

*Only when ape and horse are tamed will shells be cast;  
With merit and work perfected, they see the Real.*

We shall now tell you about the Tang monk and his three disciples, who set out on the main road.

In truth the land of Buddha in the West was quite different from other regions. What they saw everywhere were gemlike flowers and jasperlike grasses, aged cypresses and hoary pines. In the regions they passed through, every family was devoted to good works, and every household would feed the monks.

*They met people in cultivation beneath the hills*

*And saw travellers reciting sūtras in the woods.*

Resting at night and journeying at dawn, master and disciples proceeded for some six or seven days when they suddenly caught sight of a row of tall buildings and noble lofts. Truly

*They soar skyward a hundred feet,*

*Tall and towering in the air.*

*You look down to see the setting sun*

*And reach out to pluck the shooting stars.*

*Spacious windows engulf the universe;*

*Lofty pillars join with the cloudy screens.*

*Yellow cranes bring letters<sup>1</sup> as autumn trees age;*

*Phoenix-sheets come with the cool evening breeze.*

*These are the treasure arches of a spirit palace,*

*The pearly courts and jeweled edifices,*

*The immortal hall where the Way is preached,*

*The cosmos where sūtras are taught.*

*The flowers bloom in the spring;*

*Pines grow green after the rain.*

1. Immortals are thought to send their communications by means of magic birds like yellow cranes and blue phoenixes.

*Purple agaric and divine fruits, fresh every year.*

*Phoenixes gambol, potent in every manner.*

Lifting his whip to point ahead, Tripitaka said, “Wukong, what a lovely place!”

“Master,” said Pilgrim, “you insisted on bowing down even in a specious region, before false images of Buddha. Today you have arrived at a true region with real images of Buddha, and you still haven’t dismounted. What’s your excuse?”

So taken aback was Tripitaka when he heard these words that he leaped down from the horse. Soon they arrived at the entrance to the buildings. A Daoist lad, standing before the gate, called out, “Are you the scripture seeker from the Land of the East?” Hurriedly tidying his clothes, the elder raised his head and looked at his interrogator.

*He wore a robe of silk*

*And held a jade duster.*

*He wore a robe of silk*

*Often to feast at treasure lofts and jasper pools;*

*He held a jade yak’s-tail*

*To wave and dust in the purple mansions.*

*From his arm hangs a sacred register,*

*And his feet are shod in sandals.*

*He floats—a true feathered-one;<sup>2</sup>*

*He’s winsome—indeed uncanny!*

*Long life attained, he lives in this fine place;*

*Immortal, he can leave the world of dust.*

*The sage monk knows not our Mount Spirit guest:*

*The Immortal Golden Head of former years.<sup>3</sup>*

The Great Sage, however, recognized the person. “Master,” he cried, “this is the Great Immortal of the Golden Head, who resides in the Yuzhen Daoist Temple at the foot of the Spirit Mountain.”

Only then did Tripitaka realize the truth, and he walked forward to make his bow. With laughter, the great immortal said, “So the sage monk has finally arrived this year. I have been deceived by the Bodhisattva Guanyin. When she received the gold decree from Buddha over ten years ago to find a scripture seeker in the Land of the East, she told me that he would be

2. From antiquity, it has been customary to refer to immortals or transcendents (and later, most Daoists) as feathered scholars (*yushi*) or feathered travelers (*yuke*). Upon success in cultivation, according to textual accounts, the adept would sprout feathers all over his body, sometimes even wings like Christian angels, so that they could ascend to Heaven.

3. Former years: the narrative here refers back to the account in chapter 8.

here after two or three years. I waited year after year for you, but no news came at all. Hardly have I anticipated that I would meet you this year!"

Pressing his palms together, Tripitaka said, "I'm greatly indebted to the great immortal's kindness. Thank you! Thank you!" The four pilgrims, leading the horse and toting the luggage, all went inside the temple before each of them greeted the great immortal once more. Tea and a vegetarian meal were ordered. The immortal also asked the lads to heat some scented liquid for the sage monk to bathe, so that he could ascend the land of Buddha. Truly,

*It's good to bathe when merit and work are done,  
When nature's tamed and the natural state is won.  
All toils and labors are now at rest;  
Law and obedience have renewed their zest.  
At māra's end they reach indeed Buddha-land;  
Their woes dispelled, before Śramaṇa they stand.  
Unstained, they are washed of all filth and dust.  
To a diamond body<sup>4</sup> return they must.*

After master and disciples had bathed, it became late and they rested in the Yuzhen Temple.

Next morning the Tang monk changed his clothing and put on his brocade cassock and his Vairocana hat. Holding the priestly staff, he ascended the main hall to take leave of the great immortal. "Yesterday you seemed rather dowdy," said the great immortal, chuckling, "but today everything is fresh and bright. As I look at you now, you are a true son of Buddha!" After a bow, Tripitaka wanted to set out at once.

"Wait a moment," said the great immortal. "Allow me to escort you." "There's no need for that," said Pilgrim. "Old Monkey knows the way."

"What you know happens to be the way in the clouds," said the great immortal, "a means of travel to which the sage monk has not yet been elevated. You must still stick to the main road."

"What you say is quite right," replied Pilgrim. "Though old Monkey has been to this place several times, he has always come and gone on the clouds and he has never stepped on the ground. If we must stick to the main road, we must trouble you to escort us a distance. My master's most eager to bow to Buddha. Let's not dally." Smiling broadly, the great immortal held the Tang monk's hand

*To lead Candana up the gate of Law.*

The way that they had to go, you see, did not lead back to the front gate. Instead, they had to go through the central hall of the temple to go

4. Here a reference to the diamond incorruptible body of Buddhahood.

out the rear door. Immediately behind the temple, in fact, was the Spirit Mountain, to which the great immortal pointed and said, "Sage Monk, look at the spot halfway up the sky, shrouded by auspicious luminosity of five colors and a thousand folds of hallowed mists. **That's the tall Spirit Vulture Peak, the holy region of the Buddhist Patriarch.**"

The moment the Tang monk saw it, he began to bend low. With a chuckle, Pilgrim said, "**Master, you haven't reached that place where you should bow down.** As the proverb says, 'Even within sight of a mountain you can ride a horse to death!' You are still quite far from that principality. Why do you want to bow down now? How many times does your head need to touch the ground if you kowtow all the way to the summit?"

"Sage Monk," said the great immortal, "**you, along with the Great Sage, Heavenly Reeds, and Curtain-Raising, have arrived at the blessed land when you can see Mount Spirit. I'm going back.**" Thereupon Tripitaka bowed to take leave of him.

The Great Sage led the Tang monk and his disciples slowly up the mountain. They had not **gone for more than five or six miles when** they came upon a torrent of water, eight or nine miles wide. There was no trace of human activity all around. Alarmed by the sight, Tripitaka said, "**Wukong, this must be the wrong way!** Could the great immortal have made a mistake? Look how wide and swift this river is! Without a boat, how could we get across?"

"**There's no mistake!**" said Pilgrim, chuckling. "Look over there! Isn't that a large bridge? You have to walk across that bridge before you can perfect the right fruit." The elder walked up to the bridge and saw beside it a tablet, on which was the inscription "**Cloud-Transcending Stream.**" The bridge was actually a single log. Truly

*Afar off, it's like a jade beam in the sky;  
Near, a dried stump that o'er the water lies.  
To bind up oceans it would easier seem.  
How could one walk a single log or beam  
Shrouded by rainbows of ten thousand feet,  
By a thousand layers of silk-white sheet?  
Too slipp'ry and small for all to cross its spread  
Except those who on colored mists can tread.*

Quivering all over, Tripitaka said, "Wukong, this bridge is not for human beings to cross. Let's find some other way."

"This is the way! This is the way!" said Pilgrim, laughing.

"If this is the way," said Bajie, horrified, "**who dares walk on it?** The water's so wide and rough. There's only a single log here, and it's so narrow and slippery. How could I move my legs?"

"Stand still, all of you," said Pilgrim. "Let old Monkey take a walk for you to see." Dear Great Sage! In big strides he bounded on to the single-log bridge. Swaying from side to side, he ran across it in no time at all. On the other side he shouted: "Come across! Come across!"

The Tang monk waved his hands, while Bajie and Sha Monk bit their fingers, all crying, "Hard! Hard! Hard!"

Pilgrim dashed back from the other side and pulled at Bajie, saying, "Idiot! Follow me! Follow me!" Lying flat on the ground, Bajie said, "It's much too slippery! Much too slippery! Let me go, please! Let me mount the wind and fog to get over there." Pushing him down, Pilgrim said, "What sort of a place do you think this is that you are permitted to mount wind and fog! Unless you walk across this bridge, you'll never become a Buddha." "O Elder Brother!" said Bajie. "It's okay with me if I don't become a Buddha. But I'm not going on that bridge!"

Right beside the bridge, the two of them started a tug-of-war. Only Sha Monk's admonitions managed to separate them. Tripitaka happened to turn his head, and he suddenly caught sight of someone punting a boat upstream and crying, "Ahoy! Ahoy!"

Highly pleased, the elder said, "Disciples, stop your frivolity! There's a boat coming." The three of them leaped up and stood still to stare at the boat. When it drew near, they found that it was a bottomless one. With his fiery eyes and diamond pupils, Pilgrim at once recognized that the ferryman was in fact the Conductor Buddha, also named the Light of Ratnadhvaja. Without revealing the Buddha's identity, however, Pilgrim simply said, "Over here! Punt it this way!"

Immediately the boatman punted it up to the shore. "Ahoy! Ahoy!" he cried. Terrified by what he saw, Tripitaka said, "How could this bottomless boat of yours carry anybody?" The Buddhist Patriarch said, "This boat of mine

*Since creation's dawn has achieved great fame;*

*Punted by me, it has e'er been the same.*

*Upon the wind and wave it's still secure:*

*With no end or beginning its joy is sure.*

*It can return to One, completely clean,*

*Through ten thousand kalpas a sail serene.*

*Though bottomless boats may ne'er cross the sea,*

*This ferries all souls through eternity."*

Pressing his palms together to thank him, the Great Sage Sun said, "I thank you for your great kindness in coming to receive and lead my master. Master, get on the boat. Though it is bottomless, it is safe. Even if there are wind and waves, it will not capsize."

The elder still hesitated, but Pilgrim took him by the shoulder and gave him a shove. With nothing to stand on, that master tumbled straight into the water, but the boatman swiftly pulled him out. As he stood on the side of the boat, the master kept shaking out his clothes and stamping his feet as he grumbled at Pilgrim. Pilgrim, however, helped Sha Monk and Bajie to lead the horse and tote the luggage into the boat. As they all stood on the gunwale, the Buddhist Patriarch gently punted the vessel away from shore. All at once they saw a corpse floating down the upstream, the sight of which filled the elder with terror.

"Don't be afraid, Master," said Pilgrim, laughing. "It's actually you!"

"It's you! It's you!" said Bajie also.

Clapping his hands, Sha Monk also said, "It's you! It's you!"

Adding his voice to the chorus, the boatman also said, "That's you! Congratulations! Congratulations!" Then the three disciples repeated this chanting in unison as the boat was punted across the water. In no time at all, they crossed the Divine Cloud-Transcending Stream all safe and sound. Only then did Tripitaka turn and skip lightly onto the other shore. We have here a testimonial poem, which says:

*Delivered from their mortal flesh and bone,  
A primal spirit of mutual love has grown.  
Their work done, they become Buddhas this day,  
Free of their former six-six senses<sup>5</sup> sway.*

Truly this is what is meant by the profound wisdom and the boundless dharma which enable a person to reach the other shore.

The moment the four pilgrims went ashore and turned around, the boatman and even the bottomless boat had disappeared. Only then did Pilgrim point out that it was the Conductor Buddha, and immediately Tripitaka awoke to the truth. Turning quickly, he thanked his three disciples instead.

Pilgrim said, "We two parties need not thank each other, for we are meant to support each other. We are indebted to our master for our liberation, through which we have found the gateway to the making of merit, and fortunately we have achieved the right fruit. Our master also has to rely on our protection so that he may be firm in keeping both law and faith to find the happy deliverance from this mortal stock. Master, look at this surpassing scenery of flowers and grass, pines and bamboos, phoenixes, cranes, and deer. Compared with those places of illusion manufactured by

5. Six-six senses: the intensive form of the six impure qualities engendered by the objects and organs of sense: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea.

monsters and deviates, which ones do you think are pleasant and which ones bad? **Which ones are good and which evil?**" Tripitaka expressed his thanks repeatedly as every one of them with lightness and agility walked up the Spirit Mountain. Soon this was the aged Thunderclap Monastery which came into view:

*Its top touches the firmament;  
 Its root joins the Sumeru range.  
 Wondrous peaks in rows;  
 Strange boulders rugged.  
 Beneath the cliffs, jade-grass and jasper-flowers;  
 By the path, purple agaric and scented orchid.  
 Divine apes plucking fruits in the peach orchard  
 Seem like fire-burnished gold;  
 White cranes perching on the tips of pine branches  
 Resemble mist-shrouded jade.  
 Male phoenixes in pairs—  
 Female phoenixes in twos—  
 Male phoenixes in pairs  
 Make one call facing the sun to bless the world;  
 Female phoenixes in twos  
 Whose radiant dance in the wind is rarely seen.  
 You see too those mandarin duck tiles of lustrous gold,  
 And luminous, patterned bricks cornelian-gilt.  
 In the east  
 And in the west  
 Stand rows of scented halls and pearly arches;  
 To the north  
 And to the south,  
 An endless sight of treasure lofts and precious towers.  
 The Devarāja Hall emits lambent mists;  
 The Dharma-guarding Hall sends forth purple flames.  
 The stūpa's clear form;  
 The Utpala's fragrance.  
 Truly a fine place similar to Heaven  
 With lazy clouds to make the day long.  
 The causes cease, red dust can't come at all:  
 Safe from all kalpas is this great Dharma Hall.*

Footloose and carefree, master and disciples walked to the summit of Mount Spirit, where under a forest of green pines they saw a group of upāsikās and rows of worshipers in the midst of verdant cypresses. Immediately the

elder bowed to them, so startling the upāsakas and upāsikās, the monks and the nuns, that they all pressed their palms together, saying, “Sage Monk, you should not render us such homage. Wait till you see Śākyamuni, and then you may come to exchange greetings with us.”

“He is *always* in such a hurry!” said Pilgrim, laughing. “Let’s go to bow to those seated at the top!” His arms and legs dancing with excitement, the elder followed Pilgrim straight up to the gate of the Thunderclap Monastery. There they were met by the Four Great Vajra Guardians, who said, “Has the sage monk arrived?”

Bending low, Tripitaka said, “Yes, your disciple Xuanzang has arrived.” No sooner had he given this reply than he wanted to go inside. “Please wait a moment, Sage Monk,” said the Vajra Guardians. “Allow us to announce your arrival first before you enter.” One of the Vajra Guardians was asked to report to the other Four Great Vajra Guardians stationed at the second gate, and one of those porters passed the news of the Tang monk’s arrival to the third gate. Those guarding the third gate happened to be divine monks who served at the great altar. When they heard the news, they quickly went to the Great Hero Hall to announce to Tathāgata, the Most Honored One, also named Buddha Śākyamuni, “The sage monk from the Tang court has arrived in this treasure monastery. He has come to fetch the scriptures.”

Highly pleased, Holy Father Buddha at once asked the Eight Bodhisattvas, the Four Vajra Guardians, the Five Hundred Arhats, the Three Thousand Guardians, the Eleven Great Orbs, and the Eighteen Guardians of Monasteries to form two rows for the reception. Then he issued the golden decree to summon in the Tang monk. Again the word was passed from section to section, from gate to gate: “Let the sage monk enter.” Meticulously observing the rules of ritual propriety, our Tang monk walked through the monastery gate with Wukong, Wuneng, and Wujing, still leading the horse and toting the luggage. Thus it was that

*Commissioned that year, a resolve he made  
To leave with rescript the royal steps of jade.  
The hills he’d climb to face the morning dew  
Or rest on a boulder when the twilight fades.  
He totes his faith to ford three thousand streams,  
His staff trailing o’er endless palisades.  
His every thought’s on seeking the right fruit.  
Homage to Buddha will this day be paid.*

The four pilgrims, on reaching the Great Hero Treasure Hall, prostrated themselves before Tathāgata. Thereafter, they bowed to all the attendants



of Buddha on the left and right. This they repeated three times before kneeling again before the Buddhist Patriarch to present their traveling rescript to him. After reading it carefully, Tathāgata handed it back to Tripitaka, who touched his head to the ground once more to say, “By the decree of the Great Tang Emperor in the Land of the East, your disciple Xuanzang has come to this treasure monastery to beg you for the true scriptures for the redemption of the multitude. I implore the Buddhist Patriarch to vouchsafe his grace and grant me my wish, so that I may soon return to my country.”

To express the compassion of his heart, Tathāgata opened his mouth of mercy and said to Tripitaka, “Your Land of the East belongs to the South Jambūdvīpa Continent. Because of your size and your fertile land, your prosperity and population, there is a great deal of greed and killing, lust and lying, oppression and deceit. People neither honor the teachings of Buddha nor cultivate virtuous karma; they neither revere the three lights nor respect the five grains. They are disloyal and unfilial, unrighteous and unkind, unscrupulous and self-deceiving. Through all manners of injustice and taking of lives, they have committed boundless transgressions. The fullness of their iniquities therefore has brought on them the ordeal of hell and sent them into eternal darkness and perdition to suffer the pains of pounding and grinding and of being transformed into beasts. Many of them will assume the forms of creatures with fur and horns; in this manner they will repay their debts by having their flesh made for food for mankind. These are the reasons for their eternal perdition in Avīci without deliverance.

“Though Confucius had promoted his teachings of benevolence, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom, and though a succession of kings and emperors had established such penalties as transportation, banishment, hanging, and beheading, these institutions had little effect on the foolish and the blind, the reckless and the antinomian.

“Now, I have here three baskets of scriptures which can deliver humanity from its afflictions and dispel its calamities. There is one basket of vinaya, which speak of Heaven; a basket of śāstras, which tell of the Earth; and a basket of sūtras, which redeem the damned. Altogether these three baskets of scriptures contain thirty-five titles written in fifteen thousand one hundred and forty-four scrolls. They are truly the pathway to the realization of immortality and the gate to ultimate virtue. Every concern of astronomy, geography, biography, flora and fauna, utensils, and human affairs within the Four Great Continents of this world is recorded therein. Since all of you have traveled such a great distance to come here, I would

have liked to give the entire set to you. Unfortunately, the people of your region are both stupid and headstrong. Mocking the true words, they refuse to recognize the profound significance of our teachings of Śramaṇa.”

Then Buddha turned to call out: “Ānanda and Kāśyapa, take the four of them to the space beneath the precious tower. Give them a vegetarian meal first. After the maigre, open our treasure loft for them and select a few scrolls from each of the thirty-five divisions of our three canons, so that they may take them back to the Land of the East as a perpetual token of grace.”

The two Honored Ones obeyed and took the four pilgrims to the space beneath the tower, where countless rare dainties and exotic treasures were laid out in a seemingly endless spread. Those deities in charge of offerings and sacrifices began to serve a magnificent feast of divine food, tea, and fruit—viands of a hundred flavors completely different from those of the mortal world. After master and disciples had bowed to give thanks to Buddha, they abandoned themselves to enjoyment. In truth

*Treasure flames, gold beams on their eyes have shined;*

*Strange fragrance and feed even more refined.*

*Boundlessly fair the tow’r of gold appears;*

*There’s immortal music that clears the ears.*

*Such divine fare and flower humans rarely see;*

*Long life’s attained through strange food and fragrant tea.*

*Long have they endured a thousand forms of pain.*

*This day in glory the Way they’re glad to gain.*

This time it was Bajie who was in luck and Sha Monk who had the advantage, for what the Buddhist Patriarch had provided for their complete enjoyment was nothing less than such viands as could grant them longevity and health and enable them to transform their mortal substance into immortal flesh and bones.

When the four pilgrims had finished their meal, the two Honored Ones who had kept them company led them up to the treasure loft. The moment the door was opened, they found the room enveloped in a thousand layers of auspicious air and magic beams, in ten thousand folds of colored fog and hallowed clouds. On the sūtra cases and jeweled chests red labels were attached, on which the titles of the books were written in clerkly script. After Ānanda and Kāśyapa had shown all the titles to the Tang monk, they said to him, “Sage Monk, having come all this distance from the Land of the East, what sort of small gifts have you brought for us? Take them out quickly! We’ll be pleased to hand over the scriptures to you.”

On hearing this, Tripitaka said, “Because of the great distance, your disciple, Xuanzang, has not been able to make such preparation.”

"How nice! How nice!" said the two Honored Ones, snickering. "If we imparted the scriptures to you gratis, our posterity would starve to death!"

When Pilgrim saw them fidgeting and fussing, refusing to hand over the scriptures, he could not refrain from yelling, "Master, let's go tell Tathāgata about this! Let's make him come himself and hand over the scriptures to old Monkey!"

"Stop shouting!" said Ānanda. "Where do you think you are that you dare indulge in such mischief and waggery? Get over here and receive the scriptures!" Controlling their annoyance, Bajie and Sha Monk managed to restrain Pilgrim before they turned to receive the books. Scroll after scroll were wrapped and laid on the horse. Four additional luggage wraps were bundled up for Bajie and Sha Monk to tote, after which the pilgrims went before the jeweled throne again to kowtow and thank Tathāgata. As they walked out the gates of the monastery, they bowed twice whenever they came upon a Buddhist Patriarch or a Bodhisattva. When they reached the main gate, they also bowed to take leave of the priests and nuns, the upāsakas and upāsikās, before descending the mountain. We shall now leave them for the moment.

We tell you now that there was up in the treasure loft the aged Dīpaṃkara, also named the Buddha of the Past, who overheard everything and understood immediately that Ānanda and Kāśyapa had handed over to the pilgrims scrolls of scriptures that were actually wordless. Chuckling to himself, he said, "Most of the priests in the Land of the East are so stupid and blind that they will not recognize the value of these wordless scriptures. When that happens, won't it have made this long trek of our sage monk completely worthless?" Then he asked, "Who is here beside my throne?"

The White Heroic Honored One at once stepped forth, and the aged Buddha gave him this instruction: "You must exercise your magic powers and catch up with the Tang monk immediately. Take away those wordless scriptures from him, so that he will be forced to return for the true scriptures with words." Mounting a violent gust of wind, the White Heroic Honored One swept out of the gate of the Thunderclap Monastery. As he called up his vast magic powers, the wind was strong indeed! Truly

*A stalwart Servant of Buddha  
Is not like any common wind god;  
The wrathful cries of an immortal  
Far surpass a young girl's whistle!  
This mighty gust*

*Causes fishes and dragons to lose their lairs  
 And angry waves in the rivers and seas.  
 Black apes find it hard to present their fruits;  
 Yellow cranes turn around to seek their nests.  
 The phoenix's pure cries have lost their songs;  
 The pheasant's callings turn most boisterous.  
 Green pine-branches snap;  
 Blue lotus-blossoms soar.  
 Stalk by stalk, verdant bamboos fall;  
 Petal by petal, gold lotus quakes.  
 Bell tones drift away to three thousand miles;  
 The scripture chants o'er countless gorges fly.  
 Beneath the cliff rare flowers' colors fade;  
 Fresh, jadelike grasses lie down by the road.  
 Phoenixes can't stretch their wings;  
 White deer hide on the ledge.  
 Vast waves of strange fragrance now fill the world  
 As cool, clear breezes penetrate the Heavens.*

The elder Tang was walking along when he encountered this churning fragrant wind. Thinking that this was only an auspicious portent sent by the Buddhist Patriarch, he was completely off guard when, with a loud crack in midair, a hand descended. The scriptures that were loaded on the horse were lifted away with no effort at all. **The sight left Tripitaka yelling in terror and beating his breast,** while Bajie rolled off in pursuit on the ground and Sha Monk stood rigid to guard the empty pannier. Pilgrim Sun vaulted into the air. When that White Heroic Honored One saw him closing in rapidly, he feared that Pilgrim's rod might strike out blindly without regard for good or ill to cause him injury. He therefore ripped the scriptures open and threw them toward the ground. When Pilgrim saw that the scripture wrappers were torn and their contents scattered all over by the fragrant wind, he lowered the direction of his cloud to go after the books instead and stopped his pursuit. The White Heroic Honored One retrieved the wind and fog and returned to report to the Buddha of the Past.

As Bajie sped along, he saw the holy books dropping down from the sky. Soon he was joined by Pilgrim, and the two of them gathered up the scrolls to go back to the Tang monk. His eyes brimming with tears, the Tang monk said, "O Disciples! We are bullied by vicious demons even in this land of ultimate bliss!" When Sha Monk opened up a scroll of scripture which the other two disciples were clutching, his eyes perceived only snow-white paper without a trace of so much as half a letter on it.

Hurriedly he presented it to Tripitaka, saying, “Master, this scroll is wordless!” Pilgrim also opened a scroll and it, too, was wordless. Then Bajie opened still another scroll, and it was also wordless. “Open all of them!” cried Tripitaka. Every scroll had only blank paper.

Heaving big sighs, the elder said, “Our people in the Land of the East simply have no luck! What good is it to take back a wordless, empty volume like this? How could I possibly face the Tang emperor? The crime of mocking one’s ruler is greater than one punishable by execution!”

Already perceiving the truth of the matter, Pilgrim said to the Tang monk, “Master, there’s no need for further talk. This has all come about because we had no gifts for these fellows, Ānanda and Kāśyapa. That’s why we were given these wordless texts. Let’s go back quickly to Tathāgata and charge them with fraud and solicitation for a bribe.”

“Exactly! Exactly!” yelled Bajie. “Let’s go and charge them!” The four pilgrims turned and, with painful steps, once more ascended Thunder-clap.

In a little while they reached the temple gates, where they were met by the multitude with hands folded in their sleeves. “Has the sage monk returned to ask for an exchange of scriptures?” they asked, laughing. Tripitaka nodded his affirmation, and the Vajra Guardians permitted them to go straight inside. When they arrived before the Great Hero Hall, Pilgrim shouted, “Tathāgata, we master and disciples had to experience ten thousand stings and a thousand demons in order to come bowing from the Land of the East. After you had specifically ordered the scriptures to be given to us, Ānanda and Kāśyapa sought a bribe from us; when they didn’t succeed, they conspired in fraud and deliberately handed over wordless texts to us. Even if we took them, what good would they do? Pardon me, Tathāgata, but you must deal with this matter!”

“Stop shouting!” said the Buddhist Patriarch with a chuckle. “I knew already that the two of them would ask you for a little present. After all, the holy scriptures are not to be given lightly, nor are they to be received gratis. Some time ago, in fact, a few of our sage priests went down the mountain and recited these scriptures in the house of one Elder Zhao in the Kingdom of Śrāvastī, so that the living in his family would all be protected from harm and the deceased redeemed from perdition. For all that service they managed to charge him only three pecks and three pints of rice. I told them that they had made far too cheap a sale and that their posterity would have no money to spend. Since you people came with empty hands to acquire scriptures, blank texts were handed over to you. But these blank texts are actually true, wordless scriptures, and they are

just as good as those with words. However, those creatures in your Land of the East are so foolish and unenlightened that I have no choice but to impart to you now the texts with words.”

“Ānanda and Kāśyapa,” he then called out, “quickly select for them a few scrolls from each of the titles of true scriptures with words, and then come back to me to report the total number.”

The two Honored Ones again led the four pilgrims to the treasure loft, where they once more demanded a gift from the Tang monk. Since he had virtually nothing to offer, Tripitaka told Sha Monk to take out the alms bowl of purple gold. With both hands he presented it to the Honored Ones, saying, “Your disciple in truth has not brought with him any gift, owing to the great distance and my own poverty. This alms bowl, however, was bestowed by the Tang emperor in person, in order that I could use it to beg for my maigre, throughout the journey. As the humblest token of my gratitude, I am presenting it to you now, and I beg the Honored Ones to accept it. When I return to the court and make my report to the Tang emperor, a generous reward will certainly be forthcoming. Only grant us the true scriptures with words, so that His Majesty’s goodwill will not be thwarted nor the labor of this lengthy journey be wasted.” With a gentle smile, Ānanda took the alms bowl. All those vīra who guarded the precious towers, the kitchen helpers in charge of sacrifices and incense, and the Honored Ones who worked in the treasure loft began to clap one another on the back and tickle one another on the face. Snapping their fingers and curling their lips, every one of them said, “How shameless! How shameless! Asking the scripture seeker for a present!”

After a while, the two Honored Ones became rather embarrassed, though Ānanda continued to clutch firmly at the alms bowl. Kāśyapa, however, went into the loft to select the scrolls and handed them item by item to Tripitaka. “Disciples,” said Tripitaka, “take a good look at these, and make sure that they are not like the earlier ones.”

The three disciples examined each scroll as they received it, and this time all the scrolls had words written on them. Altogether they were given five thousand and forty-eight scrolls, making up the number of a single canon. After being properly packed, the scriptures were loaded onto the horse. An additional load was made for Bajie to tote, while their own luggage was toted by Sha Monk. As Pilgrim led the horse, the Tang monk took up his priestly staff and gave his Vairocana hat a press and his brocade cassock a shake. In delight they once more went before our Buddha Tathāgata. Thus it is that

*Sweet is the taste of the Great Piṭaka,  
Product most refined of Tathāgata.*

*Note how Xuanzang has climbed the mount with pain.  
 Pity Ānanda who has but love of gain.  
 Their blindness removed by Buddha of the Past,  
 The truth now received peace they have at last—  
 Glad to bring scriptures back to the East,  
 Where all may partake of this gracious feast.*

Ānanda and Kāśyapa led the Tang monk before Tathāgata, who ascended the lofty lotus throne. He ordered Dragon-Tamer and Tiger-Subduer, the two arhats, to strike up the cloudy stone-chime to assemble all the divinities, including the three thousand Buddhas, the three thousand guardians, the Eight Vajra Guardians, the five hundred arhats, the eight hundred nuns and priests, the upāsakas and upāsikās, the Honored Ones from every Heaven and cave-dwelling, from every blessed land and spirit mountain. Those who ought to be seated were asked to ascend their treasure thrones, while those who should stand were told to make two columns on both sides. In a moment celestial music filled the air as layers of auspicious luminosity and hallowed mist loomed up in the sky. After all the Buddhas had assembled, they bowed to greet Tathāgata.

Then Tathāgata asked, “Ānanda and Kāśyapa, how many scrolls of scriptures have you passed on to him? Give me an itemized report.”

The two Honored Ones said, “We have turned over to the Tang court the following:

1. <i>The Nirvāna Sūtra</i>	400 scrolls
2. <i>The Ākāśagarbha-bodhisattva-dharmi Sūtra</i>	20 scrolls
3. <i>The Gracious Will Sūtra, Major Collection</i>	40 scrolls
4. <i>The Prajñāpāramitā-saṃkaya gāthā Sūtra</i>	20 scrolls
5. <i>The Homage to Bhūtatathātā Sūtra</i>	20 scrolls
6. <i>The Anakṣara-granthaka-rocana-garbha Sūtra</i>	50 scrolls
7. <i>The Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra</i>	30 scrolls
8. <i>The Vajracchedika-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra</i>	1 scroll
9. <i>The Buddha-carita-kāvya Sūtra</i>	116 scrolls
10. <i>The Bodhisattva-piṭaka Sūtra</i>	360 scrolls
11. <i>The Sūrangama-samādhi Sūtra</i>	30 scrolls
12. <i>The Arthaviniścaya-dharmaparyāya Sūtra</i>	40 scrolls
13. <i>The Avatamsaka Sūtra</i>	81 scrolls
14. <i>The Mahāprajñā-pāramitā Sūtra</i>	600 scrolls
15. <i>The Abūta-dharma Sūtra</i>	550 scrolls
16. <i>The Other Mādhyamika Sūtra</i>	42 scrolls
17. <i>The Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra</i>	20 scrolls
18. <i>The Pañca-nāga Sūtra</i>	20 scrolls

19. <i>The Bodhisattva-caryā-nirdeśa Sūtra</i>	60 scrolls
20. <i>The Magadha Sūtra</i>	140 scrolls
21. <i>The Māyā-dālamahātānta mahāyāna-gambhīra nāyaguhyā-paraśi Sūtra</i>	30 scrolls
22. <i>The Western Heaven Śāstra</i>	30 scrolls
23. <i>The Buddha-kṣetra Sūtra</i>	1,638 scrolls
24. <i>The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra</i>	90 scrolls
25. <i>The Original Loft Sūtra</i>	56 scrolls
26. <i>The Mahāmayūri-vidyārājñī Sūtra</i>	14 scrolls
27. <i>The Abhidharma-kośa Śāstra</i>	10 scrolls
28. <i>The Mahāsaṃghaṭa Sūtra</i>	30 scrolls
29. <i>The Saddharma-puṇḍarika Sūtra</i>	10 scrolls
30. <i>The Precious Permanence Sūtra</i>	170 scrolls
31. <i>The Sāṅghika-vinaya Sūtra</i>	110 scrolls
32. <i>The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Śāstra</i>	50 scrolls
33. <i>The Precious Authority Sūtra</i>	140 scrolls
34. <i>The Correct Commandment Sūtra</i>	10 scrolls
35. <i>The Vidyā-mātra-siddhi Śāstra</i>	10 scrolls

From the thirty-five titles of scriptures that are in the treasury, we have selected altogether five thousand and forty-eight scrolls for the sage monk to take back to the Tang in the Land of the East. Most of these have been properly packed and loaded on the horse, and a few have also been arranged in a pannier. The pilgrims now wish to express their thanks to you.”

Having tethered the horse and set down the poles, Tripitaka led his three disciples to bow to Buddha, each pressing his palms together in front of him. Tathāgata said to the Tang monk, “The efficacy of these scriptures cannot be measured. Not only are they the mirror of our faith, but they are also the source of the Three Religions. They must not be lightly handled, especially when you return to your South Jambūdvīpa Continent and display them to the multitude. No one should open a scroll without fasting and bathing first. **Treasure them! Honor them! Therein will be found the mysteries of gaining immortality and comprehending the Way, the wondrous formulas for the execution of the thousand transformations.**” Tripitaka kowtowed to thank him and to express his faith and obedience. As before, he prostrated himself in homage three times to the Buddhist Patriarch with all earnestness and sincerity before he took the scriptures and left. As he went through the three monastery gates, he again thanked each of the sages, and we shall speak no more of him for the moment.



After he had sent away the Tang monk, Tathāgata dismissed the assembly for the transmission of scriptures. From one side stepped forth the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin, who pressed her palms together to say to the Buddhist Patriarch, “This disciple received your golden decree that year to search for someone in the Land of the East to be a scripture seeker. Today he has succeeded. Altogether, his journey took fourteen years or five thousand and forty days. Eight more days and the perfect canonical number will be attained. Would you permit me to surrender in return your golden decree?”

Highly pleased, Tathāgata said, “What you said is most appropriate. You are certainly permitted to surrender my golden decree.” He then gave this instruction to the Eight Vajra Guardians: “Quickly exercise your magic powers to lift the sage monk back to the East. As soon as he has imparted the true scriptures to the people there, bring him back here to the West. You must accomplish all this within eight days, so as to fulfill the perfect canonical number of five thousand and forty-eight. Do not delay.” The Vajra Guardians at once caught up with the Tang monk, crying, “Scripture seekers, follow us!” The Tang monk and his companions, all with healthy frames and buoyant bodies, followed the Vajra Guardians to rise in the air astride the clouds. Truly

*Their minds enlightened, they bowed to Buddha;*

*Merit perfected, they ascended on high.*

We do not know how they will pass on the scriptures after they have returned to the Land of the East; let's listen to the explanation in the next chapter.