sisters, the palace gatekeeper came in to report, "I wish to inform Madame that outside there are four old people with their four daughters. They say they want to come in to see you on an urgent matter. They've come to request an audience."

When Madame Chen heard this, she ordered them to come into the palace, and went to meet them in the Hall of Magic. In a moment the four old people entered, leading their four daughters, and together they prostrated themselves on the floor. Madame Chen hurried to help them to their feet and asked why they were behaving with such ceremony.

One old man respectfully said, "My family lives locally. My surname is Xu and my given name is Hui. This man is surnamed Ma and his given name is Fei. He is my wife's younger brother. This man is surnamed Ruan and his given name is Ying. He is a relative on my mother's side. This man is surnamed Zeng and his given name is Fu. He is my neighbor. These four girls, all sixteen or seventeen years old, are their daughters and nieces. Because the ruler of Min recently decreed that every place must select palace concubines, if one family hides a daughter and doesn't report her, then ten families will be implicated and punished. When these girls heard these words, they cried day and night, and tried to take their own lives. Their parents are uneasy guarding against this. They heard that you have merit with the state, which proclaimed your enfeoffment and the construction of your palace and hall. These four girls have each told their parents that they wish to acknowledge you as their master and be your servants and slaves. All their lives they will serve you and never marry, in order to avoid being selected for the palace and suffering a debased reputation. For this reason, I brought the four girls here. I beg you to take pity on the misfortunes of the common people and accept these four as your servants, to rescue them from danger for the remaining years of their lives, and to save them dying unjustly." When he finished speaking, he and the four girls wept and kowtowed.

When Chen Jinggu saw this situation, she could not bear it. She comforted them, saying, "There's no need to be so sad. Since you want to enter my palace to study magic, I should pass on my knowledge to you, so we will acknowledge each other as sisters. Why speak of slaves and servants? Moreover, I exterminated the demon snake [who enslaved creatures], but I have never yet used slaves and servants to wait on me, much less people like you. The character and ambition of you four girls is entirely correct. If you truly have the heart to follow me, how could I treat you ungenerously?" Then she called the palace concubines and requested them to come into the room. The four old people, deeply grateful for Chen Jinggu's benevolence and generosity, were delighted, and departed after kowtowing their thanks.

Now there were altogether eight sisters in Linshui Palace. They were surnamed Chen, Lin, Ou, Li, Ma, Zeng, Xu, and Ruan. Although they had different surnames, it was exactly as if they had been born to the same parents. Chen Jinggu expounded and taught them the true magic with all her heart.

Now let us turn to Yuan Guangzhi of Minqing County in Min.⁸ When he had encountered Chen Jinggu and Liangnü at Wangbeitai Peak outside the pass, he had wanted to follow Jinggu to Mount Lü to study magic with the magic master. But because it was not his fate, he could not go to Mount Lü, and was faced with a dilemma. At that moment he had encountered the Ravine Demon, who had transformed himself into a young man and inquired into his circumstances. The Ravine Demon had advised him to go to Huayang Grotto at Juqu Mountain in Jurong County in Jiangning to join the Great Perfected One at Mount Mao to study magic.⁹ The Ravine Demon had used the Earth Vein Method to take him to the grotto, and had instructed him to enter and prostrate himself before the Perfected One of Mount Mao, who accepted him as a disciple, and day and night taught him the various arts. Without noticing it, four years and four months had passed.

One day, Guangzhi suddenly thought of his hometown, and wanted to return to Min to look into his family circumstances. He went for an audience with the Perfected One, formally saying, "I have been fortunate to receive your kindness in teaching me the magic arts. It has already been more than four years, and I wish to return to Min to see the scenes of my hometown and native place. I would like to temporarily take my leave of you. I don't know if you will permit it."

The Perfected One of Mount Mao laughed, "In your home there is neither father, mother, brothers, nor sisters, so who is there to miss? I know your intention: you wish to free yourself! Why would I not allow you to return? Now I will give you a magic sword, talismans, and incantations. Go back to your province now. Should you encounter adversity or refugees from hardship, you must come to their rescue. You cannot recklessly defy Heaven." He had no further instructions.

Yuan Guangzhi quickly kowtowed, saying, "I am fortunate to have been taken on by you, and to have received your teaching for more than four years, and to have been taught the extraordinary arts. This unimportant person can hardly repay you. Now that I am leaving, I don't know what my future prospects in life will be. I beg you, master, to instruct me."

The Perfected One of Mount Mao said, "Since you ask me about your future prospects in life, I now have an eight-line poem, which is your entire life. You should keep it firmly in mind, as later it will surely be fulfilled:

You must preserve the Mount Mao arts.
 The future has many possibilities.
 When you encounter a demon, don't become enraptured with it.
 When you come upon a painting, don't make a mistake.
 The butterfly will shatter your equilibrium.
 Placed in a high position, your life will be frittered away.
 The whole army will be mobilized.
 You will only forget the hero among the women."

When the Perfected One of Mount Mao finished reciting the poem, he said, "These eight lines are the havoc that you will wreak."

When Guangzhi heard this poem, he kowtowed and said, "I will strictly abide by my master's words." Then he took his leave and went down the mountain.

On the road he was hungry and thirsty. From Jiangxi he passed through Nanchang, and just as he was going to Nanchang, he saw a notice for a cash reward posted at the side of the road.¹⁰ Many people were looking at it, vying to see it. Yuan Guangzhi didn't know what it was about, so he pushed his way through the crowd to have a look. It was about the son of the Wang family in that area, who had vanished on the day of his wedding. If anyone knew his whereabouts, or heard of him, they should report it to those searching for him. The reward was one hundred taels, and so on.

Yuan Guangzhi thought to himself, "How could a son vanish just when he was about to get married? If this man was already established and had reached the age of marriage, I don't think he had a meager fate, so why would he disappear? There must be more to it than meets the eye. Who knows what happened to him? I will go to his house and ask for an explanation." Then he went to the Wang residence to inquire about the circumstances.

Old Mr. Wang saw a Daoist with a sword at his waist come to his house to inquire in detail about this affair. Old Mr. Wang wept, saying, "My wife and I are both over fifty, and we have only this child. This year he turned eighteen, and was about to become related by marriage to the Jiang family in the village opposite. A few days ago was the auspicious day for marriage. With

drums and music, the flower-bedecked sedan chair came to the door. After the new bride got out of the sedan chair and they went through the wedding ceremony in the ceremonial hall, she went into the bedchamber and sat on the bed. And all of a sudden the groom vanished! He couldn't be found anywhere! Some say that he was carried off by a demon spirit, while others say he was kidnapped. There are all sorts of differing theories. Now it is already more than half a month. There was no alternative but to put up a notice in the neighborhood, but, even so, there is no news."

Guangzhi asked if there was a demon appearing and disappearing in the area. Old Mr. Wang said, "Behind our house there is a high mountain. Lately I've heard tell that there is an exceedingly beautiful girl who picks wild flowers on the mountain. If someone approaches to look at her, she disappears just like that. The common people suspect it is a demon. Nobody has said any more than that."

When Yuan Guangzhi heard this, he was secretly pleased. Described in this way, surely it was the doings of this demon, and he wanted to go look for it. Just then it started to rain, so he said to old Mr. Wang, "When it clears up, I'll go search for it." Old Mr. Wang was delighted, prepared a feast, and entertained Guangzhi in his study. Then he ordered his wife to bring their daughter-in-law, who bowed to Yuan Guangzhi.

Old Mr. Wang said, "After she was married in the hall, this pitiable daughter-in-law lost her husband, and hasn't even seen his face. She keeps saying that if her husband has disappeared, she won't live much longer." Yuan Guangzhi looked the new bride over carefully. Sure enough, she was good looking.

He consoled her, saying, "If I search for him, I will surely find him, so what need is there to commit suicide?"

That night Yuan Guangzhi slept peacefully in the study. At dawn the next day, when the rain had stopped, he went to the mountain behind the house. As expected, he saw a girl at the foot of the hill picking flowers, which she put in her sleeve. Guangzhi thought it was surely this girl. Following her to the mouth of a valley, he saw the girl run into it. Guangzhi made himself invisible and followed her into the valley to watch her. Although from the outside the valley appeared to be very narrow, within it was spacious and bright. There he saw a young man, surely old Mr. Wang's son, sitting with this girl on the ground, munching wild flowers. He looked carefully at the

girl. Her appearance was beautiful, exactly like the bride he had seen the day before, and in his heart all was clear and obvious.

He crept invisibly to their side to find out what the two of them were talking about. He heard the young man say, "The flowers you gave me to eat the day before yesterday stank to high heaven, so I couldn't bear to put them in my mouth. Eating them was disgusting. Today when I eat them, I feel that they are fragrant and sweet beyond compare. But 'Although Chang An is good, it's not a place where one can stay a long time,' so tomorrow I want to go home."

The girl replied, "If you go home, I absolutely won't be able to go there. Your father will instruct his daughter-in-law to be his own secondary wife. I would rather die here. I'm not going."

The young man asked in alarm, "Where did you hear about this matter?"

The girl replied, "I early on heard them say that your father wanted to take me as his concubine using you as an excuse. How would I be willing to go along? When I arrived at your house for the wedding and went into the bedchamber and sat on the bed, you went out and your father came in. He whispered in my ear, 'My son is a fool. He doesn't know anything. Getting a daughter-in-law now was done with his name. Really you're a secondary wife for me. Tonight allow me to come into your bedchamber to sleep.' When I heard him say that, I was extremely shocked. I thought that if I submitted to being his concubine, it would inevitably harm the five relationships.¹¹ For this reason, I've brought you here to this uninhabited place, where we have attained all the love of a married couple. It's been half a month. If we hadn't fled, your father would certainly have imitated the case of Zhu Wen of the later Tang dynasty, whose father usurped his wife.¹² If it were anyone else, it could be disputed. According to a folk saying, in arguing over a wife and seizing fields people don't fear death. He is your father, so who will dare challenge him? Scandalously, you will be left without any argument and will be a cuckold. Now, if you stay a few days longer and I take you with me, we will have more than enough to eat."

The young man wept and said, "As for my father behaving in such a manner, there's a saying that if a father is not upright, the son can leave his home. From now on, in life and death I wish to be together with you."

The girl used her sleeve to dry the young man's tears, embraced him, and said, "Don't be heartbroken. Although your father is not upright, how could

I be shameless?” Guangzhi himself saw that this girl’s beauty was like flowers and jade, her bewitching manner sweet and charming. Without realizing it, his own lascivious thoughts were aroused.

He slipped out of the valley and returned to the Wang family. Old Mr. Wang received him, asking, “Do you have any news?”

Guangzhi replied, “It’s because you, old man, were not upright, and had evil intentions. Do you want to imitate King Ping of Chu, who destroyed normal relationships?¹³ ‘If the father is not upright, the son flees to another place.’ This saying is not wrong.”

Old Mr. Wang was deeply shocked, and said, “Whatever are you talking about?”

Yuan Guangzhi recounted what he had seen and heard, explaining everything. Old Mr. Wang burst out laughing and said, “It’s outrageous!” He hurried inside and told his wife to bring out the daughter-in-law to see Guangzhi, saying, “Here is my daughter-in-law. How can you say this? That girl talked nonsense. It was no doubt a demon.”

Guangzhi saw that this was so, and said, “There’s no need to explain in detail. I will go again to look.”

Guangzhi again went into the valley, where he saw the young man sleeping with his arms around the girl. Guangzhi smiled and recited two lines of a poem:

Zhuangzi awoke from a dream and thought he was a butterfly.¹⁴

When the dream ended he had lustful thoughts and turned into a cuckoo.

The girl woke up, and called out, “Who dares to come into my inner chamber?”

Guangzhi laughed and said, “You dare carry off someone else’s groom and bring him here, out of insatiable desire for wanton pleasure? Perversely, you falsely accuse his father of sowing disorder in human relationships. Yet you dare to yell at other people? You really want to have it all ways! I will not kill you now.” When the girl saw that Guangzhi had seen through her, she was greatly alarmed. She tried to escape, but since there was no way out, she made herself invisible, so that when you looked at her you couldn’t see her. Guangzhi looked at the place where the girl had become invisible, then conjured up a net to cover the spot, so as to not allow her to escape. Then he led the Wang son out of the valley back to the Wang residence.

When old Mr. Wang saw that his son had come back, he was overjoyed. "Why did you disappear for more than half a month?" he asked. His son looked furious and didn't say a word.

Yuan Guangzhi said, "There's no need to ask any more questions. Quickly tell your son to go into the bedroom to see his new wife. When he talks to her, of course he will understand. Only then will you be able to clear yourself of this false accusation." Old Mr. Wang then prepared one hundred taels of silver to reward the Daoist master, which Yuan Guangzhi received with thanks. Then he said goodbye to old Mr. Wang and departed.

Guangzhi went back to the valley, and from a crack in the rock he pulled out the demon. He shouted, "What demon are you? You are in front of me, but you still don't appear in your original form." He slapped the demon on the back, whereupon she collapsed on the ground and turned into a large, gold-powdered, five-colored butterfly. Guangzhi said, "So, it's the perfected spirit of a butterfly." In his mind he reconsidered, and said to himself, "A perfected butterfly spirit surely wouldn't harm people. For the time being I am traveling alone and it is very lonely, so it would be better to take a companion. There would be many benefits."

Then he addressed the demon, demanding, "Now truly tell me your origin. Where did you get your spirit powers to have perfected your spirit to this degree? I will not kill you."

The demon replied, "I am the drawing of a butterfly by King Teng. I obtained the energies from his spirit, was moved by the power of his brush, and achieved human form. My name is Mengyu (Dream Remnant). I am not the same as other butterflies."¹⁵

When Yuan Guangzhi heard this, he was delighted. He said, "You are a painting by a famous artist, doubly elegant. I am none other than a disciple of the great Daoist master of Huayang Grotto at Mount Mao in Jiangnan. My surname is Yuan and my given name is Guangzhi. I am on my way to Fuzhou to be the preceptor of state for the king and his nobles. If you want to travel with me, I will take you as my legal wife, and we can share riches and honor. If you don't come along, my sword will not be forgiving."

Mengyu replied, "If I obtain your love, Daoist master, I am willing to join with you." When Guangzhi saw that she would obey, he helped her to her feet and embraced her.

At this time the fire of his lust had already begun to burn. Then in the valley, after he had sexual intercourse with Mengyu, they used the Invisible

Body Method to descend the mountain together. When they reached the roadstead, they looked for a boat to go to Fuzhou, paying the boatman a high price not to take any other people. Thereupon the two of them enjoyed themselves day and night.

But Mengyu didn't eat food; she only ate flowers. There was no place Yuan Guangzhi could buy them, so that night he deployed his evil arts, and early the next day he had a big pile of wildflowers. Guangzhi smiled and said, "Dear, please eat them." Mengyu ate several flowers. Then she put them down and didn't eat any more. Guangzhi asked, "Dear, why don't you have some more?"

"Wildflowers lack flavor," Mengyu replied. "Only orchids and osmanthus flowers, the kings of the flowers, are appetizing."

Guangzhi said, "I'll get some. You wait until tomorrow morning at the latest."

That night Guangzhi again deployed his magic arts. The next day, as expected, there was a big pile of orchids and osmanthus flowers. "Please, dear, enjoy the flavor of the kings," he said. When Mengyu smelled their fragrance, she ate to her heart's content. But, because orchid and osmanthus are extremely rare, only wealthy and noble families had them, so that after they had been stolen for several nights, the supply was exhausted. Guangzhi said to Mengyu, "Dear, you don't usually eat food, you only like fresh flowers. Aside from that, what flavors do you like? You might as well tell me. No matter how far away it is, I will be able to get it for you."

Mengyu smiled and said, "I love marinated phoenix and boiled dragon, carved snake belly scales and embroidered toads. Do you have any?" Guangzhi said he did. Mengyu smiled again, and said, "There's something else I like. It's just that it's unsuitable to say." Guangzhi said, "My extremely lovable wife, how I wish I could gouge out my heart and cut out my liver in order to treat you."

Mengyu said, "Since I am so fortunate that you don't blame me, when I hadn't yet become a human being, I usually stole the dirt from the hair of little girls, the tips of the penises of little boys, and the nipples of young women. I ate them for some years. When I changed into human shape, I still secretly enjoyed them. I didn't dare mention this unclean matter for fear that you would think it repulsive."

Guangzhi said, "Dear, since you are fond of these things, how could I restrict them? In ancient times, people also had them, such as Liu Yong as

Grand Commander (Taishou) in the Nanshi. He was very fond of eating ulcerous scabs. Mo Shuqi of the Sui dynasty liked to eat the excretions of young boys, and there were those who liked male sperm and female menstrual blood.¹⁶ There are many such as these. Give me until tomorrow morning, and you will have them.”

Guangzhi cut out ten paper men, each holding a pair of scissors, and stored each one separately in a small box. After writing talismans and chanting incantations, he covered the boxes tightly. Then he went into the cabin of the boat to sleep. At daybreak the next day, when he had finished washing and dressing, he opened the lids of the boxes to have a look. In one box was the filth of hair, while another held penis tips and nipples. The paper men were still there. Guangzhi smiled and said, “Could these be considered to be ‘getting jade pestles and treasures’?”

Mengyu thanked him, saying, “I am fortunate that you, Daoist master, have taken a lot of trouble. It’s really tremendous.” Then she picked up the penis tips with her fingers and ate them. She also ate the hair filth, as if it was raw seeds, and the nipples, as if they were fried beans. When Guangzhi saw this he laughed. When Mengyu had eaten everything, she was all smiles.

From this night on, he deployed his magic arts to get these three things. In all the villages, streets, and towns they passed through, there were very few young girls and boys who didn’t meet with the calamity of this demon. Of those who heard of it, there were none who were not astonished. Boys and girls who hadn’t yet been cut used red cloth to wrap themselves from head to belly in order to avoid the calamity of the demon’s magic.

Wherever Guangzhi went—Nanchang, Tingzhou, Yanping in Jiangxi, up to the provincial capital of Fuzhou—all met with this calamity.¹⁷ When the local officials heard of it, they put up announcements, sternly ordering their arrest and apprehension. But families in which people were cut were panic-stricken, so they invited monks to hold *jiao* religious services in their homes to pray to preserve peace.¹⁸ Guangzhi continued to exercise this evil Mount Mao magic. Even if he didn’t go so far as to kill people, still all communities in these two provinces were not at peace, and the commoner parents were panic-stricken. Execution was too good for him.

Now we will return to Wang Jitu, who was arrested by the ruler of Min in order to punish the crime of prophetic rumors. The members of his family had fled the palace and hidden themselves in the house of Yuan Gao, in Fuqing. Yuan Gao’s ancestors had lived in Minqing, and he had once been an

illustrious minister of the honest and prudent king; but now, having retired from office due to old age, he had moved to Fuqing. He was an older fellow clansman of Guangzhi's father's generation. When Guangzhi arrived there, he intended to go to the house to visit his clansman. The boat reached the bank, and he stepped onto it. If you want to know Guangzhi's business, then read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 14

Xue Wenjie Spreads Rumors in the Palace / Wang Jitu's Army Surrounds Fuzhou City

NOW LET US RETURN TO YUAN GUANGZHI AND MENGJU. WHEN THEIR boat arrived at Fuqing, they disembarked and went to the home of his senior clansman, Yuan Gao, who received them with great pleasure. He asked, "Worthy nephew, I haven't seen you for several years. Where have you been?"

Yuan Guangzhi replied, "It's because I went to Mount Mao in Jiangnan, where I was fortunate to be accepted by the Perfected One. I was given preferential treatment, and he completely transmitted to me all the magic arts. And I took this woman to be my wife. Consequently, I have been away from home for a long time. I only left the magic master to bring my wife home. Since the boat was passing through here, and I had heard that you had retired and were at home, I have come to visit to pay my respects."

Yuan Gao was delighted. He invited him to stay, saying, "Nephew, you have made a long and difficult journey from Jiangnan. Stay here for a while and rest for a few days, then proceed." He engaged a sedan chair for disembarking the boat, and Mengju was carried straight back to the house. The boat was moored at the bank and they were to stay for several days before continuing on their journey. Yuan Gao's hospitality was very generous. Having stayed on for several days, Guangzhi wanted to take his leave, but stayed for yet another three days.

One day, he saw someone arrive with a face the color of ash, who reported, "Something has gone wrong, and it has already been discovered by the government. The ruler of Min has issued an imperial decree dispatching officials to make an arrest and solve the crime. Already the government troops have set out from the capital and are coming to our house to make an arrest. This matter has already been exposed. Since our crime is such that even death is insufficient, how can we get out of this?"

When Yuan Gao and the people from the village heard this, they were greatly alarmed. Everyone wept and wailed. All regretted that Yuan Gao, clearly knowing that this person should not have been allowed to stay, had deliberately invited him to do so. Someone said, "Now that the matter has come to this, we have no alternative but to turn him over and leave it to the government officials to punish him. Only then can we defend ourselves as blameless."

Everyone said, "It's already too late now to turn him over. There is no way we can avoid being implicated."

Guangzhi mistakenly thought that his case had been discovered, and suspected that his having deployed evil arts on his journey and the matter of cutting off people's penises and hair was laid bare. To the crowd of people he said, "I am the one at fault. I will go take responsibility so that you will not be implicated. Quickly take me to the officials to be punished for my crime."

Yuan Gao said, "What will having you arrested accomplish? The matter has already been discovered. What does it have to do with you? The ruler of Min, Wang Lian, is a tyrant and believes slander. He trusts Xue Wenjie to kill members of the clans. For this reason Jitu, the son of Yanshu, who was the eldest son of the previous ruler, Wang Shenzhi, has fabricated slanders. On the outside he's causing rumors. The ruler of Min has heard them and therefore wants to extirpate Jitu's clan. Fortunately, Jitu had sympathizers in the inner palace who gave him prior notice to take his family and flee. Consequently, they came here to take refuge. Because I remember the official branch of the family tree of the previous ruler, and formerly received great kindness, I invited them to stay and make themselves comfortable in the inner chamber. Who could know that the news would be leaked and the government soldiers would come here to arrest them? Since I have committed the crime of hiding them, it's impossible to avoid being beheaded." When he had finished speaking, he burst into tears.

Guangzhi said, "Since this ruler is benighted, why don't we rebel? What are we waiting for? Hurry and ask the grandson Wang Jitu to come out. We'll help him raise an army. We'll get rid of the benighted ruler and the wicked traitors, take back the positions at court, and make him emperor. Our sons, grandsons, and nephews can be enfeoffed as marquises and ministers. We can't miss this opportunity! If we don't rebel, we'll be seized by the government soldiers, and they will behead us all. In contrast to becoming kings, that would be bad."

Yuan Gao still did not reply. Everyone said, "If we don't rebel, it will be hard to avoid everyone dying." Then they asked the Wang grandson, Wang Jitu, to come out, and explained the situation to him. Unwilling to wait for Yuan Gao to take the initiative, Guangzhi opened his boxes and took out two pairs of scissors. Summoning Mengyu, the paper men, and paper horses, he sprinkled beans that turned into soldiers, recited incantations, and wrote talismans. In a short time they had turned into tens of thousands of men and horses.¹ From the villages, tens of thousands joined the army, totaling more than one hundred thousand soldiers and horses. Firing guns, they set out; rushing to kill, they departed. Guangzhi dispatched an order to first attack Fuqing County, kill the officials, and seize Cang Shan.

Now let us return to the ruler of Min who, having investigated and discovered that Jitu was hiding in Fuqing County in Yuan Gao's house, had sent government soldiers to arrest and punish him. At the same time, he ordered the inner palace official, Gui Shouming, to investigate all the government officials. If there were any extremely beautiful girls, he should inquire about them, report back, and bring them for the West Palace.

Chen Jinfeng was in the Zheng Palace. Only the West and South Palaces were not yet set up. She created a register to record the name of each palace concubine in the three palaces, while Gui Lang searched for concubines. He found the daughter of Zou Huai, Secretary of the Bureau of Military Affairs, who was very beautiful, learned on the inside and elegant on the outside. He also found the daughter of Gao Teng, Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Rites, whose appearance surpassed that of Zhaojun.²

Gui Lang went into the palace, and reported, "I have found the two daughters of the Secretary of the Bureau of Military Affairs and the Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Rites. Both have the virtue and appearance to be summoned to the palace and selected as empresses for the West and South Palaces." The ruler of Min was delighted. He decreed that Worthy

Concubine Zou should be set up in the South Palace, and Concubine Gao Ying in the West Palace. On that very day the empresses of the West and South Palaces and the empress of the Zheng Palace all had their names recorded in the register. Then he sent down an imperial decree proclaiming that the two girls Zou and Gao were to enter the palace.

When the decree came down, Zou Huai was greatly alarmed, and rushed to the inner yamen to inform his wife. He said angrily, "Our daughter is the pure and innocent daughter of an official's family. I've heard that the inner palace is now debauched and wanton, and the ruler of Min is besotted with wine and sex. The palace is completely dominated by Gui Shouming, and Empress Chen of the Zheng Palace controls the affairs of state. Since the debauchery there is intolerable, how can our daughter enter the palace?"

When the Zou daughter learned of this, she tried to commit suicide. Zou Huai consoled her, saying, "You don't need to do this. Although the benighted ruler has decreed that you be summoned to the court, how could I be willing to let you go there? I'm willing for him to punish me according to the law, but I won't accept his defiling you."

Just as father and daughter were discussing the situation, a family servant came and reported, "Old Master Gao, the Gentleman Attendant of the Ministry of Rites, wants to see you about a confidential matter." Zou Huai went out of the hall to invite him to enter, and Gao Teng came in. As guest and host, they sat down.

After tea, Gao Teng said, "Elder brother, just now the ruler of Min has sent down a decree announcing that he wants our daughters to enter the palace as concubines. I understand that the inner palace is given up to the debaucheries of Gui Shouming, and the benighted ruler does not manage the affairs of state. How can our daughters bear to enter the palace and be defiled? Since my little daughter heard that she was summoned, she constantly weeps and wails, and wants to kill herself. When I heard that your daughter also was summoned, I came to your home to talk this matter over."

Zou Huai said, "Because my daughter, too, wants to commit suicide on account of this matter, I am continually trying to stop her. My thinking is: the benighted ruler is obsessed with wine and women, and pays no attention to state affairs. And I've heard that the inner palace is debauched, so I am determined not to accept the summons. Let him punish me according to the law. I don't know what your honorable intention is."

Gao Teng said, "I am of the same opinion. Whether I live or die, I will accept my fate. I will now take my leave."

Gentleman Attendant Gao returned to his office. He had agreed with Zou Huai not to send their daughters, and to stop the summons and decree. When the ruler of Min heard this, he angrily said, "The two ministers Zou and Gao, in not obeying the decree and summons, are deceiving me." He was just about to decree that they should be detained for questioning and punishment when it was reported that Wang Jitu was rebelling. He had already attacked Fuqing County and seized Cang Shan, and was nearly at the outskirts of the capital. Furthermore, the Fuqing officials had all been killed. When the ruler of Min heard this report, he was greatly alarmed. He had intended to seize the two ministers Zou and Gao and punish them. But with the traitorous soldiers near the city, Zou Huai, the Secretary of the Bureau of Military Affairs, was in a position to be useful, so he temporarily halted the punishment of the two ministers for opposing the decree. He would wait for the traitors to be destroyed and put down, and only then discuss it. Then he decreed that Zou Huai be selected as general to lead the army out of the city to exterminate the traitors.

Now we will return to Yuan Guangzhi and the soldiers rushing to Changle.³ They had already killed the government soldiers and seized the granary, the awesome power of the rebel army shaking the region. Wang Jitu had declared himself emperor of Great Min, and Yuan Guangzhi had declared himself State Founder, while Mengyu was called the State Founder's Wife. The members of Yuan's family were each enfeoffed with the title of marquis. Several hundred generals and more than a million courageous soldiers went straight to the outskirts of Fuzhou City.

When the ruler of Min heard the report that all his troops had been defeated, he consulted with Zou Huai and Xue Wenjie. He assigned Commander in Chief Liu Yuanfu to lead five thousand troops out of the city to punish the rebels by force. Liu Yuanfu ordered the troops to fire their cannons, and they went out of the city to defeat the rebels. Reaching the area of Yin Mountain, they encountered the rebel army.⁴

The two armies lined up in battle formation. As Liu Yuanfu whipped his horse and reviled the rebels, he saw a female general dash out from the opposing army. On her head she wore a phoenix hat, on her body she wore soft armor, and in her hand she grasped a "square sky" halberd.⁵ She was

more beautiful than Xi Shi. It was apparent who this person was: it was Mengyu, the State Founder's Wife.

Liu Yuanfu looked at her, observing to himself that she was very remarkable. Then he urged his army forward to attack. Raising her lance to meet him, Mengyu did not panic in the least, and the two of them fought more than twenty rounds. Mengyu was a little lacking in courage, so Liu Yuanfu pretended to be weakened, as he wanted to capture her alive in order to display his talents. At this time, Mengyu's strength had been exhausted, but her muscles were reviving. Liu Yuanfu fought closer, and pulled her horse over. Suddenly, Mengyu leaned over and let fly a mouthful of powder to cast a spell on him. She thrust her lance at an angle, causing Liu Yuanfu to roll from his saddle under his horse. Again she thrust her lance, resulting in his death. Yuan Guangzhi saw that his wife had won, and urged his soldiers forward, directly to the South Pass. A mounted scout flew back to the palace to report.

When the ruler of Min heard that Liu Yuanfu had fallen in battle and the rebel troops were approaching the city, he issued an imperial decree to tightly close the city gates. The officers received the order. When Yuan Guangzhi saw that the gates were already closed, he ordered the officers to abuse and punish the enemy by every means.

At his wit's end, the ruler of Min personally took command of the main army. He ordered the two great generals Zhu Wenzheng and Wang Zhixian to escort him. He also ordered Capital Security Officer Zhang Da and Palace Army Official Li Xin to be the two vanguards, join together, and lead the three capital armies to the inner military drill ground to make offerings to the banners and fire the cannons. He then opened the city gates, and sent out the two vanguards with their cavalry to seek battle.

Guangzhi ordered Mengyu to go out and intercept them in front of his own battle line. The two vanguard generals whipped their horses to go meet her in battle, fighting more than twenty rounds. When Zhang Da and Li Xin attacked to the front and rear, Mengyu whipped her horse and withdrew. The two generals Zhang and Li urged their horses to advance into battle. Guangzhi shielded himself behind Wang Jitu, and also withdrew.

The ruler of Min watched from the city wall. Seeing the female general and the main army retreat, he handed down an order to send out the Capital Security soldiers and horses. They mobilized and left the city in order to pursue and fall upon the retreating army. Knowing that all the soldiers and

horses in the city had come out, Yuan Guangzhi secretly used tens of thousands of his shadow soldiers to cut across in the middle and attack. The capital was in total confusion. As there was no place to escape to, when the ruler of Min observed this from the city wall, he was terrified. Moreover, he saw countless shadow troops coming to attack in pursuit. Yuan Guangzhi ordered his generals and tens of thousands of soldiers to lie in wait on the main road to kill the enemy generals, and in no time at all Generals Zhang and Li were killed by Mengyu.⁶

On this battleground corpses were strewn all over the fields, and blood flowed in rivers. The common people of the capital had no way to flee, while the ruler of Min retreated to his palace. Guangzhi beat the gong to withdraw his troops from battle, and rewarded the generals with many gifts. Wang Jitu held a banquet for Yuan Guangzhi and his wife to congratulate them for their success, at which Guangzhi drank wine. Jitu commended him, saying, "I myself am indeed deeply moved by your awesome spirit power and I have attained my vengeance."

Guangzhi said, "This is my king's extraordinary blessing, on a par with Heaven. What talent do I have? Fortunately, the Capital Security soldiers have exhausted their provisions, so within a few days we will seize Wang Lian and Xue Wenjie, the two criminals. It will be as easy as taking something out of one's pocket. What difficulty is there in that?"

Now let us speak of the ruler of Min, whose army was destroyed and generals killed; out of every ten, eight or nine were dead. The place where the capital army was defeated was to the east of the South Gate; its name is now Defeated Army Ocean (Bai Zhen Yang). Where all the soldiers were killed is Metal Heap Ocean (Jin Dun Yang), while the name Massacred Soldiers Bridge (Sha Ren Qiao) was later changed to the homonym Sand Benevolence Bridge (Sha Ren Qiao). It is called Defeated Army Ocean, because at that time the defeated soldiers threw down their spears, discarded their shields, and fled or were lost in battle. Their number was incalculable. Destroyed in battle, they sank into the sand, and their broken lances lay in piles on the ground, so that when springs are dug, there is always the smell of iron. The taste of it remains there to this day, so that the water can't be used for eating or drinking, and on the three mounds at Defeated Army Ocean there is not a single well.

Now let us return to the ruler of Min. Because his soldiers were defeated, he sued for peace and an equal division of land, ordering a messenger to go

persuade Guangzhi. The messenger entered the camp and addressed Guangzhi, saying, "I received the ruler of Min's order to come explain to you that if you are willing to withdraw your soldiers, he is willing to equally divide the land." Guangzhi hadn't yet opened his mouth to reply when Wang Jitu dismissed the messenger and sent him back.

The next day the messenger returned. He said that if they were willing to withdraw their soldiers, then the ruler of Min would be willing to yield the throne, and retire to live in a town outside, but Wang Jitu again would not assent. He required the heads of the ruler of Min (Wang Lian) and Xue Wenjie, and only then would he be willing to withdraw. The messenger went back and reported that Wang Jitu would not agree.

When the ruler of Min heard this, he turned pale with alarm. He cast back and forth in his mind, but there was nothing for him to do but commit suicide. Luckily for him, Empress Chen and Gui Shouming repeatedly tried to dissuade him, because he had to relentlessly defend the country. They tried to persuade him, saying that although they were now surrounded, the city had not yet fallen, and if there were reinforcements they could still recover. If there were no reinforcements, they should wait for the city to fall. When the ruler of Min heard that Gui Shouming and Chen Jinfeng were willing to die with him, he delayed for several days.

Now let us return to Wang Jitu. When he attained this position, his personality abruptly changed, and he was always angry. Thinking the emperorship was in sight, he became extremely arrogant, never satisfied with what anyone did. He did not even heed what Yuan Guangzhi said. At this time Jitu observed that Mengyu was beautiful, and when he thought of her his heart couldn't help leaping. He also feared that if her husband knew about it, it wouldn't do, so he devised a plan. He invited Yuan Guangzhi to drink wine in order to get him drunk, then helped him to bed, while he himself went into the rear camp. There he said to Mengyu, "This evening if you will submit to my wishes, one day I will be emperor and then I will set you up as empress of the Zheng Palace."

Mengyu laughed and said, "It wouldn't be a good idea for me to comply. If my husband found out about it, then what?"

Jitu replied, "I've just gotten your husband drunk. I think it's unlikely that he'll wake up." When he finished speaking, he advanced to seek pleasure, and Mengyu submitted and got into bed. After they had sex, Jitu

returned to his own tent and slept there alongside Guangzhi. Because Guangzhi was drunk, he didn't know anything about this matter. The next day, he went out to put the troops in order. As for Mengyu and Jitu's secret relationship, even the gods did not know about it.

Later, Guangzhi saw the two of them and it seemed to him that they intended to have an illicit affair. Was it possible that they were already having one? He didn't yet know, so that night he used clever words to trick Mengyu. In the evening, Guangzhi said to her, "I see that your facial features have the noble appearance of an empress of ten thousand people. In future, when Jitu ascends the throne, he will take you into the palace to be the empress of the Zheng Palace. I don't know if the emperor will be willing to take you or not."

When Mengyu heard this, she said that it was true. Then she laughed, "If you present me to him, the emperor will of course accept me, but only if you agree would I dare enter."

Guangzhi said, "I'm only afraid he won't accept you. At that time, how could I back out?"

Mengyu smiled and said, "The new lord will certainly accept me."

Guangzhi said, "If you are empress just the same as Chen Jinfeng, then I will be the same as Gui Shouming, and you and I can enjoy riches and honor together. Even if the new lord accepts you, I'm afraid he might change. If you and the new lord can share the same pillow and be happy, then that would be wonderful."

Mengyu laughed and said, "I've already slept with him." Guangzhi asked how many times she had slept with him. Mengyu covered her mouth and giggled, holding up four fingers.

Yuan Guangzhi said, "Four times already?" Mengyu nodded her head. When Yuan Guangzhi heard this he flared up in anger, his rage like thunder. From his waist he pulled out his precious sword to kill this demon. When Mengyu saw that he was in a rage, she hid under the bed and didn't dare come out.

Guangzhi thought back and said, "Traitorous demon, you were originally not human. Since you are a flying insect, how could you have any integrity or sense of shame? I can still forgive you. I will only hate Wang Jitu, that son of a bitch. He is detestable! Absolutely don't think that I will spare his life or his family's. While we were still working hard to defeat the whole world to get back the emperorship, he perversely dared to seize the

State Founder's Wife. Now if I were to keep this son of a bitch around, what use would he be?"

Just as he was about to go run Jitu through with his sword, he thought to himself, "Eliminating this son of a bitch really is not difficult. But our work is already nine-tenths accomplished, and the city is about to fall, so we cannot have a falling out now. I will wait until the commoners in the city have no grain. In a few days there will be chaos, and they will open the city and come out to surrender. At that time I will kill this son of a bitch and seize and occupy the throne. If I can be emperor, I will not be wasting all that I have learned." Guangzhi calculated that this was what he would do, and made his mind up. Then he called to Mengyu.

Only when Mengyu saw that he had calmed down and sheathed his sword did she dare come out from under the bed. She hung her head and didn't speak. Guangzhi said to her, "Although you are beautiful, your heart is confused. You are completely ignorant of the concept of female chastity. For the time being, I will bear in mind that you are not human, so for now I will spare your life. If you go near that dead dog again, and I hear about it, then I will kill you together. At that time you will have no cause for complaint." Mengyu's face turned bright red and, in shame, she withdrew. Guangzhi remembered this matter in his heart; it was a secret he did not reveal. For the time being he would prudently protect these two, but it was not a case of permitting any leniency.

Because Jitu saw that there were no signs of action in the city, he kept urging Guangzhi to take his troops and attack the city's defenses. He would soon succeed and ascend the throne, and, with Guangzhi, enjoy glory, luxury, wealth, and honor. But because Guangzhi despised Jitu and Mengyu for their affair, he took no action. He thought to himself, "You are now pleased with yourselves, but I am not happy." He replied, "Don't pursue a desperate enemy. Wait a few days. When I hear of great chaos in the city, I will kill the two traitors, Wang Lian and Xue Wenjie, after which the city will open and surrender." When Jitu heard this, he didn't urge him anymore. Consequently, the city hadn't yet fallen, but grain was exhausted, the people were starving, and there was great chaos.

The ruler of Min, Chen Jinfeng, and Gui Shouming embraced and wept. All of a sudden they saw an officer with an urgent dispatch enter the palace. Truly it was:

Happiness, when it reaches its extreme, turns to sorrow;
 Destiny has an allotted span.
 When in complete despair, one will encounter survival;
 It is not fixed.

The scout with the urgent dispatch entered the palace. The ruler of Min was surprised and baffled. He had been certain that the city had fallen, but, surprisingly, what the scout reported was that at the North Gate there was a female general going into battle to rescue them and bring grain and forage to aid them. She had fought the rebel troops surrounding the city into withdrawing. Now, below the city wall, she called for the gate to be opened, and requested a decree for a final decision. When the ruler of Min heard this, he was beside himself with joy. He ordered Gui Shouming and Li Deng to go together to the city wall to find out what had happened. Shouming received the decree and went with Li Deng to the gate tower to make inquiries. What they learned made them very happy, and they ordered the gate to be opened to let the female general enter. Then they led the way into the imperial palace.

You ask, who was this person? It was Madame Chen of Linshui Palace! From the time she was enfeoffed, she and her seven sworn sisters and the thirty-six palace concubines discussed magic and taught the arts day and night at Linshui. By this time all the demons had been eliminated, only the Ravine Demon having escaped. Jingu often secretly guarded against attacks. One day she heard that Wang Jitu had rebelled and Yuan Guangzhi, who had used the deviant arts of Mount Mao to kill all the Fuzhou City soldiers, was commander. Now that the capital had been under siege for more than a month, there was no food or forage within, and without there were no reinforcements, so it was in imminent danger.

When Madame Chen heard this news, she sighed, and said to her sisters, "Rescuing those in difficulty and helping those in danger, that is my lifelong aspiration. How could there be any justification for having received the ruler's blessings and now, with the country in peril, to sit here doing nothing and not come to the rescue?" Then she led out her seven sworn sisters and the thirty-six palace concubines. They did not wear armor, nor did they ride warhorses. They walked on foot, each holding a sword in her hand. Forming a long, snake formation, they fought their way to the city.⁷ Chen Jingu secretly dispatched her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to lead the shadow

soldiers of the Five Camps to pursue and kill the rebel soldiers who surrounded the city, decisively defeating the demon soldiers. Then Chen Jinggu ordered the city gates to be opened.

Now we will return to Gui Shouming. He led Chen Jinggu into the palace, where she kowtowed and had an audience with the ruler of Min. For the ruler of Min happiness was Heaven-sent. He thought to himself that now that he had reinforcements, he could guarantee that there would be no calamity. Tearfully, he told Jinggu, "If you had arrived a moment later, my life would have ended. Now how should we proceed? I will trust you to carry it out. If there are those who will not obey, execute them first and report to the emperor afterward. Unfortunately, the grain has run out and the army is desperate. What shall we do?"

"I have brought a little grain and fodder," Chen Jinggu told him. "Quickly distribute it among the people. It will be enough to enable them to live for a time. Wait a few more days, then kill the retreating rebel soldiers. Now, since there are no able-bodied men in the city, you should select five hundred maidens to be soldiers. Both order the starving people to be fed, and draft girls, choosing unmarried girls from the households of officials and common people."

Within a few days, already there were four hundred of them. Two lists of palace concubines and wives were presented to Chen Jinggu, and she personally selected them. Madame Chen looked at the palace list and saw that the very first name was that of Chen Jinfeng of the Zheng Palace. When Chen Jinfeng heard that she had been selected, she was willing to go out into the battle line. Madame Chen also selected Worthy Concubine Zou and Worthy Concubine Gao from the South Palace and West Palace. She said, "These two can be female members of the Left Brigade."

When Chen Jinfeng and the ruler of Min heard the order, with one voice they answered, "Although the concubines of the South and West Palaces are on the list, they haven't yet entered the palaces."

Madame Chen said, "Quickly summon them to the palace to allow them to be employed." The ruler of Min immediately proclaimed that they should be summoned.

When the two ministers Gao Teng and Zou Huai heard that women were being called for the army and that it was Madame Chen herself who was supervising, they thought that it was surely all right, and sent their two daughters to the palace. Madame Chen saw that the Zou and Gao girls were

both very beautiful, even flawless, and destined for great things. Then she summoned the thirty-six palace concubines and the seventy-two courtyard ladies, as well as all the female servants and women. She looked them over carefully and selected five hundred of them.⁸

Next she wrote talismans, chanted incantations, and dispatched three shadow soldier messengers, each holding a talisman. One was to go to the West River to summon Miss Jiang, the Tiger Lady. One was to go to Black Stone Mountain to summon the Rock Press women, and one was to go to the monkeys' dormitory on Panther Head Mountain outside the South Gate to summon Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage. Each and every one of them was to come be of use. The three messengers each received a talisman and, having heard their orders, departed.

In a very short time a scout rushed into the palace to report, "Outside the South Gate are three Daoist women calling for the gate to be opened. I don't know who they are."

Madame Chen said, "Surely it must be Miss Jiang and the Rock Press Women." She ordered the gate to be opened and requested them to enter. She then asked each of her sworn sisters to come into the palace. After Miss Jiang and the Rock sisters saw Madame Chen and completed the ritual of greeting, they briefly told her their situations since they had parted. Then the scout reported that a hairy monkey had arrived outside the South Gate.

"That would be Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage," Chen Jinggu said, and she sent her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to receive him. He paid his respects to Chen Jinggu, and took his place to the side of where she was seated. Seeing that the soldiers were entirely equipped and prepared, Chen Jinggu personally supervised them as commander in chief, with her nine sisters as deputy supreme commanders. Then she ordered the mass of women soldiers to listen to their orders.

Madame Chen sat solemnly in front of the hall, with the ruler of Min seated on her left listening to the mobilization.⁹ Chen Jinggu issued orders. She called on Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage to obey her order, saying, "I am now sending you to be the vanguard. Listen for my signal shot." Then she dispatched the two Rock sisters, saying, "I order you to be the vanguard on the right to resist the enemy in the flying bird category of eagles, crows, and magpies. Listen for my signal shot, then go into action." The two sisters heard their orders and withdrew. Then she summoned Miss Jiang to hear her orders, saying, "I now order you to be a general to resist the enemy in the

aquatic category of turtles, tortoises, and dragons. Listen for my signal shot, then go into action.” Miss Jiang received her orders and withdrew. Then Madame Chen summoned Lin Jiuniang, the vice commander, to hear her orders, saying, “I give you the spider pearl to resist wasps, scorpions, cicadas, and those of the insect category. Listen for the signal shot, then go into action.” Jiuniang received her orders and withdrew.

Chen Jinggu then divided the five hundred female soldiers into eight divisions, selecting eight individuals as leaders.¹⁰ She ordered the daughters Zou and Gao to first transmit the arts of the sword, as well as the secret arts of flying and invisibility. Next she summoned Li Sanniang to be head of the first division, Miss Ou to be head of the second division, Miss Zou to be head of the third division, Miss Gao to be head of the fourth division, and then she ordered her three sisters Zeng, Xu, and Ruan to be heads of the fifth, sixth, and seventh divisions. Each was to listen for the signal shot and then act.

After all the female generals had been instructed, she ordered each female soldier to carry a bucket of filthy dog and pig blood, as well as a palm whisk.¹¹ They were to wait until they engaged the soldiers, and then use the filthy blood to break their spells. She ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to lead the soldiers of the Five Camps to be stationed in battle formation. She would have them prepared but not immediately used, holding them as reserves to respond to the enemy’s actions. Each of the thirty-six palace concubines was given a precious sword, and they accompanied Chen Jinggu to protect her. “Listen for my commands. I will lead the female generals. When I fire the signal cannon three times, open the city gates wide, kill the traitors, and destroy the demons.” Truly it was:

If these evil traitors had not been exercising their evil arts,
How could she receive a second title?

We don’t yet know how these women succeeded or failed. For that you’ll need to read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 15

Yuan Guangzhi's Army Suffers Defeat / Madame Chen Receives a Second Title

LET US RETURN TO MADAME CHEN'S DISPATCHING OF THE FEMALE generals of the various divisions. She directed the troops to fire the guns, and from the South Gate they came out of the city and burst into Yuan Guangzhi's camp. When Guangzhi heard the report, he ordered Mengyu to go out to fight. Having received her orders, Mengyu engaged in battle astride a horse and wielding a two-pronged lance. But Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage was already waiting to meet her. The fighting was such that the field of battle was shrouded in darkness; it was all cries and screams.

Yuan Guangzhi personally directed his troops. With his hair unbound, he brandished his sword, and, exercising the Mount Mao deviant arts to the fullest, made cut grass into horses and turned scattered beans into soldiers. Madame Chen led the various women generals as they charged out, flinging filthy ox and dog blood to break Guangzhi's deviant spells, so that the transformed soldiers and horses all resumed their original forms. After fighting more than forty rounds, Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage captured Mengyu and took her back to the camp.

Again Cinnabar Cloud returned to the front of the formation. With a shake of his body, he turned into a celestial horse and entered the battle array, galloping madly back and forth.¹ In a short time, he had trampled underfoot tens of thousands of shadow soldiers, which revealed themselves

to be horsehead grass, and were devoured by the celestial horse. The shadow soldiers having been destroyed, Guangzhi was routed, with Cinnabar Cloud following in pursuit. Madame Chen ordered the woman who had been captured to be imprisoned in the rear camp to wait until the false commander in chief and leader of the renegades had also been captured, so that they could be put to death together.

At this time the besieged city had been freed, and grain and fodder could once again be brought in. Madame Chen requested the ruler of Min to first set up places to give aid to the distressed and to calm the people. This is the present city's Anmin Alley, which at that time was the place where grain and fodder were given to aid the distressed.²

Now we will return to Guangzhi, who, from the time that he had first sent out his soldiers, had always been victorious and never defeated in battle. Only now, in this battle, was he totally defeated. His favorite wife having been captured, and the army and officers having suffered heavy casualties, he was extremely bitter. He had no idea where these female reinforcements had come from and how they could be so devastating. He ordered a trusted officer to carefully inquire into where they had come from and quickly report what he found out. In the evening, the officer returned and reported, "This force of women soldiers comes from Linshui Palace in Gutian County. Her name is Chen Jinggu. Her parents' home is in Xiadu at Jiangnan Bridge. Her father is Chen Chang."

When Yuan Guangzhi heard this, he recalled that she was the one who, years ago, ahead of him on the road, had entered Mount Lü to study magic. He thought to himself, "Although her magic power is outstanding, how could I be willing to submit? In future we will decide once and for all who is master."

Guangzhi had already retreated more than thirty *li* and was camped at Mount Huang. Wang Jitu, because he had suffered a great defeat, blamed Guangzhi. "I repeatedly urged you to move the soldiers forward and attack the city," he said, "but you took no action. You waited until reinforcements arrived, and so we suffered a colossal defeat today. If you had listened to me and early on urged the troops to attack the city, it would already have fallen."

Having suffered this reproach, Guangzhi retorted, "If you had earlier accepted his yielding of the throne to you, you would already have been emperor for some time. Even though reinforcements came, they would

have been too late. It was you who decided to demand the heads of Wang Lian and Xue Wenjie and that the gate be opened and that they welcome you into the city to be the emperor, and so you suffered defeat today." And they continued to blame each other. It didn't suit either of them to speak clearly about this matter; they only held grudges against each other, and that's all.

The next day Yuan Guangzhi again led his great army to advance and attack. Madame Chen ordered Miss Jiang to go out to meet the enemy. After just a few rounds, Guangzhi muttered incantations, and in the air there appeared more than a thousand tigers, wolves, and ferocious beasts. Baring their fangs and brandishing their claws, they came roaring and howling. When Miss Jiang saw the tigers and wolves rushing toward her, she jumped on her golden tiger and, spurring him on, she charged. The tigers and wolves were pushed aside by the golden tiger and fled in all directions. When the golden tiger let out a roar, the tigers and wolves fell to the ground, and turned into plants like tiger's head and wolf grass.

When Guangzhi saw this he was furious, and again chanted imprecations and wrote talismans. Facing the sky, he clapped his hands several times, and the air filled with tens of thousands of ferocious birds. Hawks, crows, and magpies arrived in flocks, clawing and pecking the troops. Madame Chen ordered the two Rock sisters to go meet them. When the signal cannon fired, the two Rock women hurled stones, which were just like meteors pursuing the moon, striking down all the birds. When they resumed their original form, they were nothing but shellfish and clams of various sorts.

Yuan Guangzhi saw that this magic spell also had been broken. Again he muttered something, and in the air numberless flood dragons, tortoises, snakes, and poisonous insects of all types swarmed forward. Madame Chen ordered Cinnabar Cloud to go meet the enemy, and, at the sound of the cannon shot, he went out to battle. In the air he saw all kinds of poisonous insects and ferocious snakes. He raised his cudgel and swung it, sweeping it straight from side to side, striking down all the poisonous snakes and insects, which were nothing but plants like dragon's beard and horsetail grasses. Guangzhi saw that this line of battle was also destroyed.

Again, facing the sky, he muttered something, and the air was filled with a thick, smokelike fog. Flies, gnats, bees, and locusts arrived in heaps. Madame Chen ordered Jiuniang to go out to meet them, and when the signal cannon fired she went into battle. Numberless flying insects swarmed

forward. She waved the spider pearl for purification, and the flying insects all fell to the ground, revealing themselves to be nothing but rice husks and chaff from threshing, which blew away and vanished.

Yuan Guangzhi saw that this formation, too, was smashed, and was at his wit's end. He had only possessed a few arts, and all of them had been destroyed by Madame Chen. He was about to flee, when she gave a single order. Scattering the filthy pig and dog blood, the mass of soldiers gave chase like a surging tide. Completely defeated, Yuan Guangzhi flung down his armor and fled, trailing his weapons, whereupon Cinnabar Cloud took up his cudgel and pursued him. This battle was fought in such a way that Guangzhi's magic was exhausted. He was at the end of his rope and, abandoning his soldiers, he fled. Madame Chen ordered that gold be given to the troops to reward the army.

This time Guangzhi's soldiers had been so thoroughly defeated that there was nothing left. When Wang Jitu saw this colossal defeat, he wanted to flee back to Fuqing, where, in the future, he would again build up an army. Guangzhi said, "If you return to Fuqing, how could you not be mocked? Wait for me to get Mengyu back. It won't be too late to return. Even if I can't get her back, I vow not to give up." Then he collected the remnants of his army and set up a camp on the bank of Black Dragon River.³

At this time, both inside and outside the capital, life had returned to normal. The ruler of Min was deeply grateful for Madame Chen's remarkable achievements, and rewarded her with gifts and gold and silver piled like mountains, which she declined without exception. The empress prepared gifts to reward the various female generals, and Madame Chen reluctantly accepted her thanks.

Thinking of a plan, she said to Lin Jiuniang and Miss Gao, "I want to capture Yuan Guangzhi." She gave them the plan and said, "You, my sisters, must go out and proceed accordingly." She also ordered Cinnabar Cloud to come for his orders. Cinnabar Cloud came to the foot of Madame Chen's seat, where she whispered to him, "I order you to do as follows this evening. When you have captured the rebel king, come see me." Cinnabar Cloud accepted the order and departed.

Now let us speak of Miss Gao. In accordance with the plan, she went to Mengyu and asked her, "I see that you are very elegant and beautiful. Where are you from? Tell me. Perhaps there will be some opportunity to send you back home. Who knows?"

Mengyu replied, "I am the daughter of the Perfected One of Mount Mao."

Miss Gao said, "Since you are the precious daughter of the Perfected One of Mount Mao, how can you be treated so negligently? Tomorrow I will explain it all to Madame Chen, and she will send someone to escort you back to Mount Mao. Will that do?"

Miss Gao invited Mengyu to come out and make herself comfortable in the outer room. By day they ate together, and at night they slept in the same bed. Miss Gao secretly asked her, "Would going back to Mount Mao be good or not?"

Mengyu answered, "I am fortunate to receive your undeserved kindness. I don't wish to return to Mount Mao. If I could have a meeting with my ex-husband, then that would be very lucky."

Miss Gao said, "What difficulty could there be in that? Make haste to write a letter. Then secretly send a messenger to your husband telling him to come here tonight, so he can take you back. What could be wrong with that?"

"If Madame Chen knew, it wouldn't do," Mengyu said.

"There's no harm in trying," Miss Gao replied. "My mind is made up. No one can hold us back. But when your husband comes and you see each other, introduce me. In future we can meet again."

Mengyu was delighted, and so wrote a letter, saying, "I have been fortunate to receive special treatment from Miss Gao and the various sisters. I am not restrained in any way. Tomorrow they want to send me back to Mount Mao. Tonight in the outer camp I will be waiting in the doorway of a certain house. I beg you to come quickly and take me back. If you are late, I am afraid something will go wrong." She wrote very clearly. When the letter was sealed, Miss Gao secretly sent a shadow soldier of the elements of fire and water to fly to the camp on Black Dragon River to deliver the letter.

The shadow soldier received the order and departed. He traveled to the bank of Black Dragon River and went into Yuan Guangzhi's tent. Guangzhi tore open the letter and read it, called for the messenger, and asked his background. The messenger explained, and Guangzhi rewarded him with silver. He thought to himself, "Tonight I will go bring back my dear wife, and we will seek refuge in another country. What fear have I that I will not find a good government post? I will never again wear myself out fighting the whole world with this son of a bitch."

Without even going in to say goodbye, Guangzhi set off. Soon he arrived outside the city, where, making himself invisible, he entered the camp. In

accordance with the letter, he searched for the house. He saw Mengyu leaning against a door waiting, and put out his hand to tug her sleeve. Mengyu was startled. "Who's there?" she asked.

Guangzhi answered in a low voice, "It's me. I've come especially to take you back."

Mengyu recognized his voice and said, "Don't be in a rush. You needn't be afraid. If you thank elder sister Gao in person, we'll still have plenty of time to depart."

Guangzhi made himself visible and, facing Miss Gao, bowed and thanked her. Suddenly, Lin Jiuniang entered from outside, and seized him around the waist. She laughed and said, "Good little sister Gao sold you out," and with the demon-binding rope she bound him tight. Behind them, Li Sanniang appeared. She tied up Mengyu and ordered them to be sent under guard to the army camp to await a decision.

In a short while, Cinnabar Cloud had captured Wang Jitu and brought him back. When Yuan Guangzhi saw that Wang Jitu had been captured, he asked, "How did you get caught?"

Wang Jitu replied, "Because when I looked for you, you weren't there. I sat down under a lantern, and just when I was feeling extremely depressed, a red monkey spirit burst in. It put its arms around me holding me tight, soared into the air, and flew here. How did *you* get here?"

Yuan Guangzhi sighed when he was questioned. He said, "What use is it to bring this up? If I mention that you, you son of a bitch, hadn't agreed to let this fiend spirit be the mistress of the Zheng Palace, the city would have fallen long since, and you would already have ascended the throne as emperor. How did we come to be captured tonight? We fell into a trap! If I had killed the fiend spirit back then, and not taken her as my wife, my reputation would already have been made by now, and I would have benefited myself to the ultimate. You son of a bitch, I absolutely don't intend to save the lives of your entire family. Toiling with you to regain the whole world, you were not moved by all that I did for you. Instead, you seduced my wife. Dying today, aren't you ashamed?" When Wang Jitu heard all this, that he had already been found out, he was thoroughly ashamed. He hung his head and made no reply, already regretting it. It was because of this affair that Guangzhi had bided his time and not attacked. We won't speak of this matter anymore.

Now let us turn to Madame Chen. That day she had the three of them sent under guard to the court to request a decision from the king of Min, who

had already heard that the rebels had been put down. Wang Jitu and Guangzhi were sent under guard to the hall. For the moment, the ruler was very happy. Sitting in the Wen Qing Hall, he invited Madame Chen to sit at his side, and rewarded her with piles of embroidery. When Madame Chen was formally seated, she asked Wang Jitu and Yuan Guangzhi to confess that one of them had plotted to seize the throne and the other, as commander in chief, had assisted the rebellion. The details were all true. Furthermore, they investigated the causes of the uprising. Those who assisted the rebellion were Yuan Gao of Fuqing and all the local commoners, as well as the more than one hundred families who had supplied grain and soldiers. Once their crimes were thoroughly investigated, execution was too good for them. Madame Chen ardently said to the hall, "I beg Your Majesty to embody the virtue of Heaven on High of loving life. Only execute these two people; show mercy for the others and spare them. Then it will be very fortunate."

The ruler of Min said, "I should carry it through to the end, but because you, Madame Chen, earnestly request it, I will listen to you and not execute the others." Then he ordered the two rebels Wang Jitu and Yuan Guangzhi to be taken outside the Wu Gate and be beheaded to show the public. Then the two rebels' heads were taken under guard to Fuqing County to be strung up as a warning.

Madame Chen ordered Mengyu to be brought out, and inquired about her circumstances. Mengyu still maintained that she was the daughter of the Perfected One of Mount Mao. The ruler of Min believed this was the truth, but Madame Chen said, "Your Majesty, don't listen to the fabrications of this fiend spirit. This fiend is not human." The ruler of Min asked what kind of fiend it was. Then he again questioned Mengyu, but she refused to confess.

The ruler of Min said to Madame Chen, "See how sweet and tender she is? She isn't necessarily a demon. I want to spare her. I can send her to the rear palace as a servant in order for her to atone for her earlier crimes. How would that be?"

Madame Chen said, "Your Majesty, don't be beguiled by this demon. If you don't believe me, wait and I will make her resume her original form. Once you take a good look, you will know." When Madame Chen sprayed her with talismanic water, Mengyu fell to the ground and turned into a multihued butterfly, with wings as big as cartwheels. She was about to fly off, but Madame Chen had already seized her so that she couldn't fly away. When the ruler of Min saw her original form, he laughed and said, "So it's the

transformation of a painted figure! That accounts for her having such elegance. Although she's a fiend spirit, her beauty truly is very special. I will spare her, and put her in the flower garden and let her flutter among the flowers, where I can enjoy her."

When Madame Chen saw that the ruler of Min was not going to kill this fiend spirit, she said, "This fiend is not a real butterfly. It is not the same as ordinary butterflies; if you release it among the flowers, it won't be able to fly." The ruler of Min didn't believe her, and, seeing that he still had his doubts, Madame Chen said, "Your Majesty, if you don't believe me, I will again order her to return to what she was originally."

Then she sprayed talismanic water on the butterfly. In an instant, the butterfly had turned into a rolled-up scroll. Madame Chen unrolled the scroll, which was a color drawing of a butterfly, without the slightest difference from the previously live butterfly. The ruler of Min suspected that Madame Chen had used her magic to create an illusion. "There was just this transformation. Moreover this painting is the painting of a great master," he said. "I will keep it and hang it in my study, where I can enjoy it all day long."

Madame Chen said, "No, you can't. This is the ink drawing of a former worthy. It is the ultimate attainment of a celestial skill with thoughts that penetrate to the realm of the divine. Although his butterfly was dead, it was able to come alive, and alive it was able to become human. If you were to keep it, then it would injure the flowers and wither the grass. Transformed into a human, if you kept it, it would topple your state and capital. Now that it has been captured, you must destroy it."

The ruler of Min admired the scroll for a while. He saw the writing on the side: "Spring of the second year of the Longshuo reign period of the Great Tang.⁴ The prince of Teng, Yuan Ying, painted it at the provincial residence at Jiangxi."

The ruler of Min laughed and said, "Madame Chen, you truly have the skill of thoroughly investigating things. This was drawn by Yuan Ying, the son of Gaozong of the Tang. He painted it long ago when he was prince of Teng at Jiangxi. Generally speaking, famous paintings by former persons all have brushwork that enters the realm of the divine, like Zhang You drawing a dragon: before he even dotted the eyes, it burst through the wall [by flying out]. And like Yang Zihua, who drew a horse that neighed. And like Wang Mojie, who drew a body of water, of which one heard the tide in the stillness of the night.⁵ Only the prince of Teng drew a butterfly that turned into a

beautiful woman. It is the highest attainment of entering the divine. We don't know if now it has resumed its original substance. Could it still change again?"

Madame Chen said, "Now it can't change. This is what is banned by the Maker of Things. It will inevitably spontaneously self-destruct." She hadn't finished speaking when the scroll burst into flames and burned up. He rushed to it, but couldn't stop it. The burning produced oil and fat, which burned for several hours; the stench was unbearable. Then Madame Chen took the ashes of the scroll and threw them into the river.

At this time, the rebels having been beheaded and the fiend spirit burned up, the world was again stable. The ruler of Min lived in peace and happiness, and the condition of the people was as before, so he was pleased. He sent down a decree to carry out the conferring of titles and bestowal of gifts, promoting and rewarding each general and officer.

On the first occasion, Madame Chen had been enfeoffed as the Lady of Linshui. On this second occasion, the ruler of Min additionally enfeoffed her as Exalted and Blessed Lady of Linshui.⁶ Lin Jiuniang was given the title of Lady Who Protects the State. Li Sanniang was given the title of Lady Who Pacifies Min. Miss Jiang received the title of Tiger Lady, while her mount was given the title of Golden Tiger Great Divinity. The Rock sisters received the title of Rock Press Ladies. Miss Ou received the title of Lady Who Calms Min. Miss Zeng received the title Lady Who Makes Min Tranquil. Miss Xu received the title Lady Who Preserves Min. Miss Ruan received the title Lady Who Quiets the State. Miss Ma received the title of Lady Who Makes the State Peaceful. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage received the title of Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage Who Protects the State and Calms Min.

The ruler of Min saw that the remaining women generals had all received titles, except for the two women Zou and Gao. Imperial Secretary Zou and Attendant Gentleman Gao had both defied the edict and not sent their daughters to the two palaces, for which they should have been discharged from their offices. For the time being, remembering that in the battle to remove the rebels they had achieved meritorious service, he pardoned their fathers' earlier crimes. The two women were still, in accordance with the register, assigned to the South and West Palaces, but Madame Chen implored him, saying, "The two women Miss Zou and Miss Gao truly have Daoist fates. I beg you to let me take them to Linshui to teach them to protect the country and suppress deviance. I entreat you to be lenient."

The ruler of Min was happy to oblige. He said, "I permit you to take them back with you, to teach them to protect the country." Then he gave Miss Zou the title of Lady of the South Palace Who Makes Enlightened Responses, and Miss Gao was given the title of Lady of Auspicious Virtue. Furthermore, the thirty-six palace concubines and the five hundred female soldiers all were generously rewarded. The girls from commoner families were ordered to be taken home by their parents, and the officials in the court were promoted and rewarded. The ruler of Min also enfeoffed Liu Qi of Gutian and his parents-in-law, Chen Chang and Madame Ge, as well as Madame Zhu, Liu Qi's mother.

After Madame Chen and the various ladies and the thirty-six palace concubines, facing the ruler in the hall, expressed their gratitude, they returned to Gutian. Madame Chen secretly ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to follow, leading the shadow soldiers, while she returned to Linshui. Miss Jiang and the Rock sisters thanked Chen Jinggu, and returned to their own places. Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage also took his leave of Chen Jinggu, and returned to the monkey dormitory on Panther Head Mountain to cultivate good karma. Madame Chen then led her ten sworn sisters and they all got into sedan chairs to return to Gutian. At this time Chen Chang and his wife, Madame Ge, were at the Lius' house. There the various sisters all paid their respects to their adoptive father and mother. And, as before, they transmitted the Way at Linshui Palace.

Now we will return to the ruler of Min. After Madame Chen returned to Linshui, he gave orders for the arrest of Wang Jitu's relatives, in addition to those who started the rebellion, those who followed and assisted the rebels, and the Yuan clan of Fuqing. Altogether it was more than one hundred people. All were arrested and beheaded, and their heads displayed to the crowds in the marketplace.

Now we will return to the Ravine Demon. After he had had wanton sex with Chen Jinfeng at Great Ravine Mountain and heard that Chen Jinggu had been summoned to the Imperial Palace, the false empress's scheme had been ruined and the White Snake chopped up. The Ravine Demon thought, "The White Snake has already been chopped up. Otherwise, she certainly wouldn't have abandoned me." For this reason he had concealed Chen Jinfeng in the grotto at Great Ravine Mountain, while he himself fled to Tiger Head Mountain to hide out.

Stealthily he sought out news. Later, only when he learned that Chen Jinggu had returned to Linshui, did he relax. Feeling more courageous, he went back to Great Ravine Mountain, but Chen Jinfeng had disappeared! "I suppose she was rescued by Chen Jinggu and taken back," he thought.

When he tried to find out the whereabouts of the White Snake, only then did he learn that, having been cut into three pieces by Chen Jinggu, her tail segment was locked up in Chuan well, her middle segment weighed down in the well in Kaiyuan Temple, and her head segment locked up at the bottom of White Dragon Pool Gully. The Ravine Demon did not forget his former friendship. He hurried to White Dragon Pool Gully, where he saw that only some five feet remained of the White Snake and that the head segment was securely locked up. He cried and wept, saying, "What enmity is there between us and Chen Jinggu? Again and again she has opposed us. I only persuaded the Great Queen to perpetually enjoy a high position and great wealth in the Imperial Palace. How could I have known that, on the contrary, we would meet with this great calamity?"

When the White Snake saw that the Ravine Demon had come, she wept, saying, "I relied on your plan! How could we have known that she would beat us at our own game? I wanted to flee but didn't succeed, and now I have been cut into three pieces and locked up here. What shall I do?"

The Ravine Demon said, "Great Queen, rest assured. Wait while I undo your chains one by one. When you are free, Great Queen, we will return home and think of another plan."

After he had undone the chains, the White Snake cast off the bonds and left Dragon Pool Gully. "Now that I've cast off my chains," she said to the Ravine Demon, "where can we go to settle down in peace?"

The Ravine Demon said, "If we search for another place, we won't be able to avoid a lot of trouble. According to my way of thinking, we should stay at Great Ravine Mountain as a temporary hideout, and wait there while you, Great Queen, convalesce. Once you have recovered, as a matter of course, we will seek a quiet and secluded place." The White Snake then returned with the Ravine Demon to the grotto at Great Ravine Mountain to recuperate. Day and night it was the Ravine Demon's task to bring in wine and meat to nourish her. We won't discuss this any further.

Now we will return to the traitorous minister Xue Wenjie. His wife, Madame Song, was twenty-four years old and hadn't yet had a child.

Moreover, she was extremely beautiful. She heard that the Daoist official in the imperial palace, Chen Shouyuan, and his Daoist medium, Sheng Tao, could make the god's words come down, and were always successful in having prayers answered.⁷ She waited until her husband, Xue Wenjie, went to court, then ordered a servant to go to the Baohuang Palace to invite the medium, Sheng Tao, to come to her house to make the god descend in order to inquire regarding future male offspring and to ask what lay in store for the rest of her life.

The servant received the order and went to the Baohuang Palace to invite Chen Shouyuan and the medium, Sheng Tao, to go call the god to descend. Sheng Tao asked for sacred incense sticks. He followed the servant to the rear garden of the Xue residence, where he set out incense, candles, and tea. Madame Song changed into fresh clothes, came out, bowed, and invoked the god, secretly making a silent wish.

Sheng Tao saw that Madame Song was like flowers and jade. Her beauty was extraordinary, and Sheng Tao's lustful thoughts were aroused. She turned to look at him. He was young and handsome, refined and elegant, his deportment distinguished. He really could arouse people's lustful thoughts. Their eyes sought each other out. Sheng Tao saw that Madame Song was glancing at him meaningfully and knew that her heart was moved. In confusion, he invited the visit of the god, and spoke a few holy words, saying, "As for getting male descendants, you must act according to the following graphs. The god has withdrawn."

Madame Song received the graphs and looked at them. The graphs told her to follow Sheng Tao. Naturally, she believed that he was honest. As luck would have it, a servant suddenly returned to say that her husband had been detained by Secretary Gao for an evening banquet and wouldn't be coming back, and the next day he was going to court. She instructed the servant not to wait.

When Madame Song learned that Master Xue would not be coming home, she was very happy, and invited Sheng Tao to spend the night in the study. In the middle of the night she secretly went there. When Sheng Tao saw her come in alone, he felt that she certainly had a purpose in coming, and boldly went forward and embraced her. With both hands he caressed her private parts and penetrated her so as to arouse her lascivious thoughts, whereupon they got into bed and slept in each other's arms. After they had had sex, they talked together face to face, pledging their mutual affection.

Sheng Tao said, "Madame can often send a trusted servant to the Baohuang Palace using as an excuse inviting down the god." When the two had agreed, Sheng Tao said goodbye and returned. After this, Madame Song regularly waited until Xue Wenjie had business at court and wasn't coming back. Then she sent her trusted servant to Sheng Tao to let him know, and had illicit relations with him.

Now we will speak of the Exalted and Blessed Lady of Linshui Palace. From dawn to dusk she taught her various sisters the true arts and the secret methods. The ten sisters—Chen, Lin, Gao, Ou, Ruan, Ma, Zou, Li, Zeng, and Xu—were all astute, and they completely mastered Daoist magic. They could all capture demons and exterminate ghosts, save people from calamities, and help those in danger. Madame Chen loved them as full sisters.

When Madame Chen turned twenty-four years old, she remembered something and addressed her various sisters, saying, "The year that I left Mount Lü, the master instructed me to learn the arts of saving pregnancies, supporting the fetus, and protecting and aiding babies, but I adamantly refused to learn them. When the master first saw me off at the gate, he ordered me to walk straight ahead without looking back. I knew he was still in front of the gate of the mountain to see me off, so I turned to look back at him, and asked him to please go inside and stay there while I departed. The master knew that I had walked twenty-four steps, and that there would certainly be a great disaster. He quickly beckoned to me. I turned around to go back, and asked the master why he had called me. Again he ordered me to study the arts of supporting fetuses, protecting babies, and helping children. Only then could I leave. At the time I adamantly did not want to study those arts. When he saw that I wouldn't learn them, he had no alternative but to tell me that when I reached the age of twenty-four I would have to hide myself away in order to avoid a great disaster. I could not use the various magic implements, or perform repentance texts for others. I am now exactly twenty-four years old, and already three months pregnant. I must abide by the master's words. For the time being I must say good-bye to all of you sisters. Sooner or later there will be a time when we will see each other again. Sisters, abide by my command."

Miss Zou and Miss Gao together took a sedan chair to return to Fuzhou City. The three sisters Lin Jiuniang, Miss Li, and Miss Ou said goodbye to Chen Jinggu, hired a sedan chair, and returned to Luoyuan. The hometown of the four sisters Zeng, Xu, Ruan, and Ma was Gutian. They also said goodbye

to Madame Chen and returned home. Madame Chen having sent all nine sisters home, only the thirty-six palace concubines remained in the palace.

Madame Chen abruptly ceased using her magic implements, penances and imprecations, and so on. Day and night the door was closed and she didn't emerge. Having hidden herself from disaster, all day she discussed with the thirty-six palace concubines the five scriptures and the four books, the three registers, and the five codes of the ancient thearchs and kings in order to prevent the calamity. Who knew that a predestined fate is impossible to escape?

At this time the ruler of Min had a dream that was extremely inauspicious, and therefore he had no peace of mind. He gathered the various civil and military officials to discuss it, saying, "These days I have no peace of mind. My confusion is like a big tangle of silk and hemp thread. Every night I have this inauspicious dream. I don't know what ill it portends."

The two groups of military and civil officials had not yet arrived at an answer, when an official stepped forward. On his head was a black gauze cap, he wore a ceremonial red robe, and he clasped a tablet to his chest. He stated, "At night my ruler has an inauspicious dream. He is nervous and his spirit is exhausted. He is afraid that at this time there is something detrimental to his state or household. I hope the ruler will carefully look into whether there are treacherous ministers in the court, men who would try to seize power and usurp the throne. Send summons to every locale, ordering them to be on guard. Then there will be no harm."

The ruler of Min looked at him. It was Ministry of War Minister Zou Huai. The ruler of Min said, "Tomorrow morning I must go to the Baohuang Palace to invite the god to descend. I will let the god pass judgment." He instructed the Daoist of the Baohuang Palace, "Tomorrow wait on me." Then he withdrew from court, and the various civil and military officials dispersed and returned to their offices.

Now we will speak of Sheng Tao, the Daoist of the Baohuang Palace, who was having an affair with Madame Song. Day and night he constantly went back and forth to Xue Wenjie's house. But to his regret Xue Wenjie was usually at home, so he couldn't be with Madame Song for any length of time. Now he heard that the ruler of Min was coming to ask about the omen, enjoyed no peace of mind, and wanted to seek out any treacherous people in the court who were abusing their power. The next day he was coming there to invite the god to descend. Sheng Tao thought to himself, "I will rely on

making use of the god's words to eliminate future trouble. Isn't that clever? If I get rid of this person, then how could Madame Song not be my wife forever?" Then he composed four lines of the god's speech and informed Chen Shouyuan in advance.

That day, after the ruler of Min had washed and dressed, he led the civil and military officials out of the court, and arranged for his carriage to go to the Baohuang Palace. The Daoist official and Daoist medium knelt to meet him as he entered the Three Pure Ones Hall. On both sides was the sound of ringing bells and beating drums. After the ruler of Min offered incense and lit candles, at his side the Daoist medium, Sheng Tao, invited the god to descend. He recited the four lines of god's speech that he had fabricated:

The treacherous Xue Wenjie
 Harbors certain treasonous intentions against the reign of our emperor.
 If you want to eliminate the anxiety in your mind,
 His entire family must be extirpated.

When the ruler of Min heard this, he was greatly alarmed. Without waiting for the return carriage, he secretly summoned Ministry of War Minister Zou Huai to lead three thousand of the troops assigned for the protection of the emperor to surround Xue Wenjie's house. Without letting a single person escape, they were to bring him to court to hear the decree. Only then did he arrange for the carriage to return to the hall. Sheng Tao withdrew inside and knelt with Chen Shouyuan to see him off. Truly it was:

A dream omen often arises from the heart,
 While the flying calamity is summoned from one's own mouth.

If you want to know what in the end happened to the lives of Xue Wenjie's whole family, read the next chapter.

Praying for Rain, the People
Feel Grateful /
Perfecting the True Way,
a Third Title Is Granted

NOW WE WILL RETURN TO THE RULER OF MIN, WHO HAD DISPATCHED Minister of War Zou Huai to lead three thousand imperial guards to surround and arrest Xue Wenjie and his entire family to punish them. The Daoist priest Sheng Tao had warned Madame Song in advance. The mutual love of the couple was without compare: one hoping to be husband and wife forever, and the other willing to follow unreservedly. For this reason, Sheng Tao first informed Madame Song of the news, and told her to flee early in the morning to the Baohuang Palace to hide. At this time Madame Song was having an illicit love affair with him, and had no consideration for her husband. In her heart she thought to herself, "Although I must follow my love and secretly leave to follow my lover to live happily ever after, still what will it be like to have absolutely nothing?"

When she saw the Xue family's gold, silver, money, and valuables piled as high as a mountain, she thought, "I must secretly pack it all up." She made up two bundles, and she and her trusted female servant were about to run away together. Who could know that Heaven will not tolerate adultery? Just when they were packing up the treasure, unexpectedly the ruler of Min was in the Baohuang Palace at that very moment. When he had heard the speech

of the god who had been invited down, he was enraged. Without waiting for his carriage at Nine Immortals Mountain, he sent troops to surround and arrest Xue Wenjie, as time was of the essence. Madame Song, the mistress of the house, accompanied by her servant, was just about to flee, but before they could escape they heard the sound of shouting without cease. Bang, bang! Crash, crash! The imperial soldiers rushed in and surrounded them, seizing everyone they saw, so in the end Madame Song did not manage to escape.

All 117 members of Xue Wenjie's family were taken into custody to the execution ground and their heads cut off. What a pity! Xue Wenjie was treacherous his whole life, cruelly maltreating the wealthy households among the commoners, always causing trouble by harming people, and confiscating families' property. To his surprise, he suffered a wanton wife who secretly used the words of the medium and, because of her debauchery, destroyed the entire family. There's no need to pity him.

Having executed all of Xue Wenjie's family, the ruler of Min thought to himself, "Thanks to the god's instructions, I eliminated the traitorous minister. There will be no trouble in future." Then he proclaimed that the year name should be changed to the second year of the Yonghe reign period.¹

It happened that in the fourth month of the summer season the spring rain had been excessive, so that when it reached the seventh month of the autumn season there was a severe drought with no rain. The pitiful sprouts in the fields were scorched and withering, craving timely rain like thirsty people. The red sun filled the sky, and the farmers were worried and bewildered. Of the five grains, there was no harvest. Trees withered and grass died. The common people were deeply distraught and everywhere prayed for rain. The local officials put out official notices prohibiting the slaughter of animals and the performance of music, and they themselves went on foot to the dragon god, wind god, and city god temples to pray for rain, but there was no response. At this time the province of Min and the capital suffered drought. There is a poem as evidence, which says:

Summer heat and autumn desolation, long without rain.
 Laboring in vain at agriculture, all the people were frightened.
 Ponds dried up, all the seedlings without fruit.
 Trees and flowers scorched, the fruit didn't set.
 The sun's redness became more intense; it struck the eye.

The sound of carts everywhere caused everyone to grieve.
The farmers suffered, it was difficult to work.
The withered grass produced smoke that filled the distance.

Now we will speak of the great drought of Fuzhou. The common people of the whole province were panic-stricken. The officials prayed for rain without result, while the farmers grieved and suffered. When the ruler of Min heard this, he felt extremely worried, so the following day he sent down a decree saying, "I order the Daoist master of the Baohuang Palace, Chen Shouyuan, to build an altar, perform the *jiao* sacrifice, and pray for rain." When Chen Shouyuan received the order, he conveyed it to 128 Daoist priests, whom he gathered at the Three Pure Ones Hall in front of the Baohuang Palace, where they set up an altar to pray for rain. He and Sheng Tao presided at the altar, with each Daoist priest taking charge of his own work. From dawn to dusk they produced talismans and recited magic spells, struck bells and beat drums, burned incense and lit candles, and prayed for timely rain to fall.

The ruler of Min sent down a decree ordering the Ministry of Rites to put up a notice: "Inside and outside the city, slaughter, purification, and cleansing [as a preparation for ritual] are banned. In front of the doors of the common people's houses, official yamens, and shops, all are to set up altars to the Dragon King God of the Four Seas."

Daoist official Chen Shouyuan received the decree. In accordance with Daoist teaching, he had to arrange for sincere prayers three times a day—morning, noon, and evening—and keep watch for a supernatural response in order to gladden the heart of the king.² Who could have known that during the more than ten days of praying, the more they prayed, the clearer the sky? All they got for their prayers was a red sun rising, with not a sliver of cloud appearing.

When the ruler of Min saw that there was no response to the prayers, he sent a decree summoning the Daoist official Chen Shouyuan to come to the hall in order to give him a command in person. "Why is there is no rain? Each Daoist priest has set up an altar and performed the *jiao* sacrifice for more than half a month but, in the end, not a single drop of rain has fallen. I think that you all wasted money and grain. You have eaten food you didn't earn and chanted false scriptures. All day long you have occupied yourselves with child's play, so you could not move Supreme Heaven, with the result

that it is like this. I now set a limit of seven more days for you to pray for rain. If there is no rain within seven days, I will send down a decree ordering the Three Judicial Offices to go to the foot of Nine Immortals Mountain to prepare a tower of kindling. Then all 128 Daoist officials and priests who have prayed for rain will be burned to death.”³ When he finished speaking, he angrily retired to the empress’s palace.

When Chen Shouyuan heard the edict, he withdrew. He had to cause rain to fall within seven days! He was terror-stricken! In great haste he returned to the Baohuang Palace. When all the Daoist priests and Sheng Tao came to meet him, they saw that his face had lost its color. Over and over he cried, “We’re doomed! We’re doomed!”

The Daoist priests asked, “What did the proclamation say?”

Chen Shouyuan wept and said, “Calamity is here! Just now the ruler summoned me. He angrily blamed us for praying for rain for half a month, and asked why there is no rain. He thought you were not sincere and were playing like children. Moreover, we were eating food we hadn’t earned and were reciting false scriptures. And he personally set a limit of seven more days: if we pray for rain and there is none, at the foot of the mountain he will have prepared in advance a tower of kindling, and he will have all the Daoist officials and priests burned to death together. I think that a living person tied onto this pile of kindling and burned to death is a truly ghastly way to die.”

When they heard this, they figured it would be difficult to avoid this disaster. Suddenly an old Daoist priest called out in a loud voice, “Don’t despair! There is still a savior.”

Everyone stopped wailing and asked, “How can we be saved?” That Daoist said to Chen Shouyuan, “We Daoist priests were all taught by ordinary people, so the most we can do is set up purifying *jiao* religious services for people. We get some of the promised penitence money and eat some of the promised vegetarian dishes, and that’s all. How can we issue our own summons that would reach to the steps of the Jade Emperor Hall to pray for rain? How could we compare to your cousin Chen Jinggu? She is the best student of Perfected Lord Xu of Mount Lü, who taught her the marvelous arts and the true magic. She is ten thousand times more powerful than we are. Making a plan for this present moment, you must hurry to Gutian to beg your cousin to come pray for rain. I guarantee that the rain will immediately fall, and, when it falls, we won’t be burned to death. What need is there to uselessly weep?”

When Chen Shouyuan heard this, the idea filled his heart with joy. He wiped his eyes and said, "What you say is absolutely right!" He rushed into the bedroom to gather his traveling expenses, came out with a small bundle on his back, and instructed Sheng Tao, "As before, take care of the management of the ruler's altar." He then rushed off to Gutian.

On the very same day, Chen Shouyuan arrived at Linshui Palace. He knocked on the door and went in. Madame Chen saw that her cousin Shouyuan had come, and asked, "What family matter is there? Are my parents well?"

Shouyuan replied, "The family is fine, and the two old people are safe and sound. There's no need to worry. It's just that your foolish cousin has expressly hurried to Linshui Palace on a special matter, to beg you to save my life and the lives of all the Daoist priests."

Madame Chen quickly asked, "Cousin, what urgent matter is it? If I can save you, naturally I will do my utmost."

When Shouyuan heard this, he was very happy. He related in detail the directive sent down by the king of Min ordering him to pray for timely rain. "All the Daoist priests set up altars at the Three Pure Ones Hall and prayed for rain for half a month without effect," he told her. "The ruler of Min is very angry, and personally has set a limit for us of seven more days to pray for rain. If there is still no rain, at the foot of Nine Immortals Mountain he will erect a tower of kindling and burn to death all 128 Daoist priests. This matter is urgent and I have no way of dealing with it. I had no alternative but to especially come to Gutian to beg you to remember that we are of the same family, so saving my life is essential. Could I trouble you to hurry to Fuzhou? You will save me and all the Daoist priests, and rescue the people. The merit could not be greater."

After Madame Chen heard what he said, she muttered to herself for a long time. Then she said, "I don't know what the matter is. You asked me to pray for rain in your stead. Praying for timely rain, this matter is really difficult to comply with. When I left Mount Lü the first time the magic master exhorted me over and over, telling me that when I reached twenty-four years of age, a great calamity would threaten me. He solemnly warned me that I would not be permitted to use my magic implements, recite scripture, or write talismans. So, I really cannot go."

When Shouyuan saw his cousin flatly decline to go, he was panic-stricken. Tearfully he said, "Worthy cousin, if you aren't willing to pray for rain in my

stead, then right before your eyes you will see me burn to death. To suffer this bitter calamity while alive will be a very cruel death. Worthy cousin, I absolutely hope that you will remember our familial affection and save me in this emergency.”

Madame Chen changed color and said, “Out of sibling affection, how could I not feel pity? It’s not that I don’t want to save you. But the magic master repeatedly prohibited me, warning that I, too, will be threatened by a great calamity if I dare to act contrary to his instructions.”

Shouyuan saw his cousin change countenance and adamantly decline to consent. He was frightened to death. He wiped his tears and said angrily, “Worthy cousin, you say that your master prohibited and warned you. To be as resolute as this, you are completely forgetting that in former times when you were carried off to Mount Lü by Liangnü to study magic for three years, from the time you disappeared your parents were seriously ill. Day and night they cried out in pain. Both in and out of the house it was entirely up to me to call the doctor to treat them. Day and night I didn’t leave, waiting on them at their bedside. Are they my parents that I should be so filial? You don’t remember these ties of affection, but you remember what prohibitions your master stated. With your own eyes to see me, your cousin, burned alive, how can your sisterly heart bear it? It’s as if I, Shouyuan, am in a dream, hoping my life will be saved. Just forget it! Such is my fate!” Deeply hurt, he burst into tears. Taking up his bundle and umbrella, angrily he was about to leave.

When Madame Chen heard what her cousin said, she felt duty-bound by their family ties. “Cousin,” she said, “there’s no need to worry. I’ll certainly go pray for rain in your stead.” When Shouyuan heard that she had agreed to pray for rain, his despair turned to joy.

He said, “Since you, worthy cousin, have consented, only now can I feel relief. But just now I have offended you with my hasty words, and I hope you won’t bear a grudge.”

Madame Chen said, “We are cousins of the same family, so how could I bear a grudge? Cousin, you return first, and order all the Daoist priests in the Baohuang Palace to sincerely pray, while I will go work magic. Of course there will be a response.”

On his departure, he exhorted her repeatedly, and only then did he leave Linshui and hurry back to Fuzhou, where he went to the Baohuang Palace. All the Daoist priests welcomed him, asking, “Is your cousin coming or not?” Shouyuan told them the whole story about how his cousin had to

observe her master's prohibition and absolutely would not come, and that he had implored her piteously and only then had she agreed to come, and that she had ordered them to pray at the *jiao* altars while she went to work magic. When the Daoist priests heard this, they all exclaimed, "What good luck! We don't have to die! We're saved!" Then they all went to pray and recite scripture.

Now we will return to Madame Chen. Now that she had promised Shouyuan that she would go to Fuzhou to pray for rain, she returned home to inform her husband's parents. Then she went to Linshui Palace to fetch her magic implements, and instructed the thirty-six palace concubines to keep watch over the palace and hall. Shrinking into an earth vein, she went to Fuzhou and entered the Baohuang Palace. To Shouyuan she said, "You order all the Daoist priests to pray, while I go to White Dragon River to work magic."

When she finished speaking, she used the earth method to first return to Xiadu. When her old mother, Madame Ge, saw that her daughter had returned, she asked her where she was going. Madame Chen told her about Shouyuan requesting her to save him by praying for rain in his stead, explaining everything in detail. But since she was now three months pregnant, she was not in a position to work magic. She first had to come home to remove her fetus and leave it there, and only then would she be able to work magic.⁴ But fearing that her demon enemy would find out and harm her fetus, she said, "Then my life will come to an end. If I don't pray for rain in my cousin's stead, then his life will come to an end. I just need you, Mother, to be willing to listen to my instructions. Then our two lives will both be preserved."

Madame Ge asked, "What are your instructions? Today, for you, of course I will do as you say. How could I not listen to you?"

Madame Chen said, "Mother, since you will do as I say, today you must stay in the house. Absolutely do not open your mouth and speak, and don't have anything to do with outsiders. Wait for me to work my magic and return home before you talk again. Then I will be all right."

Madame Ge said, "What difficulty could there be in that? Your father has gone out, so today I am the only one at home. What would I have to say? Daughter, put your mind at rest and go. If there is anything to say, I will wait for you to return and then say it."

When Madame Chen heard this, she was very happy. She went inside, removed her fetus, and stored it in the birthing basin.⁵ She turned the basin upside down, covering the fetus, and closed the door tight. With her hand she formed a mudra that she waved over the door of the house, covering it with a magic hexagram.⁶ She took a straw rope and placed it at the back door, and with a spray of talismanic water it turned into a great python. Finally, she took a chamber pot and placed it at the front door. Another spray of talismanic water turned it into a fierce, multicolored tiger lying outside the door.⁷

Taking her magic implements, she again instructed her mother, "Don't pay attention to other people's business, and absolutely do not open your mouth and speak." Her mother assented, and Madame Chen firmly closed the door. In front of the door she recited the true words and magic spells, and, with a spray of talismanic water, the house was transformed into a lake of lotuses. In the middle she planted lotus roots, which entirely concealed the house with a thick growth of lotus leaves. When Madame Chen had hidden the house from view, she figured there was nothing more to do. Her mind at ease, she departed.

Madame Chen went alone to White Dragon River. (This is under the present-day great Nantai Bridge.) She spread out a duckweed mat to float on the surface of the water, shook out her black hair, put on her magic cap, and tied on her magic skirt. In her left hand she held a spirit horn and in her right hand a magic sword. She stepped onto the mat floating on the river, brandished the sword, and blew the horn. She paced the Big Dipper, performed the true magic of Mount Lü, and recited magic spells. She commanded the Tally Messenger of the Minister of Personnel to go up to Heaven. She also issued orders to her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang: she commanded bodyguard Wang to quickly go to the bureau of the Dragon King of the Four Seas to summon the Rain Dragon Spirit to bring water and cause rain to fall, while bodyguard Yang was to go to Mount Lü to inform the magic master Perfected Lord Xu that she was there praying for rain, both to rescue the people and to save the lives of her cousin and all the Daoist priests. The two bodyguards received their orders and departed.

In a short time black clouds filled the sky, and the sun no longer shone. There was violent wind and thunder and lightning; fog rose up and clouds soared. With a clap of thunder torrential rain fell, the timely rain falling

straight down, and saving innumerable living souls. Madame Chen herself couldn't escape the streaming rain. Alone on the mat in the middle of the river she performed magic and danced. She felt that because the drought had lasted so long, there must be more rain, and only then would it be beneficial.

Now we will return to the Ravine Demon. He had freed the head segment of the White Snake from its chains in Dragon Pool Gully and hidden her at Great Ravine Mountain Grotto to recuperate. Because the White Snake's body was incomplete, she could no longer transform herself into a beautiful woman. Nonetheless, her desire to seek young men for carnal pleasure, thereby harming people, was unchanged.

When the Ravine Demon learned that Madame Chen was at White Dragon River praying for rain, he thought of a plan to kill her. He said to himself, "I heard that Madame Chen is three months pregnant, so how can she perform magic and pray for rain?" He thought and thought. "That's it! Can it be that she first went to her parents' home and removed the fetus, leaving it in her mother's house for safekeeping? After she prays for rain, then she will go back to get it. What could be better than taking it to the White Snake to show her who is superior and who is inferior? If her fetus is harmed then she will not be able to perform magic, and even preserving her life will be difficult."

The Ravine Demon talked it over with the White Snake. Then, he and the White Snake's head segment used escape magic to go to Xiadu. They searched everywhere, but there was no Chen Chang house. As the Ravine Demon searched, he said, "This is very strange! This Xiadu is a place I often come, so I know everyone's business. How is it that I can't find the Chens' house?" Searching all morning, he scrutinized every corner minutely. Clearly this was the place! He said suspiciously, "The Chens' house has disappeared, and this pond wasn't always here." Suddenly he realized what had happened. "That's it! Chen Jinggu used magic to conceal it!" The Ravine Demon then turned himself into a magpie, hopped onto a lotus flower, and there he called without cease.

After her daughter gave her instructions and left, Madame Ge closed the door and sat in silence, her spirits low. Sitting in front of the stove, all she could hear was a magpie on the roof endlessly calling. The longer she listened, the more annoyed she became, and she couldn't help opening her mouth to chase it away. The Ravine Demon heard a human voice underneath

the lotuses, and knew that it was magic worked by Madame Chen. Now that he had seen through it, when he took another look, there was no pond. Knowing that he was not mistaken, the Ravine Demon, elated, danced on the roof tiles. He said to the White Snake, "Madame, you wait here. I'm going to go steal her fetus and bring it to you as nourishing food to build up your strength. Once you have eaten it, you will have your revenge for having been beheaded, and the wrong done to you will be erased." The White Snake happily assented.

The Ravine Demon proceeded to transform himself into a village boy, went to the Chens' house, and knocked on the door. From the time her daughter left, Madame Ge had been sitting in the house not daring to speak. Suddenly she heard someone outside knocking on the door, and she burst out, "Who's there?"

The reply came, "It's me." She opened the door and saw a boy.

"Who are you?" she asked.

The Ravine Demon laughed and said, "Old lady, your eyes are so bad you don't recognize me. I am the son of the third wife of the eldest son of the Lin family at the front of the village. My name is Kui Ge. Now do you recognize me?"⁸

Madame Ge said, "So it's Kui Ge, the son of Lin Sansao. Where has your father gone? Why did he send you here?"

The Ravine Demon said, "My mother is at home. Today I am coming back from taking the ox to pasture. I'm so thirsty! I came especially to ask you for a cup of tea to drink."

Madame Ge said, "Of course there's tea. Come in and have some."

The Ravine Demon followed her into the living room, where he saw a fierce tiger lying behind the door. Greatly alarmed, he cried out, "The tiger frightens me!"

Madame Ge said, "You must have seen a ghost. Where is there a tiger?"

The Ravine Demon said, "That's not a tiger?"

Madame Ge looked at it, saw a chamber pot, laughed, and said, "It's a chamber pot! What tiger are you talking about?" The Ravine Demon looked again, and, sure enough, it was a chamber pot.

He followed Madame Ge to the stove, where he saw a huge white python at the back door, coiled on the ground. Again he was frightened, and cried out, "What a big snake! What a big snake!"

Madame Ge said, "Where is there a snake?"

The Ravine Demon said, "That's not a snake?"

She looked at it, saw a straw rope, and said, "That's a straw rope! Why do you say it's a snake?" The Ravine Demon took another look and, sure enough, it was a straw rope.

Then he said, "Old lady, right in front of you is a Nine-Palace Eight-Hexagram chart."

Madame Ge said, "Right in front is the bedchamber. What Nine-Palace Eight-Hexagram chart are you talking about?" The Ravine Demon looked again and, sure enough, it was the bedchamber. One by one, all of Madame Chen's magic concealments had been revealed by Madame Ge and appeared in their original form. This was Madame Chen's fate.

Madame Ge said, "You wait for me here while I get you something to drink. Absolutely don't go into my bedchamber." The Ravine Demon was very happy.

He replied that he understood, but thought to himself, "The concealment magic is already broken, and the fetus must be stored in the bedroom." Using magic to make himself invisible, he slipped into the room. In front of the bed he saw a basin covering something. He quickly lifted the lid of the birthing basin and saw that the fetus was stored inside it. The Ravine Demon was happy beyond measure. He stole the fetus and gave it to the White Snake, who immediately ate it. Thereupon the two of them went together to White Dragon River to kill Chen Jinggu.

When Madame Ge came out carrying a bowl of tea, she didn't see Kui Ge. She looked all around for him, but he had disappeared. She called his name, but he didn't answer. She said to herself, "That child was so impatient. He came in asking for tea but couldn't wait for even a moment." Then she closed the front door and went inside.

Now we will speak of the Ravine Demon and the White Snake, who had eaten the fetus. They hurried to the riverbank, concealed themselves in the water, and waited for Chen Jinggu to complete her third prayer for rain. The water rose to her feet. She was about to collect her magic implements and mat and return to the bank, when suddenly, with the fetus from her belly destroyed, her blood poured out in a flood, as if her belly had been cut open with a knife. The pain was unbearable. In an instant her spirit had dispersed in all directions, and her limbs had no strength. Her face turned pale, and she was drenched in foul blood.⁹

Her body sank along with the duckweed mat into the water, where she saw the White Snake's head segment on the left and the Ravine Demon on the right pulling the magic mat under the water. Madame Chen looked down and calculated. Realizing that her magic spells had been broken and her fetus destroyed, she said, "My demon nemesis is secretly killing me, and my life will surely come to an end."

She wanted to take her sword and enter the water to seize and decapitate the snake and demon, but her own spirit was scattering, her limbs had no strength, and her body was as soft as cotton. Although she was conscious, having magic, she could not perform it; having a sword, she couldn't cut. She could only sigh, "It's finished! It's all over!" The mat was dragged from her under the water and she sank. We won't speak of this anymore.

Now we will return to Perfected Lord Xu, the magic master of Mount Lü. When he saw bodyguard Yang bearing Jinggu's order coming to inform him that she was performing magic to pray for rain at White Dragon River in order to save her cousin and the people, he did a quick calculation on his fingers. Very alarmed, he said, "It's not good. My disciple did not heed my warning, so it is impossible to escape this calamity." To bodyguard Yang he said, "A terrible calamity is threatening Jinggu at this very moment, and you are not at her side to protect her. You two generals were both sent far away from her. What is the best thing to do? I will now exit the mountain to see what the situation is." Quickly he flew to the top of the mountain and, gazing into the distance with his eye of wisdom, saw his disciple sinking into the water. From the ground the magic master picked up three stone eggs, sent them flying into the sky, and dispatched bodyguard Yang to hurry back to rescue Jinggu from this moment of crisis.

Now we will speak of Madame Chen, who was standing on the mat, her spirit dispersing, and, drenched in foul blood, her body weakening. Her magic no longer worked. The snake and demon had already pulled the mat down into the water, and she supposed that she would surely suffer this murderous treachery and inevitably die. Suddenly she saw three mother ducks flying down from Heaven. Together they dove into the water and, each taking a corner of the mat in its mouth, they pulled the mat back to the surface of the water.

Madame Chen, who had been sinking, once again floated. All of the foul blood was washed away and she was at peace, her spirit again whole, and her

strength returning little by little. When the Ravine Demon saw Madame Chen sink and then float again and try to perform her magic as before, he was afraid of being killed or captured by her. Unable to take care of the White Snake, he tried to save himself, and made his escape using the Water Method.

The White Snake saw that the Ravine Demon was already fleeing. She figured that as her own body was incomplete, she could not save herself. But if she didn't quickly escape, she would certainly be killed. Letting Chen Jinggu go, she fled. Madame Chen's spirit was as before. She saw the snake escaping and, leaving the mat, set off in pursuit. The White Snake's body after all was not whole, so she couldn't easily flee, and she was closely pursued by Chen Jinggu who, at the edge of Gutian, seized her. The Ravine Demon, however, had craftily slipped away without a trace. Who knows which of the five methods he used to hide where? For the time being he was impossible to catch.

Madame Chen climbed astride the White Snake's head and, soaring into the sky, rode a cloud to Linshui. At this time Madame Chen had lost her fetus and sunk in the water, after having done her utmost. Rage filled her bosom, and cold permeated her five organs and six entrails. When she encountered calamity in childbirth, she could not save herself because she had earlier adamantly refused to learn the arts of saving women in childbirth. Sitting astride the White Snake's head, she attained the Way, and died at twenty-four years of age.

Because she had died, the thirty-six palace concubines in the palace were all without protection, and had no magic arts. Unable to establish themselves in human form, together they disintegrated, reverting into thirty-six piles of white bones in the various palaces along the two halls. Each soul still followed Madame Chen in her retinue and did not leave Linshui Palace.

When old Mr. Liu and his son heard that Madame Chen had died, they were greatly shocked. Together with Liu Qi's mother they hurried to Linshui Palace, where they saw that, although Madame Chen had died, she looked exactly as she had in life. There was no change at all! She sat astride her mount, the White Snake's head. Their grief was unbearable, and they all burst into unceasing tears. Liu Qi sent a servant to Xiadu in Fuzhou to inform Chen Jinggu's parents of her death. When her parents heard the news, they nearly died of grief. Together they set out to travel to Gutian.

Now we will speak of Madame Chen, who had died. While her body had perished, her soul did not fade at all, neither dispersing nor forgetting Mount Lü.¹⁰ Just as if she were still alive, it returned to Mount Lü and had an

audience with the master, Perfected Lord Xu. It kowtowed on the ground. Perfected Lord Xu was amazed. He sighed and said, "You brought this calamity on yourself. What cause for complaint do you have? That year, as your teacher, I repeatedly implored and urged you, but in the end, you went against your teacher's wishes and were unwilling to learn the arts of saving women in childbirth. For this reason, now at the age of twenty-four you have suffered this calamity. Furthermore, you didn't heed my prohibitions. If you had hidden yourself away, you could perhaps have avoided this calamity. We can't know for certain. Who foresaw that you would not have faith and would turn your back on my teaching? It's too late for regrets now."

Madame Chen only then recalled that in former days at Mount Lü when she had taken leave of the master to return home, and had walked twenty-four steps and turned to see if the master had gone back into the grotto, he had called her back and repeatedly urged her to stay for a time to learn the arts of protecting the fetus and saving women in childbirth. She said to herself, "It was I who refused to learn. Now, sure enough, I'm twenty-four years old, I've suffered this misfortune in childbirth, and I wasn't able to save myself." Only then did she understand that her body had died and her soul had returned to Mount Lü to see the master. Indeed, it was too late for regrets, and so she felt heartbroken, bitterly regretting that she had not been able to protect to adulthood the child of her first pregnancy.

She knelt and prostrated herself in front of the magic master's throne. Weeping, she said, "I am good for nothing. I didn't listen to my master's teaching, and I disobeyed your injunctions. For this reason I suffered the calamity of losing my body. Now although I have lost my life, I want to beg you, master, to teach me the arts of saving women in childbirth, protecting the fetus, and sending children into the world, in order to fill up the void of the regrets left from my life."

She kowtowed and begged the master to teach her. The magic master said, "If you had been like this earlier, how would you have come to this today?" Then from a bundle he took out a volume and gave it to Jinggu, saying, "Thoroughly read this until you have mastered the marvelous magic." Madame Chen knelt to receive the volume, thanked the magic master, and took her leave. Then in the grotto, as before, she studied deeply.

Now we will speak of the ruler of Min. He heard that Madame Chen had gone to Fuzhou to work magic to pray for rain on White Dragon River. Sure enough, in a short while there was wind and thunder, and a heavy rain

poured down. It truly was not something that an ordinary person could have done. The common people everywhere, inside the city and out, cherished Madame Chen's magic power, and were boundlessly grateful for her kindness. Three times her rain fell. High and low, near and far, the mountains and fields all had a sufficiency. Beside himself with joy, the ruler of Min praised Chen Jinggu's great kindness and virtue.

That night, as the ruler of Min slept peacefully in the dragon bed, he saw a beautiful young woman dressed in red clothing. She knelt before the bed, her eyes brimming with tears. The ruler of Min was greatly alarmed. Astounded, he sat up and asked, "Who are you? What matter do you have to report in the dead of night?"

The woman answered, "I am none other than the one whom you have twice decreed be enfeoffed as Respected and Blessed Lady of Linshui, whose virtue is like a mountain and kindness like the ocean. I had no way to repay my debt to the state. For this reason, when Min suffered a severe drought and longed for rain like a person dying of thirst, it was I who prayed for rain on White Dragon River. Because I was three months pregnant, I first removed my fetus and left it for safekeeping in my mother's house, and only then did I go to perform magic. To my surprise, my demon enemies, the White Snake and the Ravine Demon, went to my mother's house and took the fetus and destroyed it. Then they went to White Dragon River to kill me. Three times they pulled my mat under the water. I saw the snake and the demon, and wielding my sword I left the mat to pursue and seize the White Snake. Astride her head, I returned to Linshui. Unexpectedly, cold entered my organs and entrails, wind entered my spleen and lungs, and in the end I died from a calamitous childbirth."

When the ruler of Min heard Madame Chen say that she had died from a calamitous childbirth, he was so shocked that he collapsed and burst into tears. He said, "Alone you repeatedly protected the state, saving me and all the people of the city, and freeing us from disaster. You killed the White Snake and exerted yourself praying for rain. In saving the people you lost your own life. Your merit is great. I am deeply saddened." Again and again he stamped his feet in grief. Unaware, he awoke Empress Chen Jinfeng with one of his kicks. When she heard the ruler weeping without cease, she asked why he was so grief-stricken.

When the ruler of Min heard her calling him, only then did he awaken. It had been a "Dream under the Southern Bough," unusual in the

extreme.¹¹ Then he told the empress how Madame Chen had appeared in a dream and explained to him how she had prayed for rain and died as a consequence of a calamitous childbirth, and so on. When the empress heard this, she couldn't help weeping. She said, "Your dream was exactly like mine. Last night I also dreamed that Madame Chen came here, and not even half a sentence differed. I think Madame Chen must have a reason, so I implore you tomorrow to send down a decree to thoroughly investigate this matter."

When it got to be light in the east, the ruler of Min and Empress Chen put on their robes and caps and went to the court. After the civil and military officials had each paid their respects, Vice Minister Gao Teng of the Ministry of Rites had an audience. Clutching an audience tablet to his chest, he prostrated himself and reported, "I, Gao Teng, have a message here to report to my ruler. There is a local official here now from Gutian. He reports that the person called Madame Chen of Linshui Palace in Gutian removed her fetus because she was going to White Dragon River to pray for rain. She caught cold and wind and suffered a calamitous childbirth. Astride the White Snake's head, she returned to Linshui Palace and died there. Now he sincerely reports, and begs you to pass judgment."

The ruler of Min pounded the table and wept bitter tears. "Last night I dreamed that I saw Madame Chen," he said. "She came up to the dragon bed and told me about losing her life. I have always said that dreams are evanescent, and it's hard to believe that they are true, but, to my surprise, sure enough, this really happened." In the court there wasn't a single civil or military official who was not sick at heart. The ruler of Min wiped his tears and decreed, "I am giving the Inner Palace Manager Gui Shouming a decree that he should go to Gutian and offer sacrifices." Once again he sent down a decree to enfeoff her. There's no need to speak of this.

Now we will turn to the Liu family at Linshui Palace, father and son and mother, who, of course, were deeply grief-stricken. When the people of the area, near and far, heard that Madame Chen had died, there wasn't one who did not weep. Liu Qi was about to prepare the clothing for the body, as well as the inner and outer coffins, when a Daoist priest arrived at the palace. To Liu Tong, father and son, he said, "Your daughter-in-law's achievements have attained the true fruits. She must be enthroned here. You must use charcoal, cloth, and lacquer to preserve her fleshly body to guard Linshui Palace in Gutian and receive incense offerings for ten thousand years. She

will ward off evil and bless and protect. To preserve her remains, you must not use a coffin or prepare her body for the coffin.”

No sooner had he spoken than he vanished. Surprised and bewildered, the people said, “This man surely was a heavenly immortal sent by the magic master of Mount Lü especially to give instructions.” Both inside and outside Linshui Palace there was an extraordinary fragrance. Liu Qi didn’t dare prepare the body for the coffin. Instead, he invited in an expert painting and lacquer artist, who used charcoal and cloth on the fleshly body. On the outside he used a thick layer of earth to sculpt the fleshly body, and dressed it up as the Lady. Then she was placed astride the White Snake’s head in a niche, where sacrifices were offered.

On the fourth day the parents of Madame Chen of Fuzhou arrived in Gutian. Weeping, they entered the palace. All they saw was their daughter’s body, exactly as it was when she was still alive. The two old people wept bitterly, almost to the point of death. Nearly dead of sorrow, the husband, Liu Qi, regained consciousness, his liver and entrails torn to pieces by grief. Everyone was heartbroken.

That very day Gui Shouming brought to the palace the edict to offer sacrifices and the letter conferring additional titles. The local official welcomed the edict and together they went into the palace and set out imperial sacrifices.¹² When the sacrifices were complete, he asked about the thirty-six palace concubines. Only then did he learn that they had turned back into white bones after Chen Jinggu died, and each had returned to her palace chamber. On the lintel over each palace chamber in the two halls there was a tablet on which was written the palace concubine’s name. In accordance with the tablets, Gui Shouming had the thirty-six palace concubines’ home administrative divisions and counties and their names copied into a register.¹³ Then he returned to the court and reported on the results of what he had been ordered to do.

When the ruler of Min was informed, he was amazed. He decreed that the thirty-six palace concubines should have conferred on them the titles of the thirty-six palace Poguan. He also said that he was moved by Madame Chen’s repeated achieving of outstanding services, protecting the country and bringing peace to the people, praying for rain, and sacrificing her own life. In addition, he granted Madame Chen the title of Exalted and Blessed Lady of Linshui Palace Who Illuminates and Grants Favors.¹⁴ This was the third occasion on which he decreed a title for her.

Old Liu Tong and Chen Jinggu's husband, Liu Qi, both had already resigned their official posts and gone to live in retirement. They received titles of Grand Master Who Illuminates and Grants Favors, while Madame Zhu, her mother-in-law, was given the title of Grand Mistress. The ruler granted a title to Madame Chen's grandfather, Chen Yu, as a second rank official, and her father, Chen Chang, as a second rank noble. Her grandmother and her mother, Madame Ge, were also given the title of Grand Mistress.

He again ordered the Inner Hall Manager, Gui Shouming, to go to Linshui Palace in Gutian. Shouming received the summons and again went to Gutian to confer a title. When he had expressed his thanks and gratitude, he returned to Min and reported the completion of the decree. Linshui Palace at Gutian, where Madame Chen's body was dressed and set up to complete the correct Way astride the White Snake's head, was the ancestral hall. Now the name Linshui Palace was changed to Dragon King Temple. What is more, her mother's house at Xiadu and Black Stone Mountain were both branch palaces.

The Empress Chen Jinfeng also made offerings in the palace to Madame Chen's image, giving her the title of Great Nurtress Chen. She dedicated her life to the cult of Chen Jinggu, to be a follower in life and death. On the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month she made offerings to the Great Lady's sacred tablet, when all things were offered, except for duck. Because of the affection felt for the mother ducks that on that fatal day seized the mat in their mouths, they vow not to eat duck, and, consequently, their offerings never include duck. In the Ming dynasty, Xu Zhi, because he visited Dragon King Temple, wrote a poem praising it.¹⁵ The poem says:

At the abandoned temple overlooking the river
 They sacrificed to the beauty,
 The young girl who became an exalted spirit in the Five Dynasties.
 Tadpoles come out from under the steps.
 The Snake Demon who submitted sleeps in the well.
 Spring and Autumn, the old peasants change their headcloths.
 At the New Year season youths burn paper money.
 Moss fills in the old tablet and travelers mourn it.
 The adornment tower has no caretaker.
 It seals in the smoke from dead fires.

Now we will speak of Madame Chen. Although she died, her body was at Dragon King Temple. With the spirit of a heroine, her heart did not dim, and she was exactly as in life.¹⁶ But she still regretted that the Ravine Demon had escaped and not been captured, and that she had not yet avenged herself on this enemy. She ordered her two bodyguards, Wang and Yang, to bring the Shadow Soldiers to guard Dragon King Temple. Her own spirit undimmed, it traveled everywhere searching for the Ravine Demon.

Before Heaven she again made a vow, saying, "Today I suffered death in childbirth and could not save myself. I vow that if anywhere in the mortal world there is difficulty or sickness before or after childbirth, as well as prayers for children, or young children at the malevolent passes of childhood, no matter whether it is near or far, if it is a stormy day or rainy night, if there is a call, I will invariably respond. I renounce my life to save those suffering difficulty in childbirth and to protect young children. I will recover the spirit of my male fetus that was eaten by the White Snake, and refine it." Then she practiced a Liandu Ritual of salvation through refinement, transmuting it into a human form that she named Liu Cong. This is the present Ling Tong San Sheren.

We will now set aside Madame Chen seeking to catch the demon, and turn our attention to Miss Gao and Miss Zou. Because Madame Chen banned magic implements, did not recite scriptures and imprecations, closed the door and left no trace of herself in the world, all the sisters went back to their homes. When they heard that Madame Chen had died at Linshui Palace, they wept bitterly without cease. Their parents exhorted them without success. They rejected food and drink; all day they wept and would not speak. Their parents tried to persuade them in every possible way, but it was as if they were drunk or crazy. They said that all they wanted was to see Madame Chen. That night Miss Gao waited till her parents had gone to sleep, hanged herself, and died. The next night, when Miss Zou heard about it, she, too, hanged herself in her bedchamber. The souls of the two Daoist girls, still companions, went to Linshui Palace in Gutian to join Madame Chen. Truly it was:

Although they were not born together, they wished to die together.
They rid themselves of their previous regret and went to take revenge on
their former enemy.

We don't yet know how things turned out. Read the next chapter to find out.

CHAPTER 17

Avenging Deep Hatred by Capturing the Ravine Demon / Weeping Tears of Blood and Gathering Again at the Bridge of One Hundred Flowers

NOW WE WILL RETURN TO THE TWO GIRLS ZOU AND GAO OF THE capital. When they heard that Madame Chen had died, they wept day and night, rejecting food and drink, and in the still of the night they hanged themselves and died. Their souls got together, and as comrades they went to Gutian to see Madame Chen. The souls of the three sisters met, and, as they wept in each other's arms over their deep hatred for the Ravine Demon's repeated evildoing and hostility, Madame Chen made a vow, saying, "If I don't catch the Ravine Demon and rid the people of this scourge and avenge myself on my enemy, I swear I will not act as a divinity." Then together she and her younger sisters separated to search for and capture him.

Now we will speak of the four girls Xu, Zeng, Ruan, and Ma. After Madame Chen had established prohibitions and sent them home to visit their parents, when they heard that Madame Chen had died, they, too, wept day and night. They vowed to go to Linshui Palace and from dawn till dusk worship and burn incense before her sacred tablet. Their parents exhorted them, but they wouldn't listen, and in the end they had no alternative but to

acquiesce. The parents of the four families then sent their daughters to Linshui Palace.

When they entered the hall, they saw Madame Chen's countenance exactly as if she were still alive, no different from during her lifetime. When they saw her, their grief was intense. They said, "We, your younger sisters, in former days received your kindness, you saved us, and we were like sisters. You taught us marvelous magic. This kindness and generosity were as great as the mountains and seas. We wanted only to serve all day as your retinue, never to leave you all our lives. How could anyone have predicted the demon's resolve to repeatedly cruelly harm you? Worthy elder sister, you suffered this death, with the result that we sisters will never again hear your teachings. Since you, Madame, obtained this palace hall, no one anywhere ever again heard of demons and monsters harming people. It is truly your merit and virtuous power in the world. Mournful indeed, Sister! Sorrow indeed, Madame!"

They prostrated themselves on the ground and cried out in their grief. When people heard the sounds of their grief, there was no one who did not weep. The girls' parents saw their overwhelming sorrow, feared for their lives, and urged them, "Madame Chen's merit and virtuous power are complete, and she has already become a divinity. She cannot come back to life. That you children haven't forgotten her kindness and generosity should be described as dutiful. There's no use crying! We're afraid you will do yourselves harm and damage your spirit energies."

The girls of the four families saw their parents doing their utmost to persuade them, and had no alternative but to stop grieving. They wiped their tears and bowed in respect. Each set of parents wanted to return home with their daughter, but the four girls wept and said, "Heretofore, we received Madame Chen's kindness and generosity, and she treated us as her hands and feet. We have vowed never to marry, so what use is it for you to take us home? We don't expect to be long in this world. Our souls will certainly follow Madame Chen's in close attendance." There was nothing the parents could do, and they had no alternative but to go home. In the temple the four girls offered sacrifices and burned incense. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Lin Jiuniang. From the time she had said goodbye to Madame Chen and returned to Luoyuan to visit her parents, and heard that Madame Chen had died, she had wept and wailed without cease. Her

parents earnestly exhorted her. All day long she wept, her spirit dissipated, and she took neither tea nor rice. Sick from grief, she lay in bed and did not rise, nor would she take medicine. One day Provincial Governor Lin and his wife came to their daughter's bedside and asked, "Does our daughter's illness seem a little better?"

Jiuniang replied, "Your child's illness is worse, there is no lessening, and I figure it will be difficult to find a cure. I just hope that you, my parents, will look after yourselves. Don't think about me." When she had finished speaking, her tears fell like rain.

Provincial Governor Lin consoled her, saying, "Daughter, what need is there to be so worried? Wait till tomorrow when I will bring a good doctor to treat you. In due course you will recover completely."

Because her illness had reached a critical stage her parents worried day and night. The next day, Provincial Governor Lin sent a servant to go bring the doctor, when he saw Madame Xu come out weeping and crying. To her husband she said, "Our daughter's qi has been cut off." Old Mr. Lin and his wife rushed to her bedside, held her in their arms, and wept so bitterly they nearly died. All their friends and relatives did their best to calm them, so there was nothing to do but hold back their tears and endure it. They prepared the coffin and put the body inside. Her parents had treasured her. Unable to lift the coffin and bury her, they placed it in her bedchamber. Being a refined woman and having received the kindness and generosity of Madame Chen, Jiuniang had been wounded to the core, with the result that she suffered this critical illness and died of despondency. Her soul went to Linshui Palace in Gutian to see Madame Chen.

That day Li Sanjie and Miss Ou arrived in town and hurried to Jiuniang's house to pay her a visit. Weeping, Provincial Governor Lin told them, "Jiuniang has died." The two women were shocked and shed bitter tears. A servant led them into the inner chamber where they saw the coffin waiting in readiness. They gently touched it and wept. "What serious illness caused our elder sister to lose her life?" they asked her parents.

Madame Xu, Jiuniang's mother, told them, "There really was no illness. On hearing that Madame Chen of Linshui had prayed for rain, saved her cousin and all the people, and then died in childbirth, Jiuniang cried day and night. Her depression deepened into illness, and she wouldn't take medicine. That is why she died." Having spoken, Jiuniang's mother was overcome with grief.

When Miss Li and Miss Ou learned that Madame Chen had died, they were so shocked that they turned white, utterly dumbstruck. With tears falling like rain, they said, "Madame Chen has died? We hadn't heard! We didn't know!" When they had spoken, they beat their breasts and wept, saying, "What grief! What sorrow! Jiuniang, Elder Sister, you first went to meet her, abandoning us two sisters. You, however, have gone to meet Madame Chen. Why didn't you tell us so that we could go together? How can the two of us turn our backs on justice and cravenly cling to life and fear death?" At this they burst into tears. Of those who heard, there were none who did not weep. When the two of them stopped crying, they said goodbye to Madame Xu and returned home. They, too, cried and wept every day, and had no desire to eat or drink. After a short time they, too, fell sick and also did not take medicine. They both died some seven days later. Alas! What sorrow!

Now we will speak of the four women Zeng, Ruan, Xu, and Ma in Linshui Palace at Gutian. Before the divine statue, morning and evening, they presented offerings and incense. They often wept, not leaving Madame Chen's side.

One day they saw a man dressed in Daoist clothes, with a white face and long beard, enter the palace hall weeping. Facing Madame Chen's statue, he wept, deeply grieved. The four sisters—Zeng, Xu, and so on—didn't know who he was, grief-stricken like this. They watched him kneel on the floor and weep piteously, saying, "I, your foolish cousin, was saved by you, worthy younger cousin, with the result that you yourself lost your life. Your detestable cousin lacked ability. I was not able to free you from the difficulty, so that calamity befell your body and you suffered the Ravine Demon's torments. Truly, you were entangled by your foolish cousin. Now your foolish cousin is the greatest offender under Heaven. Even if my body were shredded into a thousand pieces it would be difficult to requite you."

Weeping, he prostrated himself. When he had finished, he went out of the palace and left. When the four girls heard what he said, only then did they know that it was Chen Shouyuan, Madame Chen's cousin, and they knew that what had happened to her was for this reason. Thereafter, because of the four girls' excessive grief, whenever they saw Chen Jinggu's image in the palace they longed for her. The four sisters all fell seriously ill one after the other, and in just over a month they had all died.

At this time, although some were near and some were far, the ten women—Chen, Ma, Zou, Li, Ou, Zeng, Xu, Ruan, et cetera—had died one

after the other, and their souls returned to the same place. From dawn to dusk they gathered to discuss scripture and explicate magic, transmitting the marvelous arts of Mount Lü. The secrets of supporting the fetus, saving women in childbirth, and protecting the baby, which Chen Jinggu had begged the master to teach her on her second stay at Mount Lü, she imparted to the ten sisters according to the order of their positions. Now she instructed them in the way of sisterhood: "I previously made a vow, and all of you ought to act according to it. If anywhere in the human world anyone encounters calamity, no matter whether it is a stormy day or rainy night, and no matter whether it is near or far, if someone calls for me, I will immediately come without hesitation. My intense hatred for the Ravine Demon, this foe who deeply wronged me, is such that I absolutely cannot leave him alive, so I swear that I will capture him in order to eliminate this scourge of the people, and avenge this wrong done to me."

When she had finished speaking, she instructed all the sisters to divide into the upper, middle, and lower worlds to search for, find, and capture him.¹ All of the sisters obeyed the command to scrupulously search, while Madame Chen herself went with Lin Jiuniang, traveling everywhere to look for him.

One day they arrived at a place with which they were completely unfamiliar. Seeing a flowing stream and many trees, Madame Chen and Lin Jiuniang entered to enjoy the beautiful sights. Sure enough, the scenery was extraordinary, nothing like this mortal world! They sighed and said, "How can there be such a wonderful place!" The flowers and trees were of all shapes and sizes. Pavilions and towers were scattered around, a golden river and jade waters were spanned by a rainbow bridge, there were brocade curtains and kingfisher screens, and around them a scented wall. A gentle breeze continuously wafted fragrance. On frames there were purple ferns, and the clear sun shone warmly throughout. Along the fences there were peonies, and outside the pillars bamboo grew. Thousand-year cedars and ten-thousand-year pines, hints of tender green color, gentleman bamboo and nobleman pines, long-lasting and enduring kingfisher greens, the immortal cinnabar cassia which is in the moon, mist and clouds all around, and plum blossoms in the snow. A welcoming breeze touched the dew. In magic grasses that produced male offspring, one saw gold coins, while the earth welcomed female-child flowers. Beautiful hills and waters! Words cannot describe it! Madame Chen and Lin Jiuniang could not take in the thousand shades of red and the ten thousand shades of purple.

All of a sudden they saw two people approach, shouting loudly, "Who are you that you enter the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers on your own authority?" Madame Chen looked at them. One had an indigo-blue face, hair like cinnabar, a beard, on his head a gold helmet, and on his body red armor. Brandishing a long sword, he was extremely fierce. The other's face was very white, and he had a long beard of five strands. On his head he wore a gold hat, on his body silver armor, and in his hand he held a long firearm. His appearance also was ferocious.

When Madame Chen had looked them over, she said to the two generals, "I am Chen Jinggu of Xiadu, in Fuzhou. This is my sworn sister, Lin Jiuniang. Because we are on a mission, we are traveling and searching together. When we came here just to pass through, we saw that the scenery of the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers was extraordinary, extremely refined and elegant. For this reason we were enjoying it for a time. I will likewise ask you, 'Who are you that you lack manners like this and dare to shout and question us?'"

When the two divinities heard these words, they quickly prostrated themselves on the ground and said, "One of us is Gao of the Birthing Basin That Sends Children, the other is Deng Ying Who Protects Children and Facilitates Birth, and this is the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers of the Higher Realm. The men and women of the human world are sent down from here to be born. We had previously heard Madame's name but didn't yet know her face. Today, fortunately, we have encountered your golden visage. We beg you to forgive our error. We have long wanted to become your disciples, and today we meet. We beg you to accept us. You can employ us as subordinates."

Delighted, Madame Chen said, "You two spirit generals, please rise. I see that this bridge's scenery is extraordinary, and it precisely suits my taste. Moreover, I took a vow to send children into the human world. Now, since you two are in my charge, one of you can be called Marshal Gao of the Golden Basin Who Sends Children, and the other can be called Great Divinity Deng Who Protects Children and Eases Birth. The two of you and my younger sister can guard this Bridge of a Hundred Flowers, which will be my secondary palace, in order to set up rooms for the arrival and departure of souls." Lin Jiuniang and the spirit generals received their orders. Having instructed them to guard the bridge, Madame Chen said goodbye to Lin Jiuniang.

Again she went everywhere searching for the Ravine Demon. He had left White Dragon River, where he had pulled Madame Chen's magic mat under the water, when suddenly he had seen in the air three mother ducks fly down to the water and, with their mouths, grasp the magic mat. It had floated on the surface, so that the Great Lady, who had been immersed, had again floated. Thereupon she had entered the water, brandishing her sword to pursue the Ravine Demon. He had scrambled to escape and, using the Water Method, had fled to Fenggang.²

Having escaped with his life, he stopped to catch his breath and collect himself. Alarmed, he exclaimed, "Any later and I'd have lost my life! I was lucky!" Soon after, he set off slowly, one step at a time, seeking news as he went. Only then did he learn that the White Snake had been caught and turned into Chen Jinggu's mount and that the Great Nurtress herself had suffered death in childbirth. The Ravine Demon's happiness knew no bounds. He thought to himself, "Who is there now for me to fear? No matter what my behavior, in future I can take pleasure as I wish."

From this time on the Ravine Demon acted more boldly. At Fenggang he went sightseeing, and one day, happening to wander into the rear flower garden of the Yangs' residence, he saw a girl, very young but of marriageable age. She was extremely sweet and charming, elegant and beautiful. The Ravine Demon happily said, "She really is seductively beautiful. Although Chen Jinfeng was an empress, still she couldn't compare to this girl. I was always the White Snake's slave, all day long luring in victims for her, which was extremely hard work. I, however, was never able to be together with any attractive girl, since I never had any free time. Now that the White Snake has been imprisoned by Chen Jinggu as her mount and is gone, I figure it will be hard for her to escape. I think my share of good fortune is not small, and thus I was able to escape to this place. Moreover, I've encountered this beautiful girl. Without the burden of the White Snake and without having to worry about Chen Jinggu, now I can take advantage of these few days of living happily. Isn't that indeed happiness?"

The Ravine Demon made himself invisible and entered the garden, intending to seduce the girl. Her parents had died long ago, leaving only an elder brother, Yang Chun. He had taken a wife, Madame Yao, who was ten [lunar] months pregnant but hadn't yet given birth. The Ravine Demon put the girl under a spell. The brother and sister-in-law saw that their younger

sister did not feel like eating or drinking. Becoming pale and thin, she slipped into a stupor, and didn't speak. When they asked her why she was sick, she blushed and didn't answer. When Yang Chun saw this state of affairs, he and his wife questioned her closely. Only then did his younger sister say, "Every evening a good-looking youth casts a spell over my body and takes his pleasure in every possible way. It's like this every night, and that is why I am exhausted. I think he is surely a demon spirit or ghost monster, without a doubt."

Madame Yao said, "This isn't an infatuation, but surely a demon. Hurry and get an image of a divinity who wards off evil for her bedroom. As a matter of course, it can cure this illness."

Yang Chun felt that what his wife said was reasonable. He went to the neighbor's house to borrow a black-ink painting of Zhong Kui, which was a drawing of him holding a demon.³ They hung it in her bedroom and burned incense without interruption. By evening, the picture was half burned, the hands and feet incomplete, so Yang Chun thought, "The demon isn't afraid of Zhong Kui."

He borrowed another painting, an image of Guan Gong of the Han dynasty and Three Kingdoms, who was conventionally called Yunchang. In his hand he held a Green Dragon crescent moon sword with a long shaft, and he sat astride his famous horse called Chi Tu.⁴ They hung the image in the little sister's room, but the next day it was torn to shreds. It hadn't been able to keep the demon's malevolence away. They were very worried.

Madame Yao said, "Once the year passes, people throw everything away, like the old lunar calendar they can no longer use. I think Master Guan was a hero of the Han dynasty. That was ages ago, so it's difficult to invite a true god from that era. Zhong Kui was a man who lived under Emperor Dezong of the Tang dynasty. Although this period is recent, and his home is near here, and when he lived he eliminated scourges on behalf of the people, these days if a god doesn't come then he isn't fully efficacious. I've heard there is someone who has captured demons everywhere. Now, although she has died, surely her spirit will efficaciously respond."

Yang Chun quickly asked, "What person or magic master is that? How do you know about her?"

Madame Yao replied, "I've heard that there is a Madame Chen of Xiadu who studied magic at Mount Lü, and that she kills demons and captures monsters on behalf of people. I've also heard our neighbor Wang Erniang,

who has returned from there, say that Chen Jinggu prayed for rain at White Dragon River. When she removed her fetus in order to save her cousin and the people, she encountered her demon nemesis and died of complications of childbirth. The ruler of Min believed that Chen Jinggu had great merit and efficacious power, and gave her the title of Lady, but in this province she is called Great Nurturess Chen. In Fuzhou there are now images of the divinity Great Nurturess Chen, which are sold to people on account of their efficacy in warding off evil. Why don't you buy one and hang it up? I'm sure it will be efficacious and repulse the demon."

Thinking that what she said was reasonable, Yang Chun replied, "I have often heard of Great Nurturess Chen on each occasion killing demons and capturing ghosts for people." When he had finished speaking, he went into the city to a picture shop, and there he bought an image of the divinity Great Nurturess Chen. As expected, she was colorfully dressed. He saw Madame Chen with her hair unbound, wearing a cap and brandishing a sword in her left hand, and in her right hand holding a spirit horn. She was in the pose of working her magic. Although it was just a color painting, her appearance was exactly as it had been in life.

Yang Chun used eight silver coins to buy the picture. He took it home and hung it in his sister's room where the images of Zhong Kui and Master Guan had previously hung. They burned incense continuously, while Yang Chun knelt and prayed.

In the evening the Ravine Demon was about to enter the room when he saw the image of Madame Chen and couldn't help being terrified! He collapsed on the ground, crying out that he was going to die. He clawed his way up and went out of the room crying, "My courage is destroyed! This adversary, the minute I see her I tremble with fear! But I don't know who told him to display it. It's really too cruel!"

Thereafter the Ravine Demon did not dare enter the room. But since he could not bear to part from his beloved, whose beauty was like flowers and jade, from dawn to dusk he did not leave the Yangs' house. He was always in front or in back of the house, so tenderly attached that he couldn't give her up. From the time the Ravine Demon no longer dared enter her room, Yang Chun's sister gradually recovered from her illness, eating and drinking as before, and in her room she built up her vitality.

Madame Yao saw that her sister-in-law had recovered. One day she playfully said, "How would you have recovered so quickly if I hadn't told your

brother to provide an image of Great Nurturess Chen? You should thank me.” The sister smiled.

Who could know that just as Madame Yao was joking, the Ravine Demon happened to overhear her. Bearing her a grudge for cruelly breaking up his happy situation, he said, “I said I didn’t know who led him to put up this image for her, but it was her sister-in-law! She caused me trouble, so that I don’t dare enter the room. How can I get revenge and purge my hatred?” He thought some more to himself, and said, “Madame Yao is already more than ten months pregnant, so why don’t I go tonight and harm her?”

The Ravine Demon went into her room and stomped on her pregnant body to induce a miscarriage. In an instant Madame Yao felt pains in her belly and, thinking that she was about to give birth, went to sit on the birthing basin. The Ravine Demon was at her side. Taking her fetal membrane and entrails, he pulled them all out, so that she lost consciousness and died. Yang Chun saw that his wife had given birth. Even her intestines had fallen into the birthing basin, and her qi was cut off. He was so shaken that his soul was unable to stay attached to his body. Wailing, he ran into his sister’s room and knelt before the image of Madame Chen. Weeping, he called on the Great Nurturess to save his wife’s life. Prostrate before the goddess, he tearfully appealed to her to quickly come save the two lives from the complications of childbirth. In just a short time, his cries had become heart-rending.

Now we will return to Great Nurturess Chen, who earlier had ordered Lin Jiuniang to keep watch at the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers, while she herself searched high and low for the Ravine Demon. She also dispatched an animated talisman as a messenger to search everywhere and capture him, saying, “If anyone calls to be saved from complications of childbirth, come immediately to tell me. Or if any child is critically ill, that, too, must be reported. And make inquiries if there is any news of the Ravine Demon, and immediately come report it.”

One day the talismanic messenger came to report that there was a case of complications in childbirth in the Yang family in Fenggang. They were wailing and crying to be saved, and were beseeching Madame Chen to rescue the two lives in question. When Madame Chen heard this report, she rushed to the door of the Yangs’ house in Fenggang, where she transformed herself into a woman. She entered the house, and saw Yang Chun prostrate on the floor before her divine image, calling “Great Nurturess Chen, save their lives! Great Nurturess Chen, save their lives!”

Madame Chen said to Yang Chun, "There is no need for crying or alarm. I can save them."

Yang Chun looked at her. She was indeed a woman out of the ordinary. He led her to his wife's room, and Madame Chen entered the polluted chamber. Seeing the Ravine Demon pulling out the intestines of the woman in childbirth, the Great Nurturess quickly ran over to seize him. As soon as the Ravine Demon saw Great Nurturess Chen's true body approach, his souls scattered in terror. He ran away, with Madame Chen in pursuit, sword in hand. This time the Ravine Demon did not succeed in escaping. He thought, "This is it! This is it!"

He ran to the back door. Luckily for him, he saw a well, into which he quickly flung himself and hid. Running to the well, the Great Nurturess plucked from her head a black hair. She transformed it into a long chain and threw into the well, where it chained and locked the demon. Next she sealed the mouth of the well with a large rock, and only then did she go back into Madame Yao's polluted chamber.

She saw that Madame Yao was lying unconscious, her intestines and fetus filling the basin. Madame Chen put her intestines back into her belly and revived the fetus. At this moment Madame Yao was brought back to life, so both mother and child were alive! Yang Chun rejoiced, but suddenly he didn't see the Great Nurturess. Only then did he realize that it was Madame Chen manifesting her sagehood to save them. The whole family was deeply grateful, extremely glad, and thankful. Before the divinity's image they all kowtowed without stopping.

Now we will speak of Great Nurturess Chen after she came to the rescue of these birth complications. In this childbirth, even the intestines had come out. This is called a pond-snail birth, and it is a very dangerous complication.⁵

Now we will return to the Great Nurturess. She left the house and returned to the well, where she shifted the large rock. She had pulled out a black hair and transformed it into a long chain with which to catch the Ravine Demon, but he had vanished without a trace. She summoned the divinity of the well and asked him, "The Ravine Demon threw himself into this well, so how is it that he has disappeared? What opening does this well have through which he could have escaped?"

"This well is not like other wells," the god of the well replied. "In this well there are many channels and secret springs, through which the Ravine Demon has escaped, leading straight to the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers."

When Madame Chen heard this, she rushed to the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers. Lin Jiuniang met her and asked, "Did you catch the Ravine Demon? Do you have any news?"

Madame Chen told her the whole story of what had happened in the Yangs' house in Fenggang. She also told her how she had caught the Ravine Demon and how he had hidden in the well. Because the underground springs connected to this place, she figured that the Ravine Demon would have to emerge there. She said, "Now I must not show my face, and I must guard against him seeing me. Otherwise, I'm afraid he'll escape again. I will go in the palace first and wait there, while you go to the bridge. Do as follows, and only then will you be able to capture him." Lin Jiuniang accepted the plan and went onto the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers. She opened the adornment tower and, looking into the mirror, combed her hair.

Now we will return to the Ravine Demon. He had been at the Yangs' house when he saw that the Great Nurtress had come to capture him, and he had nearly died of shock. Fortunately for him, there was an underground spring in the well through which he could escape that led to under the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers. He didn't know what place it was, but when he emerged to take a look it was resplendent. There were many flowers and trees, and the scenery was truly beautiful. Furthermore, he saw a lovely young woman on the bridge combing her hair. He said to himself in delight, "If I can take my pleasure for a time with this beautiful girl on the bridge, then Heaven will have fulfilled my lifelong wish."

Then he transformed himself into a young boy. In his hand he held a bamboo pole. He climbed out from under the bridge, smiled at Jiuniang, and said, "Jiuniang, you are combing your hair here. I beg you to give me a strand of your black hair. Won't you do that?" Jiuniang looked at him. She saw a little boy, whom she knew perfectly well was a transformation of the Ravine Demon.

She replied, "What do you want one of my hairs for?"

The Ravine Demon answered, "I want a strand to make a crab snare. On the riverbank I will suspend it to catch crabs."

Jiuniang took a hair that had fallen out and gave it to him, asking, "Would this be all right for making a crab snare?"

The Ravine Demon replied, "I don't want a hair that has fallen out, I want one that is growing on your head. I will choose one, and only then will it be of use."

Lin Jiuniang laughed. Hanging her hair from the bridge, she said, "This way I will let you choose a hair."

The Ravine Demon was very pleased. Grabbing Jiuniang's hair, with all his might he tried to pull her into the water, thinking, "She's mine!" Who knew that Jiuniang was secretly reciting spells? She shook her hair loose and turned it into a Celestial Web and Earthly Net. The Ravine Demon was tangled in the hair and bound tight. He frantically tried to escape but couldn't get free. He thought to himself, "This is not good. I've fallen into her trap." He said, "I was just having fun with you, so why have you bound me up so tightly?"

Jiuniang replied, "I'm just having fun with you, too. Wait till I finish combing my hair, then I'll let you go." Then, she bound the Ravine Demon tight with strands of hair transformed into iron chains. When she finished combing her hair, she said, "You're no human child. What ghost demon are you really? Tell me and I'll let you go."

The Ravine Demon said, "I'm not a demon or goblin. I really am a human child. Hurry up and let me go. If there's any delay and my parents hear about it, they certainly won't give you any rest."

Jiuniang said, "You can't fool me. You have no choice but to explain truthfully. I can use you."

The Ravine Demon asked, "What use do you have for me?"

Jiuniang said, "I guard this place, the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers. Many times Chen Jinggu has tried to seize my territory by force. Fortunately, I excel in magic and I'm more than a match for her. I want to take you on here to help me guard this place together. I'm asking you, and if you don't tell me the truth, it will be hard for me to take you in and employ you."

When the Ravine Demon heard this, he was delighted, and said, "Since it's like this and I can't fool you, I will tell you the truth. I am the Ravine Demon, and I also hate Chen Jinggu."

Jiuniang said, "What score do you have to settle with her? Give me an explanation."

The Ravine Demon said, "It's because when she went to Mount Lü to study magic, it was I who barred her way and tried to proposition her. For this reason, we became bitter enemies. When she had perfected her magic and returned home, she was often my adversary. I had no refuge, and lived as a slave among the underlings of the White Snake in Linshui Grotto. Later, the grotto was destroyed by Chen Jinggu when she rescued her husband.

Luckily, I succeeded in escaping to Great Ravine Mountain Grotto, where I hid myself. There I heard that the White Snake had been chopped up and Chen Jinggu was again coming to oppose me. When she prayed for rain on White Dragon River, it was I who stole the fetus she had removed and gave it to the White Snake to eat, and I who pulled her magic mat under the water. Then the mother ducks came and took the mat in their mouths and made it float. After pursuing and catching the White Snake, Chen Jinggu returned to the palace and died. Luckily, I got away. How could I know that she wouldn't give up and was determined to seek revenge? She pursued me to Fenggang, where I threw myself into a well and made my escape to this place. Luckily, I ran into you. If you will let me stay and employ me, I will serve you like a dog."

Jiuniang heard him out. Every sentence was the truth. She ground her teeth with hatred. Angrily she said, "Since you are the Ravine Demon, why don't you appear in your original form?"

The Ravine Demon said, "If I appear in my original form, you must release me." Immediately he assumed his original form: horns grew from his head; two fangs protruded from his mouth, he had red hair and a blue face, he was several *zhang* tall, and three claws grew from his feet.⁶

Lin Jiuniang said, "I don't dare let you go on my own authority. I will request Madame to come deal with you," and she ordered a spirit general to go ask Madame to come make a decision. In no time at all Madame Chen came out of the palace and took her seat above. Lin Jiuniang and the two spirit generals Deng and Gao escorted the Ravine Demon inside. The moment the Ravine Demon saw Great Nurturess Chen sitting on high, he was so terrified that his heavenly soul flew beyond Heaven and his earthly soul to the Ninth Cloud. He knew that the situation today would be difficult to escape. He begged and pleaded for his life.

When Madame Chen saw him, she pounded on the table and reviled him, saying, "Ravine Demon Zhang, today you have again come to court death. What bitter hatred did you have for me that you dared to destroy my fetus and kill me? Now I have captured you. What more is there to say?"

Then Great Nurturess Chen ordered the spirit generals to recount his crimes in order to punish him. She said, "For barring the way that day and attempting rape when halfway up the mountain to study magic, both hands will be cut off. For urging the White Snake to delude sons of good families, cut off both his feet. For stealing my fetus, cut out his heart and lungs. For

dragging the magic mat under at White Dragon River, gouge out his eyes. For his infatuation with the young woman in Fenggang, scoop out his heart, intestines, and gall bladder. For yanking out Madame Yao's fetus and pulling out her intestines, pull out his large and small intestines, dripping with excrement. For being my enemy and causing my death in childbirth, his corpse should be divided into three segments." Then she ordered the two spirit generals to escort the Ravine Demon to be broken into pieces, to be held in Fengdu hell.⁷ "For ten thousand generations he will not be permitted to be reincarnated."

Because the White Snake had submitted and the demon was eliminated, Great Nurturess Chen and her ten sisters assembled to discuss scripture and explicate magic, either in Dragon King Temple in Gutian or in Yulin Palace at the head of the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers, from which she sent boys and girls into the human world.⁸ We won't discuss this any further.

Now let us go to the side of Fuqing Mountain, where there was a thatched hut where a woodcutter, whose surname was Xie and whose given name was Kai, lived alone. One day he was cutting wood on the mountain, when at the summit he saw a piece of rotting wood that had a very unusual scent. Xie Kai didn't know what kind of wood it was, but it had a lovely fragrance! He took the wood and burned it in the brazier. Since he was at leisure with nothing to do, he went for a walk. He closed the door, dropped the bolt, and left. It turned out that this was a piece of eagle-wood incense and a piece of ebony-wood incense.⁹ When burned together in the brazier, its fragrance was very unusual and could be smelled near and far. This fragrance was completely different from that of ordinary incense. Truly it was:

A harmonious fragrance drawing the butterfly to it,
A cloud fragrance wafting across the traveler's path.

Xie's thatched hut was on a cliff to the side, and from it the extraordinary fragrance covered the mountain peaks. In this mountain there was a bottomless cave, where there was a great python. The snake's head was the size of a bushel basket, and his body was several *zhang* long. He had practiced asceticism in the cave for more than a thousand years, never harming anyone.

But when the extraordinary fragrance reached his nostrils, he emerged from the cave and followed the fragrant cloud to its source. Arriving at Xie's

house, he saw a deserted thatched hut. He slipped inside, coiled himself in front of the brazier, and placed his snake head in the incense burner. The fragrance of the descending perfected incense and the black sinking incense in the brazier burned and smoked right up to the heavenly court, reaching all the way to the upper realm where the Jade Emperor smelled it. He assembled all the immortals, and ordered the spirit generals to find out where a beautiful woman was burning this perfected incense.

The spirit generals on duty that day received the order to investigate. Following the fragrant vapor, they carefully sought it out. When their investigation was complete, they reported to their superior, "We went to Fuqing District, but it was not an ordinary man or woman. It was a huge python at the side of the mountain guarding incense burning in an incense burner."

When the Jade Emperor heard this report, he was thrilled. He said, "So, in the mortal world there is this sort of creature that knows how to piously worship Heaven by burning this perfected incense! Alas, ordinary people don't know how to cultivate the prohibitions. I bestow a jade seal on the snake's head. The Five Thunders are not permitted to strike him, and the spirit generals are not permitted to kill him. May he practice self-refinement forever!"

The spirit generals on duty received the jade seal, sent it straight down to the thatched hut, and on the snake's forehead stamped the print. How could they know that, having received the jade seal of Heaven, the python would know that the Five Thunders would not dare to strike him, and that even the Thunderclap Celestial Master wouldn't dare seize him? The snake returned to its cave and transformed into an all-penetrating supernatural power. He assembled several thousand little demons, and from dawn till dusk drilled them in techniques and magic arts. He called himself Python Celestial Spirit King (Mang Tian Shen Wang), and his awesome power was truly formidable.

Now we'll speak of a Daoist priest in Fuqing. His surname was Liu and his given name was Zunli, "Follower of Ritual." He had yet to take a wife. In his family he had only his father and a younger sister. His sister, whose name was Xianniang, "Immortal Maiden," was still very young. Since Liu Zunli had always been very fond of the Way, he turned over all of the household affairs to his father and sister to manage, while he went through all the famous mountains, deep valleys, and rocky cliffs. He built a thatched hut

and all day lived in seclusion, cultivating and perfecting himself. He studied Daoism on the mountain for several years.

One day an old Daoist came into the thatched hut, and Liu Zunli treated him with great respect. The old Daoist used Daoist esoteric magic to summon spirits and dispatch generals, call up the wind and summon the rain, soar up on clouds and ride the fog, and taught him all of these esoteric arts. Day and night Zunli practiced, acknowledging the Daoist as his teacher. In the space of several years, he had an all-penetrating, supernatural knowledge of all these arts. Repeatedly he asked the old Daoist his name. Only after a very long time did he find out that he was Supreme Exalted Lord Lao; for this reason his Daoist magic was superb.¹⁰ Because he knew of Liu Zunli's single-minded devotion to the Way, living in seclusion on the mountain with no one to teach him, he had descended to teach him the magic arts. Liu Zunli learned these marvelous arts, so his Daoist magic was profound. He had already given up eating grain, and only cultivated and refined immortal cinnabar on the mountain.

Now we will take up the story of the Python Celestial Spirit King in the mountains drilling the little demons. He demonstrated his strength and power, such that all the demons of the summits in the mountain range of Fuqing, Changle, and Xinghua came to submit, and chose him to be their leader. Among the subordinates there was a Poisonous Snake general, a Snake Mouth secretary, a Flying Snake army official, and a Snake Mountain Peak principal graduate. These four all possessed magic arts and were extremely formidable.

One day the Python Celestial King wandered about until he came to the rear garden of the Lius' house. It was early spring, and all the flowers were in full bloom. By nature, the python was fond of fragrances, so this scene precisely matched his taste. While he was strolling, Liu Zunli's sister happened to be in the rear garden picking flowers. The moment the Snake King set eyes on her, he couldn't help rejoicing. To himself he praised her supreme beauty. Then he stirred up a gust of magical wind to carry Xianniang into his cave. There he turned himself into a fair-complexioned young scholar, and he and Xianniang became husband and wife. The Liu family couldn't find their daughter; they searched everywhere, but there was no trace of her. They could only suspect that she had been killed by a tiger or wolf from the mountain behind the house. All they could do was cry day and night.

Now we will return to the python and his wife, Madame Liu. They were a very affectionate couple. Before they knew it, more than ten years had passed, and altogether they had eleven sons. Each birth resulted in twins; the eldest was called One, the next Two, Three, Four, and so on up to Eleven. They lived in peace, without incident.

Now we will take up the story of Miss Jiang, who herself had studied magic arts and the marvelous Way. Her arts having been perfected, she returned west to take care of young children. The village people there built for her a palace hall, called Tiger Lady Palace. When she heard that Madame Chen's Way was perfected and she had turned into a divinity, she went to Linshui to pay a visit. The sisters recounted in detail all that had happened after they had parted. Madame Chen ordered the ten sisters to assemble, so they were constantly getting together. This time Madame Chen accepted Tang, Ge, Zhu, and Liao as the four generals. We won't discuss this further.

Now we will return to Liu Zunli, who was cultivating the Way in the mountains, where the Supreme Exalted Lord Lao taught him magic. Since he had shed his mortal body and entered the category of Immortal, he didn't have dealings with ordinary people. One day Zunli thought to himself, "From the time I entered the mountains, it's been more than twenty years since I left home. I don't know what the state of affairs is in my family." Then, putting his sword on his back, he returned home on foot to pay a visit to his father and sister.

When he entered the house, nobody, old or young, recognized him. Only after carefully looking him over did his father realize that it was his son, Liu Zunli. He was greatly astonished, and said, "Son, why didn't you return for so long? Why did you send no word? Where have you come from now?"

Liu Zunli paid his respects to his father and inquired after his sister. When his father was asked about her, tears poured from his eyes without his being aware of it. He said, "When you were away single-mindedly studying the Way, and didn't return, your sister was carried off by we don't know what demon spirit. We searched for her everywhere, but she had disappeared without a trace. It has already been more than twenty years now." When Zunli heard this, he said very angrily, "This is outrageous! My sister dragged off by a demon spirit! How can I let this go by?"

Zunli immediately took leave of his father. With sword in hand he went to every mountain and cave in search of her. Suddenly he saw right in front of him in the depths of the mountains an abundance of demon vapor. He

soared into the air and traveled to that great mountain, looking for the demon's grotto. The little snakes went into the grotto to report. When the Snake King heard this, he was greatly alarmed and ordered the four generals—Poisonous Snake, Snake Mouth, Flying Snake, and Snake Mountain Peak—to each take a sword and spear and fight their way out of the cave.

Liu Zunli's flying sword met them, and they fought several rounds. Zunli raised his spirit sword, and, one after the other, he killed the four generals. Then he fought his way into the grotto. The Snake King ordered sons One, Two, Three, and Four to go out of the cave and meet the enemy. Each wielding a weapon, they came out attacking. How could they be any match for Zunli with his formidable spirit sword? He killed all four of the sons. A scout flew into the cave to report. When the Snake King heard the report, he was so shocked that his soul fled his body. He had no alternative but to order his four sons Five, Six, Seven, and Eight to go meet the enemy. The four sons received the order and came out fighting, and, again, they were all killed by Zunli. The Python Celestial King had lost eight sons one after the other, as well as four generals. He wept bitterly, recognizing that the situation was critical. He had no choice but to give up Xianniang and escape from the back of the grotto.

Liu Xianniang saw that her husband had fled. Eight of her sons had been killed, and only the three—Nine, Ten, and Eleven, who were very young—remained. Madame Liu put one on her back, and took the other two by the hand. The four of them, mother and sons, came out from the cave and knelt on the ground. Liu Zunli was about to fight his way into the cave, when he recognized his sister kneeling on the ground. He rushed to help her to her feet and asked, "Where did the demon king go? I must kill him."

Xianniang replied, "My husband escaped. I don't know in what direction he went. Older brother, please calm your anger for a moment. Look at my face! Spare him!"

Liu Zunli saw the two children at his sister's side and the one on her back. He asked his sister, "Who are they?"

Xianniang replied, "From the time you went away to cultivate the Way, it has been more than twenty years. I was carried into the grotto by the Snake King, and we became husband and wife. Altogether we had eleven children. When the cave was destroyed, eight of them were killed by you, so that only these three remain. They are very young, and I hope you will take pity on them. Remember our affection as brother and sister. Don't harm them!"

When Zunli heard this, he sheathed his sword. He took his sister by the arm and they returned home. The Python Celestial King had been attacked by Zunli, who had killed eight of his sons, one after the other, and he didn't know what had happened to his wife. Luckily, before Zunli had entered the grotto, the Snake King had run for his life, fleeing deep into the mountains to hide.

Liu Xianniang and her three sons returned home with her elder brother. When she saw her father, she burst out crying and said, "I am an unworthy daughter. It's been more than twenty years since I was carried off by the Snake King to be his wife. Altogether I gave birth to eleven grandsons. I was unable to serve you at home, as I was far away from you. I am very unfilial. Now elder brother has killed them. One by one he killed eight of his nephews, leaving only these three. I hope you, Father, will pardon us. Please remember the affection between father and daughter."

When Mr. Liu heard this, he was astounded. Liu Zunli was still in the mountains searching for the Snake King with sword in hand, when suddenly he saw a mountain with demon vapor soaring up into the sky. He hurried to the mountain, and there he saw a huge python. It was none other than his enemy! He pressed down the head of his cloud and advanced with raised sword to strike. Just at that moment, from the sky a voice shouted, "Zunli, don't strike! A jade decree has come down. Hurry and take the decree."

Zunli raised his head and looked up. It was none other than Great Silver Star (Planet Venus), holding the jade decree with both hands. Facing him, Liu Zunli knelt to receive it. The python also came forward and knelt to receive the decree. That is because, although that snake was a kind of worm, he had already practiced Daoist rules for more than a thousand years. Now he had suddenly suffered the calamity of this crushing defeat. For this reason, the Jade Emperor ordered Great Silver Star to bring the decree. He lowered the head of his cloud and shouted to Liu Zunli to listen to the decree. Liu Zunli responded with a shout. Great Silver Star opened the proclamation and read the jade decree.

It said, "Now there is a python that, although he belongs to the category of worm, still knows how to respect the Jade Emperor. Since I have bestowed a jade seal on the python's head, he cannot suffer the disaster of the Five Thunders. I do not permit any spirit sword to kill him. Moreover, he has practiced rigorous Daoist rules for more than a thousand years, has never hurt any living being and is without malice. How could I think of him

without affection? Madame Liu and he were predestined from a previous existence. This was not an accidental occurrence. It is fitting that they should have become husband and wife and thereby completed the affection established in a previous life. Liu Zunli little by little will eliminate demons from the world. I will wait until Liu Zunli's work is complete and then permit him to return to the heavenly court, where I will employ him. Let him obey this. Be reverent and respectful."

When Great Silver Star finished reading the proclamation, riding on a cloud he left to report back on the reading of the decree. When the Python King heard that the jade decree exempted him from punishment, he shook his head and wriggled his tail. He went into the remote mountains and the farthest valleys and the quietest places to cultivate and refine himself. Zunli also returned home. We won't speak of this any further.

Now we will return to Xianniang, who was separated from the snake. Rescued by her brother, she had returned home. She kept and raised the sons she had brought back, but she was not spared the gossiping behind her back of the neighbors and relatives in the village, who all said that these sons were demons. When Xianniang heard this, she felt ashamed. One night she was so distraught from loss of face that she hanged herself. Later the Jade Emperor conferred on her the title of Smallpox Mother, and, with Chen Jinggu, she is in charge of diseases of childhood. Liu Xianniang expressed her gratitude.¹¹

The following year, because in the old well of Kaiyuan Temple the water swelled to waves and billows with a sound like tremendous thunder, the villagers nearby heard it, and there wasn't one who wasn't astonished. They thought it was surely the demon snake haunting the well, and they were terrified that it would emerge. Everyone was talking about it. They took an iron Buddha from inside the temple and moved it to in front of the well, and only then did the sound stop. Today it is called Iron Buddha Well and is located at Zhi Mountain.¹² It is said that the snake monster has been hiding down there for five hundred years, from the Changxing reign period of the Later Tang to the fourth year of the Zhengtong reign period of the Ming. Altogether that adds up to five hundred years.¹³

Great Nurtress Chen's relics, magic writings, and precious sword are still in Gutian. There are so many other traces of her evident efficacy that it's impossible to recount them in full. Of all of these traces the most remarkable is the miracle of the mother ducks. Under Nantai Great Bridge is the Great

River, which goes straight to the foot of Gu Mountain. There were no islets or dry spots when Great Nurturess Chen took her reed mat and floated it on the water. When she prayed for rain and performed magic, the demons figured they could pull the mat under the water. Perfected Lord Xu, the magic master, performed magic and sent three mother ducks into the water to grasp three corners of the mat in their mouths, so that the uncanny magic of the demons could not pull it under. Great Nurturess Chen pursued and caught the demon and didn't return, leaving her magic mat on the river. It was not washed away, but turned into a floating islet, which, like the mat, has the shape of one corner under water. It is called Mother Duck Islet. Later, it gradually grew through deposits to assume its present shape, and has now reached several *li* in length. The inhabitants alternate rice and wheat in the fields, and the floating islet has become a sizable town. Later, people wrote a poem as testimony to this. The poem says:

In ancient times when praying for rain the mat was left behind.

It turned into Mother Duck Islet in the famous river.

The demon surrendered and will re-emerge only with difficulty.

There is no need to pray for the sweet and seasonal rain.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

For Chinese character equivalents of other romanized terms, see the Glossary of Chinese Characters.

- An Tong** 安童 servant in the Chen household
- Aoguang/Aolian** 敖廣/敖蓮 Dragon King of the South Seas
- Bao Si** 褒姒 concubine of King You of Zhou
- Beiji Xuantian Shangdi** 北極玄天上帝 High God of the Dark Heaven of the Northern Bourne
- Bi Gan** 比干 loyal minister and uncle of Shang king Zhou Xin, who carved open his chest to see if his heart was distinctive
- Bo Yi** 伯夷 eldest son of King Wen of Zhou
- Cai Xiang** 菜襄 became Duanming Scholar Cai and the prefect who built Luoyang Bridge
- Cao Zijian** 曹子建 (192–232) celebrated poet of the late Han dynasty and the state of Wei in the Three Kingdoms period
- Chang E** 嫦娥 goddess of the moon
- Chen (Miss)** 陳 sworn sister of Chen Jinggu
- Chen Chang** 陳昌 Chen Jinggu's father
- Chen Danai** 陳大奶 Great Nurtress Chen, another title of Chen Jinggu
- Chen Jinfeng** 陳金鳳 maidservant of Wang Shenzhi's wife; became concubine of Wang Yanjun, who made her queen, then empress of Min, in 935
- Chen Jinggu** 陳靖姑 the protagonist of this story, who became the Lady of Linshui
- Chen Kuangsheng** 陳匡勝 older fellow clansman of Chen Jinfeng
- Chen Ping** 陳平 strategist who served as chancellor in the early Western Han dynasty
- Chen Ruren** 陳孺人 Chen Jinggu's title as Liu Qi's wife
- Chen Shouyuan** 陳守元 cousin of Chen Jinggu and Daoist master
- Cheng Bin** 程斌 military commissioner of Gongchen

Chongfu Linshui Furen 崇福臨水夫人
one of Chen Jinggu's titles

Chunjiao 春嬌 daughter of Wu Shan;
molested by the Ravine Demon

Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage 丹霞大聖
Danxia Dasheng

Danxia Dasheng 丹霞大聖 Cinnabar
Cloud Great Sage

Deng Ying 鄧英 protects children
at the Bridge of a Hundred
Flowers

Dragon King of the South Seas
敖廣/敖蓮 Aoguang/Aolian

Gao 高 of the Birthing Basin at the
Bridge of a Hundred Flowers

Gao Teng 高騰 an attendant gentleman
of the Ministry of Rites

Gao Ying 高英 daughter of Gao Teng
Ge (Madame) 葛 Chen Jinggu's
mother

Great Nurturess Chen 陳大奶
Chen Danai; one of Chen Jinggu's
titles

Great Protectors Wang and Yang
王楊二太保 Wang Yang er tai bao;
leaders of the five divisions of the
spirit soldiers

Guan Gong 關公 a general in the Three
Kingdoms period

Guanyin 觀音 Chinese goddess
of mercy

Gui Lang 歸郎 another name for
Gui Shouming

Gui Shouming 歸守明 responsible for
the women's quarters; lover of Chen
Jinfeng and the White Snake

He (Madame) 何 Jiang Shanyu's
mother

**High God of the Dark Heaven of the
Northern Bourne** 北極玄天上帝
Beiji Xuantian Shangdi

Hong 洪 minister of education

Huang 黃 one of the two guardian
generals of Mount Lü

Huiji jingang 穢跡金剛 "Vajra being of
impure traces"

Jiang Hudan 江虎但 another name for
Jiang Shanyu

Jiang Hupo 江虎婆 another name for
Jiang Shanyu

Jiang Qing 江清 father of Jiang Shanyu

Jiang Shanyu 江山育 Jiang Mountain
Birth, one of Chen Jinggu's sworn
sisters

Kui Ge 魁哥 another name for the
Ravine Demon

Laozi 老子 Daoist divinity
periodically incarnated in the
world

Li (Aunt) 李 a member of Chen
Kuangsheng's household

Li (Madame) 李 mother of Liu Qi

Li Sanjie 李三姐 one of Chen Jinggu's
sworn sisters

Li Sanniang 李三娘 alternative name
for Li Sanjie

Li Shan Laomu 梨山老母 "Old
Mother of Pear Mountain," teacher
of Jiang Shanyu

Li Tong 李侗 (1093–1163), called Great
Master Li Tongren 李童仁宗師 in
chapter 1

Li Wu 李五 criminal who crossed
Luoyang Bridge

Li Xin 李信 Palace Army official

Liang Hao 梁灝 scholar under whose
fingernail Pure Yang Lü hid

Liangnü 良女 or **Longnü** 龍女 grand-
daughter of the Dragon King, acolyte
of Guanyin

Lin (Madame) 林 Yang Shichang's
mother

- Lin Bashu** 林八叔 go-between
for Chen Jinggu and Liu Qi's
marriage
- Lin Chen** 林忱 father of Lin Jiuniang
- Lin Jiuniang** 林九娘 one of Chen
Jinggu's sworn sisters
- Lingtong Sansheren** 靈通三舍人 temple
name of Chen Jinggu's son
- Linshui Furen** 臨水夫人 Lady of
Linshui; title of Chen Jinggu
- Liu Bang** 劉邦 founder of the Han
dynasty
- Liu Cong** 劉聰 Chen Jinggu's son
- Liu Qi** 劉杞 Chen Jinggu's husband
- Liu Shi** 劉氏 wicked principal wife of
Wang Yanbin
- Liu Tong** 劉通 Liu Qi's father and
Jinggu's father-in-law
- Liu Xianniang** 劉仙娘 wife of Python
Celestial Spirit King
- Liu Yong** 劉邕 poet famous for
dissipation
- Liu Yuan** 柳源 companion of Zhang
Sha at Mount Lü
- Liu Yuanfu** 劉元富 commander in chief
of Min's army
- Liu Zunli** 劉遵禮 cultivated the Way in
the mountains; brother of Liu
Xianniang
- Lü Chunyang** 呂純陽 another name for
Lü Dongbin
- Lü Dongbin** 呂洞賓 famous
Daoist master of the Pure
Yang tradition
- Ma (Miss)** 馬 sworn sister of Chen
Jinggu
- Ma Lang fu** 馬郎婦 wife of Mr. Ma,
avatar of Guanyin
- Ma Yuanshuai** 馬元帥 Marshal Ma
- Mang Tian Shen Wang** 蟒天神王
Python Celestial Spirit King
- Meng Wei** 孟威 regional military
commissioner of Yanhe
- Mengyu** 夢餘 "Dream Remnant," a
perfected butterfly spirit
- Mo Shuqi** 磨叔淇 infamous for eating
the excretions of little boys
- Nanhai Guanyin** 南海觀音 another
name for Guanyin
- Nanhai Guanyin Dashi Cihang Pudu**
Tianzun 南海觀音大士慈航普渡天尊
Great Being Guanyin of the South
Sea, the Compassionate Sailing
Universal Savior Celestial Worthy
- Old Mr. Wang** 老汪 father of the young
man who disappeared on the day of
his wedding
- Ou (Miss)** 歐 sworn sister of Chen
Jinggu
- Pan An** 潘安 courtesy name of Pan Yue
岳, a poet renowned for his good
looks
- Perfected Lord Xu** 許真君 Chen
Jinggu's teacher
- Ping Wang** 平王 King Ping of Warring
States Chu
- Pure Yang Lü** 呂純陽 Lü Chunyang
- Python Celestial Spirit King** 蟒天神王
Mang Tian Shen Wang
- Qitian Dasheng** 齊天大聖 Sun
Wukong, hero of *Journey to
the West*
- Qiu (Madame)** 邱 wife of Wu Shan
- Ravine Demon** 張坑鬼 Zhangkeng Gui
- Rock Press Women** 石夾夫人 Shijia
furen, the sworn sisters of Chen
Jinggu
- Ruan (Miss)** 阮 sworn sister of Chen
Jinggu
- Shancai** 善才 Sudhanakumara, acolyte
of Guanyin

- Shen (Madame)** 沈 wife of Yang Shichang
- Sheng Tao** 盛韜 young actor carried off by the White Snake; became assistant to Chen Shouyuan, Daoist master at the court
- Shi Zhen** 石震 father of the Rock Press Women
- Song (Madame)** 宋 wife of Xue Wenjie
- Song Yu** 宋玉 famous poet of the Warring States period
- Sun Wukong** 孫悟空 hero of *Journey to the West*
- Tang Sai'er** 唐賽兒 woman White Lotus rebel general
- Teng (Prince)** 騰 Tang prince whose painting of a butterfly came to life
- Ucchusma** *see* Huiji jingang
- Wang Cheng Xiao'er** 王成小二 *see* Wang Xiao'er
- Wang Jin** 汪金 father of dead woman whose soul is retrieved and inserted in Madame Shen's body
- Wang Jipeng** 王繼鵬 son of Wang Yanjun
- Wang Jitu** 王繼圖 son of Wang Yanhan (here called Yanshu); led a rebellion and was executed
- Wang Jixiong** 王繼雄 son of Wang Yanbing and prefect of Jianzhou
- Wang Lian** 王憐 new name adopted by Wang Yanjun, according to the text
- Wang Lin** 王璘 new name adopted by Wang Yanbin, according to the histories
- Wang Mojie** 王摩詰 drew water that produced the sound of the tide
- Wang Renda** 王仁達 turreted boat commander
- Wang Shengui** 王審邽 brother of Wang Shenzhi
- Wang Shenzhi** 王審知 revered ruler of Min
- Wang Wei** 王維 famous Tang poet-painter
- Wang Xiao'er** 王小二 vegetable seller nicknamed Elder Brother Scallion; transformed into Liu Qi, Jinggu's future husband
- Wang Yanbin** 王延彬 second son of Wang Shenzhi and younger brother of Wang Yanshu; prefect of Quanzhou Prefecture in Fujian; actually the son of Wang Shengui
- Wang Yanbing** 王延稟 eldest adopted son of Wang Shenzhi
- Wang Yanhan** 王延翰 actual name of Wang Yanshu; eldest son of Wang Shenzhi
- Wang Yanjun** 王延鈞 second son of Wang Shenzhi
- Wang Yanshu** 王延翰 eldest son of Wang Shenzhi; arrogant and cruel, he proclaimed himself king of Min against the emperor's wish; his name was actually Yanhan
- Wang Yanzheng** 王延政 second son of Wang Shenzhi
- Wang Zhaojun** 王昭君 famous beauty of the Han dynasty sent to marry the chief of the Xiongnu
- Wang Zhixian** 王至賢 a general in the army of Min
- Wei Huacun** 魏華存 matriarch of Mount Mao
- Wen** 濫 (name) a libationer
- Wen Chang** 文昌 god of literature
- Wen Ji** 文姬 Xiang Yu's concubine
- Wu Shan** 吳善 father of Chunjiao, who was molested by the Ravine Demon

- Wu Yaoqin** 吳瑤琴 Minister of Education Hong's granddaughter
- Wu Zui** 吳最 court calligrapher
- Xi Shi** 西施 one of the four beauties of ancient China
- Xi Wangmu** 西王母 Queen Mother of the West
- Xiang Yu** 項羽 hegemon king of Chu
- Xie Kai** 謝開 a woodcutter
- Xu (Miss)** 許 sworn sister of Chen Jinggu
- Xu Jiulang** 許九郎 Xu Zhenjun
- Xu Sun** 許遜 Xu Zhenjun
- Xu Xiake** 徐霞客 famous Ming dynasty traveler
- Xu Zhenjun** 許真君 master of Mount Lü and teacher of Chen Jinggu
- Xuanwu** 玄武 Dark Warrior
- Xue Wenjie** 薛文傑 cruel minister of Wang Lian, the ruler of Min
- Yan (Madame)** 岩 mother of Rock Press Women
- Yan (Madame)** 閻 wet nurse
- Yang** 楊 one of the two guardian generals of Mount Lü
- Yang Bao** 楊寶 a scholar of the Han who rescued a yellow bird
- Yang Chun** 楊春 brother of young woman who is sexually possessed by the Ravine Demon
- Yang Shichang** 楊世昌 his wife and home were usurped by the Ravine Demon
- Yang Zihua** 楊子華 drew a horse that neighed
- Yao (Madame)** 姚 wife of Yang Chun, whose sister was sexually vampirized by the Ravine Demon
- Yaoqin** 瑤琴 daughter of Wu Taishou, the son-in-law of Minister of Education Hong
- Yuan Gao** 袁誥 older clansman of Yuan Guangzhi
- Yuan Guangzhi** 袁廣智 studied the deviant arts at Mount Mao; led rebellion
- Yuan Ying** 元嬰 prince of Teng
- Yunchang** 雲長 alternative name for Guan Gong
- Zeng (Miss)** 曾 sworn sister of Chen Jinggu
- Zhang Da** 張達 capital security officer
- Zhang Daoling** 張道陵 Celestial Master
- Zhang Liang** 張良 brilliant tactician who helped to found the Han dynasty
- Zhang Ren** 張任 Wang Yanbing's messenger
- Zhang Sha** 張沙 student from Fuqing who studied at Mount Lü
- Zhang You** 張繇 drew a dragon that could fly
- Zhangkeng Gui** 張坑鬼 Ravine Demon
- Zhao Feiyan** 趙飛燕 one of the beauties of ancient China
- Zhaohui Chongfu Linshui Furen** 召慧崇福臨水夫人 one of Chen Jinggu's titles, Exalted and Blessed Lady of Linshui Palace Who Illuminates and Grants Favors
- Zhaojun** 昭君 one of the four beauties of ancient China
- Zhen Feng** 真封 censor
- Zhenwu** 真武 True Warrior
- Zhong Kui** 鍾馗 famous queller of demons
- Zhou Yuan** 鄒淵 vice minister of the Military Bureau
- Zhu Wen** 朱溫 Tang dynasty man whose father usurped his wife

Zhu Wenzheng 朱文正 a general in the
army of Min

Zhu Xi 朱熹 leading Neo-Confucian
philosopher

Zhuangzi 莊子 celebrated, eccentric
Warring States philosopher

Zhuge Kongming 諸葛孔明 prime
minister noted for great wisdom

during the Three Kingdoms
period

Zikong 自空 name given to Li
Shan Laomu, “the Old Mother
of Mt. Li”

Zou (Miss) 鄒 daughter of Zou Huai

Zou Huai 鄒淮 secretary of the Bureau
of Military Affairs

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

See also Dramatis Personae for the names of characters in the novel.

Anmin Xiang 安民巷

Antai (Bridge) 安太

bagua 八卦

Bai Zhen Yang 敗陣洋

Banlingshi 半嶺石

Baohuang 寶皇

baojuan 寶卷

Baotou Shan 豹頭山

Beidou 北斗

Bian Cheng 邊城

bigu 避穀

Bosi 泊泗

bugang 步罡

Cai Duan zao Luoyang qiao ge 菜端造

洛陽橋歌

Cang Shan 倉山

chan 禪

Changchun (Palace) 長春

Changfu 長附

Changle 長樂

Changxing 長興

Chen Jinggu wenhua yanjiu

陳靖姑文化研究

Chen Shisi qizhuan 陳十四奇傳

Chenghuang Shen 城隍神

Chengmo 承謨

Chi Tu 赤兔

Chidian 墀殿

Chongfu Linshui Furen

崇福臨水夫人

Chuhui Jingang 除穢金剛

chunyang 純陽

Ciji 慈濟

cu 醋

Dafayuan 大法院

Daming 大明

dan 旦 (opera role)

dan 担=石 (unit of measure)

daochang 道場

daoguan 道官

daoshi 道士

daoshi wuzhe 道士巫者

dian 癲

Diguan 地官

ding 丁

Dizhi 地支

Dongdu 東都

Donghua (Palace) 東華

Dongtian 洞天

Duanming Xueshi 端明學士

dunjia 遁甲

fa 法

fabao 法寶

Fan Chuan Pu 泛船浦

fashi 法師

feng 風

Fengdu 豐都

Fenggang 鳳崗

Fozu 佛祖

fu 符

Fu Xi 伏羲

Fuqing 福清

Fuxing Quantan 福興泉潭

Fuzhou 福州

Gaixia 垓下

gang 罡

Gaogai (Mt.) 高蓋

gegu 割股

gen 艮

Goulong (Terrace) 鉤龍

guan 關

Guanxiapu 館霞蒲

guben tongsu xiaoshuo 古本通
俗小說

gui lan 桂蘭

Guojie (Mt.) 過界

Gutian 古田

Haijiu (Peak) 海鳩

Haiyou ji 海遊記

Han Shu 漢書

Hangzhou 杭州

heigui 黑龜

Hetu 河圖

Houpu 後浦

Houtian 後天

Hu 胡

Huang Chao 黃巢

huangyan 黃燭

huanhun 還魂

Huayang Dong 華陽洞

hufashen 護法神

hui 回

huiguan 會館

huiyan 慧眼

hun 魂

jia 甲

Jiacheng 夾城

Jiangnan 江南

Jiangpu Hezhou 江浦河州

Jiangxin 江心

Jianzhou 建州

jiao 醮

jidian 祭典

jiejie 節結

Jijun zhi 稽郡誌

Jile shijie 極樂世界

Jin Dun Yang 金墩洋

Jin Jiang 晉江

Jinfeng 金鳳

Jinfeng jiu kan qin 金鳳就堪親

jing 驚

jingang yan 金剛眼

Jingtu 淨土

Jinjiang 錦江

jinshi 進士

Jiugao 九高

Jiuxian Shan 九仙山

juan 卷

Kaiyuan (Temple) 開元

keju 科舉

kuang 狂

kuilei shi 傀儡師

Kuixing 魁星

kun 坤

Leifeng baojuan 雷峰寶卷

li 里

Lian (River) 連

Liandu 鍊度

liang 兩

Lianjiang Zhou 連江州

Liaoning 遼寧

- Lingbao** 靈寶
lingpai 令牌
Lingxiao Pan 凌霄畔
Lingxiao Taipan 凌霄台畔
Linshui 臨水
Linshui Gong 臨水宮
Linshui pingyao 臨水平妖
Liufan 留飯
Liyuan zhengjiao shenxi 梨園正教神戲
Longhu Shan 龍虎山
Longqi 龍啟
Longtan (Gully) 龍潭
Longtan Jiao 龍潭角
Longting 龍亭
Lü (Mt.) 閩
Luocheng 羅城
Luoqie (Mt.) 落伽
Luoshu 洛書
Luoyang 洛陽
Luoyuan 羅源
Lüshan Dafayuan 閩山大法院
- manshi fa** 蛮師法
manyue 滿月
Mao (Mt.) 茅
Min 閩
Min zaji 閩雜記
Mindu bieji 閩都別記
mingmo 命魔
Mingwei (Hall) 明威
Minhou 閩後
Minqing 閩清
Mishu 密術
- Nainiang zhuan** 奶娘傳
Nanchang 南昌
Nanhai Guanyin quan zhuan 南海觀音全傳
Nanke meng 南柯夢
Nantai 南台
Nantai Yancang 鹽倉
niejue 捏訣
Ningde 寧德
Nüren jing 女人經
- Penglai** 蓬萊
Pingyuantai 平遠台
po 魄
po jun 破軍
Poguan 婆官
Pojie 婆姐
pudu 普渡
Putuo (Mt.) 普陀
- qi** 氣
Qi Shan 旗山
qian 千 (one thousand)
qian 乾 (male)
Qichuan (Well) 七穿
Qifu 企伏
Qilin 麒麟
qing 青
Qisheng (Gate) 啟聖
Qu Shan 曲山
Quanzhen 全真
Quanzhou 泉州
- Ruanchen** 阮沉
- San Shi Nian Yi Kai** 三十年一開
sanfang qixiang 三坊七巷
sanjie 三界
Sannai 三奶
Sannai jing 三奶經
Sanshan 三山
Sansheng 三聖
Sha Ren Qiao 殺人橋 (Massacred Soldiers Bridge)
Sha Ren Qiao 砂仁橋 (Sand Benevolence Bridge)
Shangqing 上清
shanxiao 山魃
Shanyu 山育 (Mountain Birth)
shanyu 單于 (Xiongnu ruler)
shi 十
shi shang 十傷
Shifu 師父
shigong 師公
shijiao 師醮

shoujing 收驚 (to recover a soul lost through fright)

shoujing 受驚 (to suffer a fright)

Shuiguan 水官

Shuikou 水口

Shunyi furen 順意夫人

Sihai Longjun 四海龍君

Sizhou 泗州

Su He 蘇河

Suzhou 蘇州

Tai (River) 台

taidu 胎毒

Taiji 太極

taixi 胎吸

Tianfei niangma zhuan 天妃娘媽傳

Tiangan 天干

Tianguan 天官

tianjing 天井

tianluo 天羅 (heavenly web)

tianluo 田螺=田螺 (the text uses the character 螺, almost certainly a mistake for the homophone 螺)

tianmu 天目

Tianxin Zhengfa 天心正法

Tingzhou 汀州

tishen 替身

tudi 徒弟

tudi gong 土地公

tudi zhenguan 土地真官

tulü 禿驢

tuo qi taiyun 脫其胎孕

tuoshen 脫身

tuotai 脫胎

Wan'an (Bridge) 萬安

Wangbeitai (Peak) 望北台

wei 位

Wei Wu 威武

Wen Qu (Star) 文曲

wu 巫 (shaman)

wu 武 (warrior)

Wu Lei 五雷

Wulong Jiang 烏龍江

Wushi Shan 烏石山

Wuxian Lingguan 五顯靈官

Xi Hu 西湖

xia de hai 下得海 (to go under the sea)

Xia Dehai 夏德海 (Sea of Virtue Xia, a name)

Xiadu 下渡

Xiangzhuweng 祥朱翁

Xiantian 先天

xiaoshuo 小說

Xihe 西河

xing beidou 行北斗

xitong 喜桶

Xiucai 秀才

Xu Xiake youji 徐霞客遊記

Xue Lao (Peak) 薛老

xun 巽

yamen 衙門

yang 陽

Yangping 洋坪

yangsheng 養生

Yangzhou 揚州

Yanjian Shaoding 延建邵訂

Yi 易

Yijing 易經

yin 陰

yinbing 隱兵

yingxiong shenming 英雄神明

Yiwu Lü Shan 醫巫閭山

you 酉

Youdu 幽都

Yu Shan 玉山

Yuanfu Gong Huayang Dong 元符宮華陽洞

Yuecheng 月城

Yuelong (Palace) 躍龍

Yulanpen 孟蘭盆

Yulin shunyi dutuo chan ruozhenjing 毓麟順懿度脫產若真經

zhang 丈 (unit of measure)

zhang 章 (petition)

Zhangkeng Shan 張坑山

Zhangzhou 漳州

Zhaohui Chongfu Linshui Furen 召慧
崇福臨水夫人

Zhengyi 正一

zhenren 真人

Zhi (Mt.) 芝

zhou 咒

Zhou Yi 周易

zhu 祝

zhuan xiang 篆象

Ziwei 紫微

Zongfu 宗福

zongshi 宗師

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This is the opinion of Xu (1993) and Lin and Peng (1993). The latter work points out that some of the prefectures mentioned here did not exist before the Qing dynasty. It is also the interpretation of the editors of the proceedings of the conference Chen Jinggu Wenhua Yanjiu held in Fuzhou in 1993; see Zhu, Zhang, and Weng (1993). There is also a Xiamen Huiwen Tang edition, titled *Linshui pingyao zhi*.
- 2 Min was one of the kingdoms of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–60), immediately following the Tang. See Schafer (1954) and Ouyang (2004, 573–84).
- 3 See Baptandier (2008a) and Chen (2017, 9n3). She continued to receive newer and higher titles over the course of the centuries.
- 4 Wan'an Bridge was first built around 820. It was rebuilt between 1054 and 1060 by the prefect Cai Xiang (1012–67) over the Pu River, where it exits Quanzhou in Fujian. See *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1967), 26:8 and 10:8. The name Luoyang Bridge, which figures throughout the text, was bestowed by Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty (846–59), to whom the beauty of the countryside recalled the town of the same name.
- 5 This voyage to Mount Lü, a mythic site submerged in the Min River, could be regarded as a shamanic journey. However, the places through which it passes can still be identified on the island of Nantai in Fuzhou, where they form a map of sacred geography. See Li (1998) and Xie and Zhang (1999). The theme of marriage resistance figures in several novelistic accounts of the careers of goddesses.

- 6 *Gegu*—the act of slicing from the thigh or arm a piece of flesh that is applied or fed to an ill relative—is both a Buddhist and Confucian practice, based on the ideal of filial piety. Guanyin herself carried out such an act of devotion on behalf of her father. See Yü (2001, 317, 338–47).
- 7 On *liandu*, see Boltz (1987, 27, 37).
- 8 Chen Shouyuan was historically an eminent Daoist priest of the Zhengyi ritual tradition who served at the court of the king of Min between 931 and 935. See Schafer (1954, 96–99), Hu (1985, 110), and Ouyang (2004, 576).
- 9 See Andersen (1989–90). Dancing on the Dipper (*bugang*) magically invoked on a mat floating on the water suggests the ritual that the Dan people of Fujian call the “surging ocean” (*yangping*) of the “barbarian masters” (*manshi fa*). See Chen (2017).
- 10 Mummification is not unusual, particularly in Chan Buddhism. See Faure (1991, 150) and Demiéville ([1965] 1989). Princess Miaoshan/Guanyin is also said to have been mummified.
- 11 Baptandier (2001).
- 12 See Ye and Zheng (2010). The cult of Chen Jinggu was said to have been initiated in 792, but it was officially registered under the Southern Song (Chunyou reign period, 1241–52). It is said that every year in this grotto a snake demon had demanded the offering of two children, until Chen Jinggu eliminated the monster. See Wang and Li (1989), Baptandier (2008a), and Chen (2017, 21).
- 13 See Cass (1999, 65–85), Cahill (2006), Despeux (1990), and Despeux and Kohn (2003). See also Gherchanoc et al. ([2002] 2006, 243–44): “In the indispensable emancipation from the hold of the maternal body, it is the feminine that remains most problematic to conceive of or to invent, for men and women alike.”
- 14 On versions of the White Snake’s myths, see Idema (2009), Pimpanneau (1965), and Feng (1994).
- 15 See Ye and Wu (1997) and Baptandier (2008b).
- 16 See Ye and Lagerwey (2007), Davis (2001), and Meulenbeld (2015, 2018). See also Ye (1994).
- 17 See Topley (1974).
- 18 See Topley (1954, 1975).
- 19 Jiang Hupo’s teacher, the Old Mother of Mount Li, belonged to the line of transmission of female alchemy. She was considered to be a specialist in embryonic respiration (*taixi*). See Despeux (1990, 104–5, 172) and Zhang and Yan (1993). The *Yunji qiqian*, juan 77, testifies to the existence of her recipe for achieving immortality. See Hu (1985, 912).
- 20 These include the fox demon succubus slain by Chen Jinggu in the guise of the dharma-protecting Ucchusma, the Clam Fiend that posed as the gateway to paradise, and the Spider Fiend featured on this book’s cover. On Ucchusma, see Davis (2001, 150–51). On fox demons, see Levi (1984) and Huntington (2003).
- 21 See Zhu, Zhang, and Weng (1993), Huang (1993), Zhuang ([1989] 1993), and Boltz (1993).

- 22 The rituals of the Three Ladies sect known as the “Five Thunders” invoke the spirit soldiers of the Five Camps, which correspond to the five directions, the five elements, and the five bodily organs. See Strickmann (1975; 1996, 127–63), Despeux (2012), and Schipper (1985).
- 23 On the historical Chen Shouyuan, see Schafer (1954, 47, 96–99, 108). On the Heart of Heaven tradition and its context, see Davis (2001, 77) and Ouyang (2004, 576, 580).
- 24 On the “sinister way,” see Saso ([1978] 1990). This “tradition of Mount Mao” is not the classic tradition of Shangqing Daoism, but its modern reinterpretation, which incorporates the cults of spirit mediums. See Berezkin and Goossaert (2012).
- 25 See Chen (2017, 71–72).
- 26 See Baptandier (2016).
- 27 Cited by Yü (2001, 467): “Know that the room of a filial wife is no different from a Buddhist place of truth [*daochang*]. Although there are neither wooden fish nor bells and cymbals, the Buddha will listen to the prayer of a filial woman. . . . If you serve your parents and parents-in-law sincerely, this is far superior to cultivating the elixir in vain.”
- 28 The name Great Ravine itself also indicates the original chaos, the North, and the Northern Dipper. See Schipper (1978, 367n3).
- 29 See Ye and Wu (1997), Baptandier (1996; 2008b), and Robinet ([1979] 1995, 215–16).
- 30 See Baptandier (2008a, 6). Zhang Yining (1301–70)—a native of Gutian district in Fujian, a scholar, and an official during the Yuan dynasty (1277–1367)—was also a celebrated statesman at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). See “Memorial on the Shunyi Temple” (Gutian xian Linshui Shunyi Miaoji), reproduced in Baptandier (2008a, 6–8).
- 31 See Ye and Zheng (2010) and Lemoine and Lemaire (2016).
- 32 See Wugenzi (2000) and Chen (2017). On the Nuo, see Wang (1993).
- 33 See Ye (1983) and Zeng, Chen, and She (1987, chaps. 21–86).
- 34 See Shi (1985).
- 35 See Ye (1995, 1996), Wu and Ye (1997), and Baptandier (2002, 2008b).
- 36 See Baptandier (2008a, 6–10).
- 37 See Lemaire and Lemoine (2016).

CHAPTER 1: WANG YANBIN BUILDS LUOYANG BRIDGE

- 1 A *li* is a unit of linear measure, about one-third of a mile.
- 2 This episode is part of the legend of the True Warrior (Zhenwu) who ultimately became High God of the Dark Heaven (Xuantian Shangdi) by the grace of Guanyin.
- 3 Guanyin of the South Sea (Nanhai Guanyin) is one of the manifestations of this divinity, a Chinese transformation of Avalokitesvara. Her paradise is Putuo Mountain (Zhejiang). The full name is Putuoloujia, a Chinese substitute for the

- Potalaka in Lhasa. The Purple Bamboo Grove (Zizhu Lin) is one of her sacred sites.
- 4 The “eye of wisdom” (*huiyan*), or “celestial eye” (*tianmu*); in tantric Buddhism, Guanyin receives the secret name of “eye of vajra” (*jingang yan*).
 - 5 Appearing on a boat is a classic motif of the Daoist aspect of Great Being Guanyin of the South Sea, the Compassionate Sailing Universal Savior Celestial Worthy (Nanhai Guanyin Dashi Cihang Pudu Tianzun), who causes souls of the elect to enter the Western Paradise and who also gives instructions on internal alchemy.
 - 6 This is the motif of Guanyin as “the wife of Mr. Ma” (*Ma Lang fu*).
 - 7 Lü Dongbin is a famous Daoist venerated as one of the Eight Immortals. He is known as the master of the Daoist tradition called Pure Yang (Chunyang), as well as being a master of internal alchemy. Mount Penglai is the place where the Eight Immortals held their banquet.
 - 8 This refers to the worship of ancestors, which required a son to continue it.
 - 9 Luoqie Mountain is another name for Putuo Mountain. This is Potalaka.
 - 10 Liang Hao (963–1004) succeeded in passing the imperial examinations only at the age of eighty-two.
 - 11 Lü Dongbin is said to have succeeded in the imperial examination in 825, but quickly decided to abandon his position in order to retire to the mountains of Zhongnan, near Xi’an, in Shaanxi.
 - 12 Wang Yanbin died in 931. Renzong of the Song ruled from 1054 to 1060.
 - 13 A tael of silver (*liang*) was generally around fifty grams.
 - 14 This puzzle is deciphered according to the rules of glyptomancy.
 - 15 The village of Chidian is located on the outskirts of the town of Quanzhou.
 - 16 The choice of this season was linked to cosmological considerations: executions could only take place in winter, the season when reproductive energy was at its lowest.
 - 17 The imperial examinations (*keju*) were an essential part of the Chinese government administration from their introduction in the Tang dynasty (618–906) until they were abolished during Qing attempts at modernization in 1905.
 - 18 Relations between affines are hedged about with strong avoidance conventions. Marriage negotiations are dangerous and therefore conducted at arm’s length through indispensable go-betweens.
 - 19 Neo-Confucian master Li Tong (1093–1163) was the teacher of Zhu Xi (1130–1200).
 - 20 “Cultivated Talent” (*Xiucai*) was a title bestowed on graduates of the examinations in the systems created during the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) periods.
 - 21 This refers to examining the “eight characters of birth,” four two-character compounds formed by the cyclical Celestial and Terrestrial signs of the hour, the day, the month, and the year of birth.
 - 22 The district of Luoyuan is north of Fuzhou.

- 23 In Buddhism, Lokapala refers to the Four Heavenly Kings and to other protector spirits.
- 24 Shancai (Sudhanakumâra) and Liangnü (or Longnü), the granddaughter of the Dragon King, are Guanyin's two acolytes.

CHAPTER 2: CHEN JINGGU STUDIES MAGIC AT MOUNT LÜ

- 1 The true Mount Lü, the Portal Mountain, is in the province of Liaoning, in Dongbei (Manchuria), in the City of the North, Beizhen. The Dark Warrior (Xuanwu), "ancestor" of High God of the Dark Heavens (Xuantian Shangdi), rules over this place. Beizhen, located in Dongbei, is a major site of shamanism, as the full name of the mountain indicates: Mount Lü of the Shaman Healers (Yiwu Lü Shan).
- 2 Great Ravine Mountain (Zhangkeng Shan / Zhang'an Shan) is in the Cang Shan district of Fuzhou, and overlooks the Min.
- 3 Panther Head Mountain (Baotou Shan) is located on the site of Black Stone Mountain (Wushi Shan), in Fuzhou.
- 4 Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage (Danxia Dasheng) appears here as a double of Qitian Dasheng, hero of *Journey to the West*, in which Panther Head Mountain also figures.
- 5 When refined nine times, cinnabar produced the elixir of immortality, which is pure yang.
- 6 Dragon Tiger Mountain (Longhu Shan) in Jiangxi is the high place of the Daoist tradition of the Celestial Masters, which was founded by Zhang Daoling in 142 CE.
- 7 This Dharma Jewel is the perfumed pearl presented to Guanyin by the Dragon King.
- 8 The hairpin was given to young girls at puberty.
- 9 Minqing is an administrative district under the jurisdiction of the town of Fuzhou.
- 10 The following itinerary can be traced to real places, most of which can be located today thanks to the preservation of their toponyms. All the places are found in the Nantai quarter of Fuzhou, in Cang Shan district, along the Min River, the course of which has changed since then (various small tributaries have disappeared over time). The place called Longtan Jiao is where today the temple Great Academy of the Ritual Arts of Lüshan (Lüshan Dafayuan) is located. Dragon Pool Ravine (Longtan Huo) is below Wangbeitai and the temple Lüshan Dafayuan.
- 11 Karma refers to one's destiny based on actions in prior existences.
- 12 Dragon River is a tributary of the Min.
- 13 Fuqing is a district located on the bay of the same name, to the south of Fuzhou.
- 14 The tradition of the Sacred Jewel (Lingbao), which dates to the fourth and fifth centuries, comes after that of the Celestial Masters, and established the essence of Daoist ritual. Dominated by the importance of the scriptures and the search for health, it was also influenced by Buddhism.

- 15 The Three Sages (Sansheng) were the Daoist triad, the Three Pure Ones.
- 16 A *dan* is a dry measure for grains, anywhere between 120 and 160 pounds.
- 17 The Dharma Gate gives access to “taking refuge in the Buddha.” Rice is considered to be the pure essence of life that is transmitted from generation to generation.
- 18 Manipulating the mortar and pestle is the art of the Five Thunders (Wu Lei). They symbolize the union of yin (the mortar) and yang (the pestle).
- 19 Mount Mao, near Nanjing, was the religious center of those devoted to the revelations made to Yang Xi between 364 and 370 by the “true beings” (*zhenren*), especially the Lady of the South Peak, Wei Huacun, who became the matriarch of the tradition of High Purity (Shangqing). Popular traditions derived from the “orthodox” Mount Mao since the Song commonly took this name for themselves.
- 20 Jiangnan is the part of China to the southeast of Nanjing.
- 21 This refers to a magic technique called *dunjia*, defined as “seizing the yin moment in order to hide in it [*dun*].” This method is based on the symbolism of the Five Elements.
- 22 The Gutian district is in the north of Fujian, upstream on the Min River.

CHAPTER 3: JIANG SHANYU RENOUNCES HER
SELFHOOD TO OBTAIN THE WAY

- 1 Xihe is southwest of Gulou, in Fuzhou.
- 2 The inner court is the private part of the house, which is reserved for women.
- 3 The age of a “full month” (*manyue*) is marked by a celebration of the same name, when the baby is named.
- 4 Sixteen years was the conventional age of nubility and marriage.
- 5 “Since we parted” probably refers to the miraculous birth of Jiang Hudan, later called Hupo.
- 6 These “poisonous” diseases come from the polarization of the relation between the mother (cold) and the baby (hot). The latter must expel the “poison of the womb” (*taidu*) in order to free itself from the maternal symbiosis.
- 7 Flag Mountain (Qi Shan) is in Minhou district, south of Nantai.
- 8 The crane is the mount of the immortals.
- 9 To be “terror-stricken” (*shoujing*) constitutes a permanent threat to the child. This pathological state described as “terror” (*jing*), in the case of children, is linked to the symptomatology of the “winds” (*feng*). It belongs to the semantic field of the strange, of agitated (*kuang*) or apathetic (*dian*) madness. If the child is actually “terror-stricken,” it will be necessary to “collect the terror” (*shoujing*) in order to enable the child to “recover its soul.” To “draw out poison” refers to the idea of “polarization disorders” between the mother (cold) and the child (hot).
- 10 Yangzhou is in Jiangsu.
- 11 Suzhou is in Jiangsu.
- 12 Each major guild had a local lodge (*huiguan*) in the big towns, which served as a meeting place, hotel, depot, and bank.

- 13 The Five Brilliant Spirit-Officials (Wuxian Lingguan) were originally demons of the wild (*shanxiao*). Then, under Daoist influence, they joined with Marshal Ma (Ma Yuanshuai) to become the enemies of such demons.
- 14 These magic instruments make up the “ritual treasure” (*fabao*) of a master of the Mount Lü sect.
- 15 These are the celestial army of the yin spirits led by the Generals of the Five Camps, which represent the cardinal directions and the center.

CHAPTER 4: CINNABAR CLOUD IS CAPTURED AND
CONVERTS TO BUDDHISM TO EARN GOOD KARMA

- 1 Five *li* was approximately 1.5 kilometers. Under the Song, some villages were originally kin groupings.
- 2 The talisman burned in front of the house was presumably addressed to the local earth god (*tudi gong*). These three divinities shared control of the local territory.
- 3 The earth gods are in charge of localities. They are at the bottom of the imperial order, like the district magistrates (*tudi zhenguan*).
- 4 The reference to “Madame Jiang” seems to be a mistake. It should probably be “Madame Lin.”
- 5 Time is calculated in periods of two hours; each period is associated with one of the Terrestrial Branches of the sexagesimal system.
- 6 The hand bears the twelve Terrestrial Branches of the sexagesimal cycle, usually located at the joints of the fingers.
- 7 We should note the similarity of these rituals to acupuncture. The sword dance is a dance on the stars of the Great Bear. It is also a “hunt for the soul,” a shamanic journey “through the roads and passes.”
- 8 The tablet (*lingpai*) for issuing the commands of a Daoist master is a seal stamped with the talismans of the Northern Dipper (Beidou), or of the Five Thunders.
- 9 In certain rites for health (Liandu), one traces a body’s silhouette, to which moxa is then applied.
- 10 Nine Immortals Mountain is another name for Yü Shan, in Fuzhou. The “Nine Immortals of the He clan transformed into carp” are said to have practiced asceticism for long life there, before flying to Shizhu Shan in Fuqing, where they became gods.

CHAPTER 5: AT LINGXIAO PAN THE ROCK PRESS
WOMEN ARE CAPTURED

- 1 Antai Bridge was just beyond the South Gate (Nanmen) of Fuzhou.
- 2 The sheets of paper serve to make petitions (*zhang*) and talismans (*fu*). They are also offering money.

- 3 Xi Shi (6th and 5th c. BCE) was one of the four great beauties of ancient China. Zhao Feiyan was one of another group of beauties, in the Han dynasty.
- 4 Bao Si, the concubine of King You of Zhou, was of a melancholy disposition, so King You offered a thousand ounces of gold to anyone who could make her laugh. Wang Zhaojun was given as a wife to Huhanye, ruler (*shanyu*) of the Xiongnu, by Emperor Yuan of the Han (r. 48–33 BCE).
- 5 Lingxiao Taipan is at Wushi Shan, in Fuzhou.
- 6 Pressing the pulses gives access to all the organs of the body for diagnosis, or allows the taking possession of the body if one is a ritual master (*fashi*).
- 7 Sanshan was the name of Fuzhou until 725 (the third year of the Kaiyuan reign period). Chang E is the goddess of the moon, which is considered to be the quintessence of the female principle (yin).
- 8 The request for offerings sent to a medium through a dream is standard for this type of divination.
- 9 Li Shan Laomu was a Daoist known as a specialist in embryonic respiration (*taixi*) and internal alchemy.
- 10 The West Hall is the part of the house reserved for women.
- 11 This diet of avoiding cereals (*bigu*) and other cooked substances is that of the immortals, who absorb only the vapor.
- 12 This paper figure is a yin soldier (*yinbing*), a “substitute for the body” (*tishen*).

CHAPTER 6: THE SPIDER FIEND IS CAPTURED AND DIES

- 1 Shuikou Cliff is on the Min, northwest of Fuzhou.
- 2 Weaving and spinning are the typical tasks of women within the family.
- 3 Blue-black (*qing*) is the color of indigo and of Daoist robes.
- 4 These whispered messages are related to secret, ritual formulas (*zhou*).
- 5 Changfu County is the district of Changle, which is at the gates of Fuzhou.

CHAPTER 7: BRINGING AN END TO THE AUSPICIOUS PERIOD, JINGGU ELIMINATES THE FIEND

- 1 The Pear Orchard Theater School was created by the Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–56) of the Tang dynasty. The ritual tradition of the Exorcist Masters of Fujian (Wangshi jiao) took the name “Divine Theater of the True Tradition of the Pear Orchard” (Liyuan zhengjiao shenxi) in Jiangxi under the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In Chinese theater female roles (*dan*) were generally played by men.
- 2 Chen Jinggu here takes the appearance of Ucchusma (Huiji jingang), “Vajra being of impure traces.”
- 3 Cao Zijian (192–232), better known as Cao Zhi, was Cao Cao’s son and the most celebrated poet of the Three Kingdoms. Pan An (247–300), better known as Pan Yue, was a poet renowned for his good looks.
- 4 Wen Qu Star is the fourth star of the Big Dipper. It is named after Wen Chang, the god of literature and imperial examinations.

- 5 Song Yu was a Warring States author who wrote about romantic encounters with goddesses.
- 6 This refers to the practices of nourishing life (*yangsheng*). The seminal essence must rise along the spine up to the top of the head in order to produce there the quintessence of the person.

CHAPTER 8: THE SNAKE MONSTER HAVING BEEN EXPELLED,
FUTURE CALAMITY IS LEFT BEHIND

- 1 Realgar is arsenic sulfide (*huangyan*), which was commonly used in the fifth month of the year to drive away poisonous insects and snakes.
- 2 A Daoist master should have good posture, be energetic, and have a voice that can carry in order to chant the rituals. It is said that they have “the bones”—that is, the bodily structure—of a Daoist.
- 3 Wang Shenzhi (862–925) assumed control of Fujian on April 14, 898, and became Commissioner of the Wei Wu Army on October 25. He became Keeper of the Seal in 907 and was Prince of Min from 909 to 925.
- 4 Lianzhang Zhou is in the northeast of Fuzhou, near the mouth of the Dai River.
- 5 The city god (*Chenghuang Shen*) is the spirit equivalent of the local official. The first task of a magistrate is to visit the city god’s temple.
- 6 The Avalambana (Yulanpen) is the time when the souls of the dead return; it gives rise to great rituals of offerings for these souls and for “universal salvation” (*pudu*). The Paradise of Perfect Joy (Jile shijie) or the Pure Land Paradise (Jingtu) is the domain of the buddha Amitabha.
- 7 The White Lotus sect is a syncretist, soteriological movement that dates back at least to the twelfth century.
- 8 Dongdu is in Shandong, near Xinwen.
- 9 The *Zhou Changes* (Zhou Yi) is also known as the *Classic of Changes* (Yijing). According to myth, it was sequentially assembled by Fu Xi, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius.
- 10 The *River Chart* (Hetu) and the *Book of the Luo River* (Luoshu) represent the universe in the form of a diagram of the *bagua*, the “eight trigrams” of divination.
- 11 This “thumb-sized paper man” is a ritually generated “substitute body” (*tishen*).
- 12 This refers to two ways of laying out the trigrams and of situating them in relation to the directions. The order called “Before Heaven” (Xiantian) is the arrangement of Fu Xi. That of “After Heaven” (Houtian) is known as that of the Zhou.

CHAPTER 9: IN THE OLD TEMPLE THE FIEND MONK
WORKS HIS EVIL MAGIC

- 1 The alchemy of the five arts (*fa*) derives from a system of binary oppositions in the manner of the *Classic of Changes*. The trigrams *qian* and *kun* (the first two in the *Classic*) symbolize Heaven and Earth, yang and yin, male and female. We

- can also see in these two mandalas, the one masculine (Iron Head) and the other feminine (Lin Jiuniang), the tantric expression of the two linked rituals of the vajra and the womb. The five apprentices (*tudi*), personifications of the five phases and their law (*fa*), represent the powers of the five directions.
- 2 These elements of the Celestial Stems (Tiangan) and Terrestrial Branches (Dizhi) refer to the complete set of the cardinal directions.
 - 3 The four phases, or the four essential powers that develop in the combat, correspond to the four phases of the day, each made up of three periods of two hours. The basic principle is the formation of a Taiji by the two adversaries.
 - 4 “Seal script image” (*zhuan xiang*) refers to characters written in the ancient “Great Seal” style. Here the characters—which could be generated as seals, written characters, or hand gestures (*mudras*)—are ritually manipulated to work magic. *Xiang* also indicates the hexagrams that make up the *Classic of Changes*.
 - 5 In this combination of the Celestial Stems and Terrestrial Branches, the six *jia* periods are the generals of the yang, and the six *ding* periods are the divinities of the yin.
 - 6 “Bald ass” (*tulü*) is a term of contempt for Buddhist monks, whose heads are shaved.
 - 7 To “free oneself” (*tuoshen*) here has the double meaning of escaping and of casting off the old body, which would be a preliminary to emerging in a new form.
 - 8 The vajras are tantric creatures with terrifying appearances, like the guardians at temple doors.
 - 9 The courtyard referred to here is literally the impluvium, “Heaven’s well” (*tianjing*), an important part of the house, through which heaven and earth connect, like the trigrams *qian* and *kun*.
 - 10 This refers to the ritual division of the day into four quarters, each quarter consisting of three periods of two hours.
 - 11 At dawn, the cycle is complete. This combat recalls that in *The Precious Scroll of Thunder Peak* between the White Snake (Madame Bai) and the monk Fahai, although the roles here are reversed.
 - 12 Ningde is north of Fujian.
 - 13 *The Hidden Power of Lord Wen Chang* is one of the most important texts on moral cultivation and karma. Spoken by the deity Wen Chang, the text stresses the accumulation of yin virtue.
 - 14 This parodies the festivities of the Ghost Festival and the rites of “universal salvation” (*pudu*).

CHAPTER 10: AS THE OLD RULER IS ON HIS DEATHBED,
THE PEOPLE GRIEVE

- 1 Here, a *dan* is a measure of weight equivalent to around 110 pounds.
- 2 The vow to not remarry was a mark of high virtue, allowing some women (until the beginning of the twentieth century) to be honored by the construction of an imperial “arch of virtue” recognizing their chastity.

- 3 That is, the years 898–901.
- 4 This is Emperor Zhuangzong (923–26) of the Later Tang. Wang Shenzhi died on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month of 925.
- 5 The eldest son of Wang Shenzhi was named Yanhan (r. 925–27), and not Yanshu (perhaps a secret name of Yanhan). Yanbin, who was indeed prefect of Quanzhou, was not the son of Wang Shenzhi, but of his brother, Shengui. In contrast, Yanjun (r. 927–35), the second son of Shenzhi, is not mentioned here. As for Yanbing, he was the adopted son of Shenzhi, and was the prefect of Jianzhou (927).
- 6 Forty-nine days is the ritual period of mourning. Wang Shenzhi is supposed to have been buried at the foot of Lotus Peak, Lianhua Feng, in the Houguan district of Fuzhou.
- 7 It was Wang Yanhan who succeeded Wang Shenzhi in 925.
- 8 The Wei Wu Army was created by Emperor Zhaozong (r. 888–904) of the Tang dynasty, on October 12, 896, on behalf of Wang Chao, his commissioner and the elder brother of Wang Shenzhi. The army was based at Fuzhou.
- 9 The Luo Wall (Luocheng), “enveloping wall,” is one of the first walls of Fuzhou, constructed in 901 by Wang Shenzhi.
- 10 In 907 or 909, sections of Jiacheng (“hemming wall”), also called Yuecheng (“lunar wall”), were constructed south and north of the “enveloping wall.”
- 11 Chen Jinfeng is a historical figure.
- 12 The existence of Gui Shouming, called Gui Lang, is historically attested in the kingdom of Min.
- 13 The existence of Chen Kuangsheng is historically attested.
- 14 Gaogai Shan is in the Cang Shan district in Nantai.
- 15 The Four Treasures of the Study are the brush, ink, paper, and ink stone used in Chinese calligraphy.
- 16 The Battle of Gaixia took place in 202 BCE between the king of Chu, Xiang Yu, and Liu Bang, founder of the Han dynasty.
- 17 In order to avoid Xiang Yu’s being distracted by his love for her, the concubine Yu (Wen Ji) killed herself with Xiang Yu’s sword. Bo Yi Kao was the eldest son of King Wen of Zhou, a model of loyalty and filial piety.

CHAPTER 11: WANG YANBING IS ROUTED AT FUZHOU CITY

- 1 It was Yanhan, the eldest son of Wang Shenzhi (called Yanshu in the *Linshui pingyao*), who took the reign title of Ziyi.
- 2 Wang Yanbin was the son of Wang Shengui (brother of Wang Shenzhi). This cousin of Wang Yanhan (Yanshu in the *Linshui pingyao*) was in fact prefect of Quanzhou.
- 3 Jianzhou, modern Nanping, is a prefecture in the northwest of Fuzhou. Wang Yanbing (d. 931) was prefect of Jian. Entitled Prince Weisu of Wuping, he was an adoptive son of Wang Shenzhi.

- 4 This expedition was led in 927 by Wang Yanjun, prefect of Quanzhou, and Wang Yanbing, prefect of Jian (Nanping).
- 5 The marketplace is linked to the cult of the city god, the spirit equivalent to the local authority.
- 6 At the end of this battle it was Wang Yanjun who succeeded his brother Yanhan (called Yanshu in the original Chinese text), not Yanbin. Yanjun proclaimed himself emperor of Min in 933, under the personal name of Lin.
- 7 Du Fu (712–70) was a prominent poet of the Tang dynasty.
- 8 Yang Bao was a scholar of the Han. When he was a child he rescued a yellow bird in the wilderness. A man in yellow robes, who identified himself both as the bird he had saved and as an envoy of the Queen Mother of the West, appeared to him in a dream and promised fortune to Yang Bao's descendants.
- 9 Liu Bang founded the Han dynasty under the name of Gaozu (r. 206–194 BCE). When he was still only a simple official, he was said to have decapitated a white snake.
- 10 “Black turtle” (*heigui*) indicates a cuckold.
- 11 In reality, she became the concubine of Wang Yanjun, the second son of Shenzhi (r. 927–35) and not of Yanbin, who made her queen and, in 935, empress of Min.
- 12 Emperor Mingzong ruled from 926 to 933.
- 13 The fourth year of the Tiancheng reign period of the Tang was 929.
- 14 West Lake (Xi Hu) in the Gulou district of Fuzhou, recalls West Lake of Hangzhou (in Zhejiang) where, in other texts, the White Snake was imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda.
- 15 Wang Yanbing and his son, Wang Jixiong (called Yan Jixiong in the original Chinese text), prefect of Jian, led a siege of Fuzhou against Wang Yanjun, in 931. Both were defeated and decapitated in the marketplace by the army of Yanjun, who was supported by Wang Renda.
- 16 Wang Yanzheng, son of Wang Shenzhi, was the brother of Yanjun (cousin of Yanbin). Later (943–45) he became emperor of Dayin and of Min.
- 17 Baohuang, “the Precious August Emperor,” is the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang), the celestial ruler. In Fuzhou, Nine Immortals Mountain (Jiuxian Shan) is also called Yu Shan. The Nine Immortals, transformed into carp, were reputed to have attained the Way through refining the elixir of immortality at this mountain. They are worshipped at Shizu Shan in Fuqing, where they are believed to send dreams to those who request them.
- 18 Zhang Daoling (d. between 157 and 178) is at the origin of the Way of the Celestial Masters. Dragon Tiger Mountain (Longhu Shan), in Jiangxi, is the high place of the Celestial Masters of this orthodox Daoist tradition called Zhengyi.

- 19 These are Emperor Zhang (r. 75–88) and Emperor He (r. 88–105).
- 20 These are the sacred animals of the east and the west.
- 21 This is the Yongshou reign period (155–58) of Emperor Huan.
- 22 The Purple Tenuity (Ziwei) is the pivot of Heaven, identified with the Big Dipper (Beidou).
- 23 Both lines refer to the danger of ornate words.

CHAPTER 12: [YANBIN] ASCENDS TO THE EMPERORSHIP,
AND ALL THE OFFICIALS OFFER CONGRATULATIONS

- 1 According to the histories, this should be Wang Yanjun.
- 2 According to the histories, this should be Wang Lin, who became emperor in 933. He took the reign name of Dragon Ascent (Longqi) from the auspicious appearance of a dragon above his residence.
- 3 Chen Jinfeng became empress in March 935.
- 4 Wang Jipeng, prefect of Fuzhou, was named Vice Minister of State for the Right and Vice Secretary of State when his father, Yanjun (called Yanbin in the text), became emperor. Jipeng became emperor of Min (935–39), after having assassinated his father. He himself was assassinated by his guard. Xue Wenjie, State Astrologer, was named Fiscal Intendant in 933. The promotion of Chen Shouyuan to the rank of Celestial Master of Great Min state took place in January 936.
- 5 Zhuge Liang, courtesy name Kongming, celebrated strategist (b. 181 CE), was one of the most brilliant tacticians of the Three Kingdoms period. Zhang Liang (3rd c.–186 BCE), born in Henan, courtesy name Zifang, was a strategist and statesman who lived in the Qin and the early Western Han dynasty. Chen Ping (d. 178 BCE) was a strategist who later served as a chancellor in the early Western Han dynasty.
- 6 “A disease of cold or heat” refers to the bases of Chinese medicine concerning the balance between yin and yang.
- 7 The consumption of human flesh is based on attested medical practices and filial piety, both Confucian and Buddhist. This is closely related to *gegu*, practiced by Chen Jinggu for her parents, when she covered their wounds with pieces of her own flesh.
- 8 Bi Gan was the loyal minister and uncle of the Shang king Zhou Xin (second millennium BCE). When Bi Gan criticized the king, the latter carved open his uncle’s chest under the pretext of testing the story that sages (which Bi Gan was pretending to be) had distinctive hearts.
- 9 The Heavenly Web and Earthly Net is a web formed of the ten Celestial Stems (Tiangan) and the twelve Terrestrial Branches (Dizhi), weaving all of creation.
- 10 Every human being has three light souls (*hun*), as well as seven heavy souls (*po*), which are the essence of the bones.

- 11 Longtan Gully is on the Min River, at the supposed location of Mount Lü; Iron Buddha Palace is in Kaiyuan Temple, in Gulou in Fuzhou; Qichuan Well is also at Gulou.

CHAPTER 13: MADAME CHEN RETIRES TO LINSHUI

- 1 In the historical texts this would be Wang Yanjun.
- 2 “Refining bones” is a ritual of “salvation through refinement or transmutation” (*liandu*).
- 3 “Dragon Pavilion” (Longting) refers to geomancy and to the regulation of the state’s territory.
- 4 Chen Jingu received four titles that illustrate her progressive canonization: Zongfu, Zhaohui, Ciji, and Shunyi Furen.
- 5 Wang Jitu, son of Wang Yanhan (here Yanshu), led a rebellion and was put to death with a thousand other people.
- 6 Wang Yanbing (adopted son of Wang Shenzhi), eldest brother of Wang Yanhan (Yanshu) and of Wang Yanjun (Yanbin). Yanhan was put to death by his brothers Yanbing, prefect of Jian, and Yanjun, then prefect of Quan[zhou], who had come to lay siege to Fu[zhou] in January 927. It was then that Yanjun succeeded Yanhan, first as commissioner of the Wei Wu Army (Fuzhou), then as prince, then as emperor of Min.
- 7 It was Wang Yanjun who succeeded Yanhan.
- 8 Minqing County of eastern Fujian was under the administration of Fuzhou.
- 9 Within Daoist sacred geography, Huayang “Flourishing Yang” is the eighth Grotto Heaven (Dongtian).
- 10 Nanchang, the prefectural town, was the capital of Jiangxi.
- 11 The “five relationships” are those between ruler and subject, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and among friends.
- 12 Zhu Wen, Emperor Taizu (r. 907–12), was the founder of the Later Liang dynasty (903–27); he inaugurated the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.
- 13 King Ping of Chu ruled from 528 to 516 BCE.
- 14 This refers to the final story in chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi*, in which Zhuang Zhou dreams that he is a butterfly, and when he awakens is uncertain whether he is a butterfly dreaming that he is Zhuang Zhou, or Zhuang Zhou who had dreamed that he was a butterfly. The line about lustful thoughts and the cuckoo does not figure in the *Zhuangzi*.
- 15 Prince Teng was Li Yuanying, the younger brother of Emperor Taizong (598–649) of the Tang dynasty. Yuanying received the title of “prince” in 639. In 652 he became governor of Nanchang (Jiangxi), where he constructed the “Pavilion of Prince Teng” the following year. Wang Bo (650–76) composed a famous poem titled “Preface for the Pavilion of Prince Teng.”
- 16 According to legend, Liu Yong, who lived under the Song dynasty (420–79) of the Southern Dynasties, loved to eat scabs, finding them as delicious as abalone.

- 17 Nanchang and Tingzhou are two towns in Jiangxi. Yanping district (Fujian) is under the jurisdiction of the prefectural town of Nanping.
- 18 *Jiao* is an “offering” or “sacrifice” headed by Daoist priests. It refers to the large-scale ceremonies organized by local communities, and by other social groups, in order to define themselves on the religious level, specifically in order to establish or confirm the (semi-contractual) relationship between the group and its tutelary deity.

CHAPTER 14: XUE WENJIE SPREADS RUMORS IN THE PALACE

- 1 This refers to the magic art of using paper cutting, an ancient ritual art, to create “substitute bodies” (*tishen*).
- 2 This is another name for Wang Qiang, a lady of the Han court, who was married to a chieftain of a northern tribe, one of the four beauties of ancient China.
- 3 Changle is next to Fuzhou and was an earlier name for it.
- 4 Fuzhou was besieged in 927 by Wang Yanbing and Wang Yanjun, who vanquished Wang Yanhan (called Yanshu in the *Linshui pingyao*), who was decapitated. In 931 Wang Yanbing and his son, Wang Jixiong, led the siege against Yanjun, who won and proclaimed himself emperor of Min in 933. Yanbing and Jixiong were decapitated. Wang Jitu fomented a rebellion against Yanjun but was defeated. He was put to death with a thousand other people.
- 5 This is the quintessential Chinese halberd, which figures prominently in late imperial fiction.
- 6 This demon general of the army recalls many other women warriors, such as Tang Sai'er, who led an insurrection during the reign of the Yongle emperor (r. 1403–25) of the Ming dynasty. What made her so potent as a rebel was her status as an adept of the martial arts.
- 7 The magic tradition of Mount Mao has an open arrangement of the trigrams in the form of a snake. The eight sworn sisters and the thirty-six *Pojie* trace the form of this diagram.
- 8 These thirty-six palace concubines and seventy-two ladies of the court in the service of the shaman (*fashi*) of Min recall the court of the Jade Emperor.
- 9 The left is the yang position.
- 10 These eight divisions are patterned on the eight trigrams (*bagua*).
- 11 The blood and fur of a dog were employed in black magic. A fly whisk (in this case made of palm) wards off evil spirits.

CHAPTER 15: YUAN GUANGZHI'S ARMY SUFFERS DEFEAT

- 1 In the Thunder Arts, the tip of the Big Dipper is called the “horse” and is commonly called “breaking the army” (*po jun*) in esoteric terms. The Thunder must be summoned from the direction in which the Pole Star is pointing.

- 2 The old city of Fuzhou had “three lanes and seven alleys” (*sanfang qixiang*). Anmin Alley (Anmin Xiang) is said to have received its name at the time of the Huang Chao rebellion, at the end of the Tang dynasty.
- 3 Black Dragon River (Wulong Jiang) is a tributary of the Min.
- 4 This was 662, in the reign of Emperor Gaozong (r. 649–83) of the Tang dynasty.
- 5 Zhang You (Sengyou) (6th c.) was a painter originally from Wu, in Jiangsu. Yang Zihua (fl. 561–65) was known for his paintings of horses. Wang Mojie (Vimalakirti) was the pen name and court name of the poet, painter, and musician Wang Wei (701–61).
- 6 The Chinese title is Chongfu Linshui Furen.
- 7 Chen Shouyuan was a Daoist official (*daoguan*), and his Daoist medium, Sheng Tao, is called “Daoist master shaman” (*daoshi wuzhe*). It is common to see a Daoist master perform rituals with a medium.

CHAPTER 16: PRAYING FOR RAIN, THE PEOPLE
FEEL GRATEFUL

- 1 This was 935.
- 2 This is a reference to the sequence of rituals called morning, noon, and evening “audiences” with the Jade Emperor.
- 3 This threat to burn the Daoists alive echoes the ancient custom of burning a shaman (*wu*) to death or of exposing him to the sun for a long period in order to bring rain.
- 4 In the context of “nourishing the vital principle,” the “deliverance from the womb” (*tuotai*) evokes the nourishing of the embryo of immortality within the body of the adept, a process that culminates in the casting off of one’s old body to liberate the new, perfected one. Here this process is conflated with Chen Jinggu’s “removal of her fetus” (*tuo qi taiyun*).
- 5 The birthing basin (*xitong*) was part of the dowry that a woman took with her when she married.
- 6 The text says *niejue*, “knot a mudra.” This refers to forming a mudra that creates a “finger seal” that is used to trace out a magic figure.
- 7 Chen Jinggu re-created the world of the womb and oriented it like a birthing chamber.
- 8 Kui Ge, “Elder Brother Kui,” suggests the name Kuixing, a star in the handle of the Big Dipper (Beidou). The Great Ravine Demon is the demon of the universal womb.
- 9 Hemorrhaging evokes the real danger of bleeding to death in childbirth, as well as the punishment of the Lake of Blood that women face in the next world, due to the impurity linked to blood lost during childbirth. The ritual skirt worn by the masters of the Mount Lü sect is red, like the blood lost by Chen Jinggu.
- 10 There is a ritual called “*jiao* of the masters” (*shijiao*), unique to the Mount Lü sect for the salvation of those who died bad deaths. These unnatural deaths are

known as “ten wounds” (*shi shang*). This term recalls the Ten Furies (*chang*) often associated with the cult of Chen Jinggu and her talismans.

- 11 “A Dream under the Southern Bough” (Nanke meng or Nanke ji), by Tang Xianzu (1550–1616), is a famous Kunqu opera, where what is experienced as an entire lifetime turns out to be a brief dream.
- 12 Gui Shouming was responsible for making sacrifices (*jidian*), a category of official ritual that he carried out according to court etiquette.
- 13 The thirty-six concubines became “divine positions” (*wei*). The inscription of their names on the Imperial Register of Min gave an official status to the cult.
- 14 The Chinese title is Zhaohui Chongfu Linshui Furen.
- 15 This refers to the Ming dynasty traveler Xu Xiake (1587–1641), known for his work *Records of the Wanderings of Xu Xiake* (*Xu Xiake youji*).
- 16 This title of “heroine divinity” (*yingxiong shenming*) evokes the idea of an empire-wide heroine.

CHAPTER 17: AVENGING DEEP HATRED BY CAPTURING THE RAVINE DEMON

- 1 The three worlds (*sanjie*) correspond to the cult of the Three Agents. The Agent of Heaven (Tianguan), Agent of Earth (Diguan), and Agent of Water (Shuiguan) keep the register of good and bad actions.
- 2 Fenggang is in Sha district, near Nanping and Gutian.
- 3 Zhong Kui, who lived under Emperor Dezong (r. 799–805) of the Tang dynasty, according to legend, became king of the ghosts in hell. At New Year’s and in the fifth month, his image is pasted on doorways to ward off evil spirits.
- 4 Guan Gong (or Yunchang) was a general in the Three Kingdoms period who was killed in battle.
- 5 “Pond-snail” (*tianluo*) birth is one in which the mother’s internal organs come out along with the baby.
- 6 A *zhang* was a unit of Chinese linear measurement slightly longer than ten feet.
- 7 Fengdu is a district near Chongqing in Sichuan said to be near the entrance to hell. A large complex of shrines, temples, and monasteries dedicated to the afterlife was constructed there on the model of Youdu, the capital of hell.
- 8 The sutra particular to Chen Jinggu is titled “True Sutra of the Favorable and Beneficent *Qilin* Who Brings Infants to Birth” (Yulin shunyi dutuo chan ruozhenjing) (manuscript, Linshui Gong, Gutian).
- 9 It consists of “eagle wood,” ebony, and persimmon.
- 10 Supreme Exalted Lord Lao is the divinized Laozi.
- 11 There is still an active cult to this Python Celestial Spirit King (Mang Tian Shen Wang). In his temple in Lianjiang the serpent god is represented in human form with his wife and three sons.
- 12 Zhi Mountain is in Gulou in Fuzhou.
- 13 The Changxing reign period of the Later Tang is 930. The fourth year of the Zhengtong reign period of the Ming is 1440.

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