

University Reader
大学生读书计划



施蛰存小说选



Selected Stories by Shi Zhecun

English-Chinese • Gems of Chinese Literature • Modern

英汉对照 • 中国文学宝库 • 现代文学系列

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中国文学出版社
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总编辑 杨宪益 戴乃迭

总策划 野 莽 蔡剑峰

编委会 (以姓氏笔划为序)

吕 华

李朋义

赵文炎

凌 原

野 莽

蔡剑峰

大学生读书计划

——中国文学宝库出版呼吁

在即将开机印刷这第一批50本名为中国文学宝库的英汉对照读本时，我们的心情竟然忧多于喜。因为我们只能以保守的5000册印数，去面对全国400万在校大学生。

虽然我们并非市场经济的局外者，若仅为印数（销售量）计，大可奋起而去生产诸如TOFEL应试指南，或者英语四六级模拟试题集一类的教辅图书，但我们还是决定宁可冒着债台高筑的风险，也有责任对大学生同胞发出一声亲切的呼唤：请亲近我们的中国文学。

身为向世界译介中国文学和向国内出版外语读物的，具有双重责任的出版社，我们得知目前大学生往往仅注重外语的学习而偏废了母语的提高，以及忽视了中国文学的阅读，放弃了人文知识的训练。有统计表明，某理工院校57%的同学不曾读过《红楼梦》等四大名著，以致校园内外流行着“样子像研究生，说话像大学生，作文像中学生，写字像小学生”的幽默。还有一副这样的对联，说大学生的文章是“无错不成文，病句错句破残句，句句不堪入目；有误方为篇，别字错字自造字，字字触目惊心”，横批“斯文扫地”。作为未来社会中坚和整个社会发展关键力量的大学生，这种“文弃”现象的流行，势必导致一场人文精神危机的爆发。对照以科学与人文精神追求为主题的五四新文化运动，八十年的历程告诉我们，以上提醒绝非危言耸听。

我们已经迈入知识经济时代，在追求科学知识的同时，创新精神已成为关键；而创新的源泉其实有赖于多学科多领域知识的交融，依靠的是新型的复合型人才，所以，文学对于新一代的大学生来说绝非装点，而是沟通自然科学与人文科学的桥梁，使我们在汲取知识的同时更能获得智慧，于创造物质的同时还进一步丰富和完善着精神；无怪乎爱因斯坦认为自己受影响最大的竟是陀思妥耶夫斯基。由此证明，一个真正的科学家应该拥有丰富的文学和文化知识以及完整的人格。十年前，七十五位诺贝尔奖得主聚会巴黎，当时他们所发表的宣言开篇就是，“如果人类要在21世纪生存下去，必须回首2500年去吸收孔子的智慧。”确实，十年的时间让我们有目共睹，现代经济科技的飞速发展何尝不是一柄双刃的剑？只有文化的力量才能抵消随之而来的负面后果。可见，知识的获取与技能的训练对于大学生来说固然重要，但文化与修养却尤需关切。正因为大学生代表着社会先知先觉的知识力量，置身当前的文化现实，就应有一分责任感与使命感，力求对知识技能以外许多带有根本性质的精神追求形成明确的认识，从而具备一种对生命意义进行探索与追问的精神，一种以人文精神为背景的生存勇气和人格力量。那么，能够引导我们探索前行的一盏明灯，不就是闪烁着理想光芒的不朽的文学名著吗？

一个人乃至一个民族，从其对文学的亲疏态度，可以衡量出其文化素质的程度。文学应是从人类文化中升华出的理想的结晶，她“使人的心灵变得高尚，使人的勇气、荣誉感、希望、尊严、同情心、怜悯心和牺牲精神复活起来”（威廉·福克纳）；无疑，只有文学才能从更高的层次上提升人的文化素质和整体素质，充实人的内心世界，焕发人的精神风貌，带给人们真善美。而亲近文学，特别是热爱祖国灿烂的文学以及文化，正是当代中国大学生加强文化修养，弘扬人文精神的有力脚步。

“越是民族的，就越是世界的”，中国文学属于中国，也属于世界。和平是人类共同愿望，交流与共享则是新世纪的潮流。中国当代大学生的血液里流动着数千年的文化积淀，没有理由在让世界了解中国大学生聪明才智的同时，却无缘分享我们的骄傲——中国大学生不但能够读懂英语的莎士比亚，而且能让世界感动于中国文学的伟大。

这是我们作为出版者的理想。我们原有一个世纪礼物的构想，是同大学生一起做一个“读书计划”。这一次将中国文学的最新荟萃配设高水平的英语译文，是其中推荐给新世纪大学生的第一批读物。盼望着您——我们无数知音中的5000名先来者，给我们鼓励，也给我们意见和批评。

编者

一九九九年五月三十日

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只有文学才能从更高的层次上提升人的文化素质和整体素质，充实人的内心世界，焕发人的精神风貌，带给人们真善美。而亲近文学，特别是热爱祖国灿烂的文学以及文化，正是当代中国大学生加强文化修养，弘扬人文精神的有力脚步。

One Rainy Evening

A grey drizzle once again filled the early summer sky. I don't have anything against rain as such: it's just that I hate the way passing motorcycles splash water and mud all over my clothes. It even gets into my mouth. Sometimes, when I have nothing better to do, I sit in my office, gaze out at the rain and complain bitterly to my colleagues about the motorcycle wheels. They always urge me to take a bus or a rickshaw, saying it isn't worth getting drenched in order to save a bit of money. But so far I've never taken their advice, for in truth I enjoy walking home in the pattering rain, sheltered beneath an umbrella. My apartment is not far from work so I don't need to take the tramcar. Moreover, since I don't own a raincoat it would be pointless for me to get on a bus filled with people in wet mackintoshes as I would still arrive home soaked. In any case, when night falls and the street lamps are lit, it is delightful to stroll along the street absorbing the atmosphere. The sights and sounds of the metropolis — especially in the rain — never fail to entertain me, even though I inevitably get covered in mud and water. Passing vehicles and pedestrians become hazy through the misty drizzle; yellow light floods, and is reflected in the wide streets and every now and again the odd flash of green or red beams out of the mist like a policeman's beacon, making the passersby blink. When it rains heavily the sound of human voices, no matter how close by, seem to come from somewhere in the sky.

My colleagues usually cite my refusal to take the bus as an example of how simple and frugal a life I lead. They little know how much pleasure I take in thus ambling the streets. Motorcycles or no, I wouldn't wish to change my habits for the world. And indeed this walk has become a habit, for I have been doing it now for three or four years. Occasionally it crosses my mind that I should really buy a raincoat so that I don't get my clothes splashed, but somehow I've never got around to it.

It has been raining solidly for several days now, but I've still been travelling to and from work on foot with my umbrella.

Yesterday afternoon a lot of work accumulated on my desk, and since it was still raining at four o'clock I decided to stay behind and attend to a few more things while waiting for it to subside. By the time I left the office at six it had long since stopped.

As I walked out into the brightly lit street I saw that the sky had cleared. Tucking my umbrella under my arm, and dodging the drips coming down from the rooftops, I ambled from Jiangxi Road to the bridge on Sichuan Road. This took me about thirty minutes. The big clock on the post office showed 6:25. Just before I reached the bridge the sky darkened again, which I paid no heed to since I knew dusk was falling; but no sooner had I stepped onto the bridge than the skies opened and the rain began to fall in torrents, accompanied by a cacophony of sound. I looked down at the figures scuttling for shelter on the North Sichuan Road and along the two banks of the Suzhou Creek. Their anxiety made me anxious too. What on earth were they in such a panic about? It was only a bit of rain after all — nothing life-threatening; yet they were running as if from a disaster. It couldn't be that they didn't want to get wet because I clearly saw that even people who had raincoats and umbrellas were hurrying and stumbling along. It looked like a sort of unconscious disorder. Having said that, if I hadn't been enjoying my stroll in the rain so much I might also have found myself scurrying down the bridge.

But still, why the hurry? It was raining just as hard in front of them as behind, I opened my umbrella. It wasn't long before I passed the Tiantong intersection. The rain continued to thunder down, interrupted only by the odd motorcycle which sped past before quickly disappearing into the spray. There wasn't a tramcar or rickshaw to be seen. I wondered where they had hidden themselves. As for people, there wasn't a soul on the street. Everyone had

gathered in clusters under shop awnings or any other shelter they could find and were staring helplessly and resentfully at the rain. I couldn't understand why they had bothered to buy their rain gear.

As for myself, I found I had reached Wenjianshi Road and was still perfectly comfortable. My umbrella protected my head and though my feet were somewhat damp, it was nothing a pair of dry socks wouldn't sort out once I got home. As I walked along it seemed to me that North Sichuan Road, shrouded in misty rain, seemed to have an almost poetic quality about it. I didn't think this consciously, but was somehow aware of it as a sensation. The only thing I was concretely aware of was the fact that I had to turn off at the corner.

I leaned out into the street to see if there were any cars coming and was about to cross over and turn into Wenjianshi Road when I noticed a tramcar which had pulled up at the stop and was letting passengers off. I stepped back onto the pavement and waited for it to start up and go past. In fact there was plenty of time for me to cross before it moved off, and I had lived in Shanghai long enough to know the rules for pedestrians, but for some reason I didn't cross. Why? I had no idea.

As I waited, I counted the passengers getting out of the first-class compartment. Why did I not count those getting out of the third-class compartment? It was not a deliberate choice; merely the result of the fact that the first-class compartment was at the front of the tramcar so I could see it more clearly. The first passenger was a Russian in a red raincoat; the second a middle-aged Japanese woman with her head drawn in between her shoulders. She hurried along by the side of the tramcar, opened a thick-handled Japanese umbrella, crossed in front of the tramcar like a frightened rat and disappeared into Wenjianshi Road. I knew her; she was the owner of a fruit store. The third and fourth passengers were businessmen, possibly from Ningbo. Both wore Chinese-style green rubber raincoats. The fifth, who was also the last, was a young lady. She had neither umbrella nor raincoat, and must have got on the tramcar before the rain had started and was now unfortunate enough to emerge into this downpour. I guessed she must have boarded the tramcar quite a long way away — at least a few stops beyond the Carter Road stop. She descended and stepped awkwardly onto the pavement. Her slender shoulders shuddered with cold. By this time I had begun to notice her beauty. Beauty has many different aspects to it. Good looks are no doubt an important element, but equally important are refined manners, a well-proportioned figure and a charming style of conversation, or at least one that isn't intolerable. And for some reason I imagined this young lady standing in the rain to have all those qualities.

She glanced up and down the street, then walked to the corner to look down Wenjianshi Road. I knew she was hoping to find a rickshaw, but, as I followed the direction of her eyes, I could see none anywhere. The rain continued as before, and returning quickly she sheltered under a balcony overhanging a wooden furniture shop. Her eyes looked fretful and her delicate eyebrows were knitted together in annoyance. I too withdrew under the balcony, even though the tramcar had pulled out, the street was empty and I could cross. Why didn't I? Was it because I was reluctant to leave this young lady? No, absolutely not. Neither was I reluctant to get home to my wife, who was waiting for me to join her for dinner under the Lamplight. To be perfectly frank, at that moment I was unaware that I even had a wife. A beautiful, lonely lady was standing pathetically before me gazing into the accursed summer rain. I moved instinctively towards her.

Even though the balcony protected us from the worst of the downpour, each gust of wind blew sheets of chill rain over us. I had an umbrella and could have used it as a shield to ward off the attacking arrows like a valiant warrior of ancient times. But the young lady had already got pretty wet through previous attacks. Her thin black silk blouse offered her no protection whatsoever; instead it merely outlined the smooth roundness of her arms. Several times she had turned her back towards me to prevent the rain attacking her bosom. Was it any less harmful to let her arm and shoulder be exposed, or let her clothes cling to her body like that?

In fine weather rickshaws can be found drumming up trade everywhere. Yet now, just when they were needed

most, there wasn't one to be seen. I thought of how inflexibly these people conducted their business. Maybe demand had exceeded supply to such an extent that even on a busy street like this there were none available; or maybe the pullers were also sheltering from the rain. They had a right to, didn't they? I had never even thought about it before, but suddenly I began to find those rickshaw-pullers perfectly hateful. Here was a beautiful young lady, inconvenienced and in distress, waiting for one of these people to come and rescue her. Why didn't anyone come?

But no amount of seething on my part made a rickshaw appear. It was really beginning to get late. A few men clad in jackets on the opposite side of the street finally lost patience and, risking their clothes, dashed out into the street. I noticed that the young lady's long brows were knit even more tightly and her eyes were glistening. She seemed worried, and as her melancholy eyes met mine for the first time, I saw them dilate in surprise. Why are you standing there when you have an umbrella and a pair of leather shoes? They seemed to say. Are you waiting for someone? Who could you possibly be waiting for on such a night as this? Or maybe you're harbouring malicious intentions towards me. If you aren't, then why are you staring at me like that? She shifted her questioning eyes from me to the overcast sky. I was convinced she was suspicious of me.

I had an umbrella, and it was big enough to shelter two people. Why hadn't I thought of it earlier? Yet now that I had thought of it, what was I going to do? The obvious thing would be to shelter her from the downpour. I could accompany her to find a rickshaw. I could even see her home if it wasn't too far away. And then again, so what if it did happen to be far away? I could still go with her. Should I go over and offer? But if I did, wouldn't she still have misgivings? She might misinterpret me, as I guessed she had done just now, and decline my offer. On the other hand, would she really be prepared to remain in the ceaseless wind and rain indefinitely? No! The rain would soon stop anyway. How long ... had it been raining? I had completely forgotten the time. I looked at my watch, it was 7:34. I'd been there over an hour. The rain couldn't go on like this. I looked at the gutters, which were already beginning to overflow, and was afraid the water would soon begin to rise up over the pavement. No, it couldn't go on. In a little while she would be able to go. And even if the rain didn't stop, a rickshaw would appear at least. She would no doubt take it whatever the price demanded. Should I leave then? Most certainly. There was no reason for me to stay

Another ten minutes passed and I still hadn't left. The rain continued and no rickshaw appeared. She stood there looking as worried as ever. The sight of her discomfiture roused in me a merciless curiosity to see what she would do. I felt a strange mixture of sympathy and detachment.

Suddenly I noticed that she was gazing at me incredulously.

And in the same instant I realized why. She seemed to be waiting for me to give her shelter and see her home. Or, if she wasn't going home, at least to wherever she happened to be going. You have an umbrella, and since you haven't left, you are presumably willing to share it with me, her eyes seemed to say. What are you waiting for?

I flushed, but did not lower my gaze.

It had been a long time since I had blushed before a woman, and I was surprised at myself. What possible excuse did I have for it? None! I felt something inside me rise up in protest. I wanted revenge. I know this may seem like an extreme response, but it gives some idea of how much I wanted to resist her influence.

I moved closer and vacated half the umbrella.

"Miss, I'm afraid you won't be able to hire a rickshaw for a while yet. If it is not inconvenient to you, let me accompany you on your way. I have an umbrella."

I had wanted to say I would see her home, but then thought she might not have been going home. So finally I felt it vague, trying to appear as casual as possible, though I guessed she must have seen through my apparent composure.

With a half-smile playing on her lips, she gazed at me for a long time, probably assessing my motives.

Shanghai was a place where people habitually communicated with each other distrustfully. Perhaps she couldn't make up her mind. Would the rain really not stop soon? Would a rickshaw really not turn up? Should I risk going with him under his umbrella? Maybe there would be a rickshaw round the corner up ahead. Or maybe I should simply let him see me to my destination. Should I chance it?... Perhaps. But what if anyone I know sees me. Won't they be suspicious?... On the other hand it's getting very late and the rain isn't subsiding at all.

She nodded at me, very slightly.

"Thank you." A soft Suzhou accent floated out from between her red lips.

Turning into the western end of Wenjianshi Road I began to marvel at my encounter with this young lady now walking beside me beneath my umbrella. Had things really reached this stage? She was walking beside me and letting me protect her with my umbrella. Who was she? I hadn't been in such a situation for years, except with my wife. Looking back over my shoulder I saw people huddling in shop doorways staring at me — or rather, at us. Despite the mist, I could still make out their suspicious expressions. My heart lurched. Was there anyone there I knew? Or was there anyone who knew her?... Withdrawing my eyes I found that she was hunched over and walking on tiptoe. Her hair, which occasionally neared my face, smelled sweet. What would anyone who knew either of us think if they saw us talking together like this?... I lowered the umbrella to hide our faces. Now no one would be able to see us unless they consciously bent down and looked up at us. She seemed to like this.

I walked on her righthand side holding the umbrella with my left hand. To make as much room for her as possible I had to stretch my arm out and it wasn't long before it started to ache. But I was blissfully unaware of the pain. I glanced at her, but my view was obscured by the infernal handle. She was not as beautiful when viewed from the side as she had been when viewed from the front; but I discovered something else: she looked like somebody I knew. Who? I searched my mind. Why couldn't I place her? Then suddenly I knew. She looked like a girl I had had on my mind for years. The two were almost exactly the same height and had the same kind of complexion. Why had it taken me so long to think of it? . . . She looked like my first girlfriend, classmate and neighbour. But surely she couldn't be! Yet there was such a strong resemblance. We hadn't seen each other for what ... one year ... two years ... seven years now, and the last time we met she had only been fourteen years old. Now I was married. She, meanwhile, must have grown more beautiful. Indeed, in my mind I had watched her grow up. Whenever her image flashed across my mind or passed through my dreams, it was no longer as a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl, but as a beautiful twenty-year-old woman. She had had a sweet voice and charming manners. Sometimes when I was feeling depressed, I would imagine her as a woman or even a young mother.

But what was it about this girl that resembled her so much? Perhaps it was that her looks still had about them the features of a fourteen-year-old girl. Could it actually be her? Why couldn't she have come to Shanghai? It must be her! Could there be people so alike in the world? I couldn't tell whether or not she had recognized me.... I'd better ask.

"Are you from Suzhou?"

"Yes."

It was her. What an extraordinary coincidence! When had she come to Shanghai? I wondered. Had her family moved too? Or perhaps, had she married someone in Shanghai? She must have forgotten me, otherwise she wouldn't be letting me walk with her....Or perhaps my appearance had changed so much that she no longer recognized me. It had been a long time, or what if she had recognized me but didn't know I was married. What should I do then? Should I tell her everything? And if so, how should I start?...

I glanced casually along the street. A woman was looking at me from behind the counter of a store — or maybe she was looking at us — with what seemed to me melancholy eyes. I suddenly felt as though she were my wife. But what would she be doing there? I was baffled.

We had come to a grocery market. We were probably getting near to her destination. I mustn't miss this opportunity of finding out more about her. I had to know. But was it a good idea to rekindle our friendship? Yes, friendship would be all right. But perhaps it would be better if I just pretended to be a kindhearted stranger helping a lady in distress. I hesitated. What was the best thing to do?

I wanted to know where she was going. Maybe she wasn't going home at all. But if she was, was it to her parents' home? If so, there would be no problem. I would be able to go in as I had done when I was a child. But what if it were her own home? Why didn't I just ask her whether she was married?... Perhaps it wasn't her own home but that of her husband. I visualized a young man. I began to regret ever having got involved. Why had I interfered in other people's business and left my wife waiting anxiously for me at home? There must be some rickshaws on North Sichuan Road, and she probably could have hired one long ago if I hadn't offered to accompany her with my umbrella. If I hadn't been so confused by my own thoughts I would have turned around and left her standing in the rain.

Better ask one final question.

"What is your family name?"

"Liu."

Liu? It must be false. She had recognized me. She must know everything about me. She was fooling me. She didn't want to acknowledge me. She didn't even want to pick up our friendship. Women! Why had she changed her name? ... Perhaps it was her husband's. Liu ... Liu what?

These thoughts crossed my mind in the few minutes it took for me and this seemingly charming young lady to cross the street. My eyes had hardly left her, so I was unaware that the rain had subsided. More people were now walking up ahead and there seemed to be a couple of rickshaws about. Why didn't she hire one? Maybe we were almost there. Or maybe she had recognized me but didn't dare let me know it, and was therefore deliberately prolonging our time together.

A breeze caught the edge of her dress and blew it backwards. She turned aside to protect her face, her eyes closed, which seemed to me somewhat coquettish. It reminded me of the painting *A Beauty Going to the Palace on a Rainy Evening* by the Japanese artist Suzuki Harunobu, in which a woman carrying a lantern, sheltered by a torn umbrella, is passing by a shrine. The lantern and dress are blown upwards; her face is turned aside to avoid the driving rain and wind. Now I noticed that this girl too possessed something of this free and easy manner. As for myself, I imagined that in other people's eyes I probably seemed like her husband or lover. I was quite pleased that they should think this way and savoured the notion as though it were a fact; and that she really was my childhood sweetheart. The aroma from her hair and cheek floated across on the damp breeze and smelled the same as my wife's.... Suddenly I thought of the line "I wear a bamboo hat to escort a beautiful young lady," which seemed an apt description of my encounter. The famous painting by Suzuki Harunobu once again came into my mind. But the beauty drawn by the artist in no way resembled this girl. Instead, his beauty's lips bore some resemblance to my wife's. I glanced at the girl again. Strangely enough, I was no longer convinced that she was my first girlfriend. She was just another young lady who had nothing to do with me. Apart from her age, I could no longer detect the slightest trace of my former sweetheart in her features; neither in her eyebrows, forehead, nose or cheekbones. And indeed the features rather repelled me. What I disliked most were her lips, which seemed somewhat too thick when viewed from the side.

Suddenly I felt relaxed and I breathed easier. I held the umbrella for her absentmindedly and was aware of nothing except that my arm ached. It was as though the image I had had of this strange young lady had suddenly dissolved! I felt that a prisoner had suddenly been released from my heart. By now it was late at night and I could no longer hear the rain pattering on my umbrella.

"Thank you. You don't need to come any further. The rain has stopped."

Her words broke into my thoughts. I started, and hastened to close my umbrella. A beam of orange light from the street lamp illuminated her face. Was she really nearly at her destination? Or was she bidding me farewell now because she didn't want me to accompany her any further? Couldn't I find a way to find out where she was going?...

"It's no trouble. If it's not inconvenient, let me see you to your door."

"Really, you're very kind but it's not necessary. I can go the rest of the way by myself. It's very late. I'm very sorry to have delayed you."

It seemed she really wasn't going to let me go any further. But what if the rain started up again? I hated this merciless weather. Why didn't it just continue for another half hour? Yes, half an hour would be enough. For an instant I thought I detected a sort of unique solemnity in her gaze which was waiting for some sort of response. I was awestruck, as though a cold wind had blown through my shoulders. I was about to reply, but she was no longer waiting.

"Thank you. Do please go now. Goodbye...."

With that she turned slightly, then strode away without looking back. I stood numbly in the middle of the road, gazing after her figure as it melted into the night, until a rickshaw drove up touting for business.

I sat on the rickshaw as though in a dream from which I would shortly awake. I felt that I still had some unfinished business on my mind, of which I was not quite conscious myself. Several times I had been on the point of opening the umbrella. Then I would catch myself and laugh at my own stupidity. The rain had stopped and the sky was clear. Even a few stars were dotted about.

I got off the rickshaw and knocked at my door.

"Who is it?"

It was the voice of the young lady I had accompanied with my umbrella! What was she doing in my house? The door opened, and by the dim light in the hall I saw that the person silhouetted in the half-opened doorway was not the young lady at all. In fact as I watched, the figure metamorphosed into the woman who had been leaning against the counter and looking at us with envious eyes.

I entered the house in low spirits. As I scrutinized my wife under the light, I was surprised to find nothing about her that was in any way similar to that young lady.

She asked me why I was so late. I told her I had met a friend and that we had gone to a cafe for a snack while waiting for the rain to stop. To prove it I ate very little that night.

Translated by Wang Ying

梅雨之夕

梅雨又淙淙地降下了。

对于雨，我倒并不觉得嫌厌，所嫌厌的是在雨中疾驰的摩托车的轮子，它会溅起泥水猛力地洒上我的衣裤，甚至会连嘴里也拜受了美味。我常常在办公室里，当公事空闲的时候，凝望着窗外淡白的空中的雨丝，对同事们谈起我对于这些自私的车轮的怨苦。下雨天是不必省钱的，你可以坐车，舒服些。他们会这样善意地劝告我。但我并不曾屈就了他们的好心，我不是为了省钱，我喜欢在滴沥的雨声中撑着伞回去。我的寓所离公司是很近的，所以我散工出来，便是电车也不必坐，此外还有一个我所以不喜欢在雨天坐车的理由，那是因为我还不曾有一件雨衣，而普通在雨天的电车里，几乎全是裹着雨衣的先生们，夫人们或小姐们，在这样一间狭窄的车厢里，滚来滚去的人身上全是水，我一定会虽然带着一柄上等的伞，也不免满身淋漓地回到家里。况且，尤其是在傍晚时分，街灯初上，沿着人行路用一些暂时安逸的心境去看看都市的雨景，虽然拖泥带水，也不失为一种自己的娱乐。在蒙雾中来来往往的车辆人物，全都消失了清晰的轮廓，广阔的路上倒映着许多黄色的灯光，间或有几条警灯的红色和绿色在闪烁着行人的眼睛。雨大的时候，很近的人语声，即使声音很高，也好像在半空中了。

人家时常举出这一端来说我太刻苦了，但他们不知道我会从这里找出很大的乐趣来，即使偶尔有摩托车的轮子溅满泥泞在我身上，我也并不因此而改了我的习惯。说是习惯，有什么不妥呢？这样的已经有三四年了。有时也偶尔想着总得买一件雨衣来，于是可以在雨天坐车，或者即使步行，也可以免得被泥水溅着了上衣，但到如今这仍然留在心里做一种生活上的希望。

在近来的连日的大雨里，我依然早上撑着伞上公司去，下午撑着伞回家，每天都如此。

昨日下午，公事堆积得很多。到了四点钟，看看外面雨还是很大，便独自留下在公事房里，想索性再办了几桩，一来省得明天要更多地积起来，二来也借此避雨，等它小一些再走。这样地竟逗留到六点钟，雨早已停了。

走到外面，虽然已是满街灯火，但天色却转晴朗了。曳着伞，避着檐滴，缓步过去，从江西路南口走到四川路桥，竟走了差不多半点钟光景。邮政局的大钟已是六点二十五分了。未走上桥，天色早已重又冥晦下来，但我并没有介意，因为晓得是傍晚的时分了。刚走到桥头，急雨骤然从乌云中漏下来，潇潇的起着繁响。看下面北四川路上和苏州河两岸行人的纷纷乱窜乱避，只觉得连自己心里也有些着急。他们在着急些什么呢？他们也一定知道这降下来的是雨，对于他们没有生命上的危险，但何以要这样急迫地躲避呢？说是为了恐怕衣裳给淋湿了，但我分明看见手中撑着伞的和身上披了雨衣的人也有些脚步踉跄了。我觉得至少这是一种无意识的纷乱。但要是我不曾感觉到雨中闲行的滋味，我也是会和这些人一样地急突地奔下桥去的。

何必这样的奔逃呢，前路也是在下雨，撑开我的伞来的时候，我这样漫想着。不觉已走过了天潼路口。大街上浩浩荡荡地降着雨，真是一个伟观，除了间或有几辆摩托车，连续地冲破了雨，仍旧钻进了雨中疾驰过去之外，电车和人力车全不看见。我奇怪它们都躲到什么地方去了。至于人，行走着的几乎是没有什么，但在店铺檐下或蔽荫下是可以一团一团地看得见，有伞的和无伞的，有雨衣的和无雨衣的，全都聚集着，用嫌厌的眼望着这奈何不得的雨。我不懂他们这些雨具是为了怎样的天气而买的。

至于我，已经走近文监师路了。我并没有什么不舒服，我有一柄好的伞，脸上绝不会给雨水淋湿，脚上虽然觉得有些湿漉漉，但这至多是回家后换一双袜子的事。我且行且看着雨中的北四川路，觉得朦胧地颇有些诗意。但这里所说的“觉得”，其实也并不是什么具体的思绪，除了“我该在这里转弯了”之外，心中一些也不意识着什么。

从人行路上走出去，探头看看街上有没有往来的车辆，刚想穿过街去转入文监师路，但一辆先前并没有看见的电车已停在眼前。我止步了，依然退进到人行路上，在一支电杆边等候着这辆车的开出。在车停

的时候，其实我是可以安心地对穿过去的，但我并不曾这样做。我在上海住得很久，我懂得走路的规则。我为什么不在这个可以穿过去的时候走到对街去呢？我没知道。

我数着从头等车里下来的乘客，为什么不数三等车里下来的呢？这里并没有故意的挑选，头等座在车的前部，下来的乘客刚在我面前，所以我很看得清楚：第一个，穿着红皮雨衣的俄罗斯人。第二个是中年的日本妇人，她急急地下了车，撑开了手里提着的东洋粗柄雨伞，缩着头鼠窜似地绕过车前，转进文监师路去了。我认识她，她是一家果子店的女店主。第三，第四，是像宁波人似的我国商人，他们都穿着绿色的橡皮华式雨衣。第五个下来的乘客，也即是末一个了，是一位姑娘。她手里没有伞，身上也没有穿雨衣，好像是在雨停止了之后上电车的，而不幸在到目的地的时候却下着这样的大雨。我猜想她一定是从很远的地方上车的，至少应当在卡德路以上的几站罢。

她走下车来，缩着瘦削的，但并不露骨的双肩，窘迫地走上人行路的时候，我开始注意着她的美丽了。美丽有许多方面，容颜的姣好固然是一重要素，但风仪的温雅，肢体的停匀，甚至谈吐的不俗，至少是不惹厌，这些也有着份儿，而这个雨中的少女，我事后觉得她是全适合这几端的。

她向路的两边看了一眼，又走到转角上看着文监师路。我晓得她是急于要招呼一辆人力车。但我看，跟着她的眼光，大路上清寂地没一辆车子徘徊着，而雨还尽量地落下来。她旋即回了转来，躲避在一家木器店的屋檐下，露着烦恼的眼色，并且蹙着细淡的修眉。

我也便退进在屋檐下，虽则电车已开出，路上空空的，我照理可以穿过去了。但我何以不即穿过去，走上了归家的路呢？为了对于这少女有什么依恋么？并不，绝没有这种依恋的意识。但这也决不是为了我家里有着等候我回去在灯下一同吃晚饭的妻，当时是连我已有妻的思想都不曾有，面前有着一个美的对象，而又是一重困难之中，孤寂地只身呆立着望这永远地，永远地垂下来的梅雨，只为了这些缘故，我不自觉地移动了脚步站在她旁边了。

虽然在屋檐下，虽然没有粗重的檐溜滴下来，但每一阵风会把凉凉的雨丝吹向我们。我有着伞，我可以如中古时期骁勇的武士似地把伞当作盾牌，挡着扑面袭来的雨的箭，但这个少女却身上间歇地被淋得很湿了。薄薄的绸衣，黑色也没有效用了，两只手臂已被画出了它们的圆润。她屡次旋转身去，侧立着，避免这轻薄的雨之侵袭她的前胸。肩臂上受些雨水，让衣裳贴着了肉倒不打紧吗？我曾偶尔这样想。

天晴的时候，马路上多的是兜搭生意的人力车，但现在需要它们的时候，却反而没有了。我想着人力车夫的不善于做生意，或许是因为需要的人太多了，供不应求，所以即使在这繁盛的街上，也不见一辆车子的踪迹。或许车夫也都在避雨呢，这样大的雨，车夫不该避一避吗？对于人力车之有无，本来用不到关心的我，也忽然寻思起来，我并且还甚至觉得那些人力车夫是可恨的，为什么你们不拖着车子走过来接应这生意呢，这里有一位美丽的姑娘，正窘立雨中等候着你们的任何一个。

如是想，人力车终于没有踪迹。天色真的晚了。此处对街的店铺门前有几个短衣的男子已经等得不耐而冒着雨，他们是拼着淋湿一身衣裤的，跨着大步跑去了。我看这位少女的长眉已蹙得更紧，眸子莹然，像是心中很着急了。她的忧闷的眼光正与我的互相交换，在她眼里，我懂得我正受着诧异，为什么你老是站在这里不走呢。你有伞，并且穿着皮鞋，等什么么？雨天在街路上等谁呢？眼睛这样锐利地看着我，不是没怀着好意么？从她将盯住着在我身上打量我的眼光移向着阴黑的天空的这个动作上，我猜测她肯定是在这样想着。

我有伞呢，而且大得足够容两个人的，我懂何以这个意识不早就觉醒了。但现在它觉醒了我将使我做什么呢？我可以用我的伞给她挡住这样的淫雨，我可以陪伴她走一段路去找人力车，如果路不多，我可以送她到她的家。如果路很多，又有什么不成呢？我应当跨过这一箭路，去表白我的好意吗？好意，她不会有什么别方面的疑虑吗？或许她会像刚才我所猜想的那样误解了我，她便会拒绝了我。难道她宁愿在这样不停的风雨中，在冷静的夕暮的街头，独自立到很迟吗？不啊！雨是不久就会停的，已经这样连续不断地降下了……多久了，我也完全忘记了时间在这雨水中流过。我取出表来，七点三十四分。一小时多了。不至于老是这样地降下来吧，看，排水沟已经来不及宣泄，多量的水已经积聚在它上面，打着旋涡，挣扎不到流下去的路，不久怕会溢上了人行路么？不会的，决不会有这样持久的雨，再停一会，她一

定可以走了。即使雨不就停止，人力车是大约总能够来一辆的。她一定会不管多大的代价坐了去的。然则我应当走了么？应当走了。为什么不？……

这样地又十分钟过去了。我还没有走。雨没有住，车儿没有踪影。她也依然焦灼地站着。我有一个残忍的好奇心，如她这样的在一重困难中，我要看她终于如何处理她自己。看着她这样窘急，怜悯和旁观的心理在我身中各占了一半。

她又在惊异地看着我。

忽然，我觉得，何以刚才会觉得呢？我奇怪，她好像在等待我拿我的伞贡献给她，并且送她回去，不，不一定是回去，只是到她所要到的地方去。你有伞，但你不住，你愿意分一半伞遮蔽我，但还在等待什么更适当的时候呢？她的眼光在对我这样说。

我脸红了，但并没有低下头去。

用羞赧来对付一个少女的注目，在结婚以后，我是不常有的。这是自己也随即觉得可怪了。我将用何种理由来譬解我的脸红呢？没有！但随即有一种男子的勇气升上来，我要求报复，这样说或许是较言重了，但至少是要求制服她的心在我身里急突地催促着。

终归是我移近了这少女，将我的伞分一半遮蔽她。

“小姐，车子恐怕一时不会得有，假如不妨碍，让我来送一送罢。我有伞。”

我想说送她回府，但随即想到她未必是在回家的路上，所以结果是这样两用地说了。当说着这些话的时候，我竭力做得神色泰然，而她一定已看出了这勉强的安静的态度后面藏匿着的我的血脉之急流。

她凝视着我半微笑着，这样好久。她是在估量我这种举止的动机，上海是个坏地方，人与人都用了一种不信任的思想交际着！她也许是正在自己委决不下，雨真的在短时期内不会停么？人力车真的不会来一辆么？要不要借着他的伞姑且走起来呢？也许转一个弯就可以有人力车，也许就让他送到了，那不妨事么？……不妨事。遇见了认识人不会猜疑么？……但天太晚了，雨并不觉得小一些。

于是她对我点了点头，极轻微地。

“谢谢你。”朱唇一启，她迸出柔软的苏州音。

转进靠西边的文监师路，在响着雨声的伞下，在一个少女的旁边，我开始诧异我的奇遇。事情会展开到这个现状吗？她是谁，在我身旁同走，并且让我用伞遮蔽她，除了和我的妻之外，近几年来我并不曾有过这样的经历。我回转头去，向后面斜着，店铺里有许多人歇下了工作对我，或是我们，看着。隔着雨的帡幪，我看得见他们的可疑的脸色，我心里吃惊了，这里有着我认识的人吗？或是可有着认识她的人吗？……再回看她，她正低下着头，拣着踏脚地走。我的鼻子刚接近了她的鬓发，一阵香。无论认识我们之中任何一个的人，看见了这样的我们的同行，会怎样想？……我将伞沉下了些，让它遮蔽到我们的眉额。人家除非故意低下身子来，不能看见我们的脸面。这样的举动，她似乎很中意。

我起先是走在她右边，右手执着伞柄，为了要让她多得些荫蔽，手臂便凌空了。我开始觉得手臂酸痛，但并不以为是一种苦楚。我侧眼看她，我恨那个伞柄，它遮隔了我的视线。从侧面看，她并没有从正面看那样的美丽。但我却从此得到一个新的发现：她很像一个人。谁？我搜寻着，我搜寻着，好像很记得，岂但……几乎每日都在意中的，一个我认识的女子，像现在身旁并行着的这个一样的身材，差不多的面容，但何以现在百思不得了呢？……啊，是了，我奇怪为什么我竟会得想不起来，这是不可能的！我的初恋的那个少女，同学，邻居，她不是很像她吗？这样的从侧面看，我与她离别了好几年了，在我们相聚的最后一日，她还只有十四岁，……一年……二年……七年了呢。我结婚了，我没有再看见她，想来长得更美丽了……但我并不是没有看见她长大起来，当我脑中浮起她的印象来的时候，她并不还保留着十四岁的少女的姿态。我不时在梦里，睡梦或白日梦，看见她在长大起来，我曾自己构成她是个美丽的二十岁年纪的少女。她有好的声音和姿态，当偶然悲哀的时候，她在我的幻觉里会是一个妇人，或甚至是一个年轻的母亲。

但她何以这样的像她呢？这个容态，还保留十四岁时候的余影，难道就是她自己么？她为什么不会到上海来呢？是她！天下有这样容貌完全相同的人么？不知她认出了我没有……我应该问问她了。

“小姐是苏州人么？”

“是的。”

确然是她，罕有的机会啊！她几时到上海来的呢？她的家搬到上海来了吗？还是，哎，我怕，她嫁到上海来了呢？她一定已经忘记我了，否则她不会允许我送她走。……也许我的容貌有了改变，她不能再认识我，年数确是很久了。……但她知道我已经结婚吗？要是没有知道，而现在她认识了我，怎么办呢？我应当告诉她吗？如果这样是需要的，我将怎样措辞呢？……

我偶然向道旁一望，有一个女子倚在一家店里的柜上。用着忧郁的眼光，看着我，或者也许是看着她。我忽然好像发现这是我的妻，她为什么在这里？我奇怪。

我们走在什么地方了。我留心看。小菜场。她恐怕快要到了。我应当不失了这个机会。我要晓得她更多一些，但不要使我们继续已断的友谊呢，是的，至少也得是友谊？还是仍旧这样地让我在她的意识里只不过是——一个不相识的帮助女子的善意的人呢？我开始踌躇了。我应当怎样做才是最适当的。

我似乎还应该知道她正要到哪里去。她未必是回家去吧？家——要是父母的家倒也不妨事，我可以进去，如像幼小的时候一样。但如果是她自己的家呢？我为什么不问她结婚了不曾呢……或许，连自己的家也不是，而是她的爱人的家呢，我看见一个文雅的青年绅士。我开始后悔了，为什么今天这样高兴，剩下妻在家里焦灼地等候着我，而来管人家的闲事呢？北四川路上，终究会有人力车往来的，即使我不这样地用我的伞伴送她，她也一定早已雇到车子了。要不是自己觉得不便说出口，我早已会剩了她在雨中返身走了。

还是再考验一次罢。

“小姐贵姓？”

“刘。”

“刘”吗？一定是假的。她已经认出了我，她一定都知道了关于我的事，她哄我了。她不愿意再认识我了，便是友谊也不想继续了。女人！……她为什么改了姓呢？……也许这是她丈夫的姓？刘……刘什么？

这些思想的独白，并不占有了我多少时候。它们是很迅速地翻舞过我心里，就在与这个好像有魅力的少女同行过一条马路的几分钟之内。我的眼不常离开她，雨到这时已在小下来也没有觉得。眼前好像来来往往的人在多起来了，人力车也恍惚看见了几辆。她为什么不雇车呢？或许快要到达她的目的地了。她不会因为心里已认识了我，不敢说，所以故意延滞着和我同走么？

一阵微风，将她的衣缘吹起，飘漾在身后。她扭过脸去避对面吹来的风，闭着眼睛，有些娇媚。这是很有诗兴的姿态，我记起日本画伯铃木春信的一帧题名叫《夜雨宫诣美人图》的画。提着灯笼，遮着被斜风细雨所撕破的伞，在夜的神社之前走着，衣裳和灯笼都给风吹卷着，侧转脸儿来避着风雨的威势，这是颇有些洒脱的。现在我留心到这方面了，她也有些这样的风度。至于我自己，在旁人眼光里，或许成为她的丈夫或情人了，我很有些得意于这种自譬的假设。是的，当我觉得她确是幼小时候初恋着的女伴的时候，我是如像真有这回事似的享受着这样的假设。而从她鬓边颊上被潮润的风吹过来的粉香，我也闻嗅得出是和我妻所有的香味一样的。……我旋即想到古人有“担簦亲送绮罗人”那么一句诗，是很适合于我今天的奇遇的。铃木画伯的名画又一度浮现上来了。但铃木所画的美人并不和她有一些相像，倒是我妻的嘴唇却与画里的少女的嘴唇有些仿佛。我再试一试对于她的凝视，奇怪啊，现在我觉得她并不是我适才所误会着的初恋的女伴了。她是另外一个不相干的少女。眉额，鼻子，颧骨，即使说是年岁的改换，也绝对地找不出一些踪迹来。而我尤其嫌厌着她的嘴唇，侧看过去，似乎太厚了一些。

我忽然觉得很舒适，呼吸也更通畅了。我若有意若无意地替她撑着伞，徐徐觉得手臂太酸痛之外，没什么感觉。在身旁由我伴送着的这个不相识的少女的形态，好似已经从我的心的樊笼中被释放了出去。我才觉得天已完全黑了，而伞上已听不到些微的雨声。

“谢谢你，不必送了，雨已经停了。”

她在我耳朵边这样地嚅响。

我蓦然惊觉，收起手中的伞。一缕街灯的光射上了她的脸，显着橙子的颜色。她快要到了吗？可是她

不愿意我伴她到目的地，所以趁此雨已停住的时候要打发我吗？我能不能设法看一看她究竟到什么地方去呢？……

“不要紧，假使没有妨碍，让我送到了罢。”

“不敢当呀，我一个可以走了，不必送罢，时光已是很晏了，真对不起得很呢。”

看来是不愿我送的了。但假如还是下着大雨便怎么办呢？……我怨怼着不情的天气，何以不再继续下半小时雨呢，是的，只要再半小时就够了。一瞬间，我从她的对于我的凝视——那是为了要等候我的答话——中看出一种特殊的端庄，我觉得凛然，像雨中的风吹上我的肩膀。我想回答，但她已不再等候我。

“谢谢你，请加转罢，再会。……”

她微微地侧面向我说着，跨前一步走了，没有再回转头来。我站在中路，看她的后形，旋即消失在黄昏里。我呆立着，直到一个人力车夫来向我兜揽生意。

在车上的我，好像飞行在一个醒觉之后就要忘记了的梦里。我似乎有一桩事情没有做完成，我心里有着一种牵挂。但这并不曾很清晰地意识着。我几次想把手中的伞撑起来，可是随即会自己失笑这是无意识的。并没有雨降下来，完全地晴了，而天空中也稀疏地有了几颗星。

下了车，我叩门。

“谁？”

这是我在伞底下伴送着走的少女的声音！奇怪，她何以又会在我家里？……门开了。堂中灯火通明，背着灯光立在开着一半的大门边的，倒并不是那个少女。朦胧里，我认出她是那个倚在柜台上用嫉妒的眼光看着我和那个同行的少女的女子。我惆怅地走进门。在灯下，我很奇怪，为什么从我妻的脸色上再也找不出那个女子的幻影来。

妻问我何故回家这样的迟，我说遇到了朋友，在沙利文吃了点心，因为等雨停止，所以坐得久了。为了要证实我这谎话，夜饭吃得很少。

At the Paris Cinema

What, is she actually going to buy the tickets herself? This puts me to shame. Isn't this guy looking at me, this bald-headed Russian, I mean? And this woman has her eyes fixed squarely on my face, too! Yes, and this guy puffing on a cigar, he's looking at me now as well. They're all looking at me. Well, all right, I know what they're thinking. They're a little bit contemptuous of me. No, more than that, I think they are actually sneering at me. I don't know why on earth she had to insist on buying the tickets ... surely she must know what an awkward spot this puts me in? I am a man, a gentleman — and whoever saw a man escort a lady (a "lady" of whatever degree) to a cinema, and the lady going up to buy the tickets? Never; at any rate I've never seen such a thing. My face feels hot. I've probably gone as red as a beetroot. Isn't there a mirror around here? If there is one, I'll look at myself in it. Oh! This guy is actually laughing openly at me! How dare you mock me, sir? Surely you must have seen her suddenly lunge toward the ticket window. I couldn't stop her, how could I? Who would have expected a thing like this to happen? Oh! I don't think I can stand this any longer. I have an urge to turn and run out of the door. Oh, let me just stand outside on the steps for a while.... What, she still hasn't managed to buy the tickets? It's so crowded in here! And that's another thing; why in Heaven's name would she want to fight her way through such a crush to buy the tickets, when that should have been my job? Perhaps she didn't want me to be the one who was doing the inviting?... But, in that case why did she in fact agree yesterday evening to come to the cinema with me? Yes, why did she, yesterday evening when I escorted her to her door, consent to my taking her out tonight? Surely she didn't think that today would be her turn to take me out, did she? Humph, well, if that's what she was thinking, the best thing for us to do is break it off completely, and have none of this "you invite me, and then I invite you" nonsense, in my opinion. Did she think I had invited her to come and see a film so that I could get a return invitation from her? Well, maybe she thought that it would be awkward for me if she let me do all the treating? So she decided that she should buy the tickets today? To save face, perhaps? Yes, that was probably it! Women are always getting such ideas into their heads. They also get rather haughty ideas from time to time.... Now what's going on? She still hasn't bought the tickets. Why don't I fight my way through this crush and buy them for her? How can I be expected to just stand here and put up with the mocking stares of all these people? I'd better go up there. She probably hasn't managed to buy the tickets yet. What do they cost here, anyway?... Downstairs, 6 *jiao*, and upstairs? I wish this idiot would get his head out of the way. I can't see the price. It looks like 8 *jiao*. Oh, here she comes! She's got the tickets at last. Strange! How come I didn't see her buy them? Where did she buy these tickets?

Well, never mind. Let's go in. But why is she giving me both tickets? Oh, these are circle tickets! Why did she splash out on such expensive tickets?... I think I understand; she is showing her displeasure at my buying seats in the stalls the last time. This is even more of a slap in the face! Oh, no! I'm not standing for that. I'd rather break off our friendship. I certainly can't accept these tickets. No, I never want to take her to the cinema again. Not only that, no more strolls, no more ice cream. Never again! ... Ah, now what's she saying?

"All the upstairs and downstairs tickets were sold out, so I had to buy fancy seats."

Oh, pardon me. I almost made a blunder there. Why was it that I couldn't see that the window where they sell the ordinary seats has a sign saying "Sold out"? The crowd is dispersing, isn't it? They must be disappointed, though I can't imagine why this film has so much appeal. Oh, that's right, today's Sunday.... Well, we have to go upstairs. But ... she gave me both tickets. What was the meaning of that? What a narrow staircase! Not like that big wide one at the Grand Theatre. Hardly wide enough for two people to walk up side by side. Has the film started already? I can hear music. Here is the usherette. Oh, now I understand. She wanted me to be the one to hand over the tickets, to

make it look as though I had bought them. That's right! She didn't want me to lose face in front of the usherette. Let me have a look behind, to see if any of those people who saw her buy the tickets are following us.... No, it looks like we're the last in. What about that bald-headed Russian who was mocking me downstairs? And the woman in the skimpy cheongsam? And that cocky fellow smoking the cigar? They must have failed to get hold of tickets and gone home, I suppose. Serves them right for sneering at me, doesn't it? Now, what are our seat numbers? Seventy-four and seventy-five. I can't tell what kind of seats those are.

Good, now we're in, and the show hasn't started yet. In fact, the lights are still on. Just a minute, where's this flunky taking us? We bought circle tickets. Good Heavens! We're in the third row. The back row of the circle! Why do we keep going round the side? Are these two seats ours? This is no good; we're right at the very end. We'll be squinting sideways at the screen all the time. Well, I suppose I'll have to let her sit on the inside.

God, it's stuffy in here! Packed with people, too. Where did that German guy get that foul-smelling cigar? I've never smelled a worse cigar in my life.... Now what's she giving me?... Oh, it's a programme. Of course. Why do I have to be so muddle-headed all the time? Why didn't I pick one up in the *foyer*? But that's funny! I don't remember seeing her pick up a programme. Oh, it was probably when I was looking at the seat numbers.... UFA (Universum-Film AG). Of course. I knew that this film was made by UFA. The Paris Cinema often shows their films. They're not bad, either. I wonder if she noticed? I should tell her.

"UFA is a leading German filmmaker. They turn out some excellent films. They're my favourites. I think they're better than anything that comes out of Hollywood."

No reply. Just nods her head. I wonder if she thought my explanation was a bit impertinent? She probably thinks I'm implying that she's ignorant of the cinema world and she's nettled at that. Now she's bent her head and is engrossed in reading the programme. What should I say to her now?...

Let me see if there's anybody I know here. If anyone saw the two of us come in and spread the story around it would be embarrassing to say the least. But, on the other hand ... embarrassing? Did I use to think like that? There's nothing secret about what we are doing, surely? Can't I take a girlfriend to the cinema? Am I still afraid to do that, even now? The lights have all gone out, and the film is about to start. Good, nobody will be able to see us now! Did she finish reading the programme? She was not that fast; she probably read only half of it. We were a bit late getting here. Well, that was her fault. She refused to take a bus and would insist on walking along that tree-shaded path — God knows why.

These seats are too small. They're really uncomfortable. Has she put her arm on the armrest on this side? Yes, she has. So I've only got this side to lean on. Oh, well, I'll just have to sit sideways and relax a little. Good Lord, that's a nice perfumy smell! It must be coming from her. I detected it on her the other day when we were sitting in the park, only not so strong. Now I remember ... just after dinner she spent an awful long time upstairs, and I almost fumed with impatience, didn't I? She must have been dressing up, and making up, or whatever. I guess she must have changed her outfit completely. Right down to her underwear. That's enough of that ... don't be cheeky. What's she laughing at? Oh, everybody's laughing! Surely they didn't all realize what I was just thinking about in my wild imagination!... No, of course not. They were laughing at that elephant getting his trunk stuck in a crack. Not a bad cartoon!

Why did she nudge my arm with her elbow? It did feel like some kind of a nudge. Was it deliberate or accidental? If I could only see the expression on her face I'd know. Unfortunately the screen's too dark right now and I can't see clearly.... She doesn't look as though anything had happened. Her eyes are fixed on the screen and she has a perfectly solemn expression on her face. In fact she looks completely oblivious of the fact that she is sitting next to me in a cinema. Well, if she had not forgotten all about me what would she have been doing? Flashing glances at me all the time. Ha! Don't be ridiculous! What was I thinking? Oh, I found out this time! She's really

smart; without moving her head at all she swivelled her eyes and gave me a glance.

What does this mean? Clearly she was secretly thinking about me and felt that I was looking at her. She is lightly pressing her lips together, obviously trying to suppress a smile. How is she really feeling, deep down? I just can't guess. What really is our relationship now? Have I fallen in love with her? I can't fathom myself why I should be so happy going out with her. These past three days my mind's been in a whirl, as we've been gallivanting all over Shanghai, just about. I certainly never felt so warm even towards my wife. I really feel sorry for her, but it can't be helped; I can't control myself. She lives in the countryside. She's a gentle and rather pitiable creature. Right now, she'll probably be already asleep. I wonder if she's dreaming about me and a woman watching a film together!...

Phew, it's hot in here! I can feel beads of sweat on my forehead. Where's my handkerchief?... That's strange! It's not in my back pocket. Oh, now I remember, I spread it on a bench for her to sit on in Hongkou Park, and when we left I forgot all about it. Well. That, I'm afraid, is destined to become just a secret, faint memory. What was it she had said, sitting there on that bench and holding a willow leaf that had dropped onto her shoulder? "If only I could have known you earlier!" Didn't she say that?... That's right. I had said that to her once: "If only I could have known you earlier!" I don't know why I said that then. What did it mean? Surely it wasn't some kind of hint, was it? Ah, it's lovely in Hongkou Park on a summer's evening! I can almost see it now — the golden moon reflected in the pond. It really was attractive. But anyway, perhaps her meaning was that if she had known me earlier, then ... earlier, meaning when? Obviously meaning before I was married.... Is that what I was hinting? How strange! The truth is probably that I was just mumbling some vague thought. I shouldn't say such ambiguous things to an emotional young woman. Now, I'm sure she's got the wrong impression. She must think I'm in love with her. And she's not entirely wrong, either. I really am a little bit in love with her as a matter of fact. I really don't understand how all this came about, and I don't know whether I ought to come right out with it and tell her or not. For example, when we were sitting in Hongkou Park a little while ago, if I had told her I loved her how would she have reacted? Burst into tears, perhaps.

... Yes, I know that when women find themselves in such situations their only response is either to sob or hang their heads in mute tragedy, as if there is nothing else they can do. Then, what ought I to have done? Comfort her? Would she have let me kiss her then, like those passionate heroines on the cinema screen? I'm afraid not ... no, definitely not! The circumstances are different; for, of course, she knows that I'm married.... What's she doing now? Seems she's not very settled in her seat. She's pushing her arm further along the armrest. I can even feel the warmth of her skin.... Now, she's turning her head. Is she going to speak to me?

"What's his name?"

Who? Who's she talking about? Someone on the screen? She probably means the fellow playing the adjutant? Who is he? I just can't think of his name. It's on everybody's lips; how is it that I can't recall it all of a sudden?... He's a leading Russian film star, I know that much. Well.

"Do you mean the chap playing the adjutant? That's Ivan Morodin. He's a famous Russian film star."

"Oh, that's right! Ivan Morodin. I remember now, I've seen lots of his films. I really like him."

What? She really likes him?... How can a Chinese woman like someone as stern and cold as Morodin? No, I don't believe it. If it were someone like Valentino, then perhaps! Women go for anyone who plays the part of a handsome young hero. That's true enough! But there's no danger from a celluloid rival. And anyway, if it's a foreign film you can forget such a thing completely. So, you like him, do you? But how would he ever know that you like him? Look, he's kissing another woman. Aren't you jealous? Ha, ha.... *Quelle folle!*

I can feel her looking at me, but not in that sideways manner she was using just now. She has turned her head round towards me. Now what does this mean? Shall I swivel my eyes to meet her gaze?... Perhaps not. That might embarrass her. But she's obviously smiling. Oh, yes! I can definitely feel her smiling at me. What is there about me

to smile at? I wonder if she can read the funny thoughts running through my mind.... That would be quite a joke. Why don't I just turn my head quickly and look her full in the face? I could catch her looking at me before she has time to avert her gaze, then I could ask her what she finds so funny about me....

"What are you smiling at?"

Aha! I've caught her! She looks embarrassed, doesn't she? Let's see what she says.

"I'm smiling at you."

What? Is that all? She's smiling at me. I know that already — you don't have to tell me that. What I want to know is why you are smiling at me. What is it about me that you find so funny? So I'm going to ask her another question.

"Why are you smiling at me?"

"I'm smiling at the way you're watching the film — staring blankly at the screen with your mouth open."

What a strange thing to say! Staring blankly with my mouth open, indeed! I never do that, and I certainly was not doing that just now! Definitely not. Not a bit of it. Lies, all lies! Women are accomplished liars, of course. It was a clever retort, but that was definitely not the reason she was smiling at me. No, I think the real reason was that she thought it was a bit pointless just sitting there gazing at the film. For people in our situation it would be unutterably dull just to sit glued to the screen all the way through. Anyway, the reason for coming here in the first place was to take advantage of the dark, that's all. There are lots of actions and words that require darkness. Look, she's leaning nearer me. Now she's let the cat out of the bag! If the seat is too far to one side to see the screen properly she should be leaning the other way, to her right. She is definitely snuggling up against my shoulder. I'll lean my body up against her a little bit and see if she pulls away.... Heavens, she hasn't budged! Did she feel me move up against her? Is she in love with me too? I suppose so; these past couple of days she hasn't resisted any of my advances. Why don't I dare go any further? I'm too timid now. I love her! I've fallen in love with her! But, how can I tell her? Can she love a man who's already married?

I'm afraid that if I told her, even hinted at it, she would run away from me. She would never see me again, not even a flicker of ordinary friendship would remain.

"Intermission." The intermission already? That means the film's half over. Well, that was quick! I haven't seen any of it yet. What about some ice-cream? Yes, that would be nice; I'm really hot. But I wonder what she would like? Ice-cream? A soft drink? I'd better ask her.

"Would you like some ice-cream or a soft drink or something?"

"No, nothing, thanks."

Why does she have to be so polite today? The last couple of days she hasn't been like this. Why doesn't she want anything? Doesn't she feel hot? Yesterday evening at the Carlton she ate two cartons of ice-cream, didn't she? Why is she so adamant about refusing today? I find that a bit annoying.

"Two chocolate ice-creams, please."

Surely she's not going to refuse, now that I've bought today.

"No, honestly. I really don't feel like eating ice-cream today."

...Oh, I see. Well, if that's the case.... She's blushing slightly, isn't she? I suppose I shouldn't insist; it will only make her feel more embarrassed. Normally, she wouldn't have refused me like this. Never. Didn't she say that she didn't feel like eating ice-cream today? All right, I'll eat them. Ooh, that's cold! I don't think I can eat two cartons all by myself. I hope I won't upset my stomach. She's turning round to look at something; what is it? Is she looking for someone? Or is she afraid that someone has seen us? As a matter of fact, now I hope that someone actually has seen us. It might be a good thing if they spread the story around. I've got chocolate all over my fingers and they're all sticky. It's such a nuisance not having my handkerchief. How about wiping them on my programme? Yes, and where

is my programme? It was on my knee just now. It must have fallen on the floor. It's probably got a lot of muck on it. Damn! What am I supposed to clean my hands on?

She's passed me a handkerchief. She must have been watching me the whole time. It's a little handkerchief, warm and moist. She must have mopped her brow with it. Well, there! I've wiped my fingers clean.

Hold on! I want to know what it smells like. I can pretend to be wiping my mouth; that way no one will see that I'm taking a sniff. Mmm! Very nice. This is her fragrance right enough. Perfume mixed with her perspiration. I feel an urge to lick it, to find out what it tastes like. It must be a very interesting taste, I think. I can wipe the handkerchief across my mouth from the left to the right, and as I do so I can stick my tongue out and lick it. I could even suck at it and no one would know. Wouldn't that be nice? Ah, good! The lights have all been dimmed, and the film's continuing. This is just the right time for me to give it a really good suck, It's really salty here. Must be sweat, I suppose. What's this here, the part with the pungent smell? That must be mucus and saliva. No wonder it's so sticky. This really is a new delight. I can feel a delicious tingling sensation on the tip of my tongue. Strange, it feels as though I'm holding her naked body! I couldn't keep this handkerchief, could I? What would she say if I suddenly put it in my pocket? Even if she didn't say anything she would still think it was a bit improper. I couldn't do such a base thing. I must hand it back to her. And I'd better hand it back right now.

She didn't hold it in her hand, but stuffed it straight in her pocket. She probably sensed what I had done, because the handkerchief was wet through from my sucking it — as if I'd mopped my clothes after a summer shower. Ah, what a beautiful fragrance! A beautiful fragrance for sure! If only I could suck on her tender lips and behind her ears my whole body would start trembling. Oh, Heaven! I want to know right now how she would react if I were to reveal my secret love for her.... It would be enough if she would let me know that she would not spurn me. I don't understand why I am so helpless in this situation. Shaoyan has had lots of love affairs, but I bet he has a different technique from mine. I wonder how he handles it when he tells a woman about his love for her and she turns him down.... If I only knew that, I would be all right. But, there again, would any woman turn him down? He is so handsome, so socially poised. In fact, he's a real Flash Harry.

Perhaps women are unwilling to hurt people's feelings ... but however she handles the situation, even the slightest hint of a refusal will devastate me, I'm sure.

Anyway, let me think this over in more detail. What reason could she possibly have for turning me down? Isn't she happy every time she goes out with me? Doesn't she always strenuously oppose it every time some third person wants to go with us? Doesn't she always disappear whenever she hears that my wife is coming to Shanghai? And when we go out to dinner, doesn't she always insist on sitting in a private booth? Whenever I'm careless, doesn't she just hang her head patiently? Oh, and there's something else, too — that enigmatic gaze she fixes at me with from time to time. Sometimes it can last as long as one or two minutes. What does all this add up to?... So, it seems that, apart from the fact that I'm already married, she can have no reason at all to refuse me.

But there again, it is not absolutely out of the question for a woman to fall in love with a married man. On the contrary, it happens often enough. And to look at it from another angle, if she wanted to turn me down she would have drifted away from me a long time ago. Surely she can't be serenely unaware of the inevitability of my bothering her with such a matter! No, it's impossible. She's the sort of person who's looking for a love affair, and if she were prepared to turn me down she would have been wasting her time seeking me out as a companion, now wouldn't she? Ah, it's a puzzle, after all. At least it's a puzzle I can't solve.

Now what's happening on the screen? He's taken his former wife's ring off and thrown it away in front of that woman, hasn't he? Morodin's got a fine expression on his face. Look how anguished he looks! It must be very difficult to manage an expression like that. But, what was the story before now? I can't really make it out. I've never watched a film so absentmindedly before.... Isn't this my wedding ring? If I should throw away the ring my wife

gave me right now, what would be her reaction? Would she, in fact, see me do it? And if she did, would she say anything? Right, I'll give it a try. It's coming off now. And now I'm holding it between my finger and thumb.... She must have seen me by now, I'm sure. What was that, a sigh? Who breathed a sigh? Is the whole of the audience sighing? Ah, they're embracing. The heroine has finally thrown herself into the adjutant's arms. Why isn't she watching the screen? She's still paying attention to me. Let me just turn and have a look at her. She's looking at the ring I'm holding in my hand, isn't she? What did she say?

"What are you doing?"

What am I doing? Did she really ask me that? What a barefaced question! How does she expect me to answer? Ha, ha, what does she mean? Did she mean my taking the ring off or did she mean my turning round and looking at her? Well, I'll just give her an equivocal reply, like this:

"I'm not doing anything."

Now she's embarrassed, clearly uneasy. Why has she turned her face away and hung her head? Now what are her feelings? Right, I really have to find that out. But, if she does not tell me I will have no way of finding out. Women can keep their own secrets for ever, right until they die. But, sometimes they feel remorse.

Everybody is standing up. Oh, the film's over. The lights have been turned on and they're dazzling my eyes. What a crush of people! We have to go down by that staircase over there. What did she say? I didn't catch it.

"I said, how do you feel?"

How do I feel? What does that mean? Oh, she must mean, what did I think of the film.

"Oh, very good. Yes, not bad."

That's a joke. I hardly even glanced at it! Oops, be careful!... Mind how you walk. How could she miss her footing on a perfectly ordinary set of stairs. She must have done it on purpose ... deliberately ... so she could lean on my arm, I bet. My arm is completely round her now. Should I withdraw it? No need, we haven't got to the bottom of the stairs yet, and she might miss her footing again.

Oh, it's chilly outside! It's only when you come out of the Nanjing Theatre that you feel a warm breeze. That's an air-conditioned theatre. Now I should remove my arm from her. What time is it? 11:40. But my watch is ten minutes fast, so it's only about 11:30. Still early! I should ask her to go for a snack.

Why is she standing so much on ceremony today? Why did she so steadfastly refuse to go for a snack? She wouldn't even let me see her home, but instead flagged down a taxi and went off by herself. I was ready to take her all the way home. Did she suddenly go off me? Probably so. Today she must have finally grown tired of me. But ... but then why did she get me to promise to fetch her tomorrow afternoon at two o'clock to go to Fanwangdu Park? I don't understand.

Translated by Paul White

在巴黎大戏院

怎么，她竟抢先去买票了吗？这是我的羞耻，这个人不是在看我吗，这秃顶的俄国人？这女人也把眼光钉在我脸上了。是的，还有这个人也把衔着的雪茄烟取下来，看着我了。他们都看着我。不错，我懂得他们的意思。他们有点看轻我了，不，是嘲笑我。我不懂她为什么要抢先去买票？……她难道不知道这会使我感到难受吗？我是一个男子，一个绅士，有人看见过一个男子陪了一个女子，——不管是哪一等女子，——去看电影，而由那个女子来买票的吗？没有的，我自己也从来没有看见过……我脸上热得很呢，大概脸色一定已经红得很了。这里没有镜子吗？不然倒可以自己照一下。……啊，这个人竟公然对我笑起来了！你敢这样的侮辱我吗？你难道没有看见她突然抢到卖票窗口去买票吗？这是我没有预防到的，谁想到会有这样的事呢？啊，我受不了，我要回身走出这个门，让我到外面阶石上去站一会儿罢。……怎么，还没有买到吗？人多么挤！我真不懂她为什么要这样在拥挤的人群中挣扎着去买票，难道她不愿意让我请她看电影吗？……那么昨晚为什么愿意的呢？为什么昨晚在我送她到门口的时候允许我今天去邀她出来呢，难道她以为今天应当由她来回请我了吗？……哼！如果她真有这种思想，我看我们以后也尽可以彼此不必你请我，我请你了，大家不来往，多干脆！难道我是因为要她回请而请她看电影的吗？……难道，……或许她觉得老是让我请她玩不好意思，所以今天决意要由她来买票，作为撑持面子的表示吗？……是的，这倒是很有可能的，女人常会有这种思想，女人有时候是很高傲的。……怎么啦，还没有买到戏票吗，我何不挤上前去抢买了呢，难道我安心受着这许多人的眼光的讪笑吗？我应该上前去，她未必已经买到了戏票。这里的价目是怎样的？……楼下六角，楼上呢？这个人的头真可恶，挡着看不见了，大概总是八角吧？怎么，她在走过来了。她已经买到了戏票了。奇怪，我怎么没有看见她呢？她从什么地方买来的戏票？

好，算了，进去罢。但她为什么把两张戏票都交给我？……啊，这是circle票！为什么她这样闹阔？……我懂了，这是她对于我前两天买楼座票的不满意的表示。这是更侮辱我了。我决不能忍受！我情愿和她断绝了友谊，但我决不能接受这戏票了！不，我不再愿意陪她一块儿看电影了。什么都不，逛公司，吃冰，永远不！……怎么，她说话了：

“楼上楼下戏票都卖完了，只得买花楼票了。”

哦！我很抱歉，我几乎误会了。我为什么这样眼钝，卖普通座的窗口不是已经挂出了客满的纸牌吗？这些拥挤着的人不是正在散开了吗？他们一定很失望，但这影片难道竟这样的有号召力？哦，不错，今天是星期日。……我们该上楼了。但是……她把这两张戏票都交给我，这是什么意思呢？……这扶梯太狭小了，没有大光明戏院的宽阔。两个人相并着走，几乎占满了一扶梯。已经开映了吗？音乐的声音听见了。这是收戏票的。哦，我懂了，她要由我的手里将这戏票交给收票人，让我好装做是我买的票子。是的，准是这个意思，她不愿意我在收票人面前去丢脸。让我回过头来看看，可有刚才看见她买票的人吗？……没有，我们恐怕是最后进去的看客了。刚才在楼下嘲笑地看着我的那个秃顶的俄国人呢？那个穿着怪紧小的旗袍的女人呢？还有那个衔着雪茄烟的神气活现的家伙呢？他们一定是买不到戏票而回去了。活该谁叫你们轻看我的哪？我们的座位是几号呢？……七十四，七十五。不知是怎样一个位子。

好，我们已经走进来了，还没有开演，电灯都还亮着。怎么，这仆欧要把我们领到什么地方去？我们买的是circle票。天！已经在第三排了，这不是最后的一排circle座位吗？怎么还要打旁边走，……这两个座位是我们的吗？太坏了，在边上，眼睛要斜着看的。还是让她坐在靠里面的这座位上罢。

空气坏极了，人真多。这个德国人抽的是什么雪茄呢，哪有这样难闻的味道？怎么，她递给我什么东西了……说明书，不错，我为什么总是这样粗心，进门的时候怎么会把说明书忘了没拿？但是，可也奇怪，我没有看见她在什么时候拿这说明书的。噢，大约是在我看票面上座位号数的时候吧。……乌发公司，果然，我知道这影片准是乌发公司的出品。巴黎大戏院常映乌发片子，真不错。她看到了没有？我应

当告诉她。

“这又是乌发公司的片子。”

怎么，她看着我！她不知道乌发公司吗？这需要解释一下了。但我似乎应当低声些：

“乌发公司的出品最好，这是一家出名的德国影片公司。我最喜欢看这公司的影片，我觉得他们的出品，随便哪一种都比美国好莱坞中出来的片子好。”

她没有回话吗？她只点点头。是不是我这样的解释使她觉得冒昧了呢？她一定以为我估料她缺少影戏常识而不快了。她又把头低下去耽读着说明书了。我应该怎样对她表示呢？……让我来看，这里有没有认识的人。要是有人看见了我和她在这里，把这消息传出去而且张扬起来，那倒是有些难堪的。可是，……难堪？我是不是曾经这样想过？这并不是什么秘密的事，我不能陪一位女朋友看电影吗？我难道到现在还害怕着这些？灯都熄了，影片要开映了，好，没有人再会看见我们。她把说明书看完了没有，她未必能看得很快，一定只看了一半。本来我们来得太迟了。这是应当怪她的，她偏不愿意坐车，偏要沿着那林荫路步行着来，我真不懂她什么意思。

这里的椅子太小，坐着真不舒服。这边的椅臂也给她的手臂搁了去吗？那么，我只有这一旁的椅臂可搁了。我不妨坐斜一点，稍为松散些。哎，什么香，怪好闻的？这一定是从她身上来的。前天在公园里小坐着的时候，我也闻到过这香味，可是没有这样的浓。不错，刚才吃过晚饭之后，她在楼上耽搁了好久，我不是等得几乎不耐烦了吗？那时候她一定是在装扮。我猜想她一定是连小衣都换过了的。喔，我不能这样：这太狎褻了！但她为什么笑呢？怎么，大家都在笑！难道我这种狂妄的推想已经被发觉了？……不可能的！原来他们是看了这象鼻子给石缝夹牢了而笑的，这cartoon倒还不错。

她为什么把肘子在我手臂上推一下？我觉得这样，的确是一种推的动作。这是故意的呢，还是无心的？我只要看她的神色就得了，可惜此刻影片上暗的面积太大了，我不能看得很清楚。……她倒若无其事地，眼光一直注射在银幕上，脸色也装得很正经。她好像忘记了她是和我同坐在电影院中。为什么，如果她没有忘记便该怎么？该当屡次看看我吗？笑话！我存了什么思想？哦，这回可被我发现了，她倒很伶俐，她会不让头部动一动，而眼睛却斜睨了我一次。为什么她要这样？显然她是在偷偷地留心着我。她一定也已觉得我在看着她。果然，她嘴唇微微地翕动了，这是忍笑的姿态。她心里觉得怎么样呢？我真猜不透。我们现在究竟是哪一种关系？我是不是对于她已有了恋爱？我自己也猜不透自己，为什么我这样高兴陪她玩。这三年来我真昏迷极了。整个上海差不多全被我们玩过了。我就是对于妻也从来没有这样热烈过。我很可怜她，但我也没有办法，我不能自己约束自己啊。她住在乡下，真是温柔的可怜人，此刻她一定已经睡了。她会不会梦见我和别一个女人在这里看电影呢？……

哦，很热，额上好像有汗了。怎么，我的手帕？……连后面这个袋里都没有！噢，想起来了，在虹口公园的时候给她垫在椅子上，临走时忘掉了。噯！这恐怕要成为一个秘密的温柔的回忆了。她怎么说，当她坐在那椅子上，手牵着拖到她肩头的柳叶的时候，“谁叫我不早些认识你的呢？”她不是说过这样一句话吗？……是的，是我先说了一句：“我怎么不早认识你呢？”我不懂当时怎么会说这样的话，这是什么意思？我难道已经给她了什么暗示？……噯，夏天傍晚的虹口公园真好。我现在还好像看见面前流动着映着黄金色的大月亮的池水，这真是迷人的！但她的意思是不是说倘若她能早些认识我，就会……早些，这是指什么时候？一定是指我没有结婚的时候了……难道我对她说的那句话就是暗示了这个意思吗？这倒奇怪，大概的确是我说得含糊了。我不应该对一个容易动情的少女说这种意义不明白的话。现在她一定误会了。她一定以为我爱了她。……其实，她倒并没有错，我真是有点爱她了，我真不懂这是什么缘故。我不知道我应不应当索性告诉她。譬如刚才同坐在虹口公园里的时候，我对她说我爱她，她会怎么样呢？哭？……是的，我知道女人碰到这种境地，除了啜泣与缄默地低倒了头之外，是再也没有办法的。但那时我又应当怎样了呢？抚慰她吗？她会不会像影片中的多情的女子那样地趁此让我接吻？恐怕不会，……决不会的！这是情形不同。她当然知道我已经结婚了。……她怎么了？她好像很不安定，她把手臂更搁过来一些了。……我已经觉得从她的肌肤上传过来的热气了。……她回转头来了，不是在对我说什么话吗？

“这个人叫什么名字？”

谁？她要问的是谁？她问我影片中的人物吗？她大概是指这个扮副官的。这是谁？……我可记不起来了，他的名字是常常在嘴边的，怎么一时竟会说不出呢？……他是俄国的大明星，我知道。……噢，有了：

“你问这个扮副官的吗？这是伊凡·摩犹金，俄国大明星。”

“不错，伊凡·摩犹金，是他，我记得了。影片里常常看见他的。我很喜欢他。”

怎么，很喜欢他？……像摩犹金这样的严冷，难道中国女人竟会喜欢他吗？假的，我不相信，也许是范伦铁诺，那倒是可能的。凡是扮串小生的戏子最容易获得女人，真的。……但影戏是没有什么危险的，至少也可以说外国影戏是没有什么大关系的。你喜欢他吗？但他怎么会知道？你看，他和另外一个女人接吻了，你不觉得妒忌吗？哈哈——Nonsense！

我觉得她在看着我。不是刚才那样的只是斜着眼看了，现在她索性回过头来看了。这是什么意思？我要不要也斜过去接触着她的眼光？……不必吧？或许这会使得她觉得羞窘的。但她显然是在笑了。是的，我觉得她的确在看着我笑。我有什么好笑的地方？难道她懂得了我那种怪思想吗？……那是原是闹着玩的。我何不就旋转头去和她打个照面呢？我应当很快地旋转去，让她躲避不了，于是我可以问她为什么看了我笑……

“笑什么？”

哦，竟被我捉住了。她不是显得好像很窘了吗？看她怎样回答。

“笑你。”

怎么，就只这样的回答吗？笑我，这我已经知道了，何必你自己说。但我要知道你为什么笑我，我有什么地方会使你发笑呢？我倒再要问问她：

“笑我什么？”

“笑你看电影的样子，开着嘴，好像发呆了。”

奇怪！开着嘴，好像发呆了。哪里来的话！我从来不这样的。今天也不曾这样，我自己一点也不觉得。假话，又是假话！女人们专说假话。真机警。她一定不是为了这个缘故而笑的。她一定是毫无理由的。我懂得，大概她总不免觉得徒然看着这影戏也是很无聊的。本来，在我们这种情形里，如果大家真的规规矩矩地呆看着银幕，那还有什么意味！干脆的，到这里来总不过是利用一些黑暗罢了。有许多动作和说话的确是需要黑暗的。瞧，她又在将身子倾斜向我这边来了。这完全露出了破绽。如果说是为了座位太斜对了银幕的缘故，那是应当向右边侧转去的。她显然是故意的把身子靠上我的肩膀了。让我把身子也凑过去一些，看她退让不退让。……天，她一动也不动，她可觉得我的动作？难道她竟很有心着吗？不错，这两天来，她从来没有拒绝我的表示。我为什么还不敢呢？我太弱了。我爱她，我已经爱她了！但是，我怎么能告诉她呢？她会爱一个已经结婚了的男子吗？我怕……我怕我如果告诉了她一些些，只要稍微告诉她一些些，她就会跑了的。她会永远不再见我，连一点平常的友谊都会消灭了的……

“休息”。已经休息了。半本影戏已经做过了，好快。我一点也没有看。冰淇淋，很好，我正觉得很热。但她要吃什么呢？冰淇淋？汽水？我还是问她一声：

“吃冰淇淋呢还是汽水？”

“不要，都不要。”

今天竟客气到这样了。前两天并不这样的。为什么都不要？她不觉得热么？前晚在卡尔登不是吃了两个纸包冰么？为什么今天完全拒绝了？我不喜欢她这样的客气。

“喂，冰淇淋。两个巧格律的。”

我给她买了，难道她还不要么。……

“真的不要，今天还想吃冰。”

……哦，我猜透了，准是这个关系。她不是有些脸红了吧？我不应该这样的勉强她，害她倒窘了。不然她决不会这样拒绝我的，从来不这样的。她不是说今天不想吃吗？好，我来吃掉了罢。……太冷了，我

倒吃不下两个纸包冰，我希望不要再发胃病。……她旋转着看什么？她寻找什么人吗？还是她也怕有什么人看见了我们吗？我现在倒希望有人看见了。让他们宣传出去，这或许反而有些好处。……手指上全是巧格律了，这样粘。没有一块手帕真不方便。就在说明书上揩拭一下罢。……我的说明书呢，刚才放在膝盖上的？丢在地板上了。恐怕有痰。真糟，叫我拿什么东西来揩手呢？……

她递给我手帕了。不是随时在注意着我吗？这样小的手帕，又这样热，这样潮湿，一定搭上了许多汗了。好，我把手指都揩干净了。……慢着，我还要闻一闻呢。我可以装做揩嘴，顺便就可闻着了，谁会看出来呢？……哦，好香，这的确是她的香味。这里一定是混合着香水和她的汗的香味。我很想舐舐看，这香气的滋味是怎样的，想必是很有意思的吧？我可以把这手帕从左嘴唇角擦到右嘴唇角，在这手帕经过的时候，我可以把舌头伸出来舐着了，甚至就是吮吸一下也不会被人家发现的。这岂不很巧妙？好，电灯一齐熄了，影戏继续了。这时机倒很不错，让我尽量地吮吸一下吧。……这里很咸，这是她的汗的味道吧？……但这里是什么呢，这样地腥辣？……恐怕痰和鼻涕吧？是的，确是痰和鼻涕，怪粘腻的。这真是新发明的美味啊！我舌尖上好像起了一种微妙的麻颤。奇怪，我好像有了抱着她的裸体的感觉了。……我不能把这块手帕据为己有吗？如果我此刻拿来放进我自己的衣袋里，她会怎么说呢？啊不，即使她不说什么，也觉得太不雅了。我不能这样的卑下。我必须还给她。而且现在就该还给她了！

她不把这手帕再捏在手里了。她把它塞进衣袋里去了。大概她觉得我的动作了。这手帕已经被我吮吸得很湿了，好像曾经揩过衣服上的夏雨似的。啊，美味！美味！倘若她的小嘴唇和她的耳朵背后也肯让我吮吸一下，我一定会得通身都颤抖起来的。哎，天！我现在就只要知道如果我把对于她的秘密的恋爱泄露了出来，她到底怎样呢？……只要让我知道她不会拒绝我就好了。我不懂我为什么这样的不济。少言不是恋爱了许多女人吗？我想他一定有与我不同的方法。当他对一个女人告诉了他的恋爱之后，倘若那个女人拒绝了，不知他怎样对付。……我只要知道这一点也就好了。但女人会不会拒绝他呢？他是这样的漂亮，这样的会交际，他真是一个豪华公子！……也许女人是不大肯使人难堪的……但是不管她所取的方式怎样，只要是拒绝的表示，也就尽够我难受了。……

好，现在让我来仔细想一想，她究竟有什么理由可以拒绝我呢？不是每次都很高兴和我一同玩的吗？她不是很反对在我们两人之外有第三个人加入来一同玩的吗？当知道了我的妻在上海的时候，她不是绝迹不来找我的吗？当我们一同去吃晚饭的时候，她不是一定要住在隔壁的小房间里的吗？她不是常常会在我不注意的时候，低下头去呆想的吗？……哦！还有，她不是常常会用着一种不可索解的奇怪的眼色凝看着我，甚至会延长到一二分钟的吗？这些都是什么意思？……是的，这些都是什么意思呢？恐怕，——恐怕除了我已经结婚之外，她举不出什么别的理由来拒绝我罢。

但是一个女人恋爱一个已经结婚的男子，这也不是绝不可能的事情。不，而且是很普通的事情。有什么关系呢？她如果会拒绝我，她早就可以疏远我了。难道她很放心，以为我永远不会拿这种事情去麻烦她吗？……不，不会的，像她这样是正在寻找恋爱的好时光，如果她真预备拒绝我，她何以肯花费了她的时间来找我作无意义的游伴呢。……啊，这终究是一个谜。这个谜不打破，我终究是没有办法的。

怎么啦，他终究把前妻的戒指当着这个女人面前除下来丢掉了吗？……好！摩犹金的表情真不错。你看，他多么难过，这的确是很不容易表演的动作。可是，前面的事实是怎么样的？我可没有看清楚。我从来没有这样分心地看电影过。……这不是我的结婚指环吗？倘若我此刻也把妻的指环除下来，她会有怎样的感觉呢？她会不会看见这个动作？她看见了会不会说什么话？……好，我倒要试试看，我可以把这指环除下来，放在手里拈弄着。……她一定已经看见了，我知道。……怎么，叹气？谁在那里叹气？满院的人都在叹气了吗？啊，他们拥抱了，这女人终究投在这副官的怀里了。她为什么不看着银幕？……她还注意我。让我也旋转过去，看她怎样……她不是在看我手里的指环吗？……她说什么了：

“做什么？”

“做什么”？她是不是这样问？她问得太露骨了，叫我怎样回答她呢？哈哈，这是什么意思？指我把指环除下来这个动作呢，还是指我旋转头去看她这个动作？让我来含混一些回答她罢：

“不做什么。”

她窘了，她显然有些心烦了。她旋转脸去，低下了头做什么？现在她心里觉得怎样呢？是的，我只要明白她现在的心理怎样就好了。……但是，她不说，我终究没有法子能够知道。女人会把她们的秘密永远保守着，直到死。但有时候，她们会懊悔的。

大家都在站起来了。哦，影戏已经完了。好亮，我眼睛都昏花了，啊，人太挤了。我们应当打旁边那扶梯下去。她说什么？……我没有听见。

“我说你觉得怎样？”

“觉得怎样？”指什么？哦，她一定是指那影戏。

“哦，很好，很不错。”

笑话，其实我是等于没有看。哟哟！当心！……好端端地走，怎么会错踏了梯级的呢？也许这是她故意的。她故意要这样子，好靠在我的手臂上。现在我的手臂已经完全抱着她了，要不要放手呢？……不必，扶梯还没有走完，也许她还会失足的。

啊，外面真凉快！只有在南京大戏院看电影，出来的时候会觉到一阵热风，那真考究。现在我应当把手臂离开她了。什么时候了？十一点四十分。我这表快十分钟。不过十一点半光景。还早咧，我应当邀她去吃点点心。

为什么她今天这样客气？她为什么一定不肯去吃些点心？她连送都不要送，独自雇了车走了。我本来倒预备送她到家里的。她不是有点厌我了？也许是这样。大概她今天对于我有点觉得厌倦了。但是，……但是她为什么又约我明天下午两点钟去找她玩梵王渡公园呢？我不懂。

Devil's Road

The sky was getting hazy as the train pulled into X-zhou station.

I was eyeing with suspicion an old woman who was sitting opposite me in the compartment. Perhaps terror would be a better word than suspicion. She had not been sitting there when I got on the train in Shanghai, that seat had been empty. I had climbed aboard forty minutes before the train left. After I had chosen this seat — I don't know why this one in particular — I sat there idly watching the other passengers getting on one after the other. Here comes a lawyer. This one's the manager of a silk mill. Now we have a government official who's being transferred to another province. Oh, now just look at this young popinjay! Of course, I didn't know any of these people, I just guessed what kind of people they were from snatches of conversation and their outward appearance. And, accompanying them there was of course a beautiful young miss, a matron with a dignified but somewhat country-bumpkinish air and some servants with the sort of nonchalant expression in their eyes that doesn't actually fool anybody. But ... didn't I mention it? The seat next to me was empty, as were the two seats opposite. That meant I was taking up four seats. But the peculiar thing was — that's right, now that I come to think back on it, that was the first strange circumstance that occurred after I got on the train: when the passengers chose their seats they all, young or old, men or women, looked ahead or behind my row, and not one of them came to sit anywhere near me. At the time I didn't feel any sense of unease at all. In fact, I had been hoping that nobody would sit next to me.

The train finally set off. I took a sip of tea, and because it was more convenient to spit tea leaves out of the window standing up, I stood, and gradually got absorbed in gazing at the passing scenery. That was until a large yellow billboard spoiled the view, when I sat down again. As I did so I noticed that this old woman had occupied the seat opposite me. A most peculiar creature she was too — a decrepit old crone with a hunched back and a face covered with repulsive wrinkles, a flat nose and a mouth permanently twisted and trembling. Her eyes, every time you looked at her, were fixed in a blank gaze into the distance, and although her line of sight must have been blocked by the backs of the seats she gave the impression that she had X-ray vision and, moreover, could see into eternity. But whenever you shifted your gaze from her face she stealthily — one might almost say malevolently — fixed her eyes on you. I felt that there was something mysterious about her. When did she sit down, and did anybody see her sit down there? I began to have some misgivings.

She refused the tea the attendant offered her; she would only drink plain water. There was something weird, also, about the way she was slumped in a corner of the seat. Ah, of course! Witches don't drink tea. That's because tea dissipates their evil powers. I must have read that somewhere. And in the West witches fly on broomsticks in the air and snatch people's children away. At the same time as I was thinking this, there floated into my mind the image of the yellow-faced old woman who spouted water under the moon outside the lattice work in an old book called *Strange Stories from Make-Do Studio*. I was sure the old woman sitting opposite me must be one of those demons. I began to feel afraid. Why on earth had I chosen this seat? Why hadn't any of those people who got on before sat in any of the empty seats near me? Surely it couldn't be because they had seen something in this space? Why had this old woman come and sat opposite me? All these things put together represented something serious to me.

But I could think of no way to clear up my suspicions. I thought of changing seats, but a quick glance around the compartment showed me that, apart from the other two seats next to me, the only seat available was next to a man wearing an army officer's uniform. Well, it was better to go and put up with the stench of garlic from that officer than to have to endure this torment, wasn't it? But this was only a fleeting thought. After all, I was

comfortable with all this space I had to myself. Besides, even if I did switch seats I couldn't get rid of the foreboding presence of the old woman. How could I guarantee that her baleful influence would not linger in my head? The only thing I could do was avoid looking at her. So I forced my gaze away from her face and from the kerchief with its black flower pattern or her tiny repulsive withered hand resting on the table between us. It rested in such a way that three fingers were curiously crooked as if she were making some magic incantation.

They say that there are some old women with magic powers and at night their hands become detached from their wrists and fly off to wrench the souls from people's bodies. I suddenly thought of that. What book had I read that in? I really have a terrible memory. I'm afraid I may fall victim to a nervous breakdown, palpitations or something.... It's no good, you can't take any medicine to prevent that kind of disease — just like my life. Polyamin's no good either, I've taken three bottles of the stuff. No, if something is destined to happen, there's no way it can be avoided, Ha, Ha! I seemed to have become a fatalist. Let me see, who was the most famous fatalist? Was it Schopenhauer? That's right, just like when a person is pursued by witchcraft, if fate is out to get you, then no matter what you do it will get you. Witchcraft? Why do I make an analogy with witchcraft? Oh, what happened? I looked at her again. Why is she twisting the corner of her mouth at me like that? What does it mean? Does it mean that she's afraid because I've discerned that she's a witch. No, I don't think so, the fear's all inside me.

Perhaps I should read a book. I've got some books in my briefcase. Oh, but I'd better be careful, I can't pull out *The Romance of Sorcery* here. I wonder if it's because I've been reading a bit too much about occultism these past few days that it's beginning to affect my imagination? Well, possibly a little bit, but there is definitely something odd about that old woman, and even if I had not been reading such books I would still have had the same feeling. Which book should I read: Le Fanu's strange tales? *Religious Verses*? *A Dossier of Sex Crimes*? *Gems of English Poetry*? None of them appeal to me right now. Have I got any other books in my small suitcase? No, I only brought the five with me. I do have a magazine on psychology, but I don't feel like reading it. What was that? She stole another furtive glance at me. That sneaky manner of hers is making me more certain that she is a witch. What else could I think? Well, I'm up to your little tricks right enough. You're just waiting for me to stand up to take my bags down from the luggage rack. Then you'll cast a spell on me and steal my things. Crafty, eh? Anybody watching would think you were my mother. No, I'm not going to read a book. I'm not going to stand up to reach for my luggage. I'm just going to sit here and keep a careful eye on you. How about that? I've got my sharp, keen eye on you. Just you dare!

She hadn't made a move. She just looked like a completely decrepit old woman now. What gave me the idea a little while ago that she was a witch? It's clearly laughable. I nearly made a fool of myself. If I had yelled curses at her or hauled her off to the conductor there would have been an awful scene that I would have had difficulty in explaining. Oh, dismiss it from your mind; the fears that come over us when gloomy clouds gather are soon dispelled when the sun comes out. A gloomy cloud had descended on my mind just now, and that's why I made that mistake. A black cloud hovering over my nerves! No, that's too poetic, I should explain. What should I call it? A deep misapprehension, no, perhaps I should say a malevolent illusion! The scenery's very nice round here. I've been living in the city for too long; I've never seen fields as lush and green as these. Look at that big earthen mound over there — a grand sight! If this were in the Central Plains somebody would be excavating it, saying that it was the tomb of the wife of King So-and-so of the Such-and-such dynasty. People will excavate it, no doubt. And then? They will find a great stone room with a great stone altar in the middle. And on the altar will be burning lamps fuelled with human fat from prisoners tortured to death. Behind it there will be a huge coffin painted vermilion, and, of course, festooned with gold chains. What else? They will prise open the coffin. Yes, the opening of the coffin will be a dramatic moment. Inside will be lying a mummy tightly wrapped in white silk. The mummy of a beautiful queen of ancient times, with her white silk shroud trailing. Wouldn't she create a sensation if she walked into the

city? A sensation? It would be more than that. People would fall in love with her — more deeply than with a real, live woman. And what if they could only kiss those parted lips with their ghastly coldness and musky odour? I believe they would not wish to touch another living creature again. Oh, I can see it already: a body in white, lying amid the vermillion boards with a golden-yellow chain around it — this is definitely a glittering magical sight.

But why such hopeful fantasies? Perhaps her tomb chamber would be pitch-dark. Perhaps they would have to chisel through seven heavy stone doors. And from the interior would appear a hideous old hag. Yes, witches were often the denizens of ancient catacombs. Then they would drop their chisels and crowbars and take to their heels in a panic, and she would smother the entrance in thick, black fog. But, what if the mummy of the beautiful queen was the metamorphosis of this witch? That would be dangerous. Anyone who kissed her would be caught in a magic spell and turned into a chicken, duck or a pure white swan. Well, I don't suppose it would be too bad being turned into a swan. That reminds me of a sculpture. Isn't there a swan with its wings wrapped round Leida's knees and its neck stretched out and lying on her thighs? What a surreal bit of titillation!

Fantasy! Fantasy! Pure fantasy! How on earth could this old woman turn into the mummy of a beautiful queen? I can believe that she has magic powers, but I can't believe she could turn herself into a beautiful young woman. I really find her disgusting. Look at the strange way she drinks water. Why does she sip first out of this side of the cup and then turn it so that she can sip out of the other side? Something to do with hygiene? Is she trying to put a spell on me, or what? To save her all the trouble I ought to tell her plainly that in my travelling case there are only a few books and a pair of pyjamas.

I don't understand it. If she really doesn't have secret powers why do I feel as though I'm trembling? I've never been made to tremble by an old woman before. With all these misgivings whirling round inside my head I kept wrenching my eyes away from her face. Finally I took a look around the compartment at the other travellers and then gazed at the countryside rolling past the window. But finally I was drawn back to that sinister face; it was as if my feelings and consciousness were under her control, dominated by her weird gaze, by her constantly moving lips as if mumbling an incantation, and by her shrivelled but fearfully white hands.

Suddenly there came into sight the ancient pagoda on the outskirts of X-zhou, and I breathed a sigh of relief — at least I would soon be rid of this strange old woman, and there will be nothing to fear anymore. But if someone else gets on and sits in my place, what about him — or her? The same fear I suppose. Yes, this feeling can't be unique to me alone. And although it's getting dark it is not that that made me feel nervous.

I left the station and walked at leisure along a narrow paved road. I was there to spend the weekend at the invitation of a friend, a man named Chen. He was a horticulturist and an entomologist. He had bought a large plot of land on the outskirts of X-zhou, built himself a small Western-style house and devoted himself to his profession and his studies. That had been four or five years ago. Gratefully I breathed the fresh, perfumed air of the fields. I was anticipating the scene when I reached Chen's house and just concentrating on where I was going, without taking any notice of the other passengers who had left the train.

I wonder if it's going to rain? The sky's become a lot darker, just as if a shower's on the way. Chen's house is still about a mile away, so I reckon I had better get a move on if I don't want to get caught in the rain. So thinking, I speeded up my pace and reached Chen's place without once looking all round. Black clumps of foliage were waving in the breeze. I couldn't help thinking of the poem that goes, "As rain threatens in the mountains, wind fills the house" although at this precise moment there were no mountains near.

I met Chen and his wife, and they sat me down at my ease in the living room. It gave me a cosy feeling, putting me in a sort of relaxed frame of mind that I could not experience if I spent a weekend in Shanghai. Just as the maid brought in the tea the first thick drops of rain could be heard pattering against the windowpanes. Carrying my teacup, I walked over to the window that faced the street, intending to enjoy the rainy rural scene. Although the

season was still spring the rain was as heavy as during the summer, because the previous few days had been warm. I saw two or three farm labourers in the distance with hoes or other types of implements over their shoulders come leaping out of a field and go running off. Partridges, swallows, crows and sparrows fluttered in a panic from tree to tree. All at once it seemed as if a heavy gauze curtain had been drawn across the sky. It was difficult to see very far beyond a clump of something flickering in the thick, blue haze I knew to be a forest of bamboo.

But my attention was suddenly attracted by a small black shadow huddled under that green haze, the black shape of a human being — that of an old woman clad in a black dress! She seemed to be staring fixedly this way, standing firm and unmoving, regardless of the rain. When did she get off the train, and why has she come to X-zhou? Has she been deliberately following me? If her real purpose is to.... Ah! It seems like she doesn't just want to steal my suitcase. The tea in my cup spilled several drops over me as my hand started to tremble. What terrible thing was about to happen? What terrible thing was about to happen?... I couldn't bear the sense of fear any longer, and I called out in a panic to my friend: "Hey, quick, come and look at this."

Chen seemed to sense the tremor in my voice, and he rushed to where I was standing, "What is it? What has scared you?"

"Look, can you see it?" I asked, pointing in the direction of the black shadow of the old woman. Chen looked out of the window in the direction I was pointing. His eyes opened wide, as did his mouth, but he seemed to see nothing. "What are you talking about? It's just a grove of bamboo, isn't it?" he said.

I was dumbfounded. Couldn't he see that very real black shadow out there, the black shadow of the old woman? But, look, isn't the witch two or three times the size of the old woman on the train just now? She's grown even bigger than I am. She's still looking over in this direction, not taking any notice of the rain. I put one hand on Chen's arm, drawing him nearer to where I was standing, and pointed with the other hand.

"Yes," I said, "but under the bamboo — look, underneath there's an old woman. Look."

But, to my consternation, Chen just kept shaking his head and looking puzzled.

"An old woman? No, under the bamboo there's definitely nobody. Who could be standing there, in this rain? Is there something wrong with your eyes? Oh, don't bother about her. Come over here and drink your tea...."

But I stayed where I was, frightened, full of doubt and anger. Could it be that this witch was visible to me alone? Why? What did she have against me? I couldn't tear myself away; my gaze was rivetted on her. It was the same fascination I had felt just now on the train. With my eyes still staring out of the window, I said to Chen:

"No, I tell you I can see her! She's a witch. She's definitely a witch! I really don't know what will happen to me, if you say that you can't see her. She's followed me here from Shanghai, She *has* me in her power. Ah, I can't resist. It must be fated...."

Chen said not a word. He just stood there eyeing me up and down. I could sense him doing so, even though I didn't give him a single glance. He was wondering if I had gone completely mad. And just at this moment his wife came up to us. She looked at me, looked at Chen, and looked out of the window, but didn't say a word.

"Can you see her?" I asked her, in a deliberately calm tone of voice.

But she did not reply, she simply nudged her husband with her elbow. Then the two of them pulled me, one on each arm, meaning to sit me down on the sofa. But there was no way I could let them. I have never before seen such a huge, ugly, weird old hag. If I don't control her, she'll control me; right here she has revealed her enmity! I struggled free from my friends' grasp. Chen said:

"You seem to have been under some nervous strain recently. You must stay here for a few days and recuperate."

Nervous strain? Well, yes, he's right. But, as for wanting me to stay here for a few days and recuperate ... it's out of the question. Now that the old woman has come here, the sooner I get away from her the better. I really regret

coming to X-zhou now and bringing this terrible fear on myself. Nothing like this has ever happened to me in Shanghai. I felt great resentment at Chen welling up inside me.

"What? You really didn't see her? Come over here!" I pulled back, gripping the arms of Chen and his wife and dragging them with me back to the place where I had been standing. I pointed to that black shadow:

"Can you see her or not now?"

Unexpectedly Chen's wife laughed out loud. It was a loud and strange laugh. What did it mean? It was most unexpected, and I might even say that it shocked me. Had she seen the old woman? If she had, what was there to laugh about? She walked to the window and pointed out a black spot on the glass!

"Was this what you saw?"

Good Heavens! It's incredible. That can't possibly be it. What I saw under the bamboo was absolutely clearly that horrible old hag from the train. How could she suddenly change into a spot of dirt on the windowpane? How could the two resemble each other? But now I come to look at it, this black stain the size of a bean actually does look a bit like an old woman. But nevertheless ... what I saw just now was not this at all. I can't believe I could do something so stupid. It was definitely that old witch just before — and now? Now she has definitely become a black spot, there's no doubt about it. Well, it's all part of her magic, isn't it? Because I had fixed her with my gaze she couldn't hide, and she took the opportunity of the Chens' interference to scuttle away out of the bamboo grove.

Then I found that my eyes had opened wide — as wide as my mouth had opened — and my vision was first focussed far away and then nearby. I just stood there in a daze. But I was soon shaken out of it by the sound of laughter from Chen and his wife next to me. I felt exhausted, as though I had just gone through a war. The Chens helped me to the sofa. There I sat down, with my head swimming and my eyes blurred. I felt cold shivers running all through my body, as if I were coming down with a bout of malaria. Then I fell into a deep sleep.

When I came to it was already dusk. The rain had stopped in the meantime. Outside, the setting sun was painting the tips of the branches of the trees a golden colour. There was a tinge of freshness in the air — not like the oppressive dimness when I had arrived. I drank a cup of coffee which Chen's wife handed to me. Then I threw off the rug they had laid over me while I was sleeping. I stood up and announced that I was going to go for a walk; it seemed that my spirits were completely recovered. I strode out purposefully into the suburban countryside.

The first thing I did was take a look all around, wondering in which direction I ought to head first. My attention was caught first of all by that grove of lofty bamboo. In that direction all was bright — nothing at all sinister about the place. And not a sign of any human being either; just as if nothing had ever happened. Subconsciously I began to reproach myself. I had been day-dreaming, completely daydreaming! This could only have happened to someone with weak nerves. I can't go on suffering from this sort of debility much longer. I have to get treatment.... If only I could smoke a little opium every day, that would be better ... yes, that would help.... I should walk towards the west, into the setting sun, and gaze on the rosy rays in the gathering dusk.

A myriad of colours dazzled my eyes. The brilliance of the setting sun was overwhelming. I saw the vermilion of painted coffins and golden-yellow chains, all arrayed on the distant horizon. What else? Over there, those must be men and women slaves buried alive with their masters, arrayed in splendid garments and tumbling all over. Betrayed in their faces were the ghastly fear and despair of those who have just realized that the entrance to the mausoleum has been sealed — an everlasting fear and despair! But what is that spot of black? It is so thick, so lustrous, and yet it seems so transparent. It is a speckle — who said speckle? Do I mean that it is like that spot on the windowpane? What on earth was that? Surely Chen hasn't turned into an opium addict these days? That definitely was a speck of opium, thick and sticky on the windowpane. Only opium has that kind of glossy sheen. It definitely was not an inkstain, although it's black enough, haha! Precious things are always black. The Great Black Pearl of India, er, what else? I can't remember. I have heard that there is black jade in Tibet.... But black women are not so precious,

although they can dance the hula, since women to be exquisite must be fair.... It's a puff of black cloud. Ah, now it's evaporating. There was no opium in the sky after all. But — I don't understand, can an old witch appear in the sky? I'd better watch it disappear completely before I go. Otherwise, who knows?...

I might as well sit on this black stone for a while. Go? Where to? It will soon be dark. I'll have another look at the countryside and then I'll go back. Oh, that's right, I forgot to warn them a while ago. They must be preparing supper for me right now, I'm an easy guest to look after. I don't eat much; a bit of bread and cold water, but give me plenty of butter.... Who said that? Was it Lord Byron? The poet? Haha, have I only picked up his appetite?... But if it were Chinese food I would say give me a dish of fresh broadbeans, that would be enough for me. That's what I came down to the countryside for, to eat fresh broadbeans. I should have informed Chen and his wife in advance. It's all right to eat foreign food in Shanghai, but in China's heartland I prefer Chinese food. The Chinese food you get in Shanghai is all oil, oil, oil! The macaroni and cheese they serve in Italian restaurants is excellent, I'll go and have some tomorrow.... What's that? There's a bamboo grove over there, but is it that strange bamboo grove? Let me work out the direction, west... north. Right, that bamboo grove is to the west. I must have been veering round to the north. Dammit! I've walked and walked and ended up here. Aren't there several families of people in that bamboo grove? Country people have a different idea of comfort. What's that... the sound of water? Is there a pond behind that clump of bushes? Is someone playing about with the water there? Now I'm here I realize that the place is bathed in a sort of deep green shade. Maybe it is because the sun has set. I should go and have a look at that pond. Ancient ponds have a fascination for me. They are, so to speak, *fantastique*.

I seem to see a village girl washing something on the bank of that ancient pond with the green water. This is no common sight, at least I find it satisfying. What is she washing? Something white she's already wrung out. Now she has something red. A line from an **old** ballad about washing something **red** floated into my head. What would she do if I were to sing it to her? No, that would be a bit pedantic; she wouldn't understand a word. And besides, she wouldn't realize that I was poking fun at her. She's seen me. Standing here like this gawking, she must have seen me. Well, never mind, we don't know each other. There's somebody moving in the bamboo grove! Why doesn't he come out instead of lurking furtively in there? Strange — have my eyes gone funny again? It's an old woman.... It's that witch!

Aaaah!

My own scream brought me to my senses again, and I found myself pointing at the back of the strange old woman, who was just disappearing into the bamboo grove again.

The village girl washing by side of the pond jumped to her feet, startled by my action. First, she stared at me, and then in the direction I was pointing. Then again she turned her puzzled gaze on me.

"Did you see something, miss?"

"No, nothing."

"Nothing? You mean you didn't see that old witch?"

"Oh! What do you mean 'old witch'? That was my mother."

I dropped my pointing finger in resignation, turned and fled from her angry eyes.

At dinner that evening Chen's wife was wearing a pale-red silk dress, but, because the electricity in X-zhou was a bit weak, it looked a sort of unreal colour in the yellow light. And this white colour was a surreal and mysterious white that you couldn't bear to look at for long.

I was sitting facing her, and Chen was perpendicular to us.

I had just got down to eating a tomato that Chen had grown in his garden when I felt a sort of desire for Chen's wife. There seemed to be no reason for this; it just happened. Now, she could be considered a very attractive woman, with fine, red lips and eyes that seemed to be always smiling. But anyway I am not the philandering type. I

would never dare ... no, absolutely never ... but today I couldn't help looking at her *svelte* figure clad in that clinging thin silk, her bare arms and low-cut neckline; her lips, to which she had applied lipstick, had a sickly, withered hue in the yellow light. I don't know if she dressed like this deliberately to allure me. I'll say it again: I suspect she deliberately dressed like this — of course, I don't say deliberately to allure me. That's because there are many women who tempt men without realizing themselves that they are doing so. I felt that the lush, red tomato that I was chewing was actually her crimson lips. I have discovered the sour taste of a secret love. I half-closed my eyes: through the opened parts I could see her true smile and movements, while behind the closed parts I abandoned myself to the enjoyment of the fantasy person. I saw her walking round from the other side of the supper table, trailing that long, white dress and supporting herself with her hand on the edge of the table, I saw Chen retreat from the room. I felt her place her right hand on my forehead — well, yes, she was actually placing her hand on her own forehead at the time. I put down my knife and fork and pulled a handkerchief out from my trouser pocket to wipe my mouth with. My vision was filled with Chen's wife's face. It has never been so white! I have never seen her face like this before. Even a Japanese woman couldn't have such a deathly pale face. She smiled — definitely a seductive smile. She has actually closed her eyes! What? Have we kissed already? I have sinned. Chen had better not come in right now... and give me a dressing down. I have sinned and I deliver myself over to Heaven's punishment. Perhaps I will die right now? What was that noise? The door? Oh no, he hasn't come back in, has he?

But the person who had come in was the maid with the coffee. As Chen's wife handed me a cup of coffee I found myself so tongue-tied that I couldn't even thank her. I felt hot.

I forgot to bring my sleeping pills, so I probably will have trouble sleeping tonight, I thought agitatedly.

The next morning I rose late. My original plan to view the fresh morning scenery of the countryside had evaporated in a nightmare. As I left the bedroom I encountered Chen's wife walking down the corridor.

"You're up early," she said with a smile.

I think I detect a note of sarcasm in her voice. What time is it? It's probably past ten o'clock. Why is she mocking me? In an agony I couldn't properly express, I mumbled, "I'm afraid I slept late."

Whether she herself realized that she had said something untoward or whether some other disturbing thought had occurred to her, she reddened slightly and looked embarrassed. With her fingers arched like orchid leaves she patted the hair at her temples. I could see that she looked somewhat embarrassed. But I wanted her to be embarrassed, because I like seeing women feeling awkward. Their eyes moisten and they redden from ears to temples. They shuffle their feet and don't know where to put their hands. Their lips move but for a long time not a sound would come out. When at last they speak they would say something quite inappropriate.

She was, after all, just like the women I had experience of.

"Did you sleep well last night?"

"Oh, yes! Yes, I slept well," was my smiling reply. She abruptly lowered her head and, clutching the corner of her blouse, hurried downstairs.

At that, all the loathing that I had been suppressing all along bubbled up inside me. Avoiding me like this was, after all, quite rude. That wasn't a proper way to part after meeting like that. What an ill-mannered woman! There's no place for the likes of her in polite society. She doesn't know the first thing about how to behave, she's simply.... I was descending the staircase as I searched for ways to denigrate Chen's wife even more, when I caught sight of her vanishing into the drawing room holding a big black cat with emerald eyes.... Aha! So she was a witch too!

The fear which I had forgotten all about crept back into my heart. How could I have fantasized about us kissing yesterday evening? She is a witch, and probably a transformation of that old woman I saw yesterday — and she could probably have used her powers of illusion to transform herself into that black spot on the windowpane. That

was no speck I saw on the windowpane. Oh, this is terrifying: how can a person fight against a witch who is an expert at transforming herself into anything at all? Does that mean the ghosts from the medieval era still exist in these modern times? Well, why shouldn't they? If they could survive right from ancient times into the medieval period then of course they can survive right down to modern times. Dare you state categorically that demons don't exist in modern Shanghai?

From the time that these misgivings started stirring in my mind I made sure I kept a careful eye on Chen's wife, and, sure enough, I found every move she made suspicious. Her body must have been taken over by that old witch, just like the fox spirit in the novel disguised itself in the body of Daji, a beautiful concubine. She isn't the same person as Chen's wife used to be. How tragic! Oh, Chen, how can I ever explain it to you?

But traces of that fantasy kiss still lingered on my lips. Ever since then I felt an icy coldness on them, as if some inexplicable change had come over them.

I finally tore myself away from Chen at three in the afternoon, and raced off to the station with my **suitcase** as if I were fleeing from a calamity or something. And when I finally reached home it was like finding an asylum of guaranteed safety. Afterwards I decided never again to go to the countryside seeking to spend an enjoyable weekend. Enjoyable?... Ha! What a laugh! Fear and suffering was all I got. If I'd spent those two days in Shanghai, at least I could have relaxed at the cinema. This is what occurred to me when I took the books out of my suitcase.

What about this evening? I should find some kind of entertainment to make up for the wear and tear on my nerves during the past two days. Oh, it's still quite early, only twenty past eight. What happened, did the clock stop? What does my watch say? Eight twenty-five. That's strange. Did they stop just a while ago, or did they stop yesterday evening? I clearly remember yesterday, just before I left, winding them both fully, How could they have stopped so soon? What about the newspaper then, today's paper? Oh, never mind. I think I'll go to the Odeon Cinema.

Ten minutes later I was standing on the top step of the Odeon. But just as I was poking a banknote through the bronze bars of the box office I saw a sign saying, in big, black letters: Upstairs and Downstairs ALL Seats Sold Out, I walked back down the steps, disappointed. Surely it was too much of a coincidence for me to have arrived just after the last seat had been sold? I glanced back at the ticket collector at the gate, just in time to see the person with the last ticket walk in — and this person was an old woman dressed in black.

All old women dressed in black are bad omens! *Chacune, chacune!*

I was in a state of mental exhaustion: it felt just as if someone had unloosened the rope holding a bundle of flax together. Every nerve suddenly slackened and sagged. An evil fate had afflicted me. I wanted to curse it, to beat it. I walked and walked, I knew not where. I deliberately and savagely bumped into every suspicious stranger I encountered; they were all metamorphoses of that demonic old woman.

But why don't they do something about it, do something to me, reproach me? Yes, if they were to do so I would have an excuse to provoke a fight. Why can't I hit them? If I could knock them down and reveal their true monstrous forms, wouldn't people praise me for being a wonderful fellow? Then the newspapers would carry my story and photograph — the *Times* would give it prominent coverage, I'm sure. "This is a sensational piece of news"... but I wouldn't want them to tell the readers that I had once kissed one of the transformations of the witch. That would cause a scandal involving Chen and myself.

Oh, an evil fate has come upon me. If only I had a pair of eyes which could see where the witches were. Who is that tugging on my arm?

"Where are you going?"

Who is this? Was that a woman's voice? Oh, am I at the W Coffee Shop already? It's her, the coffee lady. We've been close friends for a long time, and I've never forgotten her, the only thing is that up until today I never

knew her name. What's she doing standing outside the door, and why did she catch me by the arm?

"Why haven't you come by for such a long time? Come in and have a cup of coffee."

Well, well, I've never seen a coffee lady standing outside the door of her establishment soliciting customers before. That is creative! But the place is so crowded — there are even some American sailors. I should perhaps go up to one of the little rooms upstairs.

"Do you want your usual coffee?"

Dammit! Have I become a specialist coffee drinker? I found her a bit pushy, so I simply shook my head.

"In that case do you want something a bit stronger? Whisky? Beer?"

"Well, perhaps a beer." I ordered that without knowing why.

"Wonderful! We've just got in a consignment of German black beer."

Black beer? Black again? In front of my eyes swam something like a big patch of black silk. Look, look at all those witches weaving their magic spells dancing and juggling about right in front of me! They are trying to throttle me to death, using their fear-some, withered hands....

But in the midst of all this jumble of black, something white is emerging.... Ah! I'm acquainted with that type of whiteness, I think.... What kind of whiteness, do I have to say? Oh, a pure whiteness! It's really too much of a coincidence. Why is she wearing this sort of white silk outfit? Don't tell me it's a fashionable colour these days, is it? Oh, the mummy of the ancient queen has left the catacomb and is walking along a tarmac road....

Well, it's not bad, but I don't have much capacity for beer. I'll give her half the bottle to drink.... She's sat down next to me. She seems to be pleased to see me. Is she beautiful? Wearing that outfit she looks a bit like Chen's wife, except that her lips are bigger but not as full. She looks quite decrepit. Yes, these coffee shop ladies soon become decrepit; it's too much of a hectic life, I suppose.

Why is she behaving so strangely today — staring at me silently? It seems that she wants to say something. We're sitting very close together. Why don't I kiss her? Should I?... Why not? These coffee shop ladies are used to it. But ... but, what if Chen's wife were to become a coffee shop lady?...

Now I have my arm round her neck. She presses her head towards me.... That large face belonging to Chen's wife! Why did she pinch my shoulder? Ah! Have our lips already met? Her lips are strangely cold. I've never known lips as cold as those before. They're not the lips of a living person! Surely she's not that mummy of the queen in the ancient tomb? Then she must be a metamorphosis of that witch. Have I really touched her?... I dare not open my eyes. If I did, what would I see? Heavens! Everything's gone wrong — I've fallen into her trap. Why is she smiling so coldly? A sinister smile of triumph! What evil fate has she got in store for me? Am I about to die?

"It's not you."

Who said it isn't me? It's a very familiar voice at any rate. I'll just have to open my eyes.... Everything is still the same. I don't know him. And he probably wasn't talking to me. There are a lot of people here and they all seem cheerful. I'm the only one who finds himself in dire straits here. She's still smiling at me, in a self-satisfied way. All right, well, I'd better leave right now — and I'm not even going to give her a tip, the witch!

Of course, she yelled a tirade at my back, and I heard her say — what? "You'd better be careful." That startled me. Ah, what misfortune would befall me? You cursed witch! Why don't you warn me honestly? I would have pleaded with you....

Twenty minutes later I finally reached home. I slumped in an easy chair, with my head in my hands. I don't know how long I stayed like that, but I was woken from my reverie by the servant bringing a telegram.

My three-year-old daughter had died.

I let the telegram fall to the floor, rose from the chair and walked out on to the balcony. A cold, stark midnight enveloped the street. I could hear a slow, rustling sound coming from down below. Leaning over the balcony I felt

my hair stand on end as I saw, in the blue light of a street lamp, a lone figure slip into an alley. It was an old woman dressed in black.

Translated by Paul White

魔 道

当火车开进×州站道的时候，天色忽然阴霾了。

我正在车厢里怀疑着一个对座的老妇人。——说是怀疑，还不如说恐怖较为适当些。这老妇人，当我在上海上车，坐到这车厢里来的时候，她还没有来坐在我对面。我对面的那个座位也空着，我是在火车开行前四十分钟上车的。拣定了这个座位之后，——我不懂我何以要拣这个座位，我就闲着看一个个接着上来的旅客。这里有律师，有织绸厂的经理，有调省听候任用的官吏，有爱发标劲儿的大少爷，——这些都是我从他们的谈话和仪态中看出来的，我并不认识其中任何一个。还有，陪同着他们的，当然有美丽的小姐，端庄的但是多少有些村俗的夫人，和那些故作矜持而到底瞒不过别人的眼睛的红倌人。但是，——我对你说过没有？我旁边的座位是空着的，我对面的两个座位也是空着的，这就是说，我是一个人占有着四个人的座位，奇怪的是——真的，这是现在回想起来要算作上车后第一件奇怪的情形了，当这些老幼男女的客人来拣座位的时候，一个一个地，对于我所占有的几个空位儿总略一瞻顾，就望望然过之，始终没有一个来就坐。但当时，我的确木然，一点也不感到有什么不愉快，因为在我是正希望不要有人来与我同坐。火车终于开行了。我喝了一口茶，因为站起来向窗外边把满口的红茶梗吐去的便，就略略看了一下窗外的景色。当黄色的百龄机的广告牌使我感到厌恶而坐下来的时候，一回头，在我的对面已经坐着这个老妇人了。这就是奇怪，她——这个龙钟的老妇人，伛偻着背，脸上打着许多邪气的皱纹，鼻子低陷着，嘴唇永远地歪揷着，打着颤震，眼睛是当你看着她的时候，老是空看着远处，虽然她的视线会被别人坐着的椅背所阻止，但她却好像擅长透视术似的，一直看得到the eternity，而当你的眼光暂时从她脸上移开去的时候，她却会偷偷地，——或者不如说阴险地，对你凝看着。她在什么时候坐到这里来的呢？可有人看见她来坐在这个位儿上吗？我开始动了我的疑虑。我觉得这个老妇人多少有点神秘。她是独自个，她拒绝了侍役送上来的茶，她要喝白水，她老是偏坐在椅位的角隅里，这些都是怪诞的。不错，妖怪的老妇人不喝茶的，因为喝了茶，她的魔法就破了。这是我从一本什么旧书中看见过的呢？同时，西洋的妖怪的老妇人骑着笤帚飞行在空中捕捉人家的小孩子，和《聊斋志异》中的隔着窗棂在月下喷水的黄脸老妇人的幻像，又浮上了我的记忆。我肯定了这对座的老妇人一定就是这一类的魔鬼。我恐怖起来了，为什么我要坐在这里？为什么刚才人家都不来占据我这里的空位？他们难道都曾在这个座位上看见了什么吗？为什么这个老妇人要来与我对面坐着？这些都立刻形成了我的严重的问题了。

但这种疑问是怎么也没有方法自己譬解的。我曾想换一个座位，但环顾这一节车中，除了我们这里还有两个空座外，只有一个穿着团长服的军人旁边尚有一个空位，此外是全都有人占坐着了。与其在这里害怕，倒不如去忍耐一点葱蒜臭与那个军人并坐去罢。可是这也不过曾在一秒钟之间活动过的思想，因为我要舒适，还是独据了这个双人座罢。况且，即使换了个座位，既已有了这个老妇人的可怖的印象，能保这印象不会持续在我易座之后的头脑里吗？我唯一的办法就是不再看她一眼，我竭力地禁制我的眼光不移向这老妇人脸上去，即使她那深浅黑花纹的头布和那正搁在几上的，好像在做什么符咒似的把三个指头装着怪样子的干枯而奇小的手。

据说，有魔法的老妇人的手是能够脱离了臂腕在夜间飞行出去攫取人的灵魂的。我不自主地又想起来了。但这又是什么书上说的？我的记性真坏极了。我怕我会患神经衰弱病，怔忡病……没有用，这种病如我这样的生活，即使吃药也是不能预防的。Polytamin有什么好处，我吃了三瓶了。定命着要来的事情是怎么也避免不了的。哈哈，我竟成了定命论者了。这是那一派的思想？叔本华？……是的，正如妖术迫人一样，定命无论如何会降临给你的。妖术？我为什么要拿妖术来做比喻？怎么，我又看她了！她为什么对我把嘴角牵动一下？是什么意思？她难道因为我看出了她是个妖妇而害怕了吗？我想不会的，害怕的恐怕倒是我自己呢……

我还是看书罢，我的小皮箱里带着书。啊，不错，那本The Romance of Sorcery倒不能拿出来了。难道

是因为我这两天多看了些关于妖术的书，所以受了它的影响么？虽然，也许有点，但是这个老妇人是无疑地她本身也有着可怪的地方，即使我未曾看那些书，我也一定会同样地感觉到的。我该拿哪一本书出来看呢：Le Fanu的奇怪小说？《波斯宗教诗歌》？《性欲犯罪档案》？《英诗残珍》？好像全没有看这些书的心情呢。还有些什么书在行篋里？.....没有了，只带了这五本书。.....还有一本《心理学杂志》，那没有意思。怎么，她又在偷看我了，那么鬼鬼祟祟的，愈显得她是个妖妇了。我怎么会不觉得。哼，我也十分在留心着你呢。你预备等我站高来向搁栏上取皮篋的时候，施行你的妖法，昏迷了我，劫去了我的行李吗？这主意倒不错！人家一定会当你是我的母亲的。我反正不想看书，我决不站起来拿皮篋。我凝看着你，怎么样！我用我的强毅的，精锐的眼光镇慑着你，你敢！

但是她没有什么动静。她完全是一个衰老于生活的妇人，从什么地方我刚才竟看出她是个妖妇呢？这分明是一重笑话！我闹了笑话了。如果我曾经骂了她，或是把她交代给车上的宪兵，那一定会就此铸成一个辩解不清的丑闻了。好，算了罢，阴云密布的时候所给予人的恐怖，在太阳出来之后，立刻会消灭了的。而刚才是一定有乌云降在我的神经里，所以这样地误会了。降在神经上的乌云！这太诗意的了，我应当说明白。这叫什么？.....也许我的错觉太深了，不，似乎应当说幻觉，太坏了！风景真好，长久住在都市里，从没有看见这样一大片自然的绿野过。那边一定是个大土阜，隆起着。如果这在中原的话，一定有人会考据出来，说是某一朝代某王妃的陵墓。那么，一定就有人会去发掘了。哦，以后呢？他们会发现一个大大的石室，中间有一只很大的石供桌，上面点着人脂煎熬的油灯。后面有一个庞大的棺材，朱红漆的，当然，并且还用黄金的链吊起着。还有呢？他们就把那棺材劈开来，是的，实演大劈棺了。但是并没有庄周跳起来，里面躺着一个紧裹着白绸的木乃伊。古代的美貌王妃的木乃伊，曳着她的白绸拖地的长衣，倘若行到我们的都会里来，一定是怎样地惊人啊！.....惊人？还不止是惊人，一定会使人恋爱的。人一定会比恋爱一个活的现代女人更热烈地恋爱她的。如果能够吻一下她那放散着奇冷的麝香味的嘴唇，怎样？我相信人一定会有不再与别个生物接触的愿望的。哦，我已经看见了：横陈的白，四围着的红，垂直的金黄，这真是个璀璨的魔网！

但是，为什么这样妄想呢？也许石室里是乌沉沉的。也许他们会凿破七重石门，而从里面走出一个神秘的容貌奇丑的怪老妇人来的。是的，妖怪的老妇人是常常寄居在古代的catacomb里的。于是，他们会得乱纷纷地抛弃了鸦锄和鹰嘴凿逃走出来，而她便会从窟穴里吐出一重黑雾来把洞口封没掉。但是，如果那个美丽的王妃的木乃伊是这妖妇的化身呢？.....那可就危险了。凡是吻着了她的嘴唇的人，一定会立刻中了妖法，变做鸡，鸭，或纯白的鹅。变作鹅，我说这倒也不错。我想起那个雕刻来了。那天鹅不是把两翼掩着丽达的膝而把头伸在她的两腿中间吗？啊，超现实主义的色情！

妄想！妄想！太妄想了！难道这个老妇人真会得变作美丽的王妃的木乃伊吗？虽然妖法是可信的，但是我终不相信她会变作美丽的少妇。我总厌恶她。看！她的喝水多么奇怪！她为什么向这面的杯边喝一口，又换向另一面的杯边喝一口？不像是讲究卫生罢？她是不是真想对我施行妖术了呢？我应当明明白白地告诉她，我行篋里只有几本书和一件睡衣，免了这徒然的劳动罢。

我不懂，如果她没有一种特殊的秘密的权力，我怎么会觉得颤栗呢？我从来不曾因为一个老妇人而战栗过。.....这样的疑虑在我心中回旋着，我的眼睛几次三番地竭力从她脸上移开，环看了一遍车中的乘客，又顾盼了一下在窗外绕着圆圈的风景。而结果总是仍旧回到她这可疑的脸上来。我的感觉和意识好像完全被她所支配了：被她的异样的眼光，喃喃然好像在念什么符咒的翕动着的嘴唇，和干萎了的但是白得带恐怖的手。

忽然，看见×州城外的古塔了，我嘘了一口气，我可以从此脱离了这怪老妇，不再有什么恐怖了。如果有别人上车来坐在我这座位上，他，——或她，将怎样呢？我想一定也会得感到恐怖的。是的，这决不会是我个人独有的感情。天色虽则忽然阴暗下来，起先倒并不使我感觉到多少不快。

走出了月台，我舒服地沿着那狭狭的石子路走。我是应了朋友陈君的招请而来消磨这个周末的。陈君是个园艺家，又是个昆虫学家。他在这×州的郊外买了一块很大的地，造了一所小小的西式房子，就致力于他的学问和业，已经有四五年的成绩了。我欣喜地呼吸着内地田野里的新鲜的香味，又预想着到了陈君家

里之后的情景，只顾自己往前走，并没有留意到别个下车的乘客。

怕要下雨罢。我看看天色愈阴了，总好像要下骤雨的样子。陈君的家还有一里多路，计算起来，似乎应当打紧步武才是。这样想着，不知不觉的就迅速地走了。我头也不回，一气走到了陈君的家。站在门檐下回看四野，黑黝黝地一堆一堆的草木在摇动着了。我不禁想起“山雨欲来风满楼”这诗句，虽然事实上此刻四周并没有山。

我会见了陈君及其夫人，坐在他们的安逸的会客间里，觉得很舒泰了。这种心境是在上海过周末的时候所不会领略到的。女仆送上茶来的时候，玻璃窗上听见了第一点粗重的雨声。我便端起茶杯，走向那面向着街的大玻璃窗，预备欣赏一下郊野的雨景。虽然是在春季，但这雨却真可抵到夏季的急雨，这都是因为前几天太热了之故。有三两个农民远远地在背着什么斧锄之类的田作器具从那边田塍上跑来。燕子，鸫鸟，乌鸦和禾雀都惊乱似的在从这株树飞到那株树。空中好似顿然垂下了一重纱幕，较远一些的景物都看不见了。只有淡淡的一丛青烟在那里摇曳着，我知道这一定是一个大竹林。

但是，我忽然注意到在那青烟的下面还有一小团黑色的影子，是的，一个黑色的人形——一个穿着黑色衣裙的老妇人！她正如在凝望着我们这里一般，冒着这样的大雨，屹然不动。她什么时候下车的？她为什么也到x州来？她可是专为了跟踪我而来的吧？她如果真要……啊！这样看来，她是不止于要偷窃我的行篋呢。我又突然颤栗了，茶杯在我手中不安稳起来，已经有一二点茶水泼出来了。会有什么重大的事变发生呢？会有什么重大的事变发生呢？……我忍耐不住这样的恐怖了，我惊叫我的朋友：

“喂，快些，你来看！”

陈君显然已经听出了我声音的抖动，他抢一步走过来：

“什么？什么东西使你恐怖了？”

“你看，你看见了吗？”我指着那老妇人的黑影问。

陈君向窗外顺着我的手指望去，他突出了眼睛，哆张了嘴，但好像始终没有看见什么。

“你说什么？那边不是一个竹子吗？”

我很奇怪，这样真实的一个老妇人的黑影，难道他竟没有看见吗？你看，这妖怪的老妇人的身材不是显得比刚才在火车里的要大二三倍吗？她比我更长更大了。她还是向我们这边看着，她不怕雨。我一手搭在陈君的肩膀上，把他拖近我所站的地方，一手指给他看：

“是的，那竹林底下，你看，底下还有一个老妇人，你看！”

但是，出于我意料之外的，陈君却还是摇摇头，做着一一种疑心的神色：

“老妇人？没有，竹林底下清清楚楚的一个人也没有。谁会立在那儿，这样大的雨。……你眼花了吗？来，不要去看她，我们喝茶罢……”

我完全给恐怖，疑虑，和愤怒占据了。难道这妖妇只显现给我一个人看的吗？为什么？她对我有什么过不去的地方？我不能走开，我须得也凝看着她。刚才在火车里也是这样地被我镇压住的。我眼看着外面，回答陈君道：

“不，我非看住她不可！这是个妖妇，这一定是个妖妇！啊，不知道我身上会发生什么事变呢，既然你看不见她。是的，她是从上海跟我到这里来的，我总得被她治服了。啊，我不能抵抗她。这是一个定命。……”

陈君不说话，他站在旁边，上上下下地打量我。我觉得的，虽然我并没有分心去看他一眼，但我的确觉得的。他是在考量我究竟是否有了痴狂的嫌疑。而这时，陈君的夫人也走上前来。她看着我，看着陈君，又看着窗外，默默不作一声。

“你看见吗，夫人？”我故作镇静地问。

但是她并不回答。我觉得她将肘子推着陈君。于是她和他就各自拽了我一只手臂，预备把我扶回沙发上去。但我怎么能够！我从来没有看见过这样庞大，丑陋，怪奇的老妇人。不是我制了她，就得让她制了我；这里分明已经显着敌意了。我从他们夫妇俩掌握中挣扎着。陈君又说了：

“你近来似乎精神有些不好呢，正要在这里多住几天，休养休养。”

精神有些不好？……是的，那是事实，但说我要在这里多住几天，休养休养？那可不成。这老妇人既然来到这里，我就非从速避开不可。我真后悔这一次来到x州，惹了大恐怖。在上海从来没有这种怪事情发生过。我对于陈君的话心中起了大大的愤懑。

“怎么？你们竟没有看见吗？来！”我自己退在后面，两手拖着陈君及其夫人的手臂，使他们同时站在我所曾站立过的地位上。我指着那个黑影。

“这一次可看见了没有？”

突然，陈君的夫人大笑起来了。这笑很奇兀，为什么笑？我出于不意地有些骇异了。她看见了这个老妇人吗？但何以要笑？……她走上前去，指着玻璃窗上的一个黑点！

“你看见了吗，是这个东西吗？”

奇怪！奇怪！我哪里相信有这回事？我明明看见在竹林底下，那个火车里的丑陋老妇人。怎么？怎么忽然变作了玻璃上的黑污渍了。哪有这样的相像？现在看起来，这一点黄豆大的黑污渍倒真有些像一个老妇人了。但是……但是刚才我所看见的一定不是这东西。我不相信我会闹这样的笑话。刚才的确是那个老妖妇，而现在呢？现在的确是一个黑污渍，都没有错！这就是她的妖法。因为我凝看着她，她没有方法隐身了，故而趁这陈夫人误会的时候从竹林中隐身下去了。

我睁大了眼睛，哆张了嘴；眼光忽而瞩目，忽而视近，失神地呆立着。但旁边的陈君及其夫人的笑声惊醒了我，我觉得很疲乏，好像经过了一次战争。当陈君及其夫人把我扶到沙发坐下时，我觉得头晕，目眩，并且通身感觉到一股寒冷，像是要发疟疾的样子。我就这样地睡熟了。

醒来时，已经傍晚了。雨不知在什么时候停止的。外面树林的梢上抹着金黄的夕阳。天气很高爽，不像刚才来时那样的阴晦愁惨了。我喝过了一盏陈夫人给送来的咖啡，便揭开了他们替我盖着的绒毯，站起来，说明了出去散步，好像完全恢复了我的精神似的，放怀地走到外面郊原里。

我先向四下里瞻望，想决定我该向那边走。但首先就看见那高大的竹林，那边很明亮，一点也看不出有什么邪气。也并没有什么人形，好像根本没有发生过什么事。我不觉得对于自己要谴责起来了。这是白日梦，完全是！只有神经太衰弱的人才会有这种现象。我不能长此以往的患着这种病。我应当治疗……但如果每天抽少量的鸦片，也行，我想至少可以有些好处。……我该向西边走，这样可以迎着夕阳，看远天的霞色。

种种颜色在我眼前晃动着。落日的光芒真是不可逼视的，我看见朱红的棺材和金黄的链，辽远地陈列在地平线上。还有呢？……那些一定是殉葬的男女，披着锦绣的衣裳，东伏西倒着，脸上还如活着似的露出了刚才知道陵墓门口已被封闭了的消息的恐怖和失望。——永远的恐怖和失望啊！但是，那一块黑色的是什么呢？这样地浓厚，这样地光泽，又好似这样地透明！这是一个斑点，——斑点，谁说的？我的意思是不是说玻璃窗上那个斑点？那究竟是一点什么东西呢？……难道陈君近来有了鸦片瘾吧？那明明是一点鸦片，浓厚地沾在玻璃窗上的。而且惟有鸦片才这样地光泽。……决不是墨渍，黑的，哈哈！贵重的东西都是黑色的。印度的大黑珠，还有呢，记不起许多了，听说西藏有玄玉……但总之黑色的女人是并不贵重的，即使她们会舞Hula，女人总是以白色的为妙……那是一朵黑云。对了，它在消淡下去了。天上原没有什么鸦片。但是——我不懂，云里会不会现出一个老妖妇来的呢？我应当看它消散完了才走。否则——谁知道？……

我不妨在这块青石上坐一会儿。走？走到哪儿去呢。天色快要晚了，再看一会野景就可以回去了。不错，刚才倒忘记了叮嘱他们，他们这时候一定在替我忙饭菜了，其实款待我这样的客人是很简单的。我吃不下许多东西，给我一杯水和少许面包就够了，但是牛油却要多。……这是谁，Byron爵爷？诗人？哈哈，我只学到了他的食量吗？……但如果吃中国饭，给我一碟新蚕豆也足够了。我是到乡下来吃新蚕豆的，这应当预先告诉他们夫妇呀。吃外国饭是上海好，吃中国饭却是内地好。上海的中国菜全是油，油，油！意大利饭店的通心粉和cheese自然是顶顶好的，我明天还得要去吃一顿。……怎么？那边有一个竹林子，可就是那个怪竹林？让我来辨辨方向，西……北，不错，那是在西方的竹林子，我刚才已经转向北了。见鬼！走走又走到这里来了，那竹林子里不是有几家人家吗？乡下人家真是另外有一种舒服的。怎么……有水

声？哦，那边灌木丛后倒还有个水潭吗？什么人在那里弄水？走到了这里，倒觉得绿沉沉地似乎很幽阴了。……但这或许是现在太阳已沉落的关系。我可以走到那水潭边去看看。古潭对于我是一向有趣味的，那是很fantastic的。

绿水的古潭边，有村姑洗濯吗？这倒并不是平凡的景色，至少在我是满意了。她洗些什么？白的，绞干了。现在，这是一块红红的……“休洗红，洗多红色浅”这古谣句浮起在我脑筋中了。我倘若对她吟着这样的谣句，她会怎么样？不，这太迂了，她不会懂得一个字。她并且不会觉得这是一种调笑。……她看见我了，我这种呆相一定已经给她看见了。随她，反正我们大家都不认识。竹林子里有什么人在走动！为什么偷偷躲躲地不出来！怪——我又眼花了吗？分明是个老妇人……那妖妇啊！

“喂！”

我惊叫起来，不知不觉的把手指了那个正在转到竹林后面去的怪妇人的背影。

那在潭边洗濯的村女被我吓了一跳。她愕然站起来，看看我，又依着我所指示的地方看去。重又回过头来疑问似的看着我。

“姑娘，看见了什么吗？”

“没有什么。”

“没有什么？你说你没有看见那个妖怪老妇人吗？”

“呸！你才是妖怪哪，那是我的妈妈。”

我失望似的垂下了手。当她用着愤怒的眼光看了我一眼之后，我返身跑了。

晚餐的时候，陈夫人穿了一件淡红绸的洋服。但因为x州的灯，电力不足之故，黄色的灯光照映着，使她的衣裳幻成了白色的。这白色——实在是已经超于真实的白色，这是使人看不定的神秘的白色。

我坐在她对面，陈君坐在我们的旁边。

当我吃到一片陈君园里的番茄的时候，我忽然从陈夫人身上感到一重意欲。这是毫无根据的，突然而来的。陈夫人是相当的可算得美艳的女人。她有纤小的朱唇和永远微笑着的眼睛。但我并不是这样地一个轻薄的好色者。我从来不敢……是的，从不曾有过……但是，今天，一眼看了她紧束着幻白色的轻绸的纤细的胴体，袒露着的手臂，和削得很低的领圈，她的涂着胭脂的嘴唇给黄色的灯光照得略带枯萎的颜色，我不懂她是不是故意穿了这样的衣服来诱引我的。我再说一遍，我是怀疑她是不是故意穿了这衣服的，至于诱引，当然我不说她是故意的。因为有许多女人是会连自己也没有意识到地诱引了一个男子的。

我觉得纳在嘴里的红红的番茄就是陈夫人的朱唇了。我咀嚼着，发现了一种秘密恋爱的酸心的味道。我半闭着双眼。我把开着的一半眼睛上看真实的陈夫人的顰笑和动作，而把闭着的一半眼睛耽于幻想的陈夫人之享受。我看见她曳着那白的长裙从餐桌的横头移步过来，手扶着桌子的边缘。我看见陈君退出室外去了。我觉得她将右手抚按着我的前额了——是的，其实她这时正在抚按她自己的前额。我放下了刀叉，我偷偷地从裤袋里掏出手帕来擦了一下嘴。我看见很大的一张陈夫人的脸在凑近来。没有这样白的！这是从来没有看见过的。日本女人也不会有这样惨白的脸。她微笑了，这是一种挑诱！她竟然闭了眼睛！怎么？我们已经在接吻了吧？我犯了罪呢。陈君最好此刻不要进来，……也不要谴责我。我犯了罪，自会得受到天刑的。也许我立刻会死了的……什么响？……门？他竟进来了吗？

但进门的是送咖啡来的女仆。当陈君递一盏咖啡给我的时候，我讷讷地没有什么话好说，也没有致谢，我觉得很热。

“阿特灵”忘记带来，今晚恐怕仍旧要不容易睡熟呢。我烦躁地想。

次日，我起身得很迟。本想来欣赏的乡野里的清晨光景，已经在我的噩梦中消逝了。我走出房门，就碰见陈夫人在走廊内。

“早。”她微笑着说。

早？这真是太挖苦我了。现在什么时候了，怕有十点钟了罢？她为什么这样地讽刺我？怀着一种说不出的苦痛，我搭讪着说：

“笑话，困失聪了。”

好像自己也觉得刚才失言了呢，还是忽然想到什么别的事情，她忽然微红着脸，露出一副狼狈的神情。她用兰花式的手指撩拨着鬓发，我看出她已经有些窘了，但是，我正要她窘，我爱看女人的窘态。她会眼睛里潮润着，从耳朵根一直红到额角，足尖踮踏着，手不知放向何处去才好，而嘴唇会翕动着，但是永远说不出一句话。当她好容易说出一句话来的时候，一定是很不适当的。

果然，陈夫人也正如我所曾经验过的女子一样。

“昨晚睡得好吗？”

“哦！睡得好，很好。”我微笑了。

她忽然一低头，手牵着衣襟走下楼去了。

于是，我惯常要发作的憎厌心又涌上来了。无论如何，她这样地避开了去是无礼的，她没有把我们的会晤做个结束。这不懂礼仪的女人！这绝不能在社交界里容身的女人。一点不懂得温雅，这简直是个……当我这样地一面想着咒诅她的譬喻，一面在下扶梯的时候，一瞥眼又看见她抱了一只碧眼的大黑猫闪进会客室里去，——啊，这简直也是个妖妇了。

已经被忘却了的恐怖重又爬入我的心里。我昨晚怎么会幻想着她与我接吻的呢？她是个妖妇，她或许就是昨天那个老妇人的化身。——所以她会把她们的幻影变作玻璃窗上的黑污渍指给我看。我起先的确看见玻璃窗上并没有什么斑点的。啊，可怕，人怎么能够抵抗一个善于变幻的妖妇呢！难道中古时代的精灵都还生存在现代吧？……这又有什么不可能？他们既然能够从上古留存到中古，那当然是可以再遗留到现代的。你敢说上海不会有这种妖魅吗？

自从这样的疑虑在我心中大大地活动了之后，我留心看那个陈夫人，果然每个动作都是可疑的。她一定是像小说中妖狐假借妲己的躯壳似的被那个老妖妇所占据了。她已经不是从前的那个陈夫人了。可怜哪！陈君，我又怎么敢对你说明白呢？

但是，对于陈夫人的幻想的吻却始终在我嘴唇上留着迹印。我一直感觉到嘴唇上冰冷，好像要发生什么事变了。

好容易和陈君盘桓到下午三点钟，我挈了行篋避难似的赶到车站。

回到自己的寓所里，就好像到了一处有担保的安全避难所了。以后决不到乡下去企图过一个愉快的周末了。愉快吗？……笑话！恐怖，魔难，全碰到了，倘若这两日在上海呢，至少有一家电影院会使我松散松散的。当我从行篋里取出书来放到书架上去的时候，我这样想。

今晚呢？该娱乐一下补救补救前两天的损失了，哦！时候还早，八点二十分，……怎么啦，钟停了？表呢？……八点二十五分。奇怪！刚才停吗，还是昨天晚上停了？我明明记得前天临走时把发条绞紧的，怎么这样快的就停了。……报纸呢，今天的报纸？……不必看罢，近一些还是到奥迪安戏院去。

十分钟之后，我已走上了奥迪安戏院的高阶。当我手指夹着一张纸币送进买票处的黄铜栏去的时候，眼前呈上了一张写着四个大黑字的卡纸：“上下客满。”我失意地退了下来。那有这样巧，我真的在末一个座位售出之后来的吗？我向收票的门边溜了一眼，一个得到最后一个座位的客人刚才闪进身去，而这个客人是穿着黑衣服的，一个老妇人！

一切穿黑的老妇人都是不吉的！Any one！Every one！

我的精神完全委顿了，好像一束苕麻忽然松懈了捆绑的绳子一样，每一支神经都骤然散懈下来了。不吉的定命已经在侵袭我了。我要咒诅它，我要打它。我不知道我在走向哪里去，我狂气似地故意碰到每一个可疑的人身上去。他们都是那鬼怪的老妇人的化身。但是他们为什么没一个干涉我，责问我呀？是的……如果他干涉我，我就有了挑衅的理由了，我为什么不可以打他们呢？当我打倒了他们，而他们现出了怪物的原形来时，人不知要说我多么伟大呢，……报纸上也会登载我的历险记和照片的，《时报》上一定登载得尤其详细。这是很grotesque的新闻……但我不愿意他们登载曾经和那妖妇的化身接吻过，那是对于我和陈君都是一个丑闻。

啊，不吉的定命已经在侵袭我了。我只要生一双能够看见妖魔在哪里的眼睛就好了。谁拖住我的臂

膀？

“哪里去？”

谁？……一个女人声音？哦！这里已经是W——咖啡店吗？她——这个咖啡女，我们是老相好了，我并没有忘记她。但我到今天还不知道她的姓名呢。她在门外做什么？她拖住了我做什么？

“为什么长久不来？进去喝一杯咖啡罢。”

哦，我从来没有看见咖啡女站在店门外兜生意的，大大的创造！啊，人这么多，还有美国水鬼，我要到楼上小房间去坐。

“来一杯咖啡吗，照例地？”

混账！我难道专喝咖啡的吗？我觉得她的话太唐突了。我摇摇头。

“那么来什么，喝酒吗，威士忌？啤酒？”

“啤酒也成。”我莫名其妙地这样要了。

“正好，刚才有新到的德国黑啤酒。”

黑啤酒！又是黑！我眼前直是晃动着一大片黑颜色的绸缎。看，有多少魔法的老妇人在我面前舞动啊！她们都是要扼死我的，用她们那干萎得可怕的小手。……

但是从这些混乱的黑色中迎上来一个白色的——啊，那样地似曾相识的白色啊！——白色的什么，我该当说？哦，一个纯白的白色哪！太奇怪，为什么她也穿了这样的白绸衣裳，难道现在这个颜色流行着吗？哦，catacomb里的古代王妃的木乃伊全都爬出来行走在柏油马路上了……

啤酒倒不错，可是我量狭。半瓶给她喝了罢。……她又坐在我身边了。看上去她倒很欢迎我的。她美丽吗？穿着这一身衣裳倒很有点陈夫人的风度了。但是这嘴唇却比较大而瘪，显见得衰老了，是的，这些咖啡女子也很容易衰老的，生活太斫丧了。

她为什么今天这样怪，一声不响地呆看着我？她好像要说话了。我们坐得很近呢，我何不吻她一下。吻得吗？……为什么不？这些咖啡女子是人尽可吻的。但是……但是，哦，倘若是陈夫人来做了咖啡女子呢？……

我已经勾住她的项颈了。她的头在逼近我了。……很大的一个陈夫人的脸哪！她为什么在我肩膀上拧一把？唉。我们已经在接吻了吗？怪冷！从来没有这样冰冷的嘴唇的。这不是活人的嘴唇呢！她难道是那个古墓里的王妃的木乃伊吗？这样说来，她一定也是那个老妖妇的化身了。我难道竟真的会接触着她的吗？……我不敢睁开眼睛来，我会看见怎样的情形呢？天哪！事情全盘都错了，我上了她的算计了。她为什么这样的冷笑着呢？阴险的胜利的笑声！她会将怎样的厄运降给我呢？我会死吗？……

“不是你。”

谁在说不是我？这声音好熟！我非睁开眼来看看不可……

一切都照样。我可不认识他，他大概不是说我。他们人很多，好像很愉快的。但只有我一个人到这里来受罪。她还在对我笑，她一定很得意了，好，我非立刻就走不可，而且我连小账都不给她，这妖妇！

果然，她在背后骂我了，我听见的，什么？“当心点！”恐吓我了，唉，什么事变会发生了呢？可咒诅的妖妇，你如果明明白白地对我说了，我会恳求你的……

二十分钟后，我迟钝地回到寓所，我坐在那只大椅子上，扶着头，不知过了多少时候，侍役送上一个电报来：

我的三岁的女孩子死了。

我把电报往地下一丢，站起身来走向露台上去，街上冷冷清清地显见得已经是半夜了。我听见一个**绺绺**的声音，很迟慢地在底下响着。我俯伏在栏杆上，在那对街的绿色的煤气灯下，使我毛发直竖的，我看见一个穿了黑衣裳的老妇人孤独地蹚进小巷里去。

Fog

Suzhen lost her mother when she was very young, and she grew up under the care and tutelage of her father. Her remaining parent was a Roman Catholic priest who was in charge of a small church in a village by the sea. He had been in this position for fourteen years already. Suzhen had never attended school, but she could read and write. In fact, the only place of instruction in this village of less than five hundred fishing families was the church. Suzhen's scholastic achievements were remarkable, so much so that she was able to write her father's sermons for him every week. The source of her knowledge was mainly her father's library of several hundred old books, supplemented by two-day-old newspapers brought in from Shanghai by the fishing boats. In addition, from time to time her cousins sent her books from Shanghai.

Her father was a deeply conservative man. But Chinese priests are not as rigorously self-disciplined as their Western counterparts. Whereas foreign priests are forbidden to read romances, Suzhen's father's library contained such love stories as *The Western Chamber*. Ever since she had first learned to read, Suzhen had buried herself in his books, some of which she never tired of reading over and over again.

Suzhen was fond of dressing up. She had a strong sense of self-confidence — believing that she was a typical tenderhearted and attractive girl. No, a better term would be one she herself had but lately learned, and that was "romantic." But one could not say that in this respect she had been influenced by the prevailing social customs at all; the traditional *qipao* dress proved that. Nine years previously one of her cousins had come from Shanghai to visit her, and she had been wearing a *qipao* or cheongsam in the latest fashion. Suzhen, just like her father, expressed disapproval of such a seductive style of dress. But she regretted it later, when some of the better-off fishermen's wives appeared for services at the church wearing *qipao*. So she got someone to buy for her some cloth for making a *qipao* from the town, thirty-odd *li* away. And her plait was also only cut after similar hesitation. So, from this aspect at least, although she liked to dress up and considered herself a romantic, she was actually just like her father, a conservative creature.

To talk about her looks, Suzhen was in no way inferior to the pretty young misses who usually turn our heads. At the same time, this was also the reason why she liked dressing up and why she could be so self-confident. Nobody had ever seen Suzhen's mother, but everyone said she must have been a natural beauty. Suzhen often pondered on her looks in the mirror. Of course, she had long ago forgotten her mother, but her looks gave her self-confidence. As she got older she reminded her father more and more of his lost wife. He would ponder on how poor his fate had been — to end up as the priest of a small village parish. And whenever he thought of the early death of his beautiful wife this doddering old priest valued more and more the jewel that had been left to him and anxiously hoped for a suitable young gentleman as a husband for her.

A suitable young gentleman. Yes, when it came to marriage Suzhen held the same firm conviction as her father. He was determined that his daughter would not suffer the same life of misery that his wife had, and so he spared no pains in looking for a good match — a young man with prospects, Suzhen herself, fully convinced that she had both good looks and talent, had set strict standards by which to judge her ideal husband.

Surrounded as she was by fisherfolk, where would Suzhen conjure up an image of a perfect husband different from the elegant young scholars of the romantic stories? So the husband for her had to be able to write poetry and essays, engage in witty conversation and drink wine while appreciating the beauty of the moon. But such a paragon never appeared in her small village, and so the years had just slipped away from the time of the first awakening of her emotions around the age of fifteen or sixteen until now.

This year, Suzhen was twenty-eight years old.

When she was about sixteen or seventeen, the old women of the fishing village, when they left the church at the end of the services, would accost her father and ask him eagerly: "Isn't there a match arranged for Suzhen yet?" Then the girl would be overcome with bashfulness. But later, when she was twenty and the old women asked the same question, she would experience a happy and shining feeling. But truly time flew by, and before she knew it she was twenty-five, and the same question made her feel irritated. Now? Well, now she was twenty-eight, and it was a long time since she had heard the question.

Was she brokenhearted? Not at all. She often read about unhappy marriages in the newspapers. She understood that a woman's happiness in the latter part of her life was built on the foundation of marriage, and that if one did not meet a suitable mate it was better not to get married at all. Apart from that, her eldest cousin's divorce had given her great consolation. She had four female cousins, two elder and two younger, the children of her mother's brother. He taught at a college in Shanghai, where all his family lived. After three of Suzhen's cousins had come to visit her nine years before, she had received wedding invitations from her two elder cousins on average once every two and a half years. They had depressed her. But the previous year she had received at the same time a notice of her younger cousin's engagement and a letter from the eldest cousin describing her divorce in tragic terms. The effect on her spirits was a calming one, and she was convinced that her stubbornness in matters marital was correct.

Nevertheless, in this small village there were only two roads open to her, never mind her ideal husband! The choices were to marry a fisherman or spend the rest of her days as an old maid, this much she had surmised. She regretted having been lost in fantasies for so many years, having let time slip away when she could have contracted a suitable match in the village.

Her father understood her dilemma and had long before written to his brother-in-law in Shanghai seeking his help. But, as is well known, nobody in the cities wants to act as matchmaker for a girl from the provinces. Consequently, the brother-in-law, although he wished to help and knew that the matter was urgent, could do nothing. And then, after the cousin's divorce Suzhen's father found it impossible to bring up the subject again with his relative in Shanghai.

On the evening of the day her younger cousin's wedding invitation was received Suzhen's father sighed over the discourtesy they had shown in not going in person to congratulate the two elder cousins on their happy occasions. He also cursed his aged limbs, which had become so feeble that he even found it difficult to move about. At that, his daughter suddenly came to a secret decision, and asked her father to allow her to go to Shanghai on the pretext of delivering congratulations. This he agreed to, and sent a letter in advance of her arrival to his brother-in-law, asking that the cousins be allowed to meet Suzhen at the Xujiahui Railway Station — Xujiahui was the district where they lived. He also arranged for an acquaintance to row her over to the town to catch the train.

So she was now on the train, on her way to Shanghai. The compartment was not crowded, and she secured a seat near the window. She was so excited that she even found the jolting of the train no discomfort. She gazed out of the window, carefully noting the names of the stations they stopped at. Not being used to the company of so many strangers, Suzhen was too shy to turn away from the window and scrutinize the other passengers. But, after five or six stations had been passed, and the shades of dusk were closing in, the train plunged into a dense fog, making it impossible for her to watch the scenery any longer.

There was nothing for it but to turn away from the window, which she did with a heavy and bowed head. The rocking of the carriage was like a cradle, and before long she was lulled into a deep reverie. She did not know how long she remained in this state until she was awoken by a severe jarring, followed by an almost eerie stillness. Raising her head, she perceived that the train had stopped.

Suzhen peered out of the window, but all she saw was the same murky fog enshrouding the fields; there was no

sign of a station. The compartment was filled with a babble of voices as the other passengers clamoured to know why the train had suddenly made this unexpected halt. Nobody seemed to know. Suzhen too was a little alarmed, as she had never had an experience like this before.

However, this occurrence made her forget her shyness and inhibitions for a short while. So much so that she had the courage to take a good look at her fellow travellers. The first one she noticed was a young gentleman seated opposite her. He was engrossed in a book, apparently oblivious to all the commotion. At a glance, she could tell he was a refined young man. He had a mild appearance, was neatly dressed and his actions betrayed a depth of cultivation — she could sense this by the way he put down the book he was holding. When he placed the book beside him Suzhen stole a glance at its title. The words printed on the cover were unfamiliar to her, but anyway it seemed to be a collection of poetry. Poetry, eh? So he was reading poetry! This aroused her curiosity in him even further, and she dared to give him another glance, and discovered a person who tallied exactly with the standards for an ideal husband she had secretly devised for herself.

She felt herself blushing. She shifted her eyes to some women sitting some distance away. They were wearing *qipao*, with sleeves so short that the dresses could almost be said to be sleeveless. Didn't they feel embarrassed, showing their arms like that? Moreover, it was already autumn; didn't they feel cold? As she pondered this she unconsciously stroked her own sleeves, which were long enough to cover the backs of her hands.

There was a man talking to a woman in the next seat. What were they talking about? They were so intimate that they certainly didn't look like a married couple at all. And why was the woman's face so red?

At that instant she felt her heart thumping hard.

Meanwhile, the young gentleman opposite kept looking at her. And a very bold and audacious stare it was too! He seemed to be examining her with all the energy in his body concentrated in his eyes — as if he had discovered something really worth noticing in her face and body. When her thumping heart had quietened down a little, Suzhen felt a kind of glorious feeling she had never experienced before. She regretted now that she had not brought a little mirror with her in her small suitcase. If she had, she could have pulled it out and had a look at herself to see whether her face really did betray the fact that she was twenty-eight years old. A glance at the elderly woman sitting next to her revealed that she had opened her puree and was looking into a small mirror fixed inside it and rubbing away a smudge on the side of her nose. "When we get to Shanghai I must buy myself a purse like that," Suzhen thought to herself. "Or would she be willing to lend me hers?" she pondered.

As far as irregular social relations were concerned — or, to put it more bluntly, free love — Suzhen had always been against it. However, as she grew older, she gradually came to accept that it might be all right in exceptional circumstances. If, perhaps... in a situation such as this, if the young gentleman were to start a conversation with her, or even declare his love for her, she definitely would not find this a reason to oppose it.

But he had made no sign of wanting to start a conversation with her, despite the fact that she herself was perfectly prepared for one. The locomotive uttered a piercing whistle, and the train began to inch forward again. Through the window she glimpsed the last rays of twilight in the opaque white fog. A whisper of wind coming in through a crack in the window made her feel quite cold.

Poetry, fine writing, witty exchanges, a fine husband appreciating the moon with a wine cup in one hand — all these things passed through Suzhen's mind with the rhythm of the rolling train wheels. In this state of distraction, she did not notice her handkerchief drop on to the floor.

Instantly, like the proper young gentleman he was, the passenger opposite bent down to pick it up for her. He said not a word, but his eyes were full of meaning and he gave her a slight smile as he presented the handkerchief to her. But no, he didn't wait for her to stretch out her hand to take it, he placed it lightly on her knee. This was something quite outside the experience of Suzhen and it caused her some consternation. She was trembling so much

that it was a good ten seconds before she stammered out a series of "thank you"s. But this was a great event in her life, because these were the very first words she had ever spoken to a strange man.

As she picked up the handkerchief she listened for what he would say. But as she sat there with the handkerchief in her hand, expectantly, she heard not a word. Her gaze shifted to the young man's mouth, and she saw that his lips were moving — but not a sound came out.

She felt like laughing, but impatient at the same time. "Men are such strange creatures," she thought. "They never do anything in a straightforward manner." She suddenly thought of the typical plots in the old romances, in which the heroine tells her serving maid or old nurse to arrange a tryst with the young gallant in the flower garden at the back of the house. She looked out of the window, only to see that everything was a dull grey colour. Sitting next to the young gentleman was some country bumpkin. He had just finished yawning, and now he fixed his eyes on Suzhen, who turned involuntarily and looked at him. Then she had an idea. Suddenly she asked the fellow:

"Have we passed Xinlonghua yet?"

Her eyes, though, were on the young gentleman, as if to say, "I'm asking you."

Naturally he wasn't stupid: he'd just been waiting for an opportunity. So he said, with a warm smile: "Xinlonghua? Not yet, but it won't be long before we get there."

The country fellow had just opened his mouth to say something, but seeing that he had been beaten to it by the young gentleman next to him, he changed what he was going to say into another yawn. By the time he had finished this second yawn, Suzhen had no further use for him.

"The fog is so thick I can't see a thing."

She had not indicated whom she was speaking to. This was not what she really wanted to tell anybody, but her listener understood. He gave a glance out of the window.

"In autumn the weather's always bad — nothing but fog from morning to night." He looked at her, almost as if he had an inkling of her true purpose. But this did not make her unhappy in the least. On the contrary, wouldn't it save a lot of trouble if he were able to see right into her heart and read her thoughts? But, in this world, no matter what it is it always has to be done in a roundabout way. He pursued the conversation:

"Are you going to Xinlonghua, Miss?"

"No, to Xujiahui."

Suzhen felt an urge to ask him where he was going, but she didn't have the courage. But she kept on gazing at him to signal that she was not prepared to end the conversation yet.

"Xujiahui — that's the next stop after Xinlonghua."

As he said this he glanced again out of the window and then at his wrist watch. He put the watch to his ear to listen for a while, and then said, "We're running behind schedule today. I'm afraid that it will probably be six or seven o'clock by the time we get there."

This gave Suzhen something of a jolt. She forgot that she was talking to a strange young man, and said, as if in a dream; "They'll have a long wait."

The two tall, pointed pagodas of Xujiahui suddenly appeared. Suzhen had never before seen these lofty and exotic buildings, but she remembered that the person who had put her on the train had said that the pagodas would be the landmark of her destination. She could picture her cousins standing underneath the pagodas. They would carry her two bags for her, and on the way she would tell them — should she tell them? — of the person she had met on the train. Of how handsome he was and mild-mannered, and nicely spoken, and how fond he was of poetry....

The young man noticed her silence and the vacant look in her eyes, and surmised that she was afraid that whoever was waiting for her would have lost patience and gone home before she arrived at her station.

"Are you going to see friends in Xujiahui?" he asked.

The sound of his cultured voice brought her back to the present. And she did not find it improper. She told him:

"No, I'm going to my uncle's house. For my cousin's wedding. I didn't go to her sisters' weddings, so I can't avoid this one. They'll all be waiting for me at the station. I'm afraid they'll have a long wait. It's so cold today, and now it getting so late — I should have caught an earlier train...."

If the train had not stopped at Xinlonghua station just then she would have gone on talking in this muddled way. An attendant came along and announced in a loud voice that those going to the South Station had to change trains there. The country fellow opposite hurriedly snatched up a basket of eggs from below his seat and got off the train. The young man slid into his seat, bringing him directly opposite Suzhen; in fact, their knees were almost touching.

"The next stop will be Xujiahui," he said.

Suzhen lifted her head and glanced at her wicker basket and leather case in the rack above. Because of the motion of the train they had shifted and were now over the next row of seats. The young man followed her gaze and seemed to sense her difficulty.

"Are those your things? Allow me...."

Before she had time to open her mouth to protest he had jumped up onto his seat and had handed down her luggage. As well as her own two pieces of luggage he brought down a small elegant suitcase which she had not noticed before. He picked up his book and put it in his suitcase, and as he did so Suzhen stole a glance into it and saw that it contained several books, a toothbrush and a handkerchief.

When the train set off again she couldn't help asking, "Are you going to Xujiahui, too, sir?"

"No, I'm going to the North Station. But I live near Xujiahui."

So he lives near Xujiahui. Perhaps he knows my uncle, thought Suzhen. Perhaps my uncle, on his way to lecture, may bump into him in the street tomorrow. "Yesterday I had the honour to meet your esteemed niece Suzhen on a train." "Oh, that's right. She mentioned it. Thank you so much for the trouble you took to look after her...." But how would he know my name? And how would he know who my uncle was? And anyway, I don't even know his name either. Oh, I do hope he is one of my uncle's students; then all he would have to do is visit my uncle's home, and everything would be fine....

Just then, to her inexpressible joy, the young man suddenly and yet timidly, as if he had suddenly screwed up his courage, asked, "Miss, would you mind telling me your name? Perhaps I could call on you — if that would not be an impertinence?"

Suzhen felt her face become almost painfully hot, and she almost didn't have the courage to say, "Qin Suzhen."

And when she did finally say it, she did it in such a low voice that the young man almost had to ask her to repeat it. Her bashfulness seemed to please him, and he asked in a more confident manner: "Would you mind telling me where you live?"

This time she really didn't have the courage to tell him, but she pulled out from her handbag the piece of paper with her uncle's address written on it which she had prepared just in case there was no one to meet her at the station. It had her uncle's name on it, too, but when the young man scrutinized it he didn't seem to recognize it. Suzhen began to feel somewhat awkward; if a stranger came to see her at her uncle's home, she would be the butt of some teasing! Thereupon, she decided that she had better find out for sure.

"Do you know my uncle? That's my uncle's name." As soon as the words were out of her mouth she regretted being so familiar. But the young man didn't seem to notice, he just shook his head.

"No, I don't know him. Er ... what business is he in?"

What? Business? Does he think my uncle is in trade? What an insult! I had better put him straight right now, Suzhen thought. Otherwise ... otherwise he might have a low opinion of me too.

"Oh, no. He's not in business. He's a professor at Huadong University." She pronounced the word "professor" particularly clearly. And, just to emphasize the point, she informed him that her cousins were students.

Immediately she could see that her words had had the desired effect. His expression changed and he said, pleased but somewhat haughtily: "I don't know them, but they may know me." With a great air of self-confidence, he produced a namecard and handed it to Suzhen. "My card," he announced.

On the card was printed simply the name, "Lu Shikui." Suzhen didn't think she had ever heard of him. But, in that case, what did he mean by saying, "... but they may know me?" He must be someone of importance. She felt somewhat ashamed of the fact that the circle of her acquaintances was so small. But at the same time she felt quite happy.

She tucked the namecard into her handbag, and as she did so she thought of something very important: was he married? Her eldest cousin had been so stupid! She had married a man not knowing that he already had a wife. But how was she to ask the young man? While she hesitated in this dilemma the train pulled into Xujiahui Station.

"We've arrived. This is Xujiahui," he said.

There was nothing for Suzhen but to stand up and pick up her two bags in preparation for getting off the train. It was late in the evening, and she could not spot her cousins in the gloom as she looked out on to the platform. She felt a twinge of panic. She gave the young man a quick nod of the head, as if there were a lot of things left unsaid, or as if to thank him, or as if to say goodbye. As her leg brushed his knee she felt a sort of thrill.

She got off the train and stood on the platform looking about her. Almost immediately two women came up to her. They were her cousins, but she gazed at them as they approached for some time before she recognized them. The elder one took her leather suitcase and led her by the arm, speaking a lot of words of greeting. What had she been saying? Oh, probably something about the train being late that they had waited for her eagerly. Although she was happy to see them her attention was elsewhere, and as her elder cousin led her out of the station she stole a couple of backward glances. Each time she looked back she saw the young man's head sticking out of the train window as he watched her depart.

After dinner at her uncle's house she chatted with her cousins. The eldest cousin, the one who had just been divorced, was suffering from some kind of internal ailment; when she spoke she often massaged her chest area. Looking at her under the light, Suzhen got the impression that she had withered, although the cousin was only three years older than herself. She certainly didn't look anywhere near as beautiful as she had done when she had visited Suzhen nine years previously. In fact, if it had not been for the high spirits of the other two cousins perhaps she would not have thought again about the romantic episode on the train. The cousin who was the would-be-bride had stayed away as was the custom then.

In the course of their animated chatter Suzhen several times had an impulse to tell the others about the young man she had met on the train. Indeed, the two younger girls were recounting — without a trace of reserve — their romantic encounters, and this made her want to tell them, in an almost haughty way, about the young man she had come to know on the train. What was his name? Oh, Lu Shikui, that was her boyfriend's name. She fumbled for the namecard, the hard feel of which seemed to give her a burst of courage. She waited for a pause in the conversation and then produced the namecard.

"Do you know this person?"

She placed it on the table with studied casualness. The youngest cousin snatched it up, and her eyes widened in astonishment as she read aloud: "Lu Shikui."

"What? Lu Shikui?" The eldest cousin in turn snatched the namecard away from her and fixed her eyes on it in rapt attention. Even Suzhen's uncle, who was sitting to one side in an armchair reading a philosophy magazine, put the magazine down and gazed at the girls with a bemused look on his face. Suzhen herself felt pleased at the

sensation she had caused. Well, she thought, he must be somebody important after all. So that's why he said "perhaps they know me!" They do all know of him — but they don't actually know him personally. Her face assumed a self-satisfied smile.

"How do you know him?" asked the eldest cousin.

"I met him on the train," Suzhen replied proudly. "Do you girls know him?" She felt that referring to the young man as "him" rather than "Mr Lu" or something like that was a familiar and elegant thing to do.

"Who doesn't know him? Lu Shikui's a famous film star!" her youngest cousin almost yelled.

Suzhen leaned back in her chair. Her ideal husband — refined, cultured and understands poetry! She felt that her twenty-eight years of maidenhood had not been wasted. But, what had her cousin said? "Who doesn't know him?" What did she mean — Lu Shikui, a film star? She stiffened and glared at her cousin.

"What? What did you say? What does he do?"

Her cousin was puzzled, she thought she had said something amiss. She took back the namecard from her sister's hand and looked at it again.

"Do you mean this is not the Lu Shikui who makes films?"

Makes films? The very idea! Lu Shikui makes films — an actor, a lowly performer! Could he really be an actor? Suzhen felt as if she had received an unexpected blow. She couldn't believe her ears. Or do they mean another person? She thought. Just then, her youngest cousin seemed to recall something and said, "Oh, that's right! Yes, it was him. I saw him sticking his head out of the train window. I remember, now you come to mention him. What did you talk about?"

Suzhen was at a loss as to why her cousin should be so impressed by a mere actor. There she was, fiddling agitatedly with his namecard and peering keenly into Suzhen's face, trying to pry out of her what she and the famous Lu Shikui had got up to on the train. As for Suzhen herself, she felt her whole body go limp. She felt weary. After all, it had been a long train ride. She leaned back again in her chair, feigned a smile and said, through trembling lips:

"We didn't talk at all."

It was a bland and indifferent reply. Suddenly she felt as if she were back on the train.

"The fog's really thick today. You can't see a thing!"

Translated by Paul White

雾

素贞小姐从小就亡故了母亲，她是在父亲的抚育和教导之下长成的。她父亲是一个天主教里的神父，在这临海的小卫城里管理一所小教堂，已经有十四年了。素贞小姐识得字，能够看书，但并不曾进过学校。这小小的卫城中所住着的只有三五百渔户，没有学校，也许她父亲的教堂便是唯一的学校了。但是素贞小姐的造诣很可惊，她已经能够以父亲所教授给她的，反过来替父亲草拟每星期的教义演辞了。她的智识学问的来源，大半是她父亲的几百卷旧书，其余就是每日下午由进城的贩鱼船带回来的隔了两日的上海报纸，以及她的在上海的表姐妹们偶然想起而寄给她的书籍。

她父亲是个守旧的人。但是中国神父并没有外国神父那样的律己森严。你知道，外国神父是被禁止看恋爱小说的，但是在素贞小姐的父亲的藏书里，却还有《西厢记》那样的东西。素贞小姐自从发现了她自己有读书的能力以来，就开始沉浸于她父亲的书籍中，一直到现在，还有几卷书是她不厌百回读的。

素贞小姐爱好修饰，而且有坚强的自信——她自信是一个典型的多情的佳人，不，照近来她所学会的术语说起来，恐怕应当说是浪漫的小姐吧，但这些都不能说是社会的风尚所影响于她的。这个，就是拿旗袍来讲，也就可以证明了。九年前，她的表姐从上海来探望她的时候，穿着新流行的旗袍，但她正和她父亲一样地不能接受。她还衷心地批评这种服装是太近于妖异了。直到后来，有几个小康的渔妇都穿着旗袍来做礼拜，她承认了自己的失败，托人到距离三十余里的城里去买了一块旗袍料来。至于她的发髻，也是在同样的情形中剪了的。所以，从这方面看起来，素贞小姐虽则爱修饰，虽则自以为很有点浪漫性，可是她实际上还和她父亲一样，是个守旧的人物。

倘若以相貌而论，素贞小姐实在并不比我们都会里的漂亮小姐有多大的逊色。这同时也就是她所以敢于爱好修饰，敢于坚强地自信的唯一理由。人家都没有看见过素贞小姐的母亲，便都说她是天生的丽质。她自己常常揽镜自鉴，当然，她也早已忘记了她的母亲，便也这样地自信了。只有她的父亲，随着素贞小姐年龄之长大，而愈加深了他对于亡妻的回忆。想想自己的命运多乖，永远做着一个小村庄里的小神父，想想美貌的妻子的早死，这老态龙钟的神父便愈加珍惜他的掌珠，而切盼她嫁一个如意郎君了。

嫁一个如意郎君，是的，关于婚姻问题，素贞小姐自己和她父亲一样地固执着一个信仰。父亲是为了不愿意她将来如她母亲一样地过一种艰苦的生活，所以千难万难地在给她物色一个有希望的快婿；素贞小姐呢，因为对于自己有了有才有貌的确信，也就给她理想中的丈夫定下了一个严格的标准。

在一眼看出去都是渔人的环境里，除了浪漫史中所描写的白面状元郎之外，她还能想象出什么别的惬意丈夫来呢？所以她希望着的是一个能做诗，做文章，能说体己的谐话，还能够赏月 and 饮酒的美男子。但是这样的丈夫从没有在她所住着的小卫城里出现过，于是素贞小姐从情窦初开的十五六岁蹉跎到今年了。

今年的素贞小姐是二十八岁。

在十六七岁的时候，老年的渔妇在做完了礼拜走出教堂门时，碰见了她父亲，总会由于偶然的高兴问一声：“素贞小姐还没有攀亲吗？”那时候她感到很羞涩。后来，二十岁了，当那些渔妇问起同样的话来，她感到很高兴和光辉了。但是，真的，时光过得太快哪，她已经二十五岁了。她听见了关于她的亲事的问话，就感到一阵忧郁。现在呢，现在二十八岁了哪，她已经好久不听见这种问话了。

她伤心吗？并不。她常常在报纸上看到种种不幸的婚姻的结局。她晓得一个女子的下半世的幸福，是建筑在结婚这事情上面的。与其遇人不淑，是毋宁不出嫁的。此外，她的大表姐的离婚，也给了她更深刻的安慰。她有两个表姐和两个表妹，是舅舅的女儿。舅舅在上海做大学教授，全家都住在上海。自从九年前两个表姐和一个表妹来探望了她一回之后，她连接着平均每两年半收到一个表姐的结婚请柬。在接到两个表姐的喜讯的时候，她的确曾经感觉过很深的悒郁，可是自从去年同时接到大表妹的订婚卡和大表姐寄来的很悲惨地述说她的离婚经过的那封信之后，她就宁静下来，相信自己的固执是利无害的。

但是，在这个小卫城中，她的可能的出路，不管她的理想如何，事实上只有两途：不是嫁给一个渔

人，就是以老处女终其生。这是她完全勘破了的。她很懊悔前几年的那种梦想，以为也许会有什么好姻缘在这个小城里成就，以至于一直蹉跎到如今。

她父亲也很明白了这种障碍，所以早就写信给她舅舅，托他在上海留心。但是，你知道，都会里的人是很怕替内地女子做媒的，于是这事情在她舅父看来，虽然急迫，也是爱莫能助的了。及至她表姐离婚以后，她父亲便不敢信托她舅父了，于是信上也不再提起这些话。

在接到大表妹结婚请柬这晚上，父亲偶然慨叹地说起两个表姐结婚都没有人去贺喜，真是失礼的事。接着又诅咒自己筋骨衰老，什么都懒得动。于是素贞小姐忽然打定了一个秘密的主意。她向父亲请得了同意，让她以给大表妹贺喜的名义，顺便到上海去旅行一次。她父亲先期寄了一个信给她舅父，在约定的时日，请她的表姐妹在徐家汇车站等候她——因为她舅父是住在徐家汇的，另外，她父亲又托了一个熟人伴送她坐划船到城里去搭火车。

所以现在素贞小姐是在到上海去的火车上了。车厢里乘客并不多，她占据了一个临窗的座位。她兴致很好，觉得就是车的颠簸也是最舒服的。她看着车窗外的风景，注意着每一次停车的站名。因为她很羞涩，不习惯在许多不相识的人群中，所以她很少回过头来注意同车的乘客。但是，当车行过五六站之后，已是将近夕暮了，火车钻进了一重很深的浓雾里，使她不能再看出窗外的风景。

这是使她不得不回过头来的原因。她很庄重地俯着头，以车的颠簸为摇篮，而沉入于幻梦中去了。不知过了多少时候，她突然觉得身体一震，接着便是一个奇怪的寂静，她抬起头来，才觉得车已停止了。

她看窗外，还是浓雾笼罩着的田野，并没到站。车厢里的乘客都骚乱起来，杂乱的声音，互相问着火车突然中途停止的原因，但谁也不能回答。她也有些惊疑，因为她从来没有过这种经验。

但这事件使她暂时忘掉了羞涩和拘束，敢于向同车的乘客注视了。她最先注意到的是坐在她对面的那个青年绅士，他很不在意似的还在静静地看书。她一眼就觉得他是一个很可亲的男子，柔和的容颜，整洁的服饰，和温文的举动——这是从他把手中执着的书放下来这姿势上就可以看得出来的。书放下在他腿边，她偷瞧一眼，书面上印着一个不很熟悉的书句，但总之是一本什么诗集。诗，他是在看诗。这就引起了素贞小姐的更深切的注意，她再冒着险看他一眼，于是她给自己私拟着的理想丈夫的标准发现了一个完全吻合的实体。

她觉得本能地脸热了。她移转眼光，去看几个坐在较远的女客人。她们穿着的旗袍，袖子短得几乎像一件背心了，袒露着大半支手臂，不觉得害羞吗？况且现在已是秋天，不觉得冷吗？她这样思想着，不禁抚摸着自己的长到手背的衣袖。

一个男子在与一个隔座的女客谈话了。他们说些什么话呢？显得这样亲热，不像是一对结婚的伴侣吧，这女客人为什么脸红红的？

于是素贞小姐觉得心仿佛要跳出来了。

对面那个青年绅士在频频地看着她。是的，一种很大胆的看法。以全身的精神凝聚在眼睛里的审察，好像从她的脸上和身上发现了什么值得注意的东西。在心的怔忡稍微安定了一会儿之后，素贞小姐忽然经验到了一种从来没有感觉到的光荣。她后悔没有带一面镜子在她的小皮箱里，否则她可以立刻拿出来照一照，她相信她的容貌一定不至于告诉人家她今年已经有二十八岁的。一斜眼，旁边座位上那个半老的妇人正在揭开她的钱袋，照着里面的一个小镜子，擦鼻子边的粉屑。到上海之后，我也得买一个这样的钱袋，素贞小姐这样打算。或者，她肯先借给我用用吗？

对于一种没来由的社交，或者直截了当地说，自由恋爱，素贞小姐是一向反对的。但是因为年龄之增长，素贞小姐渐渐地觉得这是可以有例外的。譬如……就像现在的情形，假如这位青年绅士竟和她谈起话来，甚至对她说明白了他是在爱她，她想这一定没有反对的理由的。

但是他并没有想和她谈话的表示，虽然她已经一切都预备好了。火车放着尖锐的汽笛，蠕蠕地开动了。她看看窗外，白茫茫的雾气中透露着暝色，从窗缝间吹进来的风使她觉得冷了。

诗，文章，说体己的谐话，赏月饮酒的美丈夫，这些概念随着车轮在素贞小姐心中辗过，她没有觉得捎在钮扣间的手巾卸落在地板上。

于是诚实的青年绅士俯下去替她拾起了手巾。他没有说话，以眼睛示意，带着一点微笑，将手巾授给她，不，没有等她伸出手来接取，他将手巾轻轻地放在她膝上了。这是出于素贞小姐意外的动作，她有点仓皇了。她颤抖地接连着说“谢谢你，谢谢你”的时候，已经在十秒钟之后了。但这是她一生的大纪念，因为这是她向一个陌生男子所曾说过的第一句话。

一边捎手巾，一边她就预备着听他的答话。可是手巾捎好，还听不到一个等候着的声音。眼睛一溜，她看见他嘴唇确然在动，但是话——没有冲出来。

她觉得发笑，又不耐烦。男子是那么样的怪东西，做事情总不爽快，她才想起传奇上总是小姐吩咐丫环或老妈子去私约公子在后花园相会的情节来。她往窗外一看，一片黯淡的灰色。与这青年绅士并排坐着的是一个乡下人，他刚才打完了一个呵欠，眼睛瞅着她。素贞小姐一回头，和他打了个照面，她就想出一个主意来。她冲着他问：

“新龙华过了末？”

可是她的眼睛却望着那青年绅士，这意思是我问的你。绅士当然不是蠢人，况且他又早等着机会。他就陪着亲热的笑脸：

“新龙华？没有，快到了。”

那乡下人才得开口，话早给旁边这位先生抢着说了去，他预备好的说话姿势就改打第二个呵欠，完了事，好在素贞小姐也不再利用他。

“雾这么大，一点都看不清楚哪。”

她自己虽然不好说这话对谁说，可是听的人却明白。他望窗外看了一眼：

“秋天，天气真坏，朝朝晚晚的都是雾。”他对着她望着，好像窥测她的意志。停了一停，看她并不怎样不高兴——真的，只要他当时能够瞧得透她心里怎样想着，岂不就省事得多？可是天下无论什么事情，总得绕着圈儿做，他接下去说：

“到新龙华吗，小姐？”

“不，到徐家汇。”

素贞小姐想往下问：你到哪里？但这样的勇气她还没有。她只得望着他，表示她没有预备把这场对话结束。

“徐家汇，一过新龙华就是了。”

他说着，又望了一眼窗外，再看了一看手腕上带着的表，再举起手来在耳朵边听了一会儿：

“今天脱班了，到那边恐怕要六七点钟。”

这话很引起了素贞小姐的感情。她忘记了在谈话的是一个不相识的男子，她好像在梦幻中似的：

“她们一定等得太久了。”

徐家汇的两座高高的尖塔涌现在她眼前了——她并没看见过这两个卓异的建筑物，这是送她上车的那熟人告诉她，做她的行程终点的标帜的。她看见她的表姐妹们都站在这尖塔下等候她，她们替她提行篋，提藤篮。于是她，在路上，就告诉她们——要不要告诉她们呢？她在火车上认识了一个人，这样好看，这样温和，说话又这样的文雅，而且，他又是懂得诗的……

他留心到她缄默着，眼光空望着，以为她是在害怕等候她的人会得因为不耐烦而先走了。

“小姐到徐家汇望朋友吧？”

文雅的声音在她耳朵边响着，她才警觉了。仓卒间，她一点没有觉得冒昧，由于她的天真和多情，她说：

“不，我到舅父家去。我是去吃表妹的喜酒的。我的两个表姐结婚，我都没有去，所以这一次是不能不去了。她们都在车站上等我，我怕她们等得太久了。天又这么冷，又是晚了，我该赶上早一班火车的……”

如果这时候火车不停在新龙华站上，她一定还会得杂乱地说下去。茶房来高声叫着到南站的该换车了，她对面的乡下人便匆匆地提着他放在椅下的一大篓鸡蛋下车去。那青年绅士挨过来，占据了乡下人坐

过的位儿，这样他和她正对着，他们的脚膝几乎相接触了。

“下一站就是徐家汇了。”他说。

她抬起头来，看一看搁板上的一个藤篮和一只皮筐。因为火车一路颠簸的缘故，它们已经滑了过去，在隔一排座位的上边了。他顺着她的眼光看，好像觉得了她的困难，便说：

“是这两件东西吗？我来……”

在她来得及开口逊谢的时候，他已经站起在坐椅上，替她把行李取了下来。她的藤篮和皮筐以外，他还取下了一只她刚才所没有看见的精致的小皮筐，他随手从椅上捡起那本书，放进了他的皮筐里。她偷瞧一眼，看见这里边还有几卷书，此外便是牙刷和毛巾。

当火车开动的时候，她不禁问：

“先生也是到徐家汇的吗？”

“不是，我到北站。不过我也是住在徐家汇那边的。”他说。

他也住在徐家汇，一条街上。也许他会认识我舅父的。也许明天舅父上学堂去的时候，会得在路上碰到他——“昨天荣幸得很，在火车上见到了令甥女素贞小姐，”——“啊，不错，她说起了的，费神得很，多多照应了。”——可是，他怎么知道我的名字？他又怎么知道谁是我的舅父，哎，连他的名字叫什么，我也没有知道啊。哦，我希望他是舅父的学生，他只要一到舅父家里来，就一切都好了……

这时候，教她快活得说不尽的，是那青年绅士突然以懦怯的，小心的神气凑近来说：

“小姐，可以让我知道你贵姓芳名吗？我可以来拜访你吗？”

她觉得脸上热得疼，全没有答话的勇气。

“秦素贞。”

过了半晌，她才能说出自己的名字，而且是轻得几乎使他要求再说一遍了。他好像对于她这样的羞窘，觉得很满意，所以又用更尖锐的话直刺进来了：

“令亲的地址，能够告诉我吗？”

实在没有说话的勇气了，她从衣袋里掏出一个预备表姊妹们不在车站上等候时应用的地址，这上面并且还写着她舅父的名字。但当他审视着这地址的时候，他好像并不熟识舅父的名字，她开始觉得不妥了。如果一个陌生人，到舅父家里来找她，这岂不是闹笑话了吗？于是她觉得有不得不问问明白的需要了。

“你认识我舅父吗？这就是我舅父。”

话说出口，她懊悔不该用个“你”字，这样亲热。可是他并不觉得，他一摇头：

“不认得。也许，……哦，他做什么生意的？”

什么？做生意！他以为我舅父是个做生意的吗？这太侮辱人了。我应当告诉他个明白，否则……否则他会连我都看不起的。

“不，他不做生意。他是在华东大学做教授的。”她把“教授”这两个字故意说得很响。并且，她觉得还有补足一些的必要——我的表姐妹们也都是读书的。

立刻，她看出这些话很有效验。他换了一副容色，又高兴，又骄矜地：

“哦，不认得，可是，也许他们会知道我的。”说着，他很自然地掏出一个名片来给她——这是我的名片。

名片上只印着一个名字：“陆士奎。”她想不起她曾经听说过这个人。但是，他怎么说？“也许他们会知道我的。”他一定是个有名的人。“陆士奎？”她惭愧她知道的人太少了，但同时，她又觉得喜悦。

她把名片揣在衣袋里，忽然想起一个最紧要的问题。他结过婚没有？大表姐就是这一点糊涂，嫁了一个丈夫，却没知道他已娶了正室。但是，这怎么问他呢？她迟疑着，而火车已经驶进徐家汇站了。

“到了，徐家汇。”他说。

她不得不站起来挈着她的两件行李预备下车了。天色已晚，她往站上看了一看，黑魆魆的看不见表姐妹们，她觉得有点心慌。她匆匆地对他点点头，好像有许多话没有说，又好像是表示感谢，又好像是辞别。当她的腿在他膝骨上擦过的时候，她觉得一阵微细的快感。

于是素贞小姐下车了。立在月台上，她刚要探望，迎面走来了两个女子。这就是她的大姐和大妹，但她却呆看了许多时候才认得出来。大姐接了她的小皮篋去，一手牵着她，对她说了许多话。她说些什么话？大概是关于火车误点，累她们等得心焦这些话吧？素贞小姐虽然感觉到欢喜，但没有听得十分清楚。因为在她的表姐妹牵着她走出月台的时候，她曾经偷偷地回头看过两次。每次都看见他的头伸出在车窗外。他是在目送她啊。

在舅父家里，晚饭后，大姐和两个表妹都陪着她闲谈。只有二表姐因为要出嫁了，要到喜事的上一日才得回来。大姐是因为离婚之后，心里不舒服，得了肝气病，说话的时候，常常用手去按摩胸膛。素贞小姐在灯下看着她，虽则只相差了三岁，可是已显得憔悴了，一点也不像九年前到乡下去看她那时候的美丽。若不是看见两个表妹的好兴致，她也许不会再想起刚才火车上所经验过的浪漫史了。

在热闹的闲话中间，素贞小姐几次想告诉她们，她在火车上认识了怎样一个男子。甚至，在两个表妹互相述说着——真的，她们好像一点也不觉得害臊的——各人的浪漫史的时候，她也几乎想骄矜地承认火车上的那个男子，他的名字？哦，陆士奎，就是她的情人了。

素贞小姐隔着衣裳，摸着了那坚硬的名片。她好像把握住了一股新的勇气。觑一个谈话的空儿，她终于把这珍贵的名片摸了出来。

“你们认识这个人吗？”

她把名片在桌上一放，装作很不经意的神气。二表妹最活溜，她一抢就把这名片拿在手里。她睁大了眼睛，很惊异似的叫起来：

“陆士奎！”

“什么？陆士奎？”大表姐把名片抢了去看。大表妹也凑过来急着要看个清楚。坐在旁边一只大臂椅上看哲学杂志的舅父也放下了书，露着不明白为什么纷乱的神气，呆看着她们。这些特异的动作，素贞小姐都清清楚楚地看见了。她很得意。他一定是个有名的人，“也许他们会知道我的。”可不是？他们全知道他。可是他们全没有认识他。素贞小姐脸上透着骄矜的笑容。

“你怎么认识他的？”大表姐问。

“火车上认识的。”素贞小姐光荣地回答。“你们认识他吗？”她第一次当着人称“他”，觉得这个称呼很温和，很美丽。

“谁不认识，陆士奎，电影明星。”

二妹嚷着。素贞小姐刚往后仰，靠在椅背上。一个又温和，又文雅，而且又懂得诗的理想丈夫。她觉得二十八年的处女生活并不是完全虚度了的。可是，二妹说什么？谁不认识。陆士奎，电影什么？她腰一挺，睁开了眼睛望着她的表妹：

“什么，你说什么？他做什么的？”

二表妹透着不解的神气，她以为自己说错了。她从大姐手里取回了那名片再看了一看：

“怎么，难道不是那个做影戏的陆士奎吗？”

做影戏？她说什么？陆士奎，做影戏的，一个戏子，一个下贱的戏子！难道他是个戏子吗？素贞小姐好像受了意外的袭击，她疑心她听错了，要不然，一定是弄错人了。但二妹又在好像想起了什么似的说了：

“噢，是的，是他！我还看见他头伸出在车窗外边。说起来倒想着了。你们说些什么话呢？”

素贞小姐简直的不懂二妹为什么这样羡慕一个戏子，她玩弄着那个名片，眼望着素贞小姐，好像很想知道他和她二人在车中的情形。至于素贞小姐自己呢，她觉得通身都松弛了，很疲乏。火车坐得时候太多了。她靠着椅背，勉强装着笑容，哆开了嘴：

“没有说什么话。”

她淡淡地说。一回头，仿佛自己还在火车里：

“今天雾真大，一点都看不清楚哪！”

Spring Sunshine

Aunt Chan locked the security deposit box, and as she walked out of the vault, found the eyes of a young bank clerk on her. Feeling a little flustered, she could not help turning her head away and glancing back at the neat rows of security deposit boxes, but she could no longer distinguish which one was number 305. She reached inside her clothing and ascertained that the 154.6 yuan in interest she had just taken out was securely tucked away in an inside packet. Then she walked out of the main door of the Shanghai Bank.

It was a beautiful day. The sun was enormous. This was the first time she had realized it. It was true. She had caught the train from Kunshan early that morning, and jumped on a rickshaw to get to the bank as soon as she had arrived. Apart from peeping out of the curtains to see whether it was raining or not when she got up, she had taken no notice of the weather. But the weather really was beautiful today. For the last couple of weeks it had been nothing but wet and windy, but today the street and the room were flooded with sunshine. It was spring after all, so as soon as the skies cleared the weather became warm. She loosened the woollen scarf around her neck.

You could not overlook this late February sun that for so long had not shown its face in Shanghai. It really was bewitching. If it had been the same dreary weather they had had for the past couple of days, and she had been met by a gust of cold wind as she came out through the revolving doors, she would have been sure to pull her scarf up over her mouth, hire a rickshaw to the North Railway Station, and wait there in the waiting room for the three o'clock train back to Kunshan. Today, however, she was met by a warm breeze and dazzling sunshine, which quite groundlessly put her in the mood to enjoy herself. She took out the gold watch given to her ten years before, and saw that it was only ten to twelve. Since it was still so early she had plenty of time to take a stroll around the streets.

So Aunt Chan from Kunshan walked alone through the warm spring sunshine along Shanghai's Nanjing Road. The men and women coming and going were all dressed so lightly, so beautifully and so elegantly that she began to feel as if her own woollen scarf and camel hair *qipao* were weighing her down. If she had known earlier that the weather would have been this hot, she would have worn that *qipao* lined with flannelet. While her mind was occupied with these musings, her hands undid her woollen scarf, took it off and folded it up.

There were big sales going on in every shop. Aunt Chan looked at the silks and satins, the porcelains, the different kinds of cosmetics, the silk stockings, and the confectionary and biscuits. Was she tempted to buy anything? Not at all. She had more than enough willpower to resist it all. She would not buy anything that was not a necessity. If she had been the type who spent freely, how could she have been willing to sacrifice a lifetime of happiness by marrying a memorial tablet?

From the Jiangxi Road intersection she made her way down the street looking at things as she went, and by the time she reached the Three Friends Emporium, it was already past noon. She was so hot that beads of perspiration appeared on her forehead, but when she felt in her bag, she found that she had not brought a handkerchief with her that morning. A necessity had now arisen. She went into the Three Friends Emporium and bought a towelling handkerchief, then sat down on a chair for a short rest.

She looked out through the glass display window at the endless stream of people passing by. They walked quickly, flashing past the window in a couple of steps, but none of them looked tired. The more she looked at those vigorous people, the more conscious she became of her own frailty. She wiped away the perspiration feeling disinclined to stand up. She was afraid of walking out through the door. How would she squeeze her way into that road rush of people?

Then for the first time she began to wonder: Why was it that at less than thirty-five she was so worn out? At

Kunshan she went into town every day and did not feel at all tired, but as soon as she came to Shanghai she felt like an old woman before she had walked the length of one street. Why was that? Following this train of thought, she began to reproach herself: She really should not have taken a fancy to doing some window shopping. It was utterly boring.

She stood up with an effort and dragged herself through the door. She had made up her mind to go to the snack shop opposite the Sincere Company and have a bowl of noodles for lunch, then take a rickshaw to the Northern Station. But you have to understand that this was what Aunt Chan planned as she heaved her way through the glass doors of the Three Friends Emporium. If she had really been too tired to walk any further, she would have had a meal and then gone to catch the train. But unexpectedly, as she took the first few steps in the direction of the Wing On Company, she suddenly felt the energy that had long since disappeared return to her body, so that she was able to mingle into that crazy stream of happy-faced young people with a step as light as any of them.

What was it that brought about such a major change in her? Without a doubt it was the spring sunshine. It changed not only her constitution, but even her way of thinking. Really, a flame of unsettling resistance to the life she had chosen for herself suddenly began to burn within her. Why not enjoy herself now she had come to Shanghai? People without money had no choice, they longed for the chance for a bit of fun in Shanghai. Now she had plenty of money, and although it was intended to cover two months of expenses at home, even if she spent it all, she only had to go and take out another hundred yuan. And anyway it would only cost her ten or twenty yuan if she did stay overnight. Sometimes people had to see through the restrictions they placed on themselves. What wonderful weather!

In the brilliant sunshine, everything about her seemed bright and lively. Every car shone with a brand new coat of paint; every glass shop-front glittered; in the distance, the round and square roofs of skyscrapers glowed with a brilliant light. Only the snack shop opposite the Sincere Company looked dark and gloomy, as if it had been forgotten by the sun. Why did she have to be so frugal? She should enjoy a meal in comfort. Aunt Chan no longer felt like eating noodles, but she could not think of any other place to go to eat. She decided that she would order two dishes, both Shanghai specialities. Of course she did not want to eat anything they frequently ate at Kunshan, but the price could not exceed two yuan at most. Two yuan for lunch was already very expensive, but you never knew, perhaps in Shanghai you had to pay three or four yuan for two dishes. That was why she did not dare to go rushing into any restaurant she had not been to before.

She stood on the corner of the street thinking: She had once had a meal in a restaurant in West Gate, but that was too far away. Apart from that there was another place she could remember on Seward Road, and, yes, Guanshengyuan was right here on the Aster Road. She could not recall whether she had already passed it or not, but as far as she could remember, Guanshengyuan was the most appropriate place, even though she was not very fond of the hard rice they served there. She thought for a moment and seemed to remember that she had already passed the restaurant. Why had she not taken more notice as she walked along?

Aunt Chan chose a seat on the first floor of Guanshengyuan. The seat was soft, much more comfortable than sitting in the Three Friends Emporium, of course. The waiter brought some tea and handed her the menu at the same time. This made her feel a little awkward because although she could read, she was hopeless at choosing dishes. It took her ten minutes to make her selection; two dishes that would altogether cost her one yuan. She felt very satisfied because she knew that in a luxurious restaurant like this it was not easy to be thrifty.

As she sat alone at a table sipping her tea, she began to plan what to do next. Where should she go after her meal? Should she return to Kunshan today? If she did not go back where would she stay this evening? She could go to the Huizhong Hotel as she had once the year before last when the bank had been closed and she had had to stay overnight. And she wanted some fun, but what would she actually do? She could not make up her mind.

Glancing around, she saw that a man, a woman and a child were sitting at the next table. They seemed to be a family, but the woman looked much older than the man. She must have been thirty-four or thirty-five. For a moment Aunt Chan felt overjoyed as if finding a kindred spirit. But almost simultaneously the veneer of happiness was swept away by a surge of melancholy that she usually kept buried in her heart and dared not release. This was because at her table she was the sole occupant. Where was the husband, where were the children?

Twelve or thirteen years ago, Aunt Chan's betrothed had suddenly died seventy-five days before the wedding. He was the only son of a wealthy landlord who owned a thousand *mu* of farmland, and his death left the property without an heir. At that time Aunt Chan was a healthy young lady much admired for her astuteness. She thought the matter over for two days and two nights and then decided to marry her dead fiance's memorial tablet and thereby win the legal right to inherit his sizeable property.

At the time she had believed that she was capable of a sacrifice of that magnitude, but now as she grew older, she gradually came to wonder how she could have had so much courage. Her parents-in-law died and management of the large estate fell into her hands. But what use was it? She had forgotten whether when she had sacrificed all happiness for this property she had considered just what benefit it would bring her. The rest of the clan eyed her greedily, looking forward to dividing her property between them after her death, since she could not have an heir of her own blood. So what was it worth? She was merely the temporary manager of a huge estate.

Even though she sometimes felt intensely aware of this situation, she was still unwilling to waste her wealth. As she saw it, since she had given up a lifetime of happiness for this property, only by taking pains to preserve it could she maintain a comparative advantage. If she spent the lot herself, would her sacrifice not have been all the more in vain? This was the reason why from start to finish she was always miserly.

In her judgement now, however, the value of that sacrificed happiness was higher than ever before. As the years passed, all her girlfriends married and had children. Even if they were poor, they had another kind of happiness to compensate for the economic misery — a kind of happiness that she would envy for ever, but that she would never taste, never!

Sometimes when a rare courage surged within her, she would think of throwing away her wealth and getting married. But when she picked up the mirror and saw her withered, sallow face, or when she imagined the sneering and slanderous, sarcastic remarks of the clan, she would be overwhelmed with depression.

She felt lonely, but she did not have the courage to sacrifice what she had in order to break out of that loneliness.

She observed the next table carefully; a young, handsome husband; a happy wife; and a lively five or six-year-old child. They discussed what they would eat. They talked. They looked at one another and smiled. It was as if they were in their own home. Of course they did not blame Aunt Chan for staring at them enraptured.

Aunt Chan's line of vision was blocked by the waiter bringing her meal, and shifted her gaze to the other side of her own table. On the glass tabletop only one place had been laid, one, not three. She felt somewhat embarrassed, and suspected that the wife must be looking at her. What sort of person does she think I am? Can she tell that I am a wife whose husband died before the wedding? She's not the only one who's watching me, her husband is observing me too. Can he tell that I'm no older than his wife? And that child. If I were to foster him, would he be that lively?

She stared blankly at the hard grains of rice, not daring to steal another glance sideways. She was afraid of meeting those three pairs of eyes. She was afraid that when she met those three pairs of eyes, they would answer her in the negative.

Then she saw an elegant hand holding a newspaper. She raised her head and saw a man standing next to her table. He seemed to be unable to find a seat and wanted to take the empty place opposite her. He hesitated, however, and finally walked on past her.

She watched him walk into an inner room, not knowing what to think. What if he had eventually sat down opposite her and shared her table? There would have been nothing wrong with that. In Shanghai it was an ordinary occurrence. Even if he had sat down and smiled at her, nodded and chatted with her as if they had once been acquainted, it would all have been above board. But if he really had sat down and they really had chatted together what would it have led to today?

Aunt Chan turned things over in her mind. Why was it that it was only after he had glanced at her that he resolved not to sit down? Had he originally intended to sit down, but then changed his mind because he didn't like her; or had he changed his mind because she was a woman and he felt a little embarrassed about sitting there? She hoped he was a shy man!

Aunt Chan looked around for a mirror but could not see one. She took a steam-cleaned hand towel from its plate and wiped her face, regretting that she had not put on any powder that morning. You needed to wear powder when you came to Shanghai. If she did not go back to Kunshan today, she would go and buy a powder compact before she went to the Huizhong Hotel. She had almost run out of powder at home in any case.

Once she had tidied herself up in the hotel, where would she go? Perhaps, perhaps he — she turned slightly and looked across the room at the middle-aged man with the elegant hands. He was sitting alone at a round glass table, reading a newspaper. Why was he by himself? Perhaps he would be delighted to ask:

"Miss (is that how he would address her?), would you give me the pleasure of escorting you to a film?"

But she did not know what good films were showing today. She would have to go and buy a newspaper. What was he reading at the moment? The film advertisements? Could I go and borrow it and have a look? What if he had sat here? What if he had sat here reading?

"Sir, may I borrow the film advertisements from your paper?"

"Oh, by all means, by all means, which film are you intending to watch, Miss?"

"May I ask your name, Miss?"

"Ah, my surname is Zhang, I work in the Shanghai Bank."

Everything would progress smoothly. In Shanghai in such fine weather, and not having met a single acquaintance. Aunt Chan conjured up for herself a new boyfriend who would accompany her window shopping with his arm in hers. The warm sunshine shone on their shoulders as they walked side by side, making her feel that her whole body had become light and nimble.

But why did he say he worked in the Shanghai Bank? Aunt Chan stole another glance at him. No, he definitely was not the bank clerk who looked after the security deposit boxes. That clerk was younger, more amiable, and much less restrained in his manner. It was not him.

Thinking of that young bank clerk, Aunt Chan could clearly picture his expression as he stood at the door of the vault watching her. Those eyes seemed to want to speak to her, the lips trembled as if about to move. It was a face filled with warmth. He watched from the doorway the whole time, making her feel flustered. She had felt embarrassed about dawdling away too much time in there, so had hastily locked the box and come out. She remembered that the last time she had come to open her security deposit box, that old bank clerk had by no means observed her so intently.

As she walked out of the narrow vault door, she remembered she had turned and glanced back. But it was not only because she had been concerned about the security deposit box, there was also an element of avoiding his intense gaze. She really felt that as she had walked past him, his chin had touched her hair. Not only that, she even suspected that her shoulder had touched his chest.

Aunt Chan's uncontrollable flight of fancy made her long for the security deposit vault of the Shanghai Bank. Why had she not stayed there a little longer? Why had she locked the box in such haste? She had been in such a rush

in the end had she actually relocked it? She could not help reaching into her inside pocket and feeling for the tiny key. It was there. She vaguely felt, however, that she had replaced it there after opening the box, and had not used it to lock it again. She had not, absolutely had not, relocked it. Otherwise why did she have no recollection of having done so? If she really had not relocked the security deposit box, it was a matter of utmost importance.

She immediately paid the bill and left Guanshengyuan. At the street corner, she hailed a rickshaw:

"The Shanghai Bank in Jiangzi Road."

At the service counter for the security deposit vault, she called out:

"Hey, I want to open my security deposit box."

The young bank clerk, who was smoking a cigarette and chatting with a colleague, turned his head and asked:

"What number?"

When he saw her, a look of astonishment appeared on his face, as if to say: You again? You already opened it once this morning, and now you're here again, just how busy are you? The look did not stay on his face for very long, however. The bank manager, Chen Guangfu, often warned his staff: You must be polite to customers. Don't be afraid of going to a lot of trouble for them. So when Aunt Chan took out her key and told him "number 305," he just collected the duplicate key and solicitously saw her into the vault.

She inspected security deposit box number 305 and found it securely locked. Since it was securely locked there did not seem any need to reopen it, did there?

"What? Don't want to open it?" the clerk asked playing with his keys.

"There's no need. I just came to have a look because I couldn't remember whether I had locked it earlier on," she answered apologetically.

He smiled. A young amiable bank clerk was smiling at her and looking at her. How likable he was! If he had been at Guanshengyuan, he would have been sure to sit down opposite her. But now, here in the bank's security vault, what could he do?

She was being watched by him. She waited expectantly. She felt a little awkward, but happy. What would he do?

He said cordially:

"Rest assured. Even if you hadn't locked it, it would have been nothing to worry about, Madam."

What? Madam? Madam! He called her Madam! Anger and humiliation welled up inside her. She wanted to cry. She forced a smile. Of course he did not detect anything out of the ordinary. He probably thought she was shy. She turned and left.

Outside the vault she saw a gorgeously dressed woman.

"Ah, Miss Chen, do you want to open your security deposit box? Do you have your key?"

She heard him behind her speaking even more cordially.

As they passed each other, Aunt Chan had a quick look at the woman. Miss Chen. Miss!

Then she walked out of the front door of the Shanghai Rank. She was hit by a gust of cold wind. The weather had deteriorated again, and the scene before her was overcast and gloomy. It was an icy northwest wind. It looked as if it were about to rain. She hesitated for a while, then finally wrapped her scarf around her neck.

"Rickshaw! To the North Railway Station."

In the rickshaw, she fished out her watch and looked at it. Ten past two. She would still be in time to catch the three o'clock express. She put the watch away in her pocket and took out the receipt from Guanshengyuan. With great difficulty, but total concentration, she checked the bill: dishes, tea, plain rice, tip; she had paid two yuan and been given six *jiao* plus how many coppers change was it?

Translated by Rosemary Roberts

春 阳

婵阿姨把保管箱锁上了，走出库门，看见那个年轻的行员正在对着她瞧，她心里一动，不由得回过头去向那一排一排整整齐齐的保管箱看了一眼，可是她已经认不得那只是三〇五号了。她往怀里一掏，刚才提出来的一百五十四元六角的息金好好地放在内衣袋里。于是她走出了上海银行大门。

好天气，太阳那么大。这是她今天第一次感觉到的。不错，她一早从昆山乘火车来，一下火车，就跳上黄包车，到银行。她除了起床的时候曾经揭开窗帘看下不下雨之外，实在没有留心过天气。可是今天这天气着实好，近半个月来，老是那么样的风风雨雨的没得看见过好天气，今天却满街满屋的暖太阳了。到底是春天了，一晴就暖和。她把围在衣领上的毛绒围巾放松了一下。

这二月下旬的，好久不照到上海来的太阳，你别忽略了，倒真有一些魅力呢。倘若是像前两日一样的阴沉天气，当从玻璃的旋转门中出来，一阵冷风扑上脸，她准是把一角围巾掩着嘴，雇一辆黄包车直到北火车站，在待车室里老等下午三点钟开的列车回昆山去的。今天，扑上脸的乃是一股热气，一片晃眼的亮，这使她平空添出许多兴致。她摸出十年前的爱尔琴金表来。十二点还差十分。这样早。还好在马路上走走呢。

于是，昆山的婵阿姨，独自走到了春阳和煦的上海的南京路上。来来往往的女人男人，都穿得那么样轻，那么样美丽，又那么样小玲玲的，这使她感觉到自己的绒线围巾和驼绒旗袍的累赘。早知天会这样热，可就穿了那件雁翎绉衬绒旗袍来了。她心里划算着，手却把那绒线围巾除下来，折叠了搭在手腕上。

什么店铺都在大廉价。婵阿姨看看绸缎，看看瓷器，又看看各式各样的化妆品，丝袜，和糖果饼干。她想买一点吗？不会的，这一点点定力她是有的。没有必需，她不会买什么东西。要不然，假如她舍得随便花钱，她怎么会牺牲了一生的幸福，肯抱牌位做亲呢？

她一路走，一路看。从江西路口走到三友实业社，已经过午时了。她觉得热，额角上有些汗。袋里一摸，早上出来没带手帕。这时，她觉得有必需了。她走进三友实业社去买了一条毛巾手帕，带便在椅子上坐坐，歇歇力。

她隔着玻璃橱窗望出去，人真多，来来去去的不断。他们都不像觉得累，一两步就闪过了，走得快。愈看人家矫健，愈感觉到自己的孱弱了，她抹着汗，懒得立起来，她害怕走出门去，将怎样挤进这些人的狂流中去呢？

到这时，她才第一次奇怪起来：为什么，论年纪也还不过三十五岁，何以这样的不济呢？在昆山的时候，天天上大街，可并不觉得累，一到上海，走不了一条马路，立刻就像个老年人了。这是为什么？她这样想着，同时就埋怨自己，不应该高兴逛马路玩，那是毫无意思的。

于是她勉强起身，挨出门。她想到先施公司对面那家点心店里去吃一碗面，当中饭，吃了面就雇黄包车到北火车站。可是，你得明白，这是婵阿姨刚才挨出三友实业社的那扇玻璃门时候的主意。要是她真的累得走不动，她也真的会去吃了面上火车的。意料不到的却是，当她往永安公司那边走了几步路，忽然地让她觉得身上又恢复了一种好像久已消失了的精力，让她混合在许多呈着喜悦的容颜的年青人的狂流中，一样轻快地走……走。

什么东西让她得到这样重要的改变？这春日的太阳光，无疑的。它不仅改变了她的体质，简直还改变了她的思想。直的，一阵很骚动的对于自己的反抗心骤然在她胸中灼热起来。为什么到上海来不玩一玩呢？做人一世，没钱的人没办法，眼巴巴地要挨着到上海来玩一趟，现在，有的是钱，虽然还要做两个月家用，可是就使花完了，大不了再去提出一百块来。况且，算它住一夜的话，也用不了一二十块钱。人有的时候得看破些，天气这样好！

天气这样好，眼前有一切都呈着明亮和活跃的气象。每一辆汽车刷过一道崭新的喷漆的光，每一扇玻璃上闪耀着各方面投射来的晶莹的光，远处摩天大厦的圆瓠形或方形的屋顶上辉煌着金碧的光，只有那

先施公司对面的点心店，好像被阳光忘记了似的，呈现着一种抑郁的烟煤的颜色。

何必如此刻苦呢？舒舒服服地吃一顿饭。婵阿姨不想吃面了。但她想不出应当到什么地方去吃饭。她预备叫两个菜，两个上海菜，当然不要昆山吃惯了的东西，但价钱，至多两元，花两块钱吃一顿中饭，已经是很费的了，可是上海却说不来，也许两个菜得卖三块四块。这就是她不敢闯进任何一家没有经验过的餐馆的理由。

她站在路角上，想，想。在西门的一个馆子里，她曾经吃过一顿饭，可是那太远了。其次，四马路，她记得也有一家；再有，不错，冠生园，就在大马路。她不记得有没有走过，但在她记忆中，似乎冠生园是最适宜的了，虽则稍微有点憎嫌那儿的饭太硬。她思索了一下，仿佛记得冠生园已经走过了，她怪自己一路没有留心。

婵阿姨在冠生园楼上拣了个座位，垫子软软的，当然比坐在三友实业社舒服。侍者送上茶来，顺便递了张菜单给她。这使她稍微有一点窘，因为她虽然认得字，可并不会点菜。她费了十分钟，给自己斟酌了两个菜，一共一块钱。她很满意，因为她知道在这样华丽的菜馆里，是很不容易节省的。

她饮着茶，一个人占据了四个人的座位。她想趁这空暇打算一下，吃过饭到什么地方去呢？今天要不要回昆山去？倘若不回去的话，那么，今晚住到什么地方去？惠中旅馆，像前年有一天因为银行封关而不得不住一夜那情形一样吗？再说，玩，怎样玩？她都委决不下。

一溜眼，看见旁座的圆桌上坐着一男一女，和一个孩子。似乎是一个小家庭呢？但女的好像比男的年长得多。她大概也有三十四五岁了吧？婵阿姨刚才感觉到一种获得了同僚似的欢喜，但差不多是同时，一种常常沉潜在她心里而不敢升腾起来的烦闷又冲破了她的欢喜的面具。这是因为在她的餐桌上，除了她自己之外，更没有第二个人。丈夫？孩子？

十二三年前，婵阿姨的未婚夫忽然在吉期以前七十五天死了。他是一个拥有一千亩田的大地主的独子，他的死，也就是这许多地产失去了继承人。那时候，婵阿姨是个康健的小姐，她有着人家所称赞为“卓见”的美德，经过了二日二夜的考虑之后，她决定抱牌位做亲而获得了这大宗财产的合法的继承权。

她当时相信自己有这样大的牺牲精神，但现在，随着年岁的增长，她逐渐地愈加不相信她何以会有这样的勇气来了。翁姑故世了，一大注产业都归她掌管了，但这有什么用处呢？她忘记了当时牺牲一切幸福以获得这产业的时候，究竟有没有想到这份产业对于她将有多大的好处？族中人的虎视眈眈，在指望她死后好公分她的产业，她也不会有一个血统的继承人。算什么呢？她实在只是一宗巨产的暂时的经管人罢了。

虽则她有时很觉悟到这种情形，她却还不肯浪费她的财产，在她是以以为既然牺牲了毕生的幸福以获得此产业，那么惟有刻意保持着这产业，才比较的是实惠的。否则，假如她自己花完了，她的牺牲岂不更是徒然的吗？这就是她始终吝啬着的缘故。

但是，对于那被牺牲了的幸福，在她现在的衡量中，却比从前的估价更高了。一年一年地阅历下来，所有的女伴都嫁了丈夫，有了儿女，成了家。即使有贫困的，但她们都另外有一种愉快足够抵偿经济生活的悲苦。而这种愉快，她是永远艳羡着，但永远没有尝味过，没有！

有时，当一种极罕有的勇气奔放起来，她会想，丢掉这些财富而去结婚罢。但她一揽起镜子来，看见了萎黄的一个容颜，或是想象出了族中人的讪笑和讽刺，她也就沉郁下去了。

她感觉到寂寞，但她再没有更大的勇气，牺牲现有的一切，以冲破这寂寞的氛围。

她凝看着。旁边的座位上，一个年轻的漂亮的丈夫，一个兴高采烈的妻子，一个活泼的五六岁的孩子。他们商量吃什么菜肴。他们谈话。他们互相看着笑。他们好像是在自己家里。当然，他们并不怪婵阿姨这样沉醉地耽视着。

直等到侍者把菜肴端上来，才阻断了婵阿姨的视线。她看看对面，一个空的座位。玻璃桌面上，陈列着一副碗箸，一副，不是三副。她觉得有点难堪。她怀疑那妻子是在看着她。她以为我是何等样人呢？她看得出我是个死了的未婚夫的妻子吗？不仅是她看着，那丈夫也注目着我啊。他看得出我并不比他妻子年纪大吗？还有，那孩子，他那双小眼睛也在看着我吗？他看出来，以为我像一个母亲吗？假如我来抚养

他，他会不会有这样活泼呢？

她呆看着坚硬的饭粒，不敢再溜眼到旁边去了。她怕接触那三双眼睛，她怕接触了那三双眼睛之后，它们会立刻给她一个否决的回答。

她于是看见一只文雅的手握着一束报纸。她抬起头来，看见一个人站在她桌子边。他好像找不到座位，想在她对面那空位上坐。但他迟疑着。终于，他没有坐，走了过去。

她目送着他走到里间去，不知道心里该怎么想。如果他终于坐下在她对面，和她同桌子吃饭呢？那也没有什么不可以。在上海，这是普通的事。就连他坐下，向她微笑着，点点头，似曾相识地攀谈起来，也未尝不是坦白的事。可是，假如他真的坐下来，假如他真的攀谈起来，会有怎样的结局啊，今天？

这里，她又沉思着，为什么他对她看一眼之后，才果决地不坐下来了呢？他是不是本想坐下来，因为对于她有什么不满意而翻然变计了吗？但愿他是简单地因为她是一个女客，觉得不大方便，所以不坐下来的。但愿他是一个腼腆的人！

婊阿姨想找一面镜子，但没有如愿。她从盆子里捡起一块蒸汽洗过的手巾，揩着脸，却又后悔早晨没有擦粉。到上海来，擦一点粉是需要的。倘若今天不回昆山去，就得在到惠中旅馆之前，先去买一盒粉，横竖家里的粉也快用完了。

在旅馆里梳洗之后，出来，到哪里去呢？也许，也许他——她稍微侧转身去，远远地看见那有一双文雅手的中年男子已经独坐在一只圆玻璃一桌边，他正在看报。他为什么独自个呢？也许他会高兴地说：

“小姐，”他会得这样称呼吗？“我奉陪你去看影戏，好不好？”

可是，不知道今天有什么好看的戏，停会儿还得买一份报。现在他看什么？影戏广告？我可以去借过来看一看吗？假如他坐在这里，假如他坐在这里看……

“先生，借一张登载影戏广告的报纸，可以吗？”

“哦，可以的，可以的，小姐预备去看影戏吗？……”

“小姐贵姓？”

“哦，敝姓张，我是在上海银行做事的。……”

这样，一切都会很好地进行了。在上海。这样好的天气。没有遇到一个熟人。婊阿姨冥想有一位新交的男朋友陪着她在马路上走，手挽着手。和暖的太阳照在他们相并的肩上，让她觉得通身的轻快。

可是，为什么他在上海银行做事？婊阿姨再溜眼看他一下，不，他的确不是那个管理保管库的行员。那行员是，还要年轻，面相还要和气，风度也比较的洒落得多。他不是那人。

想起那年轻的行员，婊阿姨就特别清晰地看见了他站在保管库门边凝看她的神情。那是一道好像要说出话来的眼光，一个跃跃欲动的嘴唇，一副充满着热情的脸。他老是在门边看着，这使她有点烦乱，她曾经觉得不好意思摸摸索索地多费时间，所以匆匆地锁了抽屉就出来了。她记得上一次来开保管箱的时候，那个年老的行员并不这样仔细地看着她。

当她走出那狭窄的库门的时候，她记得她曾回过头去看一眼。但这并不单为了不放心那保管箱，好像这里边还有点避免他那注意的凝视的作用。她的确觉得，当他在她身边挨过的时候，他的下颔曾经碰着她的头发。非但如此，她还疑心她的肩膀也曾经碰着他的胸脯的。

但为什么当时没有勇气抬头看他一眼呢？

婊阿姨的自己的约束不住的遐想，使她憧憬于那上海银行的保管库了。为什么不多停留一会呢？为什么那样匆匆地锁了抽屉呢？那样地手忙脚乱，不错，究竟有没有把钥匙锁上呀？她不禁伸手到里衣袋去一摸，那小小的钥匙在着。但她仿佛觉得这是开了抽屉就放进袋里去的，没有再用它来锁上过。没有，绝对的没有锁上，不然，为什么她记忆中没有这动作啊？没有把保管箱锁上？真的？这是何等重要的事！

她立刻付了账，走出冠生园。在路角上，她招呼一辆黄包车：

“江西路，上海银行。”

在管理保管库业务的行员办公的那柜台外，她招呼着：

“喂，我要开开保管箱。”

那年轻的行员，他正在抽着纸烟和别一个行员说话，回转头来问：

“几号？”

他立刻呈现了一种诧异的神气，好像说：又是你，上午来开了一次，下午又要开了，多忙？可是这诧异的神气并不在他脸上停留得很长久，行长陈光甫常常告诫他的职员：对待主顾要客气，办事不怕麻烦。所以，当婢阿姨取出她的钥匙来，告诉了他三百零五号之后，他就捡取了同号码的副钥匙，殷勤地伺候她到保管库里去。

三百零五号保管箱，她审察了一下，好好地锁着。她沉吟着，既然好好地锁着，似乎不必再开吧？

“怎么，要开吗？”那行员拈弄着钥匙问。

“不用开了。我因为忘记了刚才有没有锁上，所以来看看。”她觉得有点歉仄地回答。

于是他笑了。一个和气的年轻的银行职员对她微笑着，并且对她看着。他是多么可亲啊！假如在冠生园的话，他一定会坐下在她对面的。但现在，在银行的保管库里，他会怎样呢？

她被他看着。她期待着。她有点窘，但是欢喜。他会怎样呢？他亲切地说：

“放心罢，即使不锁，也不要紧的，太太。”

什么？太太？太太！他称她为太太！愤怒和被侮辱了的感情奔涌在她眼睛里，她要哭了。她装着苦笑。当然，他是不会发觉的，他也许以为她是羞赧。她一扭身，走了。

在库门外，她看见一个艳服的女人。

“啊，密司陈，开保管箱吗？钥匙拿了没有？”

她听见他在背后问，更亲切地。

她正走在这女人身旁。她看了那女人一眼。密司陈，密司！

于是她走出了上海银行大门。一阵冷。眼前阴沉沉的，天色又变坏了。西北风。好像还要下雨。她迟疑了一下，终于披上了围巾：

“黄包车，北站！”

在车上，她掏出表来看。两点十分，还赶得上三点钟的快车。在藏起那只表的时候，她从衣袋里带出了冠生园的发票。她困难地，但是专心地核算着：菜，茶，白饭，堂彩，付两块钱，找出六角，还有几个铜元呢？

Madame Butterfly

Prof. Li Yuehan (John Li) was an entomologist. His specialty was butterflies, and, because he had studied in the United States, his research was restricted to the butterflies of that country, as well as Canada and South America.

Prof. Li Yuehan's Ph.D. status rested on his collection of more than 5,000 butterflies — and his professorship was based on his doctorate. For that reason he cherished his little "butterfly museum" dearly.

Over 5,000 kinds of butterflies in 400 specimen boxes, with a score of collection of large label cards recording them as ABC, A'B'C', and A" B" C" and a complete set of butterfly-catching and tabulating apparatus formed Prof. Li Yuehan's research laboratory.

When he was studying abroad, Prof. Li Yuehan had been hard up for money, as his family was not at all well off and he had had to survive on a government grant. Even after he became a professor he was still short of money, mainly because of his wife's extravagance, and he could not afford to rent a large apartment. As a result, he had partitioned off part of the lounge to set up his laboratory.

Now that we have mentioned his wife, it might be as well to remark here that Prof. Li Yuehan had his butterflies to thank for her. She was the younger sister of one of his colleagues, and they had gotten to know each other when she had tagged along with her brother on a visit to Prof. Li's butterfly collection. Prof. Li just happened to be feeling the need of some comfort from the opposite sex; she was very attracted to someone who was a Ph. D. and a professor to boot! And it just happened that she started to go round to view his butterflies pretty regularly, and it just happened that one day he pointed out a particularly interesting specimen and launched into the following convoluted explanation:

"Just look at this butterfly. Look at its golden wings with black and white speckles. Isn't it beautiful? There's its scientific name, at the bottom of the card; Argynnis. You know the name Aphrodite, don't you? It is normally called Aphrodite. She was the Greek goddess of love. According to one legend, she was transformed into one of these butterflies. But, another story has it that it is so called simply because it is the most attractive of the butterflies. You know, insects are just like people; this young maiden with the golden wings and silvery-white and jade-dark patterns is a target of affection and a deity of love. Just look at the fineness of its antennae — just like arms of jade ready to fondle a lover!"

At this point Prof. Li boldly stretched out his hand and touched her on the arm. That day she just happened to be wearing a gold-coloured silk dress decorated with black-and-white patterns. She gave him a bashful smile.

Shortly after, she became the wife of Prof. Li Yuehan.

Prof. Li was deeply grateful to his butterflies. Almost every day, after returning from his teaching duties — or from accompanying his wife on shopping trips or visiting friends, on reaching home he would immediately sit himself down in front of his large laboratory table, arranging, caressing and appreciating his butterflies.

They had not been married more than six months when Prof. Li began to feel that keeping company with his wife was becoming less interesting even than studying the most ordinary of his butterflies.

After all, even the most commonplace butterfly had some attractive points.

But Prof. Li's wife had only one thing she was good at, and that was spending money. Or rather, perhaps we should say she was good at spending money outside the home. For when it came to the household, she was niggardly in the extreme. She begrudged buying her husband even a tin of decent cigarettes. But when she went out (she went out every day) she got through such an amount of money that Prof. Li was at a loss to know where it all went — and that was after he had calculated what she had spent on personal adornments, things he could actually

see. When he called her to account about her expenses she could trot out quite a plausible list. For instance, she had eaten five-yuan's worth of ice-cream, spent twelve yuan on a perm or lost nearly twenty-four yuan on playing squash.

Prof. Li got married in April. His summer vacation passed as sweet as a dream. But now it was only just over a month into the new term, and he already owed the university accountant over two months' salary. Moreover, only two days before, he had received a notice from the accountant's office to the effect that if the money was not paid back by November he could draw no more cash.

On top of that, he had encountered a particularly troublesome problem quite recently. Now, you remember that Prof. Li's special study was American butterflies, right? However, the students he had to teach were Chinese. And his Chinese students demanded that he guide them in research into Chinese butterflies. This was a dilemma for Prof. Li; did China have butterflies? If so, how many kinds? He once tried to tell them firmly: "If you want to study butterflies, you have to study American or European butterflies. That is because they are so beautiful and there are so many varieties. As for Chinese butterflies, they are not worth bothering about." The response of most of his students to this was a snort of contempt. Prof. Li felt that his professional position was a very shaky one, so he had to sail with the wind, and ended up agreeing to teach them about Chinese butterflies. To go about this he searched catalogues of foreign books and finally came across some titles of books written by foreign entomologists dealing with insects in southern and central China. He got a bookshop specializing in Western books to order them for him. At the same time he went out regularly into the suburbs to catch specimens of butterflies and moths, and suchlike. He then compared each one of these Chinese specimens with ones he had in his own collection and gave them names.

He was so busy with all this that he stopped accompanying his wife on shopping trips and on visits to friends.

"John, have you got time?"

"I'm afraid not, darling. I've still got thirty-odd catalogue cards to fill out."

"Didn't you say you were going to take me to the cinema?"

"Oh!" He looked out of the window. "It's early yet. Let's eat supper first, and then we can catch the 9:15 show."

Every time this happened, his wife would curl her lip and sneer, "The 9:15 show? I'll be back by then to go to bed. You look after the house, and I, perhaps, may not be back for supper." And then she would stalk out.

Prof. Li would watch her leave, and, tapping on the ashtray with his Parker pen, smilingly say, "You'll be back by 9:15, then?"

Then he would bury himself in his research again.

It wasn't that he didn't love his wife, even though 9:15, 10:15 and even 11:15 came and went and he still wouldn't go upstairs to bed.

At the same time, it wasn't that she didn't love her husband. Finally she came home at 12:15. She rang the doorbell ... ding, ding ... Prof. Li came running to open the door, holding a pair of butterfly tweezers in his hand.

They kissed in the porch as they usually did.

Then he followed her into the study, reception room and living room. She preceded him and stood in front of his butterfly specimen display cases, bottles of formaldehyde and desk piled high with huge tomes, cast a casual eye over them and say, "Haven't you finished your work for today? Haven't you finished yet?" Then she glanced at her watch. "It's nearly one o'clock already," she reminded him. "You have to teach a class tomorrow; why aren't you in bed yet?"

"I've finished, I've finished." Prof. Li put down the tweezers. "I finished a long time ago. I've been waiting for you."

She made him sit down on the sofa. Then she pulled out a small mirror and an embroidered handkerchief from her handbag and wiped her nose and mouth. She followed this by shooting her husband a sideways glance.

"Any interesting butterflies turn up today?"

"Yes, yes," he rejoined eagerly, and took up a glass specimen box from the desk. Inside was a new addition to the collection — a white-winged, black-spotted butterfly. He showed it to her.

"This is one of the most valuable butterfly species in China. It's commonly called the 'Zhuang Zhou' butterfly. It doesn't have a scientific name yet; I'll have to get round to looking up the Latin name. You know who Zhuang Zhou was, don't you? He was an ancient philosopher, and this butterfly is a reincarnation of him."

"Oh? And why did he want to turn into a butterfly?" she yawned, at the same time plunking her handbag on a side table.

"Him? He had a very beautiful wife, they say. Zhuang Zhou was a philosopher. Philosophers are particularly rich in imagination, and because his wife was so beautiful, he imagined that she must have a lover. So every time his wife went out he would lie down on the bed and start philosophizing. In his imagination he would turn into a butterfly and fly out of the window in pursuit of his wife. Later, it happened unfortunately that Zhuang Zhou died before his wife did. But, even as a ghost he was still in love with her, so he was turned into this butterfly, which is a symbol of pure love, and for all eternity has been pursuing his beautiful wife."

When he finished this story Prof. Li turned a humorous glance on his wife. But she had already closed her eyes languidly and was slumped against the back of the sofa.

It wasn't that she didn't want to listen to her husband's story; nor was she particularly sleepy. It was just that she was very tired, that was all. When Prof. Li stopped talking there was a profound silence for a while. Then she opened her eyes. Taking the glass specimen case from her husband's hand, she set it down upon the the small round table. She fished in her handbag and produced a piece of chewing gum, which she slipped into her husband's mouth.

"Would you like some sweets tomorrow? The Sullivan's selling them at half-price," she asked.

"Oh, all right," Prof. Li grunted, with his mouth fully occupied with chewing.

His wife opened her handbag again.

"Look, I'm out of money again. Tomorrow's Friday, and the day after that's Saturday. Today's the last day of the month. You...." She snuggled up against his chest, at the same time propping her slender legs up on one arm of the sofa. "Darling," she wheedled. "Let me have another 50 yuan tomorrow, hm?"

She stretched out her hand and stroked her husband under the chin.

But, before she knew it, he had closed his eyes languidly and slumped against the back of the sofa.

It wasn't that he didn't want to listen to what his wife was saying; nor that he was particularly sleepy. It was just that he was very tired, that was all.

Thereupon, she went quietly upstairs, leaving him to get up and tidy away the butterflies that lay scattered around on the desk.

The autumn passed, and with it disappeared the butterflies from the fields. Prof. Li no longer went out every afternoon with his net. But this did not mean that he had any more leisure, because just about this time the foreign books on Chinese butterflies he had sent for began to arrive one after the other. Besides, through a friend's introduction, he had got a few extra hours teaching, filling in for a professor who was on leave.

It meant a bit more money coming in, of course. Moreover, the more diligently he studied Chinese butterflies, the more secure became his position at the university. Prof. Li's wife understood all this, and she no longer pestered her husband to go shopping with her or to see a play, or things like that. Occasionally, to show her affection, she would invite him along, but when he refused she no longer pouted like one of those petty-minded women, as she

used to do. Apart from the fact that she understood his busy schedule these days, there was another, very sound reason for her new magnanimity. She had lately come to know a physical training instructor named Chen Junzhe — and he was always happy to accompany her whenever she required him.

Just like Prof. Li, Chen Junzhe too had studied in the United States. He was also a university professor. But there the resemblance ended. Chen was a cheerful sort of fellow, happily playing ball games, driving cars, swimming, indulging in athletics or dancing. Prof. Li's wife had first gotten to know him when she went to watch a soccer match on the university's baseball diamond. She had later recognized him in the sports columns of the local newspaper and seen him in documentaries, but it was only when he had visited their house that she had been formally introduced to him.

It was one Sunday afternoon when Chen had come bursting into Prof. Li's study.

"Hello, Prof. Li," he cried in English, "I've come to see your butterfly collection."

"Welcome, welcome," replied Prof. Li the same vein. "This is a most unexpected pleasure." He put down a book on Chinese butterflies by a German author which he had been reading and rose from the sofa.

Naturally, his wife, who had been sitting beside him, also stood up, and fixed the visitor with a coquettish smile. Prof. Li took the newcomer by the hand. "This is my colleague," he said to his wife, "Mr Chen Junzhe." And turning back: "This is my wife."

"Oh, yes, I know. Mr Chen is a famous sportsman," she acknowledged, stretching out her hand and giving Chen a dazzling smile.

The visitor glanced at the display cases of butterflies arranged on the desk. Then he whooped with delight, again in English, as if he had just scored a goal in a soccer game. "Oh, beautiful, beautiful!" Rubbing his hands in delight, he stalked over to peer at the specimens.

While her husband and Chen smoked cigarettes, Prof. Li's wife went upstairs. Why? To change into a new outfit, of course.

"Prof. Li, you are a real artist, but..." Prof. Chen Junzhe turned and looked Prof. Li up and down. He patted his shoulder heavily, making him squirm, "you don't keep yourself in shape."

Prof. Li blew out a cloud of smoke expertly. "But I get through the whole year without falling ill once."

"But your shoulders are stooped and you're too skinny," the other rejoined, with a serious look on his face. "It's no good, you must start taking exercise."

Just then, Prof. Li's wife entered, in a new set of clothes.

"Mrs Li, don't you think it's about time Mr Li got a bit of exercise?" Chen appealed to her.

"Exercise? Oh, he hates exercise; you'll never get him to do anything energetic," she said. "Mr Chen, I see you're a good propagandist for physical fitness."

Chen gave a chuckle.

"Tennis? Oh well, before, when I was at school I used to like to play. But I haven't played for a long time. I don't often get together with friends, so I lost interest."

"You see, because you don't take any exercise your wife has had to sacrifice her interest in sports too. This is too bad, you know," Chen said to Prof. Li, with a condescending smile.

"What do you mean? I've never told her she can't indulge in sports," protested Prof. Li, stroking the spine of a thick book.

"Well now, what if I make so bold as to invite Mrs Li to play tennis today. How's that?" The ever-ebullient physical training instructor turned to Prof. Li's wife as he said this.

"Today? I'm afraid not, you see I have to go to the department store. Besides ... besides, I'm quite out of practice," she said bashfully.

"Oh, don't be so modest. It's still quite early, so I can accompany you to the department store first, and then we can go to the gym and play a game."

Prof. Li's wife gazed at her husband. He gave her a gentle smile. At this moment he had the benign air of a distinguished scholar. She couldn't help a deep feeling of respect welling up from the bottom of her heart.

"Are you going?" she asked him.

"There's no point my going; I can't play tennis, Anyway... anyway, I've got something to do here." His reply was smooth and polished.

And that was how Prof. Li's wife got her first ride in Prof. Chen Junzhe's new car.

There was a hooting of the car horn outside the door, and a squeal of tires. Prof. Li picked up *Butterflies of China* from the sofa and went back to the desk to continue his research.

The butterflies returned with the spring. But Prof. Li no longer had any urge to go out into the suburbs with his butterfly net. He was surprised to find that his erstwhile zeal for his research seemed to have evaporated. Coming back from his lectures, he walked in a slow saunter, loath to tread heavily on the bright, well-paved road. There was an indescribable fragrance in the air which caused him to breathe calmly and rhythmically in a way he had never done before. A feeling of distress came over him as he continued his solitary walk. Passing a haberdasher's he wandered in and bought himself a walking-stick.

The stick made a crisp tapping sound on the paving stones. Prof. Li decided that when he got back home he would take his wife out for the afternoon. No, not just the afternoon, for an evening out, too.

But his wife was not at home.

"Did your mistress go out?" he asked the maid, who was just coming downstairs,

"Yes, sir," was the respectful reply. "She went off in Mr Chen's car."

"Did Mr Chen come here again?"

"Yes, sir, He came at noon and had lunch here."

Prof. Li went into his study-cum-lounge. There were two cups on the coffee table on the left side of the sofa. Dregs of tea were still in them. He poured the dregs into the spittoon. Pacing round his desk a few times, he lit a cigarette and sank heavily onto the sofa. He tried to make up his mind several times to make use of this period of leisure to plan the outline of his projected "A Study of the Butterflies of China," but inside his head was a great void in which, try as he might, he couldn't find even the tail end of a clue as to where to start. He couldn't get rid of a vague feeling of agitation. He got to his feet and went over to the window. Outside, in the small courtyard, an ordinary, common or garden butterfly was flitting from flower to flower.

Butterflies, butterflies, butterflies! There was no end to these butterflies! Suddenly, Prof. Li felt that his head was filled with millions of prancing, dancing butterflies.

As if waking from a dream, Prof. Li stretched and straightened up, and, trailing his new walking-stick behind him, left the house. Threading his way through a clump of graceful and pretty ladies, and oblivious as to how far he was going, Prof. Li wandered mechanically into a public park.

He had not been in the park for a long time. Gazing at the rolling expanses of lawn and the flowerbeds with their red, purple and pink blooms, he realized that he didn't know where he wanted to go. He simply felt lonely — yes, that was it, lonely. He spied a seat under a weeping willow tree just right for one person to sit on.

He took a casual look around, and the sweep of his gaze was arrested by the sight of his wife and Prof. Chen Junzhe. They were sitting on a bench big enough for two in the midst of a clump of bushes next to an oval pond. Prof. Li was looking at them sideways.

From the side they seemed to be snuggling up close to each other. Prof. Li would rather have been able to see them from the front or from the back. For a minute he hesitated, wondering whether he should shift his position, or whether he should leave the park altogether.

There were several butterflies flitting about among the bushes. Prof. Chen Junzhe swatted one or two effortlessly with his tennis racket. He picked each one of them up from the grass where it had fallen with wings furled and handed them to Prof. Li's wife. Then they fell into a deep conversation.

Prof. Li envied Chen his zest for life. Although they were about the same age, he himself felt old and withered by comparison. He felt that he had never experienced that easy vigour with which Chen had swatted the butterflies.

A gust of wind brought a snatch of his wife's laughter to him.

Although he couldn't hear them clearly he imagined that he knew what they were talking about. That was her voice, wasn't it? Yes, of course, she had learned something about butterflies from him, hadn't she? She was almost certainly telling Chen a butterfly story:

You see, this is called a "Zhuang Zhou butterfly." Zhuang Zhou was a very strange fellow in ancient times. As you know, such eccentrics are often philosophers. Now, Zhuang Zhou, whether he was reading books or working — that's right, he was very poor so he had to go to work every day — and he always liked to have his wife by his side. But his wife was a very lively person who liked to go out and gad about. All she wanted in life was diversion, but Zhuang Zhou was suspicious of her. He would often turn himself into a butterfly and go in search of her, but he never found out anything to confirm his suspicions. What a silly insect!

The wind blew another gust of laughter towards Prof. Li. This time it came from Prof. Chen Junzhe.

Then the two of them got up and left the clump of bushes, and, with their tennis rackets over their shoulders, sauntered towards the main gate of the park.

Prof. Li walked around the pond. Deep in thought, he headed for the bench where the two of them had been sitting and sat down on it. On the grass in front of it were strewn the bodies of the butterflies which had been swatted. They had white wings with black dots on them. With a feeling of deep sympathy, Prof. Li picked them up one by one and examined them. Then he thought of giving them an appropriate name.

Translated by Paul White

蝴蝶夫人

李约翰教授是昆虫学博士。

李约翰博士的专门研究是蝴蝶，因为李约翰博士是美国留学生，所以他研究有素的蝴蝶都是合众国蝴蝶，加拿大蝴蝶，并及南美洲蝴蝶。

李约翰教授的博士学位是从他所搜集的五千多种蝴蝶里产生出来的，而他的教授地位是从他的博士学位里升起来的，所以他很爱惜他的蝴蝶博物院。

五千余种，四百余玻璃匣的蝴蝶标本，编着ABC，A'B'C'，A''B''C''的二十余巨册的记录卡，全副的捕虫器和制标本器，就组成了李约翰教授的研究室。

李约翰教授在留学的时候并不很有钱，因为他家道很寒微，而是官费出洋的，做了教授之后也还是没有钱，因为他太太花得凶，所以李约翰教授租不起大住宅，他的研究室就不得不附设在会客室里。

说起他的太太，李约翰教授也不得不感谢他的蝴蝶。他的太太原先是一个同事的妹妹，因为跟了她哥哥来参观蝴蝶，于是彼此认识了。李约翰教授正在感觉到需要一个异性的安慰。而她也很同情于教授博士。于是她时常来参观蝴蝶。于是，有一天，李教授特别指点一枚蝴蝶标本给她看，并且讲着这样的一个奇妙的故事：

“你看，这蝴蝶，黄金的翅，黑白的花纹，不是很美丽的吗？你看底下注着它的学名：Argynnis，你认识Aphrodite这个字吗？它的普通名字，就叫做Aphrodite。这是希腊恋爱女神的名字。一个传说，说这蝴蝶就是那女神幻化的，但另外一个传说，却以为这不过指示它是蝴蝶中间最爱娇的。你知道，昆虫们也像人一样，有耽美的心，有恋爱的感觉。所以，在蝴蝶们中间，这有着金黄之羽衣，白银玄玉之锦绣的女郎，就是恋之目标，情之大神了。你看，它的纤细而修长的触须，也许就是它的抚爱一个情人的玉臂罢。”

讲着这样的故事，李约翰教授不禁大胆地伸手去抚摩她的手臂了。而这天，她正是穿着有黑白图案纹的黄色的罗衣，于是她羞涩地笑了。

于是她做了李约翰教授的太太。

李约翰教授衷心地感恩着他的蝴蝶，他差不多每天，从学校里，或是陪着他太太，一回家就去坐在他那宽阔的研究桌上，整理着，抚爱着，欣赏着他的蝴蝶。

结婚之后六个月，李约翰教授渐渐地感觉到陪伴太太的趣味远不如研究一只最普通的蝴蝶了。

最普通的蝴蝶倒有不少美德哪！

但李教授太太的美德只有一样，那就是会花钱，不，应当说会出门花钱。因为在家里，太太是很吝啬的，她不大情愿替李教授买一听较好的纸烟。但一出门——她是每天都要出门的，她就会用了许多钱，除了身上插戴的一部分看得见的首饰以外，还有许多钱她是怎样花了的，李教授简直是莫名其妙。可是，如果查问她起来呢，她自会得报告出一篇很可以公开的账来，例如吃了五块钱冰淇淋啦，十二块钱烫了头发啦，或是回力球输了二十四元啦……

李约翰教授的结婚是在四月里。一个暑假，他所过的生活是像梦一般甜蜜的。但是现在，开学了只有一个多月，李教授已经向会计处借支了两个月以后的薪俸，而且前两天曾经接到会计处的通知，非到十一月份，恕不再许预支了。

同时，在教务上，李约翰教授最近也受了一个魔难。李教授所研究的，不是曾经说过，是美国的蝴蝶吗？可是不幸他教的是中国学生。中国学生要求李教授指导他们研究中国的蝴蝶。这却叫李教授为难了。中国有蝴蝶吗？有多少种？李教授虽然曾经毅然地对学生说过：“要研究蝴蝶就非研究美国的或欧洲的蝴蝶不可，那是又美丽，种类又繁多。至于中国蝴蝶，实在是不值得研究的。”可是，对于他的训话，学生大多嗤之以鼻。李教授觉得地位有动摇的危险，就只得见风使舵，答应指导学生研究中国蝴蝶。他一面查外国书目，好容易找到几本外国人著的关于中国南部和中部的昆虫的书籍，就托一家西书铺专诚去代定了来，

一面天天到郊外去捕捉了许多中国的蝶蛾类昆虫，一只一只地与他所收藏的美国蝴蝶比较，给它们类似的定名。

因为这样的烦恼和忙碌，李教授开始拒绝陪他太太上街或是去看朋友了。

“约翰，有工夫没？”

“哦，没有，darling，我还得写三十个记录卡。”

“你不是说陪我看电影去吗？”

“哦，”他看看窗外的天色，“还早，索性吃了夜饭看九点一刻的罢。”

他太太总是撅起了嘴：“九点一刻，我要回来睡觉了。你看家罢，也许，也许我不回来吃饭。”她耸耸肩膀走了。

李教授看她走出了门，总用他的派克笔头叩击着烟灰缸，微笑着：“九点一刻你会回来吗？”

于是他又沉浸于他的研究了。

李约翰教授并不是不爱他的太太，虽然过了九点一刻，十点一刻，甚至十一点一刻，他太太没回来，他也不上楼去睡觉。

反之，他太太也并不是不爱她丈夫，最迟到十二点一刻，她总回家的。她按着门铃，“兹……”，于是李教授一手拿着蝴蝶镊子，赶出来给她开门。

他们在门廊里照例地接个吻。

李教授跟着太太走进那研究室，会客厅，并起居室。他太太总先走到他的陈列满了蝴蝶匣，青酸罇，和巨大的书籍的研究桌边，随意地看一眼：

“今天工作完了没有？还没有完吗？”她看一看手表，“快一点钟了。明天早晨要上课，为什么不早睡？”

“完了，完了，”李教授放下了镊子，“早就完了，等着你啊。”

于是她把李教授拖在沙发上坐了。她从手提袋里取出小镜子和绣花小手帕来擦着鼻子和嘴唇，溜一瞥眼波看着李教授。

“今天发现了什么有趣味的蝴蝶吗？”

“有，有。”李教授从桌上搬了一个小玻璃匣，指着一个新做成标本的白翅黑点花纹的蝴蝶给他太太看。“这是中国蝴蝶里最高贵的一种，普通名字叫做‘庄周蝶’。学名还没有定，我还要查一查拉丁文法。你晓得庄周吗，古时候有名的哲学家，这个蝴蝶就是他变的。”

“哦，他为什么变做蝴蝶呢？”他太太打着呵欠问。随手把手提包放在小圆桌上。

“他吗？他有个美丽的妻子，据说。庄周是个哲学家。哲学家是特别的富于想象。因为他的妻子太美丽了，他想象出她一定有情人在外边。所以，据说每当他妻子出门之后，他总是躺在床上运用他的哲学思想，使他的灵魂化成蝴蝶，从窗间飞出去，追踪着他的妻。后来，不幸得很，庄周比他的妻先死，他因为连灵魂都爱着他的妻，所以永久地化作了这样的象征着纯洁的恋爱的蝴蝶，永久地追踪在他的美丽的妻的身后。”

李教授讲了这个故事。幽默地对他的太太看，不知从什么时候起，他太太已经懒洋洋地闭了眼睛仰靠在椅背上了。

他太太并不是不愿听她丈夫讲话，也不是真的睡熟，她不过是疲倦极了而已。所以，当她丈夫停嘴了之后，寂静了一刻，她又睁开眼睛来。她替她丈夫把那玻璃匣放在小圆桌上，随手把她的手提包拿下来，从那里摸出一条留兰香糖，送在李教授嘴里。

“你明天吃糖吗，沙利文明天卖半价？”她问。

李教授咀嚼着糖，从牙齿里回答：“哦，好的。”

他太太把手提包再打开来：

“你看，我又没钱用了。明天礼拜五，后天礼拜六了。今天是月底，你……”她斜倚在李教授怀里，把两只纤细的脚搁在沙发臂上。“Darling，明天再给我五十块钱好不好？”

她伸出手去抚摩她丈夫的下颌。

可是，不知从什么时候起，她丈夫已经懒洋洋地闭了眼睛仰靠在沙发背上了。

她丈夫并不是不愿听他太太的话，也不是真的睡熟，他也不过是疲倦极了而已。

于是他太太悄悄地上楼了。于是他站起来收拾好那些乱摊在桌子上的蝴蝶。

秋季过了，田野里找不出一只蝴蝶了，李约翰教授不再在每天下午带了捕虫网出去了。但是他并不因此而多些闲暇，因为这时候他所定的关于中国蝴蝶的外国书陆续寄到了。此外，因为一个朋友的介绍，他还在一所教会大学里给一个出缺的教授代几点钟课。

多一处教席，就是多一部分收入；愈勤勉地研究中国蝴蝶，就是在大学里的地位愈稳固；李约翰的太太很明白这里的因果，所以，她现在不再常常勉强她丈夫一块儿上街去买东西，或看戏了。间或有一二次，为了表示亲热的缘故，她邀请她丈夫而被拒绝了，她亦很能了解他，绝不再撅起嘴唇，露出小气量的女人们所固有的悻悻之色了。此外，还有一个最正确的理由，那就是她近来新认识了一位体育家陈君哲，倘若她有需要的话，他是常常高兴陪伴着她的。

陈君哲虽然与她丈夫一样地是美国留学生，而且一样地是大学教授，但他没有她丈夫那么样忙，那么样迂腐。他常常是很高兴，很愉快地打球，驾车，游泳，竞技或跳舞。她在棒球场上看大学足球赛的时候认识他，她在报纸上体育栏里认识他，她在新闻电影中认识他，但经过了正式的介绍而彼此相识，却是在他到她家的那一天。

某星期日的下午，体育教授陈君哲突然闯进了李约翰教授的研究室。

“哈罗，普洛发叟李，你好，我来参观你收藏的蝴蝶。”

“喔，惠尔康姆！惠尔康姆！你是难得来的。”李约翰教授放下了正在阅读的德文本《中国之蝶蛾》，从沙发上站了起来。

自然，并坐着的李教授太太也站了起来，以爱娇的熟识的眼光注视着她的来客。于是李教授握了客人的手，望着他太太：

“这位是，同事，陈君哲先生。”他又旋向客人：“这是内人。”

“我早就认识啦，陈先生是有名的体育家。”她在伸出手来的时候，倩笑着说。

一回头，陈先生看见了桌上罗列着的蝴蝶箱！立刻就呈现了踢进一个足球似的兴会：“啊，比乌的福尔，比乌的福尔！”他搓着手去俯视李约翰教授的蝴蝶标本了。

李约翰教授抽着纸烟陪客人，她太太呢？上楼了。她觉得应当换一身衣裳。

“普洛发叟李，你真是个美术家。不过……”陈君哲教授回身对李约翰教授打量了一下，重重地拍着他的肩膀。这使李约翰教授觉得有点立不住。“不过你太不注重体育了。”

李约翰教授喷着熟练的烟圈说：“可是我倒终年不会生病的。”

“但是你的背驼了，你太瘦了。不行，非运动不可！”陈君哲教授装着严肃的态度说。

李约翰教授的太太换了衣服进来了。

“密昔司李，你说是不是，密司特李应该好好地运动一下？”那体育教授说。

“运动？他从来不喜欢运动，那也没有法子。”她说，“陈先生，你倒是一个很好的体育宣传家。”

陈君哲教授喷笑起来：

“那么，我倒要向密昔司李宣传一下了。密昔司李喜欢打网球吗？”

“网球？从前在学校里的时候倒很喜欢的，可是，好久不打了，没有常常在一块儿的朋友，就没有那么样的兴致了哪。”

“你看，因为你不运动，连你太太也牺牲了运动，这不应该。”陈君哲教授笑着对李约翰教授说。

“什么话，我并不禁止她运动啊！”李教授抚摩着一个挺厚的书脊说。

“这样说来，我今天就冒昧地请密昔司李去打网球行不行？”那常常是高兴着的体育教授向李太太说。

“今天？不行，我还要到百货店里去。况且……况且，我的球太坏啦……”她忸怩地说。

“客气客气，现在时光还早，倘若密昔司李高兴的话，我可以先奉陪到百货公司里去，随后我们再到体育会里去打球。”

李太太望望她丈夫。他微笑着，很温雅，很大方，显现着一个优越的学者的气概。她不禁从心底里崇敬他了。

“你去不去？”她问他。

“我去没有用，我不会打球。而且……而且这里还有一点事情没有了。”他文雅地说。

于是，这是李教授太太第一次坐着陈君哲教授的新汽车出去。

汽车的喇叭在矮矮的木栅门外响了。一阵橡皮轮碾过柏油路的微颤的声音。李约翰教授从沙发上捡起了《中国之蝶蛾》，回到桌子上继续他的研究。

蝴蝶跟着春天来了。但李约翰教授却不再有带着捕虫网到郊外去的兴致。他诧异从前孜孜矻矻的研究精神都到哪里去了。他从大学里上了课出来，明亮的，柔软的街路，使他好像不敢践踏得太重似的，缓缓地漫步着，流动着各种不可思议的香味的空气，使他把呼吸调节得格外停匀。他孤独地行走着，感觉到真的难受了。在一家服装店里，他随随便便地买了一条手杖。

新买的手杖在阶石上叩响着，发出清脆的声音，李约翰教授决定回来带他的太太一同出去玩一个下午，不，不但一个下午，而且要连一个晚上。

可是李约翰教授在他家里寻不到他的太太。

“太太出去了？”李约翰教授从楼梯上下来问他的女仆。

“出去了。”女仆恭恭敬敬地回答，“坐了陈先生的车子去的。”

“陈先生又来过了？”

“是，上午就来的，在这里用了饭。”

李约翰教授走进他的研究室兼会客厅，沙发椅左方的小茶桌上放着两杯饮剩的红茶。他把这茶倒在痰盂里，绕着他的桌子走了几圈，点了一枝烟沉下在沙发上了。

几次想利用这闲暇，把拟著的论文《中国蝶蛾之研究》的大纲计划一下，可是头脑里空空洞洞的，再也抽理不出端绪来。李约翰教授不禁感觉到莫名的烦躁，他起来立在窗槛边，外面小院子里盛开着的迎春花间，正有一只下等的蝴蝶在从一个花蕊上飞到另一个花蕊上去。

蝴蝶，蝴蝶，蝴蝶！永远是蝴蝶哪！李约翰教授的头脑里忽然间给成千累万的飞舞着的蝴蝶占据了。

李约翰教授如从梦中醒来，伸了个懒腰，曳着他新置的手杖出门了。他穿行于轻盈而都丽的女士的花丛中，忘了路之远近，自然而然地走进了公园。

好久不到公园里来了。对着广大的平展的草地，红紫缤纷的花圃，李约翰教授不知道应该先往哪里走。他只感得孤寂，是的，太孤寂了。他在一株垂柳下觅到了适宜于一个人坐的椅子。

由于不注意地浏览，他看见了他太太和陈君哲教授，在一个椭圆形的翻边的灌木丛中。他们坐在一只适宜于两个人坐的游椅上，他只能看到他们的侧影。

看着这近似偎倚着的二人的侧影，在李约翰教授是宁愿看他们的正面或背影的。他心中踌躇着要不要换一个地方，或者竟先离去了公园，作为一个绅士，这样的行止是必需的。

灌木丛中的花间，飞翔着几只蝴蝶，陈君哲教授很不费力地用网球拍挥落了好几只。他从草地上拾起每一只粉翅翕张着的蝴蝶来，递给李约翰太太，于是他们细声地讲着许多话。

李约翰教授很羡慕陈君哲教授的好兴致，自己呢，虽则年纪相仿，却不免有些衰老之感了。那样兴奋而容易地拍取蝴蝶，好像是从来没有经验过的事情。

于是风吹送一阵他太太的笑声过来。

李约翰教授想象得出，虽然他听不清楚，他们俩在说些什么话。这是她的声音，是的，她曾经从他那里得到许多蝴蝶的知识，她一定是在讲一个蝴蝶的故事给他听：

“你看，这是一种叫做‘庄周蝶’的东西。庄周是古时候一个最多疑的人，你知道，最多疑的人就是哲学

家。庄周是不论在读书的时候，或是做工的时候——不错，庄周是很穷的，他每天要做工才能生活，他总喜欢他的妻子陪伴着在旁边。可是他的妻子是一个活泼的女子，她常常要出去玩，她一生所需要的就是玩哪，可是庄周却疑心她了。他于是常常化做了蝴蝶，跟着他妻子的踪迹侦察她，其实，他是侦察不出什么来的哪，这傻虫儿！”

于是风吹送一阵陈君哲教授的笑声过来。

接着是，各人肩上搁了一个网拍，悠闲地离开了那灌木丛，向着公园大门去了。

李约翰教授绕行过湖，沉思地走到他们所曾坐过的椅子上坐了。草地上横陈着那些受创伤的被抛弃了的蝴蝶，白羽黑点纹的蝴蝶。李约翰教授用了深切的同情心，将它们一一的捡起来，并且想给它们定一个恰当的名字。

Kumarajiva

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As the Great Sage Kumarajiva,⁽¹⁾ mounted on a huge camel, led his retinue and his beautiful wife through the vast mountain valley, the breeze of the desert dawn tugged at his clothing, sending his side sleeves and belt billowing out under the golden sunshine. His wife rode on a camel of equal height, the sun illuminating her radiant, enchanting face, and revealing her majestic bearing. She had never lost the manner of a Kuchah princess. She was riding only half a camel-length behind Kumarajiva, so that when he turned his head back slightly he could see that her profound gaze was fixed far in the distance, as if watching a mirage in the haze of the mountains ahead. Turning his head back further, through the dust behind his column of retainers, he could see the crow-shaped city of Liangzhou cradled by high mountains. It lay in a deep mountain valley, still in shadow, but some of the highest battlements, forts, towers and stupas were already edged with a ribbon of shining gold. Wisps of white and black ashes and smoke still rose from the ruins of several forts destroyed in the fierce battle that had ended only a few days before, and the yellow smoke of burning wolf dung⁽²⁾ still poured from the tall beacon towers. But this had all been to no avail. No rescuing force had arrived, and the soldier who kept the beacon fires had long since died beneath the beacon tower, yet the unreasoning smoke had still not disappeared.

Looking back at the devastated ancient border city, the Great Sage Kumarajiva unconsciously heaved a deep sigh. The lifework of the King of the Three Rivers had been destroyed for ever. Thinking of Lü Guang's painstaking efforts of the past ten years, thinking of the brutal destruction of life in this savage battle... and thinking of the heroic death of the young Lü Bi, the last remaining descendant of Lü Guang, the compassionate Great Sage Kumarajiva could not help pitying Lü Guang even though he despised him. But what could be gained from these ten or so years at Liangzhou? As the old question returned to nag his mind, Kumarajiva felt conversely that even death was too good for this warrior who had blasphemed against Buddhism. Those dozen or so years, not only could not advance the progress of his moral attainment, but because of Lü Guang's contempt for Buddhism, had seen the defiling of the purity of his body. Since he had become a monk at the behest of his mother at the age of seven, he had travelled throughout the countries of the Western Regions, but when had he ever seen a monk with a wife? Yet now he was clearly travelling with a wife on the way to the State of Qin, it too was difficult to fathom. When he arrived there would he be treated with both respect and contempt by its ruler and officials as he had been in Liangzhou? No, the king of Qin was, after all, far wiser than Lü Guang and his son. He was a man who venerated the Buddhist doctrines. Hence, when he had commanded Yao Shoude to attack Lü Guang, he had instructed him to bring Kumarajiva safely back to Chang'an, and had further conferred on him the title of Patriarch.⁽³⁾ From the members of his retinue, he had learnt that when he arrived at the capital, King Yao was probably going to come out personally to welcome him. Taking all that into account, it seemed that this journey to Qin could prove beneficial.

A gust of wind sent the jangle of camel bells floating from the valley floor to the mountain peaks, startling rabbits and squirrels in the grass at the roadside into hasty flight. Kumarajiva too, was aroused from his contemplation, and glanced back at his lovely cousin, his wife. She was gazing around at the mountain scenery and swaying gracefully to the camel's leisurely gait. Like a layman, he suddenly felt a surge of affection welling within him. For the last dozen years this had been a constant cause of disquiet for him: Kumarajiva simultaneously held two diametrically opposed aspirations. One was the earnest desire he had held since joining the monkhood to achieve spiritual progress, the other was to love his wife like an ordinary man. He believed he was a pious Buddhist,

his being permeated with the mysterious truths of every Buddhist classic, but at the same time he felt he was still unable to renounce his love for his wife. He had once believed that this must have been a predestined karma obstruction, because he felt that, on no account had it been an accident that he had finally taken his cousin, the Kuchah princess, as his wife. Recalling playing with her when they were small, it seemed his childish heart had had an innocent love for the lovely girl even then. In the thirteen years since he had gone with his mother to Shalur to become a Buddhist monk, however, he had completely forgotten her. The heart of the clever, diligent, studious youth was filled only with the teachings of Sakyamuni. Women, even his cousin, had already been forbidden, and he did not dare to think of them. On his return to Kuchah, he had already become a great master passing on the doctrines to disciples of his own. His uncle, the king of Kuchah, built him a rostrum from which every day he examined the classics and preached Buddhist doctrine to scholars from all over the land, so although he occasionally saw the beautiful dignified figure of his cousin beneath the rostrum, and although her dark eyes were often fixed upon him, he could not but suppress the warmth flickering in his heart. Time and time again as he strolled on cool, tranquil moonlit nights through the grape vines and patra palms, peacefully absorbed in contemplation, his cousin would steal up behind him and quietly follow him. She made no attempt to greet him, but simply observed his movements or secretly listened to his occasional pious murmurings. Nevertheless, many times the cries of peacocks by the edge of the pool or birds in the forest, startled by her footsteps, had caused him to turn and look back.

Every time he discovered her following him, he felt a little disconcerted. He had been confident that he was a monk who had already achieved the cessation of desire, and a dozen or so years of spiritual cultivation could already guarantee his moral character. Seeing other women, even very beautiful ones, he had never been moved to the least of impure thoughts, but every time he saw his cousin like a heavenly beauty in the gardens at night, he really felt himself losing his emotional self-restraint. Thus he knew that this was a temptation sent to him by the Buddha, the last and the greatest temptation. If he could analyze and see through this karma obstruction, he would reach the correct path to spiritual perfection. He knelt down and clasped his hands in prayer.

"Sakyamuni Buddha, through your great glory, your pure, holy teachings have converted me to Buddhism. I strictly observe the monastic rules, and every hour of every day hold myself aloof from sin. Every word of every one of your scriptures echoes in my heart. Having received your great favour I shall spread your teachings to all living creatures on earth. I know that your sacred beneficence has enabled me to avoid the temptations of all demons but I still beg you to use your sacred power to upbraid those demons for their temptations and make them leave me for ever. Let me praise you daily from the rostrum without mishap, because I am afraid that the depth of my training in concentration is still insufficient to withstand that greatest temptation."

As he prayed this way, she, the beloved daughter of the king of Kuchah, would wave the white peacock-feather fan in her hand and smile with the moonbeams. She respected this cousin with his lofty moral virtue, and understood what a glorious path was revealed through his every explanation of the Buddhist doctrines on the rostrum. She certainly had no evil intention to destroy his spiritual achievements; she had just been unable to help herself falling in love with him. She wanted to possess him. This to her was the only glory. She smiled, intently watching her cousin in pious prayer.

"Cousin Kumarajiva, sage monk, do you have to continue your rigorous moral training even on such a lovely moonlit night? Won't Sakyamuni Buddha allow his disciples to enjoy a little of the fragrance of the trees at night?"

"The fragrance of trees can disturb the tranquil mind as much as anything else. Cousin, good woman, being here is the same to me as being in a desert. I have seen nothing. I believe that I am already able to live in this magnificent city with the indifference of living in a desert. I shall not be tempted by demons of the external world to destroy my moral attainment. But, you, I advise you to leave here immediately, otherwise let me immediately leave you, because I am afraid that it is only you who can destroy me."

"Sage monk, hearing you I laud you! I am afraid I really might destroy you because I truly do feel an evil power possessing my body. But Cousin Kumarajiva, you can illuminate my mind with your lofty doctrine and enable me to achieve pure release from worldly desires as well as enabling yourself to avoid tribulation. Come, let's go and sit by that cool spring, explain again that compassionate crown prince's teachings."

"No, Cousin, good woman, I can preach the mysterious truths of the Buddha to you from the rostrum, but not here. I am afraid I will soon lose my power of concentration. Good woman, let me go in. Look, the moon has already been hidden by dark clouds. I know a most fearful demon waits here."

As he spoke he could feel animal passions stirring within him. He hastily covered his face with his emaciated hands, and left her alone in the dark pattrā palm grove. Entering his meditation room, he knelt piously before the image of the Buddha and spent the night in repentance.

Seated high on his camel, advancing along the road to Chang'an, the sage Kumarajiva pondered on the past. When he had returned from Shalur to Kuchah over a dozen years ago, he had felt that he truly was a monk of high moral conduct. In the years of his youth when self-discipline and self-cultivation were most difficult to achieve, he had achieved the state of recognizing the unreality of the physical and spiritual world. This had to be recognized as a rare attainment. But in the last dozen years, he seemed to have tumbled from the pinnacle of merit. Although he was well versed in the scriptures, he had the hindrance of a family and although it was still possible to conceal it from others, he himself felt as if he were enveloped in an atmosphere of gloom. He spoke only in low tones, and his expression had lost much of its former radiance. It seemed he had already become no different from an ordinary layman. Thinking of all this he could not help blaming that blasphemous warrior Lü Guang, and regretting that when Lü Guang had taken Kuchah, he had suddenly been struck by a reluctance to leave and so had fallen into Lü Guang's clutches. Later Lü Guang had forced him and her to drink until they were intoxicated, then had stripped them naked and locked them into a luxuriously appointed private room until he transgressed against his life of self-denial and mortification, lost his power of contemplation, and finally committed with her the sins of lust. Thinking back on it all, he half blamed himself and half hated Lü Guang. So although he was an intellectual Buddhist monk, he could not help feeling a little pleasure at Lü Guang's demise.

Kumarajiva, however, had still not forgotten what his mother had said and what he had said to her when she had left Kuchah to return to India. She had known long before that he was predestined to be the only monk who would spread that inconceivable doctrine to the eastern lands, but that this undertaking would cause only harm to Kumarajiva himself. In response he had promised that he would not avoid personal suffering in the quest to spread the Buddhist faith. With this in mind, thinking back on it, all the disasters he had suffered in the past ten years or so may well have been predestined, and his mother had probably also known long before that he would commit the sin of taking his beautiful cousin as his wife. Suddenly thinking of his mother, Kumarajiva reined in his camel, dismounted onto the roadside, faced the distant clouds in the direction of India, and prayed to the pure and sacred glory of his mother to help him to withstand the trials that lay on the path ahead. He knew that before he reached the Qin capital he was sure to endure calamities that could destroy the little merit that he still preserved.

As he remounted his camel, he glanced at his wife again, and saw a look of melancholy clouding her majestic, ethereal beauty. The desert wind buffeted her, making her scarf flap and dance. She seemed to be enduring some kind of bitter torment. The first time he had had physical relations with her in that locked room, he had been keenly aware of her deep depression. Because she loved him it was a pleasure for her to give her burning body to him, but she knew full well that because of it the purity of his body and his asceticism would be destroyed. She also felt deeply her own sinfulness, and was struck with terror of the heavenly punishment that might befall her. In the last ten years, these two ideas had gnawed away at her soul, leaving her thin, pallid and melancholy. Kumarajiva thoroughly understood her. The reason why he felt he had been unfortunate lay in the fact that because of her his

asceticism had been destroyed, but although he resented this, he accepted and enjoyed her warmth just as if he had been a layman, and this was something quite unexpected to him. As a practised ascetic, he could resolutely withstand all experience of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch to the point where he did not need to live as a recluse in a mat shed in the remote desert painstakingly removing himself from all temptations to the senses. But the greatest danger to him was his love for his wife. If he did not love her, even if they had had sexual relations it would have been all right. He had once told people that his marrying his cousin had had no influence on his spiritual merit. It was just the same as stinking mud being able to produce pure lotus flowers. People who plucked the lotuses would not object to the stinking mud. In order to fully verify the analogy, he began to drink alcohol and eat meat, living in entirely the same manner as a layman. Nevertheless, although his analogy deceived the people of Liangzhou into believing even more firmly that his was no ordinary merit, buried in his own heart was a pain he could reveal to no one. He felt that no matter what, he and this Kuchah princess were bound by ties of affection. It was untrue that they were no more to one another than the lotus and the stinking mud.

The camels plodded along with heavy steps, their bells ringing out clear and shrill as they gradually left Liangzhou further and further behind. He looked at his wife's melancholy face, and turning things over in his mind, felt that he was already totally incapable of understanding himself. Just who was this magnificent retinue and guard of honour escorting to the Qin capital? Was it the renowned monk from the Western Regions, Kumarajiva? Or was it Kumarajiva, the ordinary layman well versed in the Buddhist scriptures? On the first day of the journey, this was the question that occupied his thoughts, but for which he could find no answer.

The third day's journey began from a small village. As they crossed a hill and made their way down a narrow sloping track, the sun rose from behind the mountains to the east. Looking around at the vast desert landscape, Kumarajiva suddenly felt his spiritual world expanding too, and the vexation of the past two days disappeared. He no longer felt the same need to ponder matters and even felt that this worrying over the past two days had been a waste of time. The brilliant sun shining over the wilderness seemed to be hinting to him that there was no conflict between sexual love and spiritual merit. This was a strange idea and he himself did not know how he could have come to this conclusion, how he could have seen the morning sun on his third day of travel and come up with an idea that no monk had ever dared to defend. He silently enumerated the great monks of all the states of India: there were indeed some who married and who ate meat. Recalling this he began to feel more confident that his merit would perhaps not be entirely destroyed. But it immediately occurred to him that he did not know whether those earlier monks who had been married had also been in love with their wives. Unfortunately that had not necessarily been so. He felt that his situation was different from theirs, and once more feared he might be unable to attain the right path to spiritual progress,

A monk who suppressed his passions and practised self-denial and mortification in the hope of making spiritual progress along the correct path was not a sage. That was as base as studying in order to receive a reward. Kumarajiva's line of thought shifted again, but then he suddenly shivered, feeling his thoughts were heretical. Why should an orthodox disciple of Buddhism fail to observe the monastic rules? Why was it that after taking a wife and being contaminated with sexual passion, he did not seek a way of repenting, but rather came up with this sort of farfetched and astounding interpretation as a means of defending himself? From that point of view he felt he really was a heretic. At this time they were crossing through a forest of white birch, and the heavy tramping of the camel's hooves suddenly startled a fox. It gazed at Kumarajiva with cunning eyes, flicked its bushy tail and fled. In that instant, the sun seemed to lose its brightness, and a murky darkness clouded Kumarajiva's vision. He knew that this was a sign of a demon. Demons would appear like this when a pious monk's thought entered evil paths. He felt pain in his soul, and was about to dismount, dispel all heretical thoughts and pray, when suddenly a powerful beam of sunlight poured down through a gap in the leaves of the tree directly on to his face. He closed his eyes, vaguely aware that his wife on the camel behind him was heaving a long, drawn-out sigh.

When he looked around at her, she was sighing a second time, her head bent low. Suddenly he seemed to be in the control of another kind of force. Dismissing the idea of praying, he frowned, reined in his camel and watched his wife, waiting for her to come up beside him.

Their camels walked abreast.

"Good wife, you aren't suffering some discomfort, are you? Why does your heavenly countenance appear so pallid, and why are your eyes filled with sorrow? Can it be that two days of travelling have exhausted you? Are you vexed that there is still so far to go and we have still not reached the ancient capital of the Eastern lands? Put your mind at rest! Look, the earth is becoming softer with every step, the flowers, grasses and trees are gradually becoming more beautiful. What is that yellow ribbon joining the sky beyond that great plain below us? Ah, I know, that is the great river of the Eastern lands named the Yellow River. Once we have crossed that sacred river we will arrive in a flourishing paradise. Beautiful princess, you will receive the welcome of all the people of the East."

"Ah, my cousin, my glory, my husband, Did I ever dream of going to that distant, splendid Eastern land? No, never. And I have never dared to think of it. I don't feel at all tired, but I can no longer ride on this camel. I don't feel that the road ahead is too long, on the contrary, I feel as if I can finish travelling the road I should travel today. I can

see my resting place up ahead, and will spend this day travelling there to rest in peace. I feel no discomfort at all, and my heart is tranquil. Look, my pulse is not racing. From behind you I smell your holy fragrance and see your sagely aura. You are the only man who is going to the Eastern land to spread the doctrines, but I am your catastrophe. If I go with you to Qin, I will obstruct your lifework and damage your good reputation. Ah, my wise Kumarajiva, I seem to have a premonition that we must part. Look, my life is already fading, Like the flame of an everlasting lamp that has run out of oil, at dusk today it will go out."

As she spoke, she heaved another sigh, like the mournful cry of a cuckoo. Kumarajiva looked at her intently and listened to her trembling voice. He could see that the shadow of death was already clouding her face, and through his divine sagacity, he knew that she would indeed die at dusk. He was suddenly overcome by a wave of intense sorrow, and quite unlike a monk who had severed all worldly ties, wept copiously. Memories of the love they had shared in their decade of marriage surged into his heart, and as he savoured each memory, he longed to avert the impending disaster. He racked his brains for a way to save her, but in the end realized it was not possible. He sobbed and hung his head low, not daring to look back at her.

The officials in the retinue did not understand the Kuchah language, so although they could hear them talking they had no idea what they were talking about. Nevertheless, they could see that he was weeping, and knew that the Patriarch was suffering some deep sorrow. One of the minor officials from Liangzhou asked him:

"Our noble monk, our Patriarch, what grief are you feeling that you weep like this. If we vulgar commoners can do so, please let us render our services and rid you of this sorrow. If that is not possible, please don't hide it and be reluctant to let us share a little of the burden of your anxiety."

He replied to them in the Liangzhou dialect he had learned:

"Kindly officials, there is no need to worry on my behalf. Because the foundation of my merit is shallow today I will meet with a great catastrophe, and because of this, what may happen afterwards cannot be foreseen. I myself cannot tell what I may do in future, I am afraid that by the time I arrive in Chang'an I may already have become an ordinary layman, in no way worthy of your respect. This is the reason why I am now weeping."

Then another official said:

"Wise Patriarch, you said that today you will meet with a great catastrophe, We believe that with your purity, holiness and nobility you cannot be wrong, but would it be possible for ordinary people like us to hear a little about this catastrophe before it occurs?"

"Why not? Honourable officials of the country of the sun. Look, see my wife, the esteemed princess of Kuchah. Today at dusk, because of her unfortunate husband, she will die on this lonely road. She will never again see a single one of her relatives, she will not have the good fortune to receive your welcome and adulation. She will sleep for ever in this wilderness. Honourable officials, please tell me, which city shall we stay in tonight?"

"Patriarch, does such a tragic fate really await you?" an official asked, looking at her. "Ah, beloved daughter of the king of Kuchah, kind wife of our Patriarch, fragrant flower from the land of Buddhism, is it possible that heaven would begrudge the people of the East the chance for one reverent look at her? We cannot reach any big city by the time this fearful dusk arrives. We are going to rest on the banks of the Yellow River that flows down from heaven, and listen for a night to the surging water. Only tomorrow morning after we have crossed the river will we be able to see the grey outlines of a city in the far distance."

Then the woman seated on the camel's back with eyes filled with vague melancholy spoke:

"Ah, I can see it. Isn't that distant yellow thing the famous great river of Paradise? Great sacred spirit, I eulogize you. I shall go and rest beside it, and it will separate us forever. My beloved husband, pious sage, already I am feeling faint, I am afraid that I cannot go on by camel to that predestined place...."

Before she could finish speaking, the beautiful princess suddenly collapsed on to the camel's back.

He supporting her, they rode together on a single camel surrounded by the officials of Qin, all moving quietly with bated breath. They travelled on through a succession of mountain valleys, each person gazing into the distance at the road ahead. She, now conscious, intermittently breathed drawn-out sighs. The sound was so plaintive that it seemed to shake the cliffs and resound in a soul-stirring echo. Her body was burning with such a heat that he could hardly hold her. She had an acute fever. There was a doctor among the retinue who volunteered his services to examine her, but in the end he could only knit his brows. As a temporary measure, he took out a few pills and pushed them in between her tightly closed lips, but they did nothing to reduce her temperature. They travelled on for another three hours, but although there were trees and grasses growing at the roadside, from start to finish they could not find a single spring.

The terrible fever worsened. Lying in his arms, she endlessly bit her lips until those beautiful moist red lips turned black. Blisters began to appear from her nose, and she mumbled frightening, crazy talk. Cradling his critically ill wife, he closed his eyes, and ignoring the unsteady gait of the camel, piously and silently recited the scriptures.

"Hey! I hear the sound of a spring. Please go and find it so that she may drink a little fresh water."

When the sun was already casting long shadows in front of the column of people, he suddenly heard the sound of flowing spring water. At this request, several messenger boys went off, following the sound in search of the spring.

Rounding a bare hillock, they entered a grove of trees and stopped beside a clear stream flowing through thick undergrowth. He laid her down on the grass and sat down beside her. Someone filled a leather bag with water and fed it to her. Gradually she regained consciousness.

It was already dusk. The evening wind rustled ceaselessly through the leaves of the trees. Ravens circled the treetops cawing noisily. A ray of sunlight shone down through the trees onto the fading beauty of her face.

"The time has come," she whispered faintly. "Just now I saw the Qin capital. In that great city you will be extolled and provided for, but for me, this will be the earth where I shall rest. What is that angry roaring? Ah, it is the Yellow River! It will separate you and me for ever. Your evil relationship has ended. After crossing the Yellow River, you will continue to be a monk of noble moral conduct, a complete sage, you have already seen through all temptations. And I who revere you will finally die in your embrace at the most utterly appropriate time. To have this kind of peace, to be so untroubled by suffering makes me very satisfied. My cousin, great sage, my respected husband, kiss me one last time..."

He knelt with his hands on the grass, bent his head, and shared with her the last kiss. She held his tongue in her mouth and her eyes closed. A raven suddenly cawed rapidly from the branch of a tree. As Kumarajiva raised his head, a gust of wind dislodged a large leaf that fluttered down and covered her peaceful face. He felt cold.

He squatted on his heels beside her body, thinking silently. The members of his retinue stood about quietly with bowed heads and closed eyes. For a long time no one moved.

Rousing himself, he reverently prostrated himself once before her body, then instructed soldiers of the guard to bury her. There was no need for a grave mound or inscription.

By the time they left the grove and headed towards the small village beside the Yellow River where they would lodge for the night, it was completely dark. That night he slept very soundly.

The following day, after they had crossed the Yellow River, he told his retinue that his merit was already almost perfect. He had already seen through all attachments in the human world, all tribulations and all temptations. Now he really had achieved the realms of ultimate purity and a true recognition of the unreality of the physical and spiritual worlds. He was confident that the people of Qin would revere him and give him a magnificent welcome, and he felt not the slightest sense of guilt.

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Yes, he felt no guilt. For a whole month he received the hospitality of Yao Xing, the king of Qin, and the prostrations of officials, court ladies, concubines, and the monks and commoners of China. He caused a sensation in the capital. Exhausted from his journey, he recuperated in the Pavilion of Western Brightness, each day emerging only for two hours to accept the prostrations of the masses. For the rest of the time he neither read the scriptures, nor came out to satisfy any curiosity about the scenery of the East. He sat cross-legged on a rush mat with his eyes closed, to all appearances meditating. But he was not meditating. No matter what he did, he felt a little uneasy in this new environment. The splendid banquets, the incense burning in the ancient bronze tripods, and the nature and customs of the people of the East only evoked travel-weariness in him. A monk should be like a floating cloud or running water, at peace wherever he finds himself. He knew that clearly. When he had returned from Shalur to Kuchah, and gone from Kuchah to Liangzhou, he had by no means felt this kind of disquiet. His tarrying in this strange land seemed devoid of meaning to him. At first he simply sat silently in bewilderment with his eyes closed.

He was simply not like a monk, he thought. He knew that considering the depth of austerity he practised he should not feel like this. But he simply could not throw off his anxiety. He must have been afflicted by some temptation again. He immediately began to refuse any sumptuous meals, had the luxurious furnishings provided for the comfort of the Patriarch removed, and instructed his servants to make sure that he could not hear any voices, male or female, from inside the room where he meditated. He completely restored the pious, ascetic way of life he had followed in the desert in Shalur when he was training to be a monk. He prayed:

"Compassionate Buddha, is it possible that the self-denial and mortification I practised in the past was not sufficient to enable me to live in this Eastern capital? Once I boldly believed that my asceticism was already developed sufficiently to enable me to resist all temptations. I ate meat and listened to music. I strolled on flourishing, prosperous streets with my eyes open. I even took a wife. Yet in a dozen years at Liangzhou there was never a single day when I felt as unsettled as I do here, I thought that I could come into contact with anything and not flee any involvement. I don't know why, but now, although I still calm my mind as before, it begins to vacillate of its own accord. Is it possible that I am not succinctly practised in asceticism? At present I feel panic-stricken, afraid that I will degenerate. I am meticulously living the life of a person who has just begun to practise Buddhism. Compassionate Buddha, I pray you will protect me. Let me regain my tranquillity so that I may preach your glorious holy doctrines here for you. Otherwise, you and I are both going to be disappointed."

Although he prayed reverently, he also consciously felt that he had not been able to dismiss his marriage to his wife completely from his heart. The face of the dying princess of Kuchah among the trees next to the stream often floated before his eyes, making him shiver. At the same time he felt he should bear the burden of the sin of lying to the Buddha.

He began to regret even becoming a monk in his childhood. He really wanted to leave his rush cushion, take off his *kasaya*,⁽⁴⁾ once more wear the clothes of a layman, and return to live among ordinary people. That way, although he would be abandoning the glorious path to spiritual progress, perhaps he might extinguish the perplexing fire burning in his heart. Yet, ah, his wife was dead. Even if he returned to a layman's life, it would be as insipid as chewing wax. He should still resist these temptations. When spiritually one progressed a foot, the cunning of the demons increased by a mile! Now was the time to put up a fight. It was fearful.

He continued his arduous life of absolute asceticism. In his bewildered mind, the Buddhist teachings and demons carried on a grim struggle.

Having accepted the courteous invitation of the king, it was now time to publicly preach the doctrines to the good men and women and Buddhist mendicants of the Eastern land. The Thatched Hut Temple had been swept clean and the air in the hall was heavy with incense. The audience were jostling for space as far back as the bottom of the stone steps leading to the hall, and everyone was vying to grab a chair to stand on. Some people who had arrived late even climbed on to the ancient cypress trees in the courtyard, their backs covered with bird droppings and peacock feathers. Before Kumarajiva had mounted the rostrum, the curious people were noisily discussing him.

"Brother, you've come to hear the Buddhist scriptures too?" a merchant squeezing his way in said to a butcher sitting in a row in front. "I reckon all you have to do is slaughter fewer pigs and you'll have done enough to live for an extra epoch!"

"Me? I'm just here to have a look."

"Just who is this man who's coming to preach today?" a woman next to them asked in puzzlement.

"Haven't you seen him?"

"No."

"He's a monk from the Western Regions who has attained sageship. General Yao Shuode invited him here from Liangzhou."

"Huh, attained sageship! A crafty baldhead who eats meat and got married," a soldier said contemptuously.

Hearing him, a thin monk nearby glanced at him, then began to recite a sutra under his breath.

The soldier's revelation attracted a great deal of interest. Everyone who heard it looked astounded. Those who had come with companions all asked each other:

"Really?"

There was a lady of the court sitting in the front row who had come out of curiosity to hear Kumarajiva's lecture. She answered a companion:

"It's true, the officials who escorted him here said the monk from the Western Regions eats meat. He's just like a layman. He had a beautiful wife. What's more I heard she was the daughter of some king. Unfortunately she died on the way. For the first few days after he arrived, the monk was still eating meat and drinking wine. I saw it with my own eyes. But these last few days he had stopped all that completely. I heard it's because he was ill."

After hearing what she had to say, everyone was just discussing this unusual state of affairs, when a gorgeous woman made her way into the hall and glanced seductively around the audience. The men all cheered in welcome, and as she passed a loafer from the market place, he reached up to her bottom and gave her a little push.

"Look, Miss Meng is here too. She's come to be the next Mrs Living Buddha!"

Everyone roared with laughter.

"Pah! If this lady becomes Mrs Living Buddha, you can come and peel her corn for her," the woman retorted.

"Really? If you have the talent to seduce the Living Buddha, I can guarantee I'll come and peel your corn for you," the loafer called, slapping his thighs.

"A good arrangement," cried a busybody nearby. "I'll be the witness." Everyone roared with laughter again and looked at the loose woman. Feeling a little embarrassed, she muttered a few words then went to the front row and sat down next to a court lady.

Just then Kumarajiva's carriage drew up. The bells and chimes sounded, and the great hall crowded with people immediately fell silent. Everyone turned and looked outside, watching with curious eyes as the foreign monk from the Western Regions walked in unhurriedly, leaning on his monk's cane.

Many successive days of living as an ascetic had left Sage Kumarajiva's face much thinner, but his eyes still flashed with a strange, piercing light, as if he could see into the innermost depths of people's hearts. His depression

continued as he suffered the anguish of the conflict between his two personalities. If it had not been that he was unwilling to let everybody down the very first time he was to lecture, he would not have come to the Thatched Hut Temple to talk today.

He walked in along that narrow aisle through the audience, gazing intently at each person in turn. As he did, each felt shocked, as if he had discovered every one of their secrets. When he passed that loose woman, he gave her the same penetrating look, but to his surprise she did not show any shock. She met his intense gaze steadily and gave him a smile that in an instant displayed to him all her beauty and charm. He suddenly felt a shock go through him. And his whole body trembled.

He knew that most of the people who had come to listen to his first lesson on the Buddhist scriptures were there out of curiosity. If he spoke for too long some of them would become impatient, so he had not prepared anything too long and profound. Even though he thought it was short and simple, however, the audience who had only come to satisfy their curiosity, having found out what he looked like, soon got bored with listening to him explain that inexplicable Buddhist doctrines in his almost incomprehensible Liangzhou dialect. So one by one the people at the back slipped quietly out. The only people left in the hall were several hundred pious, reverent monks who listened attentively with heads bowed low as if they were fast asleep. But what threw him into confusion was that apart from them, that loose woman still sat there calmly beside those court ladies. They did not display the least agitation and all seemed to understand the profound significance of his words. His bright eyes pierced through the thick incense smoke, looking from the king sitting on the throne at one side, to the court ladies, and then involuntarily being drawn to the face of the loose woman. All the while, she watched him intently, smiling and seeming to understand what he was thinking. And when his gaze fell upon her, she nodded her head slightly, setting a jade cicada ornament dancing in the hair next to her bun. Just then a small insect flew down from the yellow silk curtains next to the rostrum, buzzed around in front of Kumarajiva's face and finally settled on his lips. In order to maintain his dignity, he had no choice but to poke out his tongue a little and chase it away. It flew straight down from the rostrum and settled on the loose woman's gleaming black hair. Kumarajiva felt his body tremble violently again. He quickly closed his eyes and hastily finished his lecture. He felt grief-stricken that his merit was declining further and further. Even if he had wanted to open his eyes and continue to explain the doctrines, he could not have kept going. Surely this meant that he was no wiser or more brilliant than any common holy man.

In his carriage on the way back to the Carefree Gardens, he closed his eyes and clasped his hands, repenting and praying like an ordinary monk.

That evening was hot and humid, so Kumarajiva took a stroll through the woods. He abandoned *all* serious meditation on the Buddhist doctrines and concentrated on seeking the real source of the strange mood he had been in for the last several days. If his dead wife were here, at least he would have had the tranquillity he had known at Liangzhou. Yet he did not believe in love. He was fully aware that it did not exist — though in that case, why did he miss his wife so much? If another woman, for example that wanton Chang'an woman he had seen today, took his wife's place, how would he feel then? He did not dare to pursue the thought any further.

Is this to say that he felt agitated while he was preaching because he had been tempted by that loose woman? It was not necessarily that simple. He had seen wanton and even lewd women before, but in the past he had never felt in the least attracted to them. They had simply been like a flash of ostentation that had passed before his eyes and been forgotten in an instant, so this time why did the memory linger in his mind. He could think of no other explanation. Was it possible that he had already involuntarily fallen in love with this Eastern woman?

He felt oppressively hot. Sitting down on a stone drum, he took off his *kasaya* and immediately felt a great deal more cheerful. He breathed out deeply, and the fresh fragrance of grasses and leaves that scented the forest on that clear, warm spring night permeated to the depths of his heart, giving him a new-born vigour. He heard footsteps gradually approaching along the path leading into the woods, and asked:

"Who is it?"

"Me. Is that the Patriarch?"

As the man drew near, he recognized him as one of the royal bodyguards. He was a young man, handsome and strongly built. Kumarajiva seemed to remember that after finishing his lecture that day, when he had left the Thatched Hut Temple and climbed into his carriage, he had seen one of the guards take advantage of the chaos to push against a woman. She had coquettishly cursed him. Wasn't that man this guard? And who was that woman? He seemed to be familiar with her. He thought hard, then suddenly felt afraid. That woman seemed to be his own dead wife! It couldn't be! Oh, now he remembered, she seemed to have been one of the court ladies who had been sitting in the front row. But why did he think of his dead wife? It was inexplicable.

"Is the Patriarch meditating?" the young bodyguard asked.

"No."

"Then are you relaxing?"

"Yes, that's right."

For some reason he felt a little displeased with the young bodyguard, though they had never quarrelled and the man had done nothing to offend him. At the same time he felt he could gain something from the guard, although what it was he did not know. Finally he asked:

"Officer, what's your name?"

"Me? The surname's Yao, my personal name is Yeyu. I'm the eighth son of the Prince of Longxi."⁽⁵⁾

"So you dare to take liberties with the court ladies!" Kumarajiva said with a laugh.

The royal bodyguard was stunned. He did not know what Kumarajiva was talking about. Kumarajiva watched him, smiling and feeling very relaxed.

"Have you forgotten? Didn't you push against a court lady outside the gate of the Thatched Hut Temple today and get cursed for it? You did such a blasphemous thing and still pretend you didn't? Oh Buddha of Eternal Life!"

"Push against a court lady?... No Patriarch, you didn't see clearly. I pushed against a prostitute, yes, a prostitute."

"A prostitute?"

"Do you mean that loose woman with the jade cicada hairpin be-side her bun, Patriarch?"

As if awakening from a dream, Kumarajiva suddenly realized that the woman whom the handsome young bodyguard had jostled that day was not one of the court ladies, but was in fact that licentious woman. But was she a prostitute?

"Yes, Is she a prostitute?"

"Apart from you, Patriarch, everybody knows she is Chang'an's most famous prostitute, Miss Meng."

"Oh."

Kumarajiva's eyes closed. He felt the desire to see that prostitute, an ardent desire, but he did not know what his motives were. He pondered for a while.

"That is a tormented woman."

"No, she is a joyful, happy woman," the young bodyguard replied.

"But her soul is tormented."

"She has no soul, and what's more, she has no need of that thing called a soul."

"She will get old, then her soul will make her suffer torment, even though now she is young, joyful and happy."

"No, Patriarch, she will never get old. She will only die. She will be young and joyful for ever. Haven't you noticed that she always smiles at people?"

"Officer you have sinned!"

Kumarajiva clasped his hands and closed his eyes again, pretending to be repenting piously, but he suddenly felt confusion overwhelming him. The royal bodyguard, however, could not help laughing, and asked:

"I heard that the Patriarch has a wife. Is that true?"

"It is true I once took a wife, but she is already dead."

"Are monks allowed to marry?"

"As long as they can keep complete control of their minds, they can do anything and still be able to achieve spiritual progress. Only people whose powers of self-denial are weak do not dare to do so."

"Then how about my taking the Patriarch to visit Miss Meng?"

"Now?"

"Now."

"I am afraid that in the next few days I may suffer tribulation...." Kumarajiva groaned, but then immediately changed his mind. "Nevertheless, it is all right to go and see her. I ought to go and convert her."

The royal bodyguard laughed:

"I am afraid that even someone like the Patriarch might on the contrary be converted by her."

Perhaps it was true, Kumarajiva thought to himself.

"It's so late at night, won't we be detained by the guard patrolling the streets?"

"The guard patrolling the streets is my elder brother."

They entered a dark, quiet gateway in a wall and crossed two courtyards. A maid led them into a set of brilliantly lit rooms. At first the colourful luxury of his surroundings and the heavily scented smoke from the braziers made Kumarajiva's mind reel.

"Is Madam at home? The Patriarch wishes to see her," the royal bodyguard asked the maid.

"She's at home." The maid pouted her lips towards the main room on the western side. "She's over there with old Master Dugu. Since it is the Patriarch who wishes to see her, she will come as soon as I inform her." So saying, she walked out.

Kumarajiva could hear the sound of a woman laughing and talking in the main western room — the same voice that he had heard cursing today outside the gate of the Thatched Hut Temple. Listening to her obscene laughter and talk, he tried to imagine her appearance, but strange to say, in this famous prostitute's gorgeous room, apart from his own wife, he could not remember the face of any other beautiful woman. He was astonished. He had done his utmost to forget his wife. He was afraid her image would follow him for ever, and that would be a great danger to his spiritual cultivation. He wanted to use the image of Miss Meng to destroy the image of his wife, and then destroy the image of Miss Meng. That way it would be a little easier to free himself, because he felt the image of a prostitute should be a bit easier to destroy. At the same time he also wanted to save the soul of this famous, pitiful woman from suffering. But unexpectedly, despite coming here he had still thought of his wife. Why was that? Although there had been a time when he could not give up her memory, since he had resumed his rigorous asceticism, he had not seen her image again, so why was he so unsettled today? He had paid a lot of attention to the prostitute, so why from start to finish was he unable to remember what she looked like? Was there some relationship between this prostitute and his wife? No, there could not possibly be.

As Kumarajiva pondered with closed eyes, the sound of Miss Meng's laughter moved out of the main western room and drew closer. Then the laughter came to a leisurely halt, and he heard her speaking outside the door;

"What an honour! Even the Living Buddha has come."

Kumarajiva sat as if meditating, gently clasping his hands together, continuing his quiet contemplation. His closed eyes observed his heart and he realized it was beating so loudly that he could hear it. Kumarajiva heard her walk into the room, heard her trim the wick of every candle, and then heard her approach.

"Ha ha ha ha! Why has the Patriarch come here to meditate? Here we only meditate on having fun, what are you meditating on, Patriarch?"

Kumarajiva opened his eyes, and assuming a dignified manner looked at her. He did not recognize her at all. Who was she? He was taken aback. Could this be Miss Meng? Could that wanton woman he had seen today have been her? No — he could remember clearly that it was not a woman like this, but looking at the ornamental jade cicada trembling in the hair next to her bun, it was obvious that this was the woman he had seen. Yes, a small insect had been frightened away by that swaying ornament. But why was he unable to remember her face. He was perplexed.

Watching from one side, the young royal bodyguard could see Kumarajiva's trepidation. He laughed and said to the prostitute:

"Madam, if you keep the Patriarch here for the evening, I shall reward you handsomely."

"That's quite simple. I'm just afraid that if the Patriarch stays here night after night he won't even be willing to go to the Thatched Hut Temple to preach, and then I'll be in trouble." She began to laugh loudly.

Kumarajiva was suddenly filled with revulsion at the way that pitiful soul had been completely deceived by this luxurious, ostentatious lifestyle. The agitation he had felt when he came had completely disappeared, and he could no longer even be bothered to try to convert her. The strange desire he had felt before he had seen her had completely gone and he could see that she was nothing but a degenerate, seductively charming woman. All she had was carnal lust.

He clasped his hands together and piously repeated the name of the Buddha. Rising, he signalled to the royal bodyguard that he wished to leave, but the young man had been bewitched and was no longer willing to take Kumarajiva back. He hesitated:

"Patriarch, do you know the way back?"

Understanding what he meant, Kumarajiva told him to stay, then walked out of the room and back through the courtyard. As he walked he heard their laughter gradually fade away behind him.

The following morning Kumarajiva did not do his morning studies, nor did he translate the Buddhist scriptures. Facing the bright red sun rising in the east, he prayed. He hoped that the brilliant Buddha would instruct him what to do, because he doubted himself. Last night, he thought he had acted on impulse after being enticed by that prostitute, so he had gone with the royal body-guard. But after seeing her, he felt he had not been seduced by her, and that his powers of abstraction and contemplation had not been damaged. He had returned to the Carefree Gardens with his dignity intact. It was just that to the present he felt anxious, as if there were something that he had not done, and he could not settle down even for a moment. Because of that he was afraid that his merit had been destroyed, and so he prayed.

After midday, it was time to go and preach again. The attendants had already completed their preparations and sent a man in to ask him to prepare to get into the carriage. He felt exhausted, and had no interest in preaching, but he could not stop now, because a pious audience was already waiting for him in the main hall. They all wanted to gain some enlightenment from his lecture so that they could make spiritual progress through the correct path.

Looking down from the rostrum at the dark sea of faces, and his majesty, the Hongzhi Monarch, seated respectfully at one side, Kumarajiva immediately pulled himself together and became as serious as in the days when he had preached in Kuchah. He closed his eyes and thought for a moment, selected a topic and began to speak.

Halfway through his lecture, he noticed that it was very quiet in the audience. No one even coughed. He thought it strange. Why was it so quiet today when it had been so noisy yesterday? It was not possible that everyone who had come today was a pious Buddhist convert. He opened his eyes to observe carefully, the audience below the rostrum.

The first thing he saw was the court ladies, sitting in the front row, just as they had yesterday. But what did he see in the seat where that prostitute had sat? It made him close his eyes again instantly...the vision of his wife had reappeared, moving, smiling at him, the jade cicada in her hair trembling in the wind. She slowly approached him, climbed onto the rostrum and sat in his lap in a seductive pose. And then she embraced him and held his tongue in her mouth as she had done before she died.

Kumarajiva could not go on. He suddenly stopped speaking and was shuddering with eyes closed and his face ashen. The audience could see that something was wrong and set up a clamour, saying he must surely be seriously ill. The Hongzhi Monarch himself mounted the rostrum and spoke in his ear:

"What's the matter, Patriarch, what's the matter?"

His eyes still closed, Kumarajiva pointed to the place where the court lady was sitting and gasped:

"Retribution, My wife. Two small children. This is retribution."

The following day the whole city was buzzing with the news that the Patriarch Kumarajiva had suddenly taken a fancy to a court lady while he was preaching and that that night the king had given her to him as a wife. Because of this some people expressed doubts about his merit.

Yes, when Kumarajiva awoke in his meditating room next to that court lady who looked like his dead wife, he began to doubt himself too. In the past he could use his wisdom to deduce all that would happen, but recently he had become completely ignorant. He had had no prior knowledge at all of what would happen last night. He did not know how that strong temptation could have harmed him, made him so confused. Could it possibly be his wife's soul deliberately wrecking havoc on him? No, although the illusion was that of his wife, her manner was that of that prostitute. If he had been a resolutely ascetic monk, he would not have been so foolish last night. Ah, this lamentable Eastern land!

He repentantly left the bed that had been the scene of his licentiousness and went to the Hall of Pure Profundity. The everlasting lamp in front of the niche containing the statue of Buddha was full of oil, but the flame had gone out. He trembled, knowing that the Buddha had already left him. The sin he had committed this time was much more serious than when he had taken a wife.

He knew how the people of the capital would appraise him after last night's licentiousness. Now it was up to him most importantly to strengthen the people's and monks' belief in him. Otherwise, he did not know what danger he, a monk from the West, might face. As for the problem of his dual personality, he would just have to bear that and slowly find some way of overcoming it. So when he lectured for the third time to a room once more crowded with curious people in the Thatched Hut Temple, he used his eloquence to the full, explaining that ascetics were not the highest monks, and monks who ate meat and took wives would be able to progress spiritually too. Furthermore, a monk must first experience all desires and temptations and develop the ability to regard them with indifference, only then will his merit be as hard and undamageable as a diamond. That was why when monks of high repute came from the desert to a magnificent city, they would immediately lose their powers of self-denial. Despite this, however, monks who were not highly confident of possessing the necessary merit, still ought to live an austere ascetic life, otherwise they might easily degenerate.

After everyone heard this explanation, the slander and rumours about him disappeared immediately, and the Hongzhi Monarch himself revered him even more. That evening, by royal command, Kumarajiva was moved to the Yongguili government hostel, and he was given a dozen or more prostitutes. It was said this was to allow him to greatly increase the heirs of the Buddhist doctrine.

From then on Kumarajiva, who preached and translated the scriptures during the day, and at night slept with court ladies and prostitutes, was deeply depressed. It was true that he had no emotional attachment to these women, and they could not damage his merit, but he had relations with them because he had recalled his wife. He felt he had never been able to forget his wife, and hence he was not fit to be a senior monk. But now he felt that painstakingly driving his wife from his memory of love in order to make himself into a superior monk was contrary to human nature. Yes, now he had a concept of human nature. He knew that he had already become merely a learned, ordinary man well versed in the Buddhist scriptures, and was no longer a real ascetic monk. Then again, if one said he missed his wife, the beautiful Kuchah princess, yet now had relations with other women, it seemed that he was not constant in love. From the chaos of these three personalities, Kumarajiva recognized that he was not only no longer a monk but that he was a most utterly base layman. Now in order to be fed and clothed, he pretended to be a highly moral monk, and under the protection of the Hongzhi Monarch made fools of the ignorant, good men and women and mendicants of the East. The good intentions he had had and promises he had made to his mother years ago had all gone by the wayside. He grieved over his own demise.

One morning Kumarajiva suddenly heard a clamour of voices on the street outside, as if something important had happened. Feeling apprehensive, he was trying to hear what was going on when a servant came in to report that two monks had been seized and tied up by their neighbours for sleeping with prostitutes the night before. They were being taken to the government offices when the other monks of the city intervened angrily, saying that since the Patriarch slept with court ladies and prostitutes, what did it matter if ordinary monks occasionally did the same? They adamantly refused to allow them to be taken to the magistrate. The two sides quarrelled so noisily that it alarmed the higher officials, and a royal edict was issued ordering that the two monks be brought to the Patriarch to be punished. That was why there was such a clamour outside — everybody was waiting for the Patriarch to come out and deal with them.

As soon as Kumarajiva heard the report he knew that this was the Hongzhi Monarch presenting him with a knotty problem. Although he knew that his sleeping with prostitutes every night made it very difficult for him to

achieve spiritual progress, he had thought it would not actually have much influence on other people. But these two monks obviously dared to play around with prostitutes so audaciously because of the self-defence he had made several days ago in the Thatched Hut Temple. If all the monks in Chang'an started doing the same, his sin would be even more serious. He pondered indecisively, and then decided that now he had no choice but to call on the help of a trick he had learned from a magician when he was small. He had not practised it since becoming a monk, but now in order to resolve this dispute and at the same time preserve his own honour, he could not avoid temporarily committing a heresy. He was grief-stricken, but believed this was the only way. The Chang'an monks were sure to be fooled by it.

So he went out and called all the monks, including the two who had slept with prostitutes, into the main hall. Townsfolk who wanted to see the fun all crowded in too. He said to the two monks:

"Was it you who slept with prostitutes?"

"Yes."

"As monks why didn't you observe the monastic rules?"

"Patriarch, in fact you shouldn't punish us for this. We were merely respectfully following your instructions. Have you forgotten? According to what you said in the Thatched Hut Temple, monks don't necessarily have to practise abstentions."

"Ah, yes, you didn't hear me say which grade of monk could live a rigorous ascetic life. You sleep with prostitutes. All right, that's fine. But you ought to show everyone some proof of your merit. Meritorious monks have achieved asceticism, and ascetic monks have achieved release from worldly concerns. Even if they sleep with prostitutes every night, they are still oblivious to the physical and spiritual world and remain unpolluted. Do you know that?"

"In that case does the Patriarch have some proof of merit to show everyone?" a cunning monk asked. "Me? I can give you proof."

Kumarajiva told a servant to bring him an alms bowl from the Buddha niche. He took off the lid and handed the bowl to a monk.

"Look, what's inside there?"

"Needles."

Kumarajiva took back the bowl, took a handful of needles and swallowed them. Then he took another handful and swallowed them too. The people watching were shocked, and the hall instantly fell silent as people scarcely dared to breathe. As Kumarajiva was swallowing the last needle in the last handful, he glanced sideways and suddenly caught sight of Miss Meng standing beside him. The sight of her immediately evoked the image of his wife, and he felt a surge of desire rise within him. That last needle stuck into his tongue and he was no longer able to swallow it. He broke out in a cold sweat, and seizing a moment when he was not being observed, spat the needle out, and held it hidden between two fingers. He smiled and asked the two monks:

"Can you do that?"

"Forgive us, Patriarch. In future we will not break the monastic rules."

Amid a hubbub of astonished admiration, Kumarajiva ashamedly went back inside, but his tongue still throbbed painfully.

After that his tongue always hurt, often bringing back memories of his wife, and he secretly considered himself to be a layman, although to the outside world he pretended to be a monk of great moral virtue from the Western Regions. So after he died, when the Hongzhi Monarch cremated him in accordance with the foreign custom, his body withered and crumbled just like that of an ordinary man. Only the tongue did not burn, and replaced other Buddhist relics as a treasure to be revered by his followers.

Translated by Rosemary Roberts

(1) Kumarajiva (AD 344-413) was an Indian monk born in Central Asia who became one of the most important early translators of Buddhist classics into Chinese.

(2) Burnt at border posts in ancient China to signal an alarm.

(3) Guoshi: the title for the head monk in a state or country as appointed by the country's ruler.

(4) The patchwork outer robe worn by a Buddhist monk.

(5) Longxi is an old name for the southeast corner of Gansu Province.

鸠摩罗什

一

带领着一大群扈从和他的美丽的妻子，走在空旷的山谷里的时候，高坐在骆驼背上的大智鸠摩罗什给侵晓的沙漠风吹拂着，宽大的襟袖和腰带飘扬在金色的太阳光里。他的妻子也坐在一匹同样高的骆驼上，太阳光照着她明媚的脸，闪动着庄严的仪态。她还一直保留着一个龟兹国王女的风度。她在罗什稍后一些，相差只半个骆驼，罗什微微的回过头去，便看见她的深湛的眼睛正凝视在远方，好像从前路的山瘴中看见了蜃楼的幻景。再回过头去一些，在一行人众的身后，穿过飞扬起的尘土，便看见一带高山峻岭包裹着的那座乌鸦形的凉州城。那是在一个大山谷中，太阳光还未完全照到，但已有一部分最高的雉堞，堡垒，塔楼和浮屠上面给镶了一道金色的边缘。有几所给那直到前几天停止的猛烈的战争毁了的堡垒的废墟上，还缕缕地升上白色和黑色的余烬，矗起在半天里的烽火台上，还涌上余剩的黄色的狼烟，但这是始终不曾有效，没有一个救援到来，连那个管烽火的小卒也早已死在台下，但无理智的残烟还未曾消隐。

在骆驼背上回看着那个战伤了的古边城的大智鸠摩罗什不觉得喟叹起来。三河王的事业显见得永远地失败了，想想吕氏十余年来的苦心经营，想想这一场恶战的生命的残害，想想吕氏的末裔少年吕弼的慷慨的死状，慈悲的大智鸠摩罗什虽然很轻视吕氏，也不免有些替他惋惜了。但一想到“十余年来在凉州所能得到的是什么”这个不时盘旋在心中的疑问，便又觉得如这样读佛的武夫是死有余辜的。在这十余年中，岂但不会使自己的道行精进一些，并且，为了吕光的对于佛教的轻蔑，甚至还被破坏了自己的金刚身。自从七岁时候跟了母亲出家以来，走遍西域诸国，几曾看见过一个出家人有妻呢？但自己现今却明明是带着妻子到秦国去了。说起秦国，也颇有些不能了解它，到了那里是不是将如在凉州一样地被那些官吏和那最高的统治者所尊敬而同时又轻蔑呢？不，总说秦王比吕氏父子高明得多，他是尊崇佛法之人。所以此番命姚硕德统兵来伐吕氏的时候，曾经嘱咐他要把自己好好地带回长安去，并且还把自己封做国师。从这些扈从们的口中听来，恐怕姚王还会亲自出城来迎接，当到达京城下的时候。从这方面看来，大约此去或许会有些好处。

一阵风吹响着一行骆驼的铃声，从山谷里一直飘扬到山顶上，沿路草碛中的兔儿和松鼠都惊窜了。沉思着的罗什忽然也醒悟转来，回眼一看明媚的他的表妹——他的妻，此时正在浏览四围的山色，应合着骆驼的款段的步式，做出娉婷的姿态。他忽然觉得又像在家人一样地胸中升起了爱恋。这是十几年来时常苦闷着的，罗什的心里蓄着两种相反的企念，一种是如从前剃度的时候一样严肃的想把自己修成正果，一种是想如凡人似地爱他的妻子。他相信自己是一个虔诚的佛教徒，一切经典的妙谛他已经都参透了，但同时感觉到未能放怀的是对于妻的爱心。他曾自己相信这一定是一重孽缘，因为他对于他的终于娶这个为龟兹王女的表妹为妻的这回事，觉得无论如何不是偶然的。想想小时候和她曾在一块儿玩，童心里对于这个明媚的姑娘似乎确曾天真地爱恋过，但自从随着母亲到沙勒国去出家学道之后，十三年间，竟完全将她忘了。勤敏好学的少年的心中，只是充满了释迦牟尼的遗教；女人，即使是表妹，已完全被禁制着不敢去想到了。回到龟兹国来，已是俨然传授了佛祖的衣钵的大师，母舅龟兹国王替他造起了讲坛，每天翻检着贝叶经文对着四方来的学者说法，所以虽然在讲坛下也间或有时看见表妹的美妙庄严的容仪，虽然她的深黑的眼波不时地在凝注着他，但他是不能不压伏住那在他心中蠢动的热情了。屡次地，每当幽凉的月夜，在葡萄与贝多树丛中，当他散步着静参禅法的时候，他的表妹总偷偷掩掩地走过来在他背后悄悄地跟随着。她并不招呼他，但是这样地窥伺着他的动静，或窃听着他偶然的虔诚的教理的独白。但她这种跟踪是有好几次曾因池水边孔雀的惊叫或林叶间夜鸦的啼声而促起了他的返身回顾的。

他每次发觉了她跟踪着在背后，心中常觉得有些窘涩。他自己是很自信为一个有定性的僧人，他十余年来的潜修已经很能够保证他的道行，看见了别个女人，即使是很美丽的，他绝不曾动过一点杂念，但这

样地每次在月夜的园林中看见了他的天女似的表妹，真不觉得有些心中不自持了。所以，他晓得，这是菩萨降给他的诱惑，最大的最后的诱惑，勘破了这一重孽缘，便是到达了正果的路。他便合掌着跪下来，祈祷着：

“佛祖释迦牟尼，凭着你的光荣，我皈依着你的圣洁的教训，我恪守着清规，我每日每时在远避着罪过，你的一切经文中的每一个字都在我心里回响着，我将承受了你的恩宠，向地上众生去光大你的教义。我知道，凭着你的神圣的功德，使我能够避免了一切魔鬼的引诱，但还要祈求你，凭着你的神圣的法力，叱责那些魔鬼的引诱使他们永远地离开了我。让我好平安地在每天的讲坛上赞美你，因为我怕我的定力现在还不够抵抗那最大的引诱。”

当他这样祈祷着的时候，她，那个龟兹国王的爱女，总是挥动着手中的白孔雀羽扇和月光一同微笑着。她尊敬着她的有崇高的功德的表兄，她也听得懂他每次在坛上讲说的教义是何等光明的大道。她并未想恶意地破坏他的潜修，但她确已不自禁地爱了他，她要占有他，这是在她以为是唯一的光辉。她微笑着，凝看着在虔诚地祷告的她的表兄。

“表兄鸠摩罗什，大智的僧人，在这样的月夜也要做着严厉的功课吗？难道释迦牟尼佛连一点夜里的树叶的香气也不许他的弟子享受吗？”

“树叶的香气也是一样能够引乱寂定的道心的。表妹，善女人，在这里，我是如同在沙漠里一样地没有看见什么，我相信我已经能够生活在这个华丽的大城里如在沙漠里一样的不经意，不被身外的魔鬼引诱了去，以致败坏了道行。但是，你，我劝你立刻就离开此地，否则，请让我立刻离开了你，因为，我怕，只有你会破坏了我。”

“大智的僧人，听了你的话，我赞美你！我怕我真的会破坏了你，因为我的确觉得有一股邪道的大力附着在身上。但是，表兄鸠摩罗什，你可以用你的崇高的教义，照耀在我心里，让我得到了一个纯正的解脱，并且使你自己也避免了一重磨难。真的，在我们之间，我真觉得有一重不容易勘破的磨难。来罢，让我们去坐在那清冽的泉边，你再宣扬一回那个慈悲的太子的教训。”

“不啊，表妹，善女人，那是在讲经的坛上，我可以替你宣扬佛祖的妙谛，但不是在这里啊！我害怕我快要失掉我的定力了。善女人，让我回进去罢。你看，月光已经给黑云遮着了，我知道这里有着最可怕的魔鬼。”

这样说着，他觉得心猿动了，他急急地将枯瘦的手掌掩了脸，留下了她独自在黑暗的贝多树丛里，管自己走进了他的禅室，在佛像前虔诚地跪下来整夜地忏悔着。

在到长安去的路上行进着的高踞在骆驼上的大智鸠摩罗什，冥想十余年前从沙勒国回到龟兹国的时候，觉得自己真的曾经是一个德行很高的僧人，在最最难于自己克制潜修的青年时代，毕竟完全做到了五蕴皆空的境地，这也不可不算难能的了。但这十几年来，他仿佛已经完全从那功德的最高点跌了下来，虽然熟习着经文，但已经有了家室之累了；虽然还可能掩饰着人，但自己觉得好像已经在一重幽暗的氛围气里，对人说话也低了声音，神色之间也短了不少的光辉，似乎已无异于在家人了。想着了这些，便不禁又抱怨起那渎圣的武夫吕光来了。自己是后悔着当龟兹国被吕氏攻破的时候，不该忽然起了一点留恋之心，遂被吕氏所羁縻。到后来吕光将他和她都灌醉了酒，赤裸了身子幽闭在同一间陈设得异常奢侈的密室里，以致自己亵渎了苦行，把不住了定力，终于与她犯下了奸淫，这些回想起来是一半怨着自己一半恨着吕光的。因此，虽然是一个有学问的方外人，也不禁对于吕氏今番的败灭有点快意了。

但是鸠摩罗什还并未忘记了从前母亲离开龟兹国回到天竺去的时候对他说的和他对她的那些话。她是早已先知着他是定命着把不可思议的教义宣传到东土去的唯一的僧人，但这事业却于他本身是有害无利的，他对于她的预告，曾应允着不避自身的苦去流传佛家的教化。由这桩事情上思量起来，在凉州十几年来所受的各种大大小小的灾难，或者都是定命的，甚至要这个明媚的表妹为妻的这一重孽缘，也是母亲所早已先知的了。鸠摩罗什忽然又在骆驼背上想起了他的母亲，他即便勒住了骆驼，下来在道旁向着辽远的云天对天竺合掌祈祷着，求他母亲的圣洁的荣光帮助他抵抗前途的种种磨难。因为他晓得，在到达秦国的京都之前，一定还会有许多可以毁灭他的仅剩的一些功德的灾难。

重又跨上骆驼之际，又看见他的妻的天女一般庄严的脸相正忧愁地在给沙漠的风吹着，头巾猎猎，在风中颭舞。她好像负担着什么凄苦。当他在那被封闭的密室里和她第一次有肉体关系的时候，他曾深深地感觉到她有一种沉重的苦闷。为了爱恋的缘故，将灼热的肉身献呈给他，是她心中的一种愉快；但明知因此他将被毁灭了法身和戒行，在她也是颇感受着自己的罪过，她心中同时又有了对于或者会得降临给她的天刑的恐怖。十几年来，被这两重心绪相互地啮蚀着她的灵魂，人也变得忧郁又憔悴了。在鸠摩罗什，他是很懂得她的心曾怎样想，他所自己以为不幸的，是对于因她之故而被毁坏了戒行这回事，虽然自己很忿恨着，但对于她的热情，却竟会如一个在家人似的接受着，享用着，这是他自己也意料不到的。照他这样的戒行看来，一切的色声香味触，都可以坚定地受得住，正不必远远地避居到沙漠的团瓢里去，刻意地离绝官感的诱惑。但他的大危险是对于妻的爱恋。即使有了肉体的关系，只要并不爱着就好了。他曾经对人说他的终于纳了表妹为妻这回事，在他的功德这方面，并没有什么影响，这是正如从臭泥中会产生出高洁的莲花来，取莲花的人不会得介意到臭泥的。为了要充分地证实他的比喻，他便开始饮酒荤食，过着绝对与在家人一样的生活。但这个比喻虽然骗得满凉州的人都更加信仰他的德行不凡，而他自己的心里却埋藏着不可告人的苦楚，他觉得无论如何他与这个龟兹国王女是互相依恋着，决不真是如莲花与臭泥一样的不相干的。

骆驼踏着沉重的脚步，曳着清越的铃声，渐渐地离凉州城愈远了。他看着妻的愁颜，又前前后后的思想着，觉得自己已经完全不能了解自己了，由这样壮盛的扈从和仪仗卫送着到京都去的，是为西番的出名的僧人的鸠摩罗什呢，还是为一个平常的通悟经文的在家人的鸠摩罗什呢？这是在第一日的旅程中的他自己虽然也思索着，但不能解决的疑问。

第三日的旅程是从一个小市集上出发的。翻过了一个山冈，走下一条修长的坂道来的时候，太阳刚从东方诸山的背后升起来。四周围看看广漠的景色，鸠摩罗什忽然心中觉得也空旷起来，前两天的烦恼全都消隐下去了。他并不觉得有如前两天的思维的必要。并且，甚至觉得前两天的各种烦恼全是浪费了的。这个照耀在大野上的光明的太阳，好像给予他一重暗示，爱欲和功德是没有什么冲突的。这是个奇怪的概念，他自己也不很明白何以会这样想，何以会看了这个第三个旅行日的朝阳而想到这个从来没有一个僧人敢于辩解的思绪。他默数着天竺诸国的高行的僧人，娶妻荤食的也并非绝对没有，于是自己又坚信了一些自己的功德或者不会全毁灭了。但随即又想，不知以前的有妻室的僧人，对于妻是否也这样地痴恋着。这个恐怕未必，……于是觉得自己的情形又两样了，怕仍旧难免要不能修成正果。

为希望着成正果而禁欲，而苦修的僧人，不是有大智慧的释子，这个是与为要做官而读书，为要受报应而行善的人同样的低微。罗什心中一转，这样想着了。他忽然感到一阵寒颤。自觉这好像又叛道了？为什么一个正宗的佛弟子会这样的不遵守着清规呢？为什么娶了妻，染了爱欲，不自己设法忏悔，而又勉强造作出这种惊人的理解来替自己辩解呢？从这方面想来，他觉得自己真是一个叛道者了。这时候，他刚在穿过一个白桦树林，听见了大群的骆驼的践踏，林里忽然惊起了一个狐狸，用着狡猾的眼对罗什凝望了一次，曳着毛茸茸的尾巴逃走了。太阳在这片刻间，好像失去了光亮，罗什眼前觉到一阵的昏黑，他知道这是魔鬼的示兆。当一个虔诚的僧人想入邪道的时候，魔鬼就会这样地出现。他觉得灵魂很难受，正想下骆驼，收束起一切的邪念来祈祷，但其时一缕强烈的阳光从树叶隙缝里泻了下来，恰恰射在他脸上，他闭了一次眼，恍惚中听见后面骆驼上的妻在发着悠长的叹息。

他回顾她的时候，她正在垂着头发着第二次的叹息。于是他好像忽然被另一种力勒住了，打消了刚才的要想祈祷的心绪，蹙着眉头，勒停了骆驼，看着他的妻，等她上前来。

他们两头骆驼并行着了。

“善良的妻，不是有什么不舒快么？为什么天女的容颜显得这样地憔悴而眼睛里含着悲怨呢？莫不是两日的征行使得疲乏了么？或者是在憎厌着前路茫茫，还不到东土的古都么？安心些罢，你看，泥土是一步一步地在松软起来，花草树木是在渐渐地美丽起来，下面一大片平原之外，与天相接的一条黄色的是什么呢！哦，我知道了，那就是东土的大江，名字叫做黄河的是也。渡过那条神圣的大江，我们便到了繁华的天国。美丽的王女呀，你将受到东方的不相识的众人的欢迎。”

“啊！我的表兄，我的光荣，我的丈夫，我可曾梦见过到那辽远的辉煌的东土去吗？不啊！我从来没有，我也不曾敢这样想。我并没觉得疲乏，但我是坐不住在这骆驼上了；我并没觉得前途茫茫，我反而觉得好像今天我可以走完了我该当走的路。我看见前面有着我的归宿，我将尽着今天一日的功夫去走到那儿安息。我并没有什么不舒快，我的心地是这样的和静，你看，我并不心跳。在你的后面，我闻到你的宗教的芬芳，我看见你的大智慧的光。你是到东土去宣扬教义的唯一的人，但我是你的灾难，我跟着你到秦国去，我会阻梗了你的事业，我会损害了你的令闻。啊，我的大智鸠摩罗什，我好像已经得到了前知，我们该当分开了。你看，我的生命已经在自行消隐下去，正如干了油的长明灯里的光焰，在今天夕暮的时候，它是要熄灭了。”

说着，她又叹息了一声，这正像一只杜鹃的悲啼。罗什凝看着她，又听着她的颤抖的声音，他看见，在她的脸色上已浮起了死的幻影，凭着他的睿智，他知道她确是要在夕暮的时候死了。忽然他感觉到一阵急剧的悲怆，他全然不像一个四大皆空的僧人似的进流着眼泪，十多年来的夫妇的恩爱全都涌上在他的心头，一样一样地回忆着，他想挽救这个厄运，搜索着替她缓免的方法，但结果是不可能。他哽咽着，垂倒了头，甚至一眼也不敢回看她。

那些扈从的官吏，他们是不懂得龟兹话的，当他和她说话的时候，他们虽然听着，但一点也不知道他在说些什么。但他们看得出他在流着眼泪，这一定是在这个国师的心里有了很大的悲伤，于是一个凉州的

小吏问他：

“我们的高僧，我们的国师，可感觉到了什么悲伤，流着这样的眼泪？如果我们这些庸俗的凡人能够做得到，请让我们替国师效力来解除这种悲哀罢。否则，也请你不要藏匿着不愿意我们替你分一些烦恼。”

他用学会了的凉州方言回答着：

“好心的官儿们，不必替我分心。为了我的根基浅薄的功德，我今天将遭逢到一个很大的灾难。以后的事都会因此而不能逆料，我自己也参不透我以后会怎样，我怕到达你们长安的时候，我已经变成一个平凡的俗人，没有什么好处可以配得上享受你们的尊敬了。这就是我现在为什么哭泣的缘故。”

于是另外一个小官说：

“智慧的国师，你说今天将遭逢到一个很大的灾难，凭着你的圣洁和崇高，我们相信你是不会错的。但是，如我们这样的凡人，不知在这个灾难还未曾显现之前，能不能先听到它一点？”

“为什么不能够呢，尊敬的太阳的国度里的官儿们。你们看，看着我的妻，龟兹国的尊荣的王女，她将为了她不幸的丈夫的缘故，在今天夕暮的时候，死在这孤寂的旅途上。她将不能再看见一个她的亲族，她将没有福气受到你们的欢迎与赞美，她将永远地长眠在这一大片荒原上。尊敬的官儿们，请你们告诉我，今晚我们将歇宿在哪一个城里？”

“国师啊，真的有这样悲惨的运命要降给你吗？”一个官吏看着她说，“啊，龟兹国王的爱女，我们的国师的慈惠的妻子，佛国里来的香花，难道天吝惜着不教我们东方的人瞻仰她一回吗？在这个可怕的夕暮啊，我们还走不到任何一个大城，我们要去歇宿在那条从天上来的黄河的岸边，听一夜的溅溅水声，明天早晨渡过那条大江之后，我们才会远远地看见一个大城的灰色的影子。”

于是那个在骆驼背上闪着忧郁的空虚的眼色的女人说了：

“啊，我看见了，那远远的一片黄色的东西不就是那出名的天国的大河吗？伟大的圣灵啊！我赞美你。我将去休息在它的身旁，而它将永远地分隔了我和你，我的亲爱的丈夫，虔诚的尊者，我的头已昏了，我恐怕不能够在骆驼背上支持着走到那个定命的地方。……”

说着，那个美艳的王女忽然昏倒在骆驼背上。

他扶着她，同乘在一头骆驼上，前后回拥着秦国的官吏，全都屏息着静静地走，他们在接连的山谷间行进，他们每个人都望着茫茫的前路。苏醒了的她间歇地发出一声悠长的叹息。这声音，哀怨得好像震颤了山壁起了惊心的回响。她身体烦热着，使他几乎抱持不住。她是害了急剧的热病。同行的人群中有着大夫，他自荐来替她诊视，但结果是紧蹙着眉额。他姑且拿出一两颗药丸来送进她紧闭着的嘴唇中，但并不减轻她的热度。三小时的旅程继续着，虽然道旁有些草木，却始终找不到一处泉水。

可怕的热度增高着，她在他怀抱里，不停地咂着嘴唇，红润的美人的唇已经变成黑色了。鼻子下已经发出了许多水泡。说着可怕的吃语。他手臂里抱着这个危殆的妻，闭着眼，任凭那童子牵着骆驼一高一低地走，虔诚地默诵着经文。

“哎！何处有泉水响着？烦你们想法去找一找罢，让她喝一口活水。”

在太阳已把这一行人的影子长长地投在前面的时候，他耳朵中忽然听见泉水的流声，他这样说着。于是有几个小差役分头去跟踪着水声去寻找了。

绕过一个土丘，走进了一丛树林，他们在一条伏流于密菁中的清溪旁边歇下了。他把她平卧在草地上，自己便坐下在她身旁。有人用革囊舀满了溪水来灌给她，渐渐地她又清醒转来。

这时光，已经是垂暮了。傍晚的风吹动着木叶，簌簌地响个不停。乌鸦都在树头上打着围，啁啾地乱噪着，一缕阳光从树叶缝中照下在她的残花的脸上。

“现在时光到了。”她用微细的声音说，“我刚才已看见了秦国的京都，那个大城，你将在那里受到赞颂与供养，而我，这里是我的息壤了。那怒吼着的是什么？哦，那是黄河！它将永远地把我隔绝了你。你的孽缘是完尽了。过了黄河，你将依旧是一个高行的僧人，一个完全的智者，你已经勘破了一切的魔障。而我景仰你的人，终于死在你的怀抱里，在最最适宜的时候，这样的平安，这样的没有苦楚，也是很满足了。我的表兄，大智的尊者，我的尊崇的丈夫，你再和我接个吻。……”

他跪着，两手抵着草地，俯下头去和她接最后的吻。她含住他的舌头，她两眼闭拢来了。树枝间忽然一头乌鸦急促地啼了几声，他抬起头来，一阵风吹落一片大的木叶盖上了她的安息的脸。他觉得身上很冷。

他痴呆地蹲踞在她的尸体边，默想着，从行的人都静静地站着，他们都垂倒着头，闭了眼。这样好久。

他觉醒转来。他虔敬地向她的尸体膜拜了一次，他吩咐护卫的兵士给她埋葬了，不用什么封识。

走出树林向黄河边的小村集投宿去的时候，天色已经完全黑暗了。这天夜里，他睡得很酣熟。

次日，渡过黄河之后，他对从人说他现在已是功德快要完满的僧人，一切的人世间的牵引，一切的魔难，一切的诱惑，全都勘破了。现在是真的做到了一尘不杂，五蕴皆空的境地。他自信他将在秦国受着盛大的尊敬和欢迎而没有一些内疚。

三

是的，他一些不觉得内疚，他受着秦王姚兴的款待，官吏，宫女，王妃，中土的僧人和百姓们的膜拜，整整的一个月，都城里轰动着。为了旅途疲倦的缘故，他在西明阁里休养，每天只出来一个时辰接受大众的顶礼，其余的时候，他不看经典，不因为对于东土的风物的好奇而出来。他阖上眼在蒲团上打坐，人家会以为他是在入室参禅了。他并不在参禅，在一个新的环境里，他觉得无论如何有些不安。殿上的盛大的宴饮，古鼎里高烧的香，东方的人情风俗，这些都只引起了他的旅愁，本来出家人如行云流水，随遇而安，这是他很清楚地知道的。当他从沙勒国回到龟兹，从龟兹到凉州的时候，他并不曾有这样的不安定。他好像淹留在这异域很有空虚之感。他起先是莫名其妙地闭着眼默坐着。

简直不像一个方外人呢，他想。凭着他这样深的戒行，他知道不应当会有这种感觉。但终于抛撇不开地这样烦虑着，那是一定又被什么魔难诱引着了。他于是立刻屏绝了华腴的饮食，撤去了一切的款待一个国师的富丽的陈设，并且吩咐伺候的人不要让他在他的禅房里听见外面的人声，无论男的和女的。他完全恢复了从前在沙勒国的大沙漠里从师学道的时候所过的虔诚的禁欲的苦修生活。他祈祷着：

“慈悲的佛祖啊，难道我从前那样的苦修还不够使我生活在这个东土的京城里吗？我曾经大胆地自己相信我的戒行已经能够抵抗了一切的诱引，我吃荤，我听音乐，我睁着眼睛在繁华的大街上游行，我并且娶了妻，但在凉州的十余年间，我并不曾有过一天如像在这里似的不安，我以为我可以接触一切而彼此没有什么牵涉。但现在不知怎的，我还是一样地镇定着心，但它却会自然而然地游移起来。这难道是我的戒行还不够么？现在我是惊惶着，怕我会在这里沉沦了，我小心地仍旧过着一个开始修行的人的生活，愿慈悲的佛祖保佑我，让我好安静下来，替你在这里传扬你的光荣的圣道。否则，我和你全都要失望了。”

虽然这样虔敬地祈祷着，但他也有时理智地觉得对于曾经娶妻这事却未能绝然地无所容心。树林里，溪流旁边，临终的龟兹王女的容颜，常常浮现在他眼前，使他战栗。同时他又感觉到自己又应当负担一重对佛祖说了谎话的罪过。

他开始懊悔小时候不该受剃度的。他真的想走下蒲团来，脱去了袈裟，重又穿凡人的衣服，生活在凡人中间。这虽然从此地撤了成正果的光荣的路，但或者会熄灭了这样燃烧在心中的烦躁的心。但是，啊！现在妻也死了，便是重又还俗，也是如同嚼蜡一样的无味了。我还是应当抵抗了这些诱引，“道高一尺，魔高一丈”，现在是挣扎的时候了，可怕呀。

他继续着他的绝对禁欲的刻苦的生活，道和魔在他迷惑的心里动乱着，斗争着。

受了国王的礼清，对着东土的善男子，善女人，比丘僧，比丘尼公开讲经的日子到了。草堂寺里已经打扫得干干净净，大殿上焚起了浓重的香，听众一直拥挤到大殿的阶石下，还大家争抢着椅子站起来。有些人因为来得迟了，便高高地爬起在院子里的古柏上，肩背上被遗着鸟屎和雀羽。鸠摩罗什还没有升上讲座，好奇的人喧噪着纷纷议论。

“大哥，你也来听听佛法吗？我看你是只要少宰杀几只猪就够延寿一纪了。”一个商人挤了进来对一个坐在前排的屠户说。

“我吗，我是高兴来看看的。”

“究竟今天来讲经的是怎么样一个人呀？”旁边一个女人疑惑地问。

“你没有看见过吗？”

“没有。”

“是个得道的西番和尚，姚硕德将军从凉州请来的。”

“啐，得道的！吃荤娶妻子的贼秃呢。”一个士人愤怒地说。旁边一个瘦削的和尚听了，望了他一眼，嘴里开始喃喃地念起经来了。

那个士人的话很有些魅力，听见的人全部露着惊诧的神色。有伴侣的都在互相探问着：

“真的吗？”

在前排坐着一个宫女，她是好奇地来听听鸠摩罗什的讲义的。她回答一个同伴：

“真的，那些送他来的官儿们都说那个西番和尚吃荤的，他是像在家人一样的，有一个美丽的妻子，听说还是一个什么国王的公主呢。可惜在路上死了，没有来。才来的头几天，那个和尚还吃荤喝酒，我都亲眼看见，可是这几天都断绝了，听说是因为生病呢。”

听见了她的话，于是大家又对于这个少见的情形议论着。这时候，从外面挤进一个明艳的女人来，她向坐着的人众周流了一个媚眼，男子们都喝起采来欢迎她。当她走过一个市井闲浪人身边的时候，他伸起手来把她臀部一推，高声地说：

“你们看，孟家大娘也来了，她是来候补活佛太太的。”

大家都哄笑了。

“啐！你的老娘做了活佛太太，你就来替老娘剥鸡眼儿。”那个女人喷着笑声说。

“真的吗？你有本领勾搭上了活佛，我准来给你剥鸡眼儿。”那个浪人拍着大腿说。

“好约会！我来做中证。”旁边一个好管闲事的人嚷着。大众又哄堂大笑，望着那个放浪的女人。她有些害羞了，搭讪着到前排去挨在那个宫女身边坐下。

这时候，鸠摩罗什乘着舆来了，钟磬响动，顷刻间这挤满了人的大殿上静得鸦雀无声。大众都回头望着外面，用着好奇的眼色，看这个西域的胡僧缓步地支着锡杖走进来。

连接着许多日的禁欲生活，大智罗什的面庞瘦削了许多，但他的两眼还是炯炯地发着奇异的光彩，好像能看透到人的心之深处去似的。他还是继续着一重烦闷，二重人格的冲突的苦楚深深地感受着，要不是不愿意第一次就失信于大众，他是不会来草堂寺作这一次的讲演的。

他从人丛中的狭路上走进去，凝视着每一个人。每一个人心里吃了一惊，好像一切的隐事被他发现了似的。他走进去经过那个放浪的女人身旁。他也照例地看她一眼，出于不意的是这个大胆的女人并不觉得吃惊，她受得住他的透心的凝视，她也对他笑了一笑，她的全部的媚态，她的最好的容色，在一瞬间都展露给他。他心中忽然吃了一惊，全身颤抖了。

他知道这第一日来听讲经的人是好奇的居多，讲得时间久了，有人会得不耐烦，所以他并不预备什么深长的讲辞。但即使在他是以为很简短了，因好奇而来的听众，在既已看见了他之后，听着他用那不很能懂得的凉州话讲着不可解的佛义，也觉得有些沉闷了，于是在后面的人一个一个地悄悄地溜走了。大殿上只剩了数百个虔诚恭敬的僧人，在垂倒了头如同睡熟了似的倾听着，而此外，使他心中烦乱的是那个放肆的女人，却还平静地坐在那些宫女旁边，她们都好像很懂得他所讲演的奥义似的，并不有一些烦躁。他流动着他的光亮的眼，穿过迷漫的香烟，看着旁边宝座上的国王，看看宫女们，又不禁看到这荡女的脸上。至于她，老是凝视着他，她好像懂得他心中在怎么想，对他微笑着；并且当他眼光注射着她的时候，又微微地点着头，发髻旁边斜插着的一支玉蝉便颤动起来。这时候，一个小飞虫从讲座旁边的黄绫幔上飞下来，嚶嚶地在罗什脸前绕圈儿，最后它停住在罗什嘴唇上。为了要维持他的庄严之故，他不得不稍微伸出了舌头去驱逐那个小虫。它飞了开去，向讲坛下飞，一径停住在那个荡女的光泽的黑发上。罗什觉得身上又剧烈地震颤了一阵，他急闭了眼，匆匆地将他的讲辞收束了。他心里悲伤着自己的功德是越发低降了，即使想睁开了眼睛对大众讲经也支持不住，这不是比平凡的僧人并不高明一些么。

在回归到逍遥园去的舆中，他闭着眼，合着掌，如同一个普通的僧人，忏悔着又祈祷着。

四

晚上，天气很闷热，罗什在树林间散步。他放弃了一切严肃的教义，专心于探求自己近几日来心绪异样的真源。如果那个已死的妻在这里呢，那是至少会如像在凉州一样的平静。但他对于爱并不执着。他明知爱是一个空虚，然则又何以会这样地留恋着妻呢？如果另外有一个女人，譬如像日间所看见的那个放肆的长安女人，来代替了他的妻的地位，他将怎样呢？他不敢再想下去。

说是被那个放肆的女人所诱惑而他在讲经的时候感觉到烦躁的吗？那也未必就这样简单。放肆的，甚至淫荡的女人也不是没有见过，从前却并不曾有一点留恋，只如过眼浮华那样地略一瞬视，而何以此番却这样地萦心经意起来？至于别的理由，倒也搜索不出。难道真的心里已不自主地爱了这个东土的女人吗？

他觉得异常蒸热。他在一个石鼓上坐下，脱去了袈裟，觉得胸前轻快了许多。他深深地呼了一口气，晴和的春夜的树林中散发着的新鲜的草叶的气息，从鼻子里沁透进心底，给与他一阵新生的活力。渐渐听到有个人的脚步声在从林外的小径上走近来，他问：

“谁呀？”

“我，是国师吗？”

走近身来，他认得出这是侍卫中的一个。是个年纪又轻，容貌又俊伟的禁军。他仿佛记起日间当他讲经完毕，出了草堂寺的山门登舆的时候，曾看见一个侍卫趁着纷乱之际挤着一个女人，而 she 曾撒着娇痛骂着，那个侍卫可不是他吗？至于那个被挤的女人，是谁呢？仿佛也是熟识似的。他沉思着，他忽然害怕起来，那个女人好像是自己的亡妻！没有的事！噢，想起来了，好像是那些在前排坐着的宫女中的一个呢。但为什么会想着了亡妻，这却不可解。

“国师在打坐吗？”那个年青的禁军问。

“不打坐。”

“那么是在玩玩？”

“在玩玩，是的。”

他好像对于这个年青的禁卫军有些不快，但他并不曾与这人有过什么仇隙，这人也没有什么地方得罪了他。同时又觉得在这个禁卫军身上可以得到一些什么，一些什么？他不很明白。终于他说：

“唉，官儿，你姓什么，叫什么？”

“我吗，姓姚，名字叫业裕，我是陇西王的第八个儿子。”

“所以你敢调戏宫女吗？”罗什笑起来了。

那禁卫军愕然了。他不明白罗什在说什么。罗什笑看着他，觉得心里很舒服似的。

“忘记了吗？你日间不是曾经在草堂寺的山门外挤得一个宫女骂了起来吗？你这样地做了亵渎菩萨的事，还假装着吗？阿弥陀佛。”

“挤一个宫女？……不，国师，你看错了，我曾经挤一个妓女，是的，一个妓女。”

“一个妓女？”

“你说的是不是那个发髻边戴着玉蝉的放浪的女人呢？国师！”

罗什好像从梦中醒来似的忽然憬悟着这个年青美貌的禁卫军日间所曾推挤的女人，并不是那些宫女中的一个，而的确是那个放肆的女人。但她是个妓女吗？

“是的，她是个妓女吗？”

“只除了你国师没认识她，谁不知道她是这里长安的名妓孟娇娘。”

“哦！”

罗什的两眼闭上了。他有着一个要见一见这个妓女的企望，很热心的企望。但不知为了哪一种动机，他沉思了一会：

“那是个苦难的女人呢。”

“不，是个欢乐的，幸福的女人。”那年青的禁卫军说。

“但灵魂是苦难的。”

“她没有灵魂，况且名为灵魂的那件东西，她是不必要有的。”

“她要老了呢，那时候灵魂将使她感受到苦难。虽然现在是青春，是欢乐，是幸福。”

“不，国师，在她是没有老，只有死。她永远是青春，永远是欢乐的，你没有看见她常是对着人笑吗？”

“官儿，你罪过了。”

罗什合着手掌，又闭了两眼，装着虔敬的忏悔，但心里忽然升上了一阵烦乱。那禁卫军却失笑了，他说：

“听说国师是有妻房的，可真的吗？”

“真的，曾经娶一个妻，已经死了呢。”

“僧人可以娶妻房吗？”

“什么都可以，只要把得住心，一样可修成正果的。只有戒力不深的人不敢这样做。”

“那么让我带国师去看看孟娇娘，怎样？”

“此刻吗？”

“此刻。”

“这几天恐怕会中了魔难……”罗什沉吟着这样说，但旋即改口了：“不过，去看看也可以，我该当去感化她。”

那禁卫军笑起来道：

“恐怕就是连国师那样的人也要反给她感化了去呢。”

或许真是这样，罗什心中自想着。

“这样的深夜了，不会给巡街的官儿抓住吗？”他问。

“巡街的官儿是我的哥哥。”

从一个阒黑的墙门进去，穿过两重院落，他们由一个侍女引导着走进一排灯光辉煌的上房，披挂着的锦绣与炉中氤氲着的香料，最初使罗什的心摇荡了。

“大娘在家吗？这位国师要见见呢。”那禁卫军问着那个侍女。

“在家。”那个侍女向西上房努了努嘴，“在那边陪着独孤大爷呢。既是国师要见，待我去通报一声就来。”说着，她走了出去。

罗什听见西上房有女人笑语的声音，正是日间在草堂寺门前所听到的骂声。他想从这淫猥的笑语声里幻想出她的容貌来。但很奇怪，在这个著名的妓女的华丽的房间中，除了自己的妻的容颜之外，却再也想不起另外一个美丽的女人的脸来。他吃惊着，他曾竭力忘却了他的妻，他怕她的幻像会永远地跟随着他，这是为了修道之故很危险的。他想用孟娇娘的幻像来破灭他的妻的幻像，然后再使孟娇娘的幻像破灭掉，这样的自己解脱是比较容易些，因为对于一个妓女，他想至少总容易幻灭一些，同时他又想真的超度超度这个出名的可怜的妓女。但他却不意即使到了这里也还是想起了妻。这是为了什么缘故呢？虽然曾经有过一时舍弃不了，但自从重新又过着刻苦的禁欲生活以来，确不曾再浮上她的幻影，而何以今天又这样地不安了呢？很注意着这妓女，而何以始终想不起她的容貌来？这个妓女与自己的妻可有什么关系没有？不，决不会有一些。

罗什正在这样闭着眼沉思着，西上房里的孟娇娘的笑声已在移出来向这边来了，笑声悠然地停止了，在房门外，听到她说：

“好不荣耀呀，连活佛都到这里来了。”

罗什依然寂定着，那摩着手，做着打坐的姿态。闭着的眼睛在下看着心，心跳动得可以听得到声音。罗什听她走进房间来，听她剪去了每一支烛上的烟煤，听她在走近来。

“哈哈哈哈！国师到这里来打坐吗？我这里只参欢喜禅，请问国师，你在参什么禅？”

罗什睁开眼来，装着庄严的仪态，看着她。他完全不认识她，她是谁？他愣住了，难道这就是孟娇娘吗？难道日间的那个放肆的女人就是她吗？不——明明记得不是这样一个女人，但看她发髻上插着的颤巍巍的玉蝉，却又明明是日间看见过的。是的，曾经有一个小飞虫给这支摇动的首饰惊走了。但何以在记忆中却想不起她的容貌呢？他迷惑着。

那年青的禁卫军看在旁边，看见罗什这样地惶乱，他笑起来对那个妓女说：

“大娘，你今晚若留得国师在这里歇宿，我另外有赏。”

“那很容易，我只怕国师要一连地歇宿下去，连草堂寺讲经也不肯去，那时我倒脱不出干系呢。”她说着，又高声地笑起来。

罗什忽然感到一阵嫌厌，看着这可怜的灵魂完全给这样富丽辉煌的生活欺骗了，他已经完全没有了来时的心境，便是想超度她也懒得做了。他对于她已完全不像刚才未见面的时候那样的含有一种莫名的企望，他看出她是完全一个沉沦了的妖媚的女人，所有的只是肉欲。

他那摩着手掌，阿弥陀佛，阿弥陀佛地宣着佛号。他离了座，对那个禁卫军看了一眼，表示要走的样子。但那个年青人却被摄住了，他不再愿意领罗什回去，他犹豫着：

“国师，回去的路你还认得吗？”

罗什懂得他的话，他让他留着，独自走出了上房，穿出了院子，一路上耳朵里听见她和他的笑声渐渐地在低下去。

五

次晨，罗什并没有做早课，也没有译经，他对着在东方升起来的朱红的太阳祈祷着，他希望光明的菩萨指示他该怎样做。因为他疑惑自己。在昨夜，他是以为被那个妓女诱惑了，心里升起了一种冲动，所以和那个禁卫军同去的。但既见了那个妓女之后，他觉得他并不曾被她所挑诱，而他的定力也并不曾被她所破坏。他仍然保守了他的庄严回到逍遥园里。只是到如今仿佛还有什么事没有做了似的牵挂着，他一刻也不能安静下来。因而害怕着自己的功德的毁灭，所以祈祷着。

午刻既过，又到了讲经的时候。侍卫们已经预备了，并且着人通报进来请他预备登舆。他觉得很疲倦。他没有讲经的兴味，但这是不能停止的，有许多虔诚的听众已经在大殿上等候着了。他们是都想由他的讲演上得到一点启示去修成正果的。

升上讲坛，下面黑魆魆的全是人，弘治王陛下也恭敬地坐在一旁，罗什顿然心神收束，俨然又如从前在龟兹国讲经的时候那样地严肃起来。他略略地闭目思索了一番，拈得了讲题，开始起讲。

讲了一半，下面寂然无声，连咳嗽的人都没有。他心中疑怪着何以昨日是那样地人声嘈杂而今日是这样地肃静呢，难道今天来听讲的人都是虔诚地皈依佛教的么？他试睁开眼睛来留心观察一下坛下的听众。

第一眼他看见的是如昨日一样地在前排坐着的几个宫女，而在那个妓女所曾坐过的座位上，他所看见的是什？这是使他立刻又闭上了两眼的。……他的妻的幻像又浮了上来，在他眼前行动着，对他笑着，头上的玉蝉在风中颤动，她渐渐地从坛下走近来，走上了讲坛，坐在他怀里，做着放浪的姿态。并且还搂抱了他，将他的舌头吮在嘴里，如同临终的时候一样。

大智鸠摩罗什完全不能支持了。他突然停止了讲经，闭着眼在讲坛上发着颤抖，脸色全灰白了。底下听讲的人众全觉得他有了异样，大家哗噪起来，说他一定是急病了。弘治王自己走上讲坛，在他耳边问着：

“怎么了？国师，怎么了？”

罗什还是闭着眼，指着那个宫女坐着的地方，喘息着说：

“孽障，我的妻，两个小孩子，这是孽障。”

次日，满城都沸扬着国师鸠摩罗什在讲经的时候忽然中意了一个宫女，当夜国王就把那个宫女赐给他做妻子。有些人还因此而议论着，对于他的功德也怀疑起来。

是的，鸠摩罗什他自己也对于自己怀疑起来，当他和那个貌似亡妻的宫女在禅房中觉醒转来的时候。从前是什么事情都能够凭着自己的智慧推测出来，而近来却完全地蒙昧。昨天的事，也是绝无先知的，不知怎的，一阵强烈的诱惑竟会破坏了他，使他那样地昏迷。难道妻的灵魂故意来这样地败乱他吗？不，虽然是妻的幻影，但姿态却是那个妓女的。要是戒行坚定的僧人，昨天不会那样地胡乱的。啊，这可悲的东土！

他忏悔地离去了淫乱的床榻，走出到澄玄堂上，佛龕前的长明灯里虽然满着油，但灯芯却熄灭了。他颤抖着，知道佛祖已经离开了他。这回的罪过是比娶妻的时候重大呢。

他知道因了昨夜的淫乱，都城的人 would 怎样评论着。现在是在他，第一要坚定人民和僧人对于他的信仰，否则，他，一个西番的僧人，不知将受到什么危险，而自己内心的二重人格倒是只得忍耐着慢慢地想法子解决的了。所以，在这第三日讲经的时候，草堂寺里又挤满了好奇的人，他竭尽他的辩才，伸说禁欲者并不是最高的僧人，而荤食娶妻的僧人并不是难成正果的。况且，一个僧人要先能经历过一切欲念，一切魔难，能够不容心，然后他的功德是金刚一般的永不磨涅了的，所以在沙漠里的高僧，一到了华丽的都城，会立刻丧失了他的戒行。但是，虽然这样说，对于自己的功德没有相当的信任的僧人，还是应当去过一种刻苦的禁欲生活，否则他是很容易沉沦的。

听着这样的辩解，大家对于他的谣言和诤话立刻消灭了，便是弘治王自己也反而增加了对于他的虔敬。就在这天晚晌，敕旨下来，给他迁居到永贵里廨舍，并赐妓女十余人，据说是让他广弘法嗣的。

从此以后，日间讲译经典，夜间与宫女妓女睡觉的智者鸠摩罗什自己心里深深地苦闷着。对于这些女人，是的，他并不有所留恋，她们并不会损害了他的功德，但他是为了想起了妻而与这些宫女妓女生出关系来的。这里他觉得对于妻始终未曾忘掉，这却不适宜做一个高僧；但为了要使自己做一个高僧而这样地刻意要把妻从情爱的记忆中驱逐出去，现在他也觉得是不近人情了。是的，他现在是有的人情的观念，他知道自己已经只不过是一个有学问的通晓经典的凡人，而不是一个真有戒行的僧人了。再自己想，如说是留恋着妻，那个美丽的龟兹公主，但现在却又和别的女人有了关系，似乎又不是对于情爱的专一。鸠摩罗什从这三重人格的纷乱中，认出自己非但已经不是一个僧人，竟是一个最最卑下的凡人了。现在是为了衣食之故，假装着是个大德僧人，在弘治王的荫覆之下，愚弄那些无知的善男子，善女人和东土的比丘僧，比丘尼。当初在母亲面前的誓言和企图，是完全谈不到了。他悲悼着自己。

一日的早上，罗什忽听得外面街路上人声鼎沸，好像有了什么大事一般。正在疑虑倾听之间，有侍者通报进来说，因为有两个僧人昨夜宿妓，给街坊捉住了要捆送衙门，于是城里的僧人动起公愤来，说国师还要宫女妓女睡觉，僧人偶尔玩玩，算什么回事，坚决不许送官。因此两方面争噪起来，一直惊动了上头，有圣旨下来命将两个僧人发交国师处置，所以现在外面人声嘈杂，要等国师出去发落。

罗什听了报告，知道这是弘治王给他的难题。但自己这样的每夜宿着妓女，虽则明知是很难修成正果了，但于别人却不会有什么影响。而这两个僧人却显然地因为他前几天在草堂寺自辩的话而敢于这样大胆地去押妓的。要是真的长安所有的僧人都这样起来，那是罪过更深重了。他这样踌躇着，他想现在不得不借助于小时候曾经从术士处学会了的魔法了。那是自从剃度修行以后不曾试用过，现在为了要解决这些纠纷，同时又要维持自己的尊严，免不得又只好暂时地做了左道了。他自己悲悼着，但以为惟有这个方法，想来长安的僧人是一定会被哄骗过了的。

于是他走了出去。在大厅上，他召进了那两个宿妓的僧人和其他的僧人。看热闹的百姓都拥了进来。他对那两个僧人说：

“宿妓的是你们吗？”

“是的。”

“为什么出家人这样地不守清规呢？”

那两个僧人都讽刺地发着鼻音笑起来了。一个说：

“国师，其实你是不该处置这件事情的。我们是奉承了你国师的教训，你忘记了吗？你在草堂寺说过的那些话，僧人是可以不必禁欲的。”

“哦，是的，你没有听见我说那一等僧人只能过刻苦的禁欲生活。你们宿着妓，不错，可以的，但你们有什么功德，你们该证明给大众看。有功德的僧人是有戒行的，有戒行的僧人是得了解脱的，即使每夜宿妓，他还是五蕴皆空，一尘不染的，你们知道吗？”

“那么国师有什么功德会证明给大众看呢？”一个狡猾的僧人说。

“我吗？我可以就证明给大众的。”

罗什说着叫侍者到佛龛里去取出一个钵盂来，他开了盖，递给一个僧人。

“你看，这里是什么？”

“针。”

罗什取回针钵来，抓起一把针，吞下腹去。再抓了一把，又吞下腹去。看的人全都惊吓了，一时堂前肃静，大家屏着气息。罗什刚吞到最后一把中间的最后一支针的时候，他一瞥眼，见旁边正立着那个孟娇娘，看见了她立刻又浮上了妻的幻像，于是觉得一阵欲念升了上来，那支针便刺着在舌头上再也吞不下去。他身上满着冷汗，趁人不见的当儿，将这一支针吐了出来，夹在手指缝中。他笑着问这两个僧人：

“你们能不能这样做？”

“饶恕了罢，国师，以后不这样的犯规了。”

在纷乱的赞叹声里，鸠摩罗什心里惭愧着回了进去，但舌头依然痛楚着。

以后，永远是这样地，他的舌头刺痛着，常常提起他对于妻的记忆；而他自己也隐然以一个凡人自

居，虽然对外俨然地乔装着是一个西域来的大德僧人。所以在他寂灭之后，弘治王替他依照外国方法举行火葬的时候，他的尸体是和凡人一样地腐烂了，只留着那个舌头没有焦朽，替代了舍利子，留给他的信徒。