JOURNEY TO THE WEST

The Complete English Translation

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Chapters 1–100, in full

Translated from the Chinese classic by Wu Cheng'en

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Chapter 1

The Divine Root Conceives and the Source Streams Forth; The Mind Is Cultivated and the Great Way Is Born

The poem says:

Before Chaos was parted, Heaven and Earth were one vast blur, Dim and boundless, beheld by none. Then Pangu broke through the primal mist, And from that cleaving, pure and turbid were set apart. He covered and bore the myriad beings, supremely benevolent; He brought forth all creatures, and all was made good. Would you know the workings of Creation's turning wheel? You must read the Journey to the West, the Tale of Deliverance.

It is said that in the reckoning of Heaven and Earth, a span of 129,600 years makes one cosmic age, a yuan. This yuan is divided into twelve parts, called hui, named after the twelve branches: Zi, Chou, Yin, Mao, Chen, Si, Wu, Wei, Shen, You, Xu, and Hai. Each hui lasts 10,800 years.

Take a single day as an illustration: at the hour of Zi the yang energy stirs, and at Chou the cock crows; at Yin there is no light yet, and at Mao the sun rises; Chen is the hour after breakfast, and Si comes next in order; at Wu the sun stands at midheaven, and at Wei it slips toward the west; at Shen the day wanes and at You the sun sets; at Xu comes dusk, and at Hai people settle down to sleep.

By the same token, on the grand scale: when the hui of Xu draws to its close, Heaven and Earth grow dark and dim, and all things perish. Another 5,400 years pass, and at the start of the hui of Hai, darkness reigns; nothing remains between the two realms, neither man nor creature—and this is called Chaos.

Shao Kangjie said:

At mid-Zi of the winter solstice, The heart of Heaven has not shifted by a hair. Where the one yang first begins to stir, The myriad things are not yet born.

At this point, Heaven first took root. Another 5,400 years passed, and at the very height of the hui of Zi, the light and pure rose upward: there were sun, moon, stars, and constellations. Sun, moon, stars, and constellations are called the Four Images. Hence it is said: Heaven was opened at Zi. Another 5,400 years went by; as the hui of Zi neared its end and the hui of Chou approached, things gradually hardened and solidified.

The Book of Changes says:

Great indeed is the primal power of Qian! Perfect indeed is the primal power of Kun! The myriad things owe it their birth, And it compliantly carries out the will of Heaven.

Thus the Earth first congealed. Another 5,400 years, at the very height of the hui of Chou, the heavy and turbid sank and settled: there were water, fire, mountains, rocks, and earth. Water, fire, mountain, rock, and earth are called the Five Forms. Hence it is said: Earth was founded at Chou. Another 5,400 years passed; as the hui of Chou ended and the hui of Yin began, the myriad things were brought forth.

The Calendar says:

The breath of Heaven descends; The breath of Earth rises. Heaven and Earth intermingle, And all creatures are born.

By now Heaven was clear and Earth was fresh, yin and yang in harmony. Another 5,400 years, at the very height of the hui of Yin, there were born men, beasts, and birds—and thus Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, the Three Powers, took their appointed places. Hence it is said: Humankind was born at Yin.

After Pangu opened the world, the Three Sovereigns governed it and the Five Emperors established its moral order, and the world came to be divided into four great continents: the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift, the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, and the Northern Continent of Kuru. This book tells only of the Eastern Continent of Superior Body.

Beyond the sea there lay a country called Aolai. This country stood close to the ocean, and in that ocean there was a mountain, known as the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit.

This mountain was the ancestral vein of the Ten Continents and the dragon-line of the Three Islands, established when the pure and the turbid were first divided, formed after the primal mist was parted. A truly magnificent mountain! There is a rhapsody in testimony:

The mountain's power awed the vast ocean; its majesty stilled the jade sea. Its power awed the vast ocean: tides surged like silver mountains as fish darted into their dens; Its majesty stilled the jade sea: waves rolled in snowy billows as the clam-spirit fled the deep. On the quarters of wood and fire tall masses piled, And at the edge of the Eastern Sea a lofty peak arose. Cinnabar cliffs and strange rocks, sheer precipices and wondrous peaks. On the cinnabar cliffs, phoenixes cried in pairs; Before the sheer precipices, a qilin lay alone. From the peak one heard the golden pheasant's call; In the rocky caves one watched dragons come and go. In the woods were long-lived deer and immortal foxes; In the trees, numinous birds and black cranes. Jade grass and rare flowers never faded; Green pines and verdant cypresses were ever in their spring. Immortal peaches bore fruit all the year; Tall bamboo forever held the clouds. One ravine, dense with vines and creepers; Fresh green grass on every bank around. Truly a pillar propping up Heaven where a hundred rivers meet, The root of the great earth, unmoved through ten thousand kalpas.

At the very summit of that mountain there was an immortal stone. It was three zhang, six chi, and five cun tall, and two zhang and four chi around. Its height of three zhang six chi five cun corresponded to the 365 degrees of the heavens; its girth of two zhang four chi corresponded to the twenty-four solar terms of the calendar. On top it had nine apertures and eight holes, corresponding to the Nine Palaces and the Eight Trigrams. No trees shaded it on any side, but orchids and irises graced it left and right.

Since the creation of the world it had been steeped in the innocence of Heaven and the beauty of Earth, in the essence of the sun and the light of the moon, until at last it quickened with numinous awareness. Within it an immortal embryo grew, and one day the stone burst open, producing a stone egg the size of a ball. Exposed to the wind, the egg transformed into a stone monkey, complete in every feature, whole in every limb. At once it learned to crawl and to walk, and it bowed to the four quarters of the world. From its eyes shot two beams of golden light that pierced all the way to the Palace of the Pole Star.

This alarmed the Most Venerable Jade Emperor of Heaven, the Great Compassionate and Merciful One, who sat in state in the Cloud Palace of the Golden Gates, the Hall of Divine Mists. He summoned the immortal ministers, and seeing the blazing golden light, ordered Thousand-Mile Eye and Wind-Following Ear to open the South Gate of Heaven and go look.

The two captains went out as commanded, and they saw truly and heard plainly. Presently they returned and reported: "Your servants, obeying your command, observed the source of the golden light. It lies in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, within the borders of the small country of Aolai east of the sea. There is a mountain there called the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and on it an immortal stone. The stone produced an egg, and the egg, meeting the wind, turned into a stone monkey, which was there bowing to the four quarters, its eyes shooting golden light to the very gates of the Pole Star Palace. Now that it has begun to feed on food and water, the golden light will soon subside."

The Jade Emperor, bestowing his mercy, said: "Creatures down below are born of the essence of Heaven and Earth. There is nothing strange in that."

The monkey lived in the mountain, running and leaping, feeding on grass and trees, drinking from mountain springs, gathering wild flowers, seeking out the fruits of trees. It kept company with wolves and serpents, herded with tigers and leopards, made friends with roe deer and muntjacs, counted macaques as its kin. At night it slept beneath the rocky cliffs; by day it roamed among the peaks and caves. Truly, "In the mountains there is no calendar; when the cold has passed, one knows not what year it is."

One day the weather turned hot, and the monkey went with the other monkeys to escape the heat, all of them romping beneath the shade of the pines. Just look at them, one and all:

Climbing trees, clutching branches, picking flowers, gathering fruit; playing marbles, tossing knucklebones; racing through the sand hollows, building pagodas; chasing dragonflies, pouncing on moths; worshipping High Heaven, bowing to the Bodhisattvas; pulling up vines, weaving grass caps; catching lice, biting them and pinching them; smoothing their fur, trimming their nails; some nestling close, some rubbing shoulders; some pushing, some pressing; some tugging, some hauling—beneath the green pines they romped as they pleased, and by the emerald stream they bathed at will.

The monkeys played for a while, then went to bathe in the mountain stream. They saw the water rushing and truly foaming and splashing like rolling melons.

As the ancients said: "Birds have their bird language, and beasts have their beast speech."

The monkeys all said: "Who knows where this water comes from? We've nothing to do today—let's follow the stream up to its headwaters and see where it flows from. What larks!" With a whoop they all came running, dragging sons and daughters, calling brother and calling cousin, and they scrambled up along the stream until they reached its source: a waterfall pouring down from a spring. Just look at it:

A ribbon of white rainbow rising, A thousand fathoms of snowy spray flying; The sea wind blows, yet cannot break it; The river moon shines, and it still remains. Cold air parts the emerald crags; The trailing stream moistens the green slopes. Murmuring, it is called a waterfall— Truly like a curtain hanging.

The monkeys clapped their hands and cried in praise: "Good water! Good water! So this stream runs all the way from the foot of the mountain, straight down to the waves of the great sea!" Then one said: "Whoever has the skill to dive in, find the source, and come out again unharmed—him we'll make our king!" Three times they called out. At once, from out of the thicket, a stone monkey leapt and answered in a loud voice: "I'll go in! I'll go in!"

What a monkey! Truly it was his moment:

Today his fragrant name would shine, His hour of great fortune had come at last; Fated to dwell within this place, A king was sent into the immortal cave.

Watch him screw his eyes shut, crouch low, and with one bound leap straight through the cascade. Then he opened his eyes and lifted his head: inside there was no water and no waves, only, bright and clear, a bridge. He steadied himself, composed his spirit, and looked again carefully: it was a bridge of iron plates. The water beneath it rushed through the crevices of the rock, flowed out beneath the cliff, and hung down over the entrance, veiling the gateway like a curtain.

He rose up, walked to the head of the bridge, and went on further, looking about: it seemed like the dwelling place of some household—a truly fine place. Just look:

Emerald moss piled blue, white clouds floating like jade, Light rippling over drifts of rosy mist. Empty windows, a still and quiet room, Smooth benches and boards a-bloom with flowers. In the milky grotto dragon-pearls hang depending; Winding over all the ground, rare blossoms spread. By the hearth against the cliff, the marks of fire remain; By the table, cups and jars still show their lees and dregs. Stone seats and

stone beds, truly delightful; Stone basins and stone bowls, worthy of still more praise. And look there: one stalk, two stalks of tall bamboo, Three dots, five dots of plum blossom. A few green pines, forever damp with rain— Altogether, just like a human home.

After gazing a long while, he hopped to the middle of the bridge and looked left and right. There, set square in the center, stood a stone tablet.

On it, carved in great characters of regular script, was a line that read: "The Blessed Land of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit; the Cave Heaven of the Water Curtain Cave."

The stone monkey, beside himself with joy, dashed back out at once, screwed up his eyes, crouched, and leapt out through the water again, giving two great laughs: "What luck! What marvelous luck!" The monkeys crowded round him, asking: "What's it like inside? How deep is the water?" The stone monkey said: "There's no water! No water at all! It's a bridge of iron plates. Beyond the bridge is a home made by Heaven itself and set down by Earth."

The monkeys asked: "How do you make out that it's a home?" The stone monkey laughed: "This waterfall bursts through beneath the stone bridge and hangs down over the gateway, hiding the door. Beside the bridge there are flowers and trees—it's a stone house. Inside there are stone hearths, stone stoves, stone bowls, stone basins, stone beds, and stone benches. And on a stone tablet in the middle is carved: 'The Blessed Land of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit; the Cave Heaven of the Water Curtain Cave.' It's truly a place for us to settle in. And it's spacious enough—it could hold a thousand of us, old and young alike. Let's all go in and live there, and no longer put up with the temper of the sky. Inside:

When the wind blows, there's shelter; when it rains, a place to keep dry. Frost and snow hold no terrors, And the sound of thunder is never heard. Mists and rosy light forever shine upon it, Auspicious airs forever steam and curl. Pines and bamboo grow lovelier year upon year, And rare flowers are made new day after day."

At this every monkey was delighted.

They all cried: "You go first! Take us in! Take us in!"

The stone monkey crouched once more, screwed up his eyes, and leapt in, calling: "All of you, follow me in! In!" The bolder monkeys jumped in at once; the timid ones stretched out their necks and shrank back, scratched their ears and rubbed their cheeks, wailing and shrieking; after a bout of hesitation, they too went in.

Leaping over the bridge, they scrambled for basins and fought over bowls, seized the hearth and squabbled for beds, dragging things over here and shifting them over there—such is the unruly nature of monkeys, and never one of them still for a moment, until they had moved everything about and were worn out in body and spirit.

The stone monkey then sat erect on the seat of honor and said: "Gentlemen! 'A man without his word—how can he get on at all?' You said just now that whoever could get in, get out again, and remain unharmed should be made king. Now I have come in and gone out, gone out and come in again, and found this cave heaven where you may all sleep in peace and enjoy the blessings of a home. Why not make me your king?"

Hearing this, the monkeys all bowed low and offered no dissent. One by one, ranked in order of age, they lined up and bowed in homage, all crying "Great King of a Thousand Years." From that day the stone monkey ascended the royal seat, dropped the word "stone" from his name, and was called the Handsome Monkey King.

There is a poem in proof:

When the three yangs converged and all things quickened into life, The immortal stone, an embryo, held the essence of sun and moon. Borrowing the form of egg and monkey, the Great Way was made whole; Borrowing a name and surname, the elixir was matched and formed. Seen from within, unknowing—for it has no form; Joined to the outer world, knowingly taking shape. Every man in every age belongs to this same Way— Call him king or call him sage, he ranges as he will.

The Handsome Monkey King led a host of gibbons, macaques, and monkeys of every kind. He appointed his ministers and officers; by day they roamed the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and at night they lodged in the Water Curtain Cave. In happy concord, with hearts as one, they joined neither the flocks of flying birds nor the clans of running beasts, but ruled alone in their own right, in bliss beyond all measure. Thus:

In spring they gathered a hundred flowers for their food; In summer they sought out every fruit for their livelihood. In autumn they harvested taro and chestnuts to see the season through; In winter they foraged Solomon's-seal roots to pass the year.

The Handsome Monkey King enjoyed this life of innocent bliss for—well, who could say—some three or five hundred years. One day, in the midst of a merry feast with all his monkeys, he suddenly fell melancholy, and tears rolled down his face.

The monkeys hurriedly bowed round him and asked: "Why is the Great King so troubled?" The Monkey King said: "Though this is a happy hour, I have one small worry for what lies far ahead, and so I am troubled." The monkeys laughed: "Great King, how little you know contentment! Day after day we make merry in mountains of immortals and lands of blessing, in ancient caves and divine territories—subject to no unicorn's jurisdiction, ruled by no phoenix's authority, bound by no earthly king's law—free and unfettered, utterly. Ours is fortune beyond all measure. What worry can there be for the far future?"

The Monkey King said: "Today we obey no human king's law, and we fear no tyranny of beast or bird. But the day will come when we are old and our blood runs thin—and in the darkness, old King Yama will still have charge of us. Once this body dies, will we not have lived in this world in vain, unable to dwell any longer among the beings of Heaven and Earth?" At these words the monkeys covered their faces and wept, every one of them grieving over impermanence.

Then from among the ranks a long-armed gibbon suddenly leapt out and cried in a ringing voice: "Great King, if you can look so far ahead, then as the saying goes, your heart for the Way has awakened! Among the five kinds of creatures, only three names are exempt from old King Yama's rule."

The Monkey King asked: "Which three?" The gibbon said: "They are the Buddhas, the Immortals, and the Sages—these three escape the wheel of rebirth. They are neither born nor destroyed, and they live as long as Heaven and Earth, as long as the mountains and the rivers." The Monkey King asked: "And where do these three dwell?" The gibbon said: "They dwell only in the world of humankind, in ancient caves and mountains of the immortals." At this the Monkey King was overjoyed: "Tomorrow I shall bid you all farewell and go down the mountain. I will wander the far corners of the sea and the ends of the earth until I find these three and learn the secret of agelessness and eternal life, escaping forever from the doom of King Yama."

Oh!

With that one resolve, he leapt beyond the net of rebirth— And thus was the Great Sage Equal to Heaven brought forth.

The monkeys clapped their hands and cried: "Excellent! Excellent! Tomorrow we'll cross the ridges and climb the peaks, gather fruits of every kind, and lay a grand banquet to send the Great King on his way!"

The next day the monkeys went indeed to pick immortal peaches and rare fruits, to dig yams and Solomon's seal, and gathered fragrant orchids and wondrous flowers—everything, of every kind, all in goodly order.

They set out stone stools and stone tables and arrayed immortal wines and delicacies. Just look:

Golden balls and pearly pellets, crimson-split and golden-plump. Golden balls, pearly pellets—winter cherries, lovely to see and sweet to the taste; Crimson-split, golden-plump—ripe plums, fragrant with a tart tang. Fresh longan with sweet flesh and paper-thin skin; Fire-red lychees with tiny pits and scarlet sacs. Green crabapples offered still upon the branch; Loquats in pale-yellow calyxes held up with their leaves. Hare-pear and chicken-heart jujube, quenching thirst, dispelling care and drunkenness. Fragrant peaches and melting apricots, sweet, sweet as jade nectar and golden syrup; Crisp plums and red bayberries, tart, tart as fresh butter and clotted cream. Watermelons ripe, red-fleshed and black-seeded; Great persimmons, four-cleft, in yellow skins. Pomegranates split open, cinnabar grains like fire-crystal pearls; Taro and chestnuts broken apart, their firm flesh like golden agate. Walnuts and ginkgo nuts fit to serve with tea; Coconuts and grapes fit to brew into wine. Hazelnuts, pine nuts, and torreya nuts heaped upon platters; Oranges, sugar-cane, mandarins, and citrons spread across the tables. Yams roasted soft, Solomon's seal stewed tender, Poria and coix seeds pounded fine and simmered slow in stone pots. Though the world of men may have its rare delicacies, How can they compare with the joy and peace of mountain monkeys?

The monkeys seated the Handsome Monkey King in the place of honor and ranged themselves below in order of age; one by one they came forward, offering wine, offering flowers, offering fruit, and they feasted and drank deep all day long.

The next morning the Handsome Monkey King rose early. "Little ones," he said, "go and break me some dead pine boughs and lash them into a raft; cut me a bamboo pole to serve as an oar, and pack up some fruits and the like—I am going away." Then he boarded the raft alone, pushed off with all his strength, and drifted and bobbed straight out onto the waves of the great sea. Riding the wind of Heaven, he crossed to the shores of the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. This journey of his was truly:

A monkey of Heaven's own making, mighty in the Way, Leaving his mountain on a raft before the wind. Crossing oceans, seeking the immortal Way, Resolved, with single heart, to build a deed of merit. With fate and fortune his, he leaves the world's desires; Free of all sorrow, he shall meet the dragon of the source. Surely he will find a kindred spirit To speak the source and stream—and all the laws be clear.

And indeed his hour had come. From the moment he boarded the raft, a strong southeast wind blew day after day, until it carried him to the northwestern shore—the realm of the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. Sounding the water with his pole and finding it shallow, he abandoned the raft, leapt ashore, and there on the coast he saw folk fishing, shooting wild geese, digging clams, and panning salt. He walked up to them, played one of his tricks, and put on a fearsome face—whereupon the people flung down their baskets and nets and scattered in all directions. He caught one who could not run, stripped off the man's clothes, and dressed himself in them after the manner of men. Then, swaggering and swaying, he crossed prefecture after prefecture, and in the market towns he learned the manners of men and the speech of men. Breakfasting at dawn and lodging at night, he gave his whole heart to seeking the Way of the Buddhas, the Immortals, and the Sages, hunting for a means of never growing old. But he saw that the people of this world were all of them runners in the race for fame and gain, and not one of them gave a thought to his own life.

Truly:

When will the scramble for fame and gain come to an end? Rising early, sleeping late—no freedom at all! Riding donkey or mule, they dream of noble steeds; Raised to prime minister, they covet rank of prince. They fret and toil over food and clothes alone— But do they never fear King Yama's summons drawing near? All for the wealth and rank to bless their sons and grandsons— Not one of them is willing to turn his head!

The Monkey King sought out the Way of the immortals, but fate withheld the meeting. In the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa he string-walked the Great Wall and wandered the small county towns, until eight or nine years had passed without his noticing. Then he came to the Western Ocean, and it occurred to him that beyond the sea there must surely be immortals. Alone as before, he built himself another raft, drifted across the Western Sea, and came at last to the shores of the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift. He landed and searched far and wide for a long time, until suddenly he saw a mountain, lofty and beautiful, its forested foothills deep and secluded. He feared no wolves or serpents, dreaded no tigers or leopards, but climbed to the mountaintop and looked all around.

It was indeed a fine mountain:

A thousand peaks arrayed like rows of halberds, Ten thousand fathoms unfolded like screens. Sunlight on the mountain haze lightly veils the green; The rain gone, the dark hues coolly hold their blue. Withered vines twine about ancient trees; An old ford marks the secluded road. Rare flowers and auspicious grasses, Tall bamboo and lofty pines— Tall bamboo and lofty pines, evergreen ten thousand years, outshining every blessed land; Rare flowers and auspicious grasses, unfading through the four seasons, rivaling Penglai and Yingzhou. The hidden birds cry, and the sound is near; The welling springs gurgle, and the water runs clear. In valley after valley, orchid and iris wind about; On every sheer-cut cliff, moss and lichen grow. The dragon-veins of these rolling crests are good— Some lofty hermit surely hides his name among them.

As he stood gazing, he suddenly heard voices from deep within the forest. He hurried toward the sound, threaded his way into the trees, and cocked an ear to listen: it was someone singing. The song went:

"I watch the game of chess until my axe-haft rots; I fell the timber—ding, ding, ding. Slowly I walk the cloudy edge of the valley's mouth, Sell my firewood, buy my wine, And laugh aloud, delighting in myself. Autumn stands high upon the gray-white path; Beneath the moon I pillow on a pine root, And sleep until the sky is light. I know the old woods—up the crags, across the ridges, Axe in hand to cut the withered vines. I gather it and bind it all into one load, Then walk singing to the market square And trade it for three measures of rice. No strife is there, no contest— Prices are fair, and even. I know no cunning schemes, no clever reckoning; No glory and no disgrace— In tranquil plainness I stretch out my years. Those whom I meet are immortals, or adepts of the Way: Sitting quiet, we discourse upon the Yellow Court."

At these words the Handsome Monkey King was overjoyed: "So the immortals were hiding here all along!" He bounded inside for a closer look, and found a woodcutter raising his axe to chop firewood. But see how remarkable his dress:

On his head a broad-brimmed hat of woven bamboo— The newly-shed sheath of spring bamboo shoots. On his body a garment of cloth— Yarn spun from the cotton tree. Round his waist a knotted sash with a ring— Silk from the mouth of an aged silkworm. On his feet sandals of straw— The tough fiber of dried sedge, twisted and plaited. In his hand an axe of honest steel; Across his shoulder a rope of hemp. Pines to bend and withered trees to split— What woodman's skill could ever match this man's?

The Monkey King drew near and called out: "Old Immortal! Your disciple salutes you!"

The woodcutter hastily dropped his axe and turned to return the greeting: "Heaven forbid! Heaven forbid! I'm a poor, clumsy fellow who can scarcely keep body and soul together—how could I dare be called an immortal?" The Monkey King said: "If you're not an immortal, how is it you speak the words of immortals?" The woodcutter said: "What immortal words have I spoken?" The Monkey King said: "When I came to the edge of the wood, I heard you say: 'Those whom I meet are immortals, or adepts of the Way; sitting quiet, we discourse upon the Yellow Court.' The Yellow Court is scripture of the true Way—what are you, if not an immortal?"

The woodcutter laughed: "I'll not hide it from you. That song is called 'A Courtyard Full of Fragrance,' and an immortal taught it to me. That immortal lives right next to my cottage. He saw that my household affairs were hard and that I was troubled day after day, so he taught me this song, saying that whenever worry came upon me I should sing it through—first to ease my heart, and second to drive off my weariness. Just now something was troubling me, and so I was singing it. Who could have thought you'd be listening?"

The Monkey King said: "Since you live right next to an immortal, why don't you follow him and cultivate the Way? Wouldn't it be fine to learn a means of never growing old?" The woodcutter said: "My whole life has been one of hardship. My parents raised me until I was eight or nine, when I first came to understand the ways of the world—and then, unhappily, my father died, and my mother was left a widow. I have no brothers or sisters, only me; there was nothing for it but to wait upon her morning and night. Now that my mother is grown old, I dare not leave her more than ever. And our fields have gone to waste, and we lack food and clothing, so all I can do is cut a couple of bundles of firewood and carry it to market to sell for a few coppers, buy a few measures of rice, cook and prepare the meals myself, and provide for my old mother. That is why I cannot go off and cultivate the Way."

The Monkey King said: "By what you say, you are a gentleman who does honor to his mother—good will surely come of it hereafter. Only point out to me where that immortal lives, so I may go and pay my respects." The woodcutter said: "Not far, not far. This mountain is called the Mountain of the Numinous Terrace and the Square Inch. In it there is a cave called the Cave of the Slanted Moon and Three Stars. In that cave lives an immortal known as the Patriarch Subodhi. The disciples who have gone out from the Patriarch are past all counting—there are thirty or forty still following him now. Follow that little path southward for seven or eight li, and you will come to his home."

The Monkey King caught the woodcutter by the hand: "Brother, come along with me! If I gain any good from this, I swear I'll never forget the kindness of your guidance." The woodcutter said: "What a man you are—so impractical! I've told you all this already, and you still don't take it in? If I went off with you, wouldn't that ruin my livelihood? Who would provide for my old mother? I'm going to cut my firewood. You go yourself. Go on—go!"

The Monkey King had no choice but to take his leave. Out of the deep wood he found the path, crossed over a hillside, and after some seven or eight li he saw, sure enough, a cave dwelling. He drew himself up and looked. What a place it was! Just look:

Mists and rosy clouds scattering their hues, Sun and moon swaying down their light. A thousand ancient cypresses, Ten thousand joints of tall bamboo— A thousand ancient cypresses, trailing rain, half-sky green softly waving; Ten thousand joints of tall bamboo, holding mist, one whole ravine deep in blue. Strange flowers spread brocade before the gate; Jade grasses breathe their fragrance by the bridge. The stone crags, jutting sharp, are moist with green moss; The hanging cliffs, spread high, are long with emerald lichen. Now and again an immortal crane is heard to cry; Every little while a phoenix is seen to soar. When the crane cries, its voice rings through the nine marshes to the farthest sky; When the phoenix soars, its plumes of five hues glitter in the rainbow clouds. Black gibbons and white deer appear and vanish; Golden lions and jade elephants come and go at will. Look closely at this blessed and numinous land— It truly rivals Heaven itself!

He saw that the cave door was shut fast, all still and silent, without a trace of anyone. Suddenly he turned, and there by the cliff stood a stone tablet, some three zhang and more in height and eight-odd chi in breadth, bearing ten great characters: "The Mountain of the Numinous Terrace and the Square Inch; the Cave of the Slanted Moon and Three Stars." The Handsome Monkey King was overjoyed: "The people of this place are honest folk after all. There really is such a mountain, such a cave." He gazed a long while, not daring to knock. Instead he leapt up into the pine branches, picked pine nuts, ate a few, and played.

After a little while he heard a creak—the cave door opened, and out came an immortal youth, strikingly noble in bearing, refined and singular of face, quite unlike the common run of men. Just look at him:

Twin tufts of knotted silk upon his head, Two sleeves of wind about his ample robe. His face and form are set apart from other men; His heart and aspect both are empty and clear. A long-time guest beyond the world of things, An everlasting youth amid the hills. Not one speck of dust can cling to him— Let the sixty-year cycles roll on as they will.

The boy came out the door and called loudly: "Who is making a disturbance out here?"

The Monkey King dropped from the tree, sprang forward, and bowed: "Immortal youth, I am a disciple come seeking the Way and learning to be an immortal—I'd never dare make a disturbance here." The boy laughed: "So you've come to seek the Way?" "I have," said the Monkey King. The boy said: "My master has just this moment left his couch and mounted the altar to expound the Way. Before he had even told us why, he sent me out to open the door, saying: 'There is a cultivator of the Way outside—go and receive him.' That must be you?" The Monkey King laughed: "It is, it is." "Then follow me in," said the boy.

The Monkey King straightened his robes, composed himself with dignity, and followed the boy straight into the depths of the cave heaven: tier upon tier of deep halls and jasper towers, court upon court of palaces of pearl and gates of shell—no tongue could tell of those still chambers and secluded abodes—until they came at last beneath the jasper terrace. There sat the Patriarch Subodhi enthroned, with thirty minor immortals standing in attendance on either side below. Truly:

The Great Enlightened Golden Immortal, of undefiled form— Patriarch Bodhi, of the wondrous aspect of the West. Unborn, undying, thrice-three in his works; Whole in breath and spirit, myriad-myriad in his mercy. Emptiness and stillness follow change at will; Suchness and true nature act as they please. A majestic body coeval with Heaven itself— A great master of the Law, his mind made clear through endless kalpas.

At the sight of him the Handsome Monkey King cast himself to the floor and kowtowed beyond all counting, crying out: "Master! Master! Your disciple comes with a devoted heart! A devoted heart!"

The Patriarch said: "Where are you from? First tell me plainly your district, your country, and your surname—then you may bow." The Monkey King said: "Your disciple hails from the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the country of Aolai, in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body." The Patriarch snapped: "Drive him out! The man is a fraud and a liar—what fruit of the Way could he ever attain?" The Monkey King kowtowed on and on without pause: "Your disciple speaks the honest truth—there is no deceit in me whatsoever." The Patriarch said: "If you are honest, how can you claim to come from the Eastern Continent? That place is separated from here by two great oceans and the whole Southern Continent of Jambudvipa—how could you ever have gotten here?" The Monkey King knocked his head upon the floor: "Your disciple crossed the oceans and wandered realm upon realm for ten-odd years, and only now have I found my way here."

The Patriarch said: "Very well then—since you truly walked your way here. What is your surname?"

The Monkey King said: "I have no xing."

[Translator's note: a pun—the Chinese xing means both "surname" and "temperament."]

"If people curse me, I feel no anger; if they strike me, I feel no wrath; I merely offer an apology, and there the matter ends. All my life, I have had no temper."

The Patriarch said: "Not that kind of xing. What was your parents' surname?" The Monkey King said: "I have no parents either." The Patriarch said: "No parents? Then surely you were born of a tree?" The Monkey King said: "Not of a tree, though I did grow out of a rock. All I remember is that there was an immortal stone on

the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and in the year when that stone burst open, I was born."

Hearing this, the Patriarch was secretly delighted, and thought: "So then—he was engendered by Heaven and Earth themselves. Rise, then, and walk for me to see." The Monkey King sprang up and waddled back and forth a couple of times.

The Patriarch laughed: "Though your body is a sorry, ill-favored thing, you really do look like a husun—a macaque that lives on pine nuts. Let me give you a surname drawn from your own form. I should have you take the hu of husun. Drop the beast radical from the character hu, and you have gu and yue—'ancient moon.' Gu means old; yue means yin, the feminine principle. Old yin cannot quicken and beget—so better you take the sun of husun. Drop the beast radical from the character sun, and you have zi and xi. Zi means a son, a male child; xi means a tiny infant. That fits exactly the doctrine of the original infant. Your surname shall be Sun."

[Translator's note: the patriarch is playing with the written characters—hu (猢) "macaque" becomes gu-yue "ancient moon," which he rejects as inauspicious; sun (狲) "macaque" becomes zi-xi "child-infant," which he approves; and Sun (孙) is both "grandchild" and the sound of the second syllable of husun.]

When the Monkey King heard this he was overjoyed, and he kowtowed toward the altar: "Good! Good! Good! Only today do I have a surname at all! I beg your mercy, Master—since I now have a surname, I beg you bestow a name as well, that there may be something to call me by."

The Patriarch said: "Our school has twelve generational characters, and by their order you are the disciple of the tenth generation." The Monkey King asked: "Which twelve characters?" The Patriarch said: "They are Guang, Da, Zhi, Hui, Zhen, Ru, Xing, Hai, Ying, Wu, Yuan, Jue—Broad, Great, Wise, Sagely, True, Thus, Nature, Ocean, Bright, Awakened, Perfect, Enlightened. The generation that falls to you is Wu, 'Awakened.' What if your religious name were Sun Wukong—'Sun, Awakened to Emptiness'?"

The Monkey King laughed: "Good! Good! Good! From this day on, I shall be called Sun Wukong!"

Truly:

When primal chaos first was parted, there was no surname at all; To smash through stubborn emptiness, one must awaken to the Void.

But as for what fruits of the Way he was to cultivate hereafter—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Wukong Thoroughly Awakens to the Wondrous Truth of Bodhi; He Breaks the Demon and Returns to His Origin, Merging with the Primal Spirit

The story tells how the Handsome Monkey King, having received his name, bounded about in delight and bowed before Subodhi to give thanks. The Patriarch at once ordered the assembly to lead Sun Wukong out beyond the second gate and teach him the courtesies of sweeping and waiting, of advancing and retiring, of comportment among others. The immortals obeyed and went out. Once outside, Wukong bowed again to his senior brothers and made his sleeping quarters in the corridors and verandas.

Early the next morning he joined his senior brothers to learn speech and manners, to discuss the classics and expound the Way, to practice calligraphy and burn incense—and so it went every day. In his spare hours he swept the grounds and hoed the garden, tended flowers and pruned trees, gathered firewood and lit fires, carried water and hauled tubs of whatever was needed. Nothing required was left unfurnished. Unnoticed, six or seven years slipped by in the cave.

One day the Patriarch mounted the altar, sat in his high seat, summoned the immortals, and began to expound the Great Way. Truly:

Heavenly flowers scattered down in showers; Golden lotuses welled up from the earth. Marvelously he expounded the doctrine of the Three Vehicles; Subtle and fine, the ten thousand laws complete. Slowly he swayed his chowry tail, scattering pearls and jade; His voice rolled like thunder, stirring the ninefold heavens. Now he spoke of the Way, now discoursed upon Chan— The three teachings blended, as they are at root. One single word he opened into the truth of devotion, Pointing beyond birth and death, into the mystery of one's nature.

Sun Wukong, listening at the side, was so delighted that he scratched his ears and rubbed his cheeks, his brows blossoming, his eyes smiling. Unable to contain himself, his hands began to dance and his feet to stamp.

Suddenly the Patriarch caught sight of him and called: "Sun Wukong! Why are you capering and dancing about in the ranks instead of listening to my discourse?"

Wukong said: "Your disciple was listening with all his heart, and when I heard the wondrous notes of the Master's voice, I could not contain my joy, and so, unawares, I began to bound about like this. I beg the Master's pardon!"

The Patriarch said: "Since you can recognize wondrous notes, let me ask you: how long have you been in this cave?" Wukong said: "Your disciple was dull from the start and has never known the seasons. All I remember is that when the hearth went cold I would go behind the mountain to cut firewood, and there I found a hill of fine peach trees. I have eaten my fill of peaches there seven times."

The Patriarch said: "That hill is called Rotten Peach Mountain. If you have eaten your fill seven times, then seven years must have passed. And now—what Way would you learn from me?" Wukong said: "Whatever the Master in his wisdom sees fit to teach. If there is any breath of the Way in it, your disciple will learn it."

The Patriarch said: "Within the gate of the word 'Way' there are three hundred and sixty side-doors, and every side-door has its fruits of perfection. Which door would you learn?"

Wukong said: "As the Master pleases. Your disciple will follow with all his heart."

The Patriarch said: "Shall I teach you the Way of the side-door of 'Art'?" Wukong said: "What does the Way of the Art-door amount to?" The Patriarch said: "The Art-door includes summoning immortals, consulting

the planchette, divining by lots and yarrow stalks—arts by which one may know how to seek fortune and shun calamity." Wukong said: "Can such things win one eternal life?" The Patriarch said: "They cannot! They cannot!" Wukong said: "Then I won't learn it! I won't learn it!"

The Patriarch said: "Shall I teach you the Way of the side-door of 'Stillness'?"

Wukong said: "What fruits of perfection lie in the Stillness-door?" The Patriarch said: "This is the practice of fasting from grain, of guarding quietude and doing nothing, of sitting in meditation and trance, of keeping silence and holding the fast—sleeping exercises, standing exercises, entering trance, sitting out the seclusion." Wukong said: "Can that too win eternal life?"

The Patriarch said: "It is like an unfired brick." Wukong laughed: "Master, you're at it again! I've told you I don't understand your slang. What do you mean, 'an unfired brick'?" The Patriarch said: "Just as at the mouth of a kiln a brick may be shaped and formed but has not yet passed through fire and water: the moment a great rain comes pouring down, it will crumble away." Wukong said: "That's not lasting either. I won't learn it! I won't learn it!"

The Patriarch said: "Shall I teach you the Way of the side-door of 'Action'?"

Wukong said: "And what is the Way of the Action-door?" The Patriarch said: "This is the practice of doing and making: harvesting the yin to mend the yang, drawing the bow and treading the crossbow, rubbing the navel and passing the breath, working compounds in the alchemical furnace, burning the毛 herbs and firing the cauldron, taking in red lead, refining the autumn-mineral stone, drinking women's milk—things of that sort." Wukong said: "Can these too win eternal life?" The Patriarch said: "To seek eternal life that way is like scooping the moon out of the water." Wukong said: "There you go again, Master! What do you mean, 'scooping the moon out of the water'?" The Patriarch said: "The moon hangs in the wide sky; its reflection lies in the water. Though you see it plainly, there is nothing there to lay hold of—in the end it comes to nothing at all." Wukong said: "I won't learn that either! I won't learn it!"

At these words the Patriarch cried "Pah!", leapt down from the high seat, ruler in hand, and pointing at Wukong said: "You ape! You won't learn this and you won't learn that—just what is it you're waiting for?"

He stepped forward, rapped Wukong three times on the head, then walked away with his hands clasped behind his back, went inside, shut the middle door, and left the whole assembly standing there.

The audience of listeners was frightened out of its wits, and everyone blamed Wukong: "You wretched monkey, what manners are these! The Master was offering to transmit the Way to you—why wouldn't you learn, and why did you bandy words with him? Now you've offended him, who knows when he'll come out again!"

They all complained of him, despised him, and shunned him. But Wukong was not the least bit angry—he only smiled and smiled. For the Monkey King had already solved the riddle of the plate and held the answer secretly in his heart, which is why he did not quarrel with the others but only endured in silence. The Patriarch's three raps on his head meant that he should fix his mind on the third watch of the night; his walking away with hands clasped behind his back and shutting the middle door meant that Wukong should enter by the back door, so that the Way might be transmitted to him in secret.

That day Wukong mingled happily with the rest before the Cave of the Three Stars, watching the sky and wishing evening would hurry. At dusk he went to bed with the others, feigned sleep, and stilled his breath and composed his spirit. There was no watchman's clapper or water-clock in the mountains to mark the hours, so he simply regulated the breath passing in and out of his nostrils.

Around the hour of Zi he rose softly, dressed, quietly opened the front door, slipped away from the others, and stepped outside. Lifting his head, he looked about. Truly:

The moon was bright, the white dew cold; The eight ends of the world were far and free of dust. Deep in the trees the hidden birds were sleeping; From the spring's source the water came whispering down. Fireflies scattered their glimmering shadows; Passing wild geese wrote their characters on the clouds. It was the very hour of the third watch— The hour to seek the truth of the Way.

Watch him take the old path to the back door: there it stood, half open. Wukong rejoiced: "The Master truly means to transmit the Way to me—that's why he left the door open." He tiptoed forward, slipped sideways through the door, and walked straight to the Patriarch's sleeping couch. The Patriarch lay curled up, facing inward, asleep. Not daring to wake him, Wukong knelt before the couch. Before long the Patriarch awoke, stretched out his legs, and chanted to himself:

Hard! Hard! Hard! The Way is deepest mystery— Do not take the golden elixir lightly. Unless you meet a perfected one to pass on the secret, Your tongue will only dry, expounding words in vain!

Wukong answered at once: "Master, your disciple has been kneeling here waiting a long while."

Hearing Wukong's voice, the Patriarch rose, threw on his clothes, sat cross-legged, and snapped: "You ape! Why aren't you asleep out front, instead of coming round to my back quarters?" Wukong said: "Yesterday before the altar the Master gave his consent before all of us: he would teach your disciple at the third watch, through the back door. That is why I made bold to come straight to your couch." Hearing this, the Patriarch was greatly pleased, and thought to himself: "This fellow truly was engendered by Heaven and Earth—otherwise, how could he have cracked my hidden riddle of the plate?"

Wukong said: "There are no 'six ears' in this place—only your disciple, alone. I beg the Master, in his great mercy, to transmit to me the Way of eternal life. I shall never forget the kindness!" The Patriarch said: "You have the destiny for it, and I am glad to speak of it. Since you understood the hidden riddle of the plate, come near, listen closely, and I will transmit to you the marvelous Way of long life." Wukong knocked his head in thanks, washed his ears, gave his whole mind, and knelt beneath the couch.

The Patriarch said:

The true and wondrous secret, open and occult at once— For cultivating life itself, there is no other doctrine. All comes down to essence, breath, and spirit: Guard them firmly, let nothing leak away. Let nothing leak away—store them within the body; Receive my transmission, and your Way will flourish. Keep the oral formula in mind: it profits much; Cast out evil desire, and gain the clear coolness. Gain the clear coolness, and the light shines pure— Then on the elixir terrace you may enjoy the bright moon. The moon conceals the Jade Hare; the sun conceals the Crow; Of themselves, tortoise and serpent coil together. Coiling together, your life stands firm— You can plant golden lotuses in the very fire. Gather the Five Elements and use them upside down; When the work is done, you become at will a Buddha or an Immortal.

Now that the root was laid bare, Wukong's spirit was quick and fortune smiled upon him; he engraved the oral formula upon his memory, bowed deep thanks to the Patriarch, and went out the back door to look. The eastern sky was faintly paling toward white; in the west the golden light still blazed bright.

By the old path he came round to the front door, gently pushed it open, went in, and sat down in his old sleeping place, deliberately rattling the bed and calling: "It's light! It's light! Time to get up!"

The others were still fast asleep, with no notion that Wukong had already gained his great prize. From that day on he played the fool among them, secretly keeping up his practice, regulating his breath before Zi and after Wu.

Three more years passed in this way. Then the Patriarch again mounted his seat and expounded the Dharma for the assembly—discoursing now on koans and figures of speech, now on outward appearances and their husks.

Suddenly he asked: "Where is Wukong?" Wukong came forward and knelt: "Your disciple is here." The Patriarch said: "What Way have you been cultivating all this while?" Wukong said: "Of late your disciple's knowledge of Dharma-nature has grown sound, and the root grows daily firmer." The Patriarch said: "Since you know Dharma-nature and have grasped the root, the spiritual body is already assured. But you must still beware the Three Calamities." Hearing this, Wukong pondered a long time and said: "Master, your words are mistaken. I have always heard that when the Way is high and virtue deep, one lives as long as Heaven itself; when water and fire are in balance, no illness arises. How can there be any 'Three Calamities'?"

The Patriarch said: "This Way of yours is no ordinary way: it seizes upon the creative power of Heaven and Earth and intrudes upon the hidden springs of sun and moon. Once the elixir is achieved, ghosts and gods cannot tolerate you. You will keep your youthful looks and lengthen your years—but five hundred years on, Heaven will send down the Calamity of Thunder to strike you. You must see into your nature and clarify your mind, and slip out of its way beforehand. Escape it, and your lifespan will equal Heaven's; fail to escape, and your life ends then and there. Another five hundred years, and Heaven will send down the Calamity of Fire to burn you. This fire is no fire of Heaven and no common fire—it is called Yin Fire. It rises from the Bubbling Spring point in the sole of your foot, burns straight through to the crown palace, turns your five organs to ash and your four limbs to rot, and makes a thousand years of bitter practice all an empty dream. Another five hundred years, and the Calamity of Wind comes blowing upon you. This wind is no east, west, south, or north wind, no gentle gale or keen northwester, no breeze through flowers, willows, pines, or bamboo—it is called the Wind of Pi. It blows in through the fontanelle into the six organs, passes the elixir field, pierces the nine apertures, dissolves flesh and bone, and the body falls apart of itself. So you must learn to escape them all."

At these words Wukong's hair stood on end, and he knocked his head and bowed: "I implore the Master, in his mercy, to teach me the means of escaping the Three Calamities. I will never dare forget the kindness."

The Patriarch said: "That is not difficult either. Only you are not like other men, and so it cannot be transmitted." Wukong said: "My head is as round as any man's and holds up the sky; my feet are as square and tread the earth; I have my nine apertures and four limbs, my five organs and six viscera—how am I not like other men?" The Patriarch said: "You look like a man, indeed—but you have no cheeks." (For the monkey's face is all bony angles, hollow-cheeked and sharp-muzzled.)

Wukong felt his own face and laughed: "Master, you didn't reckon on this! True, I have no cheeks—but I have this crop-sack that men lack. It more than balances the account!"

The Patriarch said: "Very well then. Which will you learn? There is one series, the numbers of the Heavenly Constellations, which comprises thirty-six transformations; and one series, the numbers of the Earthly Fiends, which comprises seventy-two transformations." Wukong said: "Your disciple would rather cast his net wide—I'll learn the seventy-two transformations of the Earthly Fiends." The Patriarch said: "In that case, come forward, and I will give you the formula." He leaned to Wukong's ear and spoke low—and who knows what marvelous method he imparted.

When one aperture opens, a hundred apertures open: this Monkey King learned the formula, practiced and refined it on his own, and mastered all seventy-two transformations.

One day the Patriarch was enjoying the evening scene before the Cave of the Three Stars with his disciples. He said: "Wukong, is the business accomplished or not?" Wukong said: "Thanks to the Master's oceanic grace, your disciple's work is complete: I can already rise upon the rosy clouds and fly." The Patriarch said:

"Show me this flying of yours."

Wukong showed his mettle: he crouched, sprang, tumbled head over heels, leapt five or six zhang off the ground, and went skipping along the clouds for about the time it takes to eat a bowl of rice—but to and fro he covered hardly three li. Dropping down before the Master, he folded his arms and said: "Master, that is flying, soaring upon the clouds."

The Patriarch laughed: "That can't be called soaring upon clouds—crawling upon clouds, at best. As the old saying goes: 'The immortals of a morning roam the Northern Sea, and by dusk are in Cangwu.' With your half-day's effort covering less than three li, you can hardly even be called a cloud-crawler!" Wukong said: "What does 'roam the Northern Sea of a morning and Cangwu by dusk' mean?" The Patriarch said: "Those who truly ride the clouds rise of a morning from the Northern Sea, roam the Eastern Sea, the Western Sea, and the Southern Sea, and then return to Cangwu—and Cangwu is but another name for Lingling on the Northern Sea. To cross all the seas and all that lies beyond them in a single day—that is riding the clouds." Wukong said: "That is hard! Very hard!" The Patriarch said: "Nothing in this world is hard—only fear the man who sets his heart on it." At this Wukong knocked his head and bowed, and entreated: "Master, 'if you would do a man a favor, do it whole.' Show me the great mercy once more: teach me, along with the rest, this method of riding the clouds, and I will never dare forget the kindness."

The Patriarch said: "When the immortals ride the clouds, they all rise by stamping their feet. You are not of that sort. Just now I watched you go—only with a tumble and a jump did you get up into the air. I shall take that very manner of yours and teach you the Somersault Cloud." Wukong bowed and begged again, and the Patriarch gave him another formula, saying: "With this cloud, make the seal, recite the true words, clench your fists tight, give your body one shake, and spring up—one somersault, and you are eighteen thousand leagues away!"

The others all tittered: "Lucky Wukong! If you learn that trick, you could hire out as a courier—delivering letters and dispatches, anywhere at all—and never want for your rice!"

When dusk fell, master and disciples went back into the cave. That night Wukong exercised his spirit and refined the method until he had mastered the Somersault Cloud. From day to day, free and unfettered, he reveled in the joys of this deathless life.

One day, as spring gave way to summer, the assembly had been talking for hours beneath the pines.

" Wukong," they said, "what karma did you cultivate in some former life? The other day the Master whispered in your ear and taught you the transformations that escape the Three Calamities—have you learned them all?"

Wukong laughed: "I'll not hide it from you, brothers. For one thing, the Master did transmit them; for another, I toiled day and night. Yes—I've learned the whole of them." The others said: "While the hour is good, give us a demonstration. Let us see." Wukong, flattered, shook out his spirit and prepared to show off: "Brothers, give me a subject. What shall I become?" They said: "Turn into a pine tree, then."

Wukong made the seal, recited the spell, shook his body, and changed—and became a pine tree. Truly:

Lush and green, wreathed in mist through all four seasons, Soaring to the clouds, upright in its noble form. Not one trace of the demon monkey about it— All is bough that endures the frost and bears the snow.

The assembly clapped and roared with laughter: "Good monkey! Good monkey!" Their uproar, unheeded, disturbed the Patriarch.

He came hurrying out, staff in hand: "Who is making this racket?"

At his call the others hastily composed themselves, straightened their robes, and came forward.

Wukong resumed his true form, and mixed among them said: "May it please the Master—we were only holding our discussions here. There was no outsider making trouble."

The Patriarch shouted in anger: "You lot, bawling and shouting—it's no way for cultivators of the Way to carry on! For those who practice, the moment the mouth opens, spirit and breath scatter; the moment the tongue moves, right and wrong are born. How dare you laugh and clamor here?" The disciples said: "We would not presume to hide it from you, Master: Sun Wukong was just now performing transformations for fun. We bade him turn into a pine tree, and he did indeed become a pine tree. We applauded and cheered him, and so raised our voices and disturbed you. We beg forgiveness." The Patriarch said: "Rise, all of you." Then he called: "Wukong, come here! What spirit were you showing off? What pine tree did you become? Is this a skill to be flaunted before others? Suppose you see that another has a skill—will you not beg him for it? Suppose others see that you have one—they will certainly beg you. If you fear the trouble it brings, you will have to teach it; if you refuse to teach it, they will surely do you harm—and then your life will not be safe." Wukong knocked his head: "I only hope the Master will forgive me!" The Patriarch said: "I do not blame you. Only—go."

At these words Wukong's eyes filled with tears: "Master, where am I to go?" The Patriarch said: "Wherever you came from—there you must return." Wukong awoke at once: "I came from the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the country of Aolai, in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body." The Patriarch said: "Go back quickly, and preserve your life. You may not remain here!" Wukong accepted his sentence: "I must inform the Master: I have been away from home twenty years now. Glad as I am to think of seeing my old children and grandchildren again, I cannot forget the Master's great kindness, still unrepaid—and so I dare not go."

The Patriarch said: "What talk is this of kindness and duty? Only see to it that you get into no trouble that drags me in with you!"

Seeing there was no help for it, Wukong could only bow farewell and take leave of the assembly. The Patriarch said: "Mark this: go your way, and mischief is sure to follow you. Whatever evil you do, however violent the deeds—you are not, on any account, to say you are my disciple. Utter so much as half a word of it, and I shall know of it: I will have that ape of yours flayed and your bones sawn asunder, and your soul banished to the Ninth Dark Abyss, never through ten thousand kalpas to rise again!" Wukong said: "I would never dare mention the Master—not one word. I shall say only that I learned it all myself."

Wukong gave thanks, withdrew at once, made the seal, and with one tumbling bound leapt onto the Somersault Cloud and made straight for the Eastern Sea. In less than a single watch he already sighted the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit and the Water Curtain Cave. The Handsome Monkey King, knowing his own happiness, murmured to himself:

When I departed, my mortal bones and mortal flesh were heavy; Now, having gained the Way, my body is light, and lightly I move. In all the world no man will set his heart upon the Way— But set your heart on the mystery, and the mystery explains itself. Then, crossing the ocean, the waves forbade all passage; Today I come and go, and the road is easy. My master's parting words still ring within my ears— Who would have thought to see the Eastern Sea so soon?

Wukong brought his cloud down and went straight to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, following the paths. Suddenly he heard cranes crying and gibbons wailing—the cranes' cries piercing beyond the empyrean, the gibbons' wailing so piteous it wounded the heart.

He called out at once: "Children! I have come!"

From beneath the cliffs, from the rock hollows, from among the flowers and grass, from within the trees, monkeys great and small leapt out by the thousands and tens of thousands, and thronged round the Handsome

Monkey King, kowtowing and crying: "Great King, how could you be so careless of us! Why did you stay away so long? You left us stranded here, longing for you as the hungry long for food! Of late a demon has been tyrannizing us, trying to force us out of the Water Curtain Cave. We have fought him with our lives, holding him off. But these past days the villain has carried off our household goods and seized numbers of our children and nephews, and kept us sleepless day and night, guarding what was left of our home. Thank Heaven the Great King has come! Had you stayed away another year, mountain and cave alike would have belonged to another!"

Wukong's rage flared: "What demon dares behave so outrageously! Tell me all, in detail, and I'll seek him out and be avenged."

The monkeys knocked their heads: "We report to the Great King: the villain styles himself the Demon King of Havoc, and lives somewhere due north of here." Wukong said: "How far is it from here to his place?" The monkeys said: "He comes by cloud and goes by mist, by wind or rain, by lightning or thunder—we've no idea how far." Wukong said: "Then never fear. Go and play while I go find him!"

What a Monkey King! He sprang up, tumbled through the air, and went by one straight series of somersaults until he came due north and looked about. There stood a mountain, perilous and steep beyond words. A fine mountain:

Sheer brushstroke peaks thrust upward; Winding ravines run deep below. Sheer peaks pierce the empty sky; Deep ravines open into the gates of earth. Flowers and trees vie in wonder on the two cliffs; Pines and bamboo match their green in place after place. On the left, a dragon, tame and docile; On the right, a tiger, crouched and quiet. Iron oxen are often seen at the plowing; Golden coins are ever scattered in the sowing. Hidden birds pour forth their warbling notes; The scarlet phoenix stands facing the morning sun. Rocks glint and glimmer; waters lie clear and clean— All strange and twisting, savage and grim. Countless are the famous mountains of the world, With flowers that bloom and fall and crowds of weeds; But where else does a scene endure forever thus, Unmoved through all the eight seasons and four times of year? Truly the Mountain of the Source of the Pass, of the Three Realms, Nourishing the Water Cave of the Viscera of the Five Elements!

As the Handsome Monkey King stood silently taking in the view, he heard the sound of voices. He went straight down the mountain to find them, and there before the steep cliff was the very cave—the Water Cave of the Viscera. Outside the cave door several little demons were dancing, but at the sight of Wukong they bolted.

Wukong called: "Hold! Lend me the words of your mouth to carry the matter in my heart. I am the master of the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, due south of here. What 'Demon King of Havoc' of yours has bullied my children and grandchildren again and again? I have come especially to settle accounts with him!"

The little demons scurried into the cave and reported: "Great King! Trouble!" The Demon King said: "What trouble?" The little demons said: "There's a monkey-head outside who calls himself master of the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. He says you've bullied his children and grandchildren over and over, and he's come especially to settle accounts with you." The Demon King laughed: "I've often heard those monkey spirits speak of a king of theirs who went off to cultivate the Way. He must be the one who's come. What did he look like? What weapons has he?" The little demons said: "He had no weapons at all. Bare head, one red garment, a yellow sash at his waist, a pair of black boots on his feet—neither monk nor layman, no Taoist, no immortal—empty-handed, shouting at the door."

The Demon King said: "Bring my armor and my weapon!" The little demons brought them at once.

The Demon King donned helm and mail, seized his cutlass, and with his host of demons came out the door, calling in a loud voice: "Which of you is the master of the Water Curtain Cave?"

Wukong opened his eyes wide and looked. And there was the Demon King:

On his head a helmet of black gold, glittering in the sun; On his body a gown of black gauze, streaming in the wind. Below, black iron armor, lashed tight with leather thongs; On his feet embroidered boots—stately as a general. Ten arm-spans round the waist, three zhang tall, A single cutlass in his hand, its blade exceeding bright. Called the Demon King of Havoc— A burly, brutal, fearsome sight.

The Monkey King shouted: "You insolent fiend! Are your eyes so big you can't see Old Sun!"

The Demon King looked and laughed: "You're not four feet tall, not thirty years old, and empty-handed. Where do you find the insolence to come seeking accounts with me?" Wukong cursed: "You blind fiend! You think me small—growing big would be no trouble. You think me weaponless—these two hands of mine could pluck the moon from the sky's edge! Don't be afraid—just take a punch from Old Sun!" With a bound he leapt up and struck straight at the Demon King's face.

The Demon King thrust out a hand and blocked him: "A shrimp like you against my height—if I used my blade on you, I'd be laughed at for killing a man with a weapon. Let me set my cutlass aside and try a round of fisticuffs with you."

Wukong said: "Fair words! A stout fellow! Come on!" The Demon King dropped his stance and struck; Wukong ducked in, butting and countering. The two of them traded punches and kicks, charging and clashing. A long swing, though heavy, leaves gaps; short blows are close-knit and sure. Wukong worked the short ribs, rammed him in the groin, and with a few well-placed blows hurt him badly. The Demon King twisted aside, snatched up his great steel cutlass, and hacked at Wukong's skull.

Wukong sprang clear, and the blade cut only air. Seeing how fierce the Demon King was, Wukong used the method of the body outside the body: he plucked a handful of hairs, crammed them into his mouth, chewed them to bits, and spat them into the air, crying "Change!"—and they became two or three hundred little monkeys, clustering thick on every side.

For when a man attains the immortal body and can project his spirit in transformations, no form is unknown to him. Since gaining the Way, this Monkey King had on his body eighty-four thousand hairs, every single one able to transform, taking shape at will. Those little monkeys were sharp-eyed and nimble: blades could not touch them, spears could not wound them.

Watch them leap and dart, swarming up, surrounding the Demon King—hugging him, dragging him, diving between his legs, wrenching at his feet, kicking and biting, plucking his hair, gouging at his eyes, tweaking his nose, pummeling him—till they had him battered into a huddle. Then Wukong himself snatched away the cutlass, parted the little monkeys, and with one stroke split the Demon King's crown clean in two. Leading his host, he stormed into the cave and exterminated every demon, great and small.

One shake of his hairs, and they returned to his body.

But some would not come back to him: these were the little monkeys the Demon King had captured from the Water Curtain Cave. Wukong asked them: "How did you come to be here?" There were some fifty or so, all tearful: "Ever since the Great King went off to seek immortality, this villain has plagued us these two years, and finally swept us off and carried us here. And look—isn't that the household gear from our cave? Stone basins and stone bowls—he's carried them all off too." Wukong said: "Since it's our gear, carry it all outside." Then he set fire to the cave and burned the Water Cave of the Viscera dry and bare, so that all returned to one substance.

He said to the assembled monkeys: "Follow me home." The monkeys said: "Great King, when he brought us here we heard nothing but wind past our ears and floated, light as air, to this place. We never learned the road—how are we to get home?" Wukong said: "That was just one of his little spells—nothing hard about it! Now that one aperture in me is open, all are open: I can work it too. Shut your eyes and don't be afraid!"

What a Monkey King! He recited the spell, summoned a raging wind, and brought the cloud-heads down. "Children—open your eyes!" The monkeys' feet touched solid ground, and they knew their homeland. Every one of them rejoiced and dashed along the old road toward the cave door. The monkeys within came crowding out, and all thronged in together, ranked by age, to bow in homage to the Monkey King. They set out wine and fruit, welcomed him home, offered congratulations, and begged to hear how he had conquered the demon and rescued their children.

Wukong told the whole story in detail, and the monkeys could not praise him enough: "Great King—who would have thought that wherever you went, you'd learn arts like these!"

Wukong went on: "When I left you all those years ago, I drifted with the waves, floated across the Eastern Sea, and came to the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. There I learned to look like a man, put on these clothes, wore these boots, and swaggered my way about for eight or nine years—yet never found the Way. Then I crossed the Western Ocean, came to the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift, and searched a long, long time, until at last I met an old Patriarch who transmitted to me the true attainment of a lifespan equal to Heaven's, the great gate of immortality." The monkeys offered their congratulations.

Then Wukong laughed again: "Little ones, there is more cause for joy: I now have a surname." The monkeys asked: "What surname, Great King?" Wukong said: "My surname is now Sun; my religious name is Wukong." Hearing this, the monkeys clapped in delight: "The Great King is Old Sun—then we are all Second Sun, Third Sun, Youngest Sun, Little Sun—a family of Suns, a kingdom of Suns, a whole nest of Suns!" They all came to flatter Old Sun, and with great bowls and little dishes, coconut wine and grape wine, immortal flowers and immortal fruits—what a household joy it was!

Oh!

One surname runs through him all, and his body has come home to its root; He needs only the honor of enrollment upon the registers of the immortals.

But as for how it all turned out, and how his days in that realm began and ended—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Four Seas and a Thousand Mountains All Submit; The Ninefold Darkness and the Ten Categories Strike Out His Name

The story goes on to tell how the Handsome Monkey King returned in glory to his homeland. Having exterminated the Demon King of Havoc, he had seized the demon's great cutlass, and day after day he drilled his troops: he had the little monkeys cut bamboo for spears and whittle wood for blades, prepare banners and flags, fashion whistles, advance and retreat, camp and entrench—and so they sported for a long while. Then one day, sitting quietly, he fell to thinking: "If we keep up this game in earnest, we may alarm some human king; or some king of birds or king of beasts may take offense at us, claiming we are drilling troops in rebellion, and come against us with his armies. You lot, with your bamboo poles and wooden knives—how would you stand against them? We need sharp swords and halberds. But where are we to get them?" At this the monkeys were all frightened, and said: "The Great King sees far—but where could such weapons be had?"

Just then four old monkeys came forward—two horse-monkeys with red rumps, and two long-armed gibbons—and stood before him: "Great King, if it's sharp weapons you want, the thing is easy."

Wukong said: "How so?" The four monkeys said: "From our mountain, eastward across two hundred li of water, lie the borders of the country of Aolai. In that country sits a throne, and the city is full of soldiers and civilians past counting—there must be smiths of gold, silver, copper, and iron. If the Great King goes there, he might buy or have made some weapons, and drill us in their use, to guard our mountain. That would be the true means of lasting peace." Wukong was overjoyed: "You lot play on here—I'll be back directly."

What a Monkey King! He sprang onto the Somersault Cloud and in an instant had crossed the two hundred li of water. Sure enough, there stood a walled city: six streets and three markets, ten thousand households and a thousand gates, folk coming and going all in broad open daylight.

Wukong thought to himself: "There must be weapons ready-made here. I could go down and buy a few—or better, work a little magic and simply gather a few."

He made the seal, recited the spell, drew in a breath from the quarter of the wind, and blew it out with a whoop—and it became a wind that flew sand and rolled stones, a terrifying sight.

Where the storm-cloud rose, it churned heaven and earth; Black fog and gloomy haze turned all the land to dusk. Waves in the rivers and seas overturned, and fish and crabs cowered; Trees in the mountains snapped, and tigers and wolves fled. Every kind of commerce lost its traders; Every sort of livelihood was seen no more. The king upon his throne withdrew into the inner palace; Civil and military lords before the steps hurried to their yamens. The throne of a thousand autumns was blown clean over; The five-phoenix tower rocked upon its very foundations.

Where the wind arose, it terrified the king of Aolai; the three streets and six markets all slammed their doors and shut their gates, and no one dared walk abroad.

Only then did Wukong bring his cloud down and march straight in through the palace gates. He searched all the way to the armory and the weapons hall, forced the doors, and looked: inside were weapons past counting—swords, spears, halberds, battle-axes, pole-axes, scythes, whips, rakes, claws, maces, bows, crossbows, forks, lances—every sort, all complete.

At the sight he rejoiced: "How many can one pair of hands carry? Better work the method of the divided body and haul them off."

What a Monkey King! He plucked a handful of hairs, chewed them to pieces in his mouth, spat them out, recited the spell, and cried "Change!"—and they became a thousand little monkeys, all scrambling and seizing: the strong made off with five or seven weapons apiece, the weak with two or three, and the whole armory was swept utterly bare. Straight onto the cloud-heads they rose; he worked a summoning spell, called up the gale, and led his little monkeys home.

Now the monkeys of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, great and small, were playing outside the cave when they heard the sound of wind, and beheld in mid-air a tangle, a swarm, an unbounded host of monkey spirits dropping toward them—and they scattered shrieking in every direction.

Presently the Handsome Monkey King brought his cloud down, gathered in the cloud and mist, gave his body one shake, took back his hairs, and heaped the weapons in disorder before the mountain, calling: "Little ones! Come and take your weapons!"

The monkeys looked, and there stood Wukong alone on the open ground. They all ran up, kowtowed, and asked what it meant. Wukong told them all of it—the great wind, the carrying-off of the weapons, everything. When the monkeys had given thanks, they fell to scrambling for knives and snatching swords, clutching axes and wrestling for spears, bending bows and cranking crossbows, whooping and hollering—and played the whole day long.

The next day, as before, they drew up their camps. Wukong mustered the host of monkeys and counted upward of forty-seven thousand of them. The whole mountain's monstrous beasts were startled into attention: wolves, serpents, tigers, leopards, muntjacs and roe deer, foxes and wildcats, badgers and raccoon-dogs, lions and elephants, suanni and orangutans, bears and stags, wild boar and mountain cattle, antelope and blue rhinoceros, cunning beasts and divine mastiffs—demon kings of every kind, seventy-two caves in all, and every one came to pay homage and own the Monkey King as lord.

They brought tribute every year and answered the roll at each season's muster; some drilled with the ranks, some levied grain at each festival—all in fine order, till the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit was made strong as an iron bucket, a city of gold. The demon kings of every road brought in drums and gongs, banners and flags, helmets and armor, thronging and jostling, and day after day they practiced the war dance and drilled their hosts.

Just as the Handsome Monkey King was rejoicing, he said to the assembly: "You are all skilled with bow and crossbow, masters of your weapons—but this cutlass of mine is a clumsy thing and does not suit me. What's to be done?"

The four old monkeys stepped forward and reported: "The Great King is an immortal and a sage; common weapons will never serve. But tell us—can the Great King go beneath the water?" Wukong said: "Since I heard the Way, I have the merit of the seventy-two transformations of the Earthly Fiends; my Somersault Cloud has mightiest powers; I can vanish my body and escape my body, raise spells and lay spells; to Heaven above I have a road, into the earth below I have a gate; I walk on sun and moon without a shadow, enter metal and stone without hindrance; water cannot drown me, fire cannot burn me. Where is there that I cannot go?" The four monkeys said: "Since the Great King has such powers: under our iron-plated bridge, the water leads straight to the Dragon Palace of the Eastern Sea. If the Great King will only go down, find the old Dragon King, and ask him for some weapon—would that not content you?" At this Wukong rejoiced: "Wait—I'm off."

What a Monkey King! He sprang onto the bridge-head, worked the water-parting spell, made the seal, and with a plunge dove into the waves, parted the waters, and went straight down to the floor of the Eastern Ocean.

As he went along, a sea-patrolling yaksha barred his way and demanded: "You there, pushing through the water—which deity or saint are you? Speak plainly, that I may announce you and receive you properly."

Wukong said: "I am Sun Wukong, the Heaven-born sage of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, a close neighbor of your old Dragon King. How can you not know me?" At this the yaksha hurried back to the Crystal Palace and reported: "Great King! There is a Sun Wukong, Heaven-born sage of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, outside, who calls himself your close neighbor. He is about to arrive at the palace." The Dragon King of the Eastern Sea, Ao Guang, rose at once and came out to welcome him with his dragon sons and grandsons, his shrimp soldiers and crab generals: "Immortal, pray enter—pray enter!" They went into the palace and met; after he was seated and tea was served, the Dragon King asked: "When did the immortal attain the Way, and what arts were you taught?" Wukong said: "After I was born I left home to cultivate my nature, and gained a body neither born nor destroyed. Of late, drilling my children and grandchildren to guard our mountain and cave, I found I had no weapon. Long have I heard that my worthy neighbor enjoys the pleasures of jasper palaces and shell-towered courts—you must have divine weapons to spare. I have come especially to beg one of you."

The Dragon King, thus addressed, could hardly refuse. He bade the superintendent Mandarin-fish bring out a great battle-knife and present it.

Wukong said: "Old Sun doesn't use knives. Pray give me something else."

The Dragon King then bade Major Mackerel, with the strength-laborer Eel, carry out a nine-pronged fork.

Wukong jumped down, took it in his hands, ran through a set with it, and set it down: "Light! Light! Light! It doesn't answer to my hand. Pray give me another."

The Dragon King laughed: "Immortal, did you not look? That fork weighs three thousand six hundred catties!" Wukong said: "Doesn't answer to my hand! Doesn't answer!" The Dragon King, alarmed at heart, bade Admiral Bream and General Carp carry out a halberd with a painted shaft—a halberd weighing seven thousand two hundred catties.

Wukong ran up, took it in hand, threw a few postures, ran through a couple of passes, and planted it upright in the middle of the hall: "Still light! Light! Light!"

The old Dragon King grew truly afraid: "Immortal, this halberd is the heaviest thing in my palace. There are no other weapons." Wukong laughed: "As the ancients said: 'You'd never worry that the Dragon King of the Sea lacks treasure!' Go and look again. If you find something to my liking, I'll pay the full price." The Dragon King said: "Truly, in very truth, there is no more."

As they spoke, the Dragon Queen and the Dragon Princess came forward from behind: "Great King, this sage before your eyes is plainly no small matter. That divine iron in our sea-treasury, the treasure that fixed the depths of the River of Heaven—these last days it has been glowing with rosy light, its auspicious vapor rising. Can it be that its hour has come to come forth—and to meet this sage?"

The Dragon King said: "That was the plummet the Great Yu used, when he governed the waters, to fix the depths of rivers and seas—a piece of divine iron. What use could it be?" The Dragon Queen said: "Never mind use or no use—give it to him, let him alter it as he will, and see him out the palace gate. That will be the end of it."

The old Dragon King agreed, and told Wukong everything. Wukong said: "Bring it out for me to see." The Dragon King waved his hands: "It cannot be carried! It cannot be lifted! The immortal must go see for himself." Wukong said: "Where is it? Take me there." The Dragon King led him indeed into the middle of the sea-treasury—and suddenly there were ten thousand shafts of golden light.

The Dragon King pointed: "The thing that glows—that is it." Wukong tucked up his robe and stepped forward and felt it: an iron pillar, about a bushel-measure around, two zhang and more in length.

He seized it with both hands with all his strength: "Too thick! Too long by half! If it were shorter and thinner, I could use it."

At his words the treasure shrank several feet and slimmed a full span. Wukong hefted it again: "Thinner still would be better!" And the treasure truly grew a few measures thinner. Wukong, overjoyed, carried it out of the sea-treasury to look at it: at either end were two golden bands, and between them a length of black iron; close against the bands was engraved a line of characters, reading: "The As-You-Will Gold-Banded Cudgel. Weight: thirteen thousand five hundred catties."

He rejoiced in his heart: "This treasure, I'll wager, follows a man's will!"

As he walked, thinking aloud and hefting it in his hand: "A little shorter and thinner still would be perfect!" By the time he had brought it outside, it was two zhang long and no thicker than a rice-bowl. Watch him work his magic, throwing open his whole repertoire, whirling it round and round the Crystal Palace—till the old Dragon King's gallbladder froze and his heart pounded, the little dragon princes' souls flew out and scattered; turtles, soft-shelled turtles, water-lizards all drew in their necks; fish, shrimp, crabs, and monsters all hid their heads.

Wukong took the treasure in his hand and sat down in state upon the throne of the Crystal Palace.

He smiled at the Dragon King: "Many thanks for my worthy neighbor's generosity." The Dragon King said: "I dare not, I dare not." Wukong said: "This iron, useful as it is, leaves one thing more to say." The Dragon King said: "What more does the immortal require?" Wukong said: "Had there been no such iron, well and good. But now that I hold it in my hand, I have no armor to go with it. What of that? If you have any war-gear here, you might as well give me a suit, and I'll thank you for the lot together." The Dragon King said: "That, indeed, we have not." Wukong said: "'One guest does not trouble two hosts.' If you have none, then I shall certainly not leave this door." The Dragon King said: "I must trouble the immortal to try another sea; there, perhaps, you may find some." Wukong said: "'Better to sit at one house than run to three.' Ten thousand parts I beg one suit." The Dragon King said: "Truly we have none; had we any, we would offer it at once." Wukong said: "If you truly have none, then let me try this iron on you!" The Dragon King, panicked, said: "Immortal! Pray don't strike! Pray don't strike! Let me see whether my brothers have any—they shall send a suit." Wukong said: "And where are your brothers?" The Dragon King said: "My brothers are Ao Qin, Dragon King of the Southern Sea; Ao Shun, Dragon King of the Northern Sea; and Ao Run, Dragon King of the Western Sea." Wukong said: "Old Sun won't go calling! Won't go! As the proverb says, 'A promise of three is not worth the sight of two'—just send me one suit, high or low as you please, and have done." The old Dragon said: "The immortal need not go. Here I have an iron drum and a golden bell: whenever urgent business arises, beat the drum till it booms and strike the bell till it rings, and my brothers will arrive within the moment." Wukong said: "Since that's so—quick! Beat the drum and ring the bell!" And indeed the water-lizard general went off to ring the bell, and the turtle marshal came forward to beat the drum.

Presently, where the bell and drum sounded, the three Dragon Kings of the seas were truly startled, and within moments they arrived and all met outside.

Ao Qin said: "Elder brother, what urgent business calls for drum and bell?"

The old Dragon said: "Worthy brothers—it's a shame to speak of it! Some 'Heaven-born sage' of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit came this morning to claim me as neighbor, then demanded a weapon. We offered a steel fork: too small. We presented a painted halberd: too light. Then he took for himself, with his own hands, that piece of divine treasure-iron that anchors the bed of the River of Heaven, and put it through its paces. Now he sits in my palace demanding war-gear. I have none—that is why I rang the bell and beat

the drum and called you brothers here. Have you any gear? Give him a suit and see him out the door." Ao Qin, hearing this, was furious: "Brothers—let us muster our troops and take him!" The old Dragon said: "Speak not of taking! That iron—brush it and you die, graze it and you perish; touch it and the skin breaks; scrape it and the sinews tear!" Ao Run, Dragon King of the Western Sea, said: "Second Brother, don't cross hands with him. Just piece together a suit of gear and get him out the door; then present a memorial to Heaven above, and Heaven itself will destroy him." Ao Shun, Dragon King of the Northern Sea, said: "Well said. I have a pair of cloud-walking boots of lotus-fiber thread." Ao Run said: "I have brought a coat of golden chain-mail." Ao Qin said: "I have a purple-gold crown with phoenix wings." The old Dragon was delighted, led them into the Crystal Palace to be presented, and these were offered up.

Wukong donned the golden crown and golden mail, thrust his feet into the cloud-boots, swung the As-You-Will Cudgel, fought his way out the gate, and called to the assembled Dragon Kings: "Sorry for the disturbance! Sorry for the disturbance!"

The Dragon Kings of the four seas, mightily resentful, went off together to draft a memorial to Heaven above—but of that no more just now.

Watch this Monkey King: he parted the waters and returned straight to the iron-plated bridge-head, sprang up out of the waves—and there were the four old monkeys, leading all the monkeys, waiting at the bridge. Suddenly they saw Wukong leap out from beyond the waves without one drop of water on him, gleaming gold, walking up onto the bridge.

The monkeys all fell on their knees in awe: "Great King—what splendor! What splendor!"

Wukong, his face bright as spring, mounted the throne on high and stood the iron cudgel upright in the middle of the hall. The monkeys, knowing no better, all came to try lifting the treasure—but it was like dragonflies shaking an iron tree: not a hair's breadth would it stir.

One after another they bit their fingers and stuck out their tongues: "Gracious heavens! So heavy—however did you manage to carry it here!"

Wukong stepped forward, opened his hand, and gathered it up in one grasp. He laughed at the assembly: "Everything has its master. This treasure lay anchored in the sea-treasury—who knows how many thousands and hundreds of years—and this very year, of all years, it gave off its light. The Dragon King took it for a bar of black iron; he called it the divine treasure that anchors the bed of the River of Heaven. Those fellows could neither carry nor lift it, so they invited me to go take it in person. Then the treasure was two zhang and more in length, a bushel-measure thick; I took it in my grasp, thinking it too big, and it shrank a good deal; I bade it smaller, and it shrank a good deal more; I bade it smaller again, and it shrank again; and when I held it up and looked at it against the daylight, there was a line of characters upon it: 'The As-You-Will Gold-Banded Cudgel, thirteen thousand five hundred catties.' Stand back, all of you, and watch me call on it to change once more." He hefted the treasure in his hand and called: "Small! Small! Small!"—and at once it shrank to the likeness of an embroidery needle, small enough to tuck inside the ear and hide away.

The monkeys were astounded: "Great King! Take it out again and show us!"

The Monkey King indeed took it from his ear, set it on his open palm, and called: "Big! Big! Big!"—and at once it grew to a bushel-measure thick and two zhang long. He played with it to his heart's content, leapt onto the bridge, walked out of the cave, and with the treasure clenched in his fist worked the divine power of Heaven-Matching, Earth-Sharing: he bent at the waist, cried "Grow!"—and he grew ten thousand zhang tall: head like Mount Tai, waist like a soaring ridge, eyes like lightning, mouth like a basin of blood, teeth like swords and halberds; and the cudgel in his hand thrust upward to the Thirty-Three Heavens and pressed down to the Eighteenth Hell of Earth. The tigers, leopards, wolves, and serpents, the monstrous host of the whole mountain, the demon kings of the seventy-two caves—all were terrified into kowtows and worship,

their souls scattered and flying, trembling in every limb. In an instant he gathered in his magic form, shrank the treasure back into an embroidery needle, hid it in his ear, and returned to his cave. The demon kings of every cave came hurrying to offer congratulations.

Then they threw open the banners and beat the gongs till they rang. Rare delicacies of a hundred flavors were spread; coconut wine and grape syrup were poured to the brim; and he feasted and drank with his host for hours. Afterward they drilled as before. The Monkey King enfeoffed the four old monkeys as Champion Generals: the two red-rumped horse-monkeys he named Marshal Ma and Marshal Liu, the two long-armed gibbons General Beng and General Ba; and to the four Champions he entrusted the whole business of camps, entrenchments, rewards, and punishments.

His heart at rest, he rode the clouds and mists day after day, roaming the four seas, taking his pleasure among a thousand mountains. Showing his arts, he sought out heroes everywhere; working his magic, he gathered worthy friends far and wide. About this time he swore brotherhood with six others: the Bull Demon King, the Dragon-Demon King, the Roc-Demon King, the Lion-and-Camel King, the Macaque King, and the Yu-Rong King—together with the Handsome Monkey King himself, seven in all.

Day after day they talked of letters and discoursed on arms, passed the wine-cup and sent it round, made music with strings and song and dance, going at dawn and returning at dusk—there was nothing they did not enjoy. A distance of ten thousand li they counted no more than a stroll across the courtyard: as the saying goes, a nod of the head carries you three thousand li, a twist of the waist eight hundred more.

One day, in his cave, he bade the four Champions prepare a banquet and invite the six kings to drink. They slaughtered cattle and horses, sacrificed to Heaven and feasted the Earth, and bade the monstrous host dance and sing—and all drank themselves dead drunk. He saw the six kings off, then rewarded the officers great and small, and beneath the pines by the iron-plated bridge fell fast asleep in a trice. The four Champions stood guard round him with the host, not daring to raise their voices.

There the Handsome Monkey King, in his sleep, saw two men approach with a warrant in their hands, bearing the three characters "Sun Wukong." They came up close to him, and without a word of explanation slipped a cord about him, bound his soul, and hauled the Handsome Monkey King's spirit away—stumbling, staggering—straight to the edge of a city. Sobering by degrees, the Monkey King suddenly lifted his head and looked: on the city wall was an iron tablet bearing three great characters—"The Realm of Darkness."

The Handsome Monkey King came wide awake at once: "The Realm of Darkness is where King Yama dwells. How did I come here?"

The two men said: "Your span of years in the world of light has run out. We two, bearing our warrant, have come to fetch you." Hearing this, the Monkey King said: "I, Old Sun, am beyond the Three Realms and outside the Five Elements, no longer subject to your jurisdiction. How, in your muddled blindness, do you dare come to fetch me?" The two Death-Summoners only pulled and hauled the more, determined to drag him inside.

Then the Monkey King's temper rose. From his ear he whipped out his treasure, gave it one flourish to the thickness of a rice-bowl, raised it lightly, and beat the two Death-Summoners into meat paste. He untied the cord, flung it away, gripped his cudgel, and fought his way into the city.

The Ox-Headed ghosts fled east and hid west; the Horse-Faced ghosts ran south and scurried north; the ghost-soldiers rushed up to the Hall of Dark Judgment crying: "Great Kings! Trouble! Trouble! A hairy-faced Thunder God is fighting his way in!"

The Ten Kings of the Underworld, in a panic, hastily straightened their robes and came to look. Seeing how fierce his aspect was, they drew up in order and called out in unison: "Immortal, pray tell us your name!

Immortal, pray tell us your name!" The Monkey King said: "Since you don't know me, how dared you send men to fetch me?" The Ten Kings said: "We wouldn't presume! We wouldn't presume! Our summoners must have gone astray." The Monkey King said: "I am Sun Wukong, the Heaven-born sage of the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. And what offices do you hold?" The Ten Kings bowed low: "We are the Ten Kings of the Underworld, the sons of Heaven of the dark realm." Wukong said: "Quick—give your names, and escape a beating!" The Ten Kings said: "We are King Qinguang, King Chujiang, King Songdi, King Wuguan, King Yama, King Pingdeng, King Taishan, King Dushi, King Biancheng, and King Zhuanlun." Wukong said: "Since you have ascended to kingship, you are of the class of numinous and responsive powers—how can you be so blind to right and wrong? I, Old Sun, have cultivated immortality and attained the Way, my life is coeval with Heaven's; I have risen beyond the Three Realms and leapt out of the Five Elements. Why did you send men to arrest me?" The Ten Kings said: "Let the immortal cease his anger. In all the world there are many of the same name and surname. Perhaps the Death-Summoners went to the wrong man?" Wukong said: "Nonsense! Nonsense! As the common saying goes: 'Officials may err, clerks may err—the men they send do not err.' Quick—bring the registers of life and death for me to see!" At this the Ten Kings invited him up into the hall to examine them.

Cudgel in hand, Wukong strode straight up into the Hall of Dark Judgment and sat down on high, facing south, in the very center. The Ten Kings bade the Recording Judge of the case bring out the documents for inspection. The judge, not daring to delay, went to the registry and carried out five or six volumes of records, together with the registers of the ten categories, and searched them one by one. Naked creatures, hairy creatures, feathered creatures, winged creatures, scaly and shelled creatures—none bore his name. Then they came to the register of the monkey kind: for this monkey resembles man yet is not entered among men; resembles the naked creatures yet dwells not in their borders; resembles the beasts yet is not subject to the unicorn's rule; resembles the birds yet is not governed by the phoenix. There was a separate volume for them, and Wukong searched it himself, all the way to number 1,350 in the section of souls—and there at last was entered the name Sun Wukong: a heaven-born stone monkey, allotted a span of three hundred and forty-two years, to die a natural death.

Wukong said: "I keep no count of my years—strike out the name, and there's an end! Bring the brush!"

The judge in haste presented the brush, fully charged with thick ink. Wukong took the register, crossed out every name entered among the monkey kind.

He flung down the register: "Settled! Settled! No longer are you any concern of yours!"

Cudgel swinging, he fought his way out of the Realm of Darkness. The Ten Kings dared not come near him; they went off together to the Emerald Cloud Palace, and with Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, lord and teacher of the underworld, consulted on drafting a memorial to be heard in Heaven above—but of that no more.

The Monkey King fought his way out of the city—when suddenly he tripped over a knot of grass, staggered, and came awake with a start. It had all been a dream of Nanke.

He had barely stretched himself when the four Champions and all the monkeys cried out: "Great King—how much wine did you drink, to sleep a whole night and still not wake?"

Wukong said: "The sleep was nothing. I dreamed two men came to fetch me and dragged me to the gates of the Realm of Darkness. Then I came to my senses and showed my powers: I clamored my way into the Hall of Dark Judgment, wrangled with those Ten Kings, and made them show me the registers of life and death. Every name there was of our kind, I crossed out—every one. We are no longer subject to that crew." The monkeys knocked their heads and gave thanks. From that time on, the mountain monkeys all had ageless lives, for in the courts of darkness their names were no more.

When the Handsome Monkey King had told the whole story, the four Champions reported it to the demon kings of every cave, and all came to offer congratulations. Within a few days his six sworn brothers came to felicitate him too; and hearing how the names had been struck out, each rejoiced anew, and daily they gathered for pleasure—but of that no more.

Now the story turns to the Most Venerable Jade Emperor of Heaven, the Great Compassionate One. One day, seated in state in the Cloud Palace of the Golden Gates, the Hall of Divine Mists, with his civil and military immortals gathered for morning court, the Perfected One Qiu Hongji announced: "Your Majesty, outside the Hall of Universal Brightness, Ao Guang, Dragon King of the Eastern Sea, presents a memorial and awaits your summons." The Jade Emperor gave the word: "Let him be brought in."

Ao Guang was escorted beneath the Hall of Divine Mists and completed his obeisance. A page of the court received the memorial and passed it up, and the Jade Emperor read it from the first line to the last. The memorial said:

Your subject Ao Guang, little dragon of the Eastern Sea in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, of the watery realm below, humbly addresses the Great Sage Lord, the High Emperor of the Azure Vault. Of late there is one Sun Wukong, a demon-immortal born on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit and dwelling in the Water Curtain Cave, who has oppressed and abused your subject: he seated himself by force in my watery house, demanded weapons, worked spells and showed his might; demanded war-gear, unleashed his fury and flaunted his power. He has alarmed and injured the water tribes and terrified away the turtles and water-lizards. The Dragon King of the Southern Sea trembles in every scale; the Dragon King of the Western Sea is wretched and despairing; the Dragon King of the Northern Sea has bowed his head and surrendered. Your subject Ao Guang bowed low with his whole body and presented the divine treasure-iron cudgel, the phoenix-wing golden crown, with the chain-mail and cloud-walking boots, and saw him out with full courtesy. Yet still he flourished his arts and displayed his powers, saying only, "Sorry for the disturbance! Sorry for the disturbance!" He is indeed without rival, and most hard to restrain. Your subject now makes this report and awaits your sacred judgment. I humbly beg that celestial soldiers be sent to seize this demon, so that seas and mountains may again know peace and the watery realm below may rest secure. Respectfully submitted.

The Sage Emperor finished reading and gave command: "Let the dragon god return to his sea. We shall send generals to take him." The old Dragon King knocked his head in thanks and withdrew. Then the Celestial Master, the Immortal Elder Ge, announced: "Your Majesty, King Qinguang of the underworld brings a memorial from Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, lord and teacher of the Dark Realm, and asks to present it." A Jade Maiden of the court received the memorial and passed it up, and the Jade Emperor likewise read it from beginning to end. It said:

"The realm of darkness is the shadow-court of Earth. Heaven has its gods and Earth its ghosts, yin and yang wheeling in turn; birds have their life and beasts their death, male and female in endless succession. Birth upon birth, change upon change, the female conceived and the male formed—this is the natural order, which cannot be altered. Now there is Sun Wukong, a heaven-born demon-monkey of the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, who runs wild and does violence and will not answer summons. Working his magic, he beat to death the ghost-officers of the Ninefold Darkness; leaning on his power, he alarmed and affronted the Ten Kings, those compassionate lords. He wrought havoc in the courts of darkness and forced the striking-out of his name; so that the whole monkey kind now runs unrestrained, and the macaque tribe enjoys lengthened years; the wheel of rebirth is stilled, and none of them knows death. This humble monk has prepared this memorial, intrusion though it be upon the heavenly majesty. I beg that celestial soldiers be dispatched to subdue this demon, that yin and yang be set in order and the courts of earth forever calmed. Respectfully submitted."

The Jade Emperor finished reading and gave command: "Let the lords of darkness return to the courts below. We shall send generals to take him." King Qinguang likewise knocked his head in thanks and withdrew.

The Great Venerable One summoned his civil and military immortals and asked: "In what year was this demon-monkey born, of what generation, that he has attained such powers?"

Before the words were done, Thousand-Mile Eye and Wind-Following Ear stepped out from the ranks: "This monkey is the stone monkey born of Heaven three hundred years ago. We thought nothing of him at the time; who knows where, in these latter years, he has cultivated immortality—he subdues dragons and tames tigers, and has struck his name from the registers of death." The Jade Emperor said: "Which of our divine generals will go down and subdue him?" Before the words were done, the Planet Venus, the Great White Gold Star, stepped from the ranks, bowed his head, and reported: "Within the Three Realms of your sacred domain, all that have nine apertures may cultivate immortality. Now this monkey is a body reared by Heaven and Earth, a form quickened by sun and moon: he too holds up the sky and treads the earth, feeds on dew and dines on the rosy clouds. Now that he has attained the immortal Way and can subdue dragons and tame tigers—wherein does he differ from any other? Your subject proposes that Your Majesty, mindful of the kindly grace of Creation, send down an edict of amnesty, summon him to the upper world, bestow on him some office, great or small, enroll his name upon the registers, and keep him under restraint here. If he accepts the mandate of Heaven, promotion and reward may follow; if he defies it, then let him be seized. Thus we neither weary the hosts nor trouble the armies, and win over an immortal by the proper way."

The Jade Emperor was pleased: "Let it be as you propose." He bade the Literary Star draft the edict, and bade the Gold Star of Venus go down and offer the amnesty.

The Gold Star took the edict, passed out the South Gate of Heaven, brought his auspicious cloud down, and came straight to the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. He said to the little monkeys: "I am an envoy from Heaven, bearing a sacred edict, come to invite your Great King to the upper world. Go quickly and announce me!"

The little monkeys outside the cave passed the word, ring by ring, deep into the recesses of the cave heaven: "Great King! There's an old man outside, carrying a wrapped document. He says he's an envoy from Heaven above, with a sacred edict inviting you." The Handsome Monkey King was overjoyed: "These two days I've been thinking I'd like to go up to Heaven and look around—and now here comes an envoy of Heaven to invite me." He called: "Bring him in, quick!"

The Monkey King hurriedly straightened his cap and robes and went out the door to receive him.

The Gold Star came straight up the middle and took his stand facing south: "I am the Gold Star of Venus of the West, bearing the Jade Emperor's edict of amnesty, come down to invite you up to Heaven to receive the immortal register."

Wukong laughed: "I am much obliged that the Old Star has descended." He called: "Little ones! Prepare a banquet to entertain him." The Gold Star said: "The sacred edict is upon me—I dare not linger. I beg the Great King to come along at once; after your honorable promotion, we shall have leisure to talk." Wukong said: "Thanks for the visit—my apologies for the poor welcome! My apologies!" Then he summoned the four Champions and instructed them: "Drill the children and grandchildren with care. Wait till I've gone up to Heaven and had a look at the road—then I'll take you all up to live there together." The four Champions received his command.

The Monkey King and the Gold Star leapt up upon the cloud-heads and rose into the vault of heaven. Truly:

Lifted high to the rank of highest-grade immortal of Heaven, His name enrolled among the cloud-court's precious registers.

But as to what office and honors he was to receive—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Title of Keeper of Heaven's Horses Cannot Content His Heart; The Name of Great Sage Equal to Heaven Leaves His Mind Unstilled

The Gold Star of Venus and the Handsome Monkey King left the depths of the cave heaven together and rose upon the clouds. Now Wukong's Somersault Cloud was unlike all others—marvelously swift—and it left the Gold Star far behind as he arrived first outside the South Gate of Heaven. He was just gathering in his cloud to press forward when the Guardian Virudhaka, leading Pang, Liu, Gou, Bi, Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao with a whole company of mighty celestial guards, spears and swords and halberds in hand, barred the gate of Heaven and would not let him in.

The Monkey King said: "That old Gold Star is a crafty fraud! If he invited Old Sun, why does he set men with blades and spears to block the road?"

Amid his clamor the Gold Star suddenly arrived.

Wukong confronted him fiercely: "You old man—how dare you make a fool of me! You said you came by the Jade Emperor's edict of amnesty to invite me, yet you let these men block the gate of Heaven and won't let Old Sun in!"

The Gold Star laughed: "Let the Great King calm his anger. You have never before come to this Heaven, and your name is not yet entered; the celestial guards don't know you from Adam—how could they let you burst in? Once you have seen the Venerable One, received the immortal register, and had your office entered, you may come and go as you please thereafter—who would bar you then?" Wukong said: "In that case, very well—I won't go in." The Gold Star caught him by the hand: "Come in with me all the same."

As they neared the gate the Gold Star called in a loud voice: "You guardians of the gate of Heaven, officers and soldiers great and small—open the way! This is an immortal of the world below; I bear the Jade Emperor's sacred edict summoning him." Only then did Virudhaka and the celestial guards put up their weapons and stand aside, and the Monkey King at last believed his words. He walked slowly in with the Gold Star, looking about. Truly:

First ascent to the upper world, first entry into Heaven. Ten thousand shafts of golden light rolled with red rainbows; A thousand streamers of auspicious vapor spewed forth purple mist. The South Gate of Heaven: deep jade-green, wrought of colored glass, Bright and gleaming, fashioned of precious gems and jade. On either side stood dozens of Marshals who guard Heaven, Every one propped at pillar and beam, bearing halberds, trailing plumes; Below, in ranks, a dozen golden-armored divine men, Each one bearing a halberd, a whip at his belt, sword or saber in hand. The outer courts were nothing; within, it took the breath away: Great pillars wreathed with red-whiskered dragons, gold-scaled, dazzling in the sun; Long bridges over which wheeled phoenixes, red-crowned, on rainbow plumes. Bright haze shimmering, mirroring the light of heaven; Jade fog enfolding, veiling the mouth of the Dipper. Thirty-three heavenly palaces there are above: Palace of Cloud-Dispatch, Palace of Vaisravana, Palace of Five Luminaries, Palace of the Sun, Palace of Delightful Change— Palace upon palace, on its ridge a gold beast at rest; Seventy-two tiers of precious halls: Hall of Morning Court, Hall of Void-Vaulting, Hall of Precious Light, Hall of the Deva Kings, Hall of the Numinary Officer— Hall upon hall, before its columns jade qilin ranked. On the Terrace of the Star of Longevity, famous flowers that for a thousand thousand years never fade; Beside the elixir furnace, auspicious grasses green for ten thousand myriad ages. Before the Tower of Pilgrimage: crimson gauze robes, constellations glittering; Lotus crowns, gold and jade resplendent. Jade hairpins, pearl slippers, purple ribbons, golden seals. When the golden bell is struck, the Three Courts present their divine memorials at the vermilion steps; When the heavenly drum sounds, ten thousand saints come to court and wait upon the Jade

Emperor. Then to the Hall of Divine Mists itself: golden nails studding the jade doors, Painted phoenixes dancing on the vermilion gates. Double galleries and winding corridors, everywhere exquisitely wrought; Triple eaves and clustered finials, tier upon tier of soaring dragons and phoenixes. Above, a great golden gourd-crown, purple-glowing, shining, round, and bright; Below, heavenly consorts holding ceremonial fans, jade maidens bearing immortal towels. Fierce and dreadful, the generals who hold the court; Proud and lofty, the immortal ministers who guard the sovereign. In the very center, on a tray of glass, piles upon piles of Grand Unity elixir pills; In an agate vase, sprays of twisting, curving coral. Truly every rare thing of Heaven's palace is there in every kind— Nothing like them exists in all the world below. Golden palaces, silver courts, and the purple prefectures, Trees of jade, grasses of jasper, blossoms of every gem. The Jade Hare at the altar passes on his way to court the King; The Golden Crow, paying homage to the saints, skims along the ground. The Monkey King had his portion in the realm of Heaven— Not one speck of the mud of the mortal world would cling to him.

The Gold Star of Venus led the Handsome Monkey King to the outside of the Hall of Divine Mists. Without waiting for the summons, they went straight to the throne and bowed in homage. Wukong stood erect at the side, and did not salute—only cocked an ear to hear the Gold Star's report.

The Gold Star announced: "Your subject, bearing the sacred edict, has brought the demon-immortal as commanded."

The Jade Emperor, from behind his pearl curtain, asked: "Which is the demon-immortal?" Only then did Wukong bow and answer: "Old Sun is he." The assembled immortal ministers turned pale with horror: "This savage monkey! Not only does he fail to bow in homage—he dares answer 'Old Sun is he'! He deserves to die! Deserves to die!" The Jade Emperor gave command: "Sun Wukong is a demon-immortal of the world below, only lately come to his human form, ignorant of court etiquette. Let his offense be pardoned for now." The ministers cried: "We give thanks for mercy!" And only then did the Monkey King lift his hands and give a great shout of salutation toward the throne.

The Jade Emperor summoned the ministers of civil and military selection to see what office was vacant, that Sun Wukong might be appointed to it.

From the side stepped the Lord of the Military Star and announced: "In every palace and hall of Heaven, in every quarter and place, there is no lack of officers—only the Imperial Stables lack a keeper in chief."

The Jade Emperor gave command: "Then appoint him 'Protector of Horses.'" The ministers cried their thanks, and he too only shouted his salute to the throne. The Jade Emperor further dispatched the Star Officer of Wood to escort him to the Imperial Stables and install him in office.

The Monkey King went happily with the Star Officer of Wood and took up his post. When the ceremony was done, the Star Officer returned to his palace. In the stables Wukong gathered the stewards and assistant stewards, the record-keepers and the laborers—officers great and small—made a full survey of the establishment, and found it held a thousand Heavenly Horses. They were:

Hualiu and Qiji steeds, Lu'er and Xianli; Dragon-steeds and Purple Swallows, Winged Susuang mounts; Jueti and Yin-e, Yaoniao and Feihuang; Taotu and Feather-Turners, Red Hare and Light-Outrunner; Surpassing-Glow and Filling-Shadow, Mist-Riders and Yellow-Victor; Wind-Chasers and Earth-Leavers, Skimmers and Cloud-Galloping coursers; The Flying Whirlwind, the Red Lightning, Bronze Sparrow and Drifting Cloud; The dappled Long, the Tiger stamp, Dustless and Purple-Scale; Steeds of the Four Extremes and of Dayuan, the Eight Steeds and Nine Runners, thousand-li horses past all peer— And every one of these fine horses, high-mettled, neighing at the wind and racing the lightning, its strength increasing as it treads the mist and mounts the clouds.

The Monkey King examined the registers and counted off the number of horses. In the establishment, the record-keepers had charge of the fodder accounts; the laborers' officers had charge of grooming the horses, bundling hay, watering, and boiling feed; the stewards and assistant stewards supervised and pressed the work; and the Protector of Horses, sleeping neither night nor day, nourished the herd. By day his frolics could be borne; at night he watched them with a will: any horse that slept, he drove up to graze; any that strayed, he caught and brought back to the manger.

And those Heavenly Horses, whenever they saw him coming, laid back their ears and huddled their hooves—but they grew fat and sleek upon it.

So passed, unremarked, more than half a month. One day at leisure, the officers of the stables laid a banquet—partly to welcome him, partly to congratulate him.

In the midst of the merry drinking the Monkey King suddenly set down his cup and asked: "This 'Protector of Horses'—what rank of office is it?"

They said: "That is the title itself." He asked again: "And what grade does the office hold?" They said: "It holds no grade." The Monkey King said: "No grade—then it must be the very highest of all." They said: "Not high, not high. It is merely called 'unranked.'" The Monkey King said: "What is this 'unranked'?" They said: "The lowest class. An office like this is the meanest and smallest there is—fit only for a man to keep horses with. If the keeper is diligent as Your Lordship has been since taking office, and the horses grow fat, the utmost he earns is the single word 'good.' Should the beasts fall a little thin, there is a reprimand; should any be truly hurt or ruined, there is a fine to pay and a crime to answer for."

At this, the fire sprang up in the Monkey King's heart. He ground his teeth and roared: "To hold Old Sun in such contempt! On the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, Old Sun was a king and patriarch of kings—and they lured me here to keep horses for them! A horse-keeper is the work of a menial boy, a base and lowly service—is that for the likes of me? I'll not do it! I'll not do it! I am off!" With a crash he overturned the bench, pulled the treasure from his ear, flourished it to the thickness of a rice-bowl, and fought his way in a single sweeping passage out of the Imperial Stables and straight to the South Gate of Heaven.

The celestial guards, knowing he was entered upon the immortal register and was the Protector of Horses, dared not stop him, and let him fight his way out of the gate of Heaven.

In a moment he brought his cloud down and was back on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. There were the four Champions and the demon kings of every cave, drilling their troops.

The Monkey King called out in a great voice: "Little ones! Old Sun has come!"

A whole host of monkeys came kowtowing, welcomed him deep into the cave heaven, begged him to mount the throne, set out wine at one side to receive him, and asked: "Our congratulations, Great King! Ten-odd years in the upper world—you must have returned in glory and triumph?" The Monkey King said: "I was gone barely half a month—what talk is this of ten-odd years?" The monkeys said: "Great King, in Heaven you lose track of the hours. One day in Heaven is one year in the world below. But tell us—what office did you hold?" The Monkey King waved his hand: "Don't ask! Don't ask! It shames me alive! That Jade Emperor knows nothing of using men. He saw Old Sun's looks and enfeoffed me as some 'Protector of Horses'—which turned out to mean keeping his horses for him: unranked, the lowest sort. When I first took the post I didn't know, and only played around in the Imperial Stables. Today I asked my fellow officers, and only then learned how mean it was. Old Sun's heart flared, I overturned the banquet table, refused the office, and came down." The monkeys said: "Well come! Well come! Here the Great King is a king in a blessed land and cave heaven—what dignity, what joy! Why should you go be a stable-boy for anyone?" They called: "Little ones! Quick, bring wine, and cheer the Great King's spirits!"

In the midst of the drinking and rejoicing someone came to report: "Great King, outside the door are two one-horned ghost kings asking to see you."

The Monkey King said: "Show them in." The ghost kings straightened their robes, ran into the cave, and flung themselves down in worship.

The Handsome Monkey King asked them: "What would you with me?" The ghost kings said: "Long have we heard that the Great King welcomes the worthy, but we had no way to reach you. Today, seeing the Great King enrolled in the registers of Heaven and returned in glory, we bring as our tribute a robe of ochre-yellow, to swell the celebration. If you will not disdain our lowliness but take us small men into your service, we shall serve with the strength of dog or horse." The Monkey King was delighted; he put on the ochre-yellow robe, and all the rest gladly fell into ranks and bowed in homage; he straightaway enfeoffed the ghost kings as Vanguard Generals of the Van.

When the ghost kings had given thanks they asked again: "The Great King was so long in Heaven—what office was bestowed?"

The Monkey King said: "The Jade Emperor holds talent cheap; he made me some 'Protector of Horses'!" Hearing this, the ghost kings reported: "With the Great King's powers, how could you keep horses for anyone? Why not be 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven'—what's to stop you?" At this the Monkey King was overjoyed beyond measure, crying "Good! Good! Good!" again and again, and bade the four Champions: "Get me a banner quickly, with the four great characters "Great Sage Equal to Heaven" on it, set up a pole and hang it out. From this day on, call me only the Great Sage Equal to Heaven—no more of this 'Great King.' Spread word to the demon kings of every cave, that all may know." Of that no more for now.

Now the story tells that the next day the Jade Emperor held court, and the Celestial Master Zhang came leading the stewards and assistant stewards of the Imperial Stables, who bowed beneath the vermilion steps and reported: "Your Majesty, the newly appointed Protector of Horses, Sun Wukong, despising his office as too small, rebelled yesterday and left the heavenly palace."

As they spoke, from outside the South Gate of Heaven came Virudhaka with the celestial guards, who likewise reported: "The Protector of Horses has for reasons unknown gone out through the gate of Heaven." At this the Jade Emperor gave command: "Let the divine officers of both routes return to their proper posts. We shall send celestial soldiers to seize this monster." From the ranks stepped Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li and Prince Nezha, Third Son, who crossed beyond their places and announced: "Your Majesty, your subject, though lacking in talent, begs for the command to subdue this monster." The Jade Emperor was greatly pleased, and straightaway enfeoffed the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li Jing as Grand Marshal for the Subduing of Demons, and Prince Nezha, the Third Son, as Great God of the Three Altars and Oceanic Assembly, to muster the host at once and descend to the lower world.

Heavenly King Li and Nezha knocked their heads, gave thanks, took their leave, went straight to their palace, mustered the three armies, marshaled their officers, appointed Mighty-Spirit God as vanguard, the Fish-Belly General to guard the rear, and the Yaksha General to press the column forward. In an instant they were out the South Gate of Heaven and come to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. On open level ground they entrenched their camp, and the order was given for Mighty-Spirit God to offer the challenge. Mighty-Spirit God received the command, buckled his gear tight, shouldered his great axe of Xuanhua, and came before the Water Curtain Cave.

Outside the little cave door were hosts of demons—wolves, serpents, tigers, leopards of every kind—swarming and brandishing spears and swords, leaping and roaring in battle play.

Mighty-Spirit God bellowed: "You sinful beasts! Quick—go report to the Protector of Horses that a great general of Heaven has come by the Jade Emperor's command to take him. Bid him come out at once and

surrender, lest you all be maimed!"

Those monsters went tumbling and scrambling into the cave with the news: "Trouble! Trouble!" The Monkey King asked: "What trouble?" The demons said: "Outside stands a celestial general, and he named the Great Sage's title, saying he bears the Jade Emperor's sacred command and is come to take him; he bids you come out quickly and surrender, to spare our lives." Hearing this, the Monkey King commanded: "Bring my war-gear!" He set the purple-gold crown on his head, buckled on the golden mail, stepped into the cloud-walking shoes, took the As-You-Will Gold-Banded Cudgel in hand, led his host out the door, and drew up his battle lines.

Mighty-Spirit God opened his eyes wide and looked. What a Monkey King:

Golden mail upon his body, gleaming bright; A golden crown upon his head, flashing light. One gold-banded cudgel in his hands upraised; Cloud-walking shoes upon his feet, well matched. A pair of strange eyes like the morning star; Ears past his shoulders, bristly and hard. His upright frame holds transformations many; His voice rings out like bell and chiming stone. Sharp-tusked mouth—the Protector of Horses he; His heart aspiring to be Sage Equal with the Sky.

Mighty-Spirit God cried in a great voice: "You reckless monkey! Do you know me?"

The Great Sage, hearing this, asked sharply: "What hairy little god of the byways are you? Old Sun has never met you—give your name, quick!" Mighty-Spirit God said: "Take that, you double-dealing ape! It's plain you don't know me! I am Mighty-Spirit, celestial general, vanguard under the command of Li, the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King! I come by the Jade Emperor's sacred command to take you. Strip off your gear and submit to the grace of Heaven, lest this whole mountain of beasts be slaughtered; say one half of the word 'no,' and I'll pound you to powder on the instant!"

The Monkey King's heart flared: "You hairy little god—stop your big talk and spare us the long tongue! I would beat you to death with one blow of my cudgel, but then who would carry the message? I'll spare your life—hurry back to Heaven and tell the Jade Emperor: he is mightily careless with his worthies! Old Sun's powers are past all measure—why should he make me keep his horses? Look at the title on my banner. If he raises my office to match it, I'll not draw blade or crossbow, and Heaven and Earth will naturally be at peace. If he won't hear of it, I'll smash my way into the Hall of Divine Mists—and let him try sitting easy on his dragon throne!"

At this, Mighty-Spirit God opened his eyes and peered against the wind—and sure enough, outside the cave door stood a tall pole, and on the pole a banner with four great characters: "Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

Mighty-Spirit God laughed coldly three times: "This reckless monkey—so ignorant of the world, so insolent—you'd be Great Sage Equal to Heaven! Take a taste of my axe!"

He hacked straight down at his head. The Monkey King, practiced hand that he was, took his time, meeting the blow easily with the Gold-Banded Cudgel. What a battle:

The cudgel's name is As-You-Will; the axe is called Xuanhua. The two of them, meeting suddenly, knew not each other's depth: Axe and cudgel crossing left and right. One concealing marvels in his heart; One boasting loudly with his mouth. Working their methods, they spew forth cloud and mist; Spreading their arms, they scatter earth and sand. The heavenly general's magic—he thinks it has the Way; The Monkey King's transformations—truly past all bounds. The cudgel rises like a dragon sporting in the water; The axe comes down like a phoenix threading the flowers. Mighty-Spirit's name is known through all the world— But his skill, it turns out, is not the Monkey King's. The Great Sage lightly swings his iron cudgel— One touch upon the head, and all his body numbs.

Mighty-Spirit God could not withstand him. The Monkey King's cudgel came down on his head; he hastily raised the axe to parry—and with a crack the axe-handle broke clean in two. He fled for his life from the field. The Monkey King laughed: "Milksop! Milksop! I've spared you already—go carry your message! Go carry your message!"

Mighty-Spirit God returned to the camp gate and went straight to the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King, falling on his knees: "The Protector of Horses has powers indeed past measuring! Your general could not stand against him; I come back from defeat to beg your punishment."

Heavenly King Li said in anger: "This fellow blunts our edge—take him out and behead him!" From the side stepped Prince Nezha and pleaded: "Father King, calm your anger. Spare Mighty-Spirit his offense, and let your son go out once—then we shall know our man." The Heavenly King heeded him, and bade Mighty-Spirit return to camp to await judgment.

Then Prince Nezha, in full armor, leapt out of the camp and charged up to the Water Curtain Cave. Wukong was just withdrawing his troops, and saw how fiercely Nezha came on. What a Prince:

His horned tufts scarce cover the crown of his head; His flowing hair scarce covers his shoulders. Marvelous and quick of wit, Fine-boned, fair beyond words. Truly a qilin-child of the heavens above, Indeed a phoenix-immortal of mist and rose-clouds. Dragon stock is never of the common sort— In tender years he is nothing of this dusty world. Six divine weapons hang upon his body; His flying, changing powers are wide past all bounds. Now he bears the Jade Emperor's golden-mouthed decree, Titled Great God of Three Altars, Oceanic Assembly.

Wukong came forward to meet him and asked: "Whose little brother are you, to come charging to my gate? What business have you?"

Nezha shouted: "Reckless demon-monkey! Do you not know me? I am Nezha, Third Son of the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King, sent by the Jade Emperor's own command to seize you." Wukong laughed: "Little Prince, your milk-teeth have not yet fallen out, the birth-damp not yet dried on your hair—and you dare such big talk? I'll spare your life and not beat you. Just look at the title on my banner, and tell the Jade Emperor: with that title for me, he need raise no more hosts—I'll submit of my own accord. If he won't grant my heart's wish, then I'll surely smash my way into the Hall of Divine Mists." Nezha looked up at the banner—and there were the four characters: "Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

Nezha said: "What powers can this demon-monkey have, to dare such a title! Never fear—take a stroke of my sword!"

Wukong said: "I'll only stand here without moving—cut at me with your sword as many times as you please." Nezha in fury gave a great shout, cried "Change!"—and at once became three-headed and six-armed, fierce and fell, six weapons in his hands: the demon-slaying sword, the demon-cleaving blade, the demon-binding cord, the demon-subduing pestle, the embroidered ball, and the fire-wheel—all crossed and brandished, striking at Wukong's face.

At the sight Wukong said in wonder: "This little brother does know a few tricks! Don't be rude—watch my powers!"

What a Great Sage! He shouted "Change!" and became three-headed and six-armed as well; he flourished the Gold-Banded Cudgel once, and it became three cudgels; with six hands holding three, he parried the attack. This battle truly shook the earth and swayed the mountains—what a fight:

Nezha, the six-armed Prince, And the Monkey King, born of the wondrous stone: True rivals when they met, matched to their very sources. One came bearing the command down to the world below; One, in his overweening heart, made havoc in the Dipper's field. The demon-slaying sword, its edge so swift; The

demon-cleaving blade, so fierce that ghosts and gods despair; The demon-binding cord flies like a darting serpent; The demon-subduing pestle like a wolf's-head mace; The fire-wheels flash lightning, blazing bright; To and fro comes rolling the embroidered ball. The Great Sage's three As-You-Will cudgels, Guarding before and covering behind, all strategy. Bitterly they strove, round upon round, neither high nor low; The Prince's heart would not give over. He bade his six weapons multiply their forms— A hundred thousand thousandfold, hurled upon his head. The Monkey King, unafraid, laughed out loud, His iron cudgels wheeling, weaving their own plans. One became a thousand, a thousand became ten thousand, Till all the air danced with them like flying serpents. The demon kings of every cave shut fast their doors; Ghost and monster over all the mountain hid their heads. The heavenly soldiers' rage made the clouds turn grim; Gold-hoops and iron staves went whistling, whirring. On that side, the celestial guards cried out—every man afraid; On this, the monkey demons shook their banners—every one in dread. Both sides flaring, fierce in trial of strength— Who could tell which was hard and which was soft?

Prince Nezha and Wukong each displayed his divine might, and fought thirty rounds. The Prince's six weapons became thousands and myriads; Sun Wukong's Gold-Banded Cudgel became tens of thousands and thousands of myriads. The mid-air was like rain-drops and shooting stars—and still no victor.

Now Wukong's hands were quick and his eyes quicker. In the midst of the chaos he plucked a hair, cried "Change!"—and it became his own double, cudgel leveled, engaging Nezha; while his true body, with one bound, swept behind Nezha and struck a blow at his left arm. Nezha, in the middle of his magic, heard the wind of the cudgel-head; he dodged—but too late to ward. The blow struck home, and he fled the field in pain; he gathered in his magic, and his six weapons returned to his body, and he came back defeated.

On the field the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King had seen it all, and was about to lead troops to the rescue—

When, unawares, the Prince was suddenly before him, trembling as he reported: "Father King! The Protector of Horses has real powers! With all your child's magic I could not prevail—he has wounded my arm!"

The Heavenly King turned pale with shock: "With powers such as this, how are we to win?" The Prince said: "Outside his cave door he has raised a pole with a banner reading 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven,' and he boasts with his own mouth that the Jade Emperor must enfeoff him as Great Sage Equal to Heaven and be done with it; if not that title, he means to smash his way into the Hall of Divine Mists!" The Heavenly King said: "Since it is so, let us not press the fight. Let us go up to the upper world, report these words, and dispatch more celestial soldiers to surround and seize the fellow—it is not too late." The Prince, wounded too sorely to fight again, went back with the Heavenly King to report to Heaven—but of that no more.

Watch now the Monkey King return to his mountain in triumph. The demon kings of the seventy-two caves and the six brothers all came to congratulate him, and in that blessed cave heaven they drank and made merry beyond compare.

He said to his six brothers: "Since your younger brother is now Great Sage Equal to Heaven, you also may take the title of Great Sage."

At this the Bull Demon King suddenly cried in a loud voice: "Well spoken, worthy brother! I shall be Great Sage Who Stills Heaven." The Dragon-Demon King said: "I shall be Great Sage Who Covers the Sea." The Roc-Demon King said: "I shall be Great Sage Who Muddles Heaven." The Lion-and-Camel King said: "I shall be Great Sage Who Moves Mountains." The Macaque King said: "I shall be Great Sage Who Ventilates Heaven." The Yu-Rong King said: "I shall be Great Sage Who Drives Away the Gods." So the seven Great Sages each did as he pleased, styling and naming themselves, and they made merry a whole day, then each went his way.

Now the story tells how Heavenly King Li and the Third Prince, leading their generals, came straight to the Hall of Divine Mists and reported: "Your subjects, bearing the sacred command, led the host down to the

lower world to subdue the demon-immortal Sun Wukong—but his powers are past measuring, and we could not prevail. We still beg Your Majesty to add troops and exterminate him."

The Jade Emperor said: "A demon-monkey! How much skill can he have, that more troops should be needed?" The Prince stepped nearer and reported: "I beg Your Majesty pardon for my death-crime! That demon-monkey wields an iron cudgel that first defeated Mighty-Spirit and then wounded your subject's arm. Before his cave door stands a pole with a banner reading 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven.' He says: grant him that office, and he will at once cease war and submit; if not that office, he will smash his way into the Hall of Divine Mists!" The Jade Emperor said in astonishment: "How dare this demon-monkey carry such insolence! Let the generals destroy him at once!" But even as he spoke, from the ranks stepped the Gold Star of Venus once more, who announced: "That demon-monkey knows only his own big words—he knows neither great nor small. To raise armies and war against him would mean no speedy victory, and only weary our hosts the more. Better that Your Majesty show great mercy once again and send down another edict of amnesty, and simply make him Great Sage Equal to Heaven. Only give him an empty title—office without salary—and there's an end."

The Jade Emperor said: "What is this 'office without salary'?" The Gold Star said: "The name will be Great Sage Equal to Heaven, but give him nothing to administer and no salary: just let him be nourished between Heaven and Earth, his wild heart gathered in, that no more insolence arise—so that the cosmos may rest quiet and the seas and lands know peace." The Jade Emperor heard him out: "Let it be as you propose." He bade the edict be drawn, and the Gold Star bear it down once more.

The Gold Star passed out the South Gate of Heaven and came to the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to see. This time it was different from before: awesome in their might, grim with the reek of slaughter, demons of every kind without exception—each bearing sword or clutching spear, handling knife or wielding staff—roaring and leaping there. At sight of the Gold Star they all came forward with weapons.

The Gold Star said: "You officers there! Be at pains to report to your Great Sage: I am an envoy of the Lord on High, bearing a sacred edict inviting him."

The demons ran in and reported: "Outside is an old man who says he is an envoy of Heaven, with an edict inviting you." Wukong said: "Well come! Well come! It must be that Gold Star of Venus who came before. Last time he invited me up to the upper world—and though the office was worthless, I made a trip to Heaven and learned the roads inside and outside the gate. Coming again now, there must be some good intent." He bade the officers throw open banners and drums and draw up ranks to welcome him.

The Great Sage then led his host of monkeys—crown on head, mail buckled on, the ochre-yellow robe over the mail, cloud-boots on his feet—hurrying out the cave door, bowing in salute and calling: "Old Star, pray enter—and pardon me for failing to welcome you."

The Gold Star hastened forward, went straight into the cave, and stood facing south: "Now hear me, Great Sage. Previously, because you despised your office as small and fled the Imperial Stables, the officers of the establishment great and small reported it to the Jade Emperor, who commanded: 'All offices are granted from low to high—why did he despise his as small?' Then Heavenly King Li led Nezha down to make war. Not knowing the Great Sage's powers, they met defeat, and returned to report: 'The Great Sage has raised a banner and would be Great Sage Equal to Heaven.' The generals still sought to equivocate, but this old man risked his own guilt to plead for the Great Sage—so no armies were raised, and the Great King was summoned to receive the register. The Jade Emperor granted my plea; that is why I have come."

Wukong laughed: "For all that toil before, and this new kindness now—many thanks! Many thanks! But tell me: does Heaven above truly have an office of 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven'?"

The Gold Star said: "The old man had this very title approved before he dared take the edict and come. If it fails of your wish, lay the whole blame on me."

Wukong was overjoyed. He begged the Star to stay for a feast, but was refused; so he rose with the Gold Star on the auspicious cloud, and came to the South Gate of Heaven, where the celestial guards and generals all folded their hands in welcome. They went straight in beneath the Hall of Divine Mists.

The Gold Star bowed and announced: "Your subject, bearing the edict, has brought Sun Wukong, the former Protector of Horses."

The Jade Emperor said: "Let Sun Wukong come forward. Today we appoint you 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven'—the highest of ranks. But do not run wild again." The monkey only lifted his hands in a shout of salutation and cried thanks for the grace. The Jade Emperor then bade the master-builders—the Zhang and Lu guilds—raise, on the right hand of the Garden of Peaches of Immortality, a residence for the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, with two offices within: one called the Department of Quietude, one the Department of Still-Spirit; each staffed with immortal clerks to attend upon him.

He further dispatched the Star Lords of the Five Bushels to escort Wukong to his post, bestowing besides two jars of imperial wine and ten flowers of gold, commanding him to settle his mind and fix his resolve and run wild no more. The Monkey King accepted and obeyed: that very day he went with the Star Lords of the Five Bushels to his residence, opened the jars of wine, and drank deep with all. When he had seen the Star Lords back to their palaces, his heart at last was fully content: he rejoiced to the depths of earth and the heights of heaven, happy in the palace of Heaven, without care, without hindrance. Truly:

His immortal name enrolled forever on the register of long life, Never to fall into the wheel of rebirth—renowned through all the ages.

But as to what followed—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Havoc in the Garden of Peaches—The Great Sage Steals the Elixir; Rebellion in the Palace of Heaven—The Gods Unite to Catch the Monster

The story goes that the Great Sage Equal to Heaven was, in the end, a demon-monkey: he understood nothing of official ranks and grades, never weighed his salary's height, and cared only that his name was entered. The immortal clerks of the two departments under his residence attended him morning and night; he knew nothing but three meals a day and one couch a night—nothing to fret him, free and unfettered. At his leisure he called on friends and roamed the palaces, made companions and swore brotherhood. Meeting the Three Pure Ones, he gave them an "old fellow"; meeting the Four Sovereigns, he gave them a "Your Majesty."

With the Nine Luminaries, the Generals of the Five Quarters, the Twenty-Eight Constellations, the Four Heavenly Kings, the Twelve Princes of the Year-Cycle, the Five Elders of the Five Regions, the star-officials of all Heaven, and the gods of River and Star, he was on brotherly terms, all on a mutual footing. Today he roamed east, tomorrow he drifted west; he came and went by cloud, and no one could fix his tracks.

One day at morning court, the Perfected One Xu Jingyang stepped from the ranks and bowed his head to report: "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, with nothing to do, idles and roams, making friends among the hosts of Heaven's constellations, calling all of them, high and low, his cronies. I fear that in his idleness trouble will breed. Better give him something to administer, and so forestall further mischief."

The Jade Emperor, hearing this, sent down a summons at once.

The Monkey King came in high good humor: "Your Majesty—what promotion or reward do you have for Old Sun?"

The Jade Emperor said: "Seeing that you are idle and unemployed, We give you a post. Go and take charge of the Garden of Peaches of Immortality; attend to it carefully, morning and night." The Great Sage gave delighted thanks, shouted his salute to the throne, and withdrew.

He could not wait to be busy. He went straight into the Garden of Peaches to survey it. The local garden god barred his way and asked: "Where is the Great Sage going?" The Great Sage said: "I am appointed by the Jade Emperor to oversee the Garden of Peaches, and am come to inspect it." The garden god hurriedly saluted, called up the whole crew—laborers to hoe the trees, laborers to carry water, laborers to tend the peaches, laborers to sweep and clean—to kowtow to the Great Sage, and led him in. Just look:

Slender and glowing, tree upon tree; Clustered and heavy, bough upon bough. Slender and glowing, the blossoms fill the trees; Clustered and heavy, the fruit weighs down the boughs. The fruit-burdened branches droop with brocade balls; The blossom-laden trees are massed with rouge. Now blooming, now setting, ripening through a thousand years; No summer, no winter, ten thousand ages slow. Those first to ripen wear the flushed face of wine; Those still unripe show green skins and stems. Congealed mist veils their green-fleshed bodies; Reflected sunlight shows their cinnabar forms. Strange flowers and rare plants beneath the trees, Their colors fresh through all four seasons. Pavilions and lodges to left and right; Circling clouds and rainbows wreath the air. No common stock of the mortal capital— The Queen Mother of the Jasper Pool planted them herself.

The Great Sage looked his fill, then asked the garden god: "How many trees are there in this garden?"

The garden god said: "Three thousand six hundred. The first twelve hundred, in front, bloom small and bear small fruit, ripening once in three thousand years: a man who eats them becomes an immortal and attains the Way, his body sound and light. The middle twelve hundred bear flowers in tiers and sweet fruit, ripening once in six thousand years: a man who eats them rides the rosy clouds and soars aloft, living forever without

age. The last twelve hundred, behind, have purple-striped skin and pale-yellow pits, ripening once in nine thousand years: a man who eats them lives as long as Heaven and Earth, coeval with sun and moon." The Great Sage, hearing this, was overjoyed beyond bounds. That day he made a full count of the trees, inspected pavilion and tower, and went back to his residence.

From then on, every three or five days he came for his enjoyment—no more visiting friends, no more roaming abroad.

One day he saw that on the old trees' branches most of the peaches had ripened, and his heart longed to taste the new fruit. But the garden god, the laborers, and the clerks of his own residence hovered close, which made it awkward.

Suddenly he hit on a plan: "You all go wait outside the gate and let me rest a little while in this pavilion."

The immortals withdrew. Watch the Monkey King: off with cap and robes, up the great tree; he picked the fully ripened great peaches—many of them—and feasted at his ease right there among the branches. He ate his fill, dropped down, pinned on his cap, donned his robes, and called his retinue back to the residence. Two or three days later he was back with new tricks, stealing peaches to his heart's content.

One morning the Queen Mother of the West held a banquet, threw open the Precious Pavilion, and prepared in the Jasper Pool a "Grand Festival of the Peaches of Immortality." She bade the seven fairies—Red-Robe, White-Robe, Blue-Robe, Black-Robe, Purple-Robe, Yellow-Robe, and Green-Robe—each bear a flower basket and go to the Garden of Peaches to pick fruit for the feast. The seven fairies came straight to the garden gate, and found the garden god, the laborers, and the clerks of the two departments of the Great Sage's residence all standing guard there.

The fairies came forward: "We bear the Queen Mother's command, come to gather peaches for the banquet."

The garden god said: "Fair ladies, pray halt. This year is not like years past: the Jade Emperor has appointed the Great Sage Equal to Heaven to superintend here; we must report to the Great Sage before we dare open the garden." The fairies asked: "Where is the Great Sage?" The garden god said: "He is in the garden; feeling drowsy, he has gone to sleep in the pavilion." The fairies said: "In that case, let us go find him—we must not be delayed."

The garden god led them in together. They searched to the flower pavilion but found no one—only his cap and robes, no telling where he had gone. Nowhere in any direction could he be found. For the Great Sage, after playing a while and eating a few peaches, had shrunk into a little man two inches tall and gone to sleep beneath the dense leaves at the top of a great tree.

The seven fairies said: "We came bearing the command—if we cannot find the Great Sage, how dare we go back empty-handed?"

A clerk at the side said: "Since you bear the command, ladies, don't stand on ceremony. Our Great Sage is a confirmed wanderer; he has likely gone out of the garden to visit friends. Go pick your peaches; we will answer for you."

The fairies did as he said and went beneath the trees to pick. First they picked two baskets from the front trees, then three baskets from the middle; but when they came to the trees behind, the blossoms and fruit hung sparse—only a few green-skinned, fuzzy-stemmed ones remained. Every ripe peach, of course, the Monkey King had eaten. The seven fairies peered east and west, and spied upon a southern branch a single peach, half red, half white. The Blue-Robe fairy pulled the branch down; the Red-Robe fairy plucked the peach—and set the branch bobbing back up.

Now the Great Sage, transformed, had been sleeping on that very branch, and the jolt woke him.

The Great Sage resumed his true form, whipped the Gold-Banded Cudgel from his ear, flourished it to the thickness of a rice-bowl, and snapped: "What monsters are you, from what quarter, that dare steal my peaches!"

The seven fairies fell on their knees in panic: "Great Sage, calm your anger. We are no monsters—we are the seven fairies of the robes, sent by the Queen Mother to gather the immortal peaches, for the opening of the Precious Pavilion and the Grand Festival of the Peaches. Coming here, we first met the garden god and his fellows, then searched for the Great Sage and could not find you. Fearing to delay the Queen Mother's command, and unable to wait for you, we began picking first. We beg a thousand pardons." At this the Great Sage turned his wrath to laughter: "Rise, fair ladies. When the Queen Mother opens her pavilion and sets her feast, whom does she invite?" The fairies said: "The gathering keeps its old rules. Invited are the Buddha of the West and his Bodhisattvas and Arhats; Guanyin of the South Pole of the South; the Sage Emperor of Gracious Favor of the East; the immortal elders of the Ten Continents and Three Islands; the Dark Numen of the North Pole of the North; and the Great Immortal of the Yellow Horn of the Yellow Poles of the Center—these are the Five Elders of the Five Regions. Besides them, the Star Lords of the Five Bushels; the Three Pure Ones, Four Sovereigns, and Grand Unity heavenly immortals of the Upper Eight Caves; the Jade Emperor, Nine Terraces, and the gods of seas and mountains of the Middle Eight Caves; the Teacher of the Dark Realm and the worldly immortals of the Lower Eight Caves. Every venerable god, great and small, of every palace and hall, will attend the peach banquet together." The Great Sage laughed: "And am I asked?" The fairies said: "We heard no word of it." The Great Sage said: "I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. What could be simpler than giving Old Sun a seat of honor?" The fairies said: "That is the old rule of the feast; how this feast will be, we cannot say." The Great Sage said: "True enough—no fault of yours. Stand where you are, and let Old Sun go first and find out the news—whether I'm to be asked or not."

What a Great Sage! He made the seal, recited the spell, and said to the assembled fairies: "Stop! Stop! Stop!" It was the Body-Freezing Spell: the seven fairies stood fixed beneath the peach trees, staring, eyes rolled white. The Great Sage leapt onto an auspicious cloud, sprang out of the garden, and made straight for the road to the Jasper Pool. As he went, there on the other side:

A whole sky of auspicious haze, its light a-sway; Five-colored clouds of good omen fly unceasing. White cranes cry, their voices ringing through the nine marshes; Purple zhi-fungus shows its beauty, thousand-petaled. In their midst there stands revealed an immortal, His features natural, his bearing set apart. His spirit dances rainbow-hues against the sky; At his waist hangs the precious record of no birth, no death. His name: the Barefoot Great Immortal of Daluo, Come to the Feast of Peaches, to lengthen out his years.

The Barefoot Immortal ran straight into the Great Sage, who lowered his head and plotted: he would trick this true immortal, and slip away to the feast in his place. He asked: "Old Taoist, where are you bound?" The immortal said: "I am bidden by the Queen Mother to the Grand Festival of the Peaches." The Great Sage said: "You haven't heard, old Taoist. The Jade Emperor, because Old Sun's Somersault Cloud is swift, has sent Old Sun to invite you dignitaries by five routes—first to gather beneath the Hall of Universal Brightness for rehearsal of the rites, and only then to proceed to the banquet." The immortal was an open and upright soul, and took the lie for truth:

"But in other years the rehearsal of rites and the thanks were held at the Jasper Pool itself—why should I go first to the Hall of Universal Brightness?"

There was no help for it: he wheeled his auspicious cloud around and made for the Hall of Universal Brightness.

The Great Sage rode his cloud, recited a spell, shook his body, and changed—into the very likeness of the Barefoot Immortal—and sped on toward the Jasper Pool. Before long he reached the Precious Pavilion, checked his cloud, and walked softly in. Just look at the place:

Jasper incense wreathing and curling; Auspicious haze falling in showers. The jasper terrace spread with woven colors; The Precious Pavilion breathing mist upon mist. Phoenix soaring, simurgh rising—forms half-seen; Golden flowers and jade petals—shadows dipping, floating. Above, the nine-phoenix screen of cinnabar clouds, The purple-nirvana cushions of the Eight Treasures. Tables banded with gold on five-colored ground; Basins of dark jade in a thousand flowers. On the tables, dragon liver and phoenix marrow, Bear paws and ape lips— A hundred flavors, rarest of the rare, every one delicious; Strange fruits and fine dishes, every dish new-fangled.

All was laid out in perfect order—but as yet no immortal had come. The Great Sage looked his fill, when suddenly a wave of wine-scent struck his nostrils. He turned his head: beneath the long corridor on the right wall stood several wine-making officials and vat-tending laborers, directing water-carrying Taoists and fire-tending boys—all scrubbing jars and rinsing vats; the jade liquid and jasper nectar was already brewed, fine wines and splendid liquors.

The Great Sage's mouth watered past restraining; he would have drunk at once, but all those people stood about. So he worked a little magic: plucked a few hairs, tossed them into his mouth, chewed them fine, spat them out, recited the spell, cried "Change!"—and they became several sleep-insects, that flew into the faces of the crowd. Watch that crew: hands going limp, heads drooping, brows knitted, eyes closed, abandoning their tasks, all nodding off to sleep.

The Great Sage then helped himself to the hundred flavors and eight delicacies, the fine dishes and strange viands, walked into the long corridor, and leaning on vats and pressing against jars, drank his fill with both hands—deep and long. He drank for a good long while,

And got blind, dead drunk. Feeling himself over, he muttered: "Bad! Bad! Soon the invited guests will come—won't they blame me? If I'm caught in the pinch, what then? Better get back to my residence and sleep it off."

What a Great Sage! Swaying and swaggering, drunk, he blundered about at will—and presently took the wrong road: it was not his own residence, but the Tushita Palace of Heaven.

At the sight of it he came suddenly to his senses: "The Tushita Palace stands above the Thirty-Three Heavens, the dwelling of the Most High Lord Lao on the Heaven of Parting Sorrow—how did I stumble in here? Well—so be it! All this time I've meant to pay the old fellow a visit and never had the chance; since my errant feet have brought me here, I may as well look in on him."

He straightened his robes and blundered in—but no Lord Lao was to be seen, not a soul anywhere. For the old Lord was on the high terrace of vermilion hills in the three-story tower above, expounding the Way to the Ancient Buddha of the Burning Lamp, with his immortal boys, generals, officials, and clerks all standing to left and right, listening. The Great Sage went straight into the elixir chamber, searched without finding anyone—only, beside the elixir stove, fire burning in the furnace. To left and right of the furnace stood five gourds, and every gourd was full of the finished Golden Elixir.

The Great Sage rejoiced: "This stuff is the supremest treasure of the immortals. Since I attained the Way and saw through the truth that the outer and inner are one, I've wanted some elixir to help me along—but never had time at home. Today the chance is mine: I've stumbled on the very thing. While Old Lao is out, let me eat a few pills and try the taste."

He tipped out the gourds, every one, and ate them all up—just like eating fried beans.

In a moment elixir filled him and the wine wore off. He reckoned with himself again: "Bad! Very bad! This trouble is bigger than Heaven itself. If the Jade Emperor hears of it, my life won't be worth keeping. Flee! Flee! Flee! Better to go down below and be a king!"

He bolted out of the Tushita Palace—not by the old road, but out the Western Gate of Heaven, working the Body-Hiding Spell to make his escape. He brought his cloud down and returned to the borders of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. There—banners flashing, halberds gleaming: the four Champions and the demon kings of the seventy-two caves were drilling in arms.

The Great Sage called out: "Little ones! I have come!"

The monsters dropped their weapons and knelt: "Great Sage, how could you be so easy in your mind—leaving us all this long while, never once looking in!" The Great Sage said: "It hasn't been long! It hasn't been long!" Talking as he went, he walked straight into the depths of the cave heaven. The four Champions tidied a place for him to rest, and knocked their heads in homage.

They all asked: "This hundred years or ten the Great Sage spent in Heaven—what office did you really hold?"

The Great Sage laughed: "I remember barely half a year—what's all this talk of hundreds and tens?" The Champions said: "One day in Heaven is one year down below." The Great Sage said: "Here's the good of it: the Jade Emperor took a fancy to me this time, and truly enfeoffed me as 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven,' raised me a residence, set up two departments, Quietude and Still-Spirit, with immortal clerks and guards to wait on me. Later, seeing I had nothing to do, he set me to keep the Garden of Peaches. Then came the Queen Mother's 'Grand Festival of the Peaches,' and I was not invited—so without waiting to be asked, I went first to the Jasper Pool, and her immortal dainties and immortal wines, I stole and ate and drank them all. Coming out of the Jasper Pool, stumbling and staggering, I wandered by mistake into Old Lao's palace—and his five gourds of Golden Elixir I stole and swallowed too. Only, fearing the Jade Emperor's wrath, I came out through the gate of Heaven."

At this the monsters were overjoyed.

They laid out wine and fruit to welcome him home; a stone bowl of coconut wine was filled to the brim and offered. The Great Sage took one sip and grimaced: "Not good! Not good!"

Generals Beng and Ba said: "The Great Sage, living in the palace of Heaven, has drunk immortal wine and eaten immortal dishes—no wonder coconut wine tastes poor to you. As the saying goes: 'Sweet or not sweet, it's the water of home.'" The Great Sage said: "And you are the other half of the proverb: 'Kin or not kin, the folk of home.' When I was making free in the Jasper Pool this morning, I saw beneath the long corridor jars and flasks past counting, all of that same jade nectar—none of you has ever tasted it. Wait: I'll go steal a few bottles back, and you shall each drink half a cup—one and all of you, immortal and ageless." The monkeys rejoiced beyond measure.

The Great Sage went out the cave door, tumbled through another somersault, worked the Body-Hiding Spell, and made straight for the Festival of the Peaches. He entered the pavilions of the Jasper Pool: the wine-makers, vat-tenders, water-carriers, and fire-boys were still snoring, unwaked. He tucked two of the biggest jars under his arms, one on either side, took two more, one in each hand, wheeled his cloud around, and came back. There, with all the monkeys gathered in the cave, he held an "Immortal Wine Feast," each drinking several cups, happy beyond telling—but of that no more.

Now the story tells how the seven fairies, held by the Great Sage's Body-Freezing Spell, could only be freed after a full day's round.

Each with her flower basket, they returned and reported to the Queen Mother: "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven worked his spell and held us fast—that is why we are so late."

The Queen Mother asked: "How many peaches did you pick?" The fairies said: "Only two baskets of small ones, and three of the middle ones. As for the great ones behind—not half a peach: all eaten by the Great

Sage, we think. And while we were searching, out he came of a sudden, raging and striking, and asked who was asked to the feast. We told him all about the gathering, and he froze us where we stood, and where he went we never knew. Only just now did the spell break and we come back."

At this the Queen Mother went straight to the Jade Emperor and laid the whole matter before him.

Before she had finished, the whole crew of wine-makers came with the officials to report: "Some person unknown has thrown the Grand Festival of the Peaches into disorder, stolen and drunk the jade nectar and jasper syrup, and stolen and eaten the eight delicacies and hundred flavors besides."

Then four great Celestial Masters came up to announce: "The Most High Patriarch of the Way is come." The Jade Emperor went out with the Queen Mother to receive him.

Lord Lao completed his court homage and said: "In my palace I had refined some 'Nine-Times-Refined Golden Elixir,' in wait upon Your Majesty's 'Assembly of the Elixir Origin'—and a thief has stolen it. I come specially to inform Your Majesty."

The Jade Emperor's flesh crept at the news.

Shortly after, the immortal clerks of the Great Sage's residence came kowtowing: "The Great Sage Sun would not keep to his post; he went out wandering yesterday and has not returned to this hour—where he is, none can say."

The Jade Emperor's misgivings deepened.

Then the Barefoot Immortal himself bowed low and reported: "Your subject, bidden by the Queen Mother to yesterday's feast, met by chance the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, who told me Your Majesty had commanded him to invite us all first to the Hall of Universal Brightness to rehearse the rites before attending the feast. Following his words, your subject returned to the outside of the Hall of Universal Brightness, found no dragon chariot nor phoenix carriage of Your Majesty, and hastened here to wait."

The Jade Emperor was more startled still: "The villain forged an edict and gulled our worthy lord! Quick—bid the Investigating Numinary Officer hunt down the fellow's trail!"

The Numinary Officer took the command, went out from the hall, searched high and low, and got the whole tale in detail.

He returned and reported: "He who has thrown the palaces of Heaven into disorder is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

And he recounted the whole affair from the first. The Jade Emperor's fury was great. He dispatched the Four Heavenly Kings, together with Heavenly King Li and Prince Nezha, to muster the Twenty-Eight Constellations, the Nine Luminaries, the Twelve Princes of the Year-Cycle, the Revealers of the Five Quarters, the Four Duty Officers of the Hours, the Star-Lords of East and West, the Two Gods of South and North, the Five Peaks and Four Rivers, and the star-officials of all Heaven—a hundred thousand celestial soldiers in all—to cast below, around the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, a net of Heaven and earth in eighteen layers, and there besiege and surely seize the villain for punishment.

The gods mustered their hosts at once and left the palace of Heaven. This descent—just look at it:

Yellow winds rolling, rolling, darkening the sky; Purple mists surging, surging, dimming all the earth. Only because a demon-monkey insulted the Lord on High, The host of saints must descend upon the mortal dust. The Four Heavenly Kings, the Revealers of the Five Quarters: The Four Heavenly Kings hold the general command; The Revealers of the Five Quarters marshal the many troops. Pagoda-Bearing Li directs the central army; Fierce Nezha leads the van. Star Rahu heads the inspection; Star Ketu follows, towering in

might. The Star of Great Yin, spirits high; The Star of Great Sun, shining bright. The Five Planet Stars, every one a hero; The Nine Luminaries, all spoiling for a fight. The Princes of the Year-Cycle—Zi, Wu, Mao, You— Each and all are mighty celestial guards. The Five Plagues and Five Peaks deployed from east to west; The Six Dings and Six Jias marching right and left. The Dragon Gods of the Four Rivers, split above and below; The Twenty-Eight Constellations ranked in serried ranks. Horn, Neck, Root, Room lead the whole array; Straddler, Trotter, Stomach, Pleiades are practiced tumblers. Dipper, Ox, Maid, Emptiness, Rooftop, House, Wall— Every one of them a stalwart; Heart, Tail, Winnowing-Basket, every star a hero; Well, Ghost, Willow, Star, Spread, Wings, Chariot-Board— Wielding spears and brandishing swords, showing forth their power. The clouds halt, the mists descend upon the mortal world; Before the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit the camp is pitched.

The poem says:

The Heaven-born Monkey King, transformations past all count, Stole elixir, stole the wine, and reveled in his mountain nest. All for his havoc at the Feast of Peaches, A hundred thousand celestial soldiers cast their net.

Then Heavenly King Li gave the command: the celestial soldiers entrenched their camp and sealed the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit so tight not a drop of water could leak through. Above and below they spread the eighteen layers of Heaven's net and Earth's snare, and first sent the Nine Fierce Luminaries to give battle. The Nine Luminaries led their troops straight to the cave, and there before the door were the monkeys great and small, leaping and playing.

The star-officials cried in harsh voices: "You little demons! Where is your Great Sage? We are heavenly gods mustered from the upper world, come to subdue your rebellious Great Sage. Bid him come quickly and surrender! If he says one half of the word 'no,' you shall all be destroyed to a beast!"

The little demons scurried in with the news: "Great Sage—trouble! trouble! Nine fierce gods stand outside, claiming to be heavenly gods from the upper world, come to take the Great Sage."

Now the Great Sage was just dividing the immortal wine among the demon kings of the seventy-two caves and the four Champions. At the report he took no notice whatever: "While there's wine today, today we'll drink—never mind the rights and wrongs outside the door!"

Before the words were done, another troop of little demons came leaping: "Those nine fierce gods, with wicked words and wild talk, are at the gate calling us out to battle!" The Great Sage laughed: "Never mind them. 'With wine and verse, seize the day's delight; of fame and fortune, never ask the hour.' " Scarce had he finished when yet another troop came running: "Master! Those nine fierce gods have smashed the gate—they're breaking in!" The Great Sage flared: "These hairy little gods—insufferably rude! I'd have let the matter drop—why must they come to my door to bully me?" He ordered the one-horned ghost kings to lead the demon kings of the seventy-two caves out to form the line, while Old Sun followed with the four Champions.

The ghost kings swiftly led the demon troops out to meet the foe—but the Nine Fierce Luminaries fell on them all together, and pinned them at the iron-plated bridge-head, so that none could get out.

Amid the din the Great Sage arrived. He shouted "Make way!" whipped out the iron cudgel, flourished it to the thickness of a rice-bowl, twelve feet long, threw open his guard, and fought his way out. Which of the Nine Luminaries dared stand against him? They were beaten back on the spot.

The Nine Luminaries steadied their line and cried: "You reckless Protector of Horses, with no thought of life or death! You have committed the Ten Deadly Sins: first stealing the peaches, then stealing the wine, wrecking the Grand Festival of the Peaches, then stealing Lord Lao's elixir, and then carrying off the imperial wine to revel here! Sin upon sin—do you not know it?"

The Great Sage laughed: "These little matters—all true! All true! And what will you do about it?" The Nine Luminaries said: "We bear the Jade Emperor's golden command, leading the host here to take you. Submit at once, and spare these living creatures their lives! If not, we will flatten this mountain and overturn this cave!" The Great Sage roared: "Measure yourselves, you hairy gods! What magic have you, to dare such swollen words? Stand not there—take a stroke of Old Sun's cudgel!" And the Nine Luminaries all charged together.

The Handsome Monkey King, not one whit afraid, swung his Gold-Banded Cudgel, parrying left and blocking right, and fought the Nine Luminaries till their sinews wilted and their strength ran soft; one after another they dragged their weapons reversed and fled the field, hurrying into the marshal's tent to tell the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King: "That Monkey King is fierce beyond all! We could not stand against him—we come back defeated."

Heavenly King Li at once called out the Four Heavenly Kings and the Twenty-Eight Constellations, and the whole array came forth to fight. The Great Sage, no whit daunted, marshaled the one-horned ghost kings, the demon kings of the seventy-two caves, and the four Champions, and drew up his line outside the cave door. Watch this pitched battle—what a terrifying sight:

Cold wind soughing; weird mists dark and dank. On that side banners flying their colors; On this side halberds flashing their light. Roll upon roll of gleaming helmets; Tier upon tier of shining mail. The gleaming helmets rolling in the sun Like silver chimes rung against the sky; The shining mail tiered along the cliffs Like ice-mountains pressing on the ground. Great battle-knives fly cloud-quick, lightning-swift; Pillared-white spears pierce mist and thread the clouds. Square-heaven halberds, tiger-eye whips, Ranged like a tangled forest; Bronze swords, four-bright shovels, Arrayed like dense-planted trees. Bent bows and stiff crossbows with their eagle-feathered shafts; Short staves and serpent spears, soul-snatching both. The Great Sage with his single As-You-Will cudgel Turns and sweeps and battles the heavenly gods, Till no bird crosses the empty air, And tiger and wolf flee through the mountains. He flings sand and rolls stones till the cosmos blackens; He scatters earth and whips up dust till the universe dims. Only hear the clashing and crashing, startling heaven and earth, The dread and dreadful din that shakes the gods and ghosts.

This battle was drawn up at the hour of Chen and fought in chaos till the sun sank behind the western hills. The one-horned ghost kings and the monsters of the seventy-two caves were every one taken by the heavenly gods; only the four Champions and the host of monkeys escaped, hidden deep in the Water Curtain Cave.

With his single cudgel the Great Sage held off the Four Heavenly Kings, Pagoda-Bearing Li, and Prince Nezha—all in mid-air—fighting on for a good long while. When the Great Sage saw the sky darkening, he plucked a handful of hairs, tossed them into his mouth, chewed and spat them out, cried "Change!"—and they became a thousand Great Sages, every one wielding a Gold-Banded Cudgel: they beat back Prince Nezha and worsted the five Heavenly Kings.

Victorious, the Great Sage gathered in his hairs and turned quickly back toward the cave. At the iron-plated bridge-head he found the four Champions leading the host to kowtow and welcome him—weeping three great choking sobs, then laughing three great cackling laughs.

The Great Sage said: "You see me—and weep and laugh both. Why?"

The four Champions said: "This morning we led the host against the Heavenly Kings, and the demon kings of the seventy-two caves and the one-horned ghost kings were all seized by the gods. We barely escaped with our lives—that is why we wept. But now we see the Great Sage return in triumph, not a scratch upon him—that is why we laugh." The Great Sage said: "Victory and defeat are the common lot of soldiers. As the ancients said: 'Kill ten thousand of the enemy, and three thousand of your own are lost.' And those officers they took were tigers, leopards, wolves, serpents, badgers, roe deer, foxes, and the like—not one of my own kind was harmed. Why grieve? True, I beat them off with my Body-Dividing Spell, but they will camp at the

foot of my mountain still. Let us guard the passes close, eat our fill, sleep sound, and store up our spirits. At daybreak watch me work a great magic, take these heavenly generals, and be avenged for you all." The four Champions and the monkeys drank several bowls of coconut wine and slept sound—but of that no more.

The Four Heavenly Kings drew back their troops and ceased from battle; each reported his exploits: some had taken tigers and leopards, some lions and elephants, some wolves, serpents, foxes, and badgers—but not one monkey spirit had they caught. Then indeed they entrenched their camp anew, threw up the great stockade, rewarded the officers who had won merit, instructed the soldiers of Heaven's net and Earth's snare—each man his bell, each his watch-cry—and sealed the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in a ring of iron, waiting only for morning and the great battle. Each received his orders, and every post was strictly held. Truly:

The demon-monkey's revolt has startled heaven and earth; Net and snare are spread, watched by day and night.

But as to what was done after daybreak—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Guanyin Comes to the Feast and Asks the Reason; The Little Sage Shows His Might and Subdues the Great Sage

Let us leave aside for now the celestial generals surrounding the mountain and the Great Sage resting at his ease. We speak instead of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, the Great Compassionate One Who Saves from Suffering and Peril, of the numinous and responsive Assembly of He Who Perceives the Sounds of the World, whose dwelling is on Mount Potalaka in the Southern Sea. She had been invited by the Queen Mother of the West to attend the Peach Banquet, and with her senior disciple, the Pilgrim Hui'an, she ascended to the jeweled pavilions of the Jade Pool—only to find the place desolate and forlorn, the banquet tables in disarray. A few immortals were there, but none had taken their seats; all were standing about in agitated discussion. The Bodhisattva greeted the assembled immortals, and they told her everything that had happened.

"Since there is to be no grand assembly and no passing of the wine cups," said the Bodhisattva, "you may all accompany me to see the Jade Emperor."

The immortals gladly followed her. When they reached the Hall of Universal Brightness, the Four Heavenly Teachers, the Great Immortal Barefoot, and many others were already there waiting. They welcomed the Bodhisattva and told her that the Jade Emperor was much troubled, that he had dispatched celestial soldiers to seize the monster, and that they had not yet returned.

"I should like to see the Jade Emperor," said the Bodhisattva. "Please convey my request."

The Heavenly Teacher Qiu Hongji went at once into the Hall of Divine Mists to announce her, and she was summoned within. The Supreme Old Lord Laozi was in attendance above, and the Queen Mother stood behind.

The Bodhisattva led the immortals inside. After exchanging courtesies with the Jade Emperor, she greeted the Old Lord and the Queen Mother as well, and they all took their seats.

"How went the Peach Banquet?" she then asked.

"Every year we hold the feast, and all is joy," said the Jade Emperor. "But this year that demon monkey has wrecked everything—it was an invitation issued in vain."

"What is the origin of this demon monkey?" asked the Bodhisattva.

"The demon monkey was hatched from a stone egg on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the land of Aolai on the Eastern Continent of Superior Body," said the Jade Emperor. "At the moment of his birth he shot golden light from his eyes that pierced the very Palace of the Dipper. I paid it no mind at first, but then he became a spirit, subdued dragons and tigers, and struck his own name from the registers of death. The Dragon King and the King of the Underworld both memorialized me about him. I was about to have him seized when the Planet of Gold—the Evening Star—memorialized me, saying, 'Throughout the Three Realms, all who possess nine apertures may attain immortality.' So instead I extended him grace and favor, summoned him to the Upper World, and appointed him Protector of Horses in the Imperial Stables. That wretch despised the office as too lowly and rebelled against Heaven. I sent Li the Pagoda-Bearer Heavenly King and Prince Nezha to subdue him, but then I issued an edict of appeasement, summoned him back to the Upper World, and gave him the title 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven'—a title with office but no stipend. Having nothing to manage, he drifted idly east and west. Fearing he would stir up further trouble, I set him over the Garden of Peaches. But he obeyed neither law nor ordinance, and stole and ate every peach of the great fruits on the old trees. When the banquet was prepared, he, being a person without stipend, was not invited. So he

played a trick on the Great Immortal Barefoot and deceived him, transformed himself into the immortal's likeness to enter the feast, and stole and consumed all the immortal dishes and immortal wine. He then stole the Old Lord's elixir and a quantity of imperial wine besides, and carried them off to his mountain to enjoy with his monkey host. For this my heart is troubled, and I have dispatched a hundred thousand celestial soldiers with a net of heaven and a net of earth to subdue him. A full day has passed with no word returned, and I know not whether they have won or lost."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva at once commanded the Pilgrim Hui'an: "Go quickly down from the Heavenly Palace to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit and find out how the battle goes. If you encounter the enemy, lend your aid in one engagement, and be sure to return with a true report."

The Pilgrim Hui'an straightened his robes, grasped an iron staff, mounted the clouds, and left the palace gates, traveling straight to the foot of the mountain. There he saw the net of heaven and net of earth, layer upon layer, dense beyond penetrating; sentries at every camp gate rang their bells and called the watchwords, and the mountain was ringed about so tightly that not a drop of water could have leaked through.

Hui'an halted and called out: "Heavenly warriors at the camp gate, be so good as to send word within. I am Muozha, the second prince of Heavenly King Li, disciple of Guanyin of the Southern Sea, known as Hui'an. I have come to scout the state of the battle."

The spirit soldiers of the Five Sacred Peaks within the camp passed his message through the gates, and soon the Rat of the Void Day, the Cock of the Rooster Day, the Horse of the Horse Day, and the Rabbit of the Room Day relayed his words to the central command tent. Heavenly King Li gave the order to open the net of heaven and the net of earth and let him in. By this time dawn was just breaking in the east. Hui'an entered following the signal flag, and bowed to the Four Heavenly Kings and Heavenly King Li.

When the courtesies were done, Heavenly King Li asked, "My child, from where have you come?"

"I attended the Peach Banquet with the Bodhisattva," said Hui'an. "Seeing the grand assembly desolate and the Jade Pool abandoned, she led the immortals and me to see the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor told us that Your Majesty had descended to the lower world to subdue the demon monkey, and that a full day had passed with no word, so the Bodhisattva sent me to learn the truth of the matter."

"Yesterday we arrived here and set up our camps," said Heavenly King Li. "I sent the Nine Luminaries to challenge him, but that wretch threw about his magical powers and all Nine Luminaries fled back in defeat. Then we ourselves led troops against him, and he too drew up his battle lines. We fought him in a great melee, our hundred thousand celestial soldiers against him, until nightfall, when he used a body-splitting spell to fight us off. When we gathered our forces and took stock, we had caught nothing but wolves, insects, tigers, and leopards—not so much as half a demon monkey. Today he has not yet come out to do battle."

Hardly had he finished speaking when someone came in from beyond the camp gates to report: "That Great Sage is leading a troop of monkey spirits, shouting challenges outside."

The Four Heavenly Kings, Heavenly King Li, and the princes were just then discussing whether to send out troops.

"Father King," said Muozha, "the Bodhisattva instructed me to come down and scout out the situation, and said that if I met battle, I might lend my aid. Now I am willing to go myself and see what sort of 'Great Sage' this is!"

"My child," said the Heavenly King, "you have followed the Bodhisattva in cultivation these several years; no doubt you have some powers of your own. Take great care."

What a prince! He wheeled his iron staff in both hands, tightened his embroidered robe, leaped out through the camp gates, and shouted in a great voice: "Which of you is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven?"

The Great Sage leveled his As-You-Will staff and answered: "Old Monkey is he. Who are you, that you dare question me?"

"I am the second prince of Heavenly King Li," said Muozha. "I now serve as disciple and protector of the faith before the precious throne of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, and my religious name is Hui'an."

"If you practice cultivation in the Southern Sea," said the Great Sage, "what business have you coming here to see me?"

"My master sent me to scout the battle," said Muozha. "Seeing how rampant you are, I have come especially to seize you!"

"You dare to talk so big!" said the Great Sage. "Stand not aside! Taste Old Monkey's staff!"

Muozha showed no fear at all, and met him with his iron staff.

The two of them took their stand halfway up the mountain, outside the camp gates, and what a battle it was:

Though staff crossed staff, the irons were not the same; Though warrior met warrior, the men were not alike. One was a scattered immortal of Primordial Unity styled "Great Sage"; One was Guanyin's disciple, a true dragon of the primal origin. The wrought-iron staff was forged by a thousand hammers, Its spirit-work done by the Gods of the Six Cyclical Combinations; The As-You-Will staff was set in the River of Heaven, A sea-quelling divine treasure of boundless power. When the two met, they were true opponents matched; Their exchanges of technique were truly inexhaustible. This one's guarding staff—ten thousand forms of menace— Encircled his waist like a cable, swift as the wind; That one's spear-gripping staff gave no opening at all— How could left parry and right block hold against it? On that side banners flashed and glittered; On this side drums and kettledrums boomed. Ten thousand heavenly generals wheeled in rings; A whole cave of demon monkeys clustered thick. Monstrous mists and sorrowful clouds shrouded the earth; Wolf-smoke and baleful vapors pierced the palace of heaven. Yesterday's great melee was yet bearable; Today's struggle was fiercer still. One must admire the Monkey King's true abilities— Muozha, defeated once more, barely escaped with his life.

The Great Sage and Hui'an fought fifty or sixty rounds, until Hui'an's arms grew numb and sore and he could no longer hold off his foe. He feinted with his staff, broke from the fray, and fled back in defeat. The Great Sage likewise withdrew his monkey troops and stationed them outside his cave door.

Outside the Heavenly King's camp, troops great and small caught hold of the prince and opened a path for him. He went straight in through the gates and stood before the Four Heavenly Kings, Li the Pagoda-Bearer, and Nezha, gasping for breath, unable to steady his panting: "What a Great Sage! What a Great Sage! Truly his powers are vast! I could not defeat him—I too have come back beaten!"

Heavenly King Li was alarmed at heart and at once ordered a memorial written requesting aid, dispatching the Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength to carry it, together with Prince Muozha, up to Heaven to report.

The two dared not linger. They burst out through the net of heaven and the net of earth and mounted auspicious clouds of rosy vapor. In a moment they arrived below the Hall of Universal Brightness, where the Four Heavenly Teachers met them and led them into the Hall of Divine Mists to present the memorial. Hui'an also bowed to the Bodhisattva.

"What did you learn on your scouting mission?" asked the Bodhisattva.

"I received my orders and went to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit," said Hui'an. "I had them open the gates of the net of heaven and the net of earth, saw my father, and explained my master's command. Father King said, 'Yesterday we fought a battle with that Monkey King and caught nothing but his tigers, leopards, lions, and elephants—not a single monkey spirit.' Just as we were speaking, he came demanding battle again. I took my iron staff and fought him fifty or sixty rounds, but could not prevail, and fled back to camp in defeat. Father King has therefore sent the Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength up with me to seek aid."

The Bodhisattva lowered her head and pondered.

Now the Jade Emperor opened the memorial, saw the request for aid, and laughed: "Insufferable [Translator's note: the original ponai is an exclamation of impatience and indignation] monkey spirit! How great can his powers be, that he dares to withstand a hundred thousand celestial soldiers! And now Li the Heavenly King comes asking for help. Which of my divine commanders shall I send to aid him?"

Before he had finished speaking, Guanyin pressed her palms together and addressed the throne: "Let Your Majesty rest easy. This humble monk can recommend one divinity who can capture this monkey."

"Which divinity do you recommend?" asked the Jade Emperor.

"Your Majesty's own nephew, the True Lord Erlang the Sagely and Miraculous," said the Bodhisattva, "who now resides at Guanjiangkou in Guanzhou, receiving the incense and offerings of the lower world. In days past he slew six monsters by his own strength, and he has the brothers of Mount Mei and twelve hundred unkempt spirit-troops before his tent. His powers are vast. The trouble is, he heeds summons to battle but not summons to court [Translator's note: he answers calls to military action but refuses to appear at court]. If Your Majesty issues an edict of military command, he will go to your aid, and the monkey can be taken."

Hearing this, the Jade Emperor issued at once the edict of military command and dispatched the Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength to bear it.

The Ghost King received the edict, mounted the clouds, and traveled straight to Guanjiangkou. In less than half a watch he arrived at the True Lord's temple. The ghost bailiffs keeping the gate announced within: "An imperial envoy is without, bearing an edict." Erlang came out at once with all his brothers to receive the edict, burned incense, and had it read aloud. It said:

"The demon monkey of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, has rebelled. Having stolen peaches, wine, and elixir in the palace and thrown the Grand Peach Banquet into chaos, he is now surrounded by a hundred thousand celestial soldiers and eighteen layers of heaven's net and earth's net, who have invested the mountain but have not prevailed. We hereby specially summon our worthy nephew, together with his sworn brothers, to proceed at once to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to lend your strength in exterminating him. On success you shall be raised high in rank and richly rewarded."

The True Lord was overjoyed. "Let the envoy return," he said. "I shall go at once and draw my blade to aid them."

The Ghost King returned to make his report, and of him we say no more.

The True Lord then summoned the six brothers of Mount Mei—the four Commandants Kang, Zhang, Yao, and Li, and the two Generals Guo Shen and Zhi Jian—and gathered them before the hall: "Just now the Jade Emperor has summoned us to go to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to subdue the demon monkey. Let us go together!"

All the brothers gladly consented. They mustered their own spirit troops, with hawks on their wrists and hounds in leash, crossbows set and bows drawn, raised a wild wind, and in an instant crossed the Eastern

Ocean, arriving straight at the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. There they found the net of heaven and the net of earth, layer upon layer, so dense they could not advance.

They called out: "Divine generals of the net of heaven and net of earth, hear us! We are the True Lord Erlang the Sagely and Miraculous, summoned by the Jade Emperor to capture the demon monkey. Open your camp gates and let us through!"

At once the word passed from layer to layer, and the Four Heavenly Kings and Heavenly King Li came out of the camp gates to welcome them. After exchanging courtesies, they asked about the state of the battle, and the Heavenly King related all that had happened.

The True Lord laughed: "This Little Sage has come here to match transformations with him. Gentlemen, do not cover the top with your net of heaven and net of earth—only close it tightly on all four sides, and let me wager battle with him. If I lose to him, you need not come to my aid; my own brothers will support me. If I defeat him, you need not bind him; my own brothers will lay hands on him. I ask only that Li the Pagoda-Bearer Heavenly King take the Demon-Revealing Mirror and stand firm in midair. I fear that if he loses the battle he will flee elsewhere; you must keep him illuminated clearly for me and on no account let him escape."

The Heavenly Kings took their stations at the four quarters, and the celestial troops arrayed themselves in ranks. The True Lord, leading the four Commandants and two Generals—seven brothers in all, counting himself—issued from the camp to give battle, instructing the other commanders to guard the camp closely and to gather in all the hawks and hounds. The unkempt spirit-troops received their orders, and the True Lord went straight to the outside of the Water Curtain Cave, where he saw a host of monkeys drawn up in neat and orderly ranks in the formation of a coiled dragon. In their center flew a banner bearing four great characters: "Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

"What claim has that vile monkey," said the True Lord, "to an office equal to Heaven?"

"Enough of your admiration," said the six brothers of Mount Mei. "Call him to battle!"

The little monkeys at the camp entrance saw the True Lord and ran swiftly to report. The Monkey King seized his gold-banded staff, adjusted his golden armor, set his feet in cloud-walking boots, pressed his purple-gold crown firmly down, and dashed out of the camp gates. Opening his eyes wide, he took in the True Lord's appearance—truly refined and striking, dressed with elegant grace. Indeed:

A face most handsome, a bearing grand and tall, Ears hanging to his shoulders, eyes full of light. On his head, a three-peaked cap with flying phoenix; On his body, a single robe of pale goose-yellow. Gold-threaded boots on dragon-coiled hose, A jade belt round with flowers, adorned with eight treasures. At his hip a pellet bow curved like the new moon; In his hand a three-pointed, double-edged spear. With an axe he split Peach Mountain and once saved his mother; With pellets he struck down the twin phoenixes of Palm Grove. By strength he slew eight monsters, his fame spread far; In righteousness he joined the Seven Sages of Mount Mei. Proud-hearted, he acknowledges no kinship with Heaven's house; Haughty in nature, he went to live as a god at Guanjiang. The numinous and sagely lord of effulgent grace at Chicheng, Manifest without bounds, he is titled Erlang.

The Great Sage looked at him with a broad grin, raised his gold-banded staff, and called out in a loud voice: "Little general from what region are you, that you dare come here so boldly to challenge me?"

The True Lord shouted back: "You wretch, are you blind? Do you not know me? I am the Jade Emperor's sister's son, Erlang the Miraculous and Sagely Prince, invested by imperial command. By command from above I have come here to capture you, the rebel Protector of Horses who overturned the Heavenly Palace, and still you do not know whether you live or die!"

"I recall," said the Great Sage, "that the Jade Emperor's younger sister yearned for the mortal world, descended to the lower realm, and joined with one Lord Yang, bearing a son—the one who split Peach Mountain with an axe. Is that you? I was minded to curse you a few times, but we have no particular enmity between us. I thought to strike you one blow of my staff, but it would be a pity to take your life. Young lord, run home quickly and call out your Four Heavenly Kings to face me."

Hearing this, the True Lord's heart filled with fury: "Vile monkey! No more insolence! Taste my blade!"

The Great Sage turned aside to dodge, then swiftly raised his gold-banded staff and struck back.

What a battle the two of them fought:

Erlang the Miraculous, Lord of Sagely Grace, And Sun the Great Sage Equal to Heaven! This one, proud of heart, scorned his foe—the Handsome Monkey King; That one, stern of face, would master him—a true pillar of heaven. The two had never met before, and each was eager for the wager. Never had they plumbed each other's depths; Only today did they learn the measure of light and heavy. The iron staff vied with a flying dragon; The divine blade danced like a phoenix on the wing. Blocking left, attacking right; parrying before, meeting behind. On this side the six brothers of Mount Mei lent their awe; On that side the four Marshal commanders passed their orders. Banners waved and drums thundered, every heart as one; Shouts arose and gongs were beaten, each adding to the spirit. Their two blades found every opening; Back and forth they went without the seam of a thread. The gold-banded staff was a treasure from the sea, Transforming, soaring, ever gaining the advantage. If one's body were slow, his life would end; The least misstep would bring him crashing down.

The True Lord and the Great Sage fought more than three hundred rounds, and still victory was undecided. Then the True Lord shook out his divine might, shook his body, and transformed—growing ten thousand spans tall, his two hands raising aloft his three-pointed, double-edged divine blade, like the very peak atop Mount Hua, his face green, his fangs protruding, his hair crimson, fierce and terrible, and he hewed down at the Great Sage's head.

The Great Sage too used his magic power and grew as tall and as fierce as Erlang, raising his As-You-Will gold-banded staff like a pillar upholding heaven on the summit of Mount Kunlun, and held off Lord Erlang. This so terrified the Marshals Ma and Liu that they trembled and could not wave their banners, and the two Generals Beng and Ba, faint with fear, could not wield their swords.

On the other side, Kang, Zhang, Yao, Li, Guo Shen, and Zhi Jian passed the word: they loosed the unkempt spirit-troops, who swooped with hawks and hounds, crossbows set and bows drawn, upon the area outside the Water Curtain Cave and fell upon the monkeys all together. Alas! They scattered the demon monkeys' four mighty commanders and captured two or three thousand nimble spirits! The monkeys flung down their spears, abandoned their armor, cast aside their swords and hurled away their lances. Those who could ran, those who could not cried out; some fled up the mountain, some scrambled back to the caves—like night-crows startling roosting birds, scattering like stars flung across the sky.

Of the brothers' victory we need say nothing more.

Now the True Lord and the Great Sage had both grown to the vastness of heaven-and-earth in their battle, but when the Great Sage suddenly saw his own camp of demon monkeys scattered, his heart panicked. He withdrew his magic form, seized his staff, slipped out of the fight, and fled.

The True Lord saw him flee and strode after him in great bounds, calling: "Where do you run? Submit at once, and I will spare your life!"

The Great Sage did not linger to fight, but simply ran with all his might. As he neared the mouth of his cave, he ran straight into the four Commandants Kang, Zhang, Yao, and Li, and the two Generals Guo Shen and

Zhi Jian, who blocked his way with all their troops: "Vile monkey! Where do you run!"

The Great Sage panicked. He squeezed his gold-banded staff down to the size of an embroidery needle, hid it in his ear, shook his body, and transformed into a little sparrow, flitting up to perch on the tip of a tree.

The six brothers, flustered and confused, searched back and forth without finding him, and cried out together: "The monkey spirit has escaped! The monkey spirit has escaped!"

Amid the clamor the True Lord arrived. "Brothers, where did you chase him and lose him?"

"Just now we had him surrounded here," said the divinities, "and then he vanished."

Erlang rounded his phoenix eyes and looked carefully: he saw that the Great Sage had transformed into a sparrow perched on the tree. He withdrew his magic form, cast aside his divine blade, slung off his pellet bow, shook his body, and transformed into a sparrowhawk, spread his wings, and swooped to strike. The Great Sage, seeing this, whirred up on the wing and transformed into a great cormorant, soaring skyward.

Erlang, seeing this, swiftly ruffled his feathers, shook his body, transformed into a great sea-crane, and drilled up into the clouds to peck at him. The Great Sage then pressed his body downward, dove into the mountain stream, transformed into a fish, and darted beneath the water. Erlang rushed to the edge of the stream, but there was no trace of him.

He thought to himself: "That macaque must have gone into the water—doubtless transformed into a fish or a shrimp. Let me change again and catch him."

Indeed, with one shake he transformed into a fish-hawk, drifting on the waves downstream, and waited a while. The Great Sage, in the form of a fish, was swimming along with the current when he suddenly spied a bird flying overhead: like a blue sparrowhawk, yet its plumage was not blue; like an egret, yet it bore no crest; like an old stork, yet its legs were not red.

"This must be Erlang transformed, lying in wait for me!"

He turned sharply, flicked his tail, and swam away.

Erlang saw him and said: "A tail-flicking fish—like a carp, yet its tail is not red; like a mandarin perch, yet it shows no patterned scales; like a black fish, yet it has no stars upon its head; like a bream, yet no spines on its gills. Why would it turn back the moment it saw me? It must be that monkey transformed."

He darted after him and gave a slash of his beak. The Great Sage sprang out of the water, and with one shake transformed into a water snake, swam near the bank, and slipped into the grasses. Erlang, having failed to peck him, saw amid the rippling water a snake dart out, recognized it as the Great Sage, turned swiftly, and transformed into a grey crane with a scarlet-embroidered crown, stretching out a long beak like a pair of pointed iron pincers, and came straight to devour the water snake.

The water snake gave a leap and transformed into a bittern, standing dull and clumsy upon the sandbar among the knotweed.

Erlang saw that he had debased himself to something lowly—the bittern being the basest and most wanton of birds, mating without discrimination with phoenixes, eagrons, crows, or any other—and so he would not go near it. Instead he resumed his true form, strode over, took up his pellet bow, drew it full, and with one pellet knocked him head over heels.

The Great Sage seized the chance, tumbled down the cliff, crouched there, and transformed again—this time into a village shrine of the local earth-god, mouth gaping wide like the shrine door, his teeth become the door panels, his tongue become the idol of the god, his eyes become the lattice windows. Only his tail he could not manage: it stood up behind, transformed into a flagpole.

The True Lord raced down to the foot of the cliff, but found no fallen bittern—only a little shrine. Opening his phoenix eyes wide and studying it carefully, he saw the flagpole standing at the back, and laughed: "It's that macaque! He's trying to fool me again. I've seen my share of temples, but never one with a flagpole standing behind it. This beast is surely playing tricks. If he could lure me inside, he would bite down on me with one snap. But why should I go in? Let me first smash his window lattice with my fist, and then kick in his door panels!"

The Great Sage heard this and was shaken with fear: "How vicious! How vicious! The door panels are my teeth, the lattice windows are my eyes. If he knocks out my teeth and smashes my eyes, what am I to do?" With a tiger-leap he sprang into the air and vanished.

The True Lord chased wildly back and forth, until the four Commandants and two Generals crowded up to him: "Elder brother, have you caught the Great Sage?"

The True Lord laughed: "That monkey just turned himself into a temple to fool me. I was about to smash his windows and kick in his doors when he sprang up and vanished without a trace. Strange! Strange!" All were astounded, and looked about in every quarter, but there was no shape or shadow anywhere.

The True Lord said: "Brothers, stay here to keep watch and patrol. Let me go up and search for him."

He sprang into the clouds and rose into midair. He saw Heavenly King Li holding the Demon-Revealing Mirror aloft, standing in the clouds with Nezha. The True Lord called: "Heavenly King, have you seen the Monkey King?"

"He has not come up," said the Heavenly King. "But I have him in the mirror here."

The True Lord recounted the whole affair of the transformations, the magic powers, and the capture of the monkey host, and concluded: "He turned himself into a temple, and just as I was about to strike, he escaped."

Hearing this, Heavenly King Li swept the Demon-Revealing Mirror around the four quarters, then laughed heartily: "True Lord, go quickly! Go quickly! That monkey has used an invisibility spell, slipped out of the encirclement, and is headed for your own Guanjiangkou!"

Erlang, hearing this, seized his divine blade and raced back toward Guanjiangkou.

Now the Great Sage had already reached Guanjiangkou. He shook his body, transformed into the very image of old Lord Erlang himself, pressed down his cloud, and walked straight into the temple. The ghost bailiffs, unable to tell the difference, kowtowed to welcome him one and all. He seated himself in the central hall and examined the incense accounts: he saw the three sacrificial animals returned as thanks by Li Hu, the blessing vowed by Zhang Long, the document petitioning for a son by Zhao Jia, and the pious vow to cure illness made by Qian Bing.

Just as he was reading, someone came to report: "Another old Lord has arrived!"

The ghost bailiffs hurried to look, and every one of them was struck with alarm.

The True Lord demanded: "Has anyone seen any so-called Great Sage Equal to Heaven around here?"

"We have seen no Great Sage," said the ghost bailiffs. "There is only one old Lord in there checking the accounts."

The True Lord barged through the door. The Great Sage, seeing him, resumed his true form: "Young lord, no need to shout—the temple already bears the name of Sun!" The True Lord raised his three-pointed, double-edged divine blade and hewed at his face. The Monkey King shifted his body, let the blade pass, drew out his embroidery needle, waved it once to the thickness of a rice bowl, closed in, and struck back.

The two of them, shouting and brawling, fought their way out of the temple gates, half in mist and half in cloud, battling as they went, until they had fought their way back to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, where the Four Heavenly Kings and the rest redoubled their vigilance in alarm. Commandants Kang, Zhang, and the others closed in around the True Lord, and with combined strength they encircled the Handsome Monkey King—but of that we say no more.

We tell instead of the Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength, who, having dispatched the True Lord and his six brothers with troops to seize the demon, had returned to the Upper World to report.

The Jade Emperor, with the Bodhisattva Guanyin, the Queen Mother, and the assembled immortal ministers, was just then talking in the Hall of Divine Mists: "Since Erlang has gone down to battle, and a full day has passed with no report returned—"

The Bodhisattva pressed her palms together: "May this humble monk invite Your Majesty to go with the Patriarch of the Way, Lord Laozi, outside the South Gate of Heaven, and see for ourselves how matters truly stand?"

"Well said," replied the Jade Emperor. At once the imperial procession was made ready, and the Jade Emperor, with Lord Laozi, Guanyin, the Queen Mother, and the immortal ministers, proceeded to the South Gate of Heaven. Heavenly warriors and mighty spirits were already there to receive them. They opened the gate and gazed afar: they saw the celestial soldiers spreading their nets, encircling the mountain on all sides; Heavenly King Li and Nezha standing in the clouds, holding the Demon-Revealing Mirror; and the True Lord battling around and around with the Great Sage in their midst, wagering their skills in a storm of combat.

The Bodhisattva turned to the Old Lord and said: "What think you of this Erlang I recommended? Truly he has divine powers—he has the Great Sage trapped. Only, he has not yet managed to seize him. Let me now lend him my aid, and the capture is certain."

"What weapon would you use, Bodhisattva?" asked the Old Lord. "How would you help him?"

"I will throw down my pure vase and willow sprig and strike that monkey's head," said the Bodhisattva. "Even if it does not kill him, it will knock him down with a fall, so that the Little Sage Erlang may go and take him."

"Your vase is a piece of porcelain," said the Old Lord. "If it strikes him, well and good. But if it misses his head and meets his iron staff instead, will it not be shattered? Do not act yet—let me, the Old Lord, lend him the aid of a blow."

"What weapon have you?" asked the Bodhisattva.

"I have one, I have one, I have one," said the Old Lord. Rolling up his sleeve, he took a circlet from his left arm and said: "This weapon was wrought and refined from tempered steel, which I transformed with the alchemy of the Returned Elixir and nourished with a whole body of numinous breath. It can transform itself, is impervious to water and fire, and can snare all things. It is called the Diamond Snare, also known as the Diamond Bracelet. In the old days when I passed through the Hangu Pass and converted the barbarians to Buddhism, I owed it much. Morning and evening it serves best to guard one's person. Let me throw it down and strike him a blow."

So saying, he hurled it down from the Gate of Heaven. Whirling round and round, it plunged straight into the camp on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and smack!—it caught the Monkey King square on the crown of his head.

The Monkey King, locked in bitter combat with the seven sages, never saw the weapon falling from the sky. Struck on the crown of his head, he could not keep his footing, stumbled and fell. Scrambling up, he tried to run, but Lord Erlang's hound came racing up and bit him on the calf of his leg, tumbling him down once more.

Sprawled on the ground, he cursed: "You wretched beast! Instead of jinxing your own master, you come and bite Old Monkey!"

He struggled to twist over and rise, but could not. The seven sages pressed upon him in a rush and pinned him down; they bound him with cords, and with hook-blades pierced his collarbones, so that he could transform no more.

The Old Lord retrieved the Diamond Snare and invited the Jade Emperor, together with Guanyin, the Queen Mother, and all the immortals, back into the Hall of Divine Mists.

Down below, the Four Heavenly Kings, Heavenly King Li, and the other divinities struck their camps and drew in their troops, then came forward to congratulate the Little Sage: "This is the Little Sage's achievement!"

"This was the boundless good fortune of the Celestial Worthy and the mighty authority of all the divinities," said the Little Sage. "What merit have I?"

Commandants Kang, Zhang, Yao, and Li said: "Elder brother, spare us the courtesies. Let us escort this wretch up to the Upper World to see the Jade Emperor and request his sentence."

"Worthy brothers," said the True Lord, "you have not been enrolled in Heaven's registers and may not come before the Jade Emperor. Let the armored heavenly soldiers guard him. I will go up with the Heavenly Kings to make my report. Do you lead your troops in searching the mountain; when the search is finished, return to Guankou. Wait until I have requested your rewards and claimed your merits, and we shall rejoice together."

The four Commandants and two Generals accepted his instructions.

The True Lord and his company mounted the clouds, singing songs of triumph, and returned victorious to Heaven. Before long they arrived outside the Hall of Universal Brightness.

The Heavenly Teachers announced: "The Four Heavenly Kings and all their company have captured the demon monkey, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. They await your summons."

The Jade Emperor issued his decree, commanding the Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength and the heavenly warriors to escort the prisoner to the Demon-Beheading Platform and hack the wretch's body to pieces. Ah! It is truly:

Deception's fraud now reaps the torment of the law; The hero's pride is ended in an instant.

If you would know whether the Monkey King lived or died, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Great Sage Escapes from the Furnace of Eight Trigrams; The Mind-Ape Is Settled Beneath the Mountain of Five Elements

Wealth and rank, fame and fortune, are fixed by destiny's decree; Let no man deceive his own heart. Be upright and open in the light of day— The fruits of loyalty and goodness grow ever deeper. A little arrogance draws down Heaven's chastisement; If success comes not today, wait for its season. Ask the Lord of the East, the sun god, why it is That calamity and harm now press upon him. Only because his proud heart schemed beyond all bounds, Flouting high and low alike, defying every rule.

We tell now how the Great Sage Equal to Heaven was escorted by the celestial soldiers to the Demon-Beheading Platform and bound to the Demon-Subduing Pillar. Blades hacked and axes chopped at him, spears stabbed and swords carved him, yet not one could wound his body. The Star of the Southern Dipper ordered the divinities of the Fire Department to set fires and roast him, but they could not singe him. Then the divinities of the Thunder Department were told to pelt him with thunderbolts and thunder-nails, and still they could not harm him by so much as a hair.

The Great King of the Demon Ghosts of Great Strength and the others memorialized: "Your Majesty, this Great Sage must have learned this body-protecting method somewhere, for with hacking and chopping, thunder and fire, we cannot damage him by a hair. What are we to do?"

Hearing this, the Jade Emperor said: "This wretch being thus, how then shall we deal with him?"

The Supreme Old Lord Laozi stepped forward and memorialized: "That monkey has eaten the peaches of immortality, drunk the imperial wine, and stolen the elixir besides—all five pots of my cinnabar pills, ripe and raw alike, he has swallowed into his belly. Fusing them with the fire of samadhi, he has tempered them into a single mass, and so his whole body has become an adamantine frame that cannot quickly be harmed. Better that you deliver him to me, the Old Lord, to place in the Furnace of Eight Trigrams and refine with gentle and fierce fire. When my elixir has been refined out of him, his body will itself turn to ash."

The Jade Emperor consented, and ordered the Gods of the Six Cyclical Combinations to take him down from the pillar and deliver him to the Old Lord.

The Old Lord received the command and departed. At the same time, Erlang the Sagely and Miraculous was summoned and rewarded with a hundred golden flowers, a hundred flasks of imperial wine, a hundred grains of the Returned Elixir, rare treasures and bright pearls, brocades and embroideries, with orders to share them with his sworn brothers. The True Lord gave thanks for the favor and returned to Guanjiangkou—but of him we say no more.

The Old Lord went to the Tushita Palace, untied the Great Sage's ropes, removed the hook-blades from his collarbones, and thrust him into the Furnace of Eight Trigrams, ordering the Daoist who tended the furnace and the boys who fed the fire to fan the flames and refine him. Now that furnace bore the eight trigrams: Qian, Kan, Gen, Zhen, Xun, Li, Kun, and Dui. The Great Sage planted himself in the position of Xun, the trigram of Wind. Where there is wind, there is no fire. But the wind churned up smoke, which smoked his two eyes red, giving him a chronic inflammation of the eyes. And that is why he came to be called "fiery eyes and golden pupils."

Truly time flies swiftly. Unnoticed, seven times seven—forty-nine days—had passed, and the Old Lord's firing was complete. Suddenly one day he opened the furnace to take out the elixir. The Great Sage, both hands pressed over his eyes, was rubbing them and weeping, when he heard a sound at the furnace mouth. Fiercely opening his eyes and seeing the light, he could not hold back: with one spring of his body he leaped

out of the elixir furnace, and with a great crash kicked over the Furnace of Eight Trigrams and bolted for the door.

The fire-tenders, the furnace-keeper, and the whole company of the Gods of the Six Cyclical Combinations rushed in terror to seize him, but he knocked them over one by one, like a mad white-browed tiger in a frenzy, like a crazed one-horned dragon. The Old Lord ran up and grabbed at him, but the Great Sage flung him off with one jerk, leaving the Old Lord tumbling head over heels, and made good his escape.

He drew the As-You-Will staff from his ear, waved it in the wind to the thickness of a rice bowl, and held it once more in his hand. Making no distinction of friend or foe, he threw the Heavenly Palace into chaos yet again, beating the Nine Luminaries until they shut their doors and barred their windows, and scattering the Four Heavenly Kings without shadow or shape. What a monkey spirit! There is a poem in proof:

A body of primal chaos, matched to the state before heaven, Through myriad kalpas and a thousand turns remains but natural. Vast and inactive, wholly one with the Great Monad, Still and unmoving, styled the First Mystery. Long refined in the furnace—not by lead or mercury; Life eternal beyond all things—this is the true immortal. Transformations without end, transforming still again— Speak no more of the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts.

Another poem:

A single point of numinous light pierces the Great Void; That pilgrim's staff is just the same: Now long, now short, as its user wills; Laid crosswise, ranged upright, rolled or unfurled at will.

Another poem:

The ape's body of the Way matches the human heart; The heart is the ape—how deep the meaning! Great Sage Equal to Heaven is no empty title; The office of "Protector of Horses" was a kindred spirit's word. Horse and ape together make heart and mind; Bind them fast and tether them—seek not outside. The myriad forms return to truth through one principle; Like Tathagata, he shall dwell at rest in the Twin Trees.

This time the Monkey King, defying all above and below, wielded his iron staff, striking east and parrying west, and not one divinity could stand against him. He fought his way straight into the Hall of Universal Brightness, outside the Hall of Divine Mists. Fortunately the True Lord who Protects the Sage had his aide, the numinous official Wang, on watch at the hall.

Seeing the Great Sage rampaging, he grasped his golden whip, drew near, and blocked the way: "Where do you run, vile monkey! I am here—rage no further!"

Without a word of argument the Great Sage raised his staff and struck. The numinous official raised his whip to meet him, and the two locked together before the Hall of Divine Mists. What a battle:

One loyal and true, of boundless fame; One who deceived Heaven, his name undone. One low, one high, they grappled close; Heroes and champions wagered all. The iron staff fierce, the golden whip swift— How could the upright and selfless endure it? This one, the Honored One of Thunder's Voice, the Responding Transformation of the Great Monad; That one, the Monkey King, the Great Sage, a demon ape. Golden whip and iron staff—both masters of their art, Both weapons of divine palaces and immortal halls. This day before the Hall of Divine Mists they flaunted their might, Each displaying heroic gifts—truly a sight to love. One, false of heart, would seize the Palace of the Dipper; One, straining every nerve, upheld the realm of the Sagely Mystery. Bitterly they struggled, yielding nothing, showing their powers; Whip and staff flew back and forth with neither victory nor defeat.

The two fought together, victory undecided, when the True Lord who Protects the Sage sent yet another dispatch to the Thunder Ministry, summoning all thirty-six thunder generals, who came and ringed the Great

Sage about in the very center, each displaying his fierceness in pitched battle. The Great Sage showed not the slightest fear: wielding his one As-You-Will staff, he parried left and blocked right, fended behind and met them before.

Presently, seeing the thunder generals' blades, spears, swords, halberds, whips, maces, claws, hammers, battle-axes, golden melons, mowing-sickles, and crescent spades pressing in upon him thick and fast, he shook his body and transformed into a form with three heads and six arms. He waved his As-You-Will staff, and it became three staffs; his six hands wielded the three staffs like a spinning wheel, whirling round and round as he danced in the heart of the melee. None of the thunder divinities could come near him. Truly:

Round and complete, gleaming and bright, Existing from eternity—how can men learn this? Enter fire and be not burned; Enter water and never drown. A shining pearl of mani [Translator's note: mani, Sanskrit for "jewel"], Which sword, halberd, blade, and spear cannot wound. It can be good, and it can be evil; The good and evil of the world are his to work. When good, he becomes a Buddha or an immortal; When evil, he wears fur and bears horns. With boundless transformations he wrecked the Heavenly Palace, And thunder generals and divine soldiers could not seize him.

By then the assembled divinities had crowded the Great Sage into one place, yet none could come near his body. Their clamor and combat soon alarmed the Jade Emperor, who issued a decree dispatching the Numinous Official of the Wandering Contest and the True Lord who Aids the Sage to the West, to invite the Buddha to come and subdue the monster.

The two worthies received the decree and traveled straight to the blessed realm of Vulture Peak, before the precious sanctuary of Thunderclap, where they bowed to the four Vajra kings and eight Bodhisattvas and asked them to convey their message. The divinities accompanied them to the foot of the precious lotus throne to make their announcement, and Tathagata summoned them in. The two worthies circled the Buddha three times in homage and stood in attendance below the platform.

"Why has the Jade Emperor troubled you two worthies to descend here?" asked Tathagata.

The two replied: "Some time ago, on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, a monkey was born who has been wielding magic powers there, gathering a host of monkeys and throwing the world into chaos. The Jade Emperor issued an edict of pacification and made him Protector of Horses, but he despised the office as lowly and rebelled. Li the Heavenly King and Prince Nezha were sent to take him, but failed. He was pacified again and given the title 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven,' an office at first without stipend. Set over the Garden of Peaches, he stole the peaches; then he went to the Jade Pool, stole the dishes and the wine, and ruined the grand assembly. Emboldened by drink, he stole into the Tushita Palace by stealth and stole the Old Lord's elixir, then broke out of the Heavenly Palace. The Jade Emperor sent a hundred thousand celestial soldiers, who could not subdue him. Then the Bodhisattva Guanyin recommended the True Lord Erlang with his sworn brothers to hunt him down. He transformed himself a hundred ways, and only when the Old Lord hurled the Diamond Snare and struck him a heavy blow did Erlang manage to seize him. He was escorted before the throne and condemned to death—but blades, axes, fire, and thunder could all do him no harm. The Old Lord memorialized and was granted leave to take him away and refine him in fire. When the furnace was opened on the forty-ninth day, he leaped out, beat back the heavenly warriors, and fought his way into the Hall of Universal Brightness, outside the Hall of Divine Mists. The True Lord who Protects the Sage's aide, the numinous official Wang, blocked him and fought him bitterly; then the thirty-six thunder generals were summoned and trapped him in the center, yet still none could come near. The matter is urgent, and so the Jade Emperor has come especially to beg the Tathagata to save his throne."

Hearing the summons, Tathagata said to the assembled Bodhisattvas: "Sit firmly here in the hall of the Law; do not disturb your meditation seats. Wait while I go to subdue the demon and save the throne."

Tathagata called the two venerable ones, Ananda and Kasyapa, to accompany him, left Thunderclap, and went straight to the gates outside the Hall of Divine Mists. There he heard a deafening clamor: the thirty-six thunder generals had the Great Sage surrounded.

The Buddha proclaimed his decree: "Let the thunder generals cease their warfare and open their ranks. Summon the Great Sage forth, that I may ask him what powers he has."

The generals indeed fell back. The Great Sage withdrew his magic form, showed his true body, and came forward, his fury towering, crying in a stern voice: "What good man are you, from what region, that dares halt the weapons and question me?"

Tathagata laughed: "I am the Venerable Sakyamuni of the Western Paradise of Ultimate Bliss. Homage to Amitabha Buddha! I hear you have run wild and rustic, rebelling against the Heavenly Palace again and again. Where were you born? In what year did you attain the Way? Why are you so violent and unruly?"

The Great Sage said: "This is what I am:

Heaven and earth begot a numinous immortal of chaos, An old ape from the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. The Water Curtain Cave he made his home and trade; He sought out friends and masters, grasped the Great Mystery. He refined the many arts of long life, Learned transformations boundless beyond measure. Only, the mortal world below he found too narrow, So he set his heart on dwelling in the jade heaven. The Hall of Divine Mists was never his for long— Kings of men through all the ages held it in succession. The strong are honored: it should be mine; Only the hero dares to claim the first place."

Hearing this, the Buddha gave a cold laugh: "You wretch—you are nothing but a monkey become a spirit. How dare you deceive yourself so far as to covet the honored throne of the Jade Emperor, the Lord of Heaven? From youth he has practiced cultivation, enduring one thousand seven hundred and fifty kalpas of bitter discipline. Each kalpa lasts one hundred twenty-nine thousand six hundred years. Reckon it yourself: how many years must that be, before one may enjoy this boundless Way? You beast, newly reborn in human form—how can you utter such wild words! Shameful! Shameful! You have forfeited your allotted years! Submit at once and speak no more nonsense! I fear only that if you meet with cruel hands, your life will end in an instant, and it would be a pity for your original face!"

"Long though he has cultivated," said the Great Sage, "he has no right to hold this place forever. As the proverb says: 'Emperors take turns; next year it comes to my house.' Just tell him to move out and yield the Heavenly Palace to me, and all will be well. If he will not yield, I swear to stir up such chaos that there will never be peace again!"

The Buddha said: "Apart from your arts of growth and transformation, what other powers have you, that you dare occupy the blessed realm of the Heavenly Palace?"

"My powers are many!" said the Great Sage. "I have the seventy-two transformations, and ageless immortality through myriad kalpas. I can ride the Somersault Cloud, leaping one hundred and eight thousand li in a single bound. Why should I not sit upon the throne of Heaven?"

"Let us wager a bet," said the Buddha. "If you have the skill to somersault clear out of the palm of my right hand, you win: no blades need move, no bitter battles be fought, and I will invite the Jade Emperor to go dwell in the West and yield the Heavenly Palace to you. But if you cannot leap out of my palm, you will return to the lower world as a demon, cultivate a few more kalpas, and come back to quarrel then."

Hearing this, the Great Sage chuckled secretly: "This Tathagata is a simpleton indeed! Old Monkey's single somersault carries me one hundred and eight thousand li. His palm is not a foot across—how could I fail to leap out of it?"

He cried out at once: "Since you say so, can you stand by it?"

"I can! I can!" said the Buddha, and stretched out his right hand, no bigger than a lotus leaf.

The Great Sage put away his As-You-Will staff, shook out his divine might, sprang with all his force, and stood in the very center of the Buddha's palm, calling: "Here I go!" And look at him—one streak of cloud-light, formless and shadowless, gone.

The Buddha's eye of wisdom watched the Monkey King spinning like a windmill, ever onward. As the Great Sage traveled, he suddenly saw five fleshy-red pillars standing against a mass of blue vapor.

"This is the road's end," he said. "When I return, Tathagata will be my witness—the Hall of Divine Mists is surely mine."

Then he thought again: "Wait! Let me leave some mark, so I'll have proof to show Tathagata." He plucked a hair, blew on it a magic breath, and cried "Change!" It became a brush of thick double-tufted ink, and on the middle pillar he wrote a line of great characters: "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven made a pilgrimage here." Writing done, he restored his hair. And still not solemn, at the foot of the first pillar he pissed a monkey's piss.

Turning his Somersault Cloud, he returned straight to where he had been and stood in Tathagata's palm: "I went, and now I've come back. Tell the Jade Emperor to yield the Heavenly Palace to me."

Tathagata cursed: "You piss-spirit of a monkey! You never left my palm at all!"

"You don't know," said the Great Sage. "I went to the end of Heaven, saw five fleshy-red pillars against a mass of blue vapor, and left a mark there. Dare you come with me and look?"

"No need to go," said Tathagata. "Just lower your head and look for yourself."

The Great Sage opened wide his fiery eyes with golden pupils and looked down—and there, on the middle finger of the Buddha's right hand, was written "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven made a pilgrimage here." And from between the thumb and forefinger came the reek of monkey piss.

The Great Sage was thunderstruck: "Such a thing! Such a thing! I wrote those words on the pillar that upholds heaven—how did they come to be on his finger? Can he have some art of knowing the future? I refuse to believe it! I don't believe it! Let me go once more!"

What a Great Sage—he sprang up to leap out again, but the Buddha flipped his palm and clapped it down, flinging the Monkey King out beyond the West Gate of Heaven. His five fingers became five mountains joined in one—Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth—named the Mountain of Five Elements, and gently it pressed him down. All the thunder divinities, with Ananda and Kasyapa, pressed their palms together and cried: "Excellent! Excellent!

Once hatched from an egg, he took on human form, Resolved to cultivate the truth and won the fruit of the Way. Through myriad kalpas unmoved, he dwelt in realms of blessedness, Till in one morning of change his spirit was scattered. Deceiving Heaven, defying his lord, he schemed for high place; Trampling the holy, stealing the elixir, he shattered the great order. His cup of evil now brimming full, retribution has come—Who knows what day he shall rise again?"

Tathagata, having extinguished the demon monkey, summoned Ananda and Kasyapa to return with him to the Western Paradise of Ultimate Bliss.

But Marshal Tianpeng and Marshal Tianyou hurried out of the Hall of Divine Mists, crying: "We beg the Tathagata to wait a moment—our sovereign's great procession is coming!"

Hearing this, the Buddha turned his head and looked up. In a moment there indeed appeared the phoenix carriage of the eight scenes, the precious canopy of nine radiances; mystic songs and wondrous music sounded, chanting measureless divine verses; rare flowers were strewn and true incense sprayed, as the procession came straight to the Buddha to give thanks: "Much are we indebted to your great Law for extinguishing the demon evil. We beg the Tathagata to linger one day, that the immortals may hold a banquet in your honor."

Tathagata dared not refuse. Pressing his palms together, he replied: "This old monk came only at the summons of the Great Celestial Worthy—what magic power have I? It was the boundless fortune of the Celestial Worthy and all the divinities. How could I accept thanks?" The Jade Emperor issued a decree ordering the divinities of the Cloud Ministry to go separately and invite the Three Pure Ones, the Four Sovereigns, the Five Elders, the Six Ministries, the Seven Luminaries of the Northern Dipper, the Eight Extremes, the Nine Luminaries, the Ten Capitals, and the thousand truths and ten thousand sages to attend the feast and join in thanking the Buddha.

He further ordered the Four Heavenly Teachers and the nine heavenly maidens to fling wide the golden gates of the Jade Capital, the precious palace of the Great Mystery, and the jade halls of the Brilliant Yang, and to seat the Tathagata on high upon the numinous terrace of seven treasures. Seats were arranged for every rank, and dragon livers and phoenix marrow, jade nectar and immortal peaches were laid out.

Before long there arrived the Celestial Venerable of Primordial Beginning of the Jade Clarity, the Celestial Venerable of the Numinous Treasure of the Upper Clarity, the Celestial Venerable of the Way and its Virtue of the Great Clarity, the True Lords of the Five Peaks, the Star Lords of the Five Measures, the Three Officials and Four Sages, the True Lords of the Nine Luminaries, the Left Assistant and the Right Aide, the Heavenly Kings, Nezha, and the whole company of divinities of the Profound Void—pair after pair with banners, two by two with canopies, all bearing bright pearls and rare treasures, longevity fruits and wondrous flowers. Coming before the Buddha, they bowed and presented their gifts: "We are grateful to the Tathagata, whose boundless magic power subdued the demon monkey. Now the Great Celestial Worthy has set this feast and called us all to offer our thanks. We beg the Tathagata to give this assembly a name—what say you?"

Tathagata, accepting the charge of the assembled divinities, said: "If a name must be made, let it be called the 'Assembly for the Pacification of Heaven.'"

The aged immortals, with one voice, all cried: "A fine 'Assembly for the Pacification of Heaven'! A fine 'Assembly for the Pacification of Heaven'!"

With that, they all took their seats, wine-cups passed, flowers pinned in hair and zithers strummed—truly a splendid assembly. There is a poem in proof:

The feast of peaches the monkey wrecked; The Pacification feast outshone the peaches. Dragon banners and phoenix carriages, auspicious light abundant; Precious scepters and canopies, lucky vapors floating. Immortal music and mystic songs, sounds of wondrous beauty; Phoenix flutes and jade pipes ring out on high. Jade fragrance swirls as the host of immortals gathers, And all the cosmos, at peace, hails the sagely reign.

All were delighting in the feast when the Queen Mother of the West, leading a troupe of immortal maidens, nymphs, fair beauties, and lovely damsels, came dancing gracefully before the Buddha. Making obeisance, she said: "Formerly the demon monkey wrecked our Peach Banquet; now, thanks to the Tathagata's great Law, the stubborn monkey is chained and bound. To celebrate this Assembly for the Pacification of Heaven, I have nothing worthy to offer in thanks, but today I have with my own clean hands plucked several peaches from the great trees and present them here." Truly:

Half red, half green, breathing sweet fragrance, A lovely immortal root ten thousand years grown. One laughs at those planted on the Peach Blossom Spring's banks— How can they match these wonders of the heavenly court! Purple-veined, tender—rare in all the world; Pale-husked, cool and sweet—unmatched anywhere. Prolonging years, extending life, it can transform the body; Those fated to eat it shall surely be no common souls.

The Buddha pressed his palms together and thanked the Queen Mother, who then bade her nymphs and maidens sing and dance. The whole assembly of immortals praised and admired them. It was truly:

Ethereal heavenly fragrance fills every seat; Immortal buds and blossoms flutter down. The Jade Capital's golden gates blaze with splendor, Rare delights and wondrous treasures beyond price. Pair by pair, their years equal Heaven's; Two by two, lengthened through myriad kalpas. Let mulberry fields turn to ocean and back again— They themselves know neither fear nor surprise.

The Queen Mother was just having her nymphs sing and dance, cups and tallies passing briskly [Translator's note: a classic phrase describing a lively, crowded drinking party], when suddenly there came:

A waft of strange fragrance to the nose, Startling the stars and constellations filling the hall. Celestial immortals and the Buddha paused their cups, Each raising his head, watching and waiting. Amid the empyrean there appeared an old man, Holding a lingzhi mushroom, flying through embroidered haze. In his gourd, ten-thousand-year elixir stored; In his precious register, names written with a thousand years of life. In his grotto, heaven and earth at his own free will; In his pot, sun and moon follow his accomplishment. He roams the four seas, delighting in leisure, Idling through the ten isles, gathering friends wherever he goes. How many times drunk at the Peach Banquet— Waking to find the bright moon still as of old. Long head, great ears, short of body, In the southmost quarter he is called the Old Star of Longevity.

The Star of Longevity had also arrived. After bowing to the Jade Emperor, he greeted the Tathagata and expressed his thanks: "At first I heard that the demon monkey had been taken by the Old Lord to the Tushita Palace for refining, and supposed the matter settled in peace—never expecting he would break out again. It was your work, Tathagata, that subdued this monster so well; a feast has been spread in thanks, and so I came as soon as word reached me. I have nothing else to offer, but I have specially prepared purple lingzhi and jasper grass, green lotus root and golden elixir, to present." In verse:

Green lotus root and golden elixir are offered to Sakyamuni; The Tathagata's myriad years are like the sands of the Ganges. Pure peace and lasting joy—the brocade of the Three Vehicles; Health and long life—the flowers of the nine grades. In the gate of formlessness, the true Dharma King; In the heaven of emptiness and form, an immortal house. Heaven, earth, and the great lands all call him Ancestor— His golden body of sixteen feet, blessed beyond measure.

Tathagata accepted gladly. The Star of Longevity took his seat, and again the cups went round. Then the Great Immortal Barefoot arrived as well. Having bowed before the Jade Emperor, he thanked the Buddha: "Deep am I grateful for your magic power in subduing the demon monkey. I have nothing with which to express my reverence, but I have specially prepared two crossing pears and a few fire dates to offer." In verse:

The Barefoot Immortal's dates and pears breathe fragrance, Reverently offered to Amitayus for lengthened years. The lotus terrace of seven treasures, steady as a mountain; The flower seat of a thousand golds, adorned like brocade. Longevity equal to heaven and earth—no idle claim; Blessings like the vast waves—how could it be boasting? Blessings and long life arriving as foretold—truly so! Leisure, ultimate bliss—such is the Western Paradise.

Tathagata gave thanks again, and bade Ananda and Kasyapa collect the various offerings one by one. Then he went before the Jade Emperor to thank him for the feast.

All were deep in their cups when a patrolling numinous official came to report: "That Great Sage has stuck his head out!"

"No matter, no matter," said the Buddha. From his sleeve he took out a single strip of paper bearing six golden characters: "Om, Ma, Ni, Pad, Me, Hum." He handed it to Ananda and bade him paste it on the summit of the mountain. The venerable one took the strip, went out through the Gate of Heaven, and on the summit of the Mountain of Five Elements pressed it firmly upon a square boulder.

The mountain at once took root and closed its seams, but such air as the prisoner could breathe allowed him to work his hands free and squirm a little. Ananda returned and reported: "The paper has been pasted."

Tathagata then took leave of the Jade Emperor and the divinities, and with the two venerable ones went out beyond the Gate of Heaven. Moved once more by compassion, he recited true words and spells, summoned a local earth-god to the Mountain of Five Elements, and together with the Revealing Protectors of the Five Quarters, set them to dwell on the mountain as his jailers. When he is hungry, they are to give him iron pellets to eat; when he is thirsty, molten copper to drink. When his term of suffering is fulfilled, someone will come to save him. Truly:

The demon monkey, reckless, rebelled against the Heavenly Palace, But Tathagata subdued him with a turn of his hand. Thirsty, he drinks molten copper, enduring the months and years; Hungry, he eats iron pellets, passing the time away. Heaven-sent disasters besiege and torment him, Cold and alone in the world of men—yet his life is long. If the hero can but struggle free once more, In years to come he shall serve the Buddha and go to the West.

Another poem:

Relying on his might, he raised a great affair, Subduing dragons and tigers, showing his clever arts. Stealing peaches, stealing wine, he roamed the heavenly courts; Receiving office and favor, he dwelt in the Jade Capital. His cup of evil brimming full, his body was trapped; But his root of goodness unbroken, his spirit still rises. If he truly escapes the Tathagata's hand, Then wait for the Tang dynasty, when a holy monk shall come.

If you would know in what year, what month, his sufferings would end, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Our Buddha Creates the Scriptures to Transmit Ultimate Bliss; Guanyin Receives the Command and Goes to Chang'an

Ask of the gate of Chan: how countless are those who seek it, Yet so often they grow old in vain at the end. Polishing bricks to make mirrors, piling snow to store as grain— How many youths have these delusions ensnared? A hair swallows the great sea; a mustard seed holds Mount Sumeru [Translator's note: a Buddhist image for the omnipresence of the Dharma]; The golden elder breaks into a smile. Enlightened, one surpasses the Ten Stages and the Three Vehicles; Bewildered, one stagnates among the Four Births and Six Paths. Who has heard, before the Cliff of Severed Thought, beneath the Shadeless Tree, The cuckoo's single cry at spring's dawn? The road to Cao Creek is perilous; the clouds on Vulture Peak are deep— Here old friends' voices fall silent. On a thousand-fathom cliff of ice, five lotus leaves unfold; In the ancient hall the curtains hang, incense curling. At that season, when one sees through to the source, The Dragon King's Three Treasures shall appear.

This set of verses is to the tune "Su Wu Man." We tell now how our Buddha Tathagata took leave of the Jade Emperor and returned to the precious sanctuary of Thunderclap, where the three thousand Buddhas, five hundred Arhats, eight great Vajra kings, and boundless Bodhisattvas—each bearing canopies, banners, rare treasures, and immortal flowers—were arrayed in the blessed realm of Vulture Peak beneath the twin sala trees to welcome him.

Tathagata reined in his auspicious clouds and addressed the assembly: "With the deepest prajna wisdom I have surveyed the Three Realms. The fundamental nature of things is, in the end, quiet extinction. It has the aspect of empty space, wholly without existence. The subduing of that rebellious monkey is a thing beyond ordinary understanding—it is called the beginning of birth and death; such is the nature of dharmas."

As he finished speaking, he gave forth the light of his relics, and forty-two white rainbows filled the sky, joining south to north. The great assembly beheld this and bowed in homage. Presently he gathered auspicious clouds and colored mists about him, ascended the lotus terrace of the highest grade, and sat down with perfect composure.

The three thousand Buddhas, five hundred Arhats, eight Vajra kings, and four Bodhisattvas pressed their palms together, drew near, paid homage, and asked: "What of the one who wrecked the Heavenly Palace and ruined the Peach Banquet?"

Tathagata said: "That wretch was a demon monkey born on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, whose crimes against Heaven were beyond naming. All the divine generals of the heavens could not subdue him. Though Erlang captured him and the Old Lord refined him in fire, neither could harm him. When I arrived, he was in the midst of the thunder generals, flaunting his might and showing off his powers. I halted their weapons and asked him his history. He claimed magic powers, mastery of transformation, and the Somersault Cloud that carries one a hundred and eight thousand li at a bound. I made a wager with him: he could not escape my hand. I seized him in one grip, transformed my fingers into the Mountain of Five Elements, and sealed him beneath it. The Jade Emperor flung wide the golden gates and jade palaces, seated me in the place of honor, and held the 'Assembly for the Pacification of Heaven' to thank me—only then did I take my leave and return." Hearing this, the assembly rejoiced and praised him with one voice.

Their thanks given, each returned to his station and his duties, sharing the joy of natural truth. Truly:

Auspicious vapors spread over India; Rainbow light attends the World-Honored One. In the West he is accounted first— The gate of the Dharma King who is beyond all form! Often one sees black apes offering fruit, And deer carrying flowers in their mouths; Blue luan birds dance, and phoenixes sing; Numinous

turtles present longevity, immortal cranes pluck lingzhi. Peacefully they enjoy the pure land of the Jetavana garden And partake of the Dharma realm of the dragon palace. Flowers open every day; fruits ripen every hour; Quietude returns to truth, and meditation bears its fruit. Neither destroyed nor born, neither increased nor diminished. Mist and rosy clouds drift as they come and go; Cold and heat never invade, and years go uncounted.

In verse:

Coming and going free, roaming at will, With neither terror nor sorrow. In the field of ultimate bliss all is open and bright; In the great cosmos there is no spring or autumn.

The Buddha dwelt in the great sanctuary of Thunderclap on Vulture Peak. One day he summoned the assembly—the Buddhas, Arhats, Revealing Protectors, Bodhisattvas, Vajra kings, monks and nuns—and said: "Since I subdued the rebellious ape and pacified Heaven, we have kept no count of years here; I reckon half a thousand years have passed in the mortal world. Today is the full-moon day of early autumn. I have a precious basin laid with a hundred kinds of flowers and a thousand rare fruits and other things. Let us enjoy together this Feast of the Ullambana Bowls—what say you?"

The assembly, each pressing palms together, circled the Buddha three times in homage and accepted. Tathagata then had Ananda carry away the flowers, fruits, and delicacies from the precious basin, and Kasyapa distribute them among the host, who were grateful, each offering poems of thanks.

The Poem of Fortune:

Fortune's sage shines bright before the Honored One; Fortune receives him, deep and far extending. Fortune's virtue boundless, lasting as the earth; Fortune's destiny blessed, joined to Heaven itself. Fortune's fields widely sown flourish year upon year; Fortune's ocean vast and deep grows firmer with the ages. Fortune fills heaven and earth with abundant shade; Fortune increases past all measure, forever complete.

The Poem of Emolument:

Emolument heavy as mountains, and the phoenix sings; Emolument follows peace, beholding the Evening Star. Emolument adds ten thousand bushels, the body in health; Emolument enjoys a thousand measures, and all is at peace. Emolument's stipend reaches Heaven and stands secure; Emolument's fame, like the sea, grows ever clearer. Emolument's thought reaches far, much looked up to; Emolument's rank boundless—the glory of ten thousand lands.

The Poem of Longevity:

The Star of Longevity offers brightness to Tathagata; The realm of long life opens its radiance from this day. Long-life fruits fill the plates, breeding auspicious mist; Long-life flowers newly picked adorn the lotus terrace. Long-life poems, pure and elegant, full of marvels; Long-life songs, tuned by accomplished skill. Long life extended, equal to sun and moon; Long life like mountains and seas—how carefree!

When the Bodhisattvas had finished their offerings, they begged Tathagata to explain clearly the root and origin of things. Then Tathagata opened his gracious mouth, expounded the great Dharma, and proclaimed the true fruit, teaching the wondrous canon of the Three Vehicles and the strict observance of the Five Aggregates. The heavenly dragons circled about him and rain of flowers fluttered down. Truly:

"The meditating heart shines bright as the moon in a thousand rivers; The true nature holds ten thousand miles of sky."

When Tathagata had finished his discourse, he said to the assembly: "I now observe the four great continents: the beings there are good and evil, each in different measure. In the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, they honor Heaven and worship Earth, their hearts serene and their spirits at peace. In the Northern Continent of

Kuru, though they love their own kin, they merely scratch out a living; their natures are simple, their feelings drift, and they do little harm. In my Western Continent of Cattle-Gift, they are neither greedy nor murderous; they nourish the vital spirit and hide their numinosity. Though they have no supreme truths, everyone enjoys long life. But in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, they are greedy for lust and delight in calamity; there is much killing and much strife—truly a battlefield of tongues and an evil sea of right and wrong. I have here the true scriptures in three collections, which can persuade men to goodness."

The Bodhisattvas pressed their palms together in homage and asked before the Buddha: "Which three collections of true scriptures does the Tathagata have?"

Tathagata replied: "I have a collection of Dharmas, which discourses on Heaven; a collection of Treatises, which speaks of Earth; and a collection of Sutras, which saves ghosts. The three collections comprise thirty-five works in all, containing fifteen thousand one hundred forty-four scrolls. They are the path of true cultivation and the gate of right goodness. I would deliver them to the Eastern Land, but alas, the beings of that region are foolish and stupid; they slander the true words, fail to grasp the essentials of my gate of Dharma, and neglect the true lineage of Yoga. What I need is someone with magic power to go to the Eastern Land, find a man of good faith, and have him bitterly trek over a thousand mountains and journey far across ten thousand waters, to come to me and seek the true scriptures, that they may be transmitted forever in the East and persuade its beings to goodness. That would be a blessing great as a mountain and a goodness deep as the sea. Who is willing to make this journey?"

Then the Bodhisattva Guanyin drew near the lotus terrace, circled the Buddha three times in homage, and said: "Your disciple, though unskilled, is willing to go to the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker."

The assembled host raised their heads to look upon that Bodhisattva:

Her principle complete in the Four Virtues [Translator's note: constancy, bliss, self, and purity], her wisdom filling her golden body. Pendant necklaces hang with pearls and kingfisher jade; Incense rings are tied with bright treasures. Her raven hair deftly coiled in a dragon's-coil knot; Her embroidered sash lightly floats with phoenix plumes. Buttons of green jade, a robe of white silk, Veiled in auspicious light; A skirt of brocade velvet, golden pendants, Greeted by lucky vapors. Brows like the little moon, eyes like twin stars. A jade face born to gladness, red lips a single point of red. Her pure vase holds sweet dew, filled year after year; The drooping willow, slant-planted, green age after age. She frees from the Eight Perils, delivers the host of beings, Great in compassion and pity. Of old she guards the sacred mountain, dwelling in the Southern Sea, Saving the suffering, heeding every cry— Answered ten thousand times when called ten thousand times, A thousand sages, a thousand spirits. Her orchid heart delights in the purple bamboo; Her iris nature loves the fragrant vine. She is the compassionate Lord of Potalaka Peak, The living Guanyin of the Grotto of Tidewater Sound.

Tathagata beheld her and was greatly pleased: "No other could go; it must be the Venerable Guanyin, whose powers are vast—only she can make this journey."

The Bodhisattva said: "Since your disciple is going to the Eastern Land, what instructions do you give?"

Tathagata said: "On this journey you must survey the road. Do not travel in the high empyrean, but must go half in cloud and half in mist, passing over mountains and rivers. Note carefully the numbers of the journey's distances, that you may instruct the scripture-seeker. But I fear the man of good faith will find the road hard; I will give you five treasures."

He bade Ananda and Kasyapa bring out one brocade cassock and one ringed monk's staff of nine rings, and said to the Bodhisattva: "This cassock and this staff you may give to the scripture-seeker for his own use. If he will come with resolute heart, wearing my cassock he shall escape the wheel of rebirth; holding my staff, he shall suffer no deadly harm."

The Bodhisattva bowed and received them. Tathagata then took out three hoops and handed them to her: "These treasures are called 'tightening fillets.' Though the three are alike in appearance, their uses differ. I have three spells of 'gold, tight, and forbidden.' If on the road you meet demons of vast magic power, you must persuade them to reform and become disciples of the scripture-seeker. If they will not obey, put one of these fillets on their heads, and it will take root in their flesh at once. Recite the spell proper to each, and their eyes will swell and their heads ache, their skulls nigh splitting—this will surely bring them into my gate."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva leapt for joy, made obeisance, and withdrew. She summoned the Pilgrim Hui'an to accompany her. Hui'an wielded a wrought-iron staff of a thousand catties, serving as a mighty demon-subduing guardian at her side. The Bodhisattva wrapped the brocade cassock into a bundle and had him carry it, hid the golden fillets, took up the ringed staff, and went straight down from Vulture Peak. This journey had its destiny:

The Buddha's son shall return to fulfill his former vow; The Elder Golden Cicada shall be wrapped in sandalwood.

When the Bodhisattva reached the foot of the mountain, the Great Immortal of the Golden Summit of the Jade Truth Temple met her at the temple gate and invited her in for tea. Not daring to linger, the Bodhisattva said to the Immortal: "Today I have received the Buddha's decree and go to the Eastern Land to find a scripture-seeker."

"When will the scripture-seeker arrive here?" asked the Immortal.

"That is not fixed—perhaps within two or three years he may reach this place."

So she took leave of the Great Immortal and traveled on, half in cloud and half in mist, keeping count of the distances. There is a poem in proof:

Seeking each other across ten thousand miles, without a word— Yet who, you ask, can have his wishes whole? If seeking others must be like this, How could it be mere chance in all my life? When the Way is transmitted by right means, the words ring true; Without good faith, even explanation is empty rumor. I would pour out heart and liver to find the one foreknown— I reckon that ahead there surely waits a destiny.

As master and disciple were walking along, they suddenly beheld three thousand li of Weak Water—it was the boundary of the River of Flowing Sand. The Bodhisattva said: "Disciple, here is a hard passage. The scripture-seeker, with his turbid bones and mortal flesh, how shall he cross?"

Hui'an said: "Master, see how far the river runs."

The Bodhisattva paused her cloud-step to look, and this is what she saw:

East it joins the sand wastes; west it reaches the foreign tribes; South it stretches to Wuge, north to the Tartar lands. Eight hundred li across, up and down a thousand ten thousand li. The water churns as if the earth itself were rolling over; The waves heave as if a mountain raised its back. Vast and surging, boundless and dim— Ten li away one hears the ten-thousand-fathom flood. No immortal raft could reach this place; Not even a lotus leaf could float upon it. Withered grass and slanting sun along the winding shores; Yellow clouds shadow the sun, darkening the long dikes. Where here would merchants come and go? When has a fisherman ever dwelt there? On the level sands no wild geese alight; On the far banks gibbons cry. Only the red knotweed flowers in bloom tell the season, And the white duckweed breathes its faint fragrance, drifting close.

As the Bodhisattva was surveying this, there came a great splash from the river, and out of the waves leaped a demon monster, exceedingly ugly and fierce. He looked like this:

Not blue, not black—a face of ill fortune; Not long, not short—a barefoot, sinewy frame. His eyes gleamed and flickered like twin lamps at the stove's bottom; The corners of his mouth, forked and gaping, Like the fire-basin of a butcher's shop. Tusks bristled like sword blades, red hair in wild disorder. One roar of his voice like thunder; His two legs scurrying like rolling wind.

The monster gripped a precious staff, strode up the bank, and made to seize the Bodhisattva, but Hui'an raised his wrought-iron staff and blocked him, shouting: "Stand!" The monster steadied his staff and met him. The two fought beside the River of Flowing Sand—a terrible battle, truly startling:

Muozha's wrought-iron staff displays its guardian powers; The monster's demon-quelling staff strains in heroism. Two silver serpents dance beside the river; A pair of divine specters charge upon the bank. One holds the Flowing Sand with all his skill; One guards Guanyin and builds a mighty deed. One leaps the waves and churns the billows; One breathes out fog and sprays the clouds. Churning waves turn heaven and earth dark; Breathing fog and spraying clouds blind sun and moon. That demon-quelling staff is like a white tiger come down from the mountains; This wrought-iron staff is like a yellow dragon lying across the road. That one, wielded, parts the grasses seeking serpents; This one, flung open, strikes at hawks and parts the pines. They fight till all is dim and blurry, yet the stars shine bright; Mist billows up, and heaven and earth go hazy. That one, long dwelling in the Weak Water, none so fierce as he; This one, fresh from Vulture Peak, scores his first great deed.

The two of them fought back and forth several dozen rounds without victory or defeat. The monster held off the iron staff and asked: "Whence comes a monk like you, daring to stand against me?"

Muozha said: "I am Muozha, the Pilgrim Hui'an, second prince of the Pagoda-Bearer Heavenly King, now guarding my master on her journey to the Eastern Land to find a scripture-seeker. What monster are you, daring so boldly to block the road?"

Then the monster remembered: "I recall you—you practiced cultivation with Guanyin of the Southern Sea in the Purple Bamboo Grove. Why have you come here?"

Muozha said: "Is that not my master on the bank?"

Hearing this, the monster murmured assent again and again, put away his precious staff, and let Muozha lead him to Guanyin, before whom he bowed to the ground.

He pleaded: "Bodhisattva, forgive my crime, and hear my plea. I am no demon fiend—I was the Curtain-Raising General who attended the phoenix carriage beneath the Hall of Divine Mists. At the Peach Banquet I lost my grip and shattered a glass cup. The Jade Emperor had me beaten eight hundred blows and banished to the lower world, where I took on this shape. Moreover, every seven days flying swords come and pierce my chest and sides a hundred-odd times before departing; hence this torment of mine. There was no help for it—hunger and cold were unbearable, and every two or three days I would come out of the waves to seize a traveler for food. Little did I know that today, in my ignorance, I would give offense to the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion."

The Bodhisattva said: "You sinned in Heaven, were banished hither, and now take life yet again—sin heaped upon sin. I have received the Buddha's decree to go to the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker. Why not enter my gate, embrace the good fruit, and become a disciple of the scripture-seeker, going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures? I will teach the flying swords to pierce you no more. When the work is done, your crime shall be forgiven and your old post restored. What say you?"

The monster said: "I am willing to embrace the true fruit." He came forward again: "Bodhisattva, I have devoured countless people here. Several times scripture-seekers came by, and I ate them all. The heads of those I ate I flung into the Flowing Sand, and they sank straight to the bottom—even a goose feather cannot

float on this water. But nine skulls of scripture-seekers floated upon the surface and would never sink. Thinking them wondrous things, I strung them on a cord and play with them when I am idle. Only, if the scripture-seeker does not come here, will this not rather ruin my future prospects?"

"How could he not come?" said the Bodhisattva. "Hang those skulls about your neck and await the scripture-seeker; they will have their use."

The monster said: "Since it is so, I willingly accept your instruction." The Bodhisattva laid her hand upon his head, bestowed the precepts upon him, gave him the surname Sha from the river sand, and bestowed his religious name: Sha Wujing, "Sand Awakened to Purity."

At that time he entered the monastic order, escorted the Bodhisattva across the river, cleansed his heart and purged his thoughts, took life no more, and waited solely for the scripture-seeker.

The Bodhisattva bade him farewell, and with Muozha hurried on toward the East. After traveling a long while, they saw a high mountain wreathed in baleful mists that barred all passage on foot. As they were about to ride their clouds over it, a fierce wind sprang up without warning, and another demon monster flashed forth—of a most savage appearance:

A tangled lotus-pod mouth that droops and dangles; Ears like cattail fans, eyes of gleaming gold. Tusks sharp as steel files; A long snout gaping like a fire basin. A golden helmet bound tightly by cheek straps; The silken cords of his armor like a python shedding scales. In his hands a rake with dragon-claw prongs; At his waist a bent bow like ten rounds of the moon. Fierce and martial, his awe bullies the Lord of the Year; Proud and high, his spirit crushes the heavenly gods.

He charged up, friend and foe undistinguished, raised his rake, and made to rake the Bodhisattva, but the Pilgrim Muozha blocked him, roaring: "Vile monster, no more insolence! Taste my staff!"

The monster said: "This monk knows not whether he lives or dies! Taste my rake!" The two charged and clashed at the foot of the mountain, wagering victory and defeat. Truly a fierce fight:

The monster fierce and raging, Hui'an mighty in power. The iron staff pounds for the heart; The rake's prongs meet him face to face. Earth flung up and dust flying, heaven and earth darkened; Sandstorm and flying stones startle gods and demons. The nine-toothed rake gleaming bright, its twin rings ringing; A single staff, black and glossy, flying between two hands. This one is a Heavenly King's prince; That one a marshal's impish spirit. One serves as guardian at Potouka; The other works demonry in a mountain cave. In this encounter they contend for high and low— Who knows which shall lose and which shall win?

Just as the two fought at the height of it, Guanshiyin, from midair, threw down a lotus blossom that parted the rake and the staff.

The monster saw it, was startled at heart, and asked: "What monk are you, daring to trick me with 'flowers before my eyes'?"

Muozha said: "You pitchfork-armed wretch, all fleshly eyes and mortal body! I am the disciple of the Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea. This is the lotus my master has thrown—do you not even recognize that?"

"The Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea," said the monster—"is she the Guanshiyin who sweeps away the Three Disasters [Translator's note: war, pestilence, and famine] and saves from the Eight Perils?"

"Who else should she be?" said Muozha.

The monster flung aside his rake, bowed to the ground, and said: "Elder brother, where is the Bodhisattva? I beg you, introduce me." Muozha lifted his face and pointed: "Is that not she?" The monster kowtowed toward them and cried in a loud voice: "Bodhisattva, forgive my offense! Forgive my offense!"

Guanyin pressed down her cloud and came forward, asking: "Where were you transformed into a wild boar spirit? From what region do you, an old swine, run wild, daring to block me here?"

The monster said: "I am no wild boar, nor any old swine. I was originally the Marshal of the Heavenly Reeds in the River of Heaven. Only, flushed with wine, I flirted with Chang'e the moon goddess. The Jade Emperor had me beaten two thousand mallet blows and banished me to the dust of the mortal world. My one numinous true nature went straight to seize a womb and be reborn—but I lost my way, and entered the womb of a sow, taking on this shape. I bit the sow to death, killed the litter of piglings, seized this mountain territory, and have lived here eating men. Little did I expect to run into the Bodhisattva. I beg you most earnestly: deliver me, deliver me!"

"What is this mountain called?" asked the Bodhisattva.

"It is called the Mountain of Blessing Ridge," said the monster. "In the mountain there is a cave called Cloud Pathway Cave. In the cave there lived one called Second Sister Egg. Seeing I had some skill at arms, she took me as head of her household—what's called 'marrying into the wife's house.' Within a year she died, and the whole cave's estate came to me to enjoy. Here, as the days and years dragged on, I had no honest trade to sustain me, and so I merely carried on eating men to get by. I beg the Bodhisattva's forgiveness."

The Bodhisattva said: "The ancients said: 'If you would have a future, do not do what ruins your future.' You broke the law in the Upper World, and now you do not mend your savage heart but slay the living and create new karma—shall you not suffer for both crimes together?"

"Future! Future!" said the monster. "If I follow you, you'll have me chewing the wind! As the proverb says: 'Follow the law of the officials, and be flogged to death; follow the law of the Buddha, and be starved to death.' Away with it! Away with it! Better to catch a traveler and eat him, fat and greasy, mother's son though he be! What care I for two crimes, three crimes, a thousand crimes, ten thousand crimes!"

The Bodhisattva said: "'When a man has a good desire, Heaven must follow it.' If you are willing to embrace the true fruit, you shall surely have means to sustain your body. The five grains of the world can all relieve hunger—why must you eat men to live?"

Hearing this, the monster woke as if from a dream. He bowed to the Bodhisattva and said: "I wish to follow the true way; but alas—'having sinned against Heaven, there is nowhere left to pray'!"

The Bodhisattva said: "I have received the Buddha's decree to go to the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker. You may become his disciple and make one journey to the Western Heaven, atoning for your crimes with merit; I will surely deliver you from your plagues."

The monster cried with full mouth: "I'll follow! I'll follow!" Only then did the Bodhisattva lay her hand upon his head and bestow the precepts. She gave him the surname Zhu, "Swine," from his body, and his religious name: Zhu Wuneng, "Swine Awakened to Power."

Thereafter he accepted the command and returned to the truth, kept the fast and ate only vegetable food, renounced the five pungent herbs and the three forbidden meats [Translator's note: the pungent herbs—garlic, small garlic, onions, leeks, and shallots—by Buddhist precept, and the goose, dog, and black fish forbidden in Daoist practice], and waited solely for the scripture-seeker.

The Bodhisattva and Muozha, having taken leave of Wuneng, pressed on through half-cloud and half-mist. As they traveled, they saw a jade dragon crying out in the sky.

The Bodhisattva drew near and asked: "What dragon are you, that suffers punishment here?"

The dragon said: "I am the son of Ao Run, Dragon King of the Western Sea. Because I set a fire that burned the luminous pearl in the palace hall, my father memorialized the celestial court and accused me of filial

rebellion. The Jade Emperor hung me up in the sky and had me beaten three hundred blows; within days I am to be executed. I beg the Bodhisattva to save me, to save me!"

Hearing this, Guanyin went at once with Muozha through the South Gate of Heaven. The two Heavenly Teachers Qiu and Zhang met her and asked: "Where bound?"

"This humble monk would see the Jade Emperor," said the Bodhisattva. The two Heavenly Teachers hurried to announce her, and the Jade Emperor came down from his hall to welcome her.

The Bodhisattva came forward, paid her courtesies, and said: "This humble monk has received the Buddha's decree to go to the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker. On the road I met a sinful dragon hanging in punishment, and have come especially to memorialize: spare his life and bestow him on me, that he may serve as the scripture-seeker's mount."

The Jade Emperor issued an edict of pardon, dispatched heavenly generals to release him, and gave him to the Bodhisattva. She gave thanks and came out. The little dragon kowtowed in thanks for the favor of his spared life and submitted to the Bodhisattva's direction. She placed him in a deep ravine, to wait only for the scripture-seeker, when he would become the white horse and win merit on the road to the West. The little dragon received his charge and hid himself away—but of him we say no more.

The Bodhisattva led the Pilgrim Muozha past this mountain and hurried on toward the East. Before they had gone far, they suddenly saw ten thousand rays of golden light and a thousand streams of auspicious vapor.

"Master," said Muozha, "the place where that light bursts forth is the Mountain of Five Elements; Tathagata's 'sealing paper' is there."

"That must be the Great Sage Equal to Heaven," said the Bodhisattva, "who ruined the Peach Banquet and wrecked the Heavenly Palace—he is pressed beneath it now."

"Just so, just so," said Muozha. Master and disciple climbed the mountain together and looked at the paper: it bore the six true words, "Om, Ma, Ni, Pad, Me, Hum." When the Bodhisattva had read it, she sighed with pity and composed a poem:

Alas, that demon monkey who would not honor the law, In those years so wild, so proudly heroic! Deceitful of heart, he wrecked the Peach Banquet; Bold beyond shame, he broke into the Tushita Palace. Among a hundred thousand troops no hand could match him; In the ninefold heavens his might was feared. But since my Buddha Tathagata trapped him, What day shall he stretch his limbs and show his powers again?

While master and disciple were talking, they aroused the Great Sage, who called out loudly from the foot of the mountain: "Who is up there reciting poetry and exposing my faults?"

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva came straight down the mountain to find him. Beneath the rock cliff, the local earth-god, the mountain god, and the heavenly generals who guarded the Great Sage all came to bow and welcome her, and led her before him. Looking, she saw that he was pressed within a stone box: his mouth could speak, but his body could not move.

"You whose name is Sun," said the Bodhisattva, "do you know me?"

The Great Sage opened his fiery eyes with golden pupils, nodded his head, and called out: "How could I not know you? You are that Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea, of Potalaka Peak, the Great Compassionate One Who Saves from Suffering and Peril, the Homaged Guanshiyin! Much obliged for looking in! Much obliged! Here I count the days like years, and not one old acquaintance has come to see me. Where do you come from?"

"I have received the Buddha's decree," said the Bodhisattva, "to go to the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker. Passing this way, I lingered these few steps to see you."

"Tathagata fooled me," said the Great Sage, "and pressed me beneath this mountain more than five hundred years, unable to stretch or struggle. I beg the Bodhisattva, by some means or other, to save old Monkey!"

"Your sins are deep," said the Bodhisattva. "If I save you out, I fear you will only breed new calamity—that would be worse, not better."

"I know my repentance now," said the Great Sage. "I only pray, Great Compassionate One, to point me out a road—I willingly embrace the practice of the Way."

Truly it is:

When one thought stirs in the human heart, Heaven and earth all come to know it. If good and evil went unrewarded, Then heaven and earth would surely play favorites.

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva was filled with joy, and said to the Great Sage: "The sacred classics say: 'When one's words are good, they are answered from a thousand li away; when one's words are not good, they are opposed from a thousand li away.' Since such a heart is yours, wait till I reach the Great Tang Empire in the Eastern Land and find a scripture-seeker, and I shall have him save you. You may become his disciple, keep the faith and receive its sustaining power, and enter the gate of our Buddha, cultivating the true fruit once more. What say you?"

The Great Sage cried out again and again: "I'll go! I'll go!"

"Since this good fruit is yours," said the Bodhisattva, "I will give you a religious name."

"I already have one," said the Great Sage. "I am called Sun Wukong."

The Bodhisattva was delighted: "Two others have already submitted to me, both ranked in the word 'Wu.' Yours too is 'Wu'—it matches theirs exactly. Excellent, excellent! Then I need give you no instructions. I am going now."

The Great Sage, seeing his nature and clarifying his mind, turned to the Buddha's teaching; and the Bodhisattva, her heart set upon her search, went on seeking the divine register.

She and Muozha left that place and pressed straight eastward, and in less than a day they reached the Great Tang Empire and the city of Chang'an. Gathering in the mists and reining back the clouds, master and disciple transformed themselves into two scabby, scurfy wandering monks and entered the city of Chang'an, until unknowingly it grew late. Walking beside the great market street, they saw a shrine of the local earth-god, and the two walked straight in, frightening the earth-god into a panic and his ghost soldiers into trembling. Knowing it was the Bodhisattva, they kowtowed and welcomed her in.

The earth-god then ran hastily to report to the City God, the shrine gods, and all the divinities of every temple in Chang'an, who all came to pay their respects, saying: "Bodhisattva, forgive the guilt of your assembled gods in greeting you late."

"You must not let the news leak out," said the Bodhisattva. "I have received the Buddha's decree and come here especially to seek out the scripture-seeker. I borrow your temple to lodge a few days; when I have found the true monk, I shall return at once." The gods each returned to their stations, packing the earth-god off to lodge temporarily in the City God's temple, while master and disciple hid away their true forms.

If you would know whom they found to fetch the scriptures, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Chen Guangrui Meets Disaster Traveling to His Post; The River-Float Monk Avenges His Father and Repays His Origins

We tell now of the great city of Chang'an in Shaanxi, a place where emperors of successive dynasties established their capitals. From the Zhou, Qin, and Han onward, its three prefectures flowered like brocade and eight rivers flowed circling round the city—truly a land of famed scenery. It was then the reign of Emperor Taizong of the Great Tang, who had changed the era name to Zhenguan and had sat upon the throne thirteen years, the year being jisi. All under heaven was at peace: the eight quarters sent tribute, and the four seas proclaimed vassalage.

One day Taizong held court, gathering his civil and military officials. When the courtly homage was done, the Prime Minister Wei Zheng stepped forward from the ranks and memorialized: "Now that the world is at peace and the eight quarters are tranquil, Your Majesty should follow the ancient practice and open the examination grounds, recruiting worthy scholars and promoting men of talent, to aid in the work of transformation and governance."

"Your memorial is just, worthy minister," said Taizong, and he issued the proclamation of recruitment throughout the realm: in every prefecture, department, and county, whoever they might be, soldier or commoner—if they were scholars versed in letters, clear in principle, and masters of the three examinations, let them come to Chang'an to sit for the test.

This proclamation reached the district of Haizhou, where there lived a man named Chen E, whose courtesy name was Guangrui. When he saw the proclamation, he went home at once and said to his mother, née Zhang: "The court has issued the yellow proclamation [Translator's note: an imperial announcement, so called for being written on yellow paper], decreeing the opening of the southern examination halls to recruit worthy talent. Your child wishes to go sit for the examination. If I should win even a small official post, bringing honor to my parents, fame to my name, rank to my wife and shelter to my sons, and glory to our family gate—that is my ambition. I make so bold as to inform my mother that I am going."

"My son the scholar," said Zhang, "'learn in youth, act in manhood'—just so it should be. But going up for the examination, be careful on the road; and once you have gained office, come back quickly."

Guangrui ordered the household servant to pack the luggage, bade farewell to his mother, and pressed swiftly onward. Arriving at Chang'an just as the examination grounds were flung open, Guangrui entered and sat the test. When it was done, he was among those selected. At the palace examination on the three policies, the Tang sovereign's own brush named him Zhuangyuan—first among graduates—and he rode horseback through the streets for three days in triumph.

It chanced that his ride brought him before the gate of Prime Minister Yin Kaishan, whose daughter, named Wenjiao and also called Mantangjiao, was still unwed. She was just then high in an adorned colored tower, throwing an embroidered ball to divine her husband. As it happened, Chen Guangrui passed beneath the tower; the young lady saw at a glance that his talents were outstanding and knew he was the new Zhuangyuan, and her heart was filled with delight. She flung the embroidered ball down, and it struck Guangrui square upon his black gauze cap.

Suddenly there arose a strain of pipes and flutes and soft music, and a dozen maids and concubines came down from the tower, took the head of Guangrui's horse in hand, and welcomed the Zhuangyuan into the minister's residence to be married. The Prime Minister and his lady came straight out to the hall, called in the master of ceremonies to chant the rites, and gave the young lady to Guangrui in marriage. They bowed to Heaven and Earth; husband and wife bowed to one another, and then made obeisance to father-in-law and

mother-in-law. The Prime Minister ordered a banquet laid, and they drank joyously through the night.

The two of them, hand joined in hand so fair, entered together the orchid chamber.

The next day at the third point of the fifth watch, Taizong sat in state in the Hall of Golden Bells, and the civil and military ministers hurried to court.

"What office should be conferred on Chen Guangrui, the new Zhuangyuan?" asked Taizong.

Prime Minister Wei Zheng memorialized: "Your servant has examined the prefectures and commanderies under your sway, and finds the post of Jiangzhou vacant. I beg Your Majesty to confer it upon him."

Taizong appointed him Governor of Jiangzhou and ordered him to prepare for departure at once, that he not miss the appointed time. Guangrui gave thanks, left the court, returned to the minister's residence, took counsel with his wife, bade farewell to his father-in-law and mother-in-law, and set out with his wife for his post in Jiangzhou.

They left Chang'an and took the road in the season of late spring: the mild wind blowing the willows green, the fine rain dotting the flowers red. Guangrui first detoured home, where he and his wife bowed to his mother, née Zhang.

"Congratulations, my son," said Zhang, "who returns with a wife besides."

"Your child owes it to your blessing, Mother," said Guangrui, "and has unworthily been named Zhuangyuan, graced with the imperial ride through the streets. Passing the gate of Prime Minister Yin's mansion, the embroidered ball thrown for divining a husband chanced to strike me, and the Prime Minister straightway took me as his son-in-law, giving me the young lady in marriage. The court has appointed your child Governor of Jiangzhou, and I have come now to take you, Mother, to go with us to my post."

Zhang was overjoyed and packed for the journey.

After some days on the road, they came to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn of Liu Xiao'er and lodged there. Suddenly Zhang fell ill. "I am not well," she said to Guangrui. "Let us rest here at the inn a couple of days and nurse me before we go on."

Guangrui obeyed.

The next morning, he saw a man before the inn gate carrying a golden carp and crying it for sale. Guangrui bought it with a string of cash, intending to have it cooked for his mother; but the carp flicked its eyes at him [Translator's note: the rare verb zha describes the fish blinking its eyes], and Guangrui marveled: "I have heard it said that when fish or snakes blink their eyes, they are surely no common creatures!"

He asked the fisherman: "Where did you catch this fish?"

"In the Flood River, fifteen li from the prefecture," said the fisherman. Guangrui then carried the fish to the Flood River and released it to life.

He returned to the inn and told his mother of this. Zhang said: "To release a living creature is a good deed; my heart is well pleased."

"We have now stayed three days at this inn," said Guangrui. "The imperial deadline presses. Your child wishes to set out tomorrow—I know not whether Mother's health permits?"

"My body is unwell," said Zhang, "and the road is hot this season; I fear it would add to my sickness. You may hire a room here for me to lodge in a while. Leave me some travel money; you two go on ahead to your post, and when autumn brings coolness, come fetch me." Guangrui took counsel with his wife, rented a house, left travel money with his mother, and with his wife bade her farewell and went on.

The road was hard: traveling at dawn, lodging at nightfall, until unknowingly they reached the Flood River ferry. There the boatmen Liu Hong and Li Biao poled their boat to the bank to receive them. And it was, by destiny of a former life, Guangrui's lot to meet this calamity—he had run straight into his nemesis.

Guangrui had the servant carry the luggage aboard, and husband and wife were just stepping onto the boat when Liu Hong opened his eyes and beheld the young lady Yin: face like the full moon, eyes like autumn waves, a little cherry mouth, a slender waist like the green willow—truly with a beauty that would drown the fish and drop the geese from the sky, outshine the moon and shame the flowers. A wolf's heart rose in him at once. He plotted with Li Biao: they poled the boat to a place uninhabited by man, waited till the still night of the third watch, first killed the household servant, then beat Guangrui to death, and flung both bodies into the water.

When the young lady saw her husband beaten to death, she threw herself toward the water, but Liu Hong seized her in his arms. "If you comply with me, all may yet be well!" he said. "If not—一刀 two halves!" [Translator's note: an idiom meaning to cut all ties, here with a murderous edge.]

The young lady could devise no plan; she could only feign assent for the moment and submit to Liu Hong. The villain poled the boat across to the south bank, left it with Li Biao to manage, then put on Guangrui's clothes and cap, took the certificate of office, and went with the young lady to take up the post in Jiangzhou.

Now of the servant's body that Liu Hong had killed, it floated away downstream; but the body of Chen Guangrui sank to the riverbed and did not stir.

The night-patrolling yaksa at the mouth of the Flood River saw it and flew like a star to report to the Dragon Palace, just as the Dragon King ascended his hall. The yaksa reported: "Today at the mouth of the Flood River, someone unknown has beaten a scholar to death and cast his body into the deep."

The Dragon King bade them carry the body in and set it before him, looked at it closely, and said: "This man is my very benefactor who saved me. How has he been murdered? As the proverb says, 'Answer kindness with kindness.' Today I must surely save his life, to repay the kindness of that former day." He wrote out an official writ and dispatched the yaksa straight to the City God and the local earth-god of Hongzhou, to summon the scholar's soul, that he might save his life.

The City God and the earth-god then bade their underlings deliver the soul of Chen Guangrui to the yaksa, who carried it to the crystal palace and presented it before the Dragon King. The Dragon King asked: "What is your name, scholar? From what place? Why have you come here, to be beaten to death?"

Guangrui bowed and said: "Your humble student is Chen E, courtesy name Guangrui, of Hongnong county in Haizhou. Unworthily I won the new Zhuangyuan and was appointed Governor of Jiangzhou. Traveling with my wife to my post, we boarded a boat at the river's edge—and the boatman Liu Hong, coveting my wife, beat me to death and flung away my body. I beg the Great King to save me!"

Hearing this, the Dragon King said: "So it is. Sir, the golden carp you released the other day was none other than I. You are my benefactor who saved me. Now that you are in peril, how could I not save you?" He had Guangrui's body laid to one side and set a "countenance-preserving pearl" in its mouth, that it suffer no decay, so he might return to his soul in days to come and take his revenge. "For now," he added, "let your true soul serve as a captain in my water palace."

Guangrui kowtowed his thanks, and the Dragon King held a feast to entertain him—but of that we say no more.

We tell instead of the young lady Yin, who hated the villain Liu with a hate that could have eaten his flesh and slept on his hide. But she carried a child within her, and knew not whether boy or girl; there was nothing for it but to bear with him, feigning compliance. In the turning of an eye, they arrived at Jiangzhou.

The clerks, ushers, and runners all came out to greet them, and the subordinate officials held a banquet in the public hall to welcome him. Liu Hong said: "This student's arrival here depends wholly on the mighty support of you gentlemen."

"Your Honor, a Zhuangyuan of towering talent," the officials replied, "will naturally regard the people as his children; lawsuits will be few and punishments light. We all stand in your shadow—why so modest?" When the public banquet ended, the company dispersed.

Time flew swiftly. One day, when Liu Hong had gone far away on public business, the young lady, in her chambers, thought of her mother-in-law and her husband, and sighed upon the flower terrace. Suddenly her body grew weary, her belly throbbed with pain, and she fainted to the ground—and unknowingly gave birth to a son.

Beside her ear a voice instructed her: "Mantangjiao, hear my charge. I am the Star Lord of the South Pole, bearing the Dharma decree of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, and I deliver this son to you. In days to come his fame shall be great beyond the common run. If the villain Liu returns, he will surely harm this child; guard him with care. Your husband has been saved by the Dragon King; in time husband and wife shall meet again, mother and son be reunited, and the day will come for redressing the wrong and taking vengeance. Remember my words well—wake quickly, wake quickly!"

Having spoken, the voice departed. The young lady awoke, remembering every word, and clasped her child close, but could devise no plan.

Suddenly Liu Hong returned. The moment he saw the child, he wanted to drown it. "The hour is late today," said the young lady. "Wait till tomorrow, and then throw him into the river."

Fortunately, early the next morning Liu Hong was called away on urgent public business. The young lady thought to herself: "If this child waits till the villain returns, his life is finished! Better to cast him into the river at once and let him live or die. If perchance High Heaven takes pity and someone saves him and raises him, we may yet meet again in after years." But fearing he would be hard to recognize, she bit her finger open and wrote a letter in blood, setting down in full her own and the father's names and the whole story of his origins. She then bit off the little toe from the child's left foot, as a mark of proof. Taking an undershirt from next to her skin, she wrapped the child in it, and, seizing a moment, carried him out of the yamen. Happily the government offices stood not far from the river. When the young lady reached the bank, she wept a long while. Just as she was about to abandon him, a plank of wood floated up beside the bank. The young lady prayed toward heaven, set the child upon the plank, bound him fast with her sash, tied the blood letter upon his breast, pushed it out into the river, and let it go where it would.

The young lady returned to the yamen with tears—but of that we say no more.

We tell instead of the child upon the plank, drifting with the current, which carried him straight along until he came to rest at the foot of Gold Mountain Temple. The elder of Gold Mountain Temple was the monk Faming, who cultivated truth and awakened to the Way, having gained the wondrous secret of the Unborn. Just as he sat in meditation, he suddenly heard the sound of an infant crying. His heart stirred, and he hastened to the riverbank to look. There, on a plank by the shore, lay a sleeping baby. The elder hurriedly rescued him.

Seeing the blood letter in the swaddling clothes, he learned the whole story. He gave him a childhood name—Jiangliu, "River-Float"—and entrusted him to someone to raise, keeping the blood letter hidden away. Time flew like an arrow, the days and months like a shuttle, and unawares River-Float grew to eighteen years. The elder then had him tonsured for the religious life, bestowed on him the religious name Xuanzang, laid his hand upon his head to confer the precepts, and he set his heart firmly upon the Way.

One day, in late spring weather, the company was gathered beneath the pines' shade discoursing on the sutras and meditating on Chan, speaking of the mysteries, when a wine-and-meat monk was thoroughly stumped by Xuanzang's arguments.

The monk flew into a rage and cursed: "You beast of karma! You know not your own name, you know not your own father and mother—and still you stand here playing your tricks!"

Cursed out with such words, Xuanzang went into the temple, knelt before his master, and with tears streaming down said: "A person born between heaven and earth receives yin and yang and is endowed with the five elements—all come of father begetting and mother bearing. How can there be a person in this world without father or mother?" Again and again he begged to know his parents' names.

"If you truly wish to seek your parents," said the elder, "come with me to the abbot's quarters."

Xuanzang followed him in. The elder reached up above the beams, took down a little casket, opened it, brought out a blood letter and an undershirt, and gave them to Xuanzang. Xuanzang unrolled the blood letter and read it, and only then learned in full his parents' names and the whole story of the wrong done them.

When he had finished reading, he fell weeping to the ground: "How can I be a man who cannot avenge his parents' wrong? For eighteen years I knew not the parents who bore me—only today have I learned I have a mother. Had not my master rescued and raised me, how should I have lived to this day? Permit your disciple to go seek out my mother; then, with incense basin borne upon my head, I will rebuild your halls to repay my master's deep kindness!"

"If you would go seek your mother," said the master, "take this blood letter and this undershirt with you. Go only as an alms-begging monk, straight to the private residence at Jiangzhou—only so will you obtain a meeting with your mother."

Xuanzang took his master's instructions, went forth as an alms-seeking monk, and traveled straight to Jiangzhou. It chanced that Liu Hong was away on business—and it was Heaven's own arrangement that mother and son should meet. Xuanzang went straight to the gate of the private residence to beg alms.

Now the young lady Yin had that very night had a dream: she dreamed the waning moon was made full again, and thought to herself: "I have no word of my mother-in-law; my husband was murdered by this villain; my child was cast into the river. If someone took him in and raised him, he would be eighteen by now. Who knows—perhaps today Heaven ordains a meeting."

While she pondered, she suddenly heard someone before the residence chanting sutras and calling "Alms, alms." The young lady came out to ask: "Whence do you come?"

"Your poor monk," answered Xuanzang, "is a disciple of Elder Faming of Gold Mountain Temple."

"You are a disciple of the elder of Gold Mountain Temple—" she said, and called him into the residence, giving him a vegetarian meal.

Watching his bearing and speech closely, he seemed just like her husband. She sent her maids away and asked: "Little master, were you tonsured in childhood, or in mid-life? What is your name? Have you parents?"

"I was not tonsured in childhood," answered Xuanzang, "nor in mid-life. To tell the truth, my wrong is as big as heaven and my grievance as deep as the sea! My father was murdered; my mother was taken by force by the villain. Master Faming instructed me to seek my mother in the yamen of Jiangzhou."

"What is your mother's surname?" asked the young lady.

"My mother's surname is Yin, her name Wenjiao; my father was surnamed Chen, named Guangrui. My childhood name is Jiangliu, and my religious name is Xuanzang."

"I am Wenjiao," said the young lady. "But what proof have you?"

Hearing that this was his mother, Xuanzang fell upon his knees and wept piteously: "If my mother does not believe, here are the blood letter and the undershirt in witness!" Wenjiao took them and looked: indeed they were true. Mother and son fell into each other's arms and wept. Then she cried: "My child, go quickly!"

"Eighteen years I knew not the parents who bore me," said Xuanzang, "and only today have I seen my mother—how can you ask your child to part from you so soon?"

"My child, you must fly from here at once!" said the young lady. "If the villain Liu returns, he will surely take your life! Tomorrow I shall feign illness and say that years ago I vowed to bestow a hundred pairs of monk's sandals, and am come to your temple to fulfill the vow. At that time, I shall have words to say to you."

Xuanzang obeyed and bade her farewell.

Now from the time the young lady had seen her son, her heart held one part sorrow and one part joy. A day later she pleaded illness, refused tea and rice, and lay abed.

When Liu Hong returned to the residence, he asked the cause. "In childhood I made a vow," said the young lady, "to bestow a hundred pairs of monk's sandals. Five days ago I dreamed of a monk holding a keen blade, come to demand the sandals—and since then I have felt unwell."

"Why did you not say so earlier, over such a small matter?" said Liu Hong. He went straight to the hall and instructed the two aides Wang and Li: every household in the city of Jiangzhou must prepare one pair of monk's sandals, to be delivered within five days.

The people all prepared them according to the levy.

"Since the sandals are done," the young lady said to Liu Hong, "what temples are there hereabouts where I might fulfill the vow?"

"In Jiangzhou there is Gold Mountain Temple and Scorch Mountain Temple," said Liu Hong. "Go to whichever you please."

"Long have I heard that Gold Mountain Temple is a fine establishment," said the young lady. "I shall go to Gold Mountain Temple."

Liu Hong ordered the aides Wang and Li to prepare a boat. The young lady, taking her trusted attendants, boarded; the boatman poled off, and they made for Gold Mountain Temple.

We tell now how Xuanzang returned to the temple and reported everything to Elder Faming, who was greatly pleased. The next day a maid arrived first, announcing that the lady was coming to the temple to fulfill her vow. The monks all came out to welcome her. The young lady entered the temple gate, worshiped before the Bodhisattva, made a grand offering of alms, and bade her maids bear the monk's sandals and summer stockings on trays.

Coming to the Dharma hall, the young lady again lit heart-incense and worshiped, and bade Elder Faming distribute the offerings among the monks. When Xuanzang saw the monks dispersed and not one soul left in the hall, he drew near and knelt. The young lady bade him remove his sandals and stockings—and indeed the left foot lacked its little toe. The two embraced and wept once more, and gave thanks to the elder for the kindness of his nurture.

Faming said: "Now that mother and son have met, I fear the villain may learn of it. Withdraw quickly back, that you may escape the calamity."

"My child," said the young lady, "I will give you an incense ring. Go straight to the northwest of Hongzhou, some fifteen hundred li distant, to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn, where your grandmother, née Zhang, your father's own mother, was left behind. I shall also write a letter for you: go straight into the Tang sovereign's capital, left of the golden hall, to the home of Prime Minister Yin Kaishan—your mother's own father and mother. Deliver my letter to your grandfather, and bid him memorialize the Tang sovereign, lead troops, seize and slay this villain, and avenge your father; only then can you deliver your old mother's body from bondage. I dare not linger now, for fear the villain chide me for returning late." With that she left the temple and boarded her boat.

Xuanzang wept his way back to the temple, took leave of his master, and set out straight for Hongzhou.

Coming to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn, he asked the innkeeper Liu Xiao'er: "In years past, a guest of Jiangzhou named Chen left his mother lodging at your inn. How does she fare now?"

"She lodged at my inn indeed," said Liu Xiao'er. "But later her eyes clouded, and for three or four years she has paid no rent. Now she lives in a broken tile-kiln by the South Gate, going into the streets daily to beg her bread. That guest went off so long ago that to this day there has been no word—why, I cannot say."

Hearing this, Xuanzang went at once to ask at the broken kiln by the South Gate and found his grandmother.

"Your voice is like my son Chen Guangrui's," said the grandmother.

"I am not Chen Guangrui," said Xuanzang. "I am Chen Guangrui's son. The young lady Wenjiao is my mother."

"Why have your father and mother not come?" asked the grandmother.

"My father was beaten to death by a robber; my mother was taken by force as the robber's wife."

"How did you know to come seek me?" said the grandmother.

"It was my mother who sent me to seek you, Grandmother. My mother's letter is here, and an incense ring besides." The old woman took the letter and the ring and wailed aloud: "My son came this way for honor and office—I thought he had turned his back on filial duty! Who knew he had been murdered! Yet joy—High Heaven took pity and did not cut off my son's line, for today his son has come to find me."

"How did your eyes cloud over so, Grandmother?" asked Xuanzang.

"It was longing for your father," said she. "All day I gazed and waited, and he never came, and so I wept till both eyes went dim."

Xuanzang knelt down and prayed toward heaven: "Consider Xuanzang, eighteen years old, unable yet to avenge his parents' wrong. Today, bearing my mother's command, I have come to seek my grandmother. If Heaven pities the sincerity of this disciple, restore my grandmother's two eyes to sight!"

His prayer done, he licked his grandmother's eyes with the tip of his tongue.

In a moment the two eyes were licked open, clear as before. The old woman looked at the little monk: "Truly you are my grandson! The very image of my son Guangrui, not a shade different!"

She rejoiced and grieved together. Xuanzang led her out of the kiln and back to Liu Xiao'er's inn, paid some rent, and hired a room for her to live in.

He then gave her travel money, saying: "I shall return within a month or so."

Farewell said to his grandmother, he went straight to the capital.

He found the Prime Minister Yin's mansion on the East Street of the imperial city and said to the gatekeeper: "This little monk is a relative, come to call upon His Honor."

The gatekeeper reported to the Prime Minister, who said: "I have no monk among my kin." But his lady said: "Last night I dreamed our daughter Mantangjiao came home. Can it be there is a letter from our son-in-law?" The Prime Minister had the little monk invited into the hall. Seeing the Prime Minister and his lady, the little monk fell weeping to the ground, drew a letter from his bosom, and presented it to the Prime Minister. He opened and read it through from the first, then burst into loud weeping.

"What has happened, husband?" asked the lady.

"This monk is your nephew and mine," said the Prime Minister. "Our son-in-law Chen Guangrui was murdered by a robber; Mantangjiao was taken by force as the robber's wife." Hearing this, the lady likewise wept without ceasing.

"Lady, do not grieve," said the Prime Minister. "Tomorrow morning I shall memorialize our sovereign, lead the troops in person, and surely avenge our son-in-law."

The next day the Prime Minister entered court and memorialized the Tang sovereign: "Your servant's son-in-law, the Zhuangyuan Chen Guangrui, taking his family to his post at Jiangzhou, was beaten to death by the boatman Liu Hong, who seized his daughter as wife, impersonated your servant's son-in-law, and has held office for many years—a most extraordinary crime. I beg Your Majesty to dispatch troops at once to exterminate the robber band."

The Tang sovereign, seeing the memorial, was greatly angered. He dispatched sixty thousand of the Palace Guard, with Prime Minister Yin commanding. The Prime Minister received the decree, left the court, mustered his troops at the parade ground, and marched straight upon Jiangzhou. Traveling at dawn, lodging at nightfall, stars setting and birds flying, they came unawares to Jiangzhou. Prime Minister Yin's troops and horse encamped on the north bank.

That very night he sent gold-token summons to the Subprefect and Judge of Jiangzhou, told them the whole affair, and bade them bring troops to aid. They crossed the river together. Before the sky was light they had surrounded Liu Hong's yamen. Liu Hong was deep in dreams when a cannon sounded, gongs and drums thundered as one, and the soldiers stormed into the private residence. Caught unprepared, Liu Hong was seized before he could lift a hand.

The Prime Minister issued the military order: bind Liu Hong and his whole crew of criminals and carry them to the execution ground, while the army encamped outside the city.

The Prime Minister went straight into the yamen, seated himself in the main hall, and invited the young lady out to meet him. She would have come out, but shame before her father overcame her, and she tried to hang herself. Xuanzang, hearing of it, hurriedly rescued his mother, then knelt on both knees before her: "Your son and your grandfather have led troops here to avenge Father. Today the villain is already taken—why does Mother seek death instead? If Mother dies, how can your child live on?" The Prime Minister also came in and urged comfort upon her.

"I have heard," said the young lady, "that a wife follows one husband to the end. My beloved husband was slain by this villain—how could I brazen out a life with the robber? Only because his posthumous child lay in my womb did I endure shame and steal life. Now, happily, my son is grown, and I see my old father leading troops to avenge us; yet as a daughter, what face have I to meet you? There is nothing left but death, to make report to my husband!"

"This is no change of constancy with changing fortune in my child," said the Prime Minister. "All was done of sheer necessity—how can it be called shame!"

Father and daughter embraced and wept, and Xuanzang wept piteously without end.

Wiping his tears, the Prime Minister said: "Let you two grieve no more. I have seized the villain of your wrongs—let us go now and dispatch him."

He rose and went to the execution ground. By chance the Subprefect of Jiangzhou had also sent patrols who had captured the river pirate Li Biao and delivered him there. The Prime Minister was overjoyed, and ordered the military jailers to bring up Liu Hong and Li Biao, give each a hundred strokes of the heavy rod, and take their confessions. They confessed in full their crime of murdering Chen Guangrui in the former year. Li Biao was first nailed to the wooden ass [Translator's note: an instrument of punishment], paraded to the marketplace, sliced with a thousand cuts, and his head displayed to the crowd. Liu Hong was taken to the Flood River ferry, to the very place where he had beaten Chen Guangrui to death. The Prime Minister, the young lady, and Xuanzang, the three of them, came in person to the riverbank, made offerings toward the empty air, cut out Liu Hong's heart and liver while he yet lived, sacrificed them to Guangrui, and burned a sacrificial text.

The three gazed upon the river and wept bitterly—so bitterly that the water palace below was stirred. The sea-patrolling yaksa carried the sacrificial text and presented it to the Dragon King. When the Dragon King had read it, he dispatched Marshal Soft-Shelled Turtle to invite Guangrui in, saying: "Sir, congratulations! Congratulations! Your lady, your son, and your father-in-law are all at the riverside offering sacrifice to you. Today I send your soul back to your body. I further present you one As-You-Will pearl, two rolling-plate pearls, ten bolts of mermaid silk, and one bright pearl and jade girdle. Today you may be reunited, husband with wife, mother with son." Guangrui bowed his thanks again and again. The Dragon King bade the yaksa carry Guangrui's body out of the river mouth to be restored to life, and the yaksa took the command and went.

We tell instead how the young lady Yin, after weeping her offerings to her husband, sought again to fling herself into the river and die, and how Xuanzang in desperation clung to her and held her back. In the midst of the panic, a corpse suddenly floated up upon the water and drifted near the riverbank. The young lady hurried forward to look at it, recognized her husband's body, and wept aloud all the more without cease.

Everyone came to look, and they saw Guangrui stretch his fists and extend his legs; slowly the body began to move, and suddenly he sat up. All were amazed beyond measure. Guangrui opened his eyes, and there before him were the young lady Yin, his father-in-law the Prime Minister, and the little monk, all weeping at his side.

"Why are you all here?" asked Guangrui.

"Because you were beaten to death by the villain," said the young lady. "Afterward I bore this child, who by fortune was rescued and raised by the elder of Gold Mountain Temple. Grown, he sought me out, and we met. I sent him to find my father; my father learned of it, memorialized the court, led troops here, and seized the villain. Just now we cut out the living heart and liver and offered them in sacrifice to you in the empty air—I know not how my husband has returned to life."

"It was all because, years ago at the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn, you and I bought and released that golden carp," said Guangrui. "Who knew that carp was the Dragon King of this very place? Later, when the rebel threw me into the water, it was wholly thanks to him that he saved me; just now he granted me life again and presented me with treasures—all here upon my body. And more: that you bore this son, and that my father-in-law took vengeance for me—truly bitterness has ended and sweetness begun, a joy beyond all joys!"

The officials, hearing of it, all came to offer congratulations. The Prime Minister ordered a banquet laid to thank the subordinate officials, and that same day the troops set out on the return journey. Coming to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn, the Prime Minister ordered camp pitched, and Guangrui went with Xuanzang to the Liu family's inn to find his mother.

Now the old grandmother had that night had a dream: she dreamed a withered tree burst into flower, and magpies behind the house chattered ceaselessly. "Can it be," she thought, "that my grandson is coming?"

Hardly were the words out of her mouth than, before the inn gate, Guangrui father and son arrived together. The little monk pointed: "Is this not our grandmother?" Guangrui, seeing his aged mother, hurriedly fell to his knees. Mother and son embraced and wept bitterly, then told over all that had passed. They settled the reckoning for the inn, and set out back to the capital. Entering the Prime Minister's mansion, Guangrui, with the young lady, his mother, and Xuanzang, all came before the lady of the house, who was overjoyed and ordered the servants to lay a grand feast of celebration.

"This feast of today," said the Prime Minister, "may be called the Reunion Banquet." Truly the whole household rejoiced.

The next day at early court, the Tang sovereign ascended his hall. Prime Minister Yin stepped from the ranks and memorialized the whole affair in detail from first to last, recommending Guangrui's talents for great employment. The Tang sovereign approved, and at once promoted Chen E to the office of Scholar of the Academy, to attend court and manage affairs of state. Xuanzang, resolved upon a life of still meditation, was sent to the Temple of Vast Blessing to cultivate the Way. In later years the young lady Yin, in the end, composed herself and took her own life; Xuanzang went of his own accord to Gold Mountain Temple to repay Elder Faming's kindness.

If you would know how matters went thereafter, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 10

The Old Dragon King's Clumsy Scheme Breaks Heaven's Code; Prime Minister Wei Leaves a Letter Entrusted to the Underworld Clerks

In verse:

The capital, a great city, truly a sight to behold, Eight rivers flowing round four hills. How many emperors rose from this place— Since ancient times all the world speaks of Chang'an.

This chapter tells of the great city of Chang'an in Shaanxi, where emperors of successive dynasties established their capitals. From the Zhou, Qin, and Han onward, its three prefectures flowered like brocade and eight rivers flowed circling the city. Thirty-six lanes of flowers and willows, seventy-two towers of pipes and strings. On the map of China and the outer lands, it stood first under heaven—truly a place of wonders. It was now the reign of Emperor Taizong the Cultured of the Great Tang, who had changed the era name to Zhenguan; he had been upon the throne thirteen years, the year being jisi.

Let us not speak of the heroes who secured the state before his throne, nor of the champions who won the realm and contested its borders.

Instead we tell of two worthies dwelling on the banks of the Jing River outside Chang'an: one a fisherman named Zhang Shao, one a woodcutter named Li Ding. The two of them were "graduates who never sat the examination"—hermit scholars who could read. One day, having sold the firewood from their shoulders and traded the carp from their baskets in the city of Chang'an, they entered a tavern together, drank until half-tipsy, each took a flask, and strolled slowly back along the bank of the Jing River.

Zhang Shao said: "Brother Li, I think of those who scramble for fame—fame costs them their lives; those who grab at profit—profit brings them death; those who receive rank sleep embracing a tiger; those who win favor walk with a serpent in their sleeve. Reckon it up—better by far our blue waters and green hills, free and easy, content with plain fare, taking life as it comes."

"Brother Zhang speaks reason," said Li Ding. "Only, your blue waters cannot match my green hills."

"Your green hills cannot match my blue waters," said Zhang Shao. "I have a lyric to the tune 'Butterfly Loves Flowers' in proof:

Ten thousand li of misty waves, one little skiff, Quietly leaning on the lone awning, The sound of Xishi lingers round. Washing clean the heart, scant thought of fame and gain, Idly plucking knotweed ears and reeds. A few dots of sandgulls—enough to delight in: Willow banks, reed coves, Wife and children laughing together. One sound sleep though wind and waves be pert— No glory, no disgrace, no sorrow."

"Your blue waters cannot match my green hills," said Li Ding. "I too have a lyric to the tune 'Butterfly Loves Flowers' in proof:

A stretch of cloudy forest full of pine pollen, Silently hearing the orioles, Their clever tongues like tuned pipes. Red thin, green fat, spring at its warmest— Suddenly summer comes, the light turns. Then autumn arrives, so soon to change: Yellow flowers fragrant, Fit for enjoyment. Swift winter comes, as if pinched between fingers— Roaming free through the four seasons, no man to command."

"Your green hills truly cannot match my blue waters," said the fisherman. "The good things we enjoy! I have a lyric to the tune 'Partridge Sky' in proof:

In immortal country, clouds and water suffice for a living; The swinging oar, the beam athwart the boat—that is home. Live-split fresh scales, green turtle stewed, Quick-steamed purple crabs, red shrimp boiled. Green

reed shoots, Water-shield sprouts, Water chestnuts and gorgon fruit, better still to boast. Tender lotus root, aged lotus, celery leaves fresh, Arrowhead and wild rice stem and bird-flower."

"Your blue waters cannot match my green hills," said the woodcutter. "The good things we enjoy! I too have a lyric to the tune 'Partridge Sky' in proof:

Lofty ridges and steep peaks reach the sky's edge; A thatched hut, a brushwood lodge—that is my home. Cured chicken and goose beat crab and turtle, Roebuck, boar, hare, and deer surpass fish and shrimp. Fragrant toon leaves, Chinaberry sprouts, Bamboo shoots and camellia, better still to boast. Purple plums, red peaches, apricots ripening, Sweet pears, sour dates, cassia flowers."

"Brother Li, your hills truly cannot match my waters," said the fisherman. "I have another, to the tune 'Heavenly Immortal':

One leaf of a little boat, dwelling where I please, Ten thousand folds of misty waves, no fear. Dropping the hook, casting the net, catching fresh fish— No rich sauces, yet full of flavor; Old wife and little child, a family made whole. Fish in plenty, traded in Chang'an's markets, Bought fragrant brew, drunk my fill. Straw cloak for a quilt, I sleep on the autumn river, Snoring deep, No cares at all— No longing for the world's honor and rank."

"Your blue waters still cannot match my green hills," said the woodcutter. "I too have one, to the tune 'Heavenly Immortal':

A few bays of thatched cottage built below the hills, Pine, bamboo, plum, and orchid—truly lovable. Through forest and over ridge I seek dry firewood, No one blames me, I sell as I will, More or less as the world allows. With money I buy wine, happy at heart, Earthen bowl and clay cup, free and easy. Dead drunk, I sleep in the pine shade— No ties, no stakes, No heeding the world's rise or fall."

"Brother Li," said the fisherman, "your mountain trade cannot match the pleasures of my water trade. I have a lyric to the tune 'West River Moon' in proof:

Red knotweed in full bloom mirrors the moon, Yellow reed leaves toss in the wind. The blue sky, clear and far, the Chu river empty, A whole pool of stars stirred and swirled. Into the net, big fish in squadrons; Down the hook, little perch in schools. Caught and cooked, the flavor is richest of all— Laughing proud upon the rivers and lakes."

"Brother Zhang," said the woodcutter, "your water trade cannot match the pleasures of my mountain trade. I too have a lyric to the tune 'West River Moon' in proof:

Dead leaves and withered vines choke the road, Broken-topped old bamboo fills the hills. Dodder and dried kudzu tangle and clutch, Broken off and wound into rope, bundled into loads. Worm-eaten hollow elm and willow, Wind-snapped pine and nan wood. Gathered and heaped up against winter's cold, Traded for wine, for money—mine to command."

"Though your hills might compare," said the fisherman, "they cannot match the quiet elegance of my blue waters. I have a lyric to the tune 'Immortal at the River' in proof:

The tide fallen, I shift my lone boat away, Deep in night, my oar-song done. Straw cloak, waning moon—how serene! Roused gulls startle not; At heaven's edge colored clouds part. Weary, I sleep on the reed isle, nothing to do, Sun three rods high, still I drowse. My heart's own will arranges all at ease— Courtiers shiver waiting for the water-clock: How can they match my open heart?"

"The quiet elegance of your blue waters cannot match the quiet elegance of my green hills," said the woodcutter. "I too have an 'Immortal at the River' in proof:

Down the darkling path in autumn's height I haul my axe, In evening cool I shoulder my load home. Wild flowers pinned at my temple—strange delight! Parting clouds, I seek the way out; Waiting for the moon, I call the door open. My little child and mountain wife greet me with smiles, Grass bed and wooden pillow, laid aslant. Steamed pears and millet, quickly spread before us, New brew ripened in the jar— Truly it fortifies the quiet heart!"

"These are the trades of us two, our means of living," said the fisherman. "But you have not the blessings of my hours of leisure. There is a poem in proof:

At ease I watch the white cranes fly at heaven's edge, My boat moored by the stream, blue door shut. Leaning on the awning, I teach my child to twist the fishing line; Oars shipped, with my wife I spread the nets to dry. With nature stilled, one knows the waves are calm; With the body at peace, one feels the wind turn gentle. Green straw cloak, blue bamboo hat, worn at any season— Better than hanging at court the purple sash of rank."

"Your hours of leisure cannot match my hours of leisure," said the woodcutter. "There is a poem in proof too:

At ease I watch the drifting white clouds fly, Sitting alone in my brushwood lodge, bamboo door closed. With nothing pressing, I teach my child to open a book; Sometimes with guests I sit a game of chess. Joy comes—I staff in hand sing down the fragrant path; Mood rises—I carry my qin up the emerald slope. Straw sandals, hempen sash, a coarse cloth quilt— A heart at ease outshines the dress of silk."

Said Zhang Shao: "Li Ding, the two of us truly can croon our little verses together, no need for clappers or golden goblets. But scattering lyrics is nothing rare. Let us each link a few couplets, and see how fisherman and woodcutter carry on their talk!"

"Brother Zhang speaks best," said Li Ding. "Pray begin."

"A boat moored in the blue waters amid misty waves, A home dwelling deep in the mountains, in the open wilds. I love best the spring flood rising at the stream bridge, I pity most the dawn clouds veiling the rocky peaks. Fresh carp from Dragon Gate, cooked at any hour, Worm-eaten dry firewood, burned day by day. Hook and net, in many kinds, suffice for old age; Carrying-rope and shoulder-pole, two trades, may see me to my end. On the little boat, lying back, I watch the flying geese; On the grassy path, leaning aslant, I hear the swan's cry. In the arena of tongues I have no part; In the sea of right and wrong few are my traces. By the stream, nets hung to dry like brocade; On the rock, the axe ground again and again to sharpness. In autumn moonlight, bright upon bright, I fish alone; On spring mountains, silent upon silent, no one passes. Fish in plenty, traded for wine, I drink with my wife; Firewood left over, bought by the flask, I share with my sons. Self-singing, self-pouring, free and unbound, Long songs, long sighs, let the wild wind do its worst. Calling brother, calling friend, I invite the boat crew, Companions and mates gathered with the old men of the wild. Passing the cup, guessing the fist, the cups go round and round; Splitting characters, playing with words, the wine-clock passes on. Boiling shrimp, cooking crab—joy every morning; Frying duck, braising chicken—plenty every day. My simple wife brews tea, her heart at ease; My mountain spouse cooks rice, unhurried her mind. At dawn I lift the pole and wade the light waves; At sunrise I shoulder firewood across the great highway. After rain, cloak on my back, I seize the living carp; Before the wind, axe in hand, I fell the withered pine. Hiding my tracks from the world, I play the fool; Buried name and surname, I play the mute and deaf."

"Brother Li," said Zhang Shao, "I presumed to lead with the first couplets; now it is your turn, brother, to lead a pair, and your little brother will follow:

A wild man of the hills, feigning madness with wind and moon, An old spare hand, lodging pride in rivers and lakes. I had my share of quiet ease and careless freedom, No word of scandal reaching me—rejoicing in the peace. On moonlit nights, my body sleeps sound in the thatched hut; At dusk the light bamboo cloak

warms all it covers. Forgetting passion, I befriend the pine and the plum; Glad at heart, I swear fellowship with gull and heron. No schemes for fame or profit in my breast; No sound of war within hearing of my ears. At any hour, one pour of fragrant wine; Through the day, three bowls of wild-herb soup. Two bundles of firewood are my livelihood; One pole and line is my trade. At ease I call my little child to grind the steel axe; Quietly I bid my simple son patch the old nets. When spring comes I love to watch the willows green; When the season warms I joy to see the reeds turn blue. In summer's heat I take shade among new bamboo; In the sixth month's cool I pluck the tender water chestnuts. At Frost's Descent, chickens fat, I kill one any day; At Double Ninth, crabs at their prime, I cook them in good time. When winter comes, sun risen, still I sleep sound; In the depth of the ninefold cold, I naturally do not swelter. Through the eight seasons, in the hills, I let my nature loose; Through the four times, on the lakes, I indulge my heart. Gathering firewood, I have the immortal's mood; Dropping the hook, I wear no worldly shape. Outside the gate, wild flowers, bright and brighter; At the boat's head, green water, wave upon wave so calm. Body at peace, I speak not of the Three Dukes' seats; Nature stilled, I am stronger than a walled city of ten li. A city of ten li must guard against the gate-command; The Three Dukes' high seats must heed the summons of the throne. To love the hills, to love the waters—truly rare! I thank heaven, thank earth, thank the shining gods."

The two of them, having traded lyrics and linked couplets, came at last to the parting of their ways, and bowed to take their leave.

"Brother Li," said Zhang Shao, "take care on the road! Going up the mountain, watch closely for tigers. Should some mishap befall you, it would be one old friend the less upon tomorrow's street!"

Li Ding flared up: "You lazy lout! A good friend would take even life and death in your place—how dare you curse me? If I meet a tiger and am done for, may you meet a wave and the river overturn you!"

"I shall never in this life overturn in the river," said Zhang Shao.

"Heaven has storms no forecast foretells; men have weal and woe from moment to moment," said Li Ding. "How can you guarantee no mishap?"

"Brother Li," said Zhang Shao, "though you say so, you have not grasped it. My trade is not like yours—mine can be reckoned, and such mishaps will surely not befall me."

"Your trade upon the water is the most perilous there is," said Li Ding, "dark and hidden and chancy—what reckoning is there in it?"

"You don't understand," said Zhang Shao. "Here in Chang'an, on the West Gate street, there is a fortune-telling gentleman. Every day I present him a golden carp, and he passes me one divination from his sleeve. Following his directions, I hit the mark a hundred times out of a hundred. Today I go again to buy a divination; he tells me to set my nets at the east of the Jing River bend and cast my hook on the west bank, and I shall surely come home with a full load of fish and shrimp. Tomorrow I'll come to town, sell my catch, buy wine, and chat with you again, old friend." So the two parted.

Truly it is: words spoken upon the road have listeners in the grass. For there was a water-patrolling yaksa of the Jing River water palace who had heard the words "a hundred times out of a hundred." He sped back to the crystal palace in alarm and reported hurriedly to the Dragon King:

"Disaster! Disaster!"

"What disaster?" asked the Dragon King.

"Your servant was patrolling the waters and came to the riverside," said the yaksa, "where I heard a fisherman and a woodcutter talking as they parted—and their parting words were most alarming. The fisherman said: in Chang'an, on the West Gate street, there is a fortune-telling gentleman whose calculations

are the truest. Every day the fisherman gives him a golden carp, and he passes him a divination from his sleeve, instructing him so he hits the mark a hundred times in a hundred. If his reckoning proves so true, will he not have our whole water tribe netted clean away? How then shall the water palace keep its splendor? How shall we leap the waves and roll the billows to aid Your Majesty's majesty?"

The Dragon King was furiously angry, seized his sword, and was for going straight up to Chang'an to put the fortune-teller to death.

But dragon sons and dragon grandsons, shrimp ministers and crab councilors, the shad strategist, the perch vice-minister, and the carp grand steward flashed out beside him and memorialized as one: "Let Your Majesty first quench his anger. As the proverb says, words that pass the ear must not be believed. If Your Majesty goes, there will surely be clouds attending and rain assisting, and I fear you would startle the common folk of Chang'an and draw blame from Heaven above. Your Majesty's powers of hiding and showing are beyond fathoming, your transformations have no fixed form—simply change into a scholar and go into Chang'an to make inquiry. If such a man exists, it will not be too late to destroy him; if he does not, would this not be wrongly harming an innocent?"

The Dragon King followed their counsel. He set aside his precious sword, raised neither cloud nor rain, came up out of the bank waters, shook his body, and transformed into a scholar in white robes—truly stately and heroic in bearing, head high against the sky, yet walking with measured dignity, following rule and compass. His speech honored Confucius and Mencius; his courtesies embodied King Wen of Zhou. He wore a jade-colored silk gown and a "free-and-easy" cap with a single band. Striding off upon the road, he made straight for the great West Gate street of Chang'an.

There he saw a knot of people, jostling and bustling, chattering and clamoring, among whom some were holding forth: "For those born in the dragon year, the tiger year is in clash. Though tiger, dragon, snake, and pig be called a matching set, what one fears is the day offending the year's lord."

The Dragon King, hearing this, knew it must be the place of divination. He stepped forward, parted the crowd, and looked within. There:

Pearls and jade on all four walls, Brocade and embroidery filling the hall. From the duck-shaped censer, incense never ceasing; In the porcelain vase, water clear past telling. On either side hung paintings in the manner of Wang Wei; Above the seat was suspended the portrait of Guigu. An inkstone of Duan stream, ink of golden smoke, Set off by brushes of frost-white hair; The Fire-Pearl Grove, the divination numbers of Guo Pu, Carefully matched with the newest classics of divination. Thoroughly versed in the six lines of the hexagram, A complete master of the eight trigrams. He knows the principles of heaven and earth, And well discerns the feelings of ghosts and spirits. The whole array of the zodiac set out before him, His belly full of the stars marshaled in order. Truly, of things to come and things long past, He sees them as in mirror or moon; Which houses shall rise and which shall fall, He judges like a god. He knows the ill, fixes the lucky, Declares the dead and speaks them alive. His talk opens, swift as wind and rain; His brush descends, and gods and demons start. On his signboard, characters write out his name: The Master of Divine Divination, Yuan Shoucheng.

And who was this man? He was the uncle of Yuan Tiangang, the Director of the Imperial Astronomy Bureau at the present court—Yuan Shoucheng by name. The gentleman was indeed of extraordinary appearance, fine and handsome, famed throughout the great state, his art foremost in all Chang'an.

The Dragon King entered, greeted the gentleman, and when the courtesies were done, was invited to sit in the place of honor while a boy served tea.

"What matter does the gentleman come to ask about?" inquired the master.

"I beg a divination of the weather to come—clear or cloudy in the sky above," said the Dragon King.

The master passed a divination from his sleeve and pronounced: "Clouds will shroud the hilltops; mists will veil the treetops. If you ask for rain, it will surely come tomorrow."

"At what hour tomorrow will it rain?" asked the dragon, "and how much, in feet and inches?"

"Tomorrow," said the master, "clouds will gather in the hour of the dragon, thunder will sound in the hour of the snake, rain will fall in the hour of the horse, and the rain will be complete in the hour of the goat—in all, three feet three inches and forty-eight drops of water."

The Dragon King laughed: "These words are not to be trifled with. If tomorrow there is rain, at the hours and in the measure you have fixed, I shall present you fifty taels of silver in thanks. But if there is no rain, or the hours and measure do not hold, I tell you plainly: I will smash in your front, tear your signboard to bits, and drive you straight out of Chang'an—you shall not be suffered to bewitch the crowds here!"

The master answered cheerfully: "That is entirely as you please. Farewell, farewell. After the rain tomorrow, we shall meet again."

The Dragon King took his leave, left Chang'an, and returned to the water palace.

The water spirits great and small received him, asking: "How went Your Majesty's visit to the fortune-teller?"

"He exists, he exists, he exists!" said the Dragon King. "A glib-tongued gentleman who scrapes a living by talk. I asked him when it would rain, and he said tomorrow. I asked at what hour and in what measure, and he said: clouds in the dragon hour, thunder in the snake hour, rain in the horse hour, rain complete in the goat hour, three feet three inches and forty-eight drops. I made a wager with him: if it falls exactly as he says, I send him fifty taels of thanks; if it misses by so little, I smash his front and drive him away—he shall not bewitch the crowds in Chang'an."

The water folk all laughed: "Your Majesty is Lord High Governor of the Eight Rivers, the great dragon divinity in charge of rain. Whether there is rain or none, only Your Majesty knows. How dare he babble so? The fortune-teller has surely lost! Surely lost!"

While the dragon sons and grandsons and the fish, perch, and crab officers were still laughing over this, there came a voice from midair: "Dragon King of the Jing River, receive the decree!" All looked up: a strength-athlete in golden robes, bearing the Jade Emperor's edict in his hands, was descending straight upon the water palace. In alarm the Dragon King straightened his robes, stood solemnly, burned incense, and received the edict.

The golden-robed athlete returned to the sky.

The Dragon King gave thanks, broke the seal, and read: "By imperial command to the Governor of the Eight Rivers: drive the thunder and speed the lightning; tomorrow shed the rain's bounty, and bring relief universal to the city of Chang'an."

The hours and measures on the decree differed by a hair from what the gentleman had divined, and the Dragon King was frightened out of his wits.

After a while he came to himself and said to the assembled water folk: "That such a numinous man should exist in the dusty world! Truly he penetrates heaven and reaches earth—there's no outdoing him!"

The shad strategist memorialized: "Your Majesty, rest easy. What difficulty in beating him? Your servant has a little plan that shall surely seal that fellow's mouth." The Dragon King asked for the plan. "Alter the hours of the rainfall," said the strategist, "and shave a little from the number of drops. Then it is he whose

divination proved false—how can you fail to win? Then smash his signboard and drive him off—what difficulty in that?"

The Dragon King followed his advice and worried no more.

The next day he mustered the Earl of Wind, the Duke of Thunder, the Cloud Boy, and the Mother of Lightning, and rose straight to the ninth heaven above Chang'an. He stalled until the hour of the snake to spread the clouds, the hour of the horse to sound the thunder, the hour of the goat for the rain to fall, and the hour of the monkey for the rain to stop—yet he gathered only three feet and forty drops. He had shifted the rain by one hour and clipped away three inches and eight drops. When the rain was done he dismissed his captains and withdrew the host.

Then he pressed down his cloud, changed again into the white-robed scholar, came to the West Gate street, barged into Yuan Shoucheng's divination shop, and—no argument brooked—smashed his signboard, brushes, inkstone, and all to pieces together. The gentleman sat in his chair, utterly unmoved.

The Dragon King heaved up a door-plank to beat him, cursing: "You wizard who prates of fortune and calamity, you good-for-nothing who bewitches the people's hearts! Your divination is worthless and your words wild and false! The hours and measures of today's rain did not match at all, and still you sit there lofty! Get out at once, and I'll spare your life!"

Shoucheng remained utterly unafraid, even by a hair. Lifting his face to the sky, he laughed coldly: "I fear nothing! I fear nothing! I bear no capital crime—I fear rather it is you who bear one! Others may be deceived, but me you cannot deceive. I know you: you are no scholar—you are the Dragon King of the Jing River. You violated the Jade Emperor's edict, altered the hours, clipped the number of drops, and so have broken Heaven's code. Upon the Dragon-Slicing Terrace, I fear you will scarcely escape the blade—and still you stand here cursing me?"

At these words the Dragon King's heart froze and his gall trembled, his hair stood on end. He dropped the door-plank in haste, straightened his robes, bowed low, and knelt before the gentleman: "Master, forgive me. My earlier words were in jest—who knew the jest would turn to truth, that I truly had violated Heaven's code! What am I to do? I beg the master to save me—else I shall not release you even in death!"

"I cannot save you," said Shoucheng. "I can only point you a road of life, for you to flee to, and that is all."

"I beg your instruction," said the dragon.

"Tomorrow at the third quarter of the horse hour," said the gentleman, "you are due at the Human Bureau official Wei Zheng, there to hear your sentence of execution. If you would keep your life, you must go quickly and plead with the present Tang sovereign, Emperor Taizong—that is your only way. That Wei Zheng is prime minister at the Tang king's court; if you can obtain from him a favor, you may yet be safe." Hearing this, the Dragon King bowed his tearful farewell and departed.

Unnoticed the red sun sank in the west and the Great Yin star rose, and this was the scene:

Mist congeals, the hills turn purple, homing crows grow weary; Far-road travelers seek their inns. At the ferry, new geese settle on the sandbanks; The Silver River appears. The watch-tallies hasten the hours; In the lone village, lamp flames gutter low. Wind curls the censer smoke in the quiet temple; In the butterfly dream, the man is seen no more. The moon shifts the flowers' shadows up the balustrade; Starlight scatters. The water-clock changes its tone— Unnoticed, deep in night, it is already half past.

The Dragon King of the Jing River did not return to his water palace. He waited in the sky until about the hour of the rat, gathered in his cloud-head, folded away his mists, and came straight to the gate of the imperial palace. Now the Tang sovereign was dreaming he had walked out beyond the palace gates, strolling

in the flower shade beneath the moon, when suddenly the Dragon King, changed to human form, came forward, knelt, and bowed, crying: "Your Majesty, save me! Save me!"

"Who are you," said Taizong, "that I should save you?"

"Your Majesty is a true dragon; your servant is a sinful dragon," said the Dragon King. "Your servant has violated Heaven's code and is sentenced to die by the blade of your worthy minister, the Human Bureau official Wei Zheng. Therefore I come to beg you—I pray Your Majesty save me!"

"If it is Wei Zheng who is to execute you, I can save you," said Taizong. "Go now, and set your heart at rest." The Dragon King rejoiced, kowtowed his thanks, and departed.

Now when Taizong woke from his dream, the matter stayed in his thoughts. By the third point of the fifth drum he had held court, gathering the two ranks of civil and military officials. Behold:

Mist swathing the phoenix towers, Fragrant haze upon the dragon halls, Light swaying the crimson screen, Clouds brushing the kingfisher banners. Sovereign and ministers in accord, like Yao and Shun; Rites, music, majesty, near to Han and Zhou. Attendants' lanterns, palace ladies' fans, Pair upon pair reflecting colors; Peacock screens, unicorn halls, Everywhere light afloat. Mountains of cries, "Ten thousand years!" Splendid wishes, "A thousand autumns!" The silence-whip cracks thrice, And capped and gowned they bow before the crowned and beaded. Palace flowers brilliant, heavenly fragrance wafting; Dike willows tender, imperial music singing. Pearl curtains, kingfisher curtains, Their golden hooks drawn high; Dragon-flags, mountain-and-river fans, The precious carriage pausing. Civil ministers elegant, Warlords vigorous. The imperial way divides high from low; The crimson steps array the ranks. Gold seals and purple ribbons ride the three-elephant state— Long as earth, long as heaven, ten thousand times ten thousand autumns.

When the officials' homage was done, they took their stations in order. The Tang sovereign flashed his phoenix eyes and dragon gaze, surveying them one by one from the first. Among the civil officials were Fang Xuanling, Du Ruhui, Xu Shiji, Xu Jingzong, and Wang Gui; among the military, Ma Sanbao, Duan Zhixian, Yin Kaishan, Cheng Yaojin, Liu Hongji, Hu Jingde, and Qin Shubao—each one stately and solemn. But nowhere was Prime Minister Wei Zheng to be seen.

The Tang sovereign summoned Xu Shiji up to the hall: "Last night I had a strange dream. I dreamed a man bowed before me in audience, saying he was the Dragon King of the Jing River, who had violated Heaven's code and was condemned to die at the hands of the Human Bureau official Wei Zheng; he begged me to save him, and I promised. Yet today, in the ranks before me, Wei Zheng alone is missing. Why?"

"The dream has proven true," replied Shiji. "When Wei Zheng comes to court presently, Your Majesty must not let him leave the palace. If you can keep him through this one day, the dragon of the dream may be saved."

The Tang sovereign rejoiced and at once issued a decree, ordering the chamberlain to summon Wei Zheng to court.

Now Prime Minister Wei Zheng in his mansion had been watching the signs of the heavens by night. Just as he lit the precious incense, he heard cranes crying in the ninth heaven: it was Heaven dispatching an immortal envoy, bearing a golden decree of the Jade Emperor, commanding him at the third quarter of the horse hour to behead the old dragon of the Jing River in a dream. The prime minister gave thanks for the heavenly grace, fasted and bathed, and in his mansion tested the sword of wisdom and deployed his primal spirit; therefore he had not gone to court.

The moment the chamberlain arrived bearing the decree summoning him, he was overcome with awe; yet he dared not delay a sovereign's command. He hurriedly straightened his robes and girdle, accompanied the decree to court, and knocked his head before the throne begging pardon for his fault.

"The minister is pardoned," said the Tang sovereign. By then the ministers had not yet withdrawn from court; the sovereign commanded the curtains rolled and court dismissed. He detained Wei Zheng alone, summoning him up past the Hall of Golden Bells into the private hall, where they first discoursed on policies to secure the state and plans to stabilize the realm.

As the hour neared the end of the snake and the beginning of the horse, the sovereign bade the palace attendants bring the great chess set. "Let me play a game with you, worthy minister."

The palace ladies brought the chessboard and laid it upon the imperial table. Wei Zheng gave thanks and played against the Tang sovereign. Move for move, they deployed their formations—just as the Classic of the Rotten Axe says:

The way of chess lies above all in rigor. The strong player holds the center, the weak player the edges, the middling player the corners—this is the standing rule of the masters.

The law says: "Better lose one stone than lose the initiative. When you strike left, watch right; when you attack behind, look ahead. There is first-that-becomes-last, and last-that-becomes-first. When both groups live, do not cut; when both breathe, do not join. Spaciousness must not be too sparse, density not too cramped. Better to abandon stones and win than cling to them for life; better to reinforce and mend your own than to wander alone without cause. When they are many and you are few, first plan to live; when you are many and they are few, be sure to stretch your shape. The master of victory does not contend; the master of formations does not fight; the master of fighting is not defeated; the master of defeat does not fall into disorder. Chess begins with meeting on the square and ends with victory by surprise. When the enemy mends himself without cause, he means to invade and cut you off; when he abandons the small and does not save it, he harbors designs on the great; who plays at random is a man without counsel; who answers without thinking walks the road to defeat. The Odes say: 'Trembling, careful, as if approaching the deep valley.' This is what they mean."

In verse:

The board is earth, the stones are heaven, Their colors by yin and yang, creation complete. Play to the point where mystery turns to change— And smile, boasting of the Rotten-Axe immortal of old.

Sovereign and minister played this game until the third quarter of the horse hour, the endgame still unfinished, when Wei Zheng suddenly slumped over the table's edge, snoring in sleep. Taizong smiled: "Truly, worthy minister, your heart is wearied propping up the state, your strength worn out founding the realm—no wonder you drop off to sleep without knowing it." Taizong let him sleep on and did not call him.

Before long Wei Zheng awoke and fell prostrate upon the floor: "Your servant deserves ten thousand deaths! Ten thousand deaths! Just now I grew dizzy and drowsy and know not what I did. I beg Your Majesty pardon my crime of slowness before my sovereign!"

"What crime of slowness have you, minister?" said Taizong. "Rise, sweep away the unfinished game, and we shall begin the contest anew." Wei Zheng gave thanks and had just picked up a stone in his fingers when, outside the palace gates, there arose a great shouting and crying.

It was Qin Shubao, Xu Maogong, and the others, carrying a dripping, bloody dragon's head, which they cast before the throne, memorializing: "Your Majesty, we have seen seas run shallow and rivers run dry—but never before have we heard of such a marvel as this!"

Taizong and Wei Zheng rose. "Whence comes this thing?"

"South of the Thousand-Step Corridor, at the crossing of streets," said Shubao and Maogong, "this dragon's head fell out of the clouds. Your servants dared not fail to report it."

The Tang sovereign asked Wei Zheng in alarm: "What say you to this?"

Wei Zheng turned, knocked his head, and said: "It was your servant who, just now, beheaded it in a dream."

Hearing this, the Tang sovereign was greatly startled: "Worthy minister, while you dozed, we saw you neither rise nor move, and you had neither blade nor sword—how then did you behead this dragon?"

Wei Zheng memorialized: "My lord, though your servant's body was before Your Majesty, my dream left your side. My body before Your Majesty faced the endgame, eyes half-closed in a doze; my dream left Your Majesty, mounted auspicious clouds, my spirit shaken wide awake. That dragon, upon the Dragon-Slicing Terrace, was bound fast by the heavenly soldiers and generals. Your servant declared: 'You have violated Heaven's code; the death sentence is your due. I bear Heaven's mandate to behead your remnant life.' The dragon heard it and cried piteously; your servant shook out his spirit. The dragon heard it, folded his claws, drew in his scales, and meekly took his death; your servant shook out his spirit, tucked up his robes, strode forward, and raised the frost-white blade. With one crack of the blade's passage, the dragon's head fell away into the void."

Hearing this, the Tang sovereign's heart held both gladness and grief. His gladness: that Wei Zheng was such a worthy minister—with such a hero at court, what fear that the realm should be unstable? His grief: that in his dream he had promised to save the dragon, and had not expected it to come to execution after all. He could only rally his spirit and issue a decree, ordering Shubao to hang the dragon's head in the marketplace as notice to the common folk of Chang'an; meanwhile he rewarded Wei Zheng, and the officials dispersed.

That evening he returned to his palace, but his heart stayed heavy. He thought of the dragon in his dream, howling and pleading for life—who knew that impermanence would not spare it this calamity? After long brooding, his spirit grew weary, his body unwell. At the second watch of the night he heard, outside the palace gates, the sound of wailing, and Taizong's terror grew.

As he drifted into a doze, he saw again the Dragon King of the Jing River, holding a dripping, bloody head in his hand, crying in a great voice: "Tang Taizong! Give me back my life! Give me back my life! Last night you promised me full well to save me—why then, come morning, did you summon the Human Bureau official to behead me? Come out! Come out! Come with me to the Court of Yama and argue it out!"

He seized hold of Taizong and raged and clamored, refusing to let go. Taizong's mouth was pinched shut, powerless to speak; he struggled until sweat streamed over his whole body. Just as they stood locked in that tangle, there appeared in the due south a swirl of fragrant clouds and drifting colored mists, and a true woman of the Way came forward, waved her willow branch once with her hand—and the headless dragon, wailing piteously, made straight away toward the northwest.

This was, in fact, the Bodhisattva Guanyin, who, bearing the Buddha's decree, was on her way to the Eastern Land to find the scripture-seeker. Lodging in the earth-god's shrine of the city of Chang'an, she had heard in the night ghosts weeping and spirits howling, and had come specially to shout back the sinful dragon and deliver the emperor. The dragon went straight to the courts of the underworld to lodge his accusation—but of that we say no more.

We tell instead how Taizong came to himself again, crying only, "A ghost! A ghost!"—frightening the empresses of the three palaces, the consorts of the six courts, and the attending eunuchs into trembling, sleepless through the whole night. Unnoticed the third point of the fifth watch arrived, and the whole court of civil and military officials waited outside the palace gates for audience. They waited until daybreak, and still the sovereign did not appear—each of them alarmed and anxious.

By the time the sun stood three rods high, a decree finally came forth: "Our heart is unwell; let the officials be excused from court."

Unnoticed, five or seven days passed. The officials, grieving and anxious, were just on the point of beating upon the gates to greet the sovereign and inquire after his health, when the Empress Dowager issued a decree summoning the medical officers into the palace to administer medicine. All waited at the palace gates for news. Presently the medical officers came out, and the officials asked what the illness was.

"His Majesty's pulse is irregular," said the physicians, "weak and yet rapid; he raves, seeing ghosts. We have further diagnosed 'ten beats and one lapse' [Translator's note: a grave pulse pattern in traditional Chinese medicine, ten beats followed by a pause]; the five organs are without breath. I fear the unspeakable will come within seven days."

Hearing this, all the officials turned pale with shock.

In the midst of their grief and panic came yet another decree from the Empress Dowager, summoning Xu Maogong, the Duke who Protects the State, and the Duke of Wei to wait upon the sovereign. The three dukes received the decree and hastened in to the Tower of Parting Palaces.

After the bows, Taizong summoned a stern countenance and forced himself to speak: "Worthy ministers, at nineteen I took up arms, campaigning south and conquering north, blocking east and sweeping west, through bitter years of hardship, and never once saw the least demonic thing—yet today I see ghosts!"

"You founded the realm and slew men without number," said the Duke of Wei. "What ghost is there to fear?"

"You do not believe it," said Taizong. "Outside the gate of my bedchamber, as soon as night falls, bricks and tiles come flying; demons howl and cry—truly hard to bear. By day it is tolerable; at dusk and in the night it is past enduring."

"Your Majesty, set your heart at ease," said Shubao. "Tonight your servant and Jingde will guard the palace gates, and let us see what demon dares show itself." Taizong approved, and Maogong gave thanks and withdrew.

That evening the two donned their armor. Both fully armed in helm and corslet, grasping golden melons and battle-axes, they stood guard outside the palace gates. What generals! See how they were clad:

Golden helms gleaming on their heads, Scale armor of dragon hide upon their bodies. The heart-protecting mirrors flash auspicious clouds, The lion-belts drawn tight, The embroidered sashes fresh as colored dawn. This one, phoenix eyes lifted to the sky, would make the very stars afraid; That one, round eyes flashing lightning, moonlight floating on them. They were heroes and champions, veterans of the founding— And they became for a thousand years the Wardens of the Door, For ten thousand ages the Guardians of the Gate.

The two generals stood at attendance beside the gate, and through the whole night not the least demonic shadow appeared.

That night the sovereign slept in his palace without incident. At dawn he summoned the two generals and rewarded them richly: "Since falling ill, for days I could not sleep; last night, upheld by the two generals' awe-inspiring might, I was quite at peace. Pray go now and rest, and guard me once more when evening comes."

The two generals gave thanks and withdrew. Thus for two or three nights the guard was kept, and all was well—only the imperial appetite diminished, and the sickness grew heavier.

Taizong could not bear to weary the two generals further, and again summoned Shubao, Jingde, and the lords Du and Fang into the palace, instructing them: "These two days, though I have been at ease, it has been hard on Generals Qin and Hu, keeping watch the whole night through. I would summon a deft painter to make their true portraits and paste them upon the doors, sparing them the labor. What say you?"

The ministers obeyed the decree. They chose two skilled portraitists, had the two lords don their armor as before, painted their likenesses exactly, and pasted them upon the doors; through that night also there was no disturbance.

So it went for two or three days more. Then they heard, behind the North Palace Gate, bricks and tiles clattering and crashing. At dawn the sovereign hastily summoned his ministers: "Lately the front gate has happily been quiet; last night the back gate again resounded—this frightens me nearly to death!"

Maogong stepped forward and memorialized: "When the front gate was troubled, it was Jingde and Shubao who guarded it; now that the back gate is troubled, it should be Wei Zheng who guards it." Taizong approved, and again summoned Wei Zheng to keep watch that night over the back gate. Wei Zheng received the decree, equipped himself in order that night, and holding the dragon-slaying precious sword, stood in attendance before the North Palace Gate—truly a hero!

See how he was clad: a dark silk scarf wound about his brow, a brocade robe with jade belt hanging at his waist, his storm-defying cloak and sleeves drifting like frost, his bearing surpassing even the door-gods. Black boots upon his feet, a keen blade in his fierce and daring hand, both eyes wide open surveying the four quarters—what demonic spirit would dare approach?

All night he kept his vigil, and no ghost appeared. Though front and back gates were now at peace, the sovereign's body grew daily weaker. One day the Empress Dowager again issued a decree, summoning the ministers to deliberate on the rites of burial and the affairs after death. Taizong also summoned Xu Maogong and instructed him on the great affairs of state, charging him, after the manner of Liu Bei of Shu entrusting his orphan son. His words done, he bathed, changed his garments, and awaited the hour.

But Wei Zheng stepped from beside him, took hold of the dragon robe, and memorialized: "Your Majesty, rest easy. Your servant has one means to guarantee Your Majesty long life."

"The sickness has entered the vital regions; my life is near its peril," said Taizong. "How could you guarantee it?"

"Your servant has a letter," said Wei Zheng, "which I submit to Your Majesty, to be carried down to the courts of the dead, addressed to Cui Jue, the judge of Fengdu." Who is Cui Jue?" asked Taizong.

"Cui Jue was a minister under your imperial grandsire the late emperor," said Wei Zheng. "He first served as magistrate of Ci prefecture, later rose to Vice Minister of Rites. In his lifetime he and your servant swore eight-bow brotherhood, and we knew each other most intimately. He is now dead, and serves in the underworld as the Fengdu judge who holds the registers of life and death; in dreams he often meets with your servant. If this letter is delivered to him, he will think on your humble servant's small share of friendship and will surely release Your Majesty to return. I guarantee your soul shall come back to the world of the living, and the dragon countenance return to the imperial capital."

Hearing this, Taizong received the letter in his hands, tucked it into his sleeve, closed his eyes—and died.

The three palaces and six courts, the empress and consorts, the crown prince and all, and the two ranks of civil and military officials, all raised the cry of mourning and put on mourning garb; and in the Hall of the White Tiger the coffin was laid in state—but of that we say no more.

If you would know how Taizong returned to life, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 11

The Taizong Emperor Tours the Underworld and Returns to Life; Liu Quan Presents Melons and Is Rewedded to His Wife

The poem says:

A hundred years of light and shade flow past like water; A lifetime's undertakings are but foam upon the stream. Yesterday the peach-blossom hue still bloomed upon the cheek; Today the snowflakes drift about the head. Only when the white ants' ranks are scattered do we know it was illusion; Only when the cuckoo's cry grows piercing do we think of turning back. Since ancient times, hidden merit has been able to lengthen life: The good need beg no favor—Heaven provides of its own accord.

Now the soul of Emperor Taizong, dim and drifting, passed straight out before the Five Phoenix Tower, and there he saw the imperial guards and horsemen inviting the imperial chariot to leave the palace for the hunt. Taizong gladly complied, and away he floated. After traveling a long while, the men and horses were all gone, and he found himself alone, wandering through wild outskirts and grassy fields.

Just as he was growing alarmed, at a loss to find the road, he heard someone on the other side calling loudly: "Emperor of the Great Tang! Come this way! Come this way!"

Hearing this, Taizong raised his head to look, and saw a man—

On his head a black gauze cap, round his waist a rhinoceros-horn belt. On his head a black gauze cap, its soft streamers floating; Round his waist a rhinoceros-horn belt, its gold mountings gleaming. In his hands an ivory tablet, wreathed in auspicious mist; On his body a gauze robe, veiling a numinous light. On his feet a pair of white-soled boots, treading cloud and hastening mist; In his bosom the Register of Life and Death, fixing the span of all that live. His grizzled locks stream loose above his ears; His whiskers dance and flutter round his cheeks. Once a minister of state in the Tang; Now a bench-clerk serving King Yama.

When Taizong walked over to him, the man knelt and bowed at the roadside, crying: "Your Majesty, forgive your servant the crime of failing to welcome you from afar!"

Taizong asked: "Who are you? Why have you come to receive me with such bows?" The man said: "Half a month ago, your servant, in the Hall of Senluo, saw the ghost-dragon of the Jing River bring his accusation against Your Majesty—how you promised to save him and then put him to death instead. The King Qinguang of the First Court at once dispatched ghost messengers to hasten Your Majesty hither, that the case might be tried with all three parties confronted. Your servant knew of this, and so came here to await and receive you. I had not thought to arrive so late today. I beg you pardon my offense, pardon my offense." Taizong said: "What is your name, and what office do you hold?" The man said: "While I lived I served the late sovereign in the ministries of the world of light, first as magistrate of Zizhou, later as Vice Minister of Rites; my surname was Cui, my name Jue. Now in the Department of Darkness I have received the post of presiding judge in Fengdu." Taizong was greatly pleased, drew near, and lifted him up with his own imperial hand, saying: "Sir, you have come a long way to meet me. Wei Zheng, who stands at my side, has a letter addressed to you, and here we chance to meet." The judge thanked him for his grace and asked where the letter was.

Taizong took it from his sleeve and handed it over. Cui Jue received it with a bow, broke the seal, and read. The letter said:

"From your unworthy loving brother Wei Zheng, with bowed head, to my elder friend and contract brother Judge Cui, most venerable sir: I recall our old friendship; your voice and face are before me still. Suddenly years have passed without my hearing your pure instruction. I have only set out vegetables and offerings at

the festival seasons in sacrifice—I know not whether you have partaken of them. Then you did not scorn me, but came to me in dream to show yourself, and I learned that you, my elder brother, had been promoted. Alas, the worlds of light and dark are sundered, each at one end of the sky, and we may not meet face to face. Now our Emperor Taizong the Cultured has suddenly passed away, and I reckon that with the trial of the three parties he must surely meet with you. I earnestly beg that you will look back upon the friendship of our lifetimes and show some small convenience, letting my sovereign return to the world of light. This would be a great kindness to me. I shall send further thanks hereafter. I cannot write all I would say."

When the judge had read the letter, his heart was full of joy. "The affair of Wei Zheng beheading the old dragon in a dream some days ago," he said, "your servant knew of long since, and one could never exhaust praise of him. He has, moreover, shown kindness morning and evening to my children and grandchildren. Now that his letter has come, let Your Majesty set your heart at ease. Your servant will personally see Your Majesty returned to the world of light, to mount the jade steps of the palace once more." Taizong thanked him.

While the two were speaking, they saw on the other side a pair of youths in blue robes holding banners and precious canopies, calling loudly: "The Kings of Darkness invite you! Invite you!"

Taizong then walked forward together with Judge Cui and the two youths. Suddenly they came upon a city, and on its gate hung a great placard bearing seven large characters of gold: "The Ghost Gate Pass of the Dark Underworld." The blue-robed youths shook out their banners and led Taizong straight into the city, along the streets.

There by the roadside he saw his late father Li Yuan and his elder brother the late Crown Prince Jiancheng and his brother the late Prince Yuanji, who came forward crying: "Shimin has come! Shimin has come!"

Then Jiancheng and Yuanji rushed up to seize him and beat him, demanding his life. Taizong had no time to dodge, and they caught hold of him. Fortunately Judge Cui summoned a ghost messenger with a green face and boar-like tusks, who shouted Jiancheng and Yuanji back, and only then could Taizong free himself and go on. After some few li they came upon a towered building of glazed green tiles, truly magnificent. Just look:

Ten thousand folds of rainbow clouds heaped, drifting; A thousand ribbons of red mist emerging, half-seen. The gleaming eaves fly up in monster heads; The shining tiles overlap in shards of mandarin-duck green. The doors are studded with row upon row of red-gold nails; The thresholds laid with a single band of white jade. The windows, near the light, give off the mist of dawn; The curtained lattice, flashing bright, admits red lightning. Lofty towers rise to touch the azure sky; Level colonnades stretch on, joining the precious courts. From the beast-shaped censers clouds of incense greet the imperial robes; Beneath crimson gauze the lamps illume the palace fans.

On the left, fierce figures ranged—heads of oxen; On the right, looming forms arrayed—faces of horses. Golden tablets pass to speed the dead away; White silk streamers hang, to summon souls and guide them in. This is called the general gate of all the Underworld's realm: The Hall of Senluo, where King Yama sits below.

While Taizong was gazing from outside, he heard, from that quarter, the tinkling of jade pendants and a strange immortal fragrance, and there were two pairs of candle-bearers; behind them came the Ten Kings of the Underworld, descending the steps to greet him. Those ten kings were King Qinguang, King Chujiang, King Songdi, King Wuguan, King Yama, King Pingdeng, King Taishan, King Dushi, King Biancheng, and King Zhuanlun. The Ten Kings came out from the precious Hall of Senluo, bowed with bent backs, and welcomed Taizong. Taizong demurred humbly, not daring to walk ahead.

The Ten Kings said: "Your Majesty is a king of men in the world of light; we are kings of ghosts in the world of darkness. That each should take his proper place is only right—why stand on ceremony?"

Taizong said: "I stand guilty before your courts; how dare I speak of the dues of light and dark, of men and ghosts?" Still he yielded and yielded. Then Taizong walked ahead, went straight up into the Hall of Senluo, exchanged courtesies with the Ten Kings, and they sat down, host and guest in their places.

After a little while, King Qinguang raised his hands and addressed him: "The ghost-dragon of the Jing River accused Your Majesty of promising to save him and then killing him nonetheless. How was this?"

Taizong said: "I did indeed dream one night that the old dragon begged for rescue, and I truly promised him no harm. I did not expect that his crime deserved death, and that it fell to my minister Wei Zheng, the officer of human justice, to behead him. I had summoned Wei Zheng to the palace to play chess, and knew not that he beheaded the dragon in a dream. This was the uncanny cunning of that officer of human justice at work, and the dragon's own crime deserving death. How could it be my fault?" When the Ten Kings heard this, they bowed and said: "Before ever that dragon was born, it was set down in the death-register of the Southern Dipper that he should meet death at the hand of an officer of human justice; we knew it long ago. But because he kept disputing it here, insisting that Your Majesty come for the three-party confrontation, we sent him into the Wheel of Rebirth, and he has been reborn. Now we have troubled Your Majesty to come here; we beg you forgive the offense of our pressing invitation."

When they had finished speaking, they ordered the judge who kept the Register of Life and Death: "Bring the register quickly, and let us see what span of allotted life and heavenly stipend remains to Your Majesty."

Judge Cui hurried to the registry office and took out the master register of the allotted stipends of the kings of all the nations under heaven, examining it page by page. There, for the Emperor Taizong of the Great Tang in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, was written: "Zhenguan, thirteenth year." Judge Cui was startled. He snatched up a great brush loaded with thick ink, added two strokes over the character "one," and then presented the register.

The Ten Kings read it through from the beginning, and finding under Taizong's name "allotted thirty-three years," King Yama asked in surprise: "How many years has Your Majesty been upon the throne?"

Taizong said: "It is now thirteen years since I ascended the throne." The king said: "Let Your Majesty set his heart at ease and be untroubled; there remain twenty years of your span in the world of light. Now that this matter has been tried and made clear, we beg you return to your body and to life." Hearing this, Taizong bowed and gave thanks. The Ten Kings dispatched Judge Cui and Marshal Zhu to escort the emperor back to life.

As Taizong left the Hall of Senluo, he raised his hands once more and asked the Ten Kings: "Are the old and young of my palace well?"

The Ten Kings said: "All are well—only we fear your imperial sister's span of life may not be long." Taizong bowed again and said: "When I return to the world of light, I have nothing with which to repay you but melons and fruit." The Ten Kings said with pleasure: "We have plenty of winter melons and watermelons here; we lack only pumpkins." Taizong said: "When I return I shall send them at once—send them at once." And thereupon they saluted one another and parted.

The marshal held a soul-summoning banner and led the way in front; Judge Cui followed, protecting Taizong, and they went straight out of the Department of Darkness.

Taizong raised his eyes and looked: this was not the old road. He asked the judge: "Is this road not wrong?" The judge said: "It is not wrong. Such is the way in the Underworld: there is a road for going, but none for coming back. Now we are escorting Your Majesty out by way of the Wheel of Rebirth—first, that Your

Majesty may tour and observe the Underworld; second, that Your Majesty may learn how souls are sent to rebirth." Taizong could only follow the two of them as they led the way forward.

After some few li, they suddenly came upon a high mountain, its somber clouds hanging to the ground, its black fog filling the sky. Taizong said: "Master Cui, what mountain is that yonder?" The judge said: "That is the Shade-side Mountain of the nether world." Taizong said in dread: "How can I pass through there?" The judge said: "Let Your Majesty be at ease; your servants will guide you." Trembling and quaking, Taizong followed the two of them up onto the mountain crags, and raised his head to look. Just look:

Its form all hollows and humps, its character yet more rugged— Steep as the ridges of Shu, high as the cliffs of Lu. No famous mountain of the world of light is this, But a perilous land, the very floor of Hell. Thickets of brambles harbor ghosts and monsters; Jagged cliffs of rock conceal a throng of fiends. About the ear no sound of beast or bird; Before the eyes only the walking of ghost-demons. A chill wind sighs and hisses; a black fog rolls and spreads. The chill wind sighing—that is the smoke puffed from the mouths of spirit soldiers; The black fog rolling—that is the breath belched forth by lurking ghosts. Gaze where you will, no pleasing sight in all that waste; Look left or right, only the raging hosts of the dead.

There were mountains there, and peaks, and ridges, and caves, and ravines; but on the mountains no grass grew, the peaks did not pierce the sky, no travelers walked the ridges, the caves took in no clouds, and no water flowed in the ravines. Before the banks, nothing but wangliang goblins; below the ridges, hosts of demons and spirits. In the caves were gathered wild ghosts; at the ravines' bottom lurked wicked souls. Before the mountain and behind it, ox-heads and horse-faces clamored and shouted; half-hidden, half-appearing, hungry ghosts and destitute souls wept face to face.

The life-hastening judge, in a fluster, passed his writs of summons; the soul-pursuing marshal, with shouts and cries, hurried on his documents. The fleet-footed runners—whirlwinds rolling and tumbling; the soul-arresting clerks—black fog in scattering clouds.

Taizong passed the Shade-side Mountain wholly under the judge's protection.

Going forward, they passed many government offices, and from every one came sounds of grief that pierced the ear and monstrous horrors that chilled the heart. Taizong asked again: "What place is this?" The judge said: "These are the Eighteen Layers of Hell behind the Shade-side Mountain." Taizong said: "Which eighteen layers?" The judge said: "Listen while I tell you:

The Tendon-Pulling Hell, the Wrongful-Death Hell, the Fire-Pit Hell—silent, desolate, fretful, despairing; all of them made a thousand evils while alive, and after death are brought here to suffer their sentence. The Fengdu Hell, the Tongue-Ripping Hell, the Flaying Hell—weeping and wailing, piteous and grim, because they were disloyal and unfilial and wounded the principles of Heaven, with a Buddha's mouth and a serpent's heart they fell into this gate.

The Grinding Hell, the Pestling Hell, the Chariot-Dismemberment Hell—skin split open, flesh gashed, teeth set and lips awry—for they cheated their own hearts and wronged themselves, dealing crookedly, and with honeyed words and flowery speech secretly injured others. The Ice Hell, the Husk-Shedding Hell, the Bowel-Drawing Hell—faces filthy, hair matted, brows knitted, eyes narrowed—all because they cheated the simple with big measures and small scales, and so brought calamity upon themselves. The Boiling-Oil Hell, the Pitch-Dark Hell, the Knife-Mountain Hell—shuddering, trembling, grieving, and mourning—because they used violence against the good and the gentle, and now crouch with hidden heads and shrunken necks in bitter loneliness.

The Blood-Pool Hell, the Avici Hell, the Balance-Beam Hell—skin peeled from bone, arms broken, sinews snapped—all because they schemed for wealth and murdered for it, slaughtering beasts and butchering living things; sunk a thousand years, past all reprieve; drowned forever, never to rise again. One and all, bound fast

and locked, wound with ropes and cords—and see the red-haired ghosts and black-faced ghosts with long spears and short swords; ox-head ghosts and horse-face ghosts with iron maces and bronze hammers, beating them till their brows are knit and their faces writhing, streaming blood, crying to Heaven and Earth with none to answer.

Truly: In this life, never wrong your own heart; when gods and ghosts shine forth so manifest, whom do they let slip by? Good and evil, at the end, always meet their due—only the time differs, early or late."

Hearing this, Taizong was appalled and sick at heart.

Going forward a little way, they saw a band of ghost soldiers, each holding banners, who knelt by the roadside and said: "The Bridge Envoys have come to receive you." The judge ordered them to rise, led Taizong forward, and they crossed over a golden bridge. Taizong saw also, off to the other side, a silver bridge, upon which walked the loyal and filial, the worthy and good, the just and upright, likewise receiving banners of welcome. And in the other quarter there was yet another bridge, where a chill wind rolled and blood-waves surged, and the sound of wailing never ceased.

Taizong asked: "What is that bridge called?"

The judge said: "Your Majesty, that is called the Bridge of the River of Helplessness. When you return to the world of light, you must tell of it. Beneath that bridge there are only these:

Waters rushing, vast and surging; a road perilous, narrow and sheer. Just like a bolt of white silk laid across the Long River, Or a fire-pit floating up into the upper world. Its yin air chills a man to the bone; Its reeking wind assails the nose, its stench bores into the heart. Waves roll and billows toss—no ferry for the living ever crosses; Barefoot, unkempt—the ghosts of their own deeds pass to and fro. The bridge is several li in length, but only a few finger-widths wide; A hundred feet it rises, a thousand fathoms deep. Above, no railing for the hand; Below, monsters waiting to seize their prey.

Shackled and cangued, they are driven onto the perilous road of the River of Helplessness. Look how fierce the spirit generals stand beside that bridge; how bitterly the sinful souls within the river suffer. On the forked trees hang garments of silk, blue, red, yellow, and purple; before the wall-like cliffs crouch the wanton and shrewish wives who cursed their parents-in-law. Bronze serpents and iron dogs fight over them for food; forever drowned in the River of Helplessness, they have no way out."

The poem says:

Now and again are heard the ghosts' laments and spirits' cries; Blood-water, turbid waves, rise ten thousand fathoms high. Beyond all count, ox-heads and horse-faces grimly stand, Guarding the Bridge of the River of Helplessness.

While they were speaking, those Bridge Envoys had already gone back. Taizong's heart was startled and anxious; he nodded, sighed in secret, and mourned silently as he followed the judge and the marshal, and they passed beyond the evil waters of the River of Helplessness, that bitter realm of the blood basin.

Going on, they came to the City of Those Who Died Unjustly, and heard a great hubbub of voices clamoring, distinctly crying: "Li Shimin has come! Li Shimin has come!"

At the sound, Taizong's heart froze and his gall trembled. A throng of ghosts—some dragging broken backs, some with folded arms, some with feet but no heads—came forward and blocked the way.

They all shouted: "Give us back our lives! Give us back our lives!"

Taizong was so frightened that he dodged this way and that, crying only: "Master Cui, save me! Master Cui, save me!" The judge said: "Your Majesty, those are the ghost-souls of the sixty-four uprisings and the

seventy-two bands of bandits—princes and chieftains of the rebel hosts. All died unjust deaths; their grievances are unredressed, they have no one to govern or gather them, they cannot attain rebirth, and they have no money for their journey—they are lonely, cold, hungry ghosts. If Your Majesty will distribute some silver among them, then I can save you." Taizong said: "I have come here empty-handed; where would I get money?" The judge said: "Your Majesty, there is a man in the world of light who has deposited a sum of gold and silver here in our Department of Darkness. If Your Majesty will sign a note in your own name, this humble judge will stand surety; borrow one storehouse of his funds and scatter it among these hungry ghosts—only then can you pass." Taizong asked: "Who is this man?" The judge said: "He is a man of Kaifeng Prefecture in Henan, named Xiang Liang. He has thirteen storehouses of gold and silver here. If Your Majesty borrows from his stores, you need only repay him when you return to the world of light." Taizong was much pleased and willingly signed for the loan.

So they drew up the document, which was given to the judge, and one storehouse of Xiang Liang's gold and silver was borrowed; the marshal was ordered to distribute it all.

The judge then instructed the ghosts: "This gold and silver you may divide equally among yourselves for your expenses. Let the Grand Sire of the Great Tang pass. His span in the world of light still runs long. I bear the command of the Ten Kings to see him back to life, and he will hold a Mass of Land and Water in the world of light, to deliver you all to rebirth. Make no more trouble."

When the ghosts heard this and had received the gold and silver, they all bowed and withdrew. The judge ordered the marshal to shake out the soul-summoning banner and lead Taizong out of the City of Those Who Died Unjustly; they hastened onto the broad level highway and went drifting away.

After traveling forward a good while, they came to the place of the "Six Paths of Rebirth," and there he saw cloud-riders draped in rosy capes, those who had received registers with golden fishes at their girdles, monks and nuns, Daoists and laymen, beasts that walked and birds that flew, demons of hill and stream—all streaming, all hastening beneath that wheel of rebirth, each entering into its own path.

The King of Tang asked: "What does this mean?" The judge said: "Your Majesty, with clear heart and awakened nature, you must remember this and pass it on to be known by those in the world of light. This is called the Six Paths of Rebirth. Those who do good rise and are transformed into the way of immortals; the utterly loyal are reborn into the way of nobility; the filial are born again into the way of blessing; the just and fair are reborn into the way of humankind; those who store up virtue pass into the way of wealth; the vicious and venomous sink down into the way of ghosts." When the King of Tang heard this, he nodded and sighed:

"Excellent, truly excellent! To do good is in truth to be free of calamity! Let the heart of goodness be ever earnest, And the way of good will open wide. Do not let wicked thoughts arise; Take care to shun the cunning and the perverse. Say not that there is no retribution— Gods and ghosts have made their plans."

The judge escorted the King of Tang straight to the gate of "Rebirth into the Way of Nobility," and bowed, calling to him: "Your Majesty, this is the place of your deliverance. This humble judge takes his leave; I shall have Marshal Zhu escort you one stage further." The King of Tang thanked him: "I am obliged to you, sir, for so long a walk." The judge said: "When Your Majesty returns to the world of light, be sure, be sure to hold a Mass of Land and Water, to deliver all those masterless, wronged souls—do not forget. Only if there are no sounds of grievance in the Department of Darkness may the world of light enjoy the blessing of peace. Whatever is not good, amend it, one thing and another. Proclaim to all the world that they should do good, and I warrant that your descendants will endure long and your rivers and mountains stand forever firm." The King of Tang assented to every point, took leave of Judge Cui, and followed Marshal Zhu as they entered the gate together.

Inside the gate the marshal saw a dun sea-horse, saddle and housings all complete, and at once invited the King of Tang to mount, the marshal supporting him on either side. The horse sped like an arrow, and they soon reached the banks of the Wei River, where Taizong saw upon the water a pair of golden carp leaping and tumbling in the waves. At the sight his heart was delighted, and he reined his horse to gaze, unable to tear himself away.

The marshal said: "Your Majesty, bestir yourself—let us hasten and make the city gates while the hour is early."

But the King of Tang only gazed on, unwilling to go forward—until the marshal seized him by the feet, crying loudly: "Will you not go? What are you waiting for!"—and with a splash pushed him from his horse into the Wei River; and thus he slipped free of the Department of Darkness and returned straight to the world of light.

Now the King of Tang had beneath his throne such ministers as Xu Maogong, Qin Shubao, Hu Jingde, Duan Zhixian, Ma Sanbao, Cheng Yaojin, Gao Shilian, Li Shiji, Fang Xuanling, Du Ruhui, Xiao Yu, Fu Yi, Zhang Daoyuan, Zhang Shiheng, and Wang Gui—civil and military officials in their two ranks—all attending the crown prince of the Eastern Palace together with the empress, the consorts, the palace ladies, and the chief stewards, all mourning in the White Tiger Hall.

In one quarter they were deliberating to proclaim the edict of mourning, to make it known throughout the realm, and to set the crown prince upon the throne.

Then Wei Zheng, who was at the side, said: "Gentlemen, wait! It must not be! It must not be! If the prefectures and counties are alarmed and stirred, who knows what calamity may arise? Wait yet another day, and our sovereign will assuredly return to life."

At this Xu Jingzong stepped forward from below: "What Lord Wei says is utterly mistaken. Since antiquity it has been said: 'Spilled water cannot be gathered up again; the dead do not return.' How can you still utter such empty words to confuse the hearts of men? What sense is there in it?" Wei Zheng said: "I will hide nothing from you, Master Xu. From my youth I was taught the arts of the immortals, and my reckonings are most exact. I will guarantee that His Majesty does not die."

Even as they spoke, from within the coffin came shout after shout: "I've been drowned! I've been drowned!" The civil officials and military commanders were frightened out of their wits, and the empress and consorts trembled with terror. Every one of them:

Faces like mulberry leaves after autumn; Waists like willow shoots before the spring. The heir apparent's legs gave way—he could not lean on the staff of mourning to perform the rites; The chief stewards' souls took flight—how could they don the mourning caps and follow filial custom? The consorts stumbled and fell; the ladies-in-waiting reeled and tilted. The consorts stumbling—like beaten lotus flowers toppled by a gale; The ladies reeling—like tender lilies askew beneath a sudden rain. The ministers stood aghast, their bones gone soft, their sinews numb; Trembling, quaking, speechless, dazed.

The whole White Tiger Hall was like a bridge with a broken beam, and the mourning terrace like a temple in collapse.

By this time the palace folk had all fled away clean—who dared come near the coffin to support it?

It was thanks to the upright Xu Maogong, the stern and reasoned Chancellor Wei, the bold-hearted Qin Qiong, and the fiercely daring Jingde, who came forward and held the coffin steady, calling: "Your Majesty, if there is anything that still weighs upon your heart, tell it to us! Do not play tricks and terrify your family!"

Wei Zheng said: "He is not playing tricks. This is His Majesty returning to life! Quickly, bring tools!" They opened the lid of the coffin, and there in very truth sat Taizong within.

Still he was crying: "I was drowned! Who saved me?"

Maogong and the others came forward, lifted him up, and said: "Your Majesty, awake and fear not; your ministers are all here guarding your chariot." Only then did the King of Tang open his eyes and say: "Just now I suffered so bitterly: I escaped the peril of the evil ghosts of the Underworld, only to meet a drowning death upon the water." The ministers said: "Let Your Majesty's heart be at ease and unafraid—but what drowning was there?" The King of Tang said: "I was riding along and had just reached the banks of the Wei River, where I saw two double-headed fish at play; then Marshal Zhu, with wicked intent, pushed me from my horse, and I fell into the river and very nearly drowned." Wei Zheng said: "Your Majesty has not yet shaken off the ghostly air." He hastily ordered the Imperial Medical Academy to administer broths to calm the spirit and settle the soul, and had gruel and meals prepared.

Only after taking the potion once or twice did he come back to himself and know the affairs of men. Altogether the King of Tang had been dead three days and nights, and then returned to the world of light to reign. There is a poem in proof:

Since antiquity how many times have rivers and mountains changed, As dynasty after dynasty failed or flourished? The Zhou, Qin, Han, and Jin had many wonders— But who ever matched the King of Tang, who died and lived again?

That day the light was already failing, and the ministers begged the king to retire to his chambers, and each went his way. Early the next morning they doffed their mourning clothes and donned court dress—every man in red robe and black cap, every man with purple ribbons and golden seals—and waited outside the palace gates for the summons to audience.

Now Taizong, having taken the spirit-settling potion and swallowed several servings of broth and gruel, had been helped by his ministers into his bedchamber, where he slept soundly through the night, nursing his strength, and did not rise until dawn. Then he shook out his dignity and majesty. Just look at how he was attired:

On his head a crown that towers to heaven; On his body an ochre-yellow robe. Round his waist a belt of Lantian's jasper green; On his feet the shoes of the founding, free of care. Majestic of visage, he outshines the court of any age; Fierce of dignity, he founds the dynasty anew this day. A very sovereign of the Great Tang, enlightened and well-governed— His Majesty Li, returned from death to life!

The King of Tang ascended the golden chime-bell throne hall, assembled his civil and military officials in their two ranks, received the mountain-shout of homage, and ranged them by grade in their places.

The proclamation was heard: "Let those with business come forward from the ranks to memorialize; let those without retire from court."

From the east side stepped forth Xu Maogong, Wei Zheng, Wang Gui, Du Ruhui, Fang Xuanling, Yuan Tiangang, Li Chunfeng, Xu Jingzong, and others; from the west side stepped forth Yin Kaishan, Liu Hongji, Ma Sanbao, Duan Zhixian, Cheng Yaojin, Qin Shubao, Hu Jingde, Xue Rengui, and others. Together they advanced, prostrated themselves before the white-jade steps, and memorialized: "Your Majesty's dream of late—why did you wake from it only after so long a time?" Taizong said: "Some days ago I received Wei Zheng's letter, and then felt my spirit leave the palace. I saw the imperial guards inviting me out to the hunt; but as I went along, the men and horses vanished without trace. Then I saw my late father and my brothers of old quarreling and struggling. Just when the matter could not be resolved, there appeared a man in a black cap and dark robe—Judge Cui Jue—who shouted my brothers back. I passed Wei Zheng's letter over to him.

While he read it, youths in blue robes appeared, holding banners, who led me within, up to the Hall of Senluo, where I took my seat in company with the Ten Kings of the Underworld. They spoke of the Jing River dragon's false accusation—that I had promised to save him and then killed him—and I set forth the whole affair from the beginning. They said the three-party case had already been tried, and at once ordered the Register of Life and Death brought, to examine the span of my life. Judge Cui handed up the register; the kings read it and said I had thirty-three years of heavenly stipend, of which only thirteen had passed, leaving me still twenty years of life. They then ordered Marshal Zhu and Judge Cui to escort me back. I took leave of the Ten Kings, and promised to send them melons and fruit in thanks. From the time I left the Hall of Senluo, I saw in the Department of Darkness the disloyal and unfilial, the improper and unrighteous, those who wasted the five grains, cheated openly and deceived in secret, used big measures and small scales, committed adultery, theft, fraud, and falsehood, lewdness, lying, and deceit—all suffering grinding, burning, pounding, and filing, boiled in cauldrons, strung up and flayed—thousands upon myriads of them, and still I could not see enough. Then I passed through the City of Those Who Died Unjustly, where countless wronged souls—all the bandit hosts of the sixty-four uprisings and the spirits of the rebels of the seventy-two bands—blocked my road. Thanks to Judge Cui's surety, I borrowed one storehouse of gold and silver from old Xiang of Henan, and with it bought the ghost-souls over, and only then could I go forward. Judge Cui instructed me that on my return to the world of light I must by all means hold a Mass of Land and Water, to deliver those masterless souls—these were his parting words of admonition. Then, beneath the Six Paths of Rebirth, Marshal Zhu invited me to mount a horse, and swift as flight we traveled to the banks of the Wei River, where I saw the double-headed fish playing on the water. Just as I was delighting in the sight, he seized my feet and pushed me into the water—and so I returned to life." When the ministers heard this account, all offered congratulations. Dispatches were sent far and wide, and the officials of every prefecture and county in the realm sent up memorials of felicitation—but of this no more.

Now Taizong further issued an edict pardoning the criminals of the realm, and examined the capital felons in the prisons. The examining officers submitted a list of more than four hundred men under sentence of hanging or beheading in the Ministry of Justice. Taizong pardoned them and sent them home, to take leave of their parents and brothers, entrust their property to relatives, sons, and nephews, and return to the courts on this day of next year to receive the punishments they had earned. The convicts thanked him for his grace and withdrew. He also posted proclamations of relief for orphans, and examined the palace rolls, where the young and old ladies-in-waiting numbered three thousand in all, and issued an edict giving them in marriage to the soldiers. From then on, within and without, all was goodness.

There is a poem in proof:

The King of Tang, great sovereign, boundless in grace, Surpassed Yao and Shun, and the people flourished. Four hundred convicts left the prisons for their homes; Three thousand resentful maidens left the palace. Officials everywhere hailed the sovereign's long life; The ministers at court congratulated the dragon sublime. One single thought of good—and Heaven blesses it; Its shelter shall extend through seventeen generations.

When Taizong had thus released the palace ladies and pardoned the condemned, he further issued a proclamation of his own composition, to be posted throughout the realm. It read:

"Vast are Heaven and Earth; the sun and moon shine upon all with clear discernment. Broad is the universe; Heaven and Earth will not tolerate factions of the wicked. Employ the heart, use the arts—the retribution falls within this very life; do good and seek but little, and speak not of blessings in a life to come. A thousand clever schemes are not so good as honest dealing as a man; ten thousand kinds of tyranny can never match contentment and thrift, taking life as it comes. If the heart acts with charity and mercy, what need to strive at reading the sutras? If the intent is to injure others, in vain will you read a whole canon of the Tathagata!"

From that time forth, throughout the realm there was not one man who did not do good. At the same time a proclamation was posted inviting worthy men to carry melons and fruit down to the Department of Darkness; and from the treasury one storehouse of gold and silver was dispatched, with Hu Jingde, Duke of E, sent to Kaifeng Prefecture in Henan to seek out Xiang Liang and repay the debt. The proclamation had hung for several days when there appeared a worthy man who would give his life to present the melons, a native of Junzhou, named Liu Quan, whose family owned ten thousand strings of cash.

It happened that his wife, Li Cuilian, had once pulled a golden hairpin from her hair at the front gate to give as alms to a monk, and Liu Quan had scolded her for it, saying she did not keep a wife's proper ways and had gone boldly out of the women's chambers. Unable to swallow her anger, Li hanged herself and died. She left behind a young son and daughter, who wept day and night. Liu Quan could not bear to see it, and, having no other recourse, gave up his own life: he abandoned home and property, left his children, and willingly offered his death to carry the melons. He took down the imperial proclamation and came before the King of Tang.

The king gave orders that he be sent to the Gold Pavilion Hostelry, where he was to balance a pair of pumpkins on his head, carry yellow paper money in his sleeves, and hold poison in his mouth.

Liu Quan duly took the poison and died, and one point of living soul, bearing the melons and fruit on his head, arrived at the Ghost Gate Pass.

The ghost messengers guarding the gate shouted: "What man are you, that you dare come to this place?"

Liu Quan said: "I bear the imperial dispatch of the Emperor Taizong of the Great Tang, and have come especially to present melons and fruit for the enjoyment of the Ten Kings of the Underworld." The ghost messengers gladly received and led him in.

Liu Quan went straight to the precious Hall of Senluo, saw the kings of darkness, and presented the melons and fruit, saying: "By the command of the King of Tang, I have come from afar to present melons and fruit, in thanks for the grace of your forbearance, you Ten Kings."

The kings were greatly pleased, saying: "Truly an emperor of faith and virtue, this Taizong of the Great Tang!" So they accepted the melons and fruit, and asked the melon-bearer his name and whence he came.

Liu Quan said: "Your humble servant is a registered commoner of Junzhou city, named Liu Quan. Because my wife, née Li, hanged herself, she left our children behind with no one to care for them. Your servant was willing to give up home and children, to lay down his body in service to his sovereign, and so came especially to offer melons in tribute to my king, in thanks for the great kindness of you great kings."

When the Ten Kings heard this, they at once ordered an inquiry into the whereabouts of Liu Quan's wife, née Li. The ghost messengers swiftly brought her before the Hall of Senluo, where husband and wife were reunited. They told over all that had passed, and together gave thanks for the Ten Kings' merciful forbearance. Then King Yama consulted the Register of Life and Death, and found that the husband and wife both had the lifespan of those destined to become immortals; he hastily dispatched ghost messengers to send them back.

The ghost messengers announced: "Li Cuilian has been in the world of the dead a long while; her body no longer exists. To what shall her soul attach itself?"

The king said: "Li Yuying, the imperial sister of the Tang, is due to die before her time. You may borrow her body, and let her return to life in it." The ghost messengers received the command and at once restored husband and wife to life, and the two left the Department of Darkness together.

But whether you would know how that husband and wife returned to life—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 12

The King of Tang Holds the Great Mass in Perfect Sincerity; Guanyin Displays Her True Form and Converts the Golden Cicada

Now the ghost messengers, together with Liu Quan and his wife, left the Department of Darkness. The somber winds wound about them, and they came straight to the great city of Chang'an. There the ghost messengers pushed the soul of Liu Quan into the Gold Pavilion Hostelry, and carried the soul of Cuilian into the inner courts of the palace. The Princess Yuying was just then walking slowly over the green moss beneath the shade of the flowers, when the ghost messengers rushed upon her, flung her to the ground, and seized her living soul; then they thrust the soul of Cuilian into Yuying's body.

Of the ghost messengers' return to the Department of Darkness, no more need be said.

Now the waiting maids, great and small, of that palace court saw that Yuying had fallen and died, and ran swiftly to the Golden Chime Hall to report to the empress of the Three Palaces: "The Princess is fallen dead!"

The empress was greatly alarmed and at once reported it to Taizong.

Hearing this, Taizong nodded and sighed: "So it has come true after all. I once asked the Ten Kings of the Underworld whether the old and young of my palace were well, and they said: 'All are well—only we fear the princess's life is due to be cut short.' Their word has indeed come to pass."

All the palace folk came weeping in sorrow, and when they went to look beneath the flower shade, they saw that the princess still breathed faintly.

The King of Tang said: "Do not weep! Do not weep! Do not startle her."

Then he stepped forward, raised her head with his own imperial hands, and called: "Sister, awake! Awake!" Suddenly the princess turned over and cried: "Husband, walk slowly—wait for me!" Taizong said: "Sister, it is we who are here." The princess raised her head, opened her eyes, and looked: "Who are you, that you dare lay hands on me?" Taizong said: "I am your imperial brother, and this is your imperial sister-in-law." The princess said: "Since when have I any imperial brother or sister-in-law! My natal family is named Li; my milk-name is Li Cuilian, and my husband is named Liu Quan. The two of us are both of Junzhou. Three months ago, because I pulled a golden hairpin from my hair at the front gate to give as alms to a monk, my husband blamed me for boldly going out of the inner gates, not keeping a wife's ways, and scolded me for it. My anger choked my breast, and I hanged myself from the beam with a white-silk sash, leaving behind two children who weep day and night. Now, because my husband was sent by imperial dispatch of the King of Tang to the Underworld to present melons and fruit, the kings of darkness took pity and let us husband and wife return. He walked on ahead; because I came late and could not catch up with him, I stumbled and fell. How rude you all are! Not knowing who I am, how dare you lay hold of me!" Hearing this, Taizong said to the palace folk: "I suppose my sister has fallen senseless and is talking wildly." He sent orders to the Imperial Medical Academy to administer medicine, and had Yuying carried into the palace.

The King of Tang was in the hall when an officer of the imperial retinue memorialized: "Ten Thousand Years! Liu Quan, who carried the melons and fruit, has returned to life and awaits your command outside the court gate."

The King of Tang was greatly amazed, and at once gave orders to summon Liu Quan, who came in and prostrated himself before the crimson steps.

Taizong asked: "How went the business of the melons and fruit?"

Liu Quan said: "Your servant bore the melons straight to the Ghost Gate Pass, was led up to the Hall of Senluo, and saw the Ten Kings of the Underworld. I presented the melons and fruit and set forth at length my sovereign's earnest gratitude. The kings were greatly pleased and sent a full message of thanks to my sovereign, saying: 'Truly an emperor of faith and virtue, this Taizong of the Great Tang!'" The King of Tang said: "And what did you see in the Underworld?" Liu Quan said: "Your servant traveled no farther, and saw nothing much—only heard the kings ask my native place and name. I told them all: how I had abandoned home and children, and because my wife had hanged herself had willingly come to present the melons. They at once dispatched ghost messengers to bring my wife before me, and we met there below the Hall of Senluo. At the same time they consulted the Register of Life and Death, and said that we husband and wife both had the lifespan of those destined for immortal rank, and so dispatched ghost messengers to send us back. Your servant walked in front, my wife behind, and happily we returned to life. But I know not where my wife's soul has gone." The King of Tang asked in wonder: "Did the kings say anything of your wife?" Liu Quan said: "The kings said nothing; I only heard a ghost messenger say: 'Li Cuilian has been in the world of the dead a long while; her body no longer remains.' Then King Yama said: 'Li Yuying, the imperial sister of the Tang, is due to die before her time; let Cuilian borrow Yuying's body and return to life in it.' Your servant knows not what place this 'imperial sister of the Tang' means, or where her home may be—I have not yet gone to look for it."

Hearing this memorial, the King of Tang was filled with delight, and said to his assembled ministers: "When I parted from the kings of darkness, I asked about the palace, and they said the old and young were all well—only they feared the princess's life would be cut short. Just now my sister Yuying fell dead beneath the flower shade; I hastened to raise and look at her, and in a moment she revived, crying, 'Husband, walk slowly—wait for me!' I took it for raving after her fall. But when I questioned her closely, all she said matched Liu Quan's account word for word."

Wei Zheng memorialized: "The princess's span happened to run out; as soon as she revived she spoke these words. This is a case of a soul returning to life in a borrowed body. Such things do happen. We may ask the princess to come out and see what she has to say." The King of Tang said: "I have already sent the physicians to administer medicine; I know not how she fares." Then he ordered consorts and ladies to go into the palace and invite her.

That princess was shouting and railing inside: "What medicine would I take! This is not my home! My home has cool, clean tiled roofs, not these jaundiced yellow-glazed halls, not these gaudy, flaunting doors! Let me out! Let me out!"

[Translator's note: the peasant woman's eye sees the palace's yellow-glazed tiles as the complexion of a man with jaundice.]

Even as she railed, four or five women officials and two or three eunuchs came supporting her, all the way up to the hall.

The King of Tang said: "Do you recognize your husband?"

Yuying said: "What talk is that? We two have been wedded husband and wife since youth; I have borne him sons and daughters—how could I not know him?" The King of Tang ordered the inner officials to lead her down.

The princess came down from the treasure hall, walked straight to the white-jade steps, and seeing Liu Quan, seized him with both hands: "Husband! Where are you off to, that you would not wait for me! I stumbled once, and then these unreasonable people crowded round me shouting—what is the meaning of this!"

Liu Quan heard her speak with the very words of his wife, yet saw a face that was not his wife's, and dared not acknowledge her.

The King of Tang said: "Truly, 'When mountains crumble and the earth splits, there are those who see it; but seizing the living to die in another's stead—rarely is such a thing met!'"

What a sovereign of the Way he was! He at once bestowed upon Liu Quan the princess's dowry, clothing, and jewelry, all of it, as though it were her wedding portion, and further granted him an imperial rescript exempting his household forever from corvée labor, ordering him to take his wife home. The husband and wife gave thanks before the steps, joyful beyond measure, and returned to their native place. There is a poem in proof:

The lives of men, the deaths of men, are fates foretold; Short or long, each has his destined span of years. Liu Quan bore melons and returned to the world of light; Li Cuilian borrowed a corpse and lived again.

The two of them took leave of the sovereign and went straight to the city of Junzhou, where they found their old home, property, and children all well, and there the couple went about proclaiming the fruits of goodness—but of this no more.

Now Duke Yuchi Gong had carried a storehouse of gold and silver to Kaifeng Prefecture in Henan to seek out Xiang Liang. It turned out that Xiang Liang made his living selling water, and together with his wife, née Zhang, peddled black basins and earthenware before their gate. Whatever little money they earned sufficed them for daily needs; of whatever remained, more or less, they gave alms to monks, made charitable gifts, and bought paper gold and silver ingots, which, recorded in the storehouses of the Underworld, they burned. And so this blessed fruit had come to them: in the world of light they were a poor but most charitable couple; in the world to come, elders amid heaped jade and piled gold.

When Duke Yuchi delivered the gold and silver to their door, the old couple were frightened out of their wits; and since officials of the prefecture had come too, with carriages and horses thronging outside their thatched cottage, the old pair stood dumb as posts, kneeling on the ground and doing nothing but kowtow and bow in worship.

Duke Yuchi said: "Rise, good elders. Though I am an officer bearing the imperial mandate, I have come to return my sovereign's gold and silver to you."

They answered trembling: "This humble one has never lent out any gold or silver; how could we dare accept wealth of such unexplained source?" Duke Yuchi said: "I have learned indeed that you are a poor man; but you have given alms to monks and made offerings with all you could spare, buying paper gold and silver to be burned and recorded in the Department of Darkness, and there your stored-up money lies. Our Emperor Taizong died and returned to life after three days, and in the Underworld borrowed from you one storehouse of gold and silver. Now it is brought back to you to the last coin. Pray take it all in, that I may return and report the command fulfilled." But the old couple only bowed toward heaven, not daring to accept.

They said: "If we humble ones accepted this gold and silver, it would only hasten our deaths. Though we burned paper to be stored in the treasury, that is a matter of the unseen world; and if His Majesty borrowed gold and silver in the world to come, what proof is there? We absolutely dare not accept it."

Duke Yuchi said: "His Majesty says the loan of your goods was witnessed by Judge Cui as surety. Do take it." Xiang Liang said: "Even if we died for it, we would not dare accept." Seeing them refuse so stubbornly, the duke had no choice but to write a memorial and dispatch a courier to report to the throne. When Taizong read the memorial and learned that Xiang Liang would not take the gold and silver, he said:

"Truly a kind and virtuous elder!"

He at once sent down a rescript instructing Hu Jingde to use the gold and silver on his behalf to build and repair temples and monasteries, to erect a shrine to the living couple, and to invite monks to perform good works—this to count as repayment. When the rescript arrived, Jingde faced the palace and gave thanks for

the grace, and the command was proclaimed for all to know. He then used the gold and silver to buy a plot of unencumbered land in the city, belonging to soldiers and civilians alike, a full fifty mu square, and on it began work, raising a monastery named "The Xiangguo Monastery, Built by Imperial Command."

At its left stood the living shrine of Elder Xiang and his wife, with stone tablets engraved bearing the words "Built under the supervision of Duke Yuchi." This is the Great Xiangguo Monastery of today.

When the work was done, he returned and memorialized, and Taizong was greatly pleased. Then he assembled his ministers once more and posted a proclamation inviting monks, to hold a Mass of Land and Water, delivering the lonely souls of the nether world. The proclamation went through the realm, ordering the officials of every place to recommend monks of the Way of high virtue, to come to Chang'an for the assembly. Scarcely a month had passed before monks from all over the realm had arrived. The King of Tang gave orders to Fu Yi, Assistant Grand Astrologer, to choose monks of high virtue to conduct the Buddhist services. When Fu Yi received the command, he at once submitted a memorial denouncing Buddhism, declaring that there is no Buddha. His memorial read:

"The law of the Western Regions knows no ruler or minister, father or son; by its three paths and six ways of rebirth it deludes the ignorant and stupid. It pursues the sins of the past and peers after blessings to come, while its mouth chants Sanskrit words to scheme for escape. But life and death, long life and early death, are rooted in nature itself; punishment and favor, awe and blessing, rest with the sovereign of men. Today I hear that vulgar impostors falsely ascribe all these things to the Buddha. Since the Five Emperors and Three Kings there was no Buddha-dharma, yet rulers were enlightened and ministers loyal, and the dynasties endured long. Only in the reign of Emperor Ming of Han was the foreign god first set up—yet it was only monks of the Western Regions transmitting their own teaching. Truly it is the barbarian encroaching upon China, and unworthy of credence."

When Taizong had read it, he cast the memorial down for his ministers to debate.

Then the chancellor Xiao Yu came out from the ranks, bowed low, and memorialized: "The Buddha-dharma has flourished through many reigns; it spreads goodness and checks evil, secretly aiding the state; by reason it must not be cast away. The Buddha is a sage. To slander the sage is lawlessness; I beg that severe punishment be decreed for it."

Fu Yi debated with Xiao Yu, saying that ritual propriety is rooted in serving one's parents and one's sovereign, yet the Buddha turned his back on his parents to leave the household, setting a common man against the Son of Heaven, and a successor against those most akin to him. Xiao Yu, said he, was not born from a hollow mulberry trunk, yet he follows a teaching without a father—this is precisely what is meant by "the unfilial acknowledge no kin."

Xiao Yu could only press his palms together and say: "The hells were established for the sake of just such men."

Taizong then summoned Zhang Daoyuan, Minister of the Imperial Stud, and Zhang Shiheng, Director of the Secretariat, and asked them how it stood with Buddhist services and the winning of blessing.

The two ministers replied: "The Buddha's essence lies in purity, benevolence, and forgiveness; the fruit of Buddhahood is true emptiness. Emperor Wu of Zhou ranked the Three Teachings in order: the Chan Master Dahui left praises of the far and hidden world; through successive generations the offerings made to him were all manifest; the Fifth Patriarch entered the womb; Bodhidharma displayed his image. From antiquity, all have said that the Three Teachings are most venerable and must not be destroyed or abolished. We prostrate ourselves and beg Your Majesty's sagely discernment and clear judgment."

Taizong was greatly pleased. "What you say accords with reason. Whoever argues further shall be held guilty." He then ordered Wei Zheng together with Xiao Yu and Zhang Daoyuan to invite the monks and choose one man of great virtue and conduct to be master of the altar, and to establish the place of the Way. All knocked their heads in thanks for the grace and withdrew. From that time a law was promulgated: whoever reviled monks or slandered the Buddha should have his arm severed.

The next day the three court ministers gathered the monks at the Altar of Mountains and Rivers and examined and chose them one by one from the start. From among them they selected one monk of virtue and discipline. Who do you suppose he was?

His numinous penetration was his nature; in former life he bore the name Golden Cicada. Only because he listened absent-mindedly to the Buddha's discourse Was he cast down to the dust of the world to suffer grinding trials, Born into the common life to meet the snare of the world. At birth misfortune met him; before his birth, wicked kin drew near. His father was Chen, the Number One Scholar of Haizhou; His grandfather the superintendent-general of the reigning court. His horoscope was ruled by the star of falling into rivers, As he drifted down the current, borne on wave after wave. A great destiny bound him to Gold Mountain in the sea isles, Where the abbot Qian'an took and reared him. At eighteen he came to know his mother, And journeyed to the capital to seek his grandfather.

The general marched with his great host to punish the rebels, Destroying the wicked band at Hongzhou. Scholar Guangrui escaped the net of Heaven, And father and son met again—well worth the telling! Received anew in audience, he enjoyed his sovereign's grace, His worthy name resounding on the Gallery of Misty Vapor. The favored officer would not serve; he chose the monk's life, And at Hongfu Monastery sought out the Way. His infant name was River Float, a child of the ancient Buddha; His name in religion was Chen Xuanzang.

That day they set Xuanzang before the assembly as the choice. This man had been a monk from childhood; from his mother's womb he had kept the fast and observed the commandments. His maternal grandfather was Yin Kaishan, superintendent-general at the reigning court. His father, Chen Guangrui, had taken first place in the examination and been appointed Grand Academician of the Wenyuan Hall. Xuanzang himself set no store by glory and splendor, delighting only in cultivation and quietude. They found his origins were good and his virtue high: of the thousand classics and ten thousand canons there was none he had not mastered, of Buddhist chants and immortal strains there was none he could not perform.

The three ministers led him before the throne, where he bowed with dancing sleeves and scattered dust.

When the bows were done they memorialized: "Your servants Yu and the others, by your sage command, have chosen one monk of high virtue, Chen Xuanzang."

Hearing the name, Taizong pondered long in silence. "Is this the Xuanzang, son of the Academician Chen Guangrui?" River Float kowtowed and said: "Your servant is he." Taizong said with pleasure: "The choice is indeed not mistaken. Truly a monk of virtue and discipline, of Chan heart. I appoint you Left Overseer of Monks, Right Overseer of Monks, and Great Proclaimer of the Faith for All the Realm." Xuanzang knocked his head in thanks for the grace and accepted the office of Great Proclaimer. There was also bestowed on him a cassock of brocade woven with gold in five colors, and a Pilu cap.

He was instructed to seek instruction once more from enlightened monks with a devoted heart, to rank the masters and leaders of the assembly in order, to draw up the rescript, and to go to the Huasheng Monastery, there to choose an auspicious day and hour to open and expound the sutras and the Law.

Xuanzang bowed again, received the command, and went out; and so he came to the Huasheng Monastery, where he gathered the monks, built meditation couches, adorned the place of merit, and arranged the sacred music. He chose one thousand two hundred enlightened monks, great and small, and assigned them to upper,

middle, and lower halls. Before every Buddha image all appointments were complete, everything in order. The date selected was the third day of the ninth month of that year, a lucky hour on the yellow path, when they would open the forty-nine-day Mass of Land and Water, seven sevens of days.

A memorial was submitted to the throne, and Taizong together with his civil and military ministers, imperial kin, and royal in-laws all came on the day to attend the assembly, burning incense and listening to the exposition. There is a poem in proof:

The dragon year, Zhenguan's thirteenth, The sovereign summons the multitude to discourse upon the scriptures. The place of the Way unfolds the boundless Law, Cloud and mist bear the altar of the great vow. Imperial favor, bestowed, raises the lofty temple; The Golden Cicada sheds his shell, transformed toward the Western meaning. Good fruit is spread universally, the sunken souls delivered; The teaching is proclaimed, before and after, thrice.

In the thirteenth year of Zhenguan, the year jisi, ninth month, day jiaxu, the third day, at the auspicious hour guimao, the Great Proclaimer of the Faith Chen Xuanzang gathered one thousand two hundred monks of high virtue, all in the Huasheng Monastery of Chang'an, to expound the wondrous sutras of every chapter. The emperor, his morning audience concluded, led his civil and military ministers in phoenix carriage and dragon chariot, left the golden chime hall, and came straight to the monastery to offer incense. What was that imperial procession like? Truly:

A sky full of auspicious air, ten thousand rays of felicitous light. The wind of benevolence gently drifting; the transforming sun shining wondrously bright. A thousand officials, jade pendants sounding, ranged before and behind; Five guards with banners and flags arrayed on either side. Bearing golden melons, holding axes and halberds, pair upon pair; Crimson candles and imperial censers, misty and majestic. Dragons flying and phoenixes dancing; ospreys recommended, hawks in glory. The sage Son of Heaven, upright; the loyal and righteous ministers, worthy. Boundless blessing for a thousand years, surpassing Shun and Yu; Peace for ten thousand generations, outdoing Yao and Tang.

And see the curved-handled canopy, the dragon-coiled robe, their radiance shooting one against the other; the jade-linked rings, the phoenix fans of many colors, auspicious mists floating and streaming. Pearl crowns and jade girdles, purple ribbons and golden seals. A thousand companies of guards escorting the imperial carriage, two files of generals supporting the imperial conveyance. This emperor, bathed in reverence and devotion, honored the Buddha; taking refuge in the fruit of goodness, he joyfully offered his incense.

The great cortege of the King of Tang soon arrived before the monastery. He ordered the music and instruments stopped, descended from his carriage, and led his ministers to bow to the Buddha and offer incense. When the three circuits were done, he raised his head to look: truly a fine place of the Way. Just look:

Banners dancing and floating, precious canopies flying their radiance. Banners dancing and floating—shaft upon shaft of rainbow cloud shaking the sky; Canopies flying their radiance—flap upon flap of red lightning flashing in the sun. The golden visage of the World-Honored One, most solemn; The jade faces of the arhats, fierce in their majesty. Vases holding immortal flowers; censers burning sandalwood and aloe. Vases holding immortal flowers—brocade trees gleaming over the precious shrine; Censers burning sandalwood and aloe—clouds of incense piercing the clear heavens. Fresh fruits of the season piled on vermilion plates; Sugar delicacies of strange fashion heaped on lacquered tables.

Monks of high virtue ranged in order chant the true scriptures, Vowing to draw the lonely souls up out of their suffering.

Taizong and his ministers all offered incense, bowed to the golden body of the Buddha, and paid reverence to the arhats. Then they saw the Great Proclaimer, the master Chen Xuanzang, lead the monks in bowing to the

King of Tang. When the courtesies were finished, all took their meditation seats in their ranks. The master presented to Taizong the proclamation for the deliverance of lonely souls, which read:

"Supreme virtue is boundless and dim; the Chan school is quietude and extinction. Pure and clean and numinous, it flows everywhere through the Three Worlds; through a thousand changes and ten thousand transformations it governs yin and yang. Its substance and function are true and constant, without end or limit. Behold these lonely souls—most fitting is it to pity them deeply. Now, in obedience to the sage command of Taizong, monks have been assembled to sit in Chan and expound the Law. We fling wide the gates of skillful means, ply the ferry of mercy far and wide, deliver the multitudes in the sea of suffering, and free them from the stubborn maladies of the Six Paths. We lead them back to the true road, that all may gaze upon primordial chaos. Motion and rest are uncontrived; we return to pure simplicity. Relying on this good cause, may they be invited to the crimson towers of the pure capital; borne upon this auspicious assembly, may they escape the cage of hell, soon mount to the joy of the Pure Land and wander free, coming and going in the Western Heaven at their ease."

The poem says:

One censer of evergreen longevity incense; Several scrolls of the registers of rebirth. The boundless wondrous Law is proclaimed; The shoreless grace of Heaven is bathed in. Grievances and sins are all washed away; The lonely souls all leave their prisons. May they guard our realm and homes In peace and blessing for ten thousand years.

Taizong read it, and his heart was full of joy. He said to the assembled monks: "Let your hearts be set in crimson sincerity; by no means slacken in the service of the Buddha. When the work is completed, blessing will come to each of you, and I shall richly reward you—your labor shall not be in vain." The one thousand two hundred monks all knocked their heads in thanks. That day, when the three fasts were ended, the King of Tang returned to his palace. On the seventh day, the central day of the assembly, he would come again to offer incense. By then the sky was darkening, and all the officials withdrew. How fine was that evening? Just look:

Ten thousand li of empty sky, the fading light grown pale; A few dots of homing crows drift slowly down to roost. Lamps are lit through all the city; hearth-smoke and voices still— Just the hour when the Chan monks enter into meditation.

One night's evening scene passes without further word. The next morning the master mounted his seat once more and gathered the monks to chant the scriptures—but no more of this.

Now the Bodhisattva Guanyin of Potaraka Mountain in the Southern Sea, having received the Tathagata's command, had long been searching the city of Chang'an for the good man who would seek the scriptures, but day after day she had met no one of true virtue and discipline.

Suddenly she heard that Taizong was proclaiming the fruits of goodness, choosing monks of high virtue, and holding the great assembly; and she saw that the master of the altar was the monk River Float—a Buddha-son descended from the Land of Bliss, and moreover the elder whom she herself had guided and sent into his mother's womb. The Bodhisattva was overjoyed. She took the treasures bestowed by the Buddha, bore them out onto the long streets, and set up a stall with her disciple Mucha to sell them. And what treasures were they? A cassock of brocade, a rare and precious thing, and a nine-ringed tin staff.

There were also the three fillets of gold, tightening, and forbidding, which she stored away in secret for use hereafter; only the cassock and the staff did she put up for sale. In the city of Chang'an there were foolish monks who had failed of selection, and who yet had a few coppers to rattle.

Seeing this Bodhisattva transformed into the likeness of a scabby, scurfy beggar, wearing a tattered patched robe, barefoot and bareheaded, holding the cassock, which glowed resplendent, they came forward and asked: "Hey, scabby monk, how much do you want for that cassock?"

The Bodhisattva said: "The cassock is worth five thousand taels; the staff is worth two thousand." The foolish monks laughed: "These two scabby monks are madmen! Idiots! These two crude objects, and they ask seven thousand taels of silver! Even if putting them on made you live forever without growing old, even if it made you a Buddha or a patriarch, it wouldn't be worth half so much! Take them away! You'll never sell them!" The Bodhisattva did not quarrel, but walked on with Mucha.

After walking a good while, they came before the Donghua Gate, just as the chancellor Xiao Yu was returning from court, his outriders shouting the streets clear. The Bodhisattva made no move to avoid them, but stood in the middle of the street holding the cassock, directly facing the chancellor's approach. The chancellor reined in his horse to look, and seeing the cassock glow resplendent, ordered his attendants to ask the seller's price.

The Bodhisattva said: "The cassock costs five thousand taels; the staff two thousand."

Xiao Yu said: "What merits has it, to be worth such a price?" The Bodhisattva said: "The cassock has merits and demerits; there are those who must pay for it, and those who need not." Xiao Yu said: "What do you mean by merit and demerit?" The Bodhisattva said: "Whoever wears my cassock will not sink into the waves, will not fall into hell, will not suffer the peril of venomous harm, will not meet disaster from tigers and wolves—that is its merit. But the lecherous, evil-doing, foolish monk, the priest who keeps neither fast nor commandments, the worldling who reviles the scriptures and slanders the Buddha—such men may never so much as look upon my cassock: that is its demerit." He asked further: "And what do you mean by paying and not paying?" The Bodhisattva said: "If one who does not follow the Buddha's Law, does not revere the Three Treasures, insists on buying the cassock and staff, then I will certainly sell them to him for seven thousand taels—that is paying. But if one reveres the Three Treasures, rejoices at the sight of goodness, takes refuge in my Buddha, and is worthy to bear them, then I will gladly give him cassock and staff, to tie a bond of goodness between us—that is not paying." Hearing this, Xiao Yu's face brightened the more, and he knew her for a good person.

At once he dismounted and saluted the Bodhisattva with full courtesy.

Saying: "Elder of the Great Law, forgive the offense of me, Xiao Yu. Our Emperor of the Great Tang is exceedingly devoted to goodness, and the whole court, civil and military, follows his example. He is now holding the Mass of Land and Water, and this cassock is just the thing for the Great Proclaimer of the Faith, the master Chen Xuanzang, to wear. Come with me to court and see the sovereign."

The Bodhisattva gladly complied, turned her steps, and went straight in through the Donghua Gate. The Yellow Gate officials reported, and by imperial command she was brought to the treasure hall.

The two stood at the foot of the steps, and the King of Tang asked: "What business brings Xiao Yu to memorialize?" Xiao Yu prostrated himself before the steps: "As your servant came out the Donghua Gate, I chanced upon two monks, sellers of a cassock and a tin staff. It occurred to me that Master Xuanzang might wear them, and so I have brought the monks to appear before you." Taizong was greatly pleased and asked the price of the cassock.

The Bodhisattva and Mucha stood attending at the foot of the steps and made no bow; asked the price of the cassock, they answered: "The cassock five thousand taels; the staff two thousand."

Taizong said: "What merits has this cassock, to be worth so much?" The Bodhisattva said:

"This cassock—if a dragon wear but one thread of it, he escapes the calamity of being swallowed by the great peng bird; if a crane hang but a strand of it upon him, he attains the marvel of transcending the common and entering sainthood. Wherever its wearer sits, ten thousand spirits come to pay homage; in every movement, seven Buddhas attend his body.

"This cassock was woven of silk drawn from the ice silkworm, its threads twined by cunning craftsmen. Immortal maidens spun it; divine women worked the loom. Square upon square of gathered cloth, embroidered and sewn with flowers; piece joined to piece, piled with brocade. Dainty fragments of flowers vie in ornament; bright colors gleam and breathe their precious radiance. Put it on, and red mist winds about the whole body; take it off, and a length of rainbow cloud flies away. Before the gates of the Three Heavens it sheds primal light; before the mountains of the Five Peaks it breeds precious vapor. Fold within fold, Western lotus flowers inlaid; bright upon bright, pearls hanging like the constellations.

"At its four corners are night-shining pearls; at its gathered crown a single emerald. Though it has not full power to light one's original body, still it glitters with rays from Eight Treasures set in it.

"This cassock is folded away in idle hours and worn only when a sage is met. Folded away in idle hours—through a thousand wrappings it shows the rainbow's sheen; worn only when a sage is met—it startles the gods and ghosts of all the heavens. Upon it are the As-You-Will pearl, the mani pearl, the dust-dispelling pearl, the wind-fixing pearl; there too are red agate, purple coral, night-shining pearls, and ■ar■ra relics. It steals the moon's white and vies with the sun's red. Every strand brims with immortal air filling the sky; every bud of auspicious light bears up the sage. Strands of immortal air filling the sky light up the passes of Heaven; buds of auspicious light bearing the sage shade the whole world. It shines on mountains and rivers, startling tigers and leopards; it shades sea islands, stirring fish and dragons. Along its borders run two gold-locked bands; at its clasping collar hang linked rings of white jade."

The poem says:

Most majestic are the Three Treasures, and the Way deserves all honor; The four births and six paths are all judged and set in order. A clarified mind knows how to nourish the law of men and gods; Seeing one's nature, one can hand down the lamp of wisdom. Solemn in defense of the body, a world of gold; Pure in body and mind, ice in the jade pot. Since the Buddha first made the cassock, Through ten thousand kalpas, who has dared cut off a monk?

Hearing this in the treasure hall, the King of Tang was greatly delighted. He asked again: "And what merits has your nine-ringed staff, monk?" The Bodhisattva said: "This tin staff of mine—

With copper inlaid and iron wrought, nine linked rings; Nine joints of immortal vine, forever holding youth. Taken in hand, one wearies of looking at lean bones of blue; Carried down the mountain, one lightly brings white clouds home. Mahakasyapa, the Fifth Patriarch, wandered the courts of Heaven; Rahula sought his mother and broke through the gates of earth. Unstained by the least defilement of the red dust, It joyfully attends a monk of spirit up the jade mountain."

Hearing this, the King of Tang at once ordered the cassock spread out, and examined it closely from end to end: truly a fine thing.

He said: "Elder of the Great Law, I will hide nothing from you. I am now flinging wide the teaching of goodness, planting broadly the fields of blessing. At this moment in the Huasheng Monastery a great company of monks is assembled, expounding the sutras and the Law, and among them is one man of great virtue and discipline, whose name in religion is Xuanzang. I will buy these two treasures of yours and bestow them on him for his use. What price do you truly ask?"

When the Bodhisattva heard this, she and Mucha pressed their palms together in reverence, pronounced the Buddha's name, bowed, and said: "Since he is a man of virtue and discipline, this poor monk will gladly give them to him, and will certainly ask no money." With that, she turned to go.

The King of Tang hastily bade Xiao Yu hold her back, and rising from his seat stood in the hall and asked: "You first said the cassock was five thousand taels and the staff two thousand. Now, seeing that I would buy, you ask nothing. Do you mean to suggest that I, trusting to my imperial station, would force your treasure from you? There is no such reason. I will pay you the price you first named—you must not refuse."

The Bodhisattva raised her hands and said: "This poor monk made a vow beforehand: if there were indeed one who revered the Three Treasures, rejoiced at goodness, and took refuge in my Buddha, I would ask no money, but gladly give them to him. Now I see Your Majesty's enlightened virtue resting in goodness, honoring the gate of my Buddha; and since, moreover, there is a monk of virtue and discipline to proclaim the Great Law, it is right that I offer them. I will certainly take no money. This poor monk asks leave to leave these things behind and withdraw." Seeing her so earnest, the King of Tang was greatly pleased, and at once ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments to spread a great vegetarian banquet in thanks.

The Bodhisattva again firmly declined and would not stay, but departed in high serenity. As before, she went into hiding in the shrine of the city's local earth god—but of this no more.

Now Taizong held his noon court and sent Wei Zheng bearing a rescript to summon Xuanzang to the palace. The master was just then gathering the monks and mounting the altar, reciting sutras and chanting gathas. The moment the command arrived, he came down from the altar, straightened his robes, and went with Wei Zheng to see the sovereign.

Taizong said: "In seeking to fulfill this good work I have given you much trouble, Master, and have nothing with which to repay you. This morning Xiao Yu met two monks who wished to present a cassock of brocade, a rare treasure, and a nine-ringed tin staff. I have now summoned you, Master, to receive them for your use."

Xuanzang knocked his head in thanks for the grace.

Taizong said: "If you do not disdain it, Master, put it on and let me see you."

The elder shook out the cassock and draped it over his body, took the tin staff in his hand, and stood attending before the steps. Sovereign and ministers alike gazed with delight. Truly a son of the Tathagata Buddha! Just look at him:

Solemn and majestic of face, yet elegant and refined; The Buddha-robe fits his body as though tailored for him. Its radiant splendor fills the universe; Its knotted colors congeal through all creation. Bright pearls arrayed in ranks above and below; Layer upon layer of golden thread woven through before and behind. Dourak silk borders all four sides; Ten thousand rarities spread in brocade and embroidery. Flowers of the Eight Treasures bind the frogged buttons; A golden ring confines the collar, clasping the velvet loop. Buddhas and devas, great and small, ranged high and low; Stars and constellations, honored and humble, ordered left and right. Master Xuanzang has destiny indeed, And this thing before him he is fit to receive.

Just like a living arhat from the Land of Bliss, Surpassing the true enlightenment of the Western Paradise. The tin staff rings its nine clashing rings; The Pilu cap reflects a face ample and serene. Truly a Buddha-son, no empty name— Better than Bodhi, without deceit or error.

The civil and military officials shouted applause before the steps, and Taizong's delight was boundless. He ordered the master to wear the cassock and carry the precious staff, gave him two companies of escorts, and had his ministers conduct him out the court gates, to walk the great streets back to his monastery, just like a new Number One Scholar parading his honors. As he went, Xuanzang bowed again in thanks for the grace, and down the great streets he went, in a blaze of glory, swaying and strutting.

And look: throughout the city of Chang'an, traveling merchants and shopkeepers, young lords and royal scions, scholars of ink and men of letters, grown men and little maids, everyone struggled for a look and vied in praise, all saying: "What a master! Truly a living arhat descended, a living Bodhisattva come to the world!"

Xuanzang came at last to the monastery, and the monks descended from their couches to greet him. The moment they saw him draped in that cassock and bearing that tin staff, they all said Kshitigarbha, the King of the Underworld, had come, and each took refuge and attended at his left and right. Xuanzang ascended the hall, lit incense and worshiped the Buddha, recounted the imperial grace to the assembly in gratitude, and then each returned to his meditation seat. And before they knew it, the red wheel of the sun was sinking in the west. Truly:

The sun goes down; mist veils the grass and trees; In the imperial capital, bells and drums first sound. Three clangs, and the streets are cleared of passersby; Before and behind, the lanes fall still. In the great temple, lamps shine gloriously; In the lonely village, cold and hushed, no sound at all. The Chan monk, entering meditation, ponders the lingering sutras— Just the hour to refine the demons and nourish the nature.

Time passed between finger and thumb, and the seventh day, the central day of the assembly, arrived. Xuanzang submitted a memorial inviting the King of Tang to offer incense. By now the sound of goodness filled the whole realm. Taizong ordered out his cortege and led his civil and military ministers, his empress and consorts, and the imperial kindred, hastening early to the monastery. And the whole city's people, without distinction of rank or age, came to the monastery to hear the exposition.

Then the Bodhisattva said to Mucha: "Today is the central day of the Mass of Land and Water, the first seven days following upon the seven sevens; it may be reckoned complete. Let us two mingle in the crowd: first, to see how their assembly goes; second, to see whether the Golden Cicada has the fortune to wear my treasure; and third, to hear which school of scriptures he expounds."

The two went at once to the monastery. Truly: those with destiny meet their old acquaintance; prajna returns at last to its own place of the Way. Entering the monastery and gazing about—truly a great kingdom of a celestial dynasty, surpassing the Saha world, outdoing the Jetavana grove and Shravasti, no whit inferior to the great monasteries. A stream of immortal music rang out; Buddhist chants filled the air with din. The Bodhisattva went straight to the side of the Many Treasures Terrace, and there indeed was the aspect of the wise Golden Cicada.

The poem says:

All things limpid-bright, beyond a speck of dust; The master Xuanzang sits upon the high throne. The lonely souls delivered come unseen; The noble hearers of the Law come up from the market. Gifts bestowed as each requires—the mind's road far; Birth transcended at will—the hidden gate swings wide. Face to face he expounds the boundless Law, And old and young, every soul, unbosom joy.

Another poem says:

Wandering through the Dharma realm, the hall of exposition, I met a friend of old, no common man. We spoke of the thousand matters before our eyes, And talked of merit through the kalpas of dust. Clouds of the Law trail freely over all the peaks; The net of teaching spreads through the whole sky. Reviewing human life, one turns to thoughts of good, As heaven rains down red petals, falling, falling.

On that terrace the master chanted a while from the Sutra of Receiving Life and Delivering the Dead, discoursed a while from the Talisman of Guarding the Realm and Heavenly Treasure, and proclaimed a while from the Scroll Exhorting Meritorious Works.

Then the Bodhisattva drew near, struck the treasure terrace with her hand, and cried out in a loud stern voice: " Monk! You can only expound the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle—can you expound the Greater?"

Hearing this, Xuanzang's heart leapt with joy. He turned and sprang down from the terrace, raised his hands to the Bodhisattva and said: "Reverend master, your disciple has failed to look up to you—pardon my offense. The assembled monks here all teach only the doctrine of the Lesser Vehicle; I know not what the Greater Vehicle teaching may be." The Bodhisattva said: "This Lesser Vehicle doctrine of yours cannot deliver the dead to rise on high—it serves only to blur into the common world and glimmer along with its light. I have the Greater Vehicle Buddhadharma of the Tripitaka, which can raise the dead to heaven, deliver those in suffering from misery, cultivate the body of boundless long life, and bring about the state of neither coming nor going."

Even as they spoke, the incense-wardens and hall-patrolling officers hurried to report to the King of Tang: "As the master was expounding the wondrous Law, two scabby vagrant monks dragged him down from the terrace to babble wild nonsense."

The king ordered them seized, and soon a crowd of people came pushing and shoving the two monks into the inner dharma hall.

When they stood before Taizong, the monks did not raise their hands in salutation, did not bow, but lifted their faces and said: "What does Your Majesty wish of us?" The King of Tang recognized them: "Are you not the monks who presented the cassock?" The Bodhisattva said: "We are." Taizong said: "Since you have come here to hear the exposition, you should simply have taken some vegetarian food; why did you babel wildly at my master, disturbing the sutra hall and obstructing my service to the Buddha?" The Bodhisattva said: "That master of yours expounds only the Lesser Vehicle doctrine, which cannot deliver the dead to heaven. I have the Greater Vehicle Buddhadharma of the Tripitaka, which can deliver the dead from suffering and make the body incorruptible and immortal." Taizong, with grave face but glad heart, asked: "Where is this Greater Vehicle Buddhadharma of yours?" The Bodhisattva said: "In the Great Thunderclap Monastery of my Lord the Tathagata, in the land of India in the far West of the West. It can untie the knots of a hundred grievances and dispel unwarranted calamities." Taizong said: "Do you remember it?" The Bodhisattva said: "I remember it." Taizong said with great joy: "Let the master be guided there—pray mount the terrace and expound it."

Then the Bodhisattva, leading Mucha, flew up to the high terrace, trod the auspicious clouds, rose straight to the ninth heaven, and revealed her true body as the Reliever of Suffering, bearing in her hands the pure vase and the willow branch. At her left stood Mucha Hui'an, gripping his iron rod, his spirit shaking itself into readiness. Overjoyed, the King of Tang bowed toward heaven in worship, and the civil and military ministers knelt on the ground burning incense. Throughout the monastery—monks and nuns, Daoists and laymen, scholars and artisans and merchants—there was not one who did not bow and pray: "A blessed Bodhisattva! A blessed Bodhisattva!" There are verses in testimony. Just look:

Auspicious mists scattered in rainbow showers, Felicitous light guarding the Dharma body. In the flowered River of Heaven of the ninth heaven Appeared the true one, in woman's form. That Bodhisattva— On her head a crown of golden leaves and knots, spread with kingfisher flowers, shooting golden rays, breathing keen radiance, hung with pearl-strand pendants; On her body a robe of pale, light hue, faintly adorned, coiled with golden dragons and flying with many-colored phoenixes, of plain blue silk; On her breast a pendant of fragrant rings bright as the moon, dancing in the pure wind, set with precious pearls and massed kingfisher jade; Round her waist a skirt of brocade velvet, silk of the ice silkworm, edged with woven gold, treading rainbow clouds, hastening the jade sea; Before her, attending, a white parrot, yellow of plume and red of beak, that flew over the Eastern Ocean and roamed the whole world, grateful and filial; In her hands the precious vase of grace bestowed and the world delivered, and in the vase a branch of weeping willow that

sprinkled the azure sky, scourged great wickedness, and swept away the lingering fog. Jade rings strung through embroidered clasps; Golden lotus deep-set beneath her feet. Permitted to come and go through the Three Heavens— This is she who relieves suffering and distress, Guanshiyin.

The joy of it made the Emperor Taizong forget his rivers and mountains; the love of it made the civil and military ministers forget their court courtesies; the assembled multitude all intoned "Homage to the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin!" Taizong at once gave command that a skilled painter should portray the true image of the Bodhisattva. At the word of command there was chosen Wu Daozi, a man of far-seeing vision, brilliant at portraying gods and painting sages. This was the very man who later painted the meritorious ministers in the Gallery of Misty Vapor. At that time he spread out his wondrous brush and drew her true form.

The Bodhisattva's auspicious cloud receded little by little, and in an instant the golden light was gone. Then from mid-air, whirling down, dropped a slip of paper bearing a few lines of verse, written plainly. The verse said:

"Respectfully to the sovereign of the Great Tang: In the West there are wondrous texts. The journey is 108,000 li— Diligently seek the Greater Vehicle. These scriptures, brought back to your honored land, Can lift the ghosts beyond the throng. If there be one who will undertake the quest, Let him seek the true fruit, the golden body."

When Taizong had seen the verse, he commanded the monks: "Suspend the blessed assembly for now. When I have sent to fetch the scriptures of the Greater Vehicle, we shall once more with crimson sincerity rebuild this work of goodness." All the officials obeyed without exception.

Then, there in the monastery, he asked: "Who is willing to bear my command and go to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures?"

Scarcely had he finished asking when the master stepped forth from the side, bowed before the throne, and said: "This poor monk, though lacking in talent, is willing to labor like dog or horse for Your Majesty, to seek and fetch the true scriptures, praying that my sovereign's rivers and mountains may stand forever firm." The King of Tang was overjoyed, stepped forward, and raised him up with his own imperial hands: "If you, Master, can indeed show such loyalty and worth, fearing neither the length of the road nor the toil of mountains and rivers, I am willing to swear brotherhood with you." Xuanzang knocked his head in thanks for the grace.

And the King of Tang was indeed a sovereign of utmost virtue: right there in the monastery before the Buddha he bowed four times to Xuanzang, addressing him as "Imperial Brother, Sage Monk."

Xuanzang thanked him beyond all measure: "Your Majesty, what virtue or talent has this poor monk, to be graced with such heavenly favor? On this journey I will certainly spend my strength to the point of laying down my life, until I reach the Western Heaven. If I do not reach the Western Heaven and obtain the true scriptures, I dare not return to this land even in death; may I sink forever into the crushing hells."

Then he offered incense before the Buddha and took this as his oath. Taizong was greatly pleased, ordered the imperial carriage to return, and said he would choose a lucky and favorable day to issue the travel rescript and set him forth; and thereupon the cortege returned and all dispersed.

Xuanzang also went back to the Hongfu Monastery. The monks of that monastery and several of his disciples had already heard of the quest for the scriptures, and all came to see him.

They asked: "Is it true you have sworn an oath to go to the Western Heaven?"

Xuanzang said: "It is true." His disciples said: "Master, we have heard it said that the road to the Western Heaven is long, and full of tigers, leopards, demons and monsters; we fear you may go and never return, and no power can save your life." Xuanzang said: "I have sworn the great oath: if I do not obtain the true scriptures, may I sink forever into the crushing hells. In the main, I have received the sovereign's grace and favor, and cannot but repay my country with utter loyalty. This journey of mine truly drifts dim and distant; fortune and misfortune cannot be foretold." He said further: "Disciples, after I am gone—whether three or two years, or five or seven—watch the pine branches at the monastery gate: when their tips turn east, I shall return. Until then, I shall most surely not come back." The disciples treasured these words in their hearts.

The next morning Taizong held court, assembled his civil and military ministers, wrote out the rescript for seeking the scriptures, and affixed the traveling seal of state.

The Director of Astronomy memorialized: "Today the star of the traveler's blessing is in conjunction—an auspicious star, well suited for a far journey."

The King of Tang was greatly pleased.

Then the Yellow Gate official announced: "The Imperial Brother, the Master, awaits your command outside the court gate."

He was at once summoned to the treasure hall, and the king said: "Imperial Brother, today is the lucky day for departure. Here is the travel rescript for passing the frontier. I also have a purple-gold alms bowl, which I give you to beg your food along the way. I have further chosen two attendants for the long road, and a dun horse to carry you, given as a mount for the far journey. You may set forth at once." Xuanzang was overjoyed, thanked him for the grace, received the gifts, and had no thought of lingering.

The King of Tang ordered out his cortege and with his ministers escorted him all the way beyond the frontier pass, where the monks of the Hongfu Monastery and his disciples, bearing Xuanzang's winter and summer clothes, were already waiting outside the pass. Seeing them, the king first ordered the luggage and horse seen to, and then bade an officer take the ewer and pour the wine.

Taizong raised the cup and asked: "By what honored style shall I call you, Imperial Brother?" Xuanzang said: "This poor monk has left the world; I have presumed to take no style." Taizong said: "The Bodhisattva said that in the Western Heaven there are scriptures in three divisions of the canon. Let your style be drawn from the scriptures: what say we call you Sanzang—'Tripitaka,' the Three Baskets?" Xuanzang bowed again in thanks, and received the imperial wine, saying: "Your Majesty, wine is the first prohibition of the monk's life; this poor monk, since taking human form, has never learned to drink." Taizong said: "Today's journey is a matter unlike any other. This is only unfermented temple wine; drink but this one cup, that my parting toast may be complete." Sanzang dared not refuse.

He took the wine and was about to drink, when Taizong bowed his head, picked up a pinch of dust with his imperial fingers, and flicked it into the wine. Sanzang did not understand his meaning.

Taizong laughed and said: "Imperial Brother, this journey to the Western Heaven—when will you return?"

Sanzang said: "In but three years I shall come straight back to the honored land." Taizong said: "The days are long and the years run deep; the mountains are far and the road is distant. Imperial Brother, drink this wine: better to cherish one pinch of the soil of your native land than to love ten thousand taels of gold in a strange country." Only then did Sanzang understand the meaning of the pinch of dust. He thanked him once more for his grace, drained the cup to the last drop, took his leave, went out the pass, and departed. The King of Tang returned to his palace.

But whether you would know how this journey fared—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 13

At the Tiger's Den the Gold Star Relieves Peril; At Double Fork Ridge Liu Boqin Detains the Monk

The poem says:

Great indeed is the King of Tang, who sent down his rescript of appointment, Dispatching Xuanzang to inquire of the Chan school. With firm heart, polished and ground, he seeks the dragon's den; With set purpose, cultivating, he climbs the Vulture Peak. To the far frontiers he travels—how many lands? Cloud-wrapped mountains before him, thousands upon thousands of folds. From this day he sets forth for the West, Holding the teaching, keeping the discipline, awakening to the Great Void.

Now Sanzang, on the third day before the full moon of the ninth month of the thirteenth year of Zhenguan, was escorted by the King of Tang and his ministers beyond the passes of Chang'an. For a day or two the horses never halted, and they soon came to the Famen Monastery. The abbot of the monastery and the elder of the upper chambers led out more than five hundred monks, who stood ranged on either side and received him within, where they greeted him and offered tea. After tea came the vegetarian meal, and after the meal, before anyone noticed, the sky had grown dark. Truly:

Star-shadows stir—the River of Stars draws near; The moon is bright, without a speck of dust. Wild geese cry across the distant sky; Fulling-mallets sound in the western neighbors' yards. Homing birds roost in withered trees; Chan monks intone the Sanskrit sounds. Upon the rush cushion of a single couch They sit until the night is nearly spent.

By lamplight the monks discussed the settled purpose of the Buddha's gate and the reason for the journey to the Western Heaven for the scriptures. Some spoke of the far waters and high mountains; some of the many tigers and leopards on the road; some said the sheer ridges and precipitous cliffs could hardly be crossed; others that the venomous demons and wicked monsters could hardly be subdued. Sanzang held his tongue and said nothing, only pointing with his finger to his own heart and nodding his head several times.

The monks could not make this out, and pressed their palms together, asking: "Master, why do you point at your heart and nod your head?"

Sanzang answered: "When the heart arises, all manner of demons arise; when the heart is extinguished, all manner of demons are extinguished. Your disciple swore a great oath before the Buddha at the Huasheng Monastery, and I cannot do otherwise than give this heart its utmost. On this journey I am determined to reach the Western Heaven, to see the Buddha and seek the scriptures, that the wheel of our Law may turn again, and I pray that the sacred sovereign's realm may stand forever firm." When the monks heard these words, every man extolled him and each spread his fame abroad, all crying with one voice: "A master of the great proclamation, loyal of heart and red of gall!" Their praise was endless, and they begged the master to retire to his couch and rest.

At dawn it was again the bamboo striking the waning moon as it set, and the cock crowing as morning clouds arose. The monks rose and prepared tea, water, and the morning meal.

Xuanzang then put on his cassock, went up to the main hall, and worshiped before the Buddha, saying: "Your disciple Chen Xuanzang goes to the Western Heaven to seek the scriptures, but my fleshly eyes are foolish and dim, and I cannot know the true form of the living Buddha. Now I vow before you: on this road, whenever I meet a temple I will burn incense; whenever I meet a Buddha I will worship the Buddha; whenever I meet a stupa I will sweep the stupa. I pray only that my Buddha, in his mercy, will soon show his golden body of sixteen feet, bestow the true scriptures, and let them be handed down in the Eastern Land."

When he had finished his prayer, he returned to the abbot's quarters for the fast. When the meal was done, the two attendants saddled the horses and pressed the journey forward. Sanzang went out the monastery gate and bade farewell to the monks, who could not bear the parting and escorted him a full ten li before returning, their eyes brimming with tears. Then Sanzang pressed straight on toward the west. It was the season of late autumn. Just look:

In several villages the trees shed their leaves and the reed-flowers shatter; From a few rows of maples and poplars the red leaves fall. On the road, mist and rain; old friends are few. The yellow chrysanthemums lovely, the mountain bones fine; The water cold, the lotuses broken, the travelers worn. White and red knotweed, frost-sky snow; The sunset cloud and the lone duck fall through the long sky. Dimly, darkly, the wild clouds fly. The black birds depart; the guest geese arrive, Their cries shrill and clear, shattering the night.

Master and disciples traveled for several days and came to the city of Gongzhou. The officials and functionaries of all Gongzhou were already there to welcome them into the city. After resting there a night, they set out again early the next morning. Hungry, they ate; thirsty, they drank; at night they lodged, at dawn they traveled. In two or three days more they reached the Hezhou Guard. This was the frontier of the rivers and mountains of the Great Tang.

The garrison general of the frontier and the local monks and Daoists had already heard that this was the sovereign's sworn brother the Master, bearing the imperial dispatch to see the Buddha in the West, and all received him with the utmost respect, taking him within and providing for him, while the overseer of monks invited him to lodge at the Fuyuan Monastery. The monks of the monastery came one by one to pay their respects, and arranged the evening meal. When the fast was done, he instructed the two attendants to feed the horses well, for they would set out before daybreak. When the cock first crowed, he called his attendants—thereby rousing the monastery monks, who prepared tea, broth, and food for the fast. When the meal was over, he left the frontier behind.

The elder was anxious at heart and had risen far too early. For this was deep autumn, when the cocks crow early, and it could only have been the fourth watch. The party of three, with the horse making four, breasting the clear frost and by the light of the bright moon, had traveled some tens of li when they saw a mountain ridge ahead. They could only push through the grass in search of a path—too rugged to describe, and all the while they feared they had lost the way. Just as they were hesitating, they suddenly stumbled, and all three, horse and men, tumbled into a pit.

Sanzang's heart panicked; the attendants' galls quaked.

Scarcely had their terror seized them than they heard from within a roaring and a loud calling: "Seize them! Seize them!"

A howling wind rolled out, and fifty or sixty demons surged forth, dragging Sanzang and his attendants up out of the pit. Trembling and quaking, the master stole a glance at the demon king enthroned above—a creature of the utmost ferocity. Truly:

Majestic and mighty his body, fierce and imposing his face. His lightning eyes dart shooting flame; his thunder voice shakes all four quarters. Saw teeth protrude beyond his jaws; chisel fangs bare beside his cheeks. Embroidered brocade swathes his body; patterned stripes wrap his spine. His steel whiskers show scarce any flesh; his hooking claws are keen as frost. The Yellow Aged of the Eastern Sea would fear him; the white-browed king of the Southern Mountains likewise.

Sanzang was frightened out of his wits, and the two attendants went soft-boned and numb of sinew. The demon king shouted orders to bind them, and the demons all together bound the three men with cords. They were just preparing to devour them when a clamor was heard outside, and someone came to report: "Lord

Xiong of the Mountain and Master Te the Hermit are come."

Hearing this, Sanzang raised his head to look. Walking in front was a black fellow. And what did he look like?

Heroic and bold of nerve, light and strong of body. Crossing streams by sheer savage strength; Raging through the woods in the majesty of his wrath. Long since portended in lucky dreams; Now alone revealing his gallant bearing. He can bend and break the green trees; He knows the cold, and is wise in the seasons. Precisely accurate wherever he shows himself— And so he is called the Lord of the Mountain.

Behind him came a fat fellow. And what did he look like?

A towering crown of double horns; Stately and solemn, shoulders and back held high. His nature serves contentedly in clothes of black; His hoofs and paces are slow and lagging. His clan name from his father is Ox; His original style from his mother is Cow. He can labor for the men who till the fields, And so he is styled Master Te the Hermit.

The two of them came swaying and swaggering in, and the demon king rushed out in haste to welcome them. Lord Xiong said: "General Yin, long have you prospered—congratulations! Congratulations!" Master Te said: "General Yin, your bearing exceeds the common—truly delightful! Truly delightful!" The demon king said: "How have you two gentlemen fared these many days?" The lord said: "Only keeping to my plain fare." The hermit said: "Only following the seasons." When the three had exchanged greetings, they sat down each in his place and talked and laughed.

Then the attendants, bound fast, wailed aloud in their agony. The black fellow asked: "Where do these three come from?" The demon king said: "They delivered themselves to our door." The hermit laughed: "Might they serve to entertain guests?" The demon king said: "With pleasure! With pleasure!" The lord said: "They should not all be eaten. Eat two of them, and keep one—that would do." The demon king assented, and at once called his attendants, who cut open the bellies of the two followers, tore out their hearts, and chopped their bodies to pieces.

The heads and hearts and livers they presented to the two guests; the limbs the demon king ate himself; the remaining flesh and bones he divided among the demons. There arose a sound of gobbling and chewing, just like tigers devouring lambs. In a moment all was eaten. The elder was scared nearly dead. This was the first tribulation after leaving Chang'an.

In the midst of his anguish and terror, the east gradually whitened, and at daybreak the two monsters took their leave.

Both said: "Today we have intruded grossly upon you. Another day we will repay your hospitality with all our hearts."

And with that they withdrew in a crowd. Before long the red sun rose high. Sanzang, dazed and reeling, could not tell east from west. Just as he was at the point of death, there suddenly appeared an old man, leaning on a staff, who came up to him. He stepped forward, brushed him once with his hand, and all the cords snapped. Then he blew a breath of air in his face, and Sanzang came to himself.

He knelt and bowed upon the ground: "A thousand thanks, venerable sir, for saving this poor monk's life!"

The old man returned his bow and said: "Rise. Have you lost anything?" Sanzang said: "My attendants have been eaten by the monsters; I know only that my luggage and horse are somewhere about." The old man pointed with his staff: "Over there—are those not a horse and two bundles?" Sanzang turned to look: they were indeed his things, and nothing had been lost; only then did his heart ease a little.

He asked the old man: "Venerable sir, what place is this? And how come you to be here?"

The old man said: "This is Double Fork Ridge, the den and lair of tigers and wolves. How did you fall in here?" Sanzang said: "This poor monk left the bounds of the Hezhou Guard at cockcrow, not expecting I had risen so early; braving frost and parting dew, I suddenly tumbled into this place. I saw a demon king of utmost ferocity, who bound this poor monk and my two attendants. Then I saw a black fellow called Lord Xiong of the Mountain, and a fat fellow called Master Te the Hermit, who came in and hailed the demon king as General Yin. The three of them ate my two attendants, and only scattered at daybreak. Never did I think I had such great destiny and portion, that you, venerable sir, should be moved to come and save me." The old man said: "Master Te was a wild bull spirit. The Lord of the Mountain was a bear spirit. General Yin was a tiger spirit. The attendant monsters were all mountain sprites and tree ghosts, monstrous beasts and gray wolves. Only because your original nature is bright and whole could they not eat you. Follow me, and I will lead you onto the road." Sanzang, grateful beyond all measure, loaded the bundles onto the horse, took the reins, and followed the old man straight out of the pit, up onto the highroad.

He was tying the horse to the grass at the roadside and turning to bow his thanks to the venerable gentleman when the old man transformed himself into a gust of pure wind, mounted a red-crowned white crane, and soared away into the sky. From the wind floated down and drifted a slip of paper, on which were written four lines of verse. The verse said:

"I am the Gold Star of the Western Heaven, Come especially to save your living soul. Ahead you shall have a spirit disciple to aid you; Do not, for hardship's sake, complain of the quest."

When Sanzang had read it, he bowed to heaven and worshiped, saying: "A thousand thanks, Gold Star, for delivering me from this peril." When the bows were done, he led his horse and pressed bitterly forward, alone and desolate. And this ridge truly was:

A chill wind sighing through the rainy woods; A murmuring sound from the water in the ravine. Wild flowers breathing fragrance thick; Dense tangles of heaped and jumbled stones. Clamor of deer and apes in routs; Companies of river-deer and muntjacs in files. A din of varied birdsong everywhere; Still and hushed, no trace of humankind. That elder—trembling, his heart without repose; This horse—faint of strength, its hoofs hard to lift.

Sanzang risked his body and staked his life, climbing up among the sheer ridges. After half a day's travel, still no sign of human dwelling or village. His belly was hungry, and the road was rough besides. At this moment of utmost peril, ahead of him two fierce tigers came roaring, and behind him several long serpents came coiling. On the left were venomous creatures, on the right monstrous beasts. Alone and resourceless, Sanzang could only let go of body and mind and submit to whatever Heaven decreed.

And there was no help for it that the horse's back was weak and its hoofs bent: it dropped dung and water both, collapsed on the ground, and could neither be beaten up nor led along. The poor master was at his wits' end—truly in uttermost misery—and had already given himself up for dead, with nothing whatever to be done. Yet though his star of trouble was on him, deliverance was at hand too. Just as he was at the point of death, suddenly the venomous creatures came scurrying, the monstrous beasts fled flying, the fierce tigers hid their tracks, and the long serpents veiled their traces.

Sanzang raised his head and saw a man come striding round the hillside, a steel trident in his hand, a bow and arrows at his waist—truly a fine fellow. Just look at him:

On his head a cap of spotted leopard skin, sewn with mugwort patterns; On his body a robe of woolen brocade, woven in foreign fashion; Round his waist a belt of lion-patterned silk; On his feet a pair of deerskin boots. Round glaring eyes like a spirit of mourning; A circling beard in wild disorder, like the demon of the river. At his belt a quiver of poisoned arrows; In his grasp a great trident of steeled points. His thunder voice shatters the courage of the mountain beasts; His boldness startles the souls of the wild pheasants.

Seeing him draw near, Sanzang knelt by the roadside, pressed his palms together, and cried loudly: "Great King, save my life! Great King, save my life!"

When the fellow came up, he set down his trident and lifted him with his hands: "Fear not, elder. I am no wicked man. I am a hunter of these mountains, named Liu Boqin, nicknamed the Mountain-Guarding Warden. I was just coming out to catch a couple of mountain beasts for food when I happened upon you—pardon my roughness." Sanzang said: "This poor monk is a monk sent under the mandate of the Great Tang to worship the Buddha in the Western Heaven and seek the scriptures. Just now I came to this place and met with wolves, tigers, serpents, and venomous creatures crowding round on every side, so that I could not advance. Suddenly you arrived, Warden, and all the beasts fled—you have saved this poor monk's life. A thousand thanks! A thousand thanks!" Boqin said: "I live here, living by hunting wolves and tigers and catching serpents and vermin—that is why the beasts fear me and fled. Since you come from the Tang, you and I are countrymen. These parts are still the territory of the Great Tang, and I too am a subject of the Tang. You and I drink the water and eat the grain of the same royal land—truly we are men of one country. Fear not, but follow me. Rest your horse at my house, and tomorrow I will see you on your way." Hearing this, Sanzang's heart filled with joy.

He thanked Boqin, led his horse, and followed along.

They crossed the hillside, and again they heard the whoosh of wind.

Boqin said: "Do not go on, elder—sit here a while. That sound of wind means a mountain cat is coming. Let me catch it to entertain you at my house."

At these words Sanzang's gall trembled and his heart quaked, and he dared not take a step. The warden gripped his trident, spread his stride, and went forward to meet it. There, face to face, a brindled tiger came upon him. At sight of Boqin it whipped round at once to flee.

The warden, with a burst of thunder, shouted: "You wicked beast! Where do you run!"

The tiger, pressed hard by the chase, wheeled and flung out its claws to pounce. The warden raised his three-pronged trident to meet it, and Sanzang collapsed limp into the grass from fright. From the day this monk left his mother's belly, when had he ever seen such savage doings? On the slope below, warden and tiger locked together, man against beast—truly a splendid fight. Just look:

Rage flying in whirls, wild wind rolling in clouds. Rage flying in whirls—the warden's hair bristles with mighty strength; Wild wind rolling in clouds—the brindled beast ramparts, spewing red dust. That one bares teeth and brandishes claws; This one turns his steps and wheels his body. The three-pronged trident props the sky and dazzles the sun; The thousand-flowered tail swirls the mist and flying clouds. This one stabs wildly at the chest; That one comes lunging to swallow him whole. Whoever dodges past is born again into the way of men; Whoever is caught will surely see King Yama. Only hear the brindled beast roar and the warden bellow—

The beast's roaring splits mountains and rivers, startling bird and beast; The warden's bellow flings open the courts of Heaven, baring the very stars. That one's golden eyes start out in fury; This one's courage swells and anger rises. Adorable indeed, the Mountain-Guarding Warden Liu; Worthy of praise, the lord of beasts who holds the ground. Man and tiger, both greedy for life, contend for victory— One moment's slackness, and the three souls are lost.

The two fought for the space of one double-hour, until the tiger's claws slowed and its haunches slackened; the warden raised his trident and ran it through the beast's chest. Poor thing! The trident's point pierced heart and liver, and in an instant blood streamed over the ground. Seizing it by the ears, he dragged it up onto the road—a fine fellow!

Without a breath out of place or a change of color in his face, he said to Sanzang: "Luck! Luck! This mountain cat will feed the elder for some days."

Sanzang's praise was beyond all bounds: "Warden, you are truly a mountain god!" Boqin said: "What skill is mine, to deserve such over-praise? This is the elder's own great fortune. Come along! Let us lose no time in skinning it and boiling some meat, to entertain you." With one hand bearing his trident and the other dragging the tiger, he led the way in front; Sanzang led his horse and followed behind. Winding along past the hillside, they suddenly came in sight of a mountain steading.

Before its gate, truly:

Trees of old reaching to the sky, wild vines mantling the road. Ten thousand ravines, cold in wind and dust; A thousand cliffs of strange and wondrous air. One path of wild flowers, their fragrance stealing over one; A few stalks of secluded bamboo, tenderly green. A grass-gate tower, a fenced courtyard—fit to paint, fit to draw; A stone-slab bridge, walls of white earth—true rustic joy, truly rare. The face of autumn, bleak and bare; the bracing air, lone and high. Yellow leaves falling by the roadside; White clouds drifting over the ridge. In the sparse woods, mountain birds chatter; Outside the steading gate, small hounds yelp clear.

When Boqin reached the gate, he flung down the dead tiger and called: "Where are the little ones?" Out came three or four house-boys, all of fierce and savage appearance, who hauled and tugged the tiger inside.

Boqin instructed them: "Skin it at once, and prepare it to serve our guest."

Then he turned back to welcome Sanzang inside, and they exchanged greetings. Sanzang bowed his thanks once more for Boqin's great kindness in taking pity and saving his life.

Boqin said: "We are countrymen; what thanks are needed?"

When they were seated and the tea was done, an old dame came out leading a daughter-in-law, and both bowed to Sanzang.

Boqin said: "This is my mother, and this my humble wife."

Sanzang said: "Pray let your honored mother take the seat of honor; this poor monk will pay his respects." The old dame said: "You have come from afar, elder; let each of us treasure the other's presence—spare the bows." Boqin said: "Mother, he is from the court of the King of Tang, sent to the Western Heaven to see the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Just now on the ridge he met your son; mindful that we are all of one country, I invited him home to rest his horse, and tomorrow I will see him on his way." Hearing this, the old dame was greatly delighted, and said: "Good! Good! Good! Even had we wished to invite such a one, we could not have managed it. Tomorrow happens to be the anniversary of your father's death; we will trouble the elder to perform some good offices and recite a scroll of scripture, and send him off the day after." Though this Liu Boqin was a tiger-killing hand, a mountain-guarding warden, he yet had a filial heart.

Hearing his mother's words, he at once prepared incense and paper, and detained Sanzang.

As they talked, before they noticed, the sky was darkening. The little ones set out stools and tables and brought several platters of thoroughly stewed tiger meat, steaming hot, and laid them out. Boqin begged Sanzang to make do with this, saying he would prepare other food besides.

Sanzang pressed his palms together before his breast: "Blessed be! I will hide nothing from you, Warden: from the time I left my mother's womb I have been a monk, and have never known the taste of meat."

Hearing this, Boqin brooded a long while and said: "Elder, my humble household has never known how to eat vegetarian through all its generations. Even such things as bamboo shoots, wood-ear fungus we gather, dried vegetables we seek, or bean curd we make, are all fried in the fat of river-deer, deer, tigers, and

leopards—there is nothing properly vegetarian. And our two pots and stoves are soaked through and through with grease. What can be done? It seems I have done wrong in inviting you." Sanzang said: "Do not trouble yourself, Warden; pray partake yourself. This poor monk could bear hunger even five or six days without eating—I only dare not break my fast." Boqin said: "But if you starve to death, what then?" Sanzang said: "I am grateful for your heavenly kindness, Warden, in saving me from the midst of tigers and wolves; even were I to starve, that would be better far than feeding a tiger." Hearing this, Boqin's mother called out: "My son, do not bandy idle words with the elder. I have my own vegetarian food with which to entertain him." Boqin said: "Where would vegetarian food come from?" His mother said: "Never mind me; I have my own vegetarian things." She called her daughter-in-law: take down the little pot, burn out its grease over the fire, scour it and scour it again, wash it and wash it again, then set it back upon the stove.

First she put in half a pot of boiling water and set it aside for other use; then she took leaves of the mountain elm and steeped them with water to make tea-broth; after that she cooked a pot of yellow millet and rice, boiled some dried vegetables as well, filled two bowls, brought them out, and set them upon the table.

The old mother said to Sanzang: "Pray take our humble meal, elder. It is food and tea that I and my daughter-in-law prepared with our own hands—of the utmost cleanliness and purity."

Sanzang came down from his seat to give thanks, and only then took his place at table. Boqin set out a separate place for himself, spread with saltless, sauceless tiger meat, fragrant river-deer meat, python meat, fox meat, rabbit meat, and slices of dried venison—plate upon plate, bowl upon bowl—and kept Sanzang company at his vegetarian meal. But scarcely had he sat down and lifted his chopsticks when Sanzang pressed his palms together and began reciting a sutra, frightening Boqin so that he dared not move his chopsticks, but rose hastily and stood to one side. Sanzang recited only a few sentences, then said: "Pray begin the meal."

Boqin said: "Are you one of those monks who recite the short-headed sutras?"

Sanzang said: "This is not a sutra; it is a spell for lifting the fast." Boqin said: "You people who have left the world have a great many scruples indeed—chanting and murmuring even over a meal."

When the meal was eaten and the plates and bowls cleared, the sky gradually darkened. Boqin led Sanzang out of the central house for a stroll in back. Passing through a covered way, they came to a thatched pavilion. He pushed open the door and they went in: on the four walls hung several powerful bows and stiff crossbows, with several quivers of arrows; over the beams were draped two blood-flecked tiger skins; at the base of the walls were planted spears, swords, tridents, and staves without number; and in the very middle stood two seats. Boqin begged Sanzang to sit a while.

Sanzang, seeing the savage, blood-foul furnishings, dared not sit long, and left the pavilion. Going farther back, they came to a great garden, where one could not see the end of the clustered chrysanthemums heaped with yellow, and the maples and poplars on every tree hung with red. Then, with a cry, out ran a dozen or so fat deer and a great herd of yellow river-deer, which, at sight of men, stood gentle and unstartled, without the least fear.

Sanzang said: "These deer and river-deer, I suppose, are beasts the Warden has tamed and keeps?"

Boqin said: "It is as with the households of your city of Chang'an: those with money gather treasure, those with estates gather rice and grain; as for us hunters, we can only gather and keep a few wild beasts, against a rainy day." As the two talked and strolled, dusk came on before they noticed, and they returned to the front house to rest.

Early the next morning, the whole household, old and young, arose and prepared the vegetarian meal to entertain the elder, begging him to begin the recitation of scriptures. The elder washed his hands, offered

incense with the warden before the family shrine, and bowed to it; then Sanzang struck the wooden fish, first reciting the true words for purifying the sins of the mouth, then the divine spell for purifying body and mind, and after that opened a scroll of the Sutra of Deliverance for the Dead. When it was finished, Boqin begged him to write out a memorial for the deliverance of the dead, and he opened and recited the Diamond Sutra and the Guanyin Sutra.

Each he chanted aloud in ringing tones. When these were done, they ate the noon meal. Then he recited the Lotus Sutra and the Amitabha Sutra, several scrolls each; then one scroll of the Peacock Sutra, and told the story of the bhikshu who washed away his sins. Before they knew it, it was evening again. All manner of incense had been offered, the paper horses for the host of spirits burned, and the memorial for the dead consigned to the flames; the Buddhist services were done, and all retired to rest.

Now the spirit of Boqin's father, delivered by these offices from his long submersion, came early to the house of the eastern family and appeared in a dream to the whole household, old and young, saying: "In the world of darkness I suffered, unable to free myself, and for long had found no rebirth. Now, thanks to the sage monk, who has recited the scrolls, my sins are wiped away, and King Yama has sent men to escort me to the rich land of China, to be reborn in the household of elders. You must thank and speed the elder well; do not be remiss—do not be remiss. I am going now."

Truly: The majesty of the ten thousand dharmas was aimed with purpose; the dead were recommended out of suffering and up from the sunken world.

The whole household woke from the dream, and already the sun was rising in the east.

Boqin's wife said: "Warden, last night I dreamed our father-in-law came home. He said that in the world of darkness he had suffered without release, and for long had found no rebirth; but now, thanks to the sage monk's reciting the scrolls, his sins were wiped away, and King Yama had sent men to escort him to the rich land of China, to be reborn in the household of elders; and he charged us to thank that elder well and not be remiss. When he had finished speaking, he went straight out the door and sauntered away. We called him and he would not answer, tried to keep him and could not—and then I woke, and it was all a dream."

Boqin said: "I had just such a dream myself, the same as yours. Let us rise and tell my mother." The couple were just about to go tell her when the old mother called out: "Boqin, my child, come here; I have something to say to you." The two came before her, and the old mother, sitting up in bed, said: "Child, last night I had a joyful dream. I dreamed your father came home, saying that thanks to the elder's deliverance, his sins had been wiped away, and he was going to the rich land of China, to be reborn in the household of elders." The husband and wife both laughed aloud: "My wife and I both had this dream, and were just coming to report it; who would have thought, at your summons, it would be the same dream!"

So they roused the whole household, great and small, arranged offerings of thanks, and prepared his horse; and all came before him, bowing and thanking: "Our deepest thanks, elder, for delivering our dead father out of his suffering and into rebirth—we can never repay you!"

Sanzang said: "What power has this poor monk, to deserve your thanks?" Boqin recounted to Sanzang, from beginning to end, the dream-talk of the three of them, and Sanzang too was glad. A vegetarian meal was provided early, and a tael of white silver offered in thanks. Sanzang would not take a single coin. The whole family pressed him again and again with entreaties, but in the end he would take not one cash.

He said only: "If you will show compassion and see me one stage further on my way, that will be love enough."

Boqin and his mother and wife, having no recourse, hurriedly baked some coarse-flour biscuits and dried provisions, and told Boqin to escort him far on his way. Sanzang gladly accepted them. The warden, obeying

his mother's command, called two or three house-boys, each bearing hunting gear, and they set out together on the highroad, past sights of wild mountain scenery and ridge-top prospects beyond describing.

After half a day's travel, before them loomed a great mountain, truly touching the blue sky, towering and perilous. Before long Sanzang came to its foot. The warden walked this mountain as easily as level ground.

Just as they reached the middle of the mountain, Boqin turned back, stood below the path, and said: "Elder, go on forward by yourself; I must take my leave."

Hearing this, Sanzang rolled from the saddle and dismounted: "Surely you can bear to see me one stage further, Warden!" Boqin said: "You do not know, elder. This mountain is called the Mountain of Two Frontiers. The eastern half is governed by our Great Tang; the western half is the territory of the Tatars. The wolves and tigers of those parts do not submit to my taming, and I for my part cannot cross the frontier. You must go on alone." Sanzang's heart quailed; he reached out both hands, clutching Boqin's garment and sleeve, tears falling, unable to part.

At the very moment of their earnest farewells, from the foot of the mountain came a shout like thunder: "My master is come! My master is come!"

Sanzang stood dumbstruck with terror, and Boqin staggered. If you would know who it was that shouted—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 14

The Mind-Monkey Returns to the Right; The Six Robbers Vanish Without a Trace

The poem says:

The Buddha is the mind, and the mind the Buddha; Mind and Buddha alike are things that must exist. But know that there is nothing—and no mind— And that is the true Suchness, the Dharma-body Buddha. The Dharma-body Buddha has no form: One orb of perfect light holds the myriad images. The body that is no body is the true body; The mark that is no mark is the real mark. Neither form nor emptiness, nor not-emptiness; No coming, no going, no turning toward. No difference, no sameness, no being, no non-being— Hard to relinquish, hard to seize, hard to hear or hope for. The numinous light within and without is everywhere the same; One Buddha-land is contained within a grain of sand.

One grain of sand holds the great thousandfold world; One body, one mind, and the ten thousand dharmas are one. To know this, you must grasp the secret of no-mind: Unstained, unstuck—that is the pure karma. Good and evil, in their thousand forms, all done away with— That is homage to Shakyamuni, the golden leaf.

Now Liu Boqin and Tang Sanzang, startled and alarmed, again heard the cry "My master is come!"

The house-boys said: "That calling must be the old ape in the stone box at the foot of the mountain."

The warden said: "It is he! It is he!" Sanzang asked: "What old ape is this?" The warden said: "This mountain was formerly named the Mountain of Five Elements, but since our King of the Great Tang conquered the West and pacified the realm, it has been renamed the Mountain of Two Frontiers. Years ago I heard the old folk say that when Wang Mang usurped the Han throne, this mountain descended from Heaven, and beneath it was pressed a divine monkey, fearing neither cold nor heat, eating no food or drink, guarded by the local earth god, fed on iron pellets when hungry and molten copper when thirsty—and from those days until now, neither frost nor hunger has killed him. That calling must be he. Fear not, elder. Let us go down the mountain and see." Sanzang could only comply, and led his horse down the mountain.

They had not gone a few li when, sure enough, there in the cleft of the stone box was a monkey, thrusting out his head, stretching out his hand, waving wildly: "Master, why have you come only now? Well come! Well come! Get me out, and I will protect you to the Western Heaven!"

The elder drew near for a close look. And what do you suppose he looked like?

Pointed beak and sunken cheeks, golden eyes and fiery pupils. Moss heaped upon his head; brambles sprouting from his ears. Little hair at his temples, but plenty of green grass; No beard beneath his chin, but a mat of green sedge. Earth between his brows, mud in the hollows of his nose—utterly disheveled; Coarse his fingers, thick his palms, crusted over with grime. Yet happily his eyes still rolled and turned, his throat and tongue kept their gentle voice. Though fluent still of speech, his body could not stir. This is that Great Sage Sun of five hundred years ago, Today his suffering fulfilled, escaping the net of Heaven.

Liu the Warden was bold indeed: he stepped forward and plucked away the grass at the monkey's temples and the sedge beneath his chin, and asked: "What have you to say?" The monkey said: "I've nothing to say to you. Tell that master up there to come down; I have a question for him." Sanzang said: "What would you ask me?" The monkey said: "Are you, or are you not, sent by the great king of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven to seek the scriptures?" Sanzang said: "I am indeed. Why do you ask?" The monkey said: "I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven who wreaked havoc in Heaven five hundred years ago. For the crime of deceiving my superiors, the Lord Buddha pressed me beneath this mountain. Some time ago the Bodhisattva Guanyin, bearing the Buddha's command, passed here on her way to the Eastern Land to find a scripture-seeker. I begged her to save me, and she urged me to do violence no more, but to take refuge in the

Buddha's Law, to attend diligently upon the scripture-seeker and protect him on the journey west to worship the Buddha—when the work was done, good would come of itself. So day and night I have held my heart in suspense, morning and evening my gall has hung by a thread, waiting only for you, Master, to come and free me. I am willing to protect you on the quest for the scriptures and to be your disciple."

Hearing this, Sanzang's heart filled with joy. "Though you have such a good heart, and have received the Bodhisattva's instruction, and are willing to enter the Buddha's gate—yet I have no axe or chisel. How am I to get you out?"

The monkey said: "No axe or chisel is needed. If you are only willing to save me, I shall come out myself." Sanzang said: "If I do save you, how will you get out?" The monkey said: "On the summit of this mountain there is the golden-lettered seal of my Lord the Tathagata that presses me down. You have only to go up the mountain and lift off that seal, and I shall come out." Sanzang complied, and turning, begged Liu Boqin: "Warden, walk up the mountain with me once more." Boqin said: "Who knows if it's true or false!" The monkey called loudly: "It is true! I would never dare lie!"

Boqin could only call the house-boys and have them hold the horse, while he himself supported Sanzang, and they climbed the high mountain once more.

Clutching vines, grasping creepers, they walked clear to the very summit, and there, sure enough, they saw ten thousand rays of golden light and a thousand streams of auspicious air: a great square stone, and upon the stone a sealed packet bearing the six golden characters "Om, ma, ni, pad, me, hum."

Sanzang drew near and knelt down; facing the stone and gazing at the golden letters, he bowed several times, then prayed toward the West: "Your disciple Chen Xuanzang has come in obedience to the command to seek the scriptures. If I am indeed fated to have this disciple, then may I lift this golden seal and bring out the divine monkey, that together we may attain the Vulture Peak. If I am not fated to have this disciple, then this creature is a fierce and wicked monster, deluding your disciple, and the lifting will come to no happy end; the seal will not come up."

When the prayer was done, he bowed again. When the bows were done, he stepped forward and gently lifted away the six golden characters. There came a fragrant gust of wind that snatched the seal from his hand and bore it up into the sky, crying: "I am the guardian appointed to watch the Great Sage. Today his term of suffering is fulfilled; we return to see the Tathagata and hand back this seal." Sanzang and Boqin and the whole party were awestruck, and bowed toward the empty sky.

They went straight down the mountain and came again to the stone box. Sanzang said to the monkey: "The seal is lifted. Will you come out?"

The monkey was overjoyed, and cried: "Master, stand well back, so that I can come out without frightening you."

Hearing this, Boqin led Sanzang and the party back eastward at a quick pace. They had gone five or six li when they heard the monkey calling loudly again: "Farther! Farther!" Sanzang went on yet farther, down the mountain—and then came a single thunderous report, as if the earth were splitting and the mountain collapsing. Every one of them stood aghast.

And there was the monkey already at Sanzang's horse's head, kneeling bare and naked, crying: "Master, I am out!"

He bowed four times to Sanzang, sprang up, and made a great bow with folded hands to Boqin: "Much obliged to you, elder brother, for escorting my master—and obliged too, elder brother, for weeding my face." With his thanks done, he went to gather the luggage and saddle the horse. But the moment the horse saw him, its back went soft and its hoofs buckled, and it trembled and could barely stand.

For that monkey had once been the Protector of Horses, tending the dragon steeds in Heaven, and he still had something of the old authority about him; hence all common horses feared him at sight.

Sanzang saw that his heart was truly set on good, that he really did look a man of the Buddha's gate, and said: "Disciple, what is your surname?"

The Monkey King said: "My surname is Sun." Sanzang said: "Let me give you a name in religion, that I may call you by it." The Monkey King said: "There's no need to trouble your kindness, Master. I already have a name in religion: Sun Wukong." Sanzang said with delight: "That fits our own school exactly. And in that get-up you look just like a little wandering novice. Let me give you a nickname besides, and call you Xingzhe, 'Pilgrim'—would that do?" Wukong said: "Good! Good! Good!" And from that time on he was also called Sun the Pilgrim.

When Boqin saw that the Pilgrim was single-mindedly packing to go, he turned, bowed to Sanzang, and said: "Elder, you have found yourself a fine disciple here—joy indeed, joy indeed. This fellow can truly make the journey; but I must take my leave."

Sanzang bowed in thanks: "You have walked far for my sake, and my gratitude is boundless. When you return home, give my best respects to your honored mother and your good wife; this poor monk has much imposed upon your household—when I pass this way again I will call to give proper thanks." Boqin returned the bow, and so the two parted.

Now the Pilgrim Sun begged Sanzang to mount, and he himself walked in front, the luggage on his back, bare as the day he was born, limping along at a lively pace. Before long, they had crossed the Mountain of Two Frontiers, when suddenly a fierce tiger came roaring toward them, lashing its tail. Sanzang's heart froze on his horse.

But the Pilgrim rejoiced at the roadside: "Don't be afraid of him, Master. He's bringing me clothes."

He set down the luggage, pulled a needle from his ear, and shook it in the wind—and it was an iron rod as thick as a rice bowl.

He held it in his hand and laughed: "My treasure! Five hundred years and more since I last used you. Today I'll take you out and earn a suit of clothes."

Watch him spread his stride and face the tiger, calling: "Wicked beast! Where do you think you're going!" The tiger cowered flat into the dust, not daring so much as to twitch.

One blow of the rod on its head, and its brains spattered in ten thousand dots of peach-blossom red, its teeth flying out like lumps of jade. Sanzang tumbled from the saddle in fright, biting his finger and crying: "Heaven help us! Heaven help us! The other day Warden Liu fought that brindled tiger for half a day; today Sun Wukong, without the least struggle, beat one to a pulp with a single blow—truly, 'for every strong man there is a stronger still'!"

The Pilgrim dragged the tiger over: "Rest a moment, Master, while I take off his clothes and put them on for the road."

Sanzang said: "Where would a tiger have clothes?" The Pilgrim said: "Never mind, Master; I know what to do." What a Monkey King! He plucked a hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, and cried "Change!"—and it became a sharp ox-ear knife. With it he slit the tiger's belly down the middle and peeled the skin whole off the carcass.

He chopped away the claws, cut off the head, trimmed out a good square piece of tiger skin, held it up, and measured it: "A bit too wide. One piece will make two."

He took up the knife and cut it in two.

One piece he put away; the other he wrapped round his waist, plucked a kudzu vine from the roadside, bound it fast, and covered his nakedness, saying: "Let's be off, Master! Let's be off! When we come to a house, we'll borrow needle and thread and sew it properly."

He twirled the iron rod, and it became a needle again, and he put it back in his ear; then, shouldering the luggage, he begged his master to mount.

The two pressed forward, and the elder asked from horseback: "Wukong, that iron rod you killed the tiger with—where has it gone?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You don't know, Master. This staff of mine I got from the dragon palace at the bottom of the Eastern Ocean. It's called 'the Divine Iron that Anchors the Milky Way,' and also 'the As-You-Will gold-banded cudgel.' It stood me in good stead when I rebelled against Heaven. It changes as I please: big when I want it big, small when I want it small. Just now it turned into the likeness of an embroidery needle, and I tucked it in my ear. Only when I have use for it do I take it out." Hearing this, Sanzang rejoiced in secret.

He asked again: "And that tiger just now—the moment he saw you, why did he not so much as move, but let you beat him at your pleasure? What's the explanation?"

Wukong said: "I'll hide nothing from you, Master. Never mind a tiger—even a dragon would not dare be impudent to me. Your Old Sun has more than a little skill at subduing dragons and taming tigers, magic to overturn rivers and churn the seas. I read faces and sounds and know the truth of things; when I enlarge myself I can fill the universe, when I shrink I can hide within a hair. My transformations have no limit; none can tell whether I am hidden or in sight. And you think skinning this tiger anything rare? Wait till we come to some real difficulty, and then watch me show my stuff!" Hearing this, Sanzang set his heart all the more at ease, and rode forward.

Master and disciple walked along talking, and before they knew it the sun was sinking. Just look:

The blazing slanting light turns to glow in the west; Clouds come home from the edge of sky and sea. Through a thousand mountains the birds cry in flocks, Seeking their roosts, thronging into the woods. Wild beasts in pairs and couples Turn toward their dens, families and herds together. A hook of new moon breaks through the dusk, Ten thousand bright stars ringed with halos.

The Pilgrim said: "Bestir yourself, Master, the light is failing. Over there, where the trees stand so thick, there must be a farmstead. Let's hurry and ask for a night's lodging." Sanzang rode forward accordingly, straight toward the dwelling.

They dismounted before the gate. The Pilgrim dropped the luggage, walked up, and called: "Open up! Open up!" Inside was an old man, who came leaning out on his staff.

The door flew open with a clatter, and at the sight of the Pilgrim's fierce looks, a tiger skin tied about his waist, looking for all the world like the Thunder God, the old man's legs went soft and his body numb, and he babbled: "A ghost! A ghost!"

Sanzang drew near and steadied him, saying: "Good benefactor, fear not. He is this poor monk's disciple, not a ghost or monster." The old man raised his head, saw that Sanzang's own face was refined and singular, and only then stood firm.

He asked: "What monastery are you a monk of, that you bring such a ruffian to my door?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk comes from the land of Tang, bound for the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Passing this place, I found the day far gone, and have come especially to your honored house to beg a night's lodging; at first light tomorrow, before the sky offends, we shall be gone. I pray you show us some kindness." The old man said: "You may indeed be a man of Tang, but that fierce one is no man of Tang." Wukong shouted sternly: "You old fellow have no eye at all! The man of Tang is my master, and I am his disciple! And I'm no 'sugar man' or 'honey man' either—I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. Among the households here there are some that know me; I've seen you before too." The old man said: "Where ever did you see me?" Wukong said: "When you were little, didn't you gather brushwood before me? Didn't you pick greens upon my face?" The old man said: "The wretch babbles! Where do you live? Where do I live? What would I be doing gathering brushwood and picking greens before you!" Wukong said: "What nonsense, you infant! You just don't recognize me. I am the Great Sage who was in the stone box on this Mountain of Two Frontiers. Look again, and see." Only then did the old man come to his senses: "You do look somewhat like him—but how did you get out?" And Wukong told the old man in full detail how the Bodhisattva had urged him to goodness and bidden him await the Tang monk, who should lift the seal and set him free.

The old man then came down bowing, invited the Tang monk inside, called his old wife and his sons and daughters to come and be presented, recounted the whole affair to them, and every one was delighted. He ordered tea served.

When the tea was done, he asked Wukong: "Great Sage, you must be getting on in years yourself?"

Wukong said: "How old are you this year?" The old man said: "I've lived foolishly on for a hundred and thirty years." The Pilgrim said: "Why, you're my great-great-grandson! The age of my own birth I don't remember; but I've been here at the foot of this mountain five hundred years and more." The old man said: "True, true. I remember my great-grandfather saying that this mountain fell from the sky, and that it pressed down a divine monkey. Only today have you gotten free of it. When I was little and saw you, your head was all grass and your face all mud, and I wasn't even afraid of you then. Now the mud is off your face and the grass off your head, but you look thinner, and with that great tiger skin tied round your waist, how much different are you from a goblin?"

The whole household burst out laughing at this. The old man was a kindly soul, and at once ordered a vegetarian meal prepared.

After the meal, Wukong asked: "What is your family name?" The old man said: "Our humble house is named Chen." Hearing this, Sanzang came down from his seat, raised his hands, and said: "Good benefactor, you and this poor monk are of the same illustrious clan." The Pilgrim said: "Master, your name is Tang—how are you of the same clan as him?" Sanzang said: "My lay family is also named Chen; I am a native of Juxian Zhuang in the Hongnong prefecture of Haizhou in the Tang. My name in religion is Chen Xuanzang. Only because our Emperor Taizong of the Great Tang honored me as his sworn brother Sanzang, taking Tang as my surname, am I called the Tang monk." When the old man heard that they shared a surname, he was delighted beyond measure.

The Pilgrim said: "Old Chen, we've imposed on your house left and right. I haven't had a bath for five hundred years and more—go boil us some water, so master and disciple can wash, and that will be one more thanks we owe you at parting."

The old man at once ordered water heated and basins brought, and lamps lit. When master and disciple had bathed, they sat before the lamp.

The Pilgrim said: "Old Chen, one more thing to trouble you: lend me a needle and thread."

The old man said: "We have them, we have them." He bade the goodwife bring needle and thread, and handed them to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim had an eye for his moment: while his master was bathing, he had taken off a short white-cloth robe and left it unworn; the Pilgrim now snatched it over and threw it on his own body, then took the tiger skin, joined it on, pleated it in the fashion of a horse-faced skirt, bound it round his waist with a vine, and walked before his master: "How does Old Sun look today, dressed like this—better than yesterday?"

Sanzang said: "Good! Good! Good! Now you really look a pilgrim." And he added: "Disciple, if you don't scorn hand-me-downs, that robe is yours—wear it." Wukong bowed: "A gift received! A gift received!" Then he went to find some fodder and fed the horse. By now everything was seen to, and master, disciple, and the old man each went to rest.

Early the next morning, Wukong rose and begged his master to take the road. Sanzang dressed and told the Pilgrim to pack the bedding and luggage. They were just about to take their leave when the old man, who had already prepared water for washing and the morning meal, pressed it on them. Only after the meal did they set out. Sanzang mounted; the Pilgrim led the way. Hungry they ate, thirsty they drank; at night they lodged, at dawn they traveled—and the season was now early winter. Just look:

Frost has carved the red leaves; a thousand woods grow lean; On the ridge a few pines and cypresses stand green. The unopened plum buds breathe a hidden scent; The warm day is short—the little-spring season. Chrysanthemums withered, lotus spent, the camellias flourish. On the cold bridge, ancient trees struggle for their branches; In the winding ravine the spring water purls and slips; Pale clouds that would be snow float over all the sky. The north wind gusts, tugging at sleeve and skirt— How can one bear the evening's onset of the cold?

Master and disciples had been walking a good while when suddenly, with a whistle from the roadside, out burst six men, armed with long spears and short swords, keen blades and stout bows, who shouted with a great roar: "Hey, monk! Where do you think you're going! Leave the horse and drop the luggage at once, and we'll spare your life and let you pass!"

Sanzang was frightened out of his wits; he fell from his horse and could not speak.

The Pilgrim lifted him up with his hand: "Set your heart at ease, Master. It's nothing. These are people bringing us clothes and traveling money."

Sanzang said: "Wukong, are your ears stopped up? They tell us to leave the horse and the luggage—and you ask them for clothes and traveling money?" The Pilgrim said: "You just look after the clothes, the luggage, and the horse, and let Old Sun have a set-to with them and see how it goes." Sanzang said: "One good hand can't beat two fists, and two fists are no match for four hands. There are six great fellows there, and you one tiny little man—how dare you fight with them?"

The Pilgrim's courage was of the greatest; he waited for no argument, but walked forward, crossed his arms on his breast, and saluted the six: "Gentlemen, what is your reason for blocking this poor monk's road?"

The men said: "We are kings of the highway, mountain lords of the well-disposed. Our great names have long been noised abroad—you can't pretend not to know them. Hand over your goods at once and we'll let you pass; say half a word of 'no,' and we'll smash you to bits and grind your bones to powder!" The Pilgrim said: "I too am an hereditary king, a mountain lord of long standing, yet I never heard that you gentlemen had any great names." The men said: "Then you don't know. We'll tell you: one is called Eye-Delights-in-Sight, one Ear-Listens-in-Anger, one Nose-Smells-Love, one Tongue-Tastes-Craving, one Mind-Conceives-Desire, and one Body-Bears-Sorrow." Wukong laughed: "So it's six hairy thieves after all! You don't recognize that this monk is your master and lord, and you come blocking his road instead. Hand over the loot you've stolen,

and I'll divide it into seven shares and split it with you—then I'll let you off!" At these words the thieves—well, one rejoiced, one raged, one loved, one craved, one lusted, one grieved.

They all rushed forward shouting: "What insolence from this monk! You haven't a thing to your name, yet you come demanding a share of ours!"

They wheeled spears and flourished swords and charged in a crowd, hacking at the Pilgrim's head—ping, ping, pang, pang—seventy or eighty blows. The Pilgrim stood stock still in their midst and took no more notice of it than if it were nothing.

The thieves said: "What a monk! Truly a hard head!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Passable, I'd say! Your arms must be tired by now—time Old Sun took out a needle and had some fun." The thieves said: "This monk must be an acupuncture doctor gone into religion! We're not sick—what talk is this about needles!"

The Pilgrim reached into his ear, pulled out an embroidery needle, shook it once in the wind, and it was an iron rod as thick as a rice bowl.

He gripped it in his hand and said: "Don't run off! Let Old Sun try his hand with one blow!"

The six thieves scattered and fled in all directions; but the Pilgrim spread his stride, caught them round and round, and one by one he beat them all to death.

He stripped their clothes, seized their plunder, and came strolling back with a smile: "Please proceed, Master. The thieves have been wiped out by Old Sun."

Sanzang said: "You have made terrible trouble! Though they were highway robbers, even if they had been taken before the magistrates they would not have merited death. Whatever your powers, you should have done no more than drive them off. How could you kill them all? This is taking human life without cause—how can you be a monk? We who have left the world 'sweep the floor for fear of hurting the life of an ant, and shield the lamp lest the moth be burned.' How could you, with no regard for right or wrong, beat them to death in one bout? You have not a scrap of compassion or love of good! Here in the wild hills and mountains no one will inquire into it; but when we reach the cities, if anyone should so much as cross you, you'd turn violent again, and swinging that staff wound and kill at random. How could I be a mere passer-by then? How should I escape?" Wukong said: "Master, if I hadn't killed them, they'd have killed you." Sanzang said: "I, a man who has left the world, would rather die than commit violence. If I died, I would die alone; but you killed six of them—how do you justify that? If this matter were carried to the magistrates, even if your own father were the judge, you could never talk your way out." The Pilgrim said: "I'll hide nothing from you, Master. Five hundred years ago, when Old Sun held King Mountain of Flowers and Fruit and reigned as a monster, I don't know how many I killed. If I'd listened to talk like yours, I'd never have become the Great Sage Equal to Heaven." Sanzang said: "It was just because you acknowledged neither restraint nor master, ran violent through the world of men, and bullied Heaven and deceived your betters, that you suffered that five-hundred-year ordeal. Now that you have entered the Buddha's gate, if you go on as violent as before, dealing out death at every turn, you will never reach the Western Heaven and never be a monk! Wicked! Wicked!"

Now this monkey had never in his life been able to take a scolding.

Seeing Sanzang go on and on nagging, he could not hold down the fire in his heart: "Since that's how it is—since you say I can't be a monk and can't reach the Western Heaven—then don't nag at me so hatefully. I'll just go back!"

And before Sanzang could answer, he threw one of his tantrums, gave a leap, and cried: "Old Sun is off!" Sanzang looked up hastily—he was gone. He heard only a whoosh, and off eastward the monkey flew.

He left the elder all alone and desolate, nodding and sighing to himself, grieving and resentful beyond measure: "This wretch! So he will take no instruction! I only said a few words to him—how could he vanish without form or shadow and go straight back? Well! Well! Well! It must be that no disciple is fated for me, no new mouth to feed! Now I could search for him and never find him, call him and he would never answer. Be off! Be off!"

Truly: Stake body and life and press on to the West; Do not lean on others to think for you.

The elder had no choice but to gather the luggage, load it on the horse, and walk on leading the horse instead of riding—tin staff in one hand, reins clutched in the other—desolate and chill, pressing westward. He had not gone far when, on the mountain road ahead, he saw an aged old mother carrying in her arms a padded garment, and on the garment a flowered cap. Seeing her come straight toward him, he hastily led his horse to one side to let her pass.

The old mother asked: "From where do you come, elder, walking here so lonely and desolate?"

Sanzang said: "Your disciple comes from the Great Tang in the Eastern Land, bearing the sacred command to go to the Western Heaven, to worship the living Buddha and seek the true scriptures." The old woman said: "The Buddha of the West dwells in the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the land of India, and from here it is 108,000 li. A single man on a lone horse, with no companion and no disciple—how will you ever get there?" Sanzang said: "Some days ago your disciple took a disciple, but his temper was wild and fierce. I said a few words to him; he would take no teaching, and off he vanished." The old woman said: "I have here a padded cloth robe and a gold-flowered cap. They belonged to my son. He was a monk only three days when, alas, his short life ended. I have just come from his monastery, where I wept a while, took leave of his master, and brought these two garments away to remember him by. Elder, since you have a disciple, let me make you a present of this cap and robe." Sanzang said: "I am grateful for your generous gift; but my disciple has gone away, and I dare not accept it." The old woman said: "Which way did he go?" Sanzang said: "I heard a whoosh—he went back east." The old woman said: "Not far east is my house; he has most likely gone to my home. I have there, besides, a spell called the True Word for Settling the Mind, also known as the Band-tightening Spell. Learn it by heart in secret, keep it locked in your mind, and let no one else know. I shall go catch him and make him come back and follow you; then you shall dress him in this cap and robe. If he will not obey your orders, recite this spell silently, and he will never dare violence again, nor dare run off again."

Hearing this, Sanzang bowed his head in thanks. The old woman transformed into a streak of golden light and went off eastward. Sanzang understood well that it was the Bodhisattva Guanyin who had bestowed this true word; he hastily gathered up a pinch of earth as incense, and bowed earnestly toward the east. When the bows were done, he put away the cap and robe, and hid them in the middle of his bundle. Then he sat at the roadside and recited the True Word for Settling the Mind, over and over, until he knew it by heart and held it fast in his breast—but no more of this.

Now Wukong, having left his master, mounted his somersault cloud and went straight back to the Eastern Ocean. Pressing down the cloud, he parted the waters and came straight before the Crystal Palace, and the Dragon King came out in haste to welcome him. He was received into the palace and seated; the courtesies done,

the Dragon King said: "I have lately heard that the Great Sage's term of suffering was fulfilled—my congratulations were late! I suppose you are reordering your immortal mountain and returning to your old cave?"

Wukong said: "I'd half a mind to; but I've gone and become a monk instead." The Dragon King said: "How so, a monk?" The Pilgrim said: "Thanks to the kindness of the Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea, who urged me to goodness and a true fruit, I now follow the Tang monk of the Eastern Land to worship the Buddha in the West, have taken refuge in the Buddha's gate, and am called Xingzhe, the Pilgrim, as well." The Dragon King said: "Then this is truly to be congratulated! Congratulated indeed! That is what is called turning from evil back to goodness, punishing and reforming the heart. But if so, why not go west? Why turn back east?" The Pilgrim laughed: "That Tang monk has no understanding of men. A few hairy thieves held up the road; I killed them, and he nagged and nagged, laying all sorts of faults on me. Old Sun, you may imagine, is not one to swallow a scolding. So I left him, meaning to return to my own mountain; and I thought I'd stop in and see you first, and beg a cup of tea." The Dragon King said: "Honored by your visit! Honored indeed!" At once the dragon sons and grandsons brought fragrant tea and offered it.

When the tea was done, the Pilgrim glanced back and saw hanging on the rear wall a painting of "Presenting the Shoe at the Yi Bridge."

The Pilgrim said: "What scene is this?" The Dragon King said: "It happened after your time, Great Sage, and so you don't know it. It is called 'Thrice Presenting the Shoe at the Yi Bridge.'" The Pilgrim said: "What is 'thrice presenting the shoe'?" The Dragon King said: "The immortal in the picture is Huang Shigong, the Yellow Stone Patriarch; the young man is Zhang Liang of the Han dynasty. The old man sat upon the Yi Bridge, and suddenly his shoe fell off beneath it, and he called Zhang Liang to fetch it. The young man fetched it at once and knelt to present it. Three times this happened, and Zhang Liang never showed a trace of pride or impatience; the old man, loving him for his diligence and care, bestowed on him at night the heavenly book, and bade him uphold the Han. And in time it was truly said of him: 'He devised his strategy within the tent and decided the victory a thousand li away.' When peace was won, he resigned his office, returned to the mountains, wandered with Master Red Pine, and awakened to the way of immortality. Great Sage, if you do not protect the Tang monk, if you will neither toil nor take instruction, you will remain a demon-immortal to the end, and never think of attaining the true fruit." Hearing this, Wukong brooded a long while in silence.

The Dragon King said: "The Great Sage must judge for himself. Do not cling to your ease and throw away your future."

Wukong said: "Say no more; Old Sun will go back and protect him." The Dragon King said with delight: "In that case I dare not keep you. I beg the Great Sage to show his mercy early, and not let your master be left too long neglected." Seeing him pressed to be gone, the Pilgrim sprang up, left the sea's treasury, mounted his cloud, and took leave of the Dragon King.

He was on his way when he met the Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea.

The Bodhisattva said: "Sun Wukong, why do you refuse instruction, refuse to protect the Tang monk? What business brings you here?"

The Pilgrim was startled, and saluted her in the clouds: "Thanks to your kind words, Bodhisattva, the Tang monk truly came, lifted the seal, and saved my life, and I followed him as his disciple. But he found me fierce and stubborn, so I slipped away from him a moment—and now I am just going back to protect him." The Bodhisattva said: "Go quickly, then, and do not miss your destiny." With that, each went their way.

In a very short while the Pilgrim caught sight of the Tang monk sitting gloomily at the roadside.

He came up and said: "Master! Why are you not on the road? What are you doing sitting here?"

Sanzang raised his head: "Where have you been? You told me I dared neither go nor stay, and I've been sitting here waiting for you all this time." The Pilgrim said: "I went to the Eastern Ocean to drink tea with the

old Dragon King." Sanzang said: "Disciple, we who have left the world must not lie. You left me not one double-hour ago, and you say you drank tea at the Dragon King's?" The Pilgrim laughed: "I'll hide nothing from you, Master: I can ride the somersault cloud—one somersault carries me 108,000 li. That's how I could go and come in a moment." Sanzang said: "I spoke a little sharply to you, and you took offense, threw one of your tantrums, and abandoned me. A capable fellow like you can get his tea; but what of one like me, who cannot go—sitting here starving? Your conscience ought to trouble you!" The Pilgrim said: "Master, if you're hungry, I'll go beg you some food." Sanzang said: "No need to beg. In my bundle there's still some dried food that Warden Liu's mother gave us. Fetch the alms bowl and find some water, and I'll eat a little and then we'll walk."

The Pilgrim went and untied the bundle, and in the middle of it found several coarse-flour biscuits, which he took out and handed to his master.

He also saw, gleaming bright, a padded cloth robe and a gold-flowered cap. The Pilgrim said: "These clothes—were they brought from the Eastern Land?"

Sanzang answered offhand: "They were what I wore when I was small. If you put on that cap, you'll be able to recite scripture without being taught; if you wear that robe, you'll know all the rites without being drilled in them." The Pilgrim said: "Good Master, give them to me to wear." Sanzang said: "I only fear they won't fit; but if they do, put them on." So the Pilgrim took off his old white-cloth robe, put on the padded robe—and it fit as though measured to his body—and set the cap upon his head.

The moment Sanzang saw the cap on his head, he stopped nibbling his biscuit and silently recited the Band-tightening Spell once through. The Pilgrim cried out: "My head! My head aches!" The master went steadily on reciting it several more times, until the Pilgrim rolled on the ground in agony, scratching and tearing the gold-flowered cap. Sanzang, fearing he would tear apart the gold fillet, stopped and did not recite. When the reciting stopped, the pain stopped too.

The Pilgrim felt his head with his hand: there, like a thread of gold, it was bound tight upon it; it would not come off and could not be wrenched away—it had taken root. He took the needle from his ear, thrust it under the fillet, and pried outward with all his might. Sanzang, fearing he would pry it apart, began reciting again; and the pain came back as before, till the Pilgrim stood on his hands like a dragonfly, turned somersaults, his ears red, his face scarlet, his eyes swollen, his body numb.

Seeing him so, the master could not bear it, and once more stopped; and the pain stopped again.

The Pilgrim said: "So this head of mine was your doing—your spell on me!"

Sanzang said: "I was reciting the Band-tightening Sutra—when did I put a spell on you?" The Pilgrim said: "Recite it again and see." Sanzang truly recited it again.

The Pilgrim truly ached again, crying only: "Don't recite! Don't recite! The moment you recite, it hurts! What is the meaning of this?"

Sanzang said: "Now will you heed my instruction?" The Pilgrim said: "I'll heed it!"—"And will you be insolent again?" The Pilgrim said: "I dare not!"

Though his mouth consented, his heart still harbored no good; he shook the needle till it was a bowl's thickness round, and raised it toward the Tang monk to strike. In terror the elder recited two or three more times, and the monkey fell to the ground, dropped the iron rod, and could not lift a hand, crying only: "Master! I understand! Don't recite! Don't recite!"

Sanzang said: "How could you be so wicked-hearted as to strike your own master?" The Pilgrim said: "I dared not strike. I was only asking you, Master: who taught you this trick?" Sanzang said: "An old mother I

met just now bestowed it on me." The Pilgrim raged: "No need to say more! That old mother must have been that Guanyin! How could she do this to me! Wait till I go to the Southern Sea and beat her!" Sanzang said: "Since she it was who gave me the spell, she must have known of you beforehand. If you went looking for her, she would only recite it—and wouldn't you be dead?" Seeing the force of this, the Pilgrim truly dared not set out, but could only turn his heart back, kneel down, and plead: "Master! This is her way of mastering me, to make me follow you to the West. I won't go provoke her; and you, don't take it into your head to recite it as a regular habit. I will protect you, and I shall never repent and draw back again." Sanzang said: "Since it is so, help me onto the horse and let us go." Only then did the Pilgrim, his heart truly won, shake his spirit together, bind up his padded robe, saddle the horse, gather the luggage, and press westward.

But as for what was said along the road that followed—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 15

At Serpent-Coil Mountain the Gods Give Secret Aid; At Eagle Sorrow Ravine the Willful Horse Is Reined In

Now the Pilgrim waited upon the Tang monk as they pressed westward. They traveled for several days, and it was the twelfth month, the season of cold: the north wind biting, ice slick and glazed. They walked sheer cliffs and precipitous walls, rugged roads and mountains of stacked ridges and layered peaks.

From horseback Sanzang heard, faint but grating on the ear, the sound of rushing water, and turned to call: "Wukong, where is that water sounding?"

The Pilgrim said: "As I recall, this place is called Serpent-Coil Mountain, Eagle Sorrow Ravine. It must be the water sounding in the ravine." Scarcely had he spoken when the horse reached the ravine's edge, and Sanzang drew rein to look. Just look:

A chilly vein of purling water threads the clouds; The deep clear waves reflect the sun's red glow. Its sound shakes the night rain in the secluded valley; Its colors flare from dawn clouds, dazzling the sky. From a thousand fathoms the spray flies, spattering broken jade; One deep pool roars its water into the fresh wind. It flows away into ten thousand acres of misty waves, Where gulls and herons, forgetful, vanish from the angler's sight.

As master and disciple stood gazing, there came a crash from the middle of the ravine, and out of the water bored a dragon, heaving the waves, shouldering up over the cliff, and it made straight for the elder. In terror the Pilgrim dropped the luggage, snatched his master from the horse, turned, and ran. The dragon, unable to catch them, swallowed the white horse whole, saddle and bridle and all, and sank back into the water without a trace.

The Pilgrim set his master down to sit on the high bank, then went to lead the horse and carry the load—but only the one load of luggage remained; the horse was gone.

He carried the luggage to his master: "Master, that wicked dragon has vanished without a trace, and he's scared off our horse too."

Sanzang said: "Disciple, how ever are we to find the horse?" The Pilgrim said: "Easy, easy—let me go and see."

He gave a whistle and leapt into the air. With his fiery eyes and golden pupils he shaded his brow with his hand and looked in every direction—but there was no trace of the horse.

He pressed down his cloud and reported: "Master, our horse has most certainly been eaten by that dragon. Nowhere in sight does he appear."

Sanzang said: "Disciple, how big a mouth could that fellow have, to swallow a great horse entire, saddle and bridle and all? More likely he took fright, snapped the reins, and bolted into some fold of the mountains. Look again, carefully." The Pilgrim said: "You don't know my powers either. These eyes of mine, by daylight, commonly read good and evil fortune a thousand li off. Within that thousand li, if a dragonfly so much as spreads its wings, I see it—do you think I could miss a great horse!" Sanzang said: "If he has eaten it, how am I to go forward! Alas! These thousand mountains and ten thousand rivers—how am I ever to walk them!" And as he spoke his tears fell like rain.

Seeing him weep, the Pilgrim could not contain his temper; he let out a great shout: "Master, don't be such a whimpering weakling! You sit here! Sit here! Let Old Sun go find that fellow and make him give back our horse!"

Sanzang only then caught hold of him: "Disciple, where will you look for him? What if he comes sneaking out of the dark again—and finishes me off as well? Then horse and man would both be lost—what would we do!" At this the Pilgrim grew more angry still, and shouted like thunder: "You are hopeless! Hopeless! You want a horse to ride, yet you won't let me go—then let's just sit here watching the luggage till we're old and gray!"

He was still bawling, his wrath barely cooling, when they heard voices in the air, calling: "Great Sage Sun, do not rage; Imperial Brother of Tang, do not weep. We are the guardian deities of the road, dispatched by the Bodhisattva Guanyin, come in secret to protect the scripture-seeker."

Hearing this, the elder hastened to bow in worship.

The Pilgrim said: "Which of you are there? Give your names, that I may call the roll."

The deities said: "We are the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Protectors of the Five Quarters, the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons, and the eighteen Guardian Sangha protectors, each taking his turn of duty and awaiting orders." The Pilgrim said: "Who's on first today?" The Protectors said: "The Dings, Jias, Duty Officers, and Guardian Protectors take their turns in rotation; but we Protectors of the Five Quarters—the Gold-Headed Protector never leaves your side, day or night." The Pilgrim said: "In that case, let those not on duty withdraw, and let the six Ding generals, the Duty Officer of the Day, and the Protectors remain to guard my master. Old Sun will go find that wicked dragon in the ravine and make him give back my horse." The deities obeyed the order.

Only then did Sanzang's heart ease. He sat down upon the rock cliff, saying: "Take care, Pilgrim." The Pilgrim said: "Set your mind at rest." What a Monkey King! He bound up his padded cloth robe, tucked up his tiger-skin skirt, gripped his gold-banded iron rod, and strode straight to the ravine. Half in cloud and half in mist above the water, he called out in a great voice: "You slimy loach! Give me back my horse! Give me back my horse!"

Now that dragon, having eaten Sanzang's white horse, lay at the bottom of the ravine, nursing his spirit and cultivating his nature.

Hearing someone call him names and demand the horse, he could not hold down his anger; he sprang up at once, leaping the waves, and jumped out: "Who dares slander me here?"

The moment the Pilgrim saw him, he shouted: "Don't run! Give me back my horse!" and wheeled his staff and struck at his head. The dragon bared teeth and spread claws to seize him. The two fought their duel there at the ravine's edge, truly a battle of champions. Just look:

The dragon spreads his talons; the monkey raises the gold band. That one's whiskers hang like threads of white jade; This one's eyes flash like lamps of red gold. Beneath that one's whiskers, bright pearls spew colored mist; In this one's hand the iron rod dances a raging wind. That one is a wicked son who bewildered his parents; This one is a demon sprite who bullied Heaven's generals. Both alike have met with tribulation and torment; Today, to win success, each shows his power.

Back and forth they fought a long while, wheeling and circling a long time, until the dragon's strength went slack and his sinews numb, unable to withstand; he wheeled about, plunged back into the water, and hid deep at the ravine's bottom, never showing his head again. Though the Monkey King cursed him without cease, he merely played deaf.

The Pilgrim, having no other recourse, could only return to Sanzang and report: "Master, that monster was cursed out by Old Sun till he came forth; he fought me a long time, then fled the fight and hid himself in the water, and he won't come out again."

Sanzang said: "But is it truly he who ate my horse?" The Pilgrim said: "Listen to yourself! If he hadn't eaten it, would he have come out to answer and cross swords with Old Sun?" Sanzang said: "The other day, when you killed the tiger, you claimed the power to subdue dragons and tame tigers—how is it you can't subdue him today?" Now that monkey could never bear being pressed.

Hearing Sanzang fling this taunt at him, he flared into his divine fury: "Say no more! Say no more! Let me match him once again, high and low!"

The Monkey King spread his stride, leapt to the ravine's edge, and unleashed the magic that overturns rivers and churns seas, stirring that Eagle Sorrow ravine's water, clear to the very bottom, into billows like the Yellow River's nine bends in flood.

The wicked dragon in the deep ravine could neither sit nor lie at ease, and thought in his heart: "Truly it is said: blessings never come in pairs, and misfortunes never come alone. I had scarcely escaped the death penalty of Heaven's code, and not a year has passed—just long enough to drift through my days here—when I run into this savage fiend, who has come to do me in!"

Watch him: the more he brooded the angrier he grew, unable to stomach the humiliation; he gritted his teeth, sprang out, and cursed: "Where do you come from, you savage fiend, to bully me like this!" The Pilgrim said: "Never mind where I come from—just give back the horse, and I'll spare your life!" The dragon said: "Your horse I have swallowed into my belly—how should I spit it out? I won't give it back—what will you do about it!" The Pilgrim said: "If you don't give back the horse, taste my staff! I'll only beat you to death, and that will pay for my horse's life!" And the two fought bitterly again beneath the mountain cliff.

After but a few rounds, the little dragon found himself truly overmatched; he shook his body, changed into a water snake, and slid away into the grass.

The Monkey King, staff in hand, hurried forward, parting the grass in search of the snake—but not a hint or shadow of it could he find.

He was so vexed that his Three Corpse Spirits jumped and smoke poured from his seven apertures. He recited the spell-word "Om," and at once summoned the local earth god and the mountain god of the place, who came together and knelt: "The mountain god and the earth god present themselves." The Pilgrim said: "Stick out your ankle-bones, and take five strokes apiece as an introduction—that will ease Old Sun's temper!" The two deities knocked their heads and pleaded: "We beg the Great Sage's forbearance; allow us humble deities to explain." The Pilgrim said: "What have you to say?" The two said: "The Great Sage has long been confined; we humble deities knew not when you would come out, and so failed to receive you. We beg you ten thousand times to pardon our offense." The Pilgrim said: "Since that is so, I'll not beat you for now. I ask you: this dragon in Eagle Sorrow Ravine—a fiend dragon from where? How came he to seize and eat my master's white horse?" The two deities said: "The Great Sage never had a master before; you were originally an Unmoved True One of primal chaos, obeying neither Heaven nor earth—how should you have a master's horse?" The Pilgrim said: "You don't know. For that business of deceiving my betters I suffered a full five hundred years of torment. Now, thanks to the Bodhisattva Guanyin's urging me to goodness, a true monk of the Tang court brought me out and took me as his disciple, to go to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Passing this place, we lost my master's white horse." The two deities said: "So that is how it is. This ravine has never held an evil thing; it is only deep, sheer, and broad, its water clear to the very bottom, so clear that crows and magpies dare not fly across: seeing their own reflections in the water, they take them for birds of their own flock, and again and again hurl themselves in. Hence the name 'Eagle Sorrow Steep Ravine.' But some years ago the Bodhisattva Guanyin, passing on her search for the scripture-seeker, saved a jade dragon and placed him here, bidding him await that scripture-seeker and forbidding him to do evil. He has only come up on the bank when hungry, to pounce on crows and magpies, or to catch river-deer and deer for food. We know not how, in his ignorance, he has today given offense to

the Great Sage." The Pilgrim said: "The first time, he crossed hands with Old Sun and wheeled through several rounds; the second time, I called and cursed, and he would not come out. So I used a river-churning, sea-turning trick and muddied his ravine water, and then he came bursting up, wanting to fight on. But he could not withstand Old Sun's heavy staff; he turned into a water snake and slid into the grass. I hunted him, but he left no trace." The earth god said: "The Great Sage does not know: this ravine's thousand and ten thousand hollows all interconnect, and that is why its waters run so deep and far. There must be some opening here through which he has gone down. There is no need for the Great Sage to rage and search here; to take this creature, you need only send for Guanyin, and he will submit of himself."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim called the mountain god and earth god to come see Sanzang, and told him the whole affair.

Sanzang said: "If we are to go ask the Bodhisattva, when will she ever come back? How can this poor monk bear hunger and cold!"

Scarcely had he spoken when they heard, from the unseen air, the Gold-Headed Protector calling: "Great Sage, you need not go yourself; this humble deity will go ask the Bodhisattva here." The Pilgrim was overjoyed: "Much trouble to you! Much trouble! Make haste! Make haste!" The Protector sprang onto his cloud and went straight to the Southern Sea. The Pilgrim instructed the mountain god and earth god to guard his master, and the Duty Officer of the Day to go seek food for the fast, while he himself went to patrol round the ravine—but of this no more.

Now the Gold-Headed Protector, with one drive of his cloud, soon reached the Southern Sea. Pressing down his auspicious light, he went straight to the Purple Bamboo Grove on Mount Potalaka, and asked the gold-armored devas and Mucha Hui'an to convey his message. He was granted an audience with the Bodhisattva.

The Bodhisattva said: "What brings you here?" The Protector said: "The Tang monk has lost his horse at Serpent-Coil Mountain, at the Steep Ravine of Eagle Sorrow, and the Great Sage Sun is at his wits' end. The local deities, when asked, said the wicked dragon whom the Bodhisattva placed there has swallowed it; so the Great Sage sent this humble deity to beg the Bodhisattva to subdue the wicked dragon and make him give back the horse." Hearing this, the Bodhisattva said: "That fellow is the son of Ao Run of the Western Sea. Because he set a fire that burned the bright pearl in the palace hall, his father accused him of unfilial rebellion, and he was condemned to death in the courts of Heaven. It was I who went in person before the Jade Emperor and begged him down, to be the Tang monk's mount. How could he turn around and eat the Tang monk's horse? If that is how it stands—let me come."

The Bodhisattva descended from the lotus terrace, left the immortal grotto at once, and with the Protector rode the auspicious light across the Southern Sea.

There is a poem in proof:

The Buddha preached the Heart Sutra of the Three Baskets' store; The Bodhisattva spread such goodness through the Great Wall's realm. Mahakasyapa's wondrous words reach Heaven and Earth; Prajna's true sayings deliver ghosts and spirits. Thus the Golden Cicada could shed his shell once more, And Xuanzang take up his cultivation again. Only because the road was blocked at Eagle Sorrow Ravine Did the dragon's son return to truth and take a horse's form.

The Bodhisattva and the Protector, in no long time, reached Serpent-Coil Mountain, and there in mid-air they stayed their auspicious cloud and looked down: there was Sun the Pilgrim, cursing and shouting at the ravine's edge. The Bodhisattva bade the Protector summon him.

The Protector pressed down his cloud, and without going by way of Sanzang, went straight to the ravine and said to the Pilgrim: "The Bodhisattva is come." Hearing this, the Pilgrim sprang at once into the air, and shouted at her: "You teacher of seven Buddhas, you compassionate Lord of the Teaching! What scheme was this, to do me such harm!" The Bodhisattva said: "You reckless macaque! You red-rumped village fool! I did everything in my power to find a scripture-seeker, and charged him earnestly to save your life—and instead of coming to thank me for your deliverance, you come brawling and clamoring at me?" The Pilgrim said: "What a fix you've put me in! Since you had me let out, you might have left me to roam free and enjoy myself. When you met me over the sea that day, you hurt me with your words, telling me to serve the Tang monk with all my heart and strength—well and good. But why did you send him a flowered cap, to trick me into wearing it on my head and suffering? You've planted this band on Old Sun's head, and taught him a 'Band-tightening Spell' besides, so that that old monk recites it over and over, and my head aches and aches. If that isn't your doing me harm, what is it?" The Bodhisattva laughed: "You monkey! You will neither keep the rules nor seek the true fruit. If you were not tied down like this, you'd be deceiving your betters and bullying Heaven again—what do you know of good and bad? If you went crashing into calamities as before, who would ever take you in hand? It was only by such a demon-curb that you would ever enter my gate of yoga!"

The Pilgrim said: "Very well—let this affair be my demon-curb. But why did you also send that guilty wicked dragon here to become a spirit, and let him eat my master's horse? That is letting a wicked creature run loose to do evil—most unkind!"

The Bodhisattva said: "That dragon I myself memorialized to the Jade Emperor and begged down to this place, expressly to serve as mount for the scripture-seeker. Consider: how could a common horse from the Eastern Land ever endure these ten thousand waters and thousand mountains? How could it reach the Buddha-land of the Vulture Peak? Only with this dragon-horse can the journey be made." The Pilgrim said: "But if he's so scared of Old Sun, lurking in hiding and never coming out, what then?" The Bodhisattva called to the Protector: "Go to the ravine and call out: 'Jade Dragon, Third Prince of the Dragon King Ao Run, come out—the Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea is here.' And he will come out." The Protector went to the ravine and called it out twice.

The little dragon, leaping wave and breaker, sprang out of the water, changed into human form, trod the cloud, and in midair bowed to the Bodhisattva: "I have long been grateful to the Bodhisattva for freeing me and sparing my life, and have waited here all this while, yet never heard word of the scripture-seeker."

The Bodhisattva pointed at the Pilgrim: "Is this not the scripture-seeker's senior disciple?" The little dragon looked, and said: "Bodhisattva, this is my adversary. Yesterday my belly was starving, and indeed I ate his horse. Relying on his strength, he fought me till my courage failed and I fled; then he cursed me till I shut my door and dared not come out. But never once did he breathe the word 'scriptures.'" The Pilgrim said: "You never asked my name—how was I to say it?" The little dragon said: "I never got the chance to ask where you came from, you savage fiend—you were bawling, 'Never mind where! Just give me back my horse!' Not half a word of 'Tang' did you ever utter!" The Bodhisattva said: "That monkey head relies wholly on his own strength—when would he ever speak well of another? Yet ahead on this journey there are still more who will submit to you. When you meet them, first raise the words 'seeking the scriptures,' and without any trouble at all, they will bow and yield of themselves."

The Pilgrim gladly took the lesson. The Bodhisattva stepped forward, took the bright pearl from beneath the little dragon's throat, dipped her willow branch in sweet dew, flicked it once over his body, blew a breath of immortal air upon him, and cried: "Change!" And the dragon changed into the very coat and form of the horse he had been. She further instructed him with these words: "You must repay your debt of karma with a devoted heart; when the work is done, you shall transcend the common dragons, and I will restore to you a golden body and the true fruit." The little dragon, the cross-bone still held in his mouth, took the command to

heart.

The Bodhisattva bade Wukong lead him to see Sanzang: "I return to the sea." But the Pilgrim seized hold of her and would not let go: "I'm not going! I'm not going! The road west is all such rugged country—protecting this common monk, when will we ever arrive? With such endless troubles and setbacks, Old Sun's very life will hardly be safe—what merit will ever come of it? I'm not going! I'm not going!" The Bodhisattva said: "In the years before you attained human form, you were willing to cultivate with all your heart; today, escaped from Heaven's punishment, how can you have grown lazy? In my school one attains truth through stillness and extinction; you must hold faith and seek the true fruit. If you come to places where body is wounded and torment bitter, I promise you: call on Heaven and Heaven will answer, call on Earth and Earth will respond. And if you come at last to a pass from which there is no escape, I will come myself to save you. Come here—I will add one more gift of power to your store." The Bodhisattva plucked three willow leaves and set them at the back of the Pilgrim's head, crying: "Change!"—and they became three life-saving hairs. "If ever you come to a pass with no help and no refuge," she said, "you may use them as the moment requires, to deliver you from desperate peril." Only after hearing all these kind words did the Pilgrim thank the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion.

Then the Bodhisattva, fragrant winds wreathing round her, colored mists floating and streaming, turned and went back to Potalaka.

The Pilgrim pressed down his cloud at last, seized the dragon-horse by the mane, and came before Sanzang: "Master, we have our horse."

Sanzang saw it and rejoiced: "Disciple—why is this horse sleeker and fatter than before? Where did you find it?" The Pilgrim said: "Master, you're still dreaming! The Gold-Headed Protector went and asked the Bodhisattva here, and she changed the dragon of the ravine into our white horse. Same coat, same markings—only it lacks saddle and bridle; Old Sun dragged it here by force." Sanzang said in amazement: "Where is the Bodhisattva? Let me go thank her." The Pilgrim said: "By now the Bodhisattva is back in the Southern Sea; she hadn't time to wait." So Sanzang gathered up earth for incense and bowed toward the south.

When the bows were done he rose, and with the Pilgrim packed to go forward. The Pilgrim dismissed the mountain god and earth god, gave his instructions to the Protectors and the Duty Officer, and begged his master to mount.

Sanzang said: "A horse with no saddle or bridle—how can one ride it? Let us first find a boat to ferry us over the ravine, and then see what's to be done."

The Pilgrim said: "What a master, so ignorant of the world! In this wild open country, where would a boat come from? This horse has lived here a long time; he must know the water. Just ride him across as if he were a boat." Sanzang had no choice but to comply, and mounted the bare-backed horse; the Pilgrim shouldered the bag and bundle, and they came down to the ravine.

There, from upstream, came a fisherman, punting a raft of dry logs down with the current.

The Pilgrim saw him and hailed him with his hand: "Old fisherman! Come here, come here! We're bound from the Eastern Land to seek the scriptures. My master can't get across here—come ferry him over."

Hearing this, the fisherman punted over at once. The Pilgrim begged his master to dismount, and supported him on either side. Sanzang stepped onto the raft, they led the horse aboard, and stowed the luggage. The old fisherman pushed off, and swift as wind or arrow, before they knew it they had crossed the Steep Ravine of Eagle Sorrow and landed on the western bank. Sanzang bade the Pilgrim open the bundle, take out a few coins of Great Tang money, and give them to the old fisherman.

The fisherman gave the raft one shove of his pole: "No money, no money."

And off he went into midstream, dim and distant. Sanzang, most uncomfortably in his debt, could only press his palms together in thanks.

The Pilgrim said: "Master, never mind the courtesies. Don't you know him? He is the water god of this ravine. He failed to come receive Old Sun—Old Sun had a mind to beat him for it. That he escapes a beating is enough for him; how would he dare take money!"

The master, half believing, half not, could only mount the bare-backed horse again, and following the Pilgrim took the great road, pressing westward. Truly: Vast and true Suchness mounts to the farther shore; with sincere heart and perfected nature one climbs the Vulture Peak. As master and disciple pressed on together, before they knew it the red sun sank west and the light of day faded. Just look:

Pale clouds in disarray, the mountain moon dim. Frost light fills the sky with cold; the sound of wind pierces the body on every side. A lone bird departs—the gray sandbars wide; Where the sunset glows bright, the distant mountains low. A thousand trees howl in the sparse woods; One gibbon cries on the empty ridge. On the long road, no print of travelers; Ten thousand li from home, the boat puts in at nightfall.

Gazing ahead from horseback, Sanzang suddenly saw beside the road a steading. Sanzang said: "Wukong, that house ahead—we can lodge there, and go on tomorrow morning." The Pilgrim looked up: "Master, that's no farmstead." Sanzang said: "Why not?" The Pilgrim said: "A farmstead hasn't roof-ridges with flying fish and steady beasts upon them. This is a temple or a hermitage, or my eyes are no good."

Talking as they went, master and disciple were soon at the gate. Sanzang dismounted, and saw upon the gate three great characters: "The Shrine of the Village God." He entered, and within was an old man, a rosary at his throat, who pressed his palms together in welcome, saying: "Master, pray be seated." Sanzang hastily returned the bow, went up to the hall, and paid reverence to the sacred images. The old man called a boy to serve tea.

When the tea was done, Sanzang asked the old man: "Why is this temple called 'the Village Shrine'?"

The old man said: "This humble place is on the border of the Western kingdom of Habi. Behind this temple is a hamlet whose people, in common devotion, erected this shrine. 'Village'—li—means the land of one neighborhood; 'shrine'—she—means the god of the local soil. At each of the seasons—spring plowing, summer weeding, autumn harvest, winter storing—every family prepares the three sacrificial offerings, flowers, and fruit, and comes here to sacrifice to the god of the soil, that the four seasons may pass clean and auspicious, the five grains ripen abundantly, and the six kinds of livestock flourish." Hearing this, Sanzang nodded and praised: "Truly, 'three li from home, another village's ways.' In my country the people have no such goodness." The old man asked: "And where is the Master's immortal home?" Sanzang said: "This poor monk is from the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land, bearing the imperial command to worship the Buddha in the Western Heaven and seek the scriptures. Passing your honored shrine, I found the day far gone, and have come especially to beg a night's lodging; at first light we shall be gone." The old man was delighted beyond measure, said several times "forgive our failure to welcome you," and called the boy to prepare a meal.

When Sanzang had eaten, he gave his thanks.

The Pilgrim, sharp-eyed, spied under the eaves a line for drying clothes; he walked over, snapped it off in one pull, and tied the horse's leg with it.

The old man laughed: "Where did you steal this horse?"

The Pilgrim flared up: "You old fellow talk without sense of what's high or low! We are holy monks going to worship the Buddha—would we steal a horse!" The old man laughed: "If you didn't steal it, why has it no saddle, bridle, or reins, that you come snapping my clothesline to tether it?" Sanzang made apologies for him: "This scamp is only hasty of temper. If you wanted to tether the horse, why not properly ask an elder for a cord—why snap his clothesline? Good sir, forgive him, forgive him. And as for the horse, I'll hide nothing from you: it was not stolen. Coming eastward yesterday to the Steep Ravine of Eagle Sorrow, I had a white horse to ride, fully saddled and bridled. We did not know that in that ravine a wicked dragon had become a spirit, and he swallowed my horse, saddle and bridle and all, in one gulp. Luckily my disciple had some powers, and moreover the Bodhisattva Guanyin was moved to come to the ravine and seize that dragon, and bade him change into the very white horse I had ridden, same coat and markings, to carry me to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha. We crossed the ravine barely a day ago, and so have only now reached your honored shrine—we have not yet managed to get saddle and bridle." The old man said: "Master, forgive me; I old man was only joking—who knew your noble disciple would take it seriously? In my youth I too had a few coppers, and liked to ride a fine horse; but years of misfortune, losses, and fire brought me down to this—no prospects left—and so I serve as shrine-keeper, tending the incense and candles. I get by on alms from the donor families of the hamlet behind. Now I happen to have a saddle and bridle, a thing my heart has treasured all these years; even in such poverty I could not bear to sell it. But hearing your words just now, reverend master—that the Bodhisattva herself saved the divine dragon and made him turn horse to carry you—how could I old man fail to give a little help? Tomorrow I shall fetch that saddle and bridle and gladly present them to you, reverend master, to buckle on your horse as you go. I beg you accept them with a smile." Hearing this, Sanzang thanked him beyond all measure.

Soon the boy brought the evening meal. When it was eaten, lamps were lit, bedding laid, and all retired to rest.

Early the next morning the Pilgrim rose and said: "Master, that old shrine-keeper promised us a saddle and bridle last night. Ask him for it—let's not let him off."

Before he had finished speaking,

they saw the old man indeed come bearing a saddle and bridle, with saddle-cloth, reins, halter, and all—everything a horse could need, complete—and set them down in the corridor: "Master, I present the saddle and bridle."

Sanzang saw them and received them with joy. He bade the Pilgrim take them and saddle the horse, to see if they fitted. The Pilgrim stepped up, took up each piece and examined it: truly fine things. There is a poem in proof:

The carved saddle gleams with colors, studded with silver stars; The saddle flaps flash light, golden threads a-shining. The saddle-cloth, fold on fold of floss; The leading reins, three strands of purple silk cord. The bridle's headstall, banded flowers brilliant; The crupper, gold-traced beasts in dancing forms. The bit and rings, forged and hammered iron; The double breast-straps, tassels knotted of dipped horsehair.

The Pilgrim rejoiced in his heart, and set saddle and bridle on the horse—and they fitted as though measured and made for him.

Sanzang bowed his thanks to the old man, who hurriedly lifted him up: "I am mortified! Mortified! What thanks are needed?"

The old man pressed them no longer to stay, but begged Sanzang to mount. The elder came out the gate, set his foot in the stirrup, and mounted; the Pilgrim shouldered the luggage.

The old man drew from his sleeve a whip as well—a handle of fragrant rattan bound in leather studs, its lash knotted from tiger sinew—and, standing at the roadside with folded hands, presented it: "Holy monk, I have also a riding whip—let me send it along with the rest."

Sanzang received it on horseback: "Most generous alms! Most generous alms!"

Even as he raised his hands in salutation, the old man was gone; and when they looked back at the Shrine of the Village God, there was nothing but a stretch of bare ground.

They heard a voice in midair saying: "Holy monks, forgive our poor entertainment. We are the mountain god and earth god of Mount Potalaka, sent by the Bodhisattva to deliver the saddle and bridle to you. Press on westward with all your strength, and do not slacken for a moment."

In haste Sanzang rolled from the saddle, bowed toward the sky, and said: "Your disciple's eyes are fleshly, his body common; I knew not the honored faces of the honored gods—pray pardon my offense. Pray convey to the Bodhisattva my deep gratitude for her grace and protection." And watch him: he knocked his head toward heaven, bow after bow, past all counting.

Beside the road the Great Sage Sun laughed himself nearly to death, and the Handsome Monkey King was tickled beyond bearing; he came forward, caught the Tang monk's arm, and said: "Master, get up. He's far away by now—he can't hear your prayers and can't see your kowtows. What's the use of going on bowing?"

The elder said: "Disciple, here am I knocking my head to the ground, and you won't so much as bow to him once—just stand there at the side snickering. What sort of behavior is that?" The Pilgrim said: "What do you know? A fellow like that, hiding his head and showing his tail, deserves a good thrashing on principle. Only for the Bodhisattva's sake I spared him the beating—more than enough generosity—and he dares accept Old Sun's bow? Ever since I was young Old Sun has been a hero, and I've never learned to bow to anyone. Even before the Jade Emperor or Lord Lao Zi himself, Old Sun gives no more than a how-do-you-do." Sanzang said: "Shame on you! None of these empty boasts! Get up quickly—don't delay the road." Only then did the master rise, gather their things, and press westward.

From here they traveled two months of peaceful road, meeting only Tartars and Hui folk, wolves, serpents, tigers, and leopards. Time flew, and soon it was early spring again. Just look: the wooded mountains in colors of brocade and jade, grass and trees pushing green buds; the plum blossoms all fallen, the willow eyes just opening. Master and disciple strolled enjoying the spring light, and again they saw the sun sink west. Sanzang drew rein and gazed afar: in the fold of the mountains, faintly, towers and terraces, halls and pavilions looming dim.

Sanzang said: "Wukong, what place is that yonder?"

The Pilgrim looked up: "If it's not a palace, then it's a monastery. Let's hurry along and seek a night's lodging there." Sanzang gladly agreed, gave the dragon-horse its head, and pressed straight forward.

But what sort of place this proved to be—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 16

The Monks of the Guanyin Monastery Plot for a Treasure; A Monster of Black Wind Mountain Steals the Cassock

The story tells how master and disciple rode on, with the horse urged forward, until they came to the front gate of the monastery and looked. It was indeed a monastery. Just see it:

Tier upon tier of halls and towers, row upon row of corridors and chambers. Beyond the triple mountain gate, majestically, ten thousand rays of colored cloud veiled the front; before the Hall of Five Blessings, gorgeously, a thousand ribbons of rosy mist wound about. Pines and bamboo lined both paths; a whole grove of juniper and cypress stood together. The pines and bamboo along the two paths, year in and year out, kept their quiet seclusion; the grove of juniper and cypress, clothed in color and beauty, bore their proud splendor. And look: the Bell Tower and Drum Tower rose high, and the pagoda, tall and steep. The monks in meditation had settled their nature; the birds in the trees sang notes of ease.

Silent and dustless—truly silent and dustless; empty of the Way's true fruit—no, truly was it empty and pure, a home of the Way.

There is a poem:

This lofty temple, a Jetavana hidden in an emerald hollow, Its sacred scenery outshining Saha itself. Truly, pure lands are rare in the world of men— But of the famous mountains under Heaven, monks hold most.

The Elder dismounted, and Pilgrim set down the load. Just as they were about to enter, a whole company of monks came out through the gate. See what they looked like:

Left-pin caps upon their heads, stainless garments on their bodies. Bronze rings hung double from their ears; sashes of silk were bound about their waists. In straw sandals they walked with steady steps, wooden fish held in their hands. From their mouths the chanting never ceased—Prajna was their whole refuge.

When Sanzang saw them, he stood in attendance beside the gate and made a greeting-salute, and the monk in charge hastily returned his courtesy. He said with a smile: "We have failed to look after you. Where do you come from? Please enter the abbot's quarters and take tea." Sanzang said: "Your disciple is an envoy from the Eastern Land, sent with imperial authority to worship the Buddha at the Thunderclap Monastery and seek scriptures. As evening is drawing on, we would borrow a night's lodging at your temple." The monk said: "Come inside and be seated, come inside and be seated." Only then did Sanzang call Pilgrim to lead the horse in.

The monk suddenly caught sight of Pilgrim's appearance, was somewhat frightened, and asked: "What sort of thing is that creature leading the horse?"

Sanzang said: "Softly! Softly! He has a quick temper. If he hears you call him a thing, he'll be angry. He is my disciple." The monk shuddered and bit his finger, saying: "Such an ugly, ill-favored wretch—and you took him for a disciple!" Sanzang said: "You wouldn't know it to look at him. Ugly he may be, but he's very useful."

The monk had no choice but to lead Sanzang and Pilgrim in through the mountain gate. Within the gate, on the main hall, they saw four great characters written: "Guanyin Chan Monastery."

Sanzang was overjoyed again, and said: "Again and again your disciple has felt the Bodhisattva's sacred grace, and never yet had the chance to bow in thanks. Now that we have met with this monastery, it is just like seeing the Bodhisattva herself. It would be very good to bow in gratitude."

When the monk heard this, he ordered a serving brother to open the hall doors and invited Sanzang to worship. Pilgrim tethered the horse, dropped the luggage, and went up into the hall with Sanzang. Sanzang stretched his back, spread his arms, laid his breast against the floor, and kowtowed toward the golden image. The monk went to beat the drum, and Pilgrim went to strike the bell. Sanzang prostrated himself before the altar and poured out his heart in prayer. When the worship was finished, the monk stopped the drum, but Pilgrim went right on striking the bell without pause—now fast, now slow—hammering away for a good long while.

The serving brother said: "The worship is over. Why keep striking the bell?"

Only then did Pilgrim drop the bell-striker, laughing: "What would you know! With me it's 'be a monk for a day, strike the bell for a day.'"

By this time the bell's wild ringing had startled every monk in the monastery, great and small, and the elders of all the upper and lower quarters came crowding out, crying: "What wild man is making this chaos with bell and drum?"

Pilgrim leapt out and shouted with a "Pei!": "It was your Grandfather Sun, striking it for fun!" At the sight of him the monks tumbled over each other in fright and scrambled to the ground, all crying: "Grandpa Thunder God!" Pilgrim said: "The Thunder God is my great-great-grandson! Get up, get up—don't be afraid. We are masters from the Great Tang of the Eastern Land." Only then did the monks bow; and when they saw Sanzang, they all set their minds at rest and were afraid no longer.

The monastery's abbot came forward and invited them: "Honored masters, come to the rear abbot's quarters and be served tea."

So they loosened the tether and led the horse, shouldered the luggage, passed around the main hall, went straight into the rear quarters, and took their seats in order.

The abbot offered tea, then arranged a vegetarian meal. The day was still early. Before Sanzang had finished his thanks, two young acolytes came out from behind, supporting an old monk between them. See how he was dressed:

On his head a Vairocana cap of square form, its finial of cat's-eye stone gleaming bright; on his body a cassock-robe of brocade velvet, its gold edging of kingfisher plumage flashing light. A pair of monk's shoes studded with the Eight Treasures; a single staff inlaid with cloud and star. His face full of wrinkled furrows, just like the Old Mother of Mount Li; his two dim eyes, even as the Dragon Lord of the Eastern Sea. His mouth let wind through, his teeth being gone; his back was bent and hunched, his sinews being drawn.

The monks said: "The Venerable Founder has come." Sanzang bowed low in greeting: "Old Abbot, your disciple salutes you." The old monk returned the courtesy, and all sat down again in order.

The old monk said: "The little ones told me just now that masters had come from the Tang court of the Eastern Land, so I came out to receive you."

Sanzang said: "I have lightly intruded upon your precious mountain, knowing neither what is good nor what is bad. Forgive me! Forgive me!" The old monk said: "I dare not! I dare not!" Then he asked: "Honored master, how far is the road from the Eastern Land to this place?" Sanzang said: "From the borders of Chang'an it is more than five thousand li. Beyond the Twin Boundary Mountain I took in a little band of disciples, and coming along this way we passed through the Western barbarian country of Habi; two months more of travel, another five or six thousand li, and only then did we reach your honored region." The old monk said: "That must be ten thousand li and more. Your disciple has idled away a whole lifetime without ever going out the mountain gate—truly what they call 'watching the sky from the bottom of a well,' a rotten, worthless stump of a man." Sanzang asked again: "And what is the venerable Abbot's age?" The old monk

said: "I have uselessly lived two hundred and seventy years." When Pilgrim heard this he said: "Why, he's still my descendant of ten thousand generations!" Sanzang glared at him and said: "Mind your tongue! Don't be so heedless of proper measure and give offense." The monk then asked: "Honored master, how old are you?" Pilgrim said: "I dare not say." The old monk took it for a madman's word, paid it no mind, asked no more, and merely called for tea to be offered.

One young favorite brought out a plate of mutton-fat jade holding three cloisonné tea bowls rimmed with gold; another acolyte carried a white-copper pot and poured out three cups of fragrant tea. Truly, its color outshone the pomegranate's crimson bloom, its fragrance surpassed the osmanthus flower.

When Sanzang saw it, he praised it without end: "Fine things! Fine things! Truly fine tea in fine vessels!"

The old monk said: "They offend the eye! They offend the eye! You, honored master, come from the celestial court and the superior kingdom, and have viewed rare treasures far and wide. Such trumpery as this hardly deserves your praise. But as you come from the superior land, might you have some treasure to lend your disciple a look at?" Sanzang said: "Alas! My Eastern Land has no treasures worth the name; and even if it had, the road is so long I could not have carried them."

Pilgrim, standing beside, said: "Master, the other day in our bundle I saw that cassock of ours. Isn't that a treasure? What harm in showing it to him?"

When the monks heard the word "cassock," one and all they sneered.

Pilgrim said: "What are you laughing at?" The abbot said: "The honored master says a cassock is a treasure—that is truly laughable. If it's cassocks you mean, such as we ourselves possess, we have no fewer than two or thirty; and as for my Venerable Founder here, he has been a monk in this place two hundred and fifty or sixty years, and has a full seven or eight hundred of them!" He called out: "Bring them out for a look." The old monk too, in a fit of showing off, ordered the serving brother to open the storehouse and the novices to carry out the chests. They carried out twelve chests, set them in the courtyard, opened the locks, set up clothes-racks on either side, stretched cords around on all four sides, and hung the cassocks out one by one, shaking each open, inviting Sanzang to view them.

Truly it was a hall full of silken embroidery, four walls of damask and gauze!

Pilgrim examined them one by one—all of them flower-pierced brocade work, embroidered and gold-traced stuff.

He laughed: "Good, good, good! Put them away! Put them away! Bring out ours for a look too."

Sanzang caught hold of Pilgrim and whispered: "Disciple, don't compete with people in riches. You and I are alone and abroad; I only fear some mischance." Pilgrim said: "What mischance can come of looking at cassocks?" Sanzang said: "You don't understand. The ancients said: 'Rare and curious things must never be shown to the greedy, the treacherous, and the false.' If they once meet the eye, the heart must be stirred; once the heart is stirred, schemes must be born. If you were one who feared calamity, they would demand it of you, and you would have to grant their wish—well and good. But if not, then ruin and death may both spring from this. It is no small matter." Pilgrim said: "Set your mind at ease! Set your mind at ease! It all rests on old Sun!" And look at him—before another word could be said he hurried off, undid the bundle, and at once rays of rosy light came bursting forth.

There were still two layers of oiled paper wrapped around it. He took off the paper, drew out the cassock, and when he shook it open, red light filled the room and colored splendor brimmed the courtyard. Not one of the monks who saw it failed to rejoice in his heart and cry aloud in praise. Truly a fine cassock! Upon it were:

A thousand cunning pearls depending, ten thousand rare and curious Buddha-treasures clustered. Above and below, dragon-whisker borders spread with colored gauze; on all four sides, dupion silk edged the brocade seam. Hang it, and the wraiths are banished thence; wear it, and the demons go down to the Yellow Springs. Conceived and fashioned by immortals' own hands—no monk but a true one dares wear it at all.

When the old monk saw such a treasure, a covetous heart was truly stirred in him. He came forward, knelt down before Sanzang, and tears fell from his eyes: "Your disciple is truly fated to have no part in it!"

Sanzang raised him up: "What does the venerable Founder mean to say?" He said: "This treasure of yours, honored master—no sooner was it unrolled than the sky darkened; my old eyes grow dim and cannot see it clearly. Is that not to have no part in it?" Sanzang told them: "Bring a lamp, and let you look again." The old monk said: "Your treasure is already bright with light; add a lamp to that and it dazzles the more—I could never look at it closely." Pilgrim said: "How would you look at it, then, to be satisfied?" The old monk said: "If the honored master will grant grace and set his heart at ease, let your disciple take it to the rear chamber and study it closely through the night; tomorrow morning I will return it, and you may go on west. What do you say to that?" At these words Sanzang was startled and reproached Pilgrim: "This is all your doing! All your doing!" Pilgrim laughed: "What is there to fear from him? Let me wrap it up and let him take it and look. If anything goes amiss, old Sun will make it all good." Sanzang could not stop him. Pilgrim handed the cassock to the old monk, saying: "Look at it as you please—only tomorrow morning return it to me as it was, without the least damage or stain." The old monk, delighted beyond measure, had his favorite acolytes carry the cassock inside, then instructed the monks to sweep clean the meditation hall in front, set out two rattan couches with bedding, and invite the two honored masters to rest.

At the same time he ordered breakfast prepared for their send-off in the morning, and so they dispersed. Master and disciples shut the meditation hall door and lay down to sleep, and of them we say no more.

Now the story tells how that monk, having tricked the cassock into his hands, took it to the rear chamber, set a lamp before it, and wept and wailed over it with bitter sobs—so desperately that none of the monastery's monks dared go to sleep first.

The little favorite acolyte, not knowing why, went and told the monks: "The old master has been crying up to the second watch, and still won't stop."

Two novice-grandsons, men after his own heart, came forward and asked: "Grand-master, why do you weep?" The old monk said: "I weep that I have no fate, and may not keep the Tang monk's treasure!" The little monk said: "Grandpa, you are very old, and past it all. His cassock is there before you—you need only undo it and look, and that would be enough. Why weep so bitterly?" The old monk said: "Looking doesn't last. I am two hundred and seventy this year, and have laboriously gathered a few hundred cassocks. How could I ever have one like this? How could I ever be a Tang monk?" The little monk said: "Grand-master, you're wrong. The Tang monk is a wandering monk, far from home and hearth. At your great age you have had enjoyment enough—would you be like him, a wandering monk? Why?" The old monk said: "Though I sit at home at my ease and take pleasure in my late years, I cannot wear that cassock of his. If I could wear it but one little day, I would close my eyes in death content—it would mean I had been a monk in the world of light after all!"

The monks said: "What nonsense! If you want to wear his, what difficulty is there? Tomorrow we keep him one day, and you wear it one day; keep him ten days, and you wear it ten days—and there's an end. Why weep such bitter tears?" The old monk said: "Even if we kept him half a year, I should only wear it half a year, and in the end it would never be mine for long. When he wants to go, I must let him go—how could I keep him forever?"

As they were talking, a little monk named Guangzhi spoke up: "Grandpa, if you want it for long, that too is easy."

Hearing this, the old monk brightened: "My son, what is your clever idea?" Guangzhi said: "Those two, the Tang monk and his man, are travelers, worn out with the road, and by now fast asleep. Let us find a few sturdy fellows, take spears and knives, break open the meditation hall, and kill them. Bury the corpses in the back garden—only our own household will know—and then we make off with their white horse and baggage, and keep that cassock as an heirloom treasure for the family. Would that not be a plan for lasting generations?" At these words the old monk's heart filled with joy; he wiped away his tears and said: "Good! Good! Good! A perfect scheme!" And at once they got spears and knives together.

Then another little monk, named Guangmou—Guangzhi's junior by training—stepped forward and said: "That scheme is not good. If you mean to kill them, we must first take their measure. The white-faced one looks easy; the hairy-faced one looks hard. If we should fail to kill him, would we not bring calamity on our own heads instead? I have a way that moves neither knife nor spear—I wonder what you think of it?"

The old monk said: "My son, what way have you?" Guangmou said: "As this humble grandson sees it: summon together all the quarters, east mountain and west, and have every man bring a bundle of dry firewood. Give up those three rooms of meditation hall and set fire to it—leave them no door to flee by, and burn them up, horse and all. Even if the households around this mountain, front and back, see it, they will only say they were careless themselves, the fire got loose, and our meditation hall was burned down as well. Won't those two monks both be burned to death? And it will nicely cover the world's eyes and ears besides. And will not the cassock then be our family heirloom?" At this, all the monks rejoiced without exception.

They all said: "Strong! Strong! Strong! This scheme is better still! Better still!"

And so they had every quarter carry firewood over. Alas! This scheme of theirs was truly what doomed the long-lived old monk to his last hour and turned the Guanyin Chan Monastery to dust! For in that monastery there were seventy or eighty quarters, great and small, with more than two hundred monks in all. That night they swarmed in with firewood and piled it around the meditation hall, front and back, on all four sides, so that not a crack was left open, and prepared to set the fire—and of that we say no more.

Now the story tells how Sanzang and his disciple settled to rest. But Pilgrim was a monkey of numinous spirit: though he lay down, he kept his wits about him, refining his breath in a light doze. Suddenly he heard people walking ceaselessly outside, and the rustle and crackle of firewood, with wind rising in it.

His heart grew suspicious: "At this still hour of night, why should there be footsteps? Can it be thieves and robbers, plotting against our lives?..."

With one roll he sprang up. He wanted to open the door and go out to see, but feared to wake his master. Look at him muster his spirit, shake himself, and change—transforming into a little bee. Truly:

Sweet mouth and venomous sting, slender waist and body light. He threads the flowers, skims the willows, swift as an arrow; he clings to the floss and seeks the blossom like a falling star. A tiny frame, yet it can bear a load; thin wings a-buzz, yet they know how to ride the wind. And so from beneath the eaves and beams he slipped out to see for himself.

He saw the monks carrying firewood and straw, and they had already ringed the meditation hall round and were setting fire to it. Pilgrim laughed to himself: "Just as my master said! They mean to take our lives and steal my cassock—that's why they've hatched this venomous plot. If I take my staff and beat them, the pity is they can't stand a beating—one round of blows would kill them all, and then master would blame me for violence. Well, well, well! I'll 'lead off the goat along the way,' turn their own trick against them, and see to it they can't stay here any longer!"

A fine Pilgrim! With one somersault he leapt up inside the South Gate of Heaven, frightening Pang, Liu, Gou, and Bi into bowing low and Ma, Zhao, Wen, and Guan into bending double, all crying: "Bad! Bad! The master who wrecked Heaven's palace has come again!"

Pilgrim waved his hand: "Gentlemen, spare the courtesies—don't be alarmed. I've come to find Heavenly King Guangmu." Hardly were the words out when the Heavenly King himself arrived, and he greeted Pilgrim: "Long time! Long time! Word came lately that the Bodhisattva Guanyin had an audience with the Jade Emperor and borrowed the Four Duty Officers of the Hours, the Six Ding and Six Jia, and the Revealers, to protect the Tang monk on his westward journey for scriptures, and that you had become his disciple. How do you find leisure to come here today?" Pilgrim said: "Never mind renewing old acquaintance. The Tang monk has fallen in with villains on the road, and they are setting fire to burn him. The matter is urgent beyond measure. I've come especially to borrow your fire-repelling screen, to save him. Bring it out quickly for me to use; I'll return it on the spot." The Heavenly King said: "You're mistaken. If villains are setting the fire, you should borrow water to save him. Why a fire-repelling screen?" Pilgrim said: "What do you know of the inside of it? Borrow water, put the fire out—why, that would only serve their turn! No: with this screen I shield the Tang monk from harm, and the rest may burn as it pleases—let it burn! Quickly! Quickly! It may already be too late. Don't hold up my business below!" The Heavenly King laughed: "This monkey still has this wicked streak in him—looking out entirely for his own, and never mind the rest." Pilgrim said: "Hurry! Hurry! None of your clack—this is serious business!" The Heavenly King dared not refuse, and handed the screen to Pilgrim.

Pilgrim took it, brought his cloud down, and went straight to the roof ridge of the meditation hall, where he screened the Tang monk, the white horse, and the baggage under it. Then he went and sat atop the abbot's quarters behind, where the old monk lived, taking care to protect the cassock. He watched those people set the fire; then he worked the spell, muttered the words, faced the quarter of Xun, drew a breath of wind, and blew it out. A great gust arose and fanned the flames roaring higher. What a fire! What a fire! Just see:

Black smoke vast and billowing, red flames leaping and soaring. Black smoke vast and billowing: across the whole sky not a single star; red flames leaping and soaring: over the broad earth a thousand li of red glare. At first it was darting golden serpents; later on, charging blood-red horses. The triple breath of the South played the hero; the great god Huilu worked his magic power. Dry firewood feeding a raging fire—what talk is this of Suiren drilling wood? Hot oil before the doors floating colored flame—it outdoes the Old Lord opening his furnace. Truly, when merciless fire breaks out, what hope against deliberate villainy?

Instead of quelling the disaster, they abetted the ravage. The wind followed the fire's might, and the flames flew a thousand fathoms high; the fire rode the wind's fury, and sparks burst above the ninefold clouds. Crackle and boom—just like New Year's firecrackers at the year's end; roar and blast—just like cannon-fire in an army camp. The Buddha images on the spot could not escape; the Sangharama of the east court had nowhere to hide. It surpassed the night battle at Red Cliff, it outdid the fire within Epang Palace!

Truly, a spark of fire can burn ten thousand acres of field. In a moment the wind raged and the fire blazed, and the whole Guanyin Monastery glowed red in every quarter. Look at those monks: hauling chests and carrying baskets, snatching tables, lugging pots, filling the courtyard with cries of bitterness to Heaven. Sun Pilgrim protected the abbot's quarters at the rear, and the fire-repelling screen covered the meditation hall in front; everywhere else, front and back, the flames raged at full force—truly a red glow blazing bright against the sky, golden light streaming through every wall!

But when the fire broke out, it startled the beasts and monsters of a whole mountain. Some twenty li due south of the Guanyin Monastery stood Black Wind Mountain. In that mountain was Black Wind Cave, and in the cave lived a demon spirit, who was just then turning over in his sleep. He saw the window glowing bright and took it for daybreak.

When he rose and looked, it was a fire's glare shining from due north. The demon was greatly astonished: "Ah! This must be a fire in the Guanyin Monastery! How careless those monks are! I'll go and help them put it out."

A fine demon! He rose on his cloud-head and came at once beneath the smoke and fire. There indeed was fire leaping to the very sky: the halls in front were emptied, both corridors just beginning to blaze. Striding briskly, he plunged in, and was just calling for water to be brought when he noticed that the rear rooms had no fire, and that on the roof ridge sat a man fanning the wind. Knowing at once how matters stood, he hurried inside to look, and saw in the middle of the abbot's quarters a glow of rosy light and colored vapor, and on the table a bundle wrapped in black felt.

He undid it and looked: it was the brocade cassock, a rare treasure of the Buddha's school. Truly it is said that wealth moves a man's heart. He put out no fire, he called for no water; clutching the cassock, plundering in the general confusion, he dragged in his cloud and made straight back to the cave in the eastern mountain.

That fire burned until the fifth watch and dawn, and only then died out. Look at those monks: stripped half naked, weeping and wailing, all grubbing in the ashes for copper and iron, raking the charred coals, hunting gold and silver. Some propped up makeshift shelters against the walls; some, at the foot of the blackened walls, set pots and cooked rice—crying grievances, shouting wrongs, all tumult and uproar, and of them we say no more.

Now the story tells how Pilgrim returned the fire-repelling screen, and with one somersault carried it up to the South Gate of Heaven and gave it back to Heavenly King Guangmu, saying: "Thanks for the loan! Thanks for the loan!" The Heavenly King received it, saying: "The Great Sage is a man of his word. I was just worrying you would never bring my treasure back, and that I'd have nowhere to seek it—how good that you bring it so promptly!" Pilgrim said: "Is old Sun the sort to swindle a man of his goods to his face? This is called 'borrow in good order, return in good order, and the next loan comes easy.'" The Heavenly King said: "Long since we've met not. Will you come into my palace and sit a while?" Pilgrim said: "Old Sun is not what he was before, when we could 'rot the bench with lofty talk'; now that I protect the Tang monk I can't be idle. Another time! Another time!" He took his leave in haste and dropped from the clouds, and there was the sun coming up.

He came straight to the front of the meditation hall, shook himself, changed into a bee, flew in, resumed his true form, and looked—his master was still sound asleep.

Pilgrim called: "Master, it's day. Time to get up."

Only then did Sanzang wake, and rolling over he said: "So it is." He dressed, opened the door, came out, and suddenly lifted his head: nothing but toppled walls and red brick, and no halls or towers to be seen.

He cried out in alarm: "Ah! Where are all the halls and towers gone? Nothing but red walls—how is this?"

Pilgrim said: "You're still dreaming! The fire got loose in the night." Sanzang said: "How is it I knew nothing of it?" Pilgrim said: "It was old Sun who shielded the meditation hall. I saw you in deep sleep and did not disturb you." Sanzang said: "If you had the power to shield the meditation hall, why not save the other rooms from the fire as well?" Pilgrim laughed: "Let me tell you, Master. It happened just as you said yesterday: they fell in love with our cassock and plotted to burn us to death. If old Sun had not found out, by now we'd both be ash and bone!" Sanzang heard this with fear: "It was they who set the fire?" Pilgrim said: "If not they, who?" Sanzang said: "Could it be that they neglected you, and this is your doing?" Pilgrim said: "Is old Sun the sort of idle scoundrel to do such wicked deeds? Truly it was those monks who set it. When I saw how black their hearts were, to be sure I didn't put out their fire—I just lent it a wee bit of wind." Sanzang said: "Heaven help us! Heaven help us! When fire breaks out you should lend water—how could you lend wind?" Pilgrim said: "You know what the ancients said: 'When no man means the tiger harm, the tiger means no man

harm.' If you hadn't stirred up fire, would I ever have stirred up wind?" Sanzang said: "Where is the cassock? Don't say it's burned to ruin!" Pilgrim said: "No fear! No fear! It isn't burned! There was no fire in the abbot's quarters where the cassock lay." Sanzang said bitterly: "I'll hold you to it! If there's the least damage to it, I have only to recite that little something, and you're a dead monkey!" Pilgrim panicked: "Master, don't recite it! Don't recite it! I guarantee I'll find your cassock and return it. Let me go fetch it so we can be on our way." Sanzang led the horse, Pilgrim shouldered the load, they left the meditation hall and went straight to the abbot's quarters at the rear.

Now the story tells how those monks, in the midst of their grieving, suddenly saw master and disciple come along, leading the horse and carrying the load, and were so frightened that every soul flew scattering: "The vengeful ghosts have come for our lives!" Pilgrim shouted: "What vengeful ghosts come for lives! Hand back my cassock, and quick!" All the monks fell to their knees and kowtowed: "Grandpa! Every wrong has its author, every debt its debtor. If it's lives you've come for, that's no business of ours. It was Guangmou and the old monk who laid the plans to harm you—don't demand our lives!" Pilgrim barked: "Damn you doomed beasts! Who asked you for any lives! Just bring the cassock and give it back so we can be gone!" Among them two monks of stouter nerve said: "Honored master, you were burned to death in the meditation hall. Now you come back demanding the cassock—are you men, or ghosts?" Pilgrim laughed: "You brood of sinful beasts! What fire was there, pray? Go look at the meditation hall out front, then come back and talk!" The monks scrambled up and went forward to look: outside the meditation hall the doors, windows, and lattice panels had not been scorched by half an inch.

At that the whole company shuddered in awe, and they recognized at last that Sanzang was a divine monk and Pilgrim a guardian of the Law.

They came forward together and kowtowed: "We had eyes but saw not the true man come down to earth! Your cassock is with the Old Founder, in the abbot's quarters at the rear."

Sanzang passed through three or five layers of broken walls and ruined brick, sighing without cease.

The abbot's quarters indeed had no fire. The monks rushed inside, calling: "Grandpa! The Tang monk is a divine man—the fire did not kill him, and now you've only destroyed your own household! Bring out the cassock at once and return it to him, and let him go!"

Now this old monk had lost the cassock and burned down his own monastery's halls, and was in the very depths of desperation and burning anguish. When he heard these words, how could he answer? Finding no way out, neither advance nor retreat, he strode off, bent his back, and dashed his head full force against the wall. The pity of it! He dashed his skull broken and the blood streaming, his soul scattered; the breath cut short in his throat, he dyed the red sand. There is a poem in witness:

Lament the old monk, so foolish and besotted, Who wore out a long life in the world of men for naught. He longed to keep the cassock for generations hence— How could he know a Buddha-pearl brooks no common fate? To take the easy for the lasting ever Is surely to reap desolation and defeat. What use were Guangzhi and Guangmou's schemes? To harm others, to profit self—all ended in a dream!

The monks wailed in panic: "The Grand-master has dashed himself to death, and the cassock is nowhere—what are we to do?"

Pilgrim said: "I suspect you lot have stolen and hidden it! All of you, come out! Draw up your registers with every name inscribed, and old Sun will search you one by one!" The abbots of the upper and lower quarters drew up two rosters of every monk, novice, acolyte, and serving brother in the monastery—two hundred and thirty souls in all, great and small. Pilgrim seated his master on high, then called the roll from the top, searching each man: all had to loosen their garments and be examined one by one—but there was no cassock.

Then all the chests, baskets, and goods that the quarters had hauled out and snatched away he searched through, item by item, from the first—but nowhere was there a trace of it.

Sanzang's heart was heavy with worry, and his resentment of Pilgrim knew no bounds; he sat up on high and began to recite the spell.

Pilgrim collapsed to the ground, clutching his head, past all bearing, crying only: "Don't recite it! Don't recite it! I guarantee I'll find your cassock!"

At the sight of him the monks, trembling one and all, came forward on their knees to plead for him, and only then did Sanzang close his mouth and stop.

With a bound Pilgrim leapt up, drew the iron staff from his ear, and would have beaten those monks, but Sanzang shouted him down: "You ape! Your head's not done aching and you dare be insolent again? Hands off! Harm no one! Question them once more!"

The monks kowtowed and made offerings, pleading to Sanzang: "Honored master, spare our lives! Truly we never laid eyes on it. It is all that dead old wretch's doing. Last night he looked upon your cassock and wept until the late watches—never once dared look at it close—then, scheming to keep it forever as an heirloom, he plotted with the others to burn you to death. When the fire broke out a wild wind rose, and each man was bent only on quenching the fire and hauling off his goods; where the cassock went, no one knows." Pilgrim fell into a fury. He went into the abbot's room, carried out the corpse of the wall-smashed ghost, stripped it, and examined it closely: nowhere on the whole body was that treasure.

He had the abbot's quarters dug three feet deep as well—still no trace.

Pilgrim pondered a good while, then asked: "Are there any monsters or spirits turned demon in these parts?"

The abbot said: "Had the honored master not asked, it would never have come out. Due southeast of us stands Black Wind Mountain. In Black Wind Cave lives the Great Black King. That dead old wretch of ours often discussed the Way with him. He, indeed, is a demon spirit. There's nothing else about." Pilgrim said: "How far is that mountain from here?" The abbot said: "Only twenty li. That mountain top you see yonder is it." Pilgrim laughed: "Master, set your mind at ease; there's no more to say. It must certainly be that black monster stole it." Sanzang said: "His place is twenty li from here—how can you be so sure it was he?" Pilgrim said: "Didn't you see that fire last night? Its light leapt ten thousand li and its glare pierced the threefold heavens. Never mind twenty li—even two hundred li it would have shown! I'll stake it that he saw the blazing glow and seized his chance, came here on the sly, saw our cassock was a treasure, and made off with it in the confusion. Wait till old Sun goes and hunts him out." Sanzang said: "If you go, whom have I to lean on?" Pilgrim said: "On that score, rest easy: unseen spirits will guard you in the dark, while openly I'll have these monks wait on you." He called the monks over at once and said: "Some of you go bury that old ghost; some of you wait on my master and tend my white horse!" The monks assented.

Pilgrim went on: "None of your loose promises now—answering while I'm here and forgetting me once I'm gone. Those who watch my master must keep smiling faces; those who tend the white horse must balance his water and fodder. If there is one hair's worth of neglect, I'll show you this staff of mine, the very same way!"

He drew out the staff and, with a resounding smack against the fire-scorched brick wall, smashed it to fragments, and brought seven or eight more courses of wall tumbling down.

At the sight every monk went limp to the bone, and kneeling they kowtowed and wept: "Grandpa, go with an easy heart! We will serve the honored master with all our strength and all devotion, and never dare the least neglect!"

A fine Pilgrim! He leapt at once upon his somersault cloud and went straight to Black Wind Mountain to hunt for the cassock.

Truly:

The Chan master, seeking truth, left the capital's bounds; Staff in hand he set out west, through the emerald hills. Where he walked, tigers, leopards, wolves and beasts were always found; Artisans, scholars, travelers were rarely seen. On the road he met a foolish monk of an alien land, envious— And had to lean upon the Great Sage Equal to Heaven's might. Fire broke, wind rose, the Chan monastery was destroyed; By night the black bear stole the brocade cassock away.

Whether that quest found the cassock or no, what fortune or misfortune came—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 17

Sun Pilgrim Wreaks Havoc on Black Wind Mountain; Guanshiyin Subdues the Black Bear Spirit

The story tells how Sun Pilgrim leapt up with a single somersault, frightening the monks of the Guanyin Monastery, great and small, novices, acolytes, and serving brothers, until one and all bowed to the sky in worship, crying: "Grandpa! So it is a divine sage come down to earth, riding cloud and mist! No wonder the fire could not harm you! Curse that old flayed hide of ours who could not tell a man—he schemed and schemed, and today has done himself in!"

Sanzang said: "Gentlemen, rise; there's no need for hatred. If we go now and find the cassock, all is at an end. But I fear that if it can't be found—my disciple has something of a temper, and I know not what will become of your lives; I doubt a single one of you would escape." At these words every monk's heart leapt into his throat. They prayed to Heaven and vowed their vows: if only the cassock could be found, each would keep his life entire—and of them we say no more.

Now the story tells how the Great Sage Sun reached the void, gave his waist one twist, and arrived at once on Black Wind Mountain. He brought his cloud to a stop and looked carefully: it was indeed a fine mountain. And it was just the season of spring. Just see:

Ten thousand ravines racing streams, a thousand cliffs vying in beauty. Birds called unseen; flowers fell, yet the trees kept their fragrance. The rain gone by, the sky joined the green cliffs, glistening; the wind came, and the pines unrolled their screens of jade. Mountain grasses sprouting, wild flowers opening on sheer precipices and beetling crags; fig-vines climbing, fine trees fair on steep ridges and level banks. If you meet no hermit here, where will you find a woodcutter? By the stream two cranes drink; on the rocks wild gibbons romp. Piled high as whorled shells, ranged in eyebrow-black; towering grandly, embracing green, playing with mountain mist.

As Pilgrim was admiring the scenery, he suddenly heard voices on the fragrant-grass slope. Treading lightly, concealing his tracks, he slipped beneath the rock cliff and stole a look. It was three demons, sitting on the ground: at the head a black fellow; at his left, below, a Daoist; at his right, below, a white-robed scholar. All were holding forth in lofty discourse. Their talk was of setting up the tripod and installing the furnace, of kneading cinnabar and refining mercury—snow-white and yellow-sprout, sidetrack arts and heresy.

In the midst of the talk the black fellow laughed: "The day after tomorrow is the day of my mother's suffering. Will you two gentlemen do me the honor of attending?"

The white-robed scholar said: "Every year we come to wish the Great King long life. How could this year be an exception?" The black fellow said: "Last night I obtained a treasure, called the brocade Buddha-robe, truly a thing of rare delight. Tomorrow I shall celebrate my birthday with it: I'll open a grand banquet and invite the Daoist officials of every mountain to rejoice over the Buddha-robe. We'll call it the 'Buddha-Robe Banquet'—what say you?" The Daoist laughed: "Marvelous! Marvelous! Tomorrow I'll come first to offer birthday greetings, and the day after I'll come again for the feast."

When Pilgrim heard talk of the Buddha-robe, he knew at once it must be his treasure.

He could no longer hold back his wrath. He sprang out from the rock cliff, raised the gold-banded cudgel in both hands, and shouted: "Damn you thieving monsters! You've stolen my cassock, and now you'd hold a 'Buddha-Robe Banquet'! Bring it back here this instant!"

With a cry of "Stand not!" he swung the staff and struck at the head. In terror the black fellow fled as a gust of wind and the Daoist escaped on a cloud; only the white-robed scholar did he fell with one blow. Dragging him over to look, he found it was a white flower-speckled snake demon. So, seizing him outright, he dashed

him into five or seven pieces and went straight into the deep mountains to hunt for that black fellow.

Rounding a sharp peak, skirting steep ridges, he saw before a sheer cliff a cave dwelling towering out. Just see it:

Mists and rosy haze far-drifting, pines and cypresses dense and deep. Mists and rosy haze far-drifting—gathered splendor fills the gate; pines and cypresses dense and deep—green encircles the door. The bridge is trodden wood of withered branch; on the peak's summit fig-vines wind. Birds carry red petals to the cloudy ravine; deer tread fragrant thickets up the stone terrace. Before that gate the seasons haste the flowers to bloom; the wind bears fragrance of flowers. Along the dike, green willows and orioles warbling; beside the bank, young peach trees and pink butterflies fluttering. Though a wild waste that none would praise, it rivals the scenery below Mount Penglai.

When Pilgrim came to the front, he saw two stone doors shut fast. Above them was a horizontal stone tablet plainly inscribed with six great characters: "Black Wind Mountain, Black Wind Cave."

He swung his staff and called: "Open up!" A junior demon who kept the gate opened the doors and came out, asking: "Who are you, that dare come beat upon our immortal cave?" Pilgrim cursed: "You beast courting death! What sort of place is this, to call itself an immortal cave! Is the word 'immortal' for the likes of you? Get inside quick and report to that black fellow of yours: tell him to send your Grandpa's cassock out at once, and I'll spare the whole nest of you your lives!"

The junior demon scurried inside and reported: "Great King! The 'Buddha-Robe Banquet' is off! There's a hairy-faced, thunder-god-beaked monk outside, come to demand the cassock!"

That black fellow had been chased by Pilgrim from the fragrant-grass slope; he had barely shut his door and sat down, and was not yet settled.

Hearing this, he thought to himself: "Where in the world can this fellow have come from, to be so unmannerly—daring to bawl at my very gate!"

He called: "Bring my armor." When he was duly accoutered, he gripped a black-tasseled spear and walked out the door. Pilgrim slipped to one side outside, staff in hand, and stared. The monster was truly a fearsome sight:

An iron helmet like a bowl, lacquered with fire-bright gloss; dark-gold armor gleaming brilliant. A black gauze robe covers sleeves that bell in the wind; a black-green silk sash trails its tassels long. In his hand a black-tasseled spear; on his feet a pair of black leather boots. His eyes flash, golden orbs like lightning—he is the Black Wind King of the mountains.

Pilgrim laughed to himself: "This wretch is truly like a kiln-burner's brother, a coal-hewer's twin! He must make his living here scrubbing charcoal—how else could he be so black from head to foot?"

The monster shouted in a harsh voice: "What sort of monk are you, to dare behave so boldly on my ground?" Pilgrim strode up to him, staff in hand, and thundered: "None of your chatter! Hand back your Grandpa's cassock, and quick!" The monster said: "Which monastery's monk are you? Where did you lose this cassock of yours, that you dare come here demanding it?" Pilgrim said: "My cassock was kept in the abbot's quarters behind the Guanyin Monastery due north of here. When the fire broke out in that place, you wretch, you plundered in the confusion, stole it away, and now would hold a 'Buddha-Robe Banquet' to celebrate your birthday. How dare you deny it? Return it at once, and I'll spare your life! If one half of the word 'no' crosses your teeth, I'll topple Black Wind Mountain, flatten Black Wind Cave, and grind this whole den of fiends of yours into powder!"

At this the monster laughed coldly: "You reckless thing! So it was you who set that fire last night! Up on the roof of the abbot's quarters, working your violence and stirring up the wind—it was I who carried off a cassock. What are you going to do about it? Where do you come from? What's your surname, your name? What powers have you, to dare spout such wild boasts?"

Pilgrim said: "So you don't know your old Grandpa! Your old Grandpa is the disciple of the Tripitaka Master, Sanzang, the sworn brother of the Tang emperor of the great superior kingdom. My surname is Sun; my name, Wukong, Pilgrim. If you ask after old Sun's powers—once told, they'll send your soul flying and your spirit scattering, and you'll drop dead on the spot!" The monster said: "I've never met you. What powers—tell them, and I'll listen." Pilgrim laughed: "My son, stand steady and hear me out!

From boyhood, my magic powers were high; I lorded it in transformations with the wind. I nurtured my nature, refined the true, through days and months, Leapt from the wheel of rebirth and fled my doom. With one true heart I once went seeking the Way, On the Numinous Terrace Mountain gathering drug sprouts. On that mountain lived an ancient immortal, A hundred and eight thousand years of age. Old Sun bowed to him and made him master; He pointed me a single road of long life. He said: within the body lies the elixir; To seek it outside is toil thrown away. He passed me down the Great Recipe of heaven's immortals— Without the root, it truly is hard going.

Turn the light inward, still the heart, and sit; Within the body, sun and moon, Kan and Li, unite. Brood on nothing, be wholly free of desire; The six roots cleansed, the body stands fast. To turn from old age back to youth is easy won; The road from common clay to sage is not far. Three years without leak, an immortal body made, Unlike the vulgar brood that seethes in woe. I roamed and sported through the Ten Continents and Three Isles; I made the round of ocean's corners and sky's ends. A full three hundred years and more I lived, Yet could not wing aloft into the ninefold heavens. First came the treasure true that tames the dragons— The single gold-banded staff in hand.

Before the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit I stood as chief; In the Water Curtain Cave I gathered demon hosts. The Jade Emperor grandly issued his decree: I was made Great Sage, of highest peerless rank. Time and again I wrecked the Hall of Divine Mists; Oft I stole the Queen Mother's peaches too. A hundred thousand heavenly soldiers came to subdue me, Layer upon layer, dense with spears and blades. I beat back the Heavenly Kings to the upper world; Nezha, smarting, fled at the head of his troops. The True Lord who shows forth his sagehood masters transformation— Old Sun matched him trick for trick, and fought to a draw. The Patriarch of the Way, Guanyin, and the Jade Emperor Watched from the South Gate as the demon was subdued.

Then the Old Lord lent a hand in the fight, And Erlang seized me and brought me to Heaven's court. They bound my body to the Demon-Subduing Pillar And ordered the divine troops to take my head. Blades hacked and hammers pounded—no harm at all; Then thunder was called to strike me, fire to burn. Old Sun indeed has means of his own, And never feared them half a hair. They threw me into Lord Lao Zi's furnace, The divine fire of the Six Ding slow-simmering me. The days complete, the furnace opened—I leapt out, Iron staff in hand, and ran wild through the heavens. Unhindered, unchecked, wherever I went, I raised an uproar through the Thirty-Three Heavens.

Then my Buddha, the Tathagata, worked his magic power: Five Elements Mountain pressed old Sun by the waist. A full five hundred years it held me down, Till, blessed by fortune, Sanzang came forth from Tang. Today I've turned to the true faith and go west, To climb to the Thunderclap and behold the Jade Hare. Go ask through all the seas and the world of things: I am the most notorious demon of every age!"

At this the monster laughed: "So you're the Protector of Horses who wrecked Heaven's palace!" Nothing stung Pilgrim more than being called Protector of Horses; hearing it, his heart flared with wrath. He cursed: "You thieving monster! You steal the cassock and won't return it, and you insult your Grandpa on top of it!

Don't run! Taste my staff!" The black fellow swayed aside to dodge, gripped his long spear, and met him hand to hand. What a battle the two of them fought:

The As-You-Will staff, the black-tasseled spear: Two champions flaunt their might before the cave. Thrust at the heart, slash at the face; Strike at the arm, smite upon the head. This one sweeps a low and crooked blow; That one thrusts quick, three spears in a breath. The White Tiger climbs the hill, its claws outreaching; The Yellow Dragon couches on the road, wheeling round. They spew colored mist, they spit portentous light: Two demon immortals past all reckoning— One, a Great Sage made perfect, matched with Heaven; One, a Black Great King become a spirit. This strife upon the mountain, rank against rank, All for a cassock, and neither one in the right.

The monster fought Pilgrim a dozen rounds and more, with neither victor nor vanquished.

Slowly the red sun climbed to noon. The black fellow raised his spear to lock the iron staff and said: "Sun Pilgrim! Let us two withdraw for now. Wait till I've had my meal, then I'll have it out with you again."

Pilgrim said: "You beast—do you call yourself a man? A fine man, wanting dinner after half a day? Old Sun was pinned at the foot of a mountain a full five hundred years and more, and never tasted broth or water—how could I be hungry? No excuses! Don't run! Give back my cassock, and then you may go eat!" The monster feinted with his spear, slipped away into the cave, shut the stone doors, called in his junior fiends, and set about arranging the banquet and writing invitations to the demon kings of every mountain for the feast—and of that we say no more.

Pilgrim battered at the doors without opening them, and had no choice but to return to the Guanyin Monastery. The monks of the place had by now buried the old monk and were all in the abbot's quarters waiting on the Tang monk. Breakfast was over, and the noon meal already laid. As they were ladling broth and changing the water, Pilgrim dropped out of the sky. The monks bowed and led him into the abbot's quarters to see Sanzang.

Sanzang said: "Wukong, you're back? What of the cassock?"

Pilgrim said: "The trail is found. It was no injustice to those monks after all. It was the demon of Black Wind Mountain stole it. Old Sun went hunting for him quietly, and there he was with a white-robed scholar and an old Daoist, sitting and talking on the fragrant-grass slope. He too was a monster who confesses unprompted: he suddenly let out that the day after tomorrow is his birthday, and he's inviting all the fiends to celebrate; that last night he got a brocade Buddha-robe, and means to make it his birthday show, hold a grand banquet called the 'Buddha-Robe Feast of Celebration.' Old Sun rushed at him and struck a blow; the black fellow fled as wind, the Daoist too was gone, and only the white-robed scholar did I kill—and he was a white flower-speckled snake turned spirit. Then I hurried to his cave doors and called him out to fight me. He's already confessed that he carried it home. We fought half the day without a victor. The monster went back into his cave saying he wanted dinner, shut the stone doors, and won't come out for fear of battle. Old Sun came back to look in on you, Master, and report the news first. The cassock's whereabouts are known—never fear he won't return it."

At these words the monks pressed their palms, kowtowed, and all intoned: "Namo Amitabha Buddha! Today the trail is found, and our lives at least are saved!"

Pilgrim said: "Now don't go celebrating too soon. It's not in my hands yet, and my master hasn't set out the gate. Only when the cassock is had and my master is sent safely out the door will your ease begin. If there's the least mischance, old Sun is not a master to be trifled with! Have you fed my master good tea and rice? Have you fed the horse good hay?" The monks answered with full mouths: "We have! We have! We have! Never once have we dared slight the honored master in the least." Sanzang said: "In the half day since you left, I've already had tea three times and two meals. They haven't dared be slow with me. Only—do you still

go all-out to fetch the cassock back?" Pilgrim said: "No hurry. The trail is found; I guarantee I'll collar that wretch and return your property whole. Set your mind at ease!" As they talked, the abbot of the upper quarters prepared vegetarian fare and invited Master Sun to eat.

Pilgrim ate a little, mounted his auspicious cloud again, and went off hunting once more.

On the way he saw a junior demon coming along the high road, a rosewood box tucked under his left arm. Pilgrim reckoned there must be some letter or card inside. He raised his staff, brought it down on the head, and—the pity of it—he couldn't stand the blow: he was smashed flat as a meat patty. Pilgrim dragged him to the roadside, opened the box, and looked: sure enough, an invitation. It read:

"Your humble servant the Bear humbly bows and presents this to the Dan Chamber of the Venerable Elder Golden Pool, Great Expounder: Many times have I received your kind bounty, for which my gratitude is deep as the sea. Last night I witnessed the calamity of Huilu, and failed to bring rescue; yet I trust that by immortal foresight you have come to no harm. Your servant has lately obtained a Buddha-robe, and would make of it an elegant gathering. I have modestly prepared a flowered feast and presume to invite your discerning enjoyment. On the day, a thousand prayers that your immortal carriage grace us with a visit for a talk together. Herewith my thanks. Written two days before."

When Pilgrim saw it he roared with laughter: "That old flayed hide didn't die a hair too soon! So he was in league with demons! No wonder he lived to two hundred and seventy. That monster must have passed him some little breath-cultivating tricks, and that's how he lasted so long. Old Sun still remembers his looks. Wait—I'll change into that old monk, stroll into his cave, and see where my cassock is kept. If I can lay hands on it, I'll carry it straight home, and save a deal of labor."

A fine Great Sage! He muttered the spell, faced the wind, changed—and indeed he looked exactly like that old monk. He hid his iron staff, strode off, came straight to the cave doors, and called: "Open up!"

The junior demon opened the doors, saw the figure, and hurried back to report: "Great King, Elder Golden Pool is here."

The monster was greatly startled: "I just sent a little one with the invitation; he couldn't have gotten there yet. How could he come so fast? The little one must have missed him on the road—no, it must be Sun Pilgrim who called him up to demand the cassock. Steward! Hide the Buddha-robe—don't let him see it!"

Pilgrim entered the front gate and saw the courtyard: pine and bamboo mingling their green, peach and plum vying in beauty, flowers blooming in clusters, orchid fragrance in clumps—truly a place of cave-heaven charm. On the second gate he saw a couplet written: "Still hidden in deep mountains, no vulgar cares; dwelling at ease in the immortal cave, delighting in innocence."

Pilgrim thought: "This wretch is a monster too that has shed the filth and left the dust, one who knows his fate."

He entered the gate, pressed on forward, and in the third court within found painted beams and carved rafters, bright windows and decorated doors. He saw that the black fellow wore a black-green ramie jacket covered by a crow-flower blue silk cloak, a black-horned soft cap on his head, and a pair of black suede boots.

Seeing Pilgrim come in, he straightened his cap and robe and came down the steps to greet him: "Old friend Golden Pool—days on end without the pleasure of your company! Be seated, be seated."

Pilgrim returned his courtesy. The greetings done, they sat; seated, they took tea.

Tea over, the demon rose slightly from his seat: "I have just sent a little note announcing a gathering the day after tomorrow. How is it, old friend, that you favor me with a visit today?"

Pilgrim said: "I was coming precisely to pay my respects, when unexpectedly I met your elegant letter on the road and read of a 'Buddha-Robe Eleganth Gathering.' That is why I hastened here—may I beg a look at it?" The monster laughed: "Old friend, you're mistaken. The cassock belongs to the Tang monk. He lodged in your place—how could you not have seen it? Why come to me to look at it?" Pilgrim said: "This humble monk borrowed it, but night had fallen and I never unrolled it to view, when, who'd have thought it, the Great King took it away. Then the fire burned my poor mountain and destroyed my household goods. The Tang monk's disciple is rather bold and fierce besides, and in all the hurly-burly we hunted for it high and low and could not find it. Now I learn it was gathered in by the Great King's vast fortune, and so I have come especially for a look."

Just as they were talking, a little demon who patrolled the mountain came in and reported: "Great King! Disaster! The junior who carried the invitation was beaten to death by Sun Pilgrim by the side of the high road! And that Pilgrim has taken advantage of the errand, changed himself into Elder Golden Pool, and come to swindle the Buddha-robe!"

Hearing this, the monster thought: "I wondered how that Elder could come today, and come so fast—it is indeed he!" He sprang up, seized his spear, and stabbed at Pilgrim. Pilgrim whipped the staff out of his ear, resumed his true form, caught the spear-point on it, and leapt out of that central hall; from the courtyard they fought their way out past the front gate, frightening every fiend in the cave out of its wits, and all the household, old and young, clean out of their souls.

This battle on the mountain top was a finer bout than the last. What a fight:

The Monkey King, bold-hearted, played the monk; The black fellow, cunning, hid the Buddha-robe. Word for word the openings came by luck; Each turned with the occasion, nothing missed. The cassock wished-for might by no means be seen— The treasure's subtle mystery, truly wondrous fine. The little demon, scanning hills, brought news of woe; The old fiend, flaring into rage, showed forth his might. He wheeled and fought his way from Black Wind Cave; Spear against cudgel, they contended, right and wrong. The staff met the long spear with ringing clash; The spear met the iron staff with flashing light. Wukong's transformations few are found on earth; Such demon magic's rare in all the world.

This one would celebrate his birthday with the Buddha-robe; That one would never leave in peace without the cassock. This bitter war could find no parting blow— A living Buddha, come to earth, could not have solved the knot.

The two of them fought from the cave mouth up to the mountain top, from the mountain top out beyond the clouds, breathing fog and spouting wind, flying sand and rolling stones, and they fought until the red sun sank west, still with neither victor nor vanquished.

The monster said: "Sun! Hold your hand. The day is late—ill suited for carrying on. Go! Go! Come at first light tomorrow, and we'll settle it, life or death."

Pilgrim shouted: "Don't run, son! If you mean to fight, fight like a man—you can't plead the lateness of the day!" But see him lay on with the staff, blow after blow at head and face—and the black fellow turned again into a cool breeze and slipped back to his own cave, bolted the stone doors, and would not come out.

Pilgrim had no stratagem to best him, and had no choice but to return to the Guanyin Monastery too. He brought down his cloud and hailed his master. Sanzang had been watching for him with longing eyes. Suddenly seeing him there, he was overjoyed; then he saw there was no cassock in his hands, and was afraid again.

He asked: "How is it you still haven't the cassock this time?"

Pilgrim drew the invitation from his sleeve, handed it to Sanzang, and said: "Master, that monster and the dead old flayed hide were friends from the first. He sent a little demon with this card, inviting him to the 'Buddha-Robe Banquet.' Old Sun did the little demon to death, changed into that old monk, went into his cave, and swindled a cup of tea. I meant to ask for a look at the cassock, but he wouldn't bring it out. As we were sitting there, some wind-patrol creature or other leaked the word, and he fell upon me fighting. We fought until this hour without winner or loser. He saw the day was late, dodged back into his cave, and barred the stone doors. Old Sun, helpless, came back for the moment." Sanzang said: "How do your powers compare with his?" Pilgrim said: "I'm not a whit the better—we fought to a stand-off."

Only then did Sanzang read the invitation, and he handed it to the abbot: "Could your master have been a demon too?"

The abbot hurriedly fell to his knees: "Honored master, my master was a man. It was only that the Great Black King had cultivated human form and often came to the monastery to discuss scripture with my master; he passed on to him some arts of nourishing the spirit and swallowing the breath, and so they called each other friends." Pilgrim said: "These monks have no demon smell about them: each of them has a round head holding up the sky and square feet treading the earth—only they're a bit fatter and taller than old Sun. Not demons. Look at the card: it's signed 'your humble servant the Bear.' The thing must be a black bear turned spirit." Sanzang said: "I've heard the ancients say: 'Bears are akin to the ape.' Both are beasts—how could it become a spirit?" Pilgrim laughed: "Old Sun is of the beast kind himself, and look—Great Sage Equal to Heaven! What's the difference? In general, of all the things in this world, whatever has nine apertures can cultivate the Way and become an immortal." Sanzang said again: "You said just now his skill was even with yours. How then will you win, and fetch my cassock back?" Pilgrim said: "Never mind, never mind. I have ways to deal with him."

As they were conferring, the monks laid the evening meal and invited master and disciple to eat. Sanzang had lamps brought and went again to rest in the meditation hall in front. The monks all huddled against the walls, propped up their makeshift shelters, and lay down each where he could, yielding the rear abbot's quarters to the abbots of the upper and lower houses. At that still hour of night, just see:

The Silver River showing its shadow, the jade firmament without dust. The whole sky's stars in splendor, the river's waves folding away their traces. The myriad sounds stilled, the thousand mountains birdless. The fisher's fire by the stream gone out, the Buddha lamp on the pagoda burned dim. Last night the precentor's bell and drum resounded; tonight, on every side, the sound of weeping.

That night they lodged in the meditation hall. But Sanzang, brooding on the cassock, how could he sleep soundly?

Suddenly he rolled over, saw the window whitening, rose in haste and called: "Wukong, it's day! Go quickly and find the cassock."

Pilgrim sprang up with a roll.

The monks were already standing in attendance, offering hot water. Pilgrim said: "You lot, wait on my master with all your hearts. Old Sun is off."

Sanzang got down from the couch and caught hold of him: "Where are you going?" Pilgrim said: "I've been thinking: this whole business is the Bodhisattva Guanyin's fault. She has this monastery here, enjoys the incense and offerings of these people's households—and then lets a demon spirit live next door! I'm off to the Southern Sea to find her and have a word or three with her—make her come in person and make the demon hand back my cassock." Sanzang said: "And when will you be back?" Pilgrim said: "Soon, right after the meal; late, by midday—it will be done. Monks, serve my master well. Old Sun is off."

The word "off" was scarcely out before he was gone without a trace. In a moment he reached the Southern Sea. He stopped his cloud and looked. Just see:

The vast ocean stretching far, the waters joining the sky. Auspicious light envelops the universe; propitious vapor shines upon hills and streams. A thousand tiers of snowy waves roar against the blue heavens; ten thousand folds of misty billows roll beneath the day. Water flying across the four wilds, waves churning all around. Water flying across the four wilds, shaking with rolling thunder; waves churning all around, crashing with bolts of lightning. Say nothing of the water's power—look only at the middle: five colors blur upon the piled jewel of a mountain, red, yellow, purple, black, green, and blue. Here you see Guanyin's true and matchless realm—behold Mount Potalaka of the Southern Sea. What a place! The mountain peak towers high, its summit piercing the void.

In the midst, a thousand kinds of rare flowers, a hundred sorts of auspicious grasses. Wind sways the jeweled trees, sun gilds the golden lotus. The tiles of Guanyin's hall are laid with glazed glass; the doors of the Tide-Sound Cave are paved with tortoiseshell. In the shade of green willows parrots chatter; in the purple bamboo grove peacocks cry. On the mottle-veined stone, guardians stern and majestical; before the agate shore, Muzha stalwart and grand.

Pilgrim could not see the end of that extraordinary scenery. He brought his cloud straight down beneath the bamboo grove. The Guardians of Heaven came out to meet him at once: "The Bodhisattva told us all before this that the Great Sage had turned to the good, and spoke most highly of it. Now that you protect the Tang monk, how do you find leisure to come here?" Pilgrim said: "In protecting the Tang monk I've met with a matter on the road. I've come especially to see the Bodhisattva—pray announce me." The Guardians went to the cave mouth and reported. The Bodhisattva bade him enter.

Pilgrim went in as the Law prescribed and bowed beneath the lotus throne.

The Bodhisattva asked: "What brings you here?" Pilgrim said: "My master came upon your monastery on his road. You accept the incense of the world of men, yet you let a black bear spirit live there as neighbor, and he has stolen my master's cassock. Repeatedly I've demanded it, and he won't give it up—so now I've come to demand it of you." The Bodhisattva said: "How unmannerly this monkey's talk is! If a bear spirit stole your cassock, why come demanding it of me? It is all your doing, you sinful ape, you daredevil—flaunting the treasure, showing it to small-minded men! Then you turned violent besides: you called the wind and raised the fire, burned down my Cloud-Resting Branch Monastery, and now you come to my place to play your tricks!" When Pilgrim heard the Bodhisattva speak so, he knew she was aware of things past and things to come, and he hurriedly bowed: "Bodhisattva, I beg forgiveness for your disciple's fault—truly it was as you say. But that hateful monster will not give me the cassock, and my master is all for reciting that little spell of his. Old Sun couldn't bear the headache, and so I came to trouble the Bodhisattva. I pray the Bodhisattva, in her heart of mercy, help me seize that demon and recover the cassock, that we may go on west." The Bodhisattva said: "That monster has considerable magic—not one whit less than yours. Still and all, for the Tang monk's sake I'll go with you a round." Pilgrim thanked her, bowing again and again.

He begged the Bodhisattva come out, and together they mounted the auspicious cloud and soon reached Black Wind Mountain. They brought the cloud down and followed the path to find the cave.

As they walked, a Daoist came out from the hillside before them, carrying a glass tray in his hand, two pills of immortality laid upon it, walking straight ahead. Pilgrim ran full into him, whipped out his staff, and with one blow to the head smashed the brains flowing out and the blood spouting from the cavity.

The Bodhisattva cried out in alarm: "You monkey—still so wanton! He never stole your cassock, he's no acquaintance of yours, there's no feud between you—how could you strike him dead?"

Pilgrim said: "Bodhisattva, you wouldn't know him. He's the black bear spirit's friend. Yesterday he was sitting and holding forth with a white-robed scholar on the fragrant-grass slope. The day after tomorrow is the black bear spirit's birthday, and he's invited them to celebrate the 'Buddha-Robe Banquet.' Today he comes first to offer birthday greetings, tomorrow for the feast—that's how I know him. He must be on his way to offer birthday felicitations for the demon today." The Bodhisattva said: "If that's how it stands, so be it." Pilgrim then went and lifted the Daoist to look at him: he was a gray wolf.

On the underside of that tray there were characters engraved: "Made by Lingxu Zi."

When Pilgrim saw this, he laughed: "Luck! Luck! Old Sun profits, and the Bodhisattva saves her strength. This monster may be called a self-confessing one—and that little message settles the other's account today."

The Bodhisattva said: "Wukong, what does this mean?" Pilgrim said: "Bodhisattva, your Wukong has a little saying: 'turn their own trick against them.' I wonder if the Bodhisattva will consent to follow me?" The Bodhisattva said: "Speak." Pilgrim said: "Bodhisattva, look: in this tray are two pills of the elixir—those will be our gift of introduction to the demon. And the four characters engraved on the back of the tray, 'Made by Lingxu Zi,' will be our token of appointment with the demon. If the Bodhisattva will consent to my way, I can devise a plan for you: no need to move weapon or spear, no need for the labor of battle—the demon will meet his plague this very hour, and the Buddha-robe appear this very hour. But if the Bodhisattva won't follow me, then the Bodhisattva may go west and Wukong will go east, the Buddha-robe may count as a gift given away, and the Tang Sanzang may count as a man left empty-handed." The Bodhisattva laughed: "You glib-tongued monkey!" Pilgrim said: "Not glib—a genuine plan." The Bodhisattva said: "And what is this plan of yours?" Pilgrim said: "The tray is engraved 'Made by Lingxu Zi'—this Daoist, I take it, is called Lingxu Zi. If the Bodhisattva will follow me, then you change into this Daoist. I'll swallow one of the pills and change myself into another, just a little bigger. The Bodhisattva carries this tray, with the two elixir pills, and goes to offer birthday greetings to the demon, letting him have the bigger of the two pills. The moment the demon swallows it down in one gulp, old Sun will work my business inside him; and if he won't hand over the Buddha-robe, old Sun will weave him one out of his own guts!"

The Bodhisattva had no way around it, and could only nod and follow him. Pilgrim laughed: "Well?" Then the Bodhisattva, with her vast mercy and boundless magic, her million million transformed bodies, met thought with mind and mind with body, and in a flash became the Immortal Lingxu:

A crane-plume cape, immortal wind a-rustle, Drifting and swaying, as one who treads the void. A face grown old as pine and cypress, A beauty such as old and now never knew. Going, going, yet nowhere dwelling; Thus and thus, yet set apart from all. All told, both come back to the single Law— Only a fiendish frame divides the two.

Pilgrim looked and said: "Marvelous! Marvelous! Is this a demon who is a Bodhisattva, or a Bodhisattva who is a demon?"

The Bodhisattva laughed: "Wukong, Bodhisattva and demon are both a single thought. Speak of the original nature, and neither has being." At this Pilgrim's mind suddenly woke; he turned about and changed himself into a pill of the elixir:

Rolling on the tray, never once at rest, Round and bright, of no fixed square. Three and three, the Goulou count completed; Six and six, the Shaoweng reckoning summed. A glittering golden flame, a mote of tile; The mani-pearl gives light at noon of day. Its outer lead and mercury, without— Not lightly may their measure be discussed.

When Pilgrim had changed into that pill, it was, as ever, a little the bigger. The Bodhisattva fixed it in mind, took the glass tray, and came straight to the demon's cave door. Looking, she saw truly:

Cliffs deep and caverns perilous, cloud born upon the ridge; cypresses gray-green and pines emerald, wind soughing in the woods. Cliffs deep and caverns perilous—truly a place where demons roam and human smoke is scant; cypresses gray-green and pines emerald—fit for immortals and true men to hide and cultivate, with much savor of the Way. The mountain has ravines, the ravines have springs, the murmuring flowing water sobbing like a zither—good for washing the ears; the cliffs have deer, the woods have cranes, the faint immortal music stirring the quiet peaks—also a delight to the heart. Here a demon-immortal had the fortune to meet Bodhi; a vow vast and boundless extends its pity.

When the Bodhisattva had looked, she was secretly pleased at heart: "This sinful beast has occupied this mountain cave—yet he has some portion of the Way." And so a compassion was already born in her heart.

She walked to the cave mouth, and the little demons who kept the gate knew her at once: "The Immortal Lingxu has come." One side passed the word within; the other led her in.

The demon had already come out to the second gate: "Lingxu! You do me the honor of so precious a visit—my humble hut shines with it."

The Bodhisattva said: "This humble Daoist reverently presents a pill of the elixir, and presumes to wish you a thousand birthdays." The two bowed; only then were they seated, and they fell to talking of the previous day's affair.

The Bodhisattva did not answer, but quickly took up the tray of pills: "Great King, first deign to see this humble Daoist's small offering."

She picked out the larger pill and pushed it toward the demon: "May the Great King live a thousand years!" The demon also pushed a pill across to the Bodhisattva: "May you share it with Lingxu Zi!" The courtesies done, the demon was just about to swallow—when the pill rolled straight down his throat of itself. There it resumed its true form and set itself square and level within; the demon rolled over on the ground. The Bodhisattva showed her true form and demanded the Buddha-robe of the demon. Pilgrim had already gone out through his nostrils.

The Bodhisattva, fearing the demon might prove unruly, tossed a fillet down upon his head. The demon rose, grabbed his spear to stab—but Pilgrim and the Bodhisattva were already aloft in the sky, and the Bodhisattva began to recite the true words. The monster's head ached as before; he dropped the spear and rolled all over the ground. In mid-air the Handsome Monkey King laughed himself sore; on the flat earth the black bear monster rolled himself half dead.

The Bodhisattva said: "Sinful beast! Will you now submit?"

The monster poured out his words: "I submit with all my heart—only spare my life!" Pilgrim, fearing the time would be wasted, was for beating him to death on the spot.

The Bodhisattva hastily stopped him: "Harm him not. I have a use for him."

Pilgrim said: "A monster like that! Not beating him dead—what use is there keeping him?" The Bodhisattva said: "Behind my Mount Potalaka there is no one to keep watch. I'll take him back and make him a Great God Guarding the Mountain." Pilgrim laughed: "Truly the compassionate Lord who saves from suffering—not a single spirit destroyed! If old Sun had such a spell as that, I'd recite the thing a thousand times over! And every black bear in the world would be settled this very hour!"

Now the monster had come to after a long while; justice was hard to deny and the pain past bearing, and he could only kneel upon the ground and plead: "Only spare my life—I vow to seek the true fruit!" [Translator's note: "true fruit" (zhengguo) means enlightenment's attainment, the orthodox result of Buddhist practice.]

Then the Bodhisattva let fall her auspicious light, laid her hand on his crown to receive the precepts, bade him take up his long spear, and follow at her side. Only then did the black bear's wild heart settle once for all that day, his boundless stubborn nature subside that very hour.

The Bodhisattva gave her charge: "Wukong, go back now. Serve the Tang monk well, and don't turn lazy or stir up trouble."

Pilgrim said: "Deep thanks that the Bodhisattva came so far—your disciple should escort you back a little way." The Bodhisattva said: "No need." Only then did Pilgrim, holding the cassock in both hands, kowtow and take his leave. The Bodhisattva, taking the black bear with her, went straight back to the great sea. There is a poem in witness:

Auspicious light, mist upon mist, congeals upon the golden image; Ten thousand rays in riotous splendor, worthy of all praise. She succors all the world and shows her pity; She scans the whole realm of Law, the golden lotus manifests. She came this time for the sake of carrying scriptures; She goes from here without the least flaw left behind. The monster conquered, made true, returns to the great sea; The gate of Emptiness recovers the brocade cassock.

But what happened after, and how things went—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 18

At the Guanyin Monastery Tang Sanzang Escapes His Trouble; At Gao Village the Great Sage Subdues a Demon

Pilgrim took leave of the Bodhisattva, brought his cloud down, hung the cassock on a fragrant nanmu tree, whipped out his staff, and charged into Black Wind Cave. But was there a single junior demon left in the cave? They had all seen the Bodhisattva appear and reduce their old master to rolling on the ground, and in panic they had scattered and fled.

Pilgrim waxed all the more violent: he piled dry firewood before each of those several gates, set fire front and back all at once, and burned Black Wind Cave into a "Red Wind Cave." Then he took up the cassock, mounted his auspicious light, and turned back due north.

The story tells how Sanzang, watching anxiously for Pilgrim who did not come, grew deeply troubled: did the Bodhisattva refuse to come, or had Pilgrim made some excuse and run off?

In the very midst of his wild guessing, a glitter of colored mist filled mid-air and Pilgrim suddenly dropped down before the steps, calling: "Master, here's the cassock!"

Sanzang was overjoyed.

The monks too rejoiced without exception: "Saved! Saved! Only today are our lives made whole!"

Sanzang received the cassock and said: "Wukong, when you left this morning, the pact was by mealtime or midday. Why do you only return now, with the sun in the west?" Pilgrim gave a full account of fetching the Bodhisattva, working the transformation, and subduing the demon. Hearing it all, Sanzang set up an incense table and bowed in worship toward the south.

Then he said: "Disciple, now that we have the Buddha-robe, let us quickly pack our bundles and be gone."

Pilgrim said: "No hurry, no hurry. The day is late—no time for traveling. Let's wait and set out tomorrow morning." All the monks knelt down together: "Master Sun speaks sense: first, the day is late; and second, we have vows to fulfill. Today, thank fortune, we are safe and have the treasure back. Let us pay our vows and ask the honored masters to share the blessing-food, and tomorrow morning we'll see you on your way west."

[Translator's note: after a sacrifice, distributing the offerings among those present was called "dispersing the blessing."]

Pilgrim said: "Just so, just so." And look at those monks: they emptied bags and boxes to the bottom, each giving all he had of the goods saved from the fire, and prepared a vegetarian feast; they burned paper prayers for peace and freedom from harm, and recited several scrolls of scripture to disperse calamity and dissolve misfortune. That evening the business was done.

Early the next morning they brushed down the horse, packed the baggage, and went out the gate. The monks escorted them far before turning back. Pilgrim led the way, and it was just the season of melting spring. Just see:

Grass cushions soft the hoofprints of the jade steed; willows sway their golden threads, the dew fresh upon them. Peach and plum fill the woods, vying in beauty; fig-vines wind the paths, putting forth their spirit. On the warm sand banks mandarin ducks sleep; in the mountain ravines, fragrant with flowers, the butterflies grow tame. Autumn gone, winter worn away, and spring more than half past—and who knows in what year his journey will be complete and he obtain the true scriptures?

Master and disciples traveled five or seven days along wild roads. One day, as the sky was darkening, they descried far off a village of households. Sanzang said: "Wukong, look over there—a mountain village is close at hand. Let's go ask for a night's lodging and travel on tomorrow. What do you say?" Pilgrim said: "Wait till old Sun goes and scouts the luck of it, good or bad, and then decide." The master drew up his silken reins, and Pilgrim fixed his gaze and looked. Truly:

Bamboo fences dense and close, thatched cottages tier on tier. Wild trees, tall as heaven, greet the gate; a winding stream and a plank bridge mirror the door. Along the road the willows green and swaying; inside the garden, flowers abloom and breathing fragrance. Now the evening sun was sinking west, and in every wood on every hill the birds made clamor; the supper smoke rose from the hearths, and down each path and lane the cattle and sheep turned home. And look: chickens and pigs, fed full, sleeping by the house corners; a drunken old neighbor singing as he comes along.

When Pilgrim had looked his fill, he said: "Master, ride on. It must be a village of good honest folk—just the place to beg a night's lodging."

The Elder urged on the white horse and soon came to the mouth of the village street. There they saw a young man, his head wrapped in cotton cloth, wearing a blue jacket, carrying an umbrella and a bundle, his trousers bound tight at the ankle, a pair of three-lashed straw sandals on his feet, stepping out briskly, hurrying down the street.

Pilgrim reached out and caught hold of him: "Where to? Let me ask you a thing or two: what place is this?"

The man only struggled, bawling: "Is there no one else in my village, that it's me you must question!" Pilgrim smiled good-humoredly: "Patron, don't be angry. 'Give another convenience, and you give yourself one.' What harm in telling me the name of the place? Perhaps I can even lighten your troubles." Unable to wrench free, the man hopped with fury: "Ill luck! Ill luck! Couldn't stomach the old master's unjust scolding, and now I run into this bald pate, to take his idle airs!" Pilgrim said: "If you have the skill, pry open my hand, and you may go wherever you like." The man twisted left and twisted right, but could he twist it loose? It was like a blacksmith's iron tongs clamped fast. Furious, he dropped his bundle, threw down his umbrella, and clawed at Pilgrim with both hands, thick as raindrops.

Pilgrim, one hand steadying the luggage, held the man off with the other: struggle and squirm as he might, the man could not lay a finger on him. And the tighter Pilgrim held, the madder he got, until he was sputtering with rage like a thunderclap.

Sanzang said: "Wukong, is there no one else coming? Ask that other man instead—what's the good of hanging on to this one? Let him go."

Pilgrim laughed: "Master, you don't know. Asking anyone else would be a bore; it's him I must ask—the deal is with him." Held fast by Pilgrim and unable to get away, the man had to speak: "This place is on the border of the country of Us-Tsang, and it's called Gao Village. More than half the households in the village are named Gao, and so it's called Gao Village. Now let me go." Pilgrim said: "With that outfit of yours, you're not dressed for a short stroll. Tell me true—where are you bound, and what's your errand? Then I'll let you go."

The man had no way out and could only tell the truth: "I'm a servant of Squire Gao, and my name is Gao Cai. My master has an old unmarried daughter, just twenty years of age, never yet betrothed, and three years ago a demon spirit took her. The demon has played the son-in-law these three years entire. My master is not pleased. 'A daughter wed to a demon spirit is no lasting arrangement,' he says: 'first, it ruins the family name; second, there's no exchange of kin to come and go.' So all along he's wanted to be rid of the demon. But would the demon consent to go? On the contrary, he has locked the daughter up in the rear compound these six months and more, and will not let her out to see anyone of the household. My master gave me a few taels

of silver and told me to find a master of the Law to seize the monster. I haven't rested my feet all this while; one after another I've brought three or four—all feeble monks and fainthearted Daoists, none of them able to subdue the fiend. Just now the master cursed me out again, said I couldn't do a thing right, gave me another five mace of silver for the road, and sent me to fetch some good master of the Law to subdue him. And then I ran into you, you devil-star, who caught hold of me and held up my journey—that's why I'm catching it from both sides, and in my helplessness I bawled at you. And now it turns out you know some gripping trick; I can't wrestle free, so I've told you the plain truth. Let me go."

Pilgrim said: "Your luck, my livelihood! This is what they call a deal that fits four and matches six. You need travel no farther, and you'll save your silver into the bargain. We are not feeble monks or fainthearted Daoists—we truly have some powers, and catching demons is our trade. It's just the thing: 'one trip looks after the doctor, and cures the eye into the bargain.' I must trouble you to go back and report to your master: say that we are holy monks, the emperor's sworn brother and his disciple, sent out from under the Eastern throne, traveling to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures, mighty skilled at subduing demons and binding monsters." Gao Cai said: "Don't you be fooling me. I'm a man with a bellyful of grievances already. If you've tricked me and you've no real powers, and can't catch that demon, won't I just catch it all over again?" Pilgrim said: "I guarantee I won't be the ruin of you. Lead us to your master's gate."

The man had no choice. Truly enough, he picked up his bundle, took his umbrella, turned back, and led master and disciple to the gate, saying: "Two Venerables, wait a moment and rest at the mounting block while I go in and announce you to my master." Only then did Pilgrim let go, set down the load, and lead the horse; master and disciple sat and stood by the gate, waiting.

Gao Cai entered the main gate and walked straight toward the central hall—and ran bang into Squire Gao.

The Squire cursed: "You thick-skinned beast—why aren't you out looking for a man? What are you doing back here?"

Gao Cai put down bundle and umbrella: "Let me report to Your Honor. I had scarcely reached the street mouth when I ran into two monks: one riding a horse, one carrying a load. He caught hold of me and wouldn't let go, asking where I was bound. Time and again I refused to tell him, but he pestered me past bearing and I couldn't get my hand free, so I told him everything about Your Honor's affairs, one item after another. And he was hugely delighted—says he'll catch that monster for us." Old Gao said: "Where are they from?" Gao Cai said: "He says they're holy monks, the emperor's sworn brother sent out from the Eastern throne, traveling to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures." The Squire said: "Monks come from so far—they'll surely have real powers. Where are they now?" Gao Cai said: "Waiting outside the gate."

The Squire hastily changed his clothes and came out with Gao Cai to welcome them, calling "Venerable Sirs." Hearing him, Sanzang turned at once, and there they were face to face.

The old man wore a black silk cap, a robe of scallion-white Shu brocade, a pair of rough-grained calfskin boots, and a black-green sash. He came out greeting them with smiles, saying: "Two Venerables, my respects."

Sanzang returned the courtesy, but Pilgrim stood without moving. Seeing his fierce, ugly looks, the old man dared not bow to him.

Pilgrim said: "How come you don't bow to old Sun?"

The old man was somewhat frightened, and he called to Gao Cai: "You young rascal—are you trying to do me to death? There's an ugly, monstrous son-in-law in the house already that I can't be rid of, and now you bring this Thunder God to plague me too?" Pilgrim said: "Old Gao, you've grown all these years for

nothing—you still don't understand the world! If you judge men by their faces alone, you're clean wrong. Old Sun may be ugly, but he has some skill. If I capture the demon for your family, catch the ghost and the fiend, seize that son-in-law of yours, and give you back your daughter—wouldn't that be a fine thing? Why harp on and on about looks!" At this the Squire trembled, but he could only pull himself together and say: "Please come in."

Being asked, Pilgrim led in the white horse, told Gao Cai to carry the luggage, and went in with Sanzang. Heedless of polite ways, he tethered the horse to a pillar of the open hall, dragged over a chair of dulled lacquer for Sanzang to sit on, then pulled over another chair and sat down beside him.

Old Gao said: "This little Venerable is quite at home with us."

Pilgrim said: "Let me stay six months, and you'll see how at home I can be."

When they were seated, Old Gao asked: "My man was saying just now—the two Venerables come from the Eastern Land?"

Sanzang said: "Indeed. This humble monk, by command of the court, is traveling to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Passing your honored village, we would borrow a night's lodging and go on early tomorrow." Old Gao said: "So you've only come to lodge—why speak of catching monsters?" Pilgrim said: "Since we're lodging anyway, we might as well catch a few monsters for fun, on the side. Let me ask: how many monsters does your honored house hold?" Old Gao said: "Heaven help us! What do you take us for—a larder? Just this one monstrous son-in-law has worried me to rags!" Pilgrim said: "Tell me the whole story of this monster from beginning to end, and how much power he has, and I'll catch him for you."

Old Gao said: "In our village, from old times to this day, there's never been any ghost or goblin, any evil demon making trouble. It's only my own misfortune: I never had a son, only three daughters. The eldest is called Xianglan, the second Yulan, the third Cuilan. The two elder were betrothed from childhood to households of this village. Only the youngest was to take a husband in, in hopes he would live with me as a family and support my old age—a son-in-law to hold up the gate and keep the house, to work and run errands. Three years ago, who could have known, there came a fellow, rather fine-looking, who said he was from a household on Fuling Mountain, surnamed Zhu, no parents above him, no brothers below, and willing to be a son-in-law to some family. I, old fool, seeing a man with no roots and no ties, took him in. When he first came through the door, he was diligent indeed: plowing and harrowing without oxen, reaping the crop without sickle or staff. Coming at dusk, going at dawn—really quite satisfactory. Only one thing: he has a way of changing his face."

Pilgrim said: "How does he change?" Old Gao said: "When he first came, he was a dark, stout fellow; later he turned into a lunkhead with a long snout and great big ears, with a strip of bristles down the back of his head, his body rough and frightening to see—his head and face just like a pig's. And his gut is enormous: at one meal he'll eat three or five pecks of rice; for his morning snack it takes a hundred-odd sesame cakes to fill him up. The blessing is, he still eats vegetarian. If he took to wine and meat as well, with my farm and property here, he'd eat the whole of it clean in half a year!" Sanzang said: "Because he works so hard, he eats so much." Old Gao said: "Eating is a small matter beside the rest. Now he can raise wind besides—clouds coming, mists going, stones rolling and sand flying—so that my whole household and all the neighbors left and right have no peace. And he has locked my youngest daughter Cuilan in the rear compound; for six months and more not a glimpse of her, and who knows if she's dead or alive. That's how I know he's a monster, and why I want a master of the Law to make him leave, make him leave." Pilgrim said: "What difficulty is there in that? Old man, set your mind at ease: tonight I guarantee I'll catch him and make him write you a paper of divorce and give you back your daughter. How's that?" Old Gao was overjoyed: "Taking him in has cost me no small thing—ruined my good name, estranged me from half my kin. But catch him,

and what do I care for papers? Only rid me of him root and branch!" Pilgrim said: "Easy! Easy! When night falls, you'll see."

The old man, greatly pleased, had tables and chairs wiped and set, and a vegetarian meal laid out.

The meal done, toward evening, the old man asked: "What weapons will you need? How many men to follow you? Tell me soon, that I may get them ready."

Pilgrim said: "Weapons I have of my own." The old man said: "You two have only that tin staff—how will a tin staff beat a demon?" Thereupon Pilgrim drew from his ear an embroidery needle, twirled it in his fingers, flourished it in the wind, and it became an iron cudgel with golden bands, thick as a rice bowl. He faced Old Gao with it: "Look at this staff of mine—how does it compare with your farm tools? Will it beat this monster or no?" Old Gao asked again: "With your weapon, will you want men along?" Pilgrim said: "I need no men—only a few venerable old men of virtue and standing, to sit with my master in quiet chat, so I can leave him and slip away. When I've caught the demon, I'll question him before you all, and root him out for you for good." The old man at once called household servants and invited several kinsmen, old friends, and neighbors.

In a little while they had all arrived.

Greetings over, Pilgrim said: "Master, sit easy and set your mind at rest. Old Sun is off."

Look at him gripping the iron staff and pulling Old Gao along: "Lead me to the rear compound—let me have a look at the demon's dwelling."

Old Gao led him to the gate of the rear compound. Pilgrim said: "Fetch the key, quick." Old Gao said: "Just try looking first. If it took a key, I'd never have had to ask you in." Pilgrim laughed: "Old man, for all your years you can't take a joke. I was just teasing you with that key talk, and you took it for earnest." He stepped up and felt the lock: it was one of those poured fast with molten bronze.

Viciously he gave the gold-banded cudgel one jab, smashed the door open—inside it was black as pitch.

Pilgrim said: "Old Gao, go call your daughter—see if she's within."

The old man summoned his courage and called: "Third Sister." The daughter knew her father's voice, and answered faintly, strengthlessly: "Papa, I'm here." Pilgrim flashed his golden eyes and peered carefully into the darkness. What do you suppose she looked like? Just see:

Cloud-hair tangled, uncombed; jade face unwashed of its grime. Her orchid heart unchanged within, but all her sweet charms gone to wreck. Cherry lips without a trace of color; her waist bent, huddled, and weak. Brows knitted in grief, faded and thin; wasted and frail, her voice sunk low.

She came out, and seeing Old Gao, seized him with both hands and wept aloud, head on his shoulder.

Pilgrim said: "Don't cry! Don't cry! Tell me—where has the monster gone?"

The girl said: "I don't know where he goes. All this time, he leaves at daybreak and returns only at night, in cloud and mist, coming and going who knows where. Because he knows father means to be rid of him, he keeps on his guard too—that's why he goes at dusk and comes at dawn." Pilgrim said: "No more need be said. Old man, take your daughter to the front compound, have your long talk in peace, and let old Sun wait for him here. If he doesn't come, don't blame me; but if he comes, I'll surely cut the grass and dig up the root for you." Delighted, Old Gao led his daughter away.

Pilgrim then worked his magic: he shook himself, changed, and became the very image of that girl, and sat alone in the room waiting for the demon. Before long a wind came, and truly it rolled stones and flew sand. What a wind:

At first a light, mild stirring; later on, vast and boundless. Light and mild, yet heaven and earth rock; vast and boundless, and nothing stands in its way. It snaps carved rafters and breaks willows better than hempen rope; it topples trees and mows down woods like plucking greens. It churns rivers and whips the seas till ghosts and gods grieve; it splits rocks and bursts mountains till heaven and earth marvel. The stag that carried flowers in its mouth has lost its homeward track; the ape that plucked the fruit strays bewildered abroad. It bends the seven-tiered iron pagoda down to the Buddha's head; it tears the eight-faced banners and hurts the jeweled canopy. Golden beams and jade pillars shake loose at the root; the roof tiles go flying like flights of swallows.

The boatman at his oar vows vows to the gods; the shipper hastily stages his sacrifice of pig and sheep. The local deity abandons his shrine; the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas make their bows to the court of Heaven. It batters the yaksha's boat along the coast; it blows down half the Great Wall's frontier wall.

As that wild gust passed, a demon spirit appeared in mid-air—truly an ugly thing: a black face and short bristles, a long snout and great ears; he wore a cloth gown neither blue nor green, and a flowered cloth kerchief round his waist. Pilgrim laughed to himself: "So this is the deal!" A fine Pilgrim! He did not go out to meet him, nor question him, but lay on the bed feigning sickness, groaning and moaning without pause.

The monster, unable to tell false from true, walked into the room, took "her" in his arms, and tried for a kiss.

Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "So you mean to take liberties with old Sun!"

He used a wrestling trick, braced the monster's long snout, gave a little toss—and with a flop threw him off the bed.

The monster scrambled up, steadying himself on the bed's edge: "Sister, why are you rather strange with me today? Could it be I've come too late?"

Pilgrim said: "Not strange! Not strange!" The demon said: "If you're not strange with me, why throw me that tumble?" Pilgrim said: "How can you be so small-minded—grabbing me for a kiss the moment you're in the door? I'm feeling out of sorts today. If it were any ordinary day, I'd have gotten up and opened the gate to wait for you. Come—take off your clothes and go to sleep." The monster, missing the point, actually went and began undressing. Pilgrim bounced up and sat himself on the chamber pot.

The monster came back to the bed and felt around; no one there. He called: "Sister, where have you gone? Take off your clothes and come to bed."

Pilgrim said: "You sleep first. Wait till I've seen to a call of nature." The demon indeed loosened his clothes first and climbed into bed.

Suddenly Pilgrim heaved a sigh, saying: "My luck has run low!" The monster said: "What are you fretting for? How has your luck run low? Since I came to your family, I've had my share of tea and rice, but I never ate it for nothing either: I've swept your floors and cleared your ditches, hauled bricks and carried tiles, pounded earth and built walls, plowed the fields and harrowed the ground, planted wheat and set out the seedlings—I've built up this family's estate. Now look at you: you wear brocade and gold; through the four seasons there are flowers and fruit to enjoy, at the eight festival times there are vegetables fresh-cooked. What is there left to discontent you, that you sigh short and groan long and talk of luck run low?" Pilgrim said: "It's not like that. Today my parents, over the wall, kept throwing bricks and tiles, scolding and cursing me something dreadful." The monster said: "What do they scold and curse you for?" Pilgrim said: "They say that I, having made myself a wife to you, and you being a son-in-law in their house, have no manners at all. A man with such an ugly face—can't be shown to my uncles, can't be seen by the kin. And nobody knows where you come from with your clouds and mists—what household, what surname, what name—ruining their good repute and staining their family honor. That's why they scold and curse me, and that's my sorrow."

The monster said: "Ugly I may be a little, but if it's handsome you want, that's no hard thing either. When I first came, I spoke with him about it, and only when he was willing did he take me in. How does this talk arise again today! My home is in Yunzhan Cave on Fuling Mountain. I took my surname from my looks, and so I'm surnamed Zhu; my official name is Zhu Ganglie. If he asks you again, just tell him that."

Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "This monster is honest after all—no need for torture, and he's confessed this clearly. Now that I've got the place and the name, catch him I will, no matter what."

Pilgrim said: "They mean to invite a master of the Law to seize you." The monster laughed: "Sleep, sleep! Pay him no mind! I have the transformations of the Heavenly Gang number, and a nine-toothed rake—what do I care for your masters of the Law, monks, or Daoists? Even if your old father were devout and brought down the Patriarch who Scourges Demons of the Nine Heavens, I've made his acquaintance before, and he wouldn't dare do a thing to me." Pilgrim said: "They say they'll invite the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, surnamed Sun, who five hundred years ago wreaked havoc in Heaven's palace, and that he's coming to seize you." At that name the monster showed a third part of fear: "If that's how it is, I'd best be off. There'll be no husband and wife for us." Pilgrim said: "Why leave all of a sudden?" The monster said: "You don't know. That Protector of Horses who wrecked Heaven's palace has real powers. I'm only afraid I couldn't handle him—that my name would be dragged down, and it wouldn't look well."

With that, he pulled on his clothes, opened the door, and was marching out—when Pilgrim seized him, wiped a hand across his own face, and showed his true form.

He roared: "Fine monster—where do you run! Lift your head and look—who am I?"

The monster rolled his eyes around, and saw Pilgrim with fangs bared and mouth grinning, eyes of fire and gold, a furry face on a bowed head—the very image of a live Thunder God. In terror his hands went numb and his legs went soft; with a ripping sound he burst his clothes, turned into a wild wind, and made his escape. Pilgrim leapt after him, snatched out his iron staff, and struck at the wind. The monster burst into ten thousand sparks of fire and made straight for his own mountain.

Pilgrim rode his cloud, chasing hard, crying: "Where do you run! If you go up to Heaven, I'll chase you to the Palace of the Dipper and the Ox! If you dive into the earth, I'll follow you to the Prison of the Wrongfully Dead!"

Ah! But to what place did this chase carry him, and who won and who lost—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 19

In the Cloud Pathway Cave Wukong Takes in Bajie; On Mount Futu Xuanzang Receives the Heart Sutra

The story tells how the monster's firelight fled ahead and the Great Sage's iridescent glow followed behind. As they went, a high mountain suddenly rose before them. The monster gathered his red glow, showed his true form, plunged into his cave, and came out brandishing a nine-toothed rake for battle.

Pilgrim shouted: "Reckless monster! Where did you come from, you evil fiend? How do you know old Sun's name? What powers have you? Confess them honestly, and I'll spare your life!"

The monster said: "So you don't know my powers either! Step up, stand firm, and I'll tell you:

From birth my nature was a dullard's, I loved my ease, my lazy rest, without end. I never nurtured my nature nor refined the true; In muddled chaos I wore away the days and months. Then suddenly, at ease, I met a true immortal, And straight we sat and traded common courtesies. He urged me to turn my heart back, not to fall to the mortal world, Slaying living things and heaping up boundless sin. The day the great term comes and life is ended, In the Eight Misfortunes and the Three Paths, remorse bites without cease. At his words my purpose turned; I meant to cultivate; I heard his speech, my heart turned back to seek the wondrous key. By fate I bowed at once and made him master; He pointed out to me the gates of Heaven and Earth's portals. He handed down the Great Return Elixir, nine times refined; By night and day the labor never ceased. Above, it reached the Clay-Pellet Palace atop my crown; Below, it reached the Bubbling Spring point upon my soles. The kidney water coursed all round into the Flowery Pool; The Cinnabar Field warmed, and warmly glowed. The Infant Boy and the Lovely Maid were matched to yin and yang; Lead and mercury together split the sun and moon. The Dragon of Li and Tiger of Kan I learned to harmonize; The numinous turtle drank the golden crow's blood dry. The Three Flowers gathered at the crown—I won my root; The Five Breaths courted the Origin, all through and through.

When the work was round, my deeds complete, I flew aloft; Twin ranks of heaven's immortals came to welcome me. Bright-colored clouds were born beneath my feet; Light of body, hale of limb, I faced the golden gates. The Jade Emperor spread a feast for all the immortals, Each ranked by grade and file in ordered lines. He named me Marshal, put the River of Heaven in my charge, Commander of the waters, with staff of office borne. It was the Queen Mother's Peach Banquet, once— The feast thrown open at the Jasper Pool, all guests invited. That day, drunk, my wits gone dim and dizzy, I staggered east and west and played the reckless fool. Flaunting my strength I burst into the Vast Cold Palace, Where the graceful fairy maidens came to greet me. At sight of those entrancing looks, the soul near left me; The old worldly heart of former days would not be quenched. All thought of high and low, of rank and reverence, gone, I seized the moon-lady, bade her share my bed. Time and again she would consent to nothing, Hiding east and west, her heart displeased. My lustful daring reached the sky; my roars were thunder— They nearly shook the gates and portals of the sky. The Inspecting Officer memorialized the Jade Emperor; That day, alas, my luck ran low. The Vast Cold Palace was ringed about, no breath of wind, No door to advance, no way to flee, no hope of slipping out. The host of gods laid hands on me and held me fast— But with the wine still in my heart, I felt no fear.

They dragged me to the Hall of Divine Mists, before the Jade Emperor, And by the statute I was sentenced to be executed. Thanks be to Gold Star Li, the White Metal Star, Who left the ranks, bowed low, and pleaded for me. The sentence was commuted: two thousand blows of the maul, Till flesh split, skin tore, and bones all but broke. Spared death, banished beyond the gates of Heaven, I came to Fuling Mountain to build a family estate. Because I sinned, I entered the wrong womb at rebirth— And my common name is Zhu Ganglie."

When Pilgrim heard this: "So you're the Water Marshal Tianpeng fallen to the world below! No wonder you know old Sun's name." The monster said: "Bah! You fraudulent Protector of Horses! When you made that trouble of yours back then, who knows how many of us you dragged down with you—and now you come here bullying people! No more insolence! Take a rake-stroke from me!" Pilgrim was not the man to stand on ceremony. He raised his staff and struck at the head. And the two of them battled on that mountainside in the black of night. What a fight:

Pilgrim's golden eyes like forks of lightning, the demon's round eyes like silver flowers. This one spewed colored mist from his mouth; that one breathed red haze from his lips. Red haze breathed out lit up the dark; colored mist spewed forth gave light to night. The gold-banded cudgel, the nine-toothed rake—two heroes, worthy of all praise: one, a Great Sage descended to the mortal world; one, a Marshal fallen to the sky's far edge. That one, losing all dignity, became a monster; this one, escaping bitter tribulation, bowed to a monk. The rake went out just like a dragon stretching claws; the staff met it even as a phoenix threading flowers.

That one cried: "You've broken up a marriage—it's like killing a man's father!"

This one cried: "You ravished a young girl—rightly should be seized!"

Idle words, a din of wrangling, back and forth, staff against rake. And as they fought the sky began to pale; the demon's two arms grew numb and sore.

The two of them fought from the second watch until the east grew white. Unable to hold out, the monster broke from the field and fled; he turned again into a wild wind, went straight back into his cave, shut the door fast, and would not show his head again. Outside the cave door Pilgrim saw a stone tablet inscribed with three characters: "Cloud Pathway Cave."

Seeing the monster would not come out, and the day grown bright, he thought: "My master will be waiting. Let me go back and see him first; it will be time enough to come catch this monster after."

He trod his cloud, gave a little leap, and was soon at Gao Village.

The story tells how Sanzang and the old gentlemen had talked of today and argued of olden times, sleepless the whole night through. He was just wondering that Pilgrim did not come when suddenly Pilgrim stood in the courtyard. Pilgrim stowed his iron staff and straightened his robe, then went up into the hall.

He called: "Master, I'm back." The old gentlemen, flustered, bowed down together, thanking him: "Much toil! Much toil!" Sanzang asked: "Wukong, you've been gone the whole night—where's the demon you caught?" Pilgrim said: "Master, that demon is no common evil spirit of the mortal world, nor some wild beast of the mountains. He was Marshal Tianpeng descended to earth; because he entered the wrong womb at rebirth, his face and head took the shape of a wild boar—yet his spirit and wits are still whole. He said he took his surname from his looks, and is called Zhu Ganglie. Old Sun struck at him with his staff in the rear compound, and he fled as a gust of wind. Old Sun hit the wind one blow, and he turned into a streak of fire and made straight for his home cave on his own mountain, then came out with a nine-toothed rake and fought old Sun the whole night through. Just now, as day was breaking, he fled from the fight, shut his cave door tight, and won't come out. Old Sun meant to smash that door in and settle it with him once for all—but fearing you'd be anxious here, waiting and wondering, I came back first with the news."

As he finished, Old Gao came forward and knelt: "Venerable Sir, there's no help for it—drive him off though you may, once you've gone he'll come back. What then? I must trouble you to catch him once and for all, root him out, and end the trouble for good. I, old man that I am, dare not be remiss: I have ample thanks to give. All this estate and farmland, with all our kin and friends to draw up the papers, I'll split with you, Venerable Sir, half and half. Only cut the grass and dig up the root, and don't let it ruin the good name of the House of Gao."

Pilgrim laughed: "Old man, you don't know when you're well off. That monster told me himself: big eater though he is, for the tea and rice of your house he's done you many a good turn. All the family wealth these years have built up came from his strength. He never ate your food for nothing—why should you want to be rid of him? By his account, he's a god of Heaven come down below, working your farm and doing your chores, and he never did your daughter any harm. A son-in-law like that—well matched, surely, and not so very ruinous to your family name or your standing. Honestly, you might as well keep him."

Old Gao said: "Venerable Sir, scandal aside, the reputation is ugly to hear. At every turn someone says: 'The Gao family took in a monster for a son-in-law!' How is a man to bear a saying like that?" Sanzang said: "Wukong, since you've had this bout with him, see it through to the very end—that's the only way to finish what you began." Pilgrim said: "I was only trying him out for fun. This time I'll surely bring him in for you all to see. Don't worry." He called: "Old Gao, keep waiting on my master well. I'm off."

At the word "off" he was gone without form or shadow, leapt to that mountain of his, came to the cave mouth, and with a burst of the iron staff smashed the two doors to splinters.

He cursed aloud: "You chaff-guzzling lunkhead! Come out and fight old Sun!"

The monster was inside the cave, still gasping and puffing.

Hearing the doors battered, and hearing himself cursed as a chaff-guzzling lunkhead, his rage was past restraining. He had no choice but to drag his rake, rouse his spirits, and come running out, cursing fiercely: "You Protector of Horses, you thorough-paced idler! What business of yours was it, to smash my front gate? Go look at the statutes: 'breaking down a man's front gate and entering'—that's a capital crime, Miscellaneous Articles!"

Pilgrim laughed: "You blockhead! I've smashed your gate, and I've still got a defense. But you—seizing another man's daughter by force, with no go-betweens, no witnesses, no betrothal gifts of tea and wine—that's a capital crime of the True Offenses, and no mistake!"

The monster said: "Spare the speeches—taste old Pig's rake!"

Pilgrim caught it on his staff: "This rake of yours—did you work it as a garden tool for old Gao, hoeing ground and planting vegetables? What's so fine about it that I should fear you!" The monster said: "You've got it wrong! Is this rake a thing of the mortal world? Listen and I'll tell you:

This is no common iron, but divine ice-steel, Wrought and ground to shape, luminous and pure. Lord Lao Zi himself swung hammer and tongs; Yinghuo, the Fire Star, fed in the coals with his own hands. The Five Emperors of the Five Quarters spent their cunning on it; The Six Ding and Six Jia took endless pains. They fashioned nine teeth like pendant jade, And cast the twin rings with leaves of falling gold. Its body arrays the Six Luminaries, ranks the Five Stars; Its frame conforms to the Four Seasons, fits the Eight Terms. Long, short, high, low—it settles heaven and earth; Left, right, yin, yang—it divides the sun and moon. The spirit generals of the Six Lines obey the statutes of the sky; The trigrams and starry hosts are ranked about the Dipper.

It is named the Rake of Supreme Treasure, outshining gold, And was presented to the Jade Emperor to guard the Cinnabar Gates. Because I had cultivated to a Great Luo Immortal, And was become a guest of long life nourished well, He enfeoffed me Marshal with the title Tianpeng, And bestowed this rake on me as my staff of office. Raise it, and fierce flames and glowing light leap forth; Bring it down, and a violent wind drives flurries of auspicious snow. The generals of Heaven's Bureau all stand aghast; The Yama Kings of the underworld lose heart and courage. Where in the world of men is such a weapon found? On earth there is no other iron like this. It changes with my fancy, reads my very mind; It tosses and turns at will, obedient to my spell.

Years on end it has never left my side; Companion through the seasons, not a day apart. Three meals a day, I never dropped it once; One night's sleep—it never left my hand. I wore it to the Peach Banquet at the Jasper Pool, And bore it to court before the imperial gates. But trusting to wine, I turned to violence; Relying on my strength, I played the reckless fool. Heaven banished me and sent me down to dust, To work my sins out in the world below. In mountain caves, my heart gone wrong, I ate men's flesh; At Gao Village, pleased with love, I made a match. This rake, dropped in the sea, upsets the dragons' dens; Carried up mountains, it smashes tiger and wolf lairs.

Of every other weapon, say no more— Of all, my rake alone is best. What trouble winning, locked in combat, hold by hold? What need to speak of triumph sought in battle? What fear of you, with head of bronze and brain of iron and body steel? One stroke of this rake—your soul dissolves, your spirit drains away!"

When Pilgrim heard this, he put away his iron staff and said: "Blockhead, no more boasting! Old Sun will stick this head of mine out here—you give it a stroke or two, and let's see whether my soul dissolves and my spirit drains."

The monster truly raised his rake and struck with all his might. With a resounding thwack the rake sparked and flamed—and never so much as stirred a scrap of Pilgrim's scalp.

The monster was so frightened his hands went numb and his legs went weak, and he cried: "What a head! What a head!" Pilgrim said: "You really don't know. Old Sun, for wrecking Heaven's palace—stealing the elixir, pilfering the peaches, and making off with the imperial wine—was seized by the little sage Erlang and bound before the Palace of the Dipper and the Ox, where the host of heavenly gods hacked me with axes, pounded me with mauls, hacked me with swords, stabbed me with knives, burned me with fire and battered me with thunder—and never did me a hair's worth of harm. Then Lord Lao Zi took me off, popped me into the Furnace of the Eight Trigrams, and refined me in divine fire till I came out with eyes of fire and gold and a head of bronze and arms of iron. Don't believe it? Strike a few more blows, and see whether it hurts or not."

The monster said: "You monkey—I remember you. When you wrecked Heaven's palace you lived in the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the Aolai Country of the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. Nothing's been heard of you for ages—how do you turn up here, coming to my door to bully me? Don't tell me my father-in-law went and invited you?"

Pilgrim said: "Your father-in-law never invited me. It's this: old Sun has turned from the evil way to the true, left the Dao and become a monk, protecting the emperor's sworn brother of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, called the Master Sanzang, on his journey to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Passing through Gao Village, we lodged the night; old Gao, as the talk turned to his troubles, asked me to save his daughter and catch you, you chaff-guzzling lunkhead!"

At these words the monster dropped his rake, made a deep bow with a "he-e-e", and said: "Where is the scripture-pilgrim? Pray introduce me, I beg you."

Pilgrim said: "What do you want with him?" The monster said: "I was urged to the good by the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin and received her precepts. Here I've kept the vegetarian fast; she charged me to follow the scripture-pilgrim to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures, to set my crimes against my merits and win the true fruit at last. She told me to wait for him; but for years now, no word. Now that you've become his disciple, why didn't you tell me about the scriptures at the start, instead of bullying and battering at my gate?" Pilgrim said: "None of your tricks to soften my heart and slip your way out. If you truly mean to protect the Tang monk, with no shadow of a lie, then swear an oath to Heaven, and I'll take you to see my master." The monster flopped down on his knees and kowtowed toward the sky like a pestle pounding rice, over and over, crying: "Amitabha Buddha! Namo Buddha! If I am not true of heart and honest

of intent, may I violate the statutes of Heaven and be hacked into ten thousand pieces!"

Seeing him swear his oath and vow his vow, Pilgrim said: "Since it's so, light a fire and burn this dwelling of yours, and then I'll take you."

The monster truly hauled up reeds and thorn-brush, lit a fire, and burned the Cloud Pathway Cave till it looked like a broken tile kiln.

He said to Pilgrim: "Now I have nothing holding me back. Lead the way."

Pilgrim said: "Hand me that rake to carry." The monster passed the rake over. Pilgrim then plucked a hair, blew on it a magic breath, cried "Change!"—and it became a three-strand hemp rope. He came over and bound the monster's hands behind his back. The monster truly put his hands behind him and let himself be tied, however Pilgrim pleased.

Then Pilgrim grabbed his ear and hauled him along, crying: "Quick march! Quick march!" The monster said: "Gently, gently! Your hand is heavy—you're pulling my ear-roots off!" Pilgrim said: "Gently it can't be! No allowances for you! As the saying goes: 'A docile pig still needs a rough capture.' Only when you've seen my master and proved your true heart will I let you go." And the two of them, half on cloud and half on mist, made straight back for Gao Village. There is a poem in witness:

The nature of Metal, hard and strong, can overcome Wood; The Mind-Ape tamed, the Wood-Dragon comes to heel. Metal yielding to Wood, both merge as one; Wood cleaving to Metal's kindness—each fulfills its part. One host, one guest, with no wall between; Three unions, three mergers, hold the hidden mystery. Nature and passion joined in joy, the primal powers meet; Together they shall witness the West—the word will not be broken.

In a moment they reached the village.

Pilgrim, gripping his rake and tugging his ear, said: "Look—who sits erect in that hall? My master."

Old Gao, his kin and friends, suddenly seeing Pilgrim come dragging the monster, bound hand and foot by the wrists and led by the ear, hurried joyfully out into the courtyard, crying: "Venerable Sirs! Venerable Sirs! That's our son-in-law all right!" The monster walked up, dropped to both knees, hands still bound, kowtowed to Sanzang, and cried aloud: "Master, your disciple failed to welcome you. Had I known it was Master lodging at my father-in-law's, I'd have come to bow and receive you—why all these comings and goings?" Sanzang said: "Wukong, how did you bring him to bow to me?" Only then did Pilgrim let go. Whacking him with the rake's handle, he barked: "Blockhead! Tell it yourself!" And the monster gave a full account of how the Bodhisattva had urged him to the good.

Sanzang was overjoyed.

He called: "Squire Gao, bring an incense table, if you please."

Old Gao hurriedly carried one out. Sanzang washed his hands and burned incense, bowed toward the south, and said: "Deep thanks for the Bodhisattva's holy grace!" The old gentlemen all added incense and bowed as well. When the bows were done, Sanzang went up into the hall and sat on high, and told Wukong to loosen the rope. Pilgrim gave his body one shake, drew the hair back to him, and the binding came undone of itself. The monster bowed afresh to Sanzang, vowing to follow him west. Then he bowed to Pilgrim too; and as the earlier of the two, Pilgrim was the elder—so he called Pilgrim "Elder Brother."

Sanzang said: "Since you follow me to the good fruit and will be a disciple, I must give you a religious name, to call you by morning and night."

He said: "Master, the Bodhisattva has already laid her hand on my crown and received my vows, and gave me a religious name: Zhu Wuneng." Sanzang said with a laugh: "Good! Good! Your elder brother is called Wukong, and you are called Wuneng—truly you are of the lineage of my school of the Law." Wuneng said: "Master, I received the Bodhisattva's precepts and gave up the five strong-smelling foods and the three forbidden meats. At my father-in-law's I kept the vegetarian fast and touched no meat; but today, having met my master, may I break the fast?" Sanzang said: "No! No! Since you abstain from the five strong foods and three forbidden meats, I'll give you another name besides: I'll call you Bajie, 'Eight Prohibitions.'" The blockhead said happily: "I obey my master's command." And so he was also called Zhu Bajie.

Old Gao, seeing him thus delivered from evil to the true, was doubly delighted. He ordered the household servants to arrange a banquet in thanks to the Tang monk.

Bajie stepped forward and caught hold of Old Gao: "Father-in-law, have my humble wife come out to bow to her father-in-law and her uncles—what do you say?"

Pilgrim laughed: "Worthy brother, since you've entered the gate of the Sakya and become a monk, from this day on never mention that 'humble wife' of yours again. In this world there are household Daoists who live at home with wives—but where have you ever seen a household monk? Come, let's take our seats in order, eat our vegetarian meal, and make an early start on the road to the Western Heaven."

Old Gao laid the tables and invited Sanzang to the seat of honor. Pilgrim and Bajie sat to left and right; the kin sat below. Old Gao opened a jar of vegetarian wine, filled a brimming cup, poured a libation to Heaven and Earth, then offered it to Sanzang.

Sanzang said: "I'll not hide it from you, Squire—I was a vegetarian from the womb; from infancy I've touched no meat."

Old Gao said: "Knowing the Venerable Master's pure habits, we've dared touch no meat. This wine too is vegetarian—one cup can do no harm." Sanzang said: "But I dare not touch wine either. Wine is the first precept of us monks." Wuneng said in a panic: "Master, I've kept the fast, but I've never given up wine." Wukong said: "Though old Sun's capacity is small—he can't drink a jar or so—he's never given up wine either." Sanzang said: "Since that's how it is, you brothers may drink a little vegetarian wine. Only no drunken carousing that spoils the work." So the two of them took the first cup.

All sat down as before, and the vegetarian feast was laid. No tongue could tell the plenty of cups and platters, the abundance of dishes.

When the feast was done, Old Gao brought out on a red-lacquered tray two hundred taels of loose gold and silver, offering them to the three Venerables for expenses on the road; and three cotton cloth robes for outer wear.

Sanzang said: "We are wandering monks, begging our rice at village after village, seeking our meals wherever we find ourselves—how could we accept gold, silver, and treasure?"

Pilgrim stepped up, reached out his hand, and grabbed a handful.

He called: "Gao Cai! Yesterday I troubled you to lead my master here; today we've taken in a disciple, and I have nothing to thank you with. Let this loose gold and silver serve as a fee for your pains—take it and buy yourself straw sandals. And hereafter, whenever there's a demon about, drum up a few more for me—there'll be more thanks where this came from."

Gao Cai received it and kowtowed his thanks for the gift.

Old Gao said again: "Since the masters will take no gold or silver, we pray you accept these rough garments, a small token of our hearts."

Sanzang said again: "We who have left the world, if we accepted so much as a thread of bribe, could not complete our cultivation in a thousand kalpas. Only let us take some of the cakes and fruit left over from the feast, to serve as dry rations—that is enough." Bajie, at the side, said: "Master, Elder Brother—if you two won't, that's your affair. I've been this family's son-in-law these several years; even my food allowance should come to three piculs by now. Father-in-law! My gown was torn by my Elder Brother last night—give me a black brocade cassock; my shoes are splitting—give me a good new pair of shoes." Old Gao, hearing this, dared not refuse.

So they bought a new pair of shoes and a fresh robe, and Bajie changed out of his old clothes.

Then Bajie swayed and swaggered up to Old Gao, bowed with a "he-e-e", and said: "Give my respects to my mother-in-law, my sisters-in-law, first and second, and to all the uncles and cousins of both lines: today I go off to be a monk, and have no time to take leave of them face to face—don't hold it against me. Father-in-law, you take good care of my wife: if it should happen we fail to fetch the scriptures, I'll come back, return to the lay life, and be your son-in-law and live with you as before."

Pilgrim barked: "Lunkhead! None of that loose talk!" Bajie said: "Brother, it's not loose talk. Only suppose some little slip happens along the way—then wouldn't the monkhood be missed, the wife be missed, and both chances spoilt together?" Sanzang said: "Less idle talk—we make an early start." So they packed a load of luggage, and Bajie shouldered it; the white horse was saddled, and Sanzang rode; Pilgrim carried his iron staff over his shoulder and led the way in front.

A band of three, they bade farewell to Old Gao and all the kin and friends, and set their faces west. There is a poem in witness:

Mist and rosy haze on every hand, the trees stand tall; The Buddha's son of the Tang, toiling, toiling on. Hungry, he begs one bowl among a thousand homes; Cold, he wears a patched robe of a thousand stitches. Let the horse of the will not gallop loose within the breast; Let the unruly Mind-Ape not be suffered to howl. When passion and nature settle, all conditions join; The moon full, the golden flower blooms—that is the washing of the marrow.

The three pressed westward, and for a month the road was calm. They crossed out of the borders of Us-Tsang, and suddenly, lifting their heads, saw a high mountain.

Sanzang drew his whip and reined his horse: "Wukong, Wuneng—the mountain ahead is high. We must go carefully, carefully."

Bajie said: "No matter. That mountain is called Mount Futu, and in it lives the Chan Master of the Crow's Nest, who cultivates there. Old Pig has met him too." Sanzang said: "What manner of things does he do?" Bajie said: "He has real attainments in the Way. He once urged me to cultivate with him, but I didn't go—that's all." As master and disciples talked, they soon came up on the mountain. What a mountain! Just see:

South of the mountain, green pines and blue cedars; north of it, green willows and red peaches. Clamor and chatter: mountain birds in talk; flutter and float: cranes flying together. Fragrance on fragrance: flowers of a thousand colors; green on green: strange weeds of ten thousand kinds. Below the ravines, green water rolling; before the cliffs, auspicious clouds in clusters. Truly a place of most secluded charm—still and silent, no one coming or going.

The master, gazing from horseback, saw before the fragrant cedar a nest of brushwood. To its left, elk carried flowers in their mouths; to its right, mountain monkeys offered fruit. On the treetops, blue luan-birds and colorful phoenixes sang together; black cranes and golden pheasants gathered on every branch. Bajie pointed: "There's the Chan Master of the Crow's Nest!" Sanzang urged his horse and whipped it on, straight

to the foot of the tree.

The story tells how the Chan Master, seeing the three of them come, left his nest at once and leapt down from the tree.

Sanzang dismounted and bowed in offering; the Chan Master lifted him up with his hand: "Holy Monk, rise. I failed to welcome you—I beg your pardon."

Bajie said: "Old Chan Master, my respects." The Master asked in surprise: "You are Zhu Ganglie of Fuling Mountain—how came you by such great fortune, to travel with the Holy Monk?" Bajie said: "The year before last, the Bodhisattva Guanyin urged me to the good, and I vowed to follow him as his disciple." The Chan Master rejoiced: "Good! Good! Good!" Then he pointed at Pilgrim and asked: "And who is this one?" Pilgrim laughed: "Old Chan Master, how is it you know him, but not me?" The Chan Master said: "From lack of acquaintance, that's all." Sanzang said: "He is my first disciple, Sun Wukong." The Chan Master said with a smile: "My rudeness—forgive me."

Sanzang bowed again and asked where the Great Thunderclap Monastery of the Western Heaven still lay.

The Chan Master said: "Far! Far! And the road is full of tigers and leopards—hard going."

Sanzang pressed his questions earnestly: "How far, truly, is the road?" The Chan Master said: "Far though the road is, the day of arrival must come at last. Only the demon miasmas are hard to escape. I have a scroll of the Heart Sutra—fifty-four lines in all, two hundred and seventy characters. Whenever you come to a place of demon miasma, you have only to recite this sutra, and no harm can touch you." Sanzang threw himself to the ground and begged; and the Chan Master recited it aloud and transmitted it. The sutra says:

"Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra. Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, practicing deep Prajna Paramita, looked down and saw the five aggregates as all empty, and crossed beyond all suffering and hardship. Shariputra, form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form. Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. So too with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. Shariputra, all dharmas are marked by emptiness: not born, not destroyed; not defiled, not pure; not increasing, not decreasing. Therefore in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, perception, volition, or consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, scent, taste, touch, or object of mind; no realm of sight, and on to no realm of consciousness; no ignorance, and no end of ignorance; on to no old age and death, and no end of old age and death. There is no suffering, no extinguishing, no path; no wisdom and no attainment. Because there is nothing to attain, the Bodhisattva relies on Prajna Paramita, and the mind is without hindrance; because there is no hindrance, there is no terror; far removed from inverted dream-thinking, one reaches ultimate nirvana. The Buddhas of the three ages, relying on Prajna Paramita, attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Therefore know that Prajna Paramita is the great divine mantra, the great bright mantra, the supreme mantra, the mantra beyond compare, able to remove all suffering—true, not false. Therefore I speak the Prajna Paramita mantra, and the mantra goes: 'Gate! Gate! Paragate! Parasamgate! Bodhi Svaha!'"

Now the Master of the Tang had roots of his own: hearing the Heart Sutra but once, he could remember it—and so it has been handed down to this day. This is the master scripture of the cultivation of the true, the meeting-gate of Buddhahood.

The Chan Master, having transmitted the sutra, trod the cloud-light and would have risen into the crow's nest; but Sanzang caught hold of him again and begged him—resolute to ask the truth of the road that led west.

The Chan Master laughed and said in verse: "The road is not hard to travel—hear my instructions: A thousand mountains, a thousand waters deep; many the miasmas, many the demons' haunts. If you come to the Cliff That Meets the Sky, set your heart at ease, be not afraid. When you pass the Rock of Rubbed Ears, turn your footsteps sideways. Be careful in the Black Pine Forest—wicked foxes often stop the road there.

Spirits fill the cities and towns; demon lords crowd every mountain. Tigers sit in the halls of state; gray wolves serve as registrars. Lions and elephants all proclaim themselves kings; tigers and leopards all serve as guards. The wild boar carries the luggage; a water monster you will meet ahead. The old stone monkey of many years—what cause has he for rage? Ask that old acquaintance of yours: he knows the road that leads out west."

When Pilgrim heard this, he laughed coldly: "We needn't ask him—we need only ask me."

Sanzang did not yet understand the meaning. The Chan Master turned into golden light and went straight up into the crow's nest. The Elder bowed his thanks toward it. But Pilgrim, his heart in a fury, raised his iron staff and battered wildly upward—only to see lotus flowers spring up ten thousand strong, and auspicious clouds guard the nest a thousand layers deep. Though Pilgrim had strength to churn the seas and overturn the rivers, he could not so much as bend one strand of the crow's nest's rattan.

Seeing this, Sanzang caught Pilgrim's arm: "Wukong—such a Bodhisattva as that! Why batter down his nest?"

Pilgrim said: "He had his fling at cursing us two brothers, and off he went." Sanzang said: "He was telling the road to the Western Heaven—when did he curse you?" Pilgrim said: "Where would you know it? 'The wild boar carries the luggage'—that was cursing Bajie. 'The old stone monkey of many years'—that was cursing old Sun. How do you explain that?" Bajie said: "Elder Brother, calm yourself. This Chan Master knows things past and things to come. But look—that line of his, 'a water monster you will meet ahead'—who knows if it will prove true? Let him go." Pilgrim, seeing the lotus flowers and auspicious mists all about the nest, could only help his master onto the horse, and they went down the mountain and set out west. And that going:

Was sure to make rare the blessings of peace in the world of men, And multiply the plagues of demons in the mountains.

But how the road ahead turned out in the end—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 20

On Yellow Wind Ridge Tang Sanzang Meets with Trouble; Halfway up the Mountain Bajie Vies to Lead

The gatha says:

The Dharma is born from the mind, and by the mind it dies. Who is it that governs birth and death? Pray tell them apart yourself. Since all of it is your own mind, what need for others' words? You only need to labor hard, and wring the blood from out the iron. Thread the floss rope through the nose, and knot it fast to empty space; Tether it unto the Tree of Undoing, and let it rage no more. Mistake not the thief for your own son—let every mind-trick die away. Do not let him fool me: strike him first with one clean blow, and strike him through. The mind revealed is still no mind; the Dharma shown—the Dharma stops.

When neither man nor ox is seen, The vast sky's light is pure and white. As round as any autumn moon, The one and other can't be told apart.

[Translator's note: the "ox" is the traditional Buddhist metaphor for the progress of meditation; "neither man nor ox" is the eighth stage of the Ten Ox-herding Pictures, in which both seeker and object of seeking are forgotten.]

This gatha came of the Master Xuanzang's full awakening to the Heart Sutra—the opening of the gate. The Elder recited it constantly, kept it constantly, till of itself a point of numinous light shone through.

And now the story tells how the three of them, dining on wind and lodging by water, wearing the moon and draped in stars, came once more to the blazing heat of summer. Just see:

The flowers all gone, the butterflies confer no more; the trees grow tall, the cicadas clamor aloud. Wild silkworms spin their cocoons, the pomegranate blazes red; in the ponds the new lotus shows its face.

One day, as they were walking on, evening fell of a sudden, and beside the mountain road they spied a village house.

Sanzang said: "Wukong, look—'the sun sets in the west and hides the fiery mirror; the moon rises from the eastern sea and shows the wheel of ice.' Luckily there's a household by the road. Let's beg a night's lodging and travel on tomorrow."

Bajie said: "Well said. Old Pig's a bit hungry too. Let's get to that house and beg a meal—then I'll have the strength to carry the luggage." Pilgrim said: "You homesick devil! A few days away from home and you're already grumbling!" Bajie said: "Brother, I'm not like you, one who drinks the wind and swallows smoke. Since I've followed the Master these few days, I've gone with half a belly of hunger the whole time—did you know that?" Hearing this, Sanzang said: "Wuneng, if your heart is still so set on home, you're no man for the monastic life—you may as well go back." The blockhead dropped to his knees in a panic: "Master, don't listen to Elder Brother. He's one for pinning tales on people. I never grumbled about anything, and he says I grumbled. I'm a simple-hearted fool who speaks straight: I said my belly was empty, so we'd best find a household and beg a fast—and he calls me a homesick devil. Master! I've received the Bodhisattva's precepts, and you have shown me pity besides; I am willing and resolved to serve you all the way to the Western Heaven—I swear no turning back, no regret. This is what they call 'hating the bitterness and cultivating all the harder.' How can you say I'm not for the monastic life?" Sanzang said: "Since it's so, get up." The blockhead bounced up, still grumbling and mumbling, shouldered the load, and, his heart set fast, followed on.

Soon they reached the gate of the house by the road. Sanzang dismounted, Pilgrim took the reins, Bajie set down the luggage, and all three stood in the green shade. Leaning on his nine-ringed tin staff, settling his rattan-woven, bamboo-plaited cape, Sanzang first hurried to the door, where he saw an old man reclining on a bamboo couch, softly, softly intoning the Buddha's name.

Not daring to raise his voice, Sanzang slowly called out: "Patron, my greetings." The old man bounced up at once, hastily gathered his garments, came out the door, and returned the courtesy: "Venerable Sir, forgive my failure to welcome you. From what quarter do you come, and what brings you to my humble gate?" Sanzang said: "This humble monk is a monk of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, bearing the sacred decree to go to the Thunderclap Monastery to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Coming to your honored region, we find the day late, and would beg a night's lodging at your benevolent house—a thousand prayers for your kindness." The old man waved his hands and shook his head: "You can't go. The scriptures are hard to win from the Western Heaven. If you'd seek scriptures, go to the Eastern Heaven instead." Sanzang said nothing, but sank into thought: "The Bodhisattva pointed the road to the west—why does this old man say to travel east? How could there be scriptures in the east?"... Too bashful to speak, he made no answer for a long while.

Now Pilgrim, unruly by nature, could contain himself no longer. He stepped forward and called out at the top of his voice: "Old man! All those years you've lived, and not a bit of sense in you. We monks come from afar to beg a night's lodging, and you scare us off with your ill-omened talk. If your house is really so cramped there's nowhere to sleep, very well: we'll sit under a tree the whole night through, and never trouble you."

The old man clutched Sanzang's sleeve: "Master, you say nothing, but that disciple of yours—that crooked face, those jutting jawbones, that thunder-god beak, those red eyes—some consumptive devil! How can he turn on an old man like me!" Pilgrim laughed: "You old man, you've no eye for quality at all! Your pretty-pretty sort is what they call 'fine to look at, no good to eat.' Old Sun here may be small, but he's solid—nothing under the hide but sinew." The old man said: "You must have some powers then." Pilgrim said: "I'd not boast—but they'll pass inspection." The old man said: "Where is your home, and why did you shave your head for monkhood?" Pilgrim said: "Old Sun's family, from way back, lived in the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the Aolai Country beyond the Eastern Sea of the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. From childhood I learned to be a monster, and my name is Wukong. By my own skill I won myself the title Great Sage Equal to Heaven. But because I would not accept Heaven's stipend, I rebelled against the Heavenly Palace and stirred up a world of trouble. Now, my tribulation past and the trouble discharged, I have turned and bowed to the gate of Sakya, seeking the true fruit, protecting this master of mine from under the Tang throne, bound for the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha. What have I to fear of high mountains or perilous roads, wide waters or wild waves? Old Sun can catch monsters and subdue demons. Taming tigers, seizing dragons, kicking down heaven and churning up wells—I know a little of all of it. If your honored house has bricks flying and tiles falling, pots crying out and doors opening by themselves, old Sun can set it all at rest."

Hearing this speech, the old man laughed aloud: "So you're one of those smooth-tongued monks who drum up alms door to door!"

Pilgrim said: "It's your son who's smooth-tongued! These days, what with the hard traveling with my master, I've been too weary to talk at all." The old man said: "If you weren't weary and didn't stint your talk, why, you'd chatter me to death alive! With powers like that, you may reach the west after all—you may indeed. How many in your party? Come into my thatched cottage and lodge." Sanzang said: "Deep thanks for the kindness of not scolding us. We are three in all." The old man said: "Where are the other two?" Pilgrim pointed: "You old man, your eyes must be dim—aren't those the very ones standing in the green shade?" The old man indeed was dim-sighted; he lifted his head and looked closely, and the moment he saw Bajie's face he was so frightened he staggered at every step and went scrambling into the house, crying: "Shut the door! Shut the door! A monster's come!" Pilgrim rushed up and caught him: "Old man, don't be afraid. He's no

monster—he's my monastic brother." The old man said, trembling: "Fine! Fine! Fine! One monk uglier than the last!" Bajie stepped forward: "Old governor, if you judge men by their looks, you're clean wrong. Ugly we may be, but we're useful every one." As the old man stood at his gate bandying words with the three monks, from the south of the village came two young men leading an old granny, with three or four little children, girls and boys, their clothes gathered up, barefoot, coming back from setting out rice seedlings.

They saw a white horse and a load of luggage, and a crowd clamoring at their gate. Not knowing what it meant, they all surged forward, asking: "What's this? What's this?" Bajie swung his head around, wagged his ears a few times, and stuck out his long snout—whereupon the whole company toppled east and tumbled west, staggering and falling over each other.

Sanzang, in a flurry, called out with all his might: "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! We're not bad men—we're monks going to fetch scriptures."

Only then did the old man come out the door, supporting the granny: "Mother, get up—there's nothing to fear. This master comes from the Tang court; it's only that his disciples' faces are rather ugly. But the mountains are cruel and the men are kind. Take the children inside." So the granny took hold of the old man, and the two young men led their children in.

Sanzang sat down on the bamboo couch in the gate-tower and reproached them: "Disciples! Ugly faces you two have, and coarse speech besides—you've frightened this whole household out of seven parts of its eight, and all of it lays sin at my door!"

Bajie said: "I'll not deceive you, Master—old Pig has grown a deal handsomer since following you. Back when I went about in Gao Village, if I thrust my snout forward and swung my ears out both sides, I'd regularly scare two or thirty people out of their wits." Pilgrim laughed: "Blockhead, no more of that—put a bit of polish on your ugliness." Sanzang said: "Listen to Wukong! A face is born the way it's born—how can you tell him to polish it?" Pilgrim said: "Tuck that rake-snout into his breast and don't let him haul it out; paste those cattail-leaf ears flat behind his head and forbid them to wag—that's polishing." And Bajie truly tucked in his snout and flattened his ears, hunched his head, and stood to one side.

Pilgrim carried the luggage inside and tethered the white horse to a stake.

Presently the old man led in a young man bearing a board tray with three cups of clear tea to offer. Tea over, he ordered a meal prepared. The young man brought out an old table, holed and unvarnished, and set down two stools with broken heads and wrenched legs, in the courtyard, inviting the three to sit where it was cool.

Only then did Sanzang ask: "Old Patron, your honored surname?" The old man said: "This humble one is named Wang." "And how many worthy sons?" "Two little sons, and three little grandsons." Sanzang said: "Congratulations! Congratulations!" He asked again: "And your age?" "A useless sixty-one years." Pilgrim said: "Good! Good! Good! The full cycle of sixty, come round again!" Sanzang asked once more: "Old Patron, at first you said the scriptures of the Western Heaven were hard to win—why so?" The old man said: "The scriptures are not hard to win; it's the road that's rough and hard to travel. Westward from us, only thirty li or so, there is a mountain called the eight-hundred-li Yellow Wind Ridge, and that mountain is full of monsters. That is why I said the scriptures were hard to win. But for this little Venerable here, with all the powers you claim, it may be done." Pilgrim said: "No matter! No matter! With old Sun and this monastic brother of mine, whatever monster it is won't dare meddle with us."

As they talked, the son brought in the rice, set it on the table, and said: "Please, the meal." Sanzang pressed his palms together and began chanting the meal sutra. Bajie had already swallowed a bowl. Before the Elder had got through a few lines of sutra, the blockhead had eaten his fill of three bowls more.

Pilgrim said: "This chaff-guzzler! He must have run into a hungry ghost!"

Old Wang, a man of feeling, seeing how fast he ate, said: "This Venerable must be truly hungry—quick, more rice!" The blockhead indeed had a mighty gut: watch him, head never lifting, eat a dozen bowls and more on end. Sanzang and Pilgrim managed no more than two bowls apiece. The blockhead showed no sign of stopping—still eating.

Old Wang said: "In the hurry of the moment we've no dishes to speak of—we dare not press you. Pray take another helping."

Sanzang and Pilgrim both said: "Enough." Bajie said: "Old man, what's all this clacking? Who asked you to cast divinations—your fifth line and sixth line and all? If there's rice, just keep bringing it on!" In one session the blockhead ate the whole family's rice to the last grain—and said he was only half full. Only then were the dishes cleared, and under the gate-tower bamboo couches and plank beds were made ready, and they lay down.

At dawn next day Pilgrim went to saddle the horse and Bajie to square the load. Old Wang had the granny prepare tea and cakes and hot water to see them off, and the three gave thanks and took their leave. The old man said: "If you meet with any mischance on the road, you must come back to this thatched cottage." Pilgrim said: "Old man, none of your disgraceful talk. We monks never walk the road back." So they mounted, shouldered the load, and set out west.

Alas! This going promised no good road into the western regions, but surely evil demons bringing down great calamity. The three pressed on, and before half a day had passed, they indeed came upon a high mountain—and a fearsome, steep one to tell of. Sanzang's horse drew near the cliff's edge, and he reined in and looked carefully around. Truly:

The high ones are mountains, the steep ones are ridges; the sheer ones are cliffs, the deep ones are ravines; the sounding ones are springs, the fresh ones are flowers. Is that mountain high? Its summit touches the blue empyrean. Is this ravine deep? Its bottom looks down into the underworld. Before the mountain, white clouds puff unceasing, weird rocks tower precipitous. No tongue could tell of the Soul-Snatching Cliff, a thousand and ten thousand fathoms high. Behind the cliff, the winding, twisting Dragon-Hiding Cave; within the cave, the Dripping Water Rock, ding-dong ringing.

And see: fork-antlered deer; dazed and foolish river-deer that stare at men; red-scaled pythons coiled and coiling; white-faced apes romping and rollicking. At dusk, tigers seek their dens on the hillside; at daybreak, dragons toss the waves and leave the water, the cave-doors resounding with their thunder. Birds burst whirring from the grass; beasts shuffle hunched through the woods. A sudden pack of wolves and beasts sweeps past, and a man's heart goes thudding with fright. Truly, on that upside-down cave, upside-down cave—the cave's collapse brings down the mountain;

Blue-black dye stains the thousand-fathom jade; a gauze of green veils ten thousand heaps of mist.

The master urged his silver steed gently on; the Great Sage Sun stilled his cloud and stepped slowly; Zhu Wuneng trudged along, grumbling at his load. They were admiring the mountain when suddenly they heard a whirlwind springing up.

Sanzang's heart quaked on his horse: "Wukong, the wind is rising!" Pilgrim said: "What's to fear from wind? It's only the breath of the four seasons from Heaven's house—why be frightened?" Sanzang said: "This wind is evil—unlike the winds of the sky." Pilgrim said: "How do you make it out to be unlike the sky's wind?" Sanzang said: "Look at this wind:

Towering, surging, soughing and swirling, Dim and distant, it rises from the blue empyrean. Crossing the ridge, a thousand trees are heard to roar; Entering the wood, ten thousand bamboo stalks sway. The willows on the banks are shaken root and all; The flowers in the gardens go flying leaf and petal. The fishing boats

hauling in their nets make fast their lines; The travelers' barges drop their sails and let go anchor. Halfway on their road, the marching men lose their way; The woodcutters in the hills can scarcely bear their loads. Through the groves of immortal fruit the monkeys scatter; Among the clusters of rare flowers the deer flee in panic. Cedar and cypress before the cliff fall tree by tree; Pine and bamboo below the ravine shed leaf on leaf. It strews the earth, blows up the dust, the sand goes flying; It churns the rivers, stirs the seas, the waves go rolling."

Bajie stepped forward and caught hold of Pilgrim: "Elder Brother, the wind's terrible! Let's get out of the way somewhere—it's only sensible."

Pilgrim laughed: "Brother, you're hopeless! Hiding when the wind blows—what if we came face to face with a demon, what then?" Bajie said: "Brother, haven't you heard: 'Flee beauty as you'd flee an enemy; flee the wind as you'd flee an arrow'? There's no shame in stepping aside." Pilgrim said: "Quiet now, and watch: I'll grab a handful of this wind and give it a sniff." Bajie laughed: "There's Elder Brother with another empty lie! Wind—grabbed and sniffed! Even if you grabbed it, it would slip away." Pilgrim said: "Brother, you don't know: old Sun has a method of grabbing the wind."

A fine Great Sage! He let the head of the wind pass, caught the tail of it, and sniffed. It had a raw, fishy smell. "This is no good wind!" he said. "The taste of this wind—either a tiger wind or a demon wind. There's something crooked here beyond doubt."

Hardly were the words out when, below the hillside, tail tucked and hooves flying, out leapt a dappled, fierce tiger. Sanzang was so frightened he could not sit the carved saddle; he tumbled head over heels off the white horse and leaned against the roadside, his soul truly flying and his spirit scattering. Bajie dropped the luggage, whipped out his rake, and—giving Pilgrim no chance to step forward—roared out: "Sinful beast! Where do you run!" He charged and struck at the head.

That tiger stood bolt upright, raised its left forepaw, clawed its own chest, and ripped downward with a slashing sound—stripping off its whole skin! There it stood by the roadside. Look what a fiendish sight! Ah, that shape:

A body bared and dripping blood, legs curved and red; temples aflame with bristling hair; brows stiff and stiffly standing; four steel fangs white and gleaming; a pair of golden eyes bright and blazing. High-hearted, it strains and gives a mighty roar; fierce and proud, it shrieks in a ringing voice.

It shouted: "Hold! Hold! I am none other than the Advance Guard of the Great King of the Yellow Wind! Charged this day by my Great King's stern command to patrol the mountain and take a few common mortals for his drinking relish. What monks are you, that dare lift weapons against me?"

Bajie cursed: "Damn you, sinful beast! You don't know me! We are no common passersby, but disciples of Sanzang, the Tang emperor's sworn brother of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, bearing the imperial decree to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Clear off, far and fast, and open the great road! Frighten not my master, and I'll spare your life. Rampage as before, and where my rake falls, there'll be no mercy!" The demon waited for no argument: he closed in briskly, dropped into a stance, and clawed at Bajie's face.

Bajie dodged aside in haste and swung his rake to strike. The monster, weaponless, turned tail and fled, and Bajie chased after him. At the foot of the hillside, in a tangle of heaped stones, the monster drew out two red-bronze swords, whirled them up quickly, and turned to give battle. The two of them fought before that slope, back and forth, charge and counter-charge.

Meanwhile Sun Pilgrim was helping the Tang monk to his feet: "Master, don't be afraid. Sit here, and let old Sun go lend Bajie a hand; we'll fell that monster and be on our way."

Only then did Sanzang sit up, trembling, reciting the Heart Sutra under his breath—and of him we say no more.

Pilgrim drew out his iron staff and shouted "Take him!" Just then Bajie, his spirit roused, beat the monster back from the field.

Pilgrim cried: "Don't spare him! We must catch him up!"

The two of them, swinging the rake and raising the iron staff, chased down the mountainside. The monster lost his head and his hands: he played the "Golden Cicada Sheds Its Shell" trick, gave a roll, and returned to his true body—once more a fierce tiger. Pilgrim and Bajie would not give over: they chased that tiger determined to dig out the root. When the monster saw them hard upon him, he clawed his chest again, stripped off the skin, and draped it over the Crouching Tiger Rock; then, slipping his true body loose, he turned into a gust of wild wind and made straight back for the road.

At the roadside, the master was just reciting the Heart Sutra when the monster seized him in one grab, mounted the rushing wind, and carried him off. Ah, the pity of Sanzang! Born of the river's current, fated to tribulation on tribulation; in the gate of extinction, the work of merit is hard.

The monster bore the Tang monk captive to his cave mouth, reined in the wild wind, and said to the gatekeeper: "Go report to the Great King: the Tiger Vanguard of the Advance Guard has taken a monk, awaiting orders outside the gate."

The master of the cave gave orders to bring him in.

The Tiger Vanguard, two red-bronze swords stuck in his belt, bore the Tang monk in both hands, came forward, knelt, and said: "Great King, your humble general, unskilled though he is, was honored with your command to patrol the mountain, and suddenly met with a monk—the Master Sanzang, the Tang emperor's sworn brother from under the throne of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, bound for the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. I have seized him and present him here, a modest dish to set before you."

At this the master of the cave was startled: "I heard tell of this before now: the Master Sanzang is a holy monk of the Tang, bearing the imperial decree to fetch scriptures, and he has a disciple named Sun Pilgrim, of vast magic powers and mighty strength. How were you able to catch him?"

The Vanguard said: "He has two disciples. The first to come at me wielded a nine-toothed rake, and he was long of snout and great of ears; the other carried a gold-banded iron staff, and he had eyes of fire and gold. As they pressed your humble general in the fight, I played the 'Golden Cicada Sheds Its Shell' trick, slipped free at a stroke, took this monk, and present him to the Great King—a small token of a meal's respect."

The master of the cave said: "Let's not eat him just yet." The Vanguard said: "Great King—to see food and not eat it, that's called refractoriness." The master of the cave said: "You don't understand. Eating him would be a small matter—but I fear those two disciples will come raising a ruckus at our gate, and that would not be safe. Bind him to the Wind-Fixing Stake in the rear garden, and wait three or five days. If the two of them don't come stirring up trouble, why then: first, his body will be clean and whole; second, no war of words. Won't he then be ours to do with as we please? Boiled or steamed, fried or fricasseed, we can take our ease and enjoy him slowly—no hurry." The Vanguard rejoiced: "Deep plans and far sight, Great King—well said!" He called: "Little ones, take him away!"

Seven or eight binders swarmed up from the sides and hauled the Tang monk off, just as a hawk seizes a sparrow—roped and bound. Truly: the ill-fated son of the river thinks of Pilgrim; the holy monk in peril thinks of Wuneng.

He cried: "Disciples! On what mountain are you catching monsters, where subduing demons, while I am seized by this fiend and suffer this venomous harm! When shall we ever meet again? O bitter, bitter! If you had come a little earlier, my life might yet be saved; if you are too long delayed, it cannot be saved for certain!"

So he lamented on the one hand, and on the other his tears fell like rain.

Now the story tells how Pilgrim and Bajie chased that tiger down the slope—and saw the tiger tumble and sprawl flat before the cliff. Pilgrim raised his staff and struck with all his might, and the shock stung his own hand. Bajie struck a rake-stroke too, and the rake's teeth sprang back. It was a tiger skin, spread over a slab of Crouching Tiger Rock.

Pilgrim cried out in alarm: "Bad! Bad! We've fallen for his trick!"

Bajie said: "What trick?" Pilgrim said: "It's called 'the Golden Cicada Sheds Its Shell': he left the tiger skin draped here and made off. Let's hurry back and look to the master, before the poison hand falls on him." The two hurried back—and Sanzang was gone.

Pilgrim roared like thunder: "What's to be done! The master has been carried off!"

Bajie, leading the horse, tears dripping from his eyes, said: "Heaven help us! Heaven help us! Where are we to look for him!" Pilgrim lifted his head and leapt: "Don't cry! Don't cry! Crying blunts the fighting edge. One way or another he must be in this mountain—let's go search."

The two of them indeed plunged into the hills, threading ridges and crossing peaks. After they had gone a good long while, beneath a rocky cliff a cave dwelling rose before them. The two stopped and studied it: truly a dangerous place. Just see:

Range upon range of pointed peaks, ancient roads through curving hills. Green pines and emerald bamboo swaying; green willows and blue wutong trees bending. Before the cliff, weird rocks in pairs; within the woods, secluded birds two by two. The ravine's waters rush from far, striking the stone walls; the mountain springs drip thin, soaking the sandy banks. Wild clouds, sheet upon sheet; jasper grasses, lush and thick. Cunning foxes and crafty hares dart back and forth; antlered deer and musk deer vie in boldness. Down the cleft cliff hangs the ten-thousand-year vine; on the deep ravine's rim leans half the thousand-year cypress.

Gleaming, towering, it outdoes Mount Hua; fallen flowers and crying birds rival Mount Tiantai.

Pilgrim said: "Worthy brother, leave the luggage in the wind-sheltered hollow, let the horse graze, and stay out of sight. Old Sun will go to his gate and give battle. Only by taking the demon can we save the master." Bajie said: "No need to tell me—go quick!"

Pilgrim straightened his gown, tightened his tiger-skin kilt, drew his staff, and strode to the gate, where he saw six great characters on the doors: "Yellow Wind Ridge, Yellow Wind Cave." He planted his feet in a T-stance, gripped his staff, and called out at the top of his voice: "Demon! Send my master out at once, and save yourself the trouble of having your nest overturned and your dwelling stamped flat!"

At these words the junior demons, every one of them afraid, came trembling inside to report: "Great King! Disaster!" The Yellow Wind Demon, sitting there, asked: "What now?" The junior demon said: "Outside the cave gate is a monk with a thunder-god beak and a hairy face, carrying an iron staff as thick as all that, demanding his master!" The master of the cave was alarmed and summoned the Tiger Vanguard: "I sent you to patrol the mountain—you should have taken mountain oxen, wild boars, fat deer, stray sheep. Why seize the Tang monk! Now his disciple has come making this ruckus—what's to be done?" The Vanguard said: "Great King, set your heart at rest—sleep high and worry not. Your humble general, unskilled though he is, is willing to lead fifty junior demon troops out and fetch this Sun Pilgrim, whoever he is, to make a second

course." The master of the cave said: "Besides the officers great and small, I have five or seven hundred junior troops here—choose as many as you please. Only take that Pilgrim, and we can eat that monk's flesh at our leisure, and I'll gladly swear brotherhood with you. But if you fail to take him and get hurt instead, don't blame me."

The tiger demon said: "Rest easy! Rest easy! Wait for me!"

And indeed he mustered fifty sturdy junior demons, beat drums and waved banners, belted on his two red-bronze swords, burst out through the gate, and cried in a fierce voice: "Where are you from, you ape of a monk, that dare howl and bawl here?" Pilgrim cursed: "You skinned beast! Playing your shell-shedding tricks, carrying off my master—and you ask what I'm about! Send my master out, nice and proper, and I'll spare your life!" The tiger demon said: "Your master was taken by me, for my Great King's supper. If you know what's good for you, go home! Or, when I've taken you too, we'll eat you together—'buy one, get one free,' as they say!" At this Pilgrim's wrath flared.

With a grinding sound his steel fangs gnashed together; in a wheeling flash his fiery eyes rolled round.

He drew his iron staff and roared: "What powers have you, to talk so big! Stand not! Taste my staff!"

The Vanguard gripped his swords and held his ground. This bout was a serious one indeed: each showed his full prowess. What a fight:

That monster was a real goose-egg, and Wukong a goose-egg stone. Red-bronze swords crossed the Monkey King's path—like eggs hurled against a rock. How can the magpie quarrel with the phoenix? How dare the tame dove match the hawk? The monster spewed wind, and ash filled the mountain; Wukong breathed fog, and cloud hid the sun. Back and forth they fought three rounds and five; the Vanguard's waist went limp, his strength all gone. He wheeled and broke, seeking life in flight— But Wukong, dogging him close, gave him no quarter.

The tiger demon could not hold out; he turned tail and ran. He had bragged before the master of the cave, so he dared not go back to the cave, but fled straight for the hillside. Pilgrim was not the man to let him go: staff in hand he simply chased on, bawling and roaring, his war-cries never ceasing—and chased him to the wind-sheltered hollow. Lifting his head, he saw Bajie there grazing the horse.

Bajie suddenly heard the whooping and yelling, turned to look, and there was Pilgrim chasing the beaten tiger demon. He dropped the horse, raised his rake, and struck him a slanting blow on the head. The pity of that Vanguard! Escaping one net, he had hoped to leap free of the yellow-silk snare—and met instead the fisherman with the casting net. With one rake-stroke Bajie punched nine holes in him, the fresh blood gushing; one whole headful of brains drained dry. There is a poem in witness:

Three years and five since he returned to the true line, He kept the fast, held to the greens, and woke to utter Void. With faithful heart to guard the Tang Sanzang, At his first keeping of the Way he won this deed of merit.

The blockhead set one foot on the corpse's spine and swung the rake with both hands to strike again.

When Pilgrim saw this he rejoiced: "Brother, that's the very thing! He led a few dozen junior demons and dared give battle to old Sun; I beat him, and instead of running for the cave he ran here to die. Well met, brother—another minute and he'd have slipped away."

Bajie said: "Was he the one who raised the wind and carried off the master?" Pilgrim said: "The very one, the very one." Bajie said: "Did you ask him where the master is?" Pilgrim said: "This monster has the master in his cave, meaning to make a meal of him for some damned Great King or other. Old Sun lost his temper, fought him all the way here, and you finished him. Brother, this merit is yours. You keep watch over the

horse and the luggage, while I drag this dead monster off to the cave gate and demand battle. We must take that old demon before we can save the master." Bajie said: "Well said, Elder Brother. Go, go. If you beat the old demon, chase him here, and old Pig will cut him off and slay him." A fine Pilgrim! Iron staff in one hand, dragging the dead tiger in the other, he went straight to the cave mouth.

Truly:

The Law Master, meeting trouble, meets a demon; Their natures joined in harmony subdue the unruly fiend.

But whether that quest subdued the demon and saved the Tang monk—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 21

The Dharma Protector Sets Up a Manor to Shelter the Great Sage; On Sumeru, Lingji Subdues the Wind Demon

The story tells how some fifty battered little demons, clutching their tattered banners and broken drums, rushed into the cave and reported: "Great King, the Tiger Vanguard could not prevail against that hairy-faced monk. He's been chased down the eastern slope of the mountain."

The old demon was greatly vexed at this news.

While he hung his head in silence, brooding over a plan, another little demon who guarded the front gate came in and said: "Great King, the Tiger Vanguard has been beaten to death by that hairy-faced monk, and the body's been dragged to our front gate—the monk is shouting a challenge there."

At this the old demon was more distressed than ever. "The scoundrel is utterly shameless!" he cried. "I never so much as tasted his master, and now he has gone and killed my vanguard. Hateful! Hateful!" Then he shouted: "Bring my armor! All I've heard is talk of some 'Pilgrim Sun.' Let me go out and see what sort of nine-headed, eight-tailed monk this is. I'll capture him and bring him in to pay for my Tiger Vanguard's life." The little demons hurriedly carried out his armor.

The old demon buckled it all on smartly, seized a three-pronged steel trident, and led his demon host bounding out of the cave. The Great Sage stood waiting outside the gate, and when he saw the demon come forth, he was truly formidable. See how he was dressed:

A golden helmet flashing in the sun, golden armor gleaming with light. From the helmet floated the plume of a mountain pheasant; over the armor, a gauze robe of pale goose-yellow. The armor-binding sash coiled with dragons, bright with color; the heart-protecting mirror dazzled the eye. Deerskin boots dyed the color of locust blossom; a brocade apron trimmed with willow-leaf velvet. In his hand a three-pronged steel trident, keen and sharp—no less a figure than the Illustrious Sage of old.

The old demon came out his gate and called in a stern, loud voice: "Which of you is Pilgrim Sun?"

The Pilgrim, one foot planted on the tiger monster's skin, his As-You-Will iron cudgel in hand, replied: "Your Grandpa Sun is here! Send my master out!"

The monster looked him over carefully. He saw that the Pilgrim had a scrawny, ill-favored body and a thin, wasted face, not four feet tall, and he laughed: "Pitiful! Pitiful! I thought you'd be some invincible, untopplable hero, and here you are—a skeleton of a sick ghost!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You son of a fool, you've no eye at all! Your grandpa may be small, but if you're willing to give me one crack of your trident's handle on the head, I'll grow three feet taller."

"You dare," said the monster. "Harden that head of yours and take a blow from my handle!"

The Great Sage stood his ground without a flicker of fear.

The monster indeed brought the blow down, and the Great Sage merely bent at the waist—and lengthened three feet, standing a full zhang tall. The demon was so startled that he pressed down his trident and shouted: "Pilgrim Sun! How dare you come flaunt that body-protecting transformation trick at my very gate! None of your tricks! Come up here, and let's see what you can really do!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Sonny, as the saying goes: 'He who shows mercy does not raise his hand; he who raises his hand shows no mercy.' Your grandpa's hand is heavy—I'm afraid you won't be able to take this cudgel of mine!"

The monster was in no mood for talk. He wheeled his trident around and thrust it straight at the Pilgrim's chest. But the Great Sage was one of those experts who are never flustered—the flustered are never experts. He swung his iron cudgel aside, executed the move called "Black Dragon Sweeping the Ground," parried the trident, and struck straight at the monster's head.

The two of them fought a splendid battle before the mouth of the Yellow Wind Cave:

The demon king raged; the Great Sage displayed his might. The demon king raged, hoping to seize the Pilgrim to pay for his vanguard; The Great Sage displayed his might, resolved to capture the fiend and rescue the elder. Trident thrust—cudgel parries; cudgel swings—trident meets it. One was the grand commander who ruled the mountain; One was the Dharma-protecting Handsome Monkey King. At first they fought amid the dust; then each rose into midair. The steeled trident, its points bright and keen; The As-You-Will cudgel, its body black and its bands gold. Whomsoever it pierced, his soul went down to the Courts of the Shades; Whomsoever it struck was sure to see King Yama. All depended on quick hands and quick eyes, and it surely took mighty strength and a sturdy body. The two of them fought a battle of life and death— And who could tell which would be safe and which would fall!

The old demon and the Great Sage fought thirty rounds without a victor. Wanting to press his advantage, the Pilgrim used the trick of the body outside the body: he plucked a handful of hairs, chewed them to pieces in his mouth, spat them out with a cry of "Change!"—and thereupon a hundred-odd Pilgrims appeared, all dressed exactly alike, each gripping an iron cudgel, surrounding the monster in midair.

The monster was alarmed, but he had a trick of his own. He turned his head sharply toward the quarter of the southeast, opened his mouth three times, and with a great whoosh blew out a breath—and all at once a yellow wind rose howling out of the sky. What a wind! Truly a fearful thing:

Cold and biting, it turned Heaven and Earth strange; formless and shadowless, it whipped up yellow sand. It pierced the forests, toppled the ridges, felled the pines and plums; it hurled soil and dust, and split the peaks apart. Waves of the Yellow River surged until the whole stream ran muddy; the waters of the Xiang River churned and rolled. The azure sky shook to the Palace of the Dipper and Ox, and all but toppled the Hall of the King of Hell. The five hundred arhats clamored to high Heaven; the Eight Great Vajra warriors cried out in confusion. Manjusri lost his blue-maned lion; Puxian's white elephant could nowhere be found. The Dark Warrior's tortoise and snake scattered from their flock; the mount of Zitong lost its saddle-cloth. Traveling merchants cried out, appealing to the gray heavens; boatmen bowed and vowed offerings of every kind. Lives drifted on the misty waves; folk who chased fame and gain gave their last breath to the waters. Immortal mountains and cave palaces turned black as pitch; the isles of Penglai on the sea went dim and dark. Lord Lao Zi could no longer tend his elixir furnace; the Star of Longevity put away his dragon-whisk fan. The Queen Mother, setting out for the Peach Banquet, had her sash and bracelet snapped by a single gust. Erlang lost his way in the city of Guanzhou; Nezha could not fetch the sword from its case. The Heavenly King could not find the pagoda in his palm; Lu Ban dropped his golden-headed drill. The precious towers of the Thunderclap Monastery toppled three stories; the stone bridge of Zhaozhou broke clean in two. The red sun wheeled, drained of all light; the stars across the sky were thrown into confusion. Birds of the southern mountains flew to the northern hills; the waters of the eastern lake spilled over into the western lake. Mates were torn from mates and could not call to one another; mothers were parted from children, and their cries went unheard. The Dragon Kings scoured the seas for their yakshas; the Thunder Lord searched everywhere for Lightning. The ten kings of the dead hunted for their judges; in the underworld, the Ox-Headed chased the Horse-Faced. The wind blew all the way to Mount Potalaka, and rolled up a scroll of Guanyin's sutras. White lotus petals shed, flying along the coast; it toppled the Bodhisattva's twelve courtyards. Since Pangu's day the world has known winds, but never a wind that came so evil as this. With a roar and a crash, all but burst the cosmos itself— And ten thousand li of rivers and mountains trembled!

When the monster loosed this gale, it caught all those little Pilgrims—the Great Sage's transformed hairs—and whirled them about in midair like so many spinning wheels, so that they could neither swing their cudgels nor close with the monster.

In alarm the Pilgrim shook his body, took back his hairs, and came on alone, raising his iron cudgel to strike. But the monster spat a mouthful of yellow wind full in his face, and it seared the Pilgrim's fiery eyes with golden pupils so that they squeezed tightly shut and would not open. Unable to use his cudgel, he was beaten off the field. The monster gathered his wind and returned to his cave, and of him we shall say no more for now.

Now let us speak of Zhu Bajie. Seeing the yellow wind rage and Heaven and Earth lose their light, he had held the horse and guarded the luggage, crouching in a hollow of the mountain, not daring to open his eyes, not daring to raise his head, his mouth ceaselessly reciting the Buddha's name and making vows; and he knew not whether the Pilgrim had won or lost, nor whether his master lived or died. As he agonized thus, the wind suddenly died away and the sky cleared. He raised his head and looked toward the mouth of the cave: no weapons in sight, no sound of gongs or drums.

But the blockhead dared not go up to the gate, and there was no one else to watch the horse and luggage. Truly he was caught in a dilemma, unable either to advance or retreat, in a fine state of panic and distress.

While he fretted, he heard the Great Sage Sun come shouting along from the west, and he rose at once to meet him: "Brother, what a mighty wind! Where have you come from?"

The Pilgrim waved his hand: "Formidable! Formidable! Since old Sun first came into the world, I have never seen such a wind. That old demon came out with a three-pronged steel trident to fight me. We fought thirty-odd rounds, and then old Sun used my body-outside-the-body trick and had him surrounded—but he grew desperate, and so he whipped up this wind. It was truly vicious. It beat me until I could not stand, and I had to take in my magic and flee before the gale. Whew, what a wind! Whew, what a wind! Old Sun can call up winds and summon rains himself, but never have I known a demon's wind so wicked!"

"Brother," said Bajie, "how was the monster's skill at arms?"

"Fair enough," said the Pilgrim. "His trident work is quite tidy. He fought old Sun to a standstill. Only his wind was too wicked—that's what makes him hard to beat."

"If it's like that, how are we ever to rescue Master?"

"Rescuing Master will keep for the moment," said the Pilgrim. "I wonder whether there's an eye doctor anywhere around here who could treat my eyes."

"What's wrong with your eyes?"

"The monster spat a gust of wind at me, and it blew my eyeballs sore and aching. This while, cold tears keep streaming down."

"Brother," said Bajie, "we're halfway up a mountain and the sky's getting dark. Never mind eye doctors—we haven't even got a place to spend the night!"

"A place to sleep is no problem. I reckon that demon won't dare harm our master just yet. Let's find the main road, look for some household, put up there for the night, and come back tomorrow at first light to subdue the fiend."

"Right, right."

So he led the horse and shouldered the luggage, and they came out of the hollow and onto the road. Dusk was gathering by degrees when they heard the sound of dogs barking on the slope south of the road. The two of

them stopped to look: it was a farm manor, with the faint glimmer of lamplight showing. Neither caring whether there was a path or not, they pushed through the grass straight up to the gate. And this is what they saw:

Purple zhi-mushrooms spreading shade, white stones gray and ancient. Purple zhi-mushrooms spreading shade, and green grass all about; white stones gray and ancient, half mantled in moss. A few points of small fireflies glimmering bright; a whole wood of wild trees packed in dense array. Fragrant orchids breathing perfume; tender bamboo newly planted. A clear spring flowing down the winding ravine; ancient cypresses leaning on the deep cliff. So secluded a spot that no traveler ever comes; before the gate, only wild flowers bloom.

The two of them dared not enter unbidden, and could only call out: "Open up! Open up!"

There within was an old man, who came out with several young farmhands, all carrying pitchforks, rakes, and brooms, demanding: "Who's there? Who's there?"

The Pilgrim bowed and said: "We are disciples of a holy monk of the Great Tang empire in the East, journeying west to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Passing through this mountain, our master was captured by the Great King of the Yellow Wind, and we have not yet been able to rescue him. The sky is late, and we have come to your honorable house to beg a night's lodging. We pray you, grant us this convenience."

The old man returned the courtesy: "Forgive us for failing to welcome you. This is a place of many clouds and few people, and hearing someone at the gate just now, we feared it might be demon foxes, tigers, or bandits from the hills—hence these foolish lads of mine, so boorish in challenging you. We did not know you were two reverend elders. Please come in, come in."

The brothers led in the horse and carried in the luggage, went straight inside, tied up the horse and set down the load, greeted the master of the manor, and were seated with him in due form.

A gray-bearded servant brought tea, and when the tea was done, several bowls of sesame rice were set out.

When the meal was finished, bedding was laid out for them. The Pilgrim said: "Sleep is all very well, but may I ask, good sir—do the local folk here sell eye medicine?"

"Which of the reverend elders has an eye ailment?" asked the old man.

"I won't deceive you, venerable sir," said the Pilgrim. "We monks have always been free of sickness—never in our lives have we known an ailing eye."

"If your eyes are not ailing, why do you seek medicine?"

"Today at the mouth of the Yellow Wind Cave, while rescuing my master, that monster unexpectedly spat a gust of wind at me, and it blew my eyeballs sore and aching. Now my eyes are all a-swim with tears—that's why I'm looking for eye medicine."

"Bless us! Bless us!" said the old man. "You, reverend elder, so young in years—how can you tell lies? The Great Sage of Yellow Wind has the most dreadful wind of all. His wind is not like the winds of spring and autumn, or of pines and bamboo, or the winds of east, west, south, and north."

"Perhaps," said Bajie, "it's like a wind through the skull, or a wind behind the ears, or leprosy-wind, or a migraine on either side of the head?"

"No, no," said the old man. "His is called the Divine Samadhi Wind."

"How do you make that out?" asked the Pilgrim.

"That wind can blow Heaven and Earth dark; it can gale till ghosts and gods despair. It splits rocks and bursts cliffs with its fury, and any man it blows upon is done for. If you had been caught in that wind of his, could you hope to live? Only immortals escape it unharmed."

"Indeed! Indeed!" said the Pilgrim. "Though we are not immortals ourselves, the immortals are my juniors, so my life is not so easily done for. It's only that the wind blew my eyeballs sore and aching!"

"In that case," said the old man, "you are a man of consequence. In this poor place of ours there is no eye medicine for sale. But I too suffer from wind-damp and cold tears, and once I met a remarkable man who passed on to me a prescription called the Three-Blossom Nine-Seed Ointment, which can cure all wind-afflicted eyes."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim bowed his head and sang out a courteous thanks: "May I beg a little of it, just to try—just to try?"

The old man consented, went inside, and brought out a little jar of agate. He drew out the stopper, dipped in a jade hairpin, took out a small portion, and applied it to the Pilgrim's eyes, telling him not to open them, but to compose his mind and sleep—by morning he would be well. When the application was done, the old man put away the stone jar and withdrew with his young servants to the inner rooms.

Bajie untied the bundle and spread the bedding, inviting the Pilgrim to lie down.

The Pilgrim sat groping about with his eyes shut, and Bajie chortled: "Sir, where's your white stick?"

"You licker of swill, you blockhead!" cried the Pilgrim. "You're taking care of me as if I were blind!" The blockhead gave a silent, snickering laugh and lay down to sleep. The Pilgrim sat on the bed, circulating his divine arts, and only after the third watch did he lie down.

Before he knew it the fifth watch was passing and dawn approaching. The Pilgrim wiped his face, opened his eyes, and said: "Truly good medicine! Better than ever—a hundred percent more light than usual!"

Then he turned his head to look behind him—ah! Where were the houses, the windows and doors? He saw only old locust trees and tall willows, and his brothers were all asleep on a bed of green sedge.

When Bajie woke, he said: "Brother, what are you bawling about?"

"Open your eyes and look," said the Pilgrim.

The blockhead raised his head suddenly, saw that the household was gone, and scrambled up in a panic: "Where's my horse?"

"Isn't that it, tied to the tree?"

"Where's the luggage?"

"Isn't it there, beside your head?"

"That family is a passel of slackers!" said Bajie. "They moved off—why didn't they give us a shout? If old Pig had known, I could at least have seen them off with tea and fruit. I expect they were dodging their gate obligations, afraid the local constable might hear of it, and so they moved house overnight. Ugh! And we slept like the dead! How could they tear down a house without our hearing so much as a sound?"

The Pilgrim gave a sniggering laugh: "Blockhead, don't bawl. Look at that paper note up in the tree—what is it?"

Bajie went up, reached out, and took it down. On it were four lines of verse:

"This manor was no mortal's home, but a hut conjured by the Dharma-protecting Sangharamas. A wondrous medicine we gave to ease your eyes—now set your minds to subduing the fiend, and hesitate no more."

The Pilgrim said: "That pack of presumptuous gods! Ever since we traded for the dragon horse, I haven't once summoned them—and here they come playing tricks on me!"

"Don't put on airs, brother," said Bajie. "Why should they wait on your summons?"

"Brother, you don't know yet. These Dharma-protecting Sangharamas, the Six Ding and Six Jia, the Revealers of the Five Quarters, and the Four Duty Officers of the Hours are under the Bodhisattva's command to guard our master in secret. From the day they reported their names to us, it happened that once you came along we never needed them, and so I never summoned them—that's all."

"Brother, since they're under holy orders to guard Master in secret, they cannot show themselves openly—that's why they conjured up this immortal manor. Don't be angry with them. Yesterday you owed them for doctoring your eyes, and we owed them too for that vegetarian meal. They've done all they could, truly. Don't bear them a grudge; let's go and rescue Master."

"What you say is right, brother. It's not far from here to the Yellow Wind Cave. Don't stir from this spot—stay in the wood and watch the horse and the luggage while old Sun goes into the cave to scout things out and see how Master fares, before we do battle with the fiend again."

"Just so," said Bajie. "We need definite news, alive or dead. If Master is dead, each of us can plan his own affairs; if he lives, we can give our whole strength and all our hearts."

"No idle chatter—I'm off!"

He sprang straight to the cave gate, which was still shut while the demons slept. Not knocking, careful not to alarm the monsters, the Pilgrim made a spell with his fingers, recited a formula, shook his body, and transformed into a mosquito with spotted wings and legs. A tiny, nimble thing indeed! There is a poem in witness:

A tiny shape, a busy form, a sharp little beak; A fine thin hum, faint as thunder to the ear. Through gauze curtains of orchid chambers it slips at will, Loving best the warm airs of summer days. It only fears the smudge-smoke and the fan, Yet dotes upon the lantern's gleaming light. So light, so small, so very quick at darting— It flew into the demons' cave.

There he saw the little demon who kept the gate fast asleep and snoring. The Pilgrim lit on his face and stung him once. The little demon rolled over and woke: "My stars, what a mosquito! One bite and it's raised a great lump!" Then he opened his eyes suddenly: "It's daylight."

Again there came the sound of a creak as the inner gate opened. The Pilgrim hummed his way in, and there was the old demon giving orders for vigilance at every gate, while weapons were being readied at one side. "I only fear that yesterday's wind did not blow Pilgrim Sun to death," he was saying. "He is sure to come back today, and when he comes, I'll see to it that his life is finished once and for all."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim flew on past the great hall and went straight to the rear. There he saw a barred gate, shut most securely. The Pilgrim slipped in along the crack of the door, and found it was a great empty garden—and there, on the wind-fixing stake, Tang Sanzang was bound with cords and ropes. The master's tears fell in streams, his heart fixed only on Wukong and Wuneng, not knowing where they might be. The Pilgrim hovered and lit on his shining head, calling softly: "Master!"

The elder knew his voice. "Wukong! I've missed you to death! Where are you calling me from?"

"Master, I'm on your head. Don't be anxious; spare yourself the grief. We are determined to capture the fiend—only then can your life be saved."

"Disciple, when will you ever catch the demon?"

"The tiger monster who seized you has already been beaten to death by Bajie. Only the old demon's wind is formidable. I reckon that by today at the latest we're sure to take him. Set your heart at rest and don't weep. I'm off now."

At the word "off," he hummed his way to the front, where the old demon sat enthroned, mustering the commanders of the various posts.

Then a little demon before the cave, someone who had polished up a command flag, came rushing into the hall to report: "Great King, your little one was patrolling the mountain. The moment I left the gate I saw a long-snouted, great-eared monk sitting in the woods. If I hadn't run so fast, he'd very nearly have caught me. But I didn't see that hairy-faced monk from yesterday anywhere."

"Pilgrim Sun is nowhere about," said the old demon. "No doubt the wind blew him dead—or else he's gone off somewhere to fetch rescue troops!"

"Great King," said the assembled demons, "if it truly blew him to death, that's our good fortune. We only fear it didn't kill him, and that he'll go invite divine soldiers here—what then?"

"What's there to fear?" said the old demon. "Fear these divine soldiers, forsooth! To settle my wind there is only one hope—only if Bodhisattva Lingji comes. The rest are nothing to fear!"

From the roof beam the Pilgrim heard this one sentence, and his joy was beyond containing. At once he slipped out, resumed his own form, came back to the wood, and called: "Brother!"

"Brother," said Bajie, "where have you been? Just now a demon with a command flag came by, and I chased him off."

"Good for you! Good for you!" said the Pilgrim, laughing. "Old Sun turned into a mosquito and went into his cave to look for Master. It turns out they have him tied to the wind-fixing stake, weeping. Old Sun gave him my instructions—not to weep—and then flew up to the roof beam to listen. I saw the one with the command flag come puffing in to report: it was your chasing him that made him miss me. The old demon fell to guessing wildly—saying old Sun had been blown to death, or gone to fetch divine soldiers. And then he gave himself away—naming a name! Marvelous! Marvelous!"

"Whom did he name?"

"He said, 'What divine soldiers are worth fearing? Who could settle my wind? Only if Bodhisattva Lingji comes!' But where does Lingji live?"

As they were conferring, they saw an old gentleman come walking out from beside the main road. See what he looked like:

Hale of body, needing no staff; an icy beard and snowy temples, thick and flowing. Golden flowers dazzle the eye, his thoughts half-dim; but the gaunt bones and weary sinews are tough and strong. Bent of back, head bowed, walking slowly; bushy brows, a face as red as any child's. Look at his face and form—a man well-favored, Yet just like the Star of Longevity come forth from his cave.

Bajie caught sight of him and was delighted: "Brother, as the saying goes: 'To know the roads below the mountain, you must ask a man who's come and gone.' Go up and ask him—what do you say?"

The Great Sage hid his iron cudgel, dropped the flap of his robe, went forward, and saluted: "Grandfather, my respects."

The old man returned the bow half-heartedly: "What monks might you be? What business have you in this wild waste?"

"We are disciples of a holy monk seeking scriptures," said the Pilgrim. "Yesterday we lost our master in these parts. We've come specially to ask you, grandfather—where does Bodhisattva Lingji live?"

"Lingji lives due south of here, two thousand li away. There is a mountain called Little Mount Sumeru. On that mountain is a religious foundation, a chan monastery where the Bodhisattva preaches the sutras. Are you going there to fetch his scriptures?"

"Not to fetch his scriptures. There is a matter in which I must trouble him. Which road do we take?"

The old man pointed south with his hand: "This sheep-gut path is the one."

While the Great Sage turned his head to look at the road, the old gentleman dissolved into a pure breeze and vanished without a sound. Only there on the roadside lay a little note, bearing four lines of verse:

"Let this message be conveyed to the Great Sage Equal to Heaven: The old man was Li Changgeng. On Sumeru there is a Flying Dragon Staff, Which Lingji received from the Buddha's own hand."

The Pilgrim took up the note and turned back down the road.

"Brother," said Bajie, "our luck has run low these past days. The last two days, ill-luck has shown us ghosts! Who was that old fellow who turned into wind and went off?"

The Pilgrim handed him the note. Bajie read it through once and asked: "Who's this Li Changgeng?"

"That is the title of the Gold Star of Venus of the West," said the Pilgrim.

Bajie fell to bowing toward the sky in a fluster: "My benefactor! My benefactor! If old Pig hadn't had the Gold Star memorialize the Jade Emperor on my behalf back then, who knows what my life would have turned into by now!"

"So you do know how to be grateful, brother," said the Pilgrim. "But keep your head down—stay hidden deep in this wood and keep careful watch over the luggage and the horse, while old Sun goes to find Sumeru and invite the Bodhisattva."

"Understood! Understood! You just hurry along! Old Pig has learned the way of the tortoise: when it's time to pull in the head, he pulls in the head."

The Great Sage Sun leapt into the sky, mounted his somersault cloud, and headed due south—swift indeed! One nod of his head carried him three thousand li; one twist of his waist, eight hundred li more. In a moment he saw a lofty mountain, with auspicious clouds appearing halfway up, propicious mists drifting in profusion; and there in the mountain's hollow was indeed a chan monastery. He heard the lingering tones of bell and chime, and saw the incense smoke wreathe and curl. The Great Sage came straight to the gate, where he found a Daoist acolyte, a string of beads about his neck, reciting the Buddha's name.

The Pilgrim said: "My respects, acolyte."

The acolyte bowed in return: "From where do you come, my lord?"

"Is this the place where Bodhisattva Lingji preaches the sutras?"

"It is indeed. What is your business?"

"I must trouble you, venerable sir, to bear a message for me. I am the disciple of the Tripitaka Master Sanzang, the sworn brother of the Tang emperor of the East—Pilgrim Sun Wukong, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. There is a matter on which I must see the Bodhisattva."

The acolyte laughed: "My lord, you have many titles and many words—I can't remember them all."

"Just say that Sun Wukong, disciple of the Tang monk, has come."

The acolyte did as he was told and went up to the lecture hall to report.

The Bodhisattva at once donned his cassock and lit more incense to receive the guest.

Only then did the Great Sage step through the gate and look within: the whole hall was brocade splendor, the room one of solemn majesty. The assembly of disciples recited the Lotus Sutra together; the old head monk lightly struck a gold-cast chime. Offerings before the Buddha were all immortal fruits and immortal flowers; what was arrayed on the altar tables was entirely vegetarian fare. Shining treasure candles sent out streak on streak of golden flame like rainbows; rich true incense wafted thread after thread of jade smoke flying in colored mists. Truly:

His lecture done, heart at ease, he enters into samadhi, As fragments of white cloud circle the pine-tips. Quietly sheathing the sword of wisdom, the demon's head is cut off; High and good is the assembly of prajna-paramita.

The Bodhisattva straightened his robes and came out to greet him. The Pilgrim mounted to the hall, took the guest's seat, and tea was ordered.

"No need for tea," said the Pilgrim. "But my master is in peril on Yellow Wind Mountain, and I have come especially to beg the Bodhisattva to exert his mighty magic to subdue the fiend and save my master."

"I received the Tathagata's command to be stationed here to keep the Yellow Wind Demon under restraint," said the Bodhisattva. "The Tathagata bestowed on me a wind-fixing pill and a Flying Dragon treasure staff. Long ago I captured him, spared his life, and released him to hide away in the mountains and mend his ways, forbidding him ever again to take life and work evil. I did not know that today he would seek to harm your master. He has disobeyed my command—the fault is mine."

The Bodhisattva wished to detain the Pilgrim and prepare a vegetarian feast for talk's sake, but the Pilgrim earnestly declined. So the Bodhisattva took up the Flying Dragon Staff, and together with the Great Sage rose into the clouds.

In a short while they reached Yellow Wind Mountain.

"Great Sage," said the Bodhisattva, "this fiend is somewhat afraid of me. I shall remain stationed here in the clouds. You go down and challenge him to battle; lure him out, and then I shall exert my magic power."

The Pilgrim did as he was told. Dropping out of the clouds, without further ado he drew his iron cudgel and smashed in the fiend's gate, crying: "Monster! Give me back my master!"

The little demons at the gate were panic-stricken and hurried in to report.

"That rotten monkey is thoroughly without manners!" cried the monster. "He would not submit, and now he's smashed my gate! This time when I go out, I'll loose a divine wind and blow him dead for certain!"

Once more he buckled on his armor, seized his steel trident, and came out the gate. At the sight of the Pilgrim, without a word he leveled his trident and thrust for the chest. The Great Sage sidestepped, raised his cudgel, and gave battle.

They had fought but a few rounds when the monster swung his head around toward the southeast and was just about to open his mouth and call up the wind—when in midair Bodhisattva Lingji hurled down the Flying Dragon treasure staff. Who knows what spell he recited, but it turned into an eight-clawed golden dragon. With a flourish it spread wide its two claws, seized the fiend in one grip, lifted him by the head, dashed him two or three times against the mountain rocks and cliff-side, and forced him back to his true form: a yellow-furred marten.

The Pilgrim rushed up, raised his cudgel, and would have struck—but the Bodhisattva stopped him: "Great Sage, do not take his life. I must still bring him before the Tathagata."

Then he said to the Pilgrim: "He was originally a rat that attained the Way at the foot of Vulture Peak. Because he stole the clear oil from a crystal lamp before the Buddha, the lamp's flame went dim, and fearing the Vajra guardians would seize him, he fled and came here to become a fiend and work mischief. The Tathagata saw him clearly and judged his crime not capital; therefore he ordered me to keep him under restraint. But now he has taken life and worked evil, and I shall bring him up to Vulture Peak. Today, moreover, he has affronted you, Great Sage, and done harm to the Tang monk. I take him to see the Tathagata, that his crime may be duly judged—only so will this deed of merit be complete."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim thanked the Bodhisattva, who turned back toward the West—and of him we say no more.

Now the story tells how Zhu Bajie, in the wood, was worrying over the Pilgrim when he heard a voice calling from below the slope: "Brother Wuneng! Bring the horse and the luggage!"

The blockhead knew the Pilgrim's voice, hastily gathered everything, and ran out of the wood. Meeting the Pilgrim, he said: "Brother, how did the business go?"

"I invited Bodhisattva Lingji, who used the Flying Dragon Staff to capture the fiend. It turned out to be a yellow-furred marten become a spirit, and the Bodhisattva has taken him to Vulture Peak to see the Tathagata. Come—you and I will go into the cave and rescue Master." At this the blockhead was joy itself.

The two of them charged inside and with rake and iron cudgel slaughtered out the whole nest—crafty hares, demon foxes, musk deer, and horned stags—then went to the rear garden to bow and rescue their master.

As the master came out the gate, he asked: "How did you two manage to capture the fiend? How was I saved at last?"

The Pilgrim recounted the whole affair of inviting Lingji to subdue the demon, and his master's thanks were beyond measure. The brothers laid out some vegetarian food from the cave, prepared tea and a meal and ate it, and only then left the cave, found the main road, and set off westward.

If you would know what lay ahead for them, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 22

Bajie Fights a Great Battle at the Flowing Sands River; Muzha, Obeying the Dharma, Wins Over Wujing

The story goes that the Tang monk and his three disciples, having escaped their peril, pressed on, and in no more than a day had crossed the eight hundred li of Yellow Wind Ridge and entered a level stretch of open country to the west. Time flew swiftly; they passed through summer and on into autumn, saw the cold cicadas shrilling in the withered willows, and watched the Fire Star drift westward across the sky.

As they journeyed on, there suddenly appeared a great river, raging torrents, turbid waves surging and swelling. From horseback Sanzang cried out in alarm: "Disciples, look how broad the water stretches ahead, yet not a single boat is to be seen. How are we to get across?"

When Bajie saw it he said: "It is a raging flood indeed. No boat can cross it."

The Pilgrim leapt into the sky, shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked—and even his heart was daunted. "Master," he said, "it is truly hard going, truly hard! If it were a question of old Sun's crossing this river, I'd only have to twist my waist once and I'd be over. But for you, master, it would be a thousand times hard to ferry, ten thousand years hard to cross."

"As far as I can see, there is no end to it in any direction," said Sanzang. "Just how wide is it?"

"It is a good eight hundred li straight across."

"Brother," said Bajie, "how do you fix the distance so exactly?"

"I'll not deceive you, worthy brother. These eyes of old Sun's can commonly see the fortunes and misfortunes of a thousand li of road in broad daylight. Just now, up in the sky, I took a look: I couldn't tell how far this river runs up or down, but straight across it is a full eight hundred li."

The elder sighed with worry and distress. Wheeling his horse around, he suddenly saw a stone tablet on the bank.

When the three of them went up to look, they found three seal-script characters on it: "The Flowing Sands River." On the tablet's face were four small lines in regular script:

"Eight hundred li of flowing sands, Three thousand li of feeble waters. A goose feather could not float upon it; Reed down would sink straight to the bottom."

Suddenly there emerged from the waves, with a fearsome roar, a demon, hideous and fierce:

A head of flame-red hair, wild and shaggy; Two round eyes, gleaming bright as lamps. A face neither black nor blue, but the hue of indigo; A voice like thunder, like drums—the voice of an aged dragon. Over his body a goose-yellow cape; About his waist a double-twisted belt of white rattan. Beneath his neck, nine skulls hung dangling; In his hand a treasure staff, awesome and grand.

With the whirl of a wind the monster dashed up the bank and made straight for the Tang monk. In alarm, the Pilgrim scooped up his master, hastened up the high bank, and escaped with him. Bajie set down the load, drew out his iron rake, and struck at the demon; the monster parried with his treasure staff. The two of them, on the bank of the Flowing Sands River, each displayed his heroism. What a battle this was:

The nine-toothed rake, the demon-quelling staff—two foes met on the riverbank. This one was the Grand Marshal Tianpeng, that one the banished Curtain-Raising General. In years gone by they met in the Hall of Divine Mists; today they struggle, each betting on his strength. This one's rake strikes out like a dragon

stretching its claws; That one's staff parries like an elephant grinding its teeth. They spread wide their great four-square stances, and bore into the wind head-on. This one claws at head and face without pause; that one lets fly with never a wasted stroke. One was a man-eating fiend, long lord of the Flowing Sands; One was a general who held the faith and kept the discipline.

The two of them went back and forth, fighting twenty rounds without a victor.

The Great Sage, guarding the Tang monk, leading the horse and watching over the luggage, saw Bajie locked in combat with the monster—and it made him grind his teeth in frustration, rub his palms and flex his fists, unable to hold back from joining in. He drew out his cudgel and said: "Master, you sit here, don't be afraid. Let old Sun go have a bit of fun with him."

The master could not hold him back. He gave a whistle and leapt to the front. Now the monster and Bajie were fighting at the very best pitch, locked in a struggle neither could break, when the Pilgrim swung up his iron cudgel and brought it down on the monster's head. The monster spun round in a flash and dodged in panic, then plunged straight into the Flowing Sands River.

Bajie hopped with rage: "Brother! Who asked you to come! The monster was slowing down—he could barely parry my rake. Another three or five rounds at most and I'd have taken him! Now he's seen your ferocity and fled the field in defeat—what are we to do!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Brother, to tell you the honest truth, ever since we subdued the Yellow Wind Demon and came down from the mountain, I haven't swung my staff for a month or more. Seeing how sweetly you and he were fighting, my feet itched unbearably, and so I jumped in for a turn of play. Who knew the fellow couldn't take a joke—he ran off!"

The two of them walked arm in arm, chatting and laughing, and returned to the Tang monk.

"Did you catch the monster?" asked Sanzang.

"The monster couldn't stand the fight," said the Pilgrim. "Beaten, he fled back into the water."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "this monster has lived here a long time; he knows the depths and the shallows. With boundless feeble waters like these, and no boat to be had, we truly need someone who knows the ways of the water to lead us across."

"That's just it," said the Pilgrim. "As the saying goes, 'He who stays near vermilion gets stained red; he who stays near ink gets stained black.' Since that monster lives here, he must certainly know the water's ways. If we capture him now, let's not kill him—let him ferry Master across, and then take it from there."

"No need to hesitate, brother," said Bajie. "Go take him first; old Pig will guard Master."

"Worthy brother," said the Pilgrim, laughing, "this is one job where I daren't boast. Water business is not old Sun's strong suit. Even to walk through it empty-handed, I have to make a spell with my fingers and recite the water-repelling formula before I can move. Otherwise I'd have to transform into some fish or shrimp, crab or soft-shelled turtle, before I could go in. If it's a contest of tricks—whatever strange and wondrous feats you like up in the clouds and high mountains—old Sun can do them all. Only the water trade is a bit beyond me."

"Old Pig, back in the day, was Grand Marshal of the Heavenly River," said Bajie, "commanding a host of eighty thousand water soldiers, so I did pick up a few water skills. My only fear is that down there he has family, old and young—a whole seven nests and eight generations of them all coming at once. Then I couldn't handle him, and mightn't I get dragged under?"

"When you get into his water and fight him, don't become enamored of the fight. Feign defeat—no victories allowed. Lure him out, and old Sun will step in and help you."

"Well said. I'm off."

At the word "off," he stripped off his black-brocade tunic, removed his shoes, brandished the rake in both hands, parted the waters, brought out the old skills of his former days, leapt the waves and rolled the billows, plunged in, and went straight to the river bottom, walking onward.

Now the monster, beaten from the field, had just gotten his breath back when he heard someone pushing through the water with a splashing. He rose abruptly to look: it was Bajie, rake in hand, driving through the water.

The monster raised his staff and shouted to his face: "Where do you think you're going, monk! Look sharp and take my blow!"

Bajie parried with his rake: "What kind of demon are you, daring to block the road here?"

"Don't you know me either?" said the monster. "I am no demon ghost or evil spirit, nor am I one of no name and no family."

"If you're no evil demon or ghostly monster," said Bajie, "how is it you take life here? What, in the end, is your name? Tell me truly, and I'll spare your life."

The monster said:

"From birth my spirit was stout and strong; I roved ten thousand li of heaven and earth. A hero whose fame filled all the world, a pattern for the bold and great. The ten thousand kingdoms and nine provinces—everywhere I might walk; the five lakes and four seas—wherever I pleased to charge. All because I studied the Way and ranged to the sky's edge, seeking a master through the endless wastes. Year on year my robe and bowl were ever at my side; day upon day I never let my mind and spirit wander. I roamed the clouds over the earth a dozen times, idled along a hundred journeys through the lands. And so at last I met a true immortal, who opened for me the great Way, all golden light. First I gathered in the infant boy and the wondrous maiden; then I released the Mother of Wood and the Lord of Metal. The kidney waters of the bright hall flowed into the flower pond; the liver fire of the tiered tower was cast into the heart. When my three thousand works were complete I bowed before the face of Heaven, with a loyal heart paying court toward the shining west. The Jade Emperor then promoted me, with his own lips appointing me Curtain-Raising General. Within the South Gate of Heaven I stood highest; before the Hall of Divine Mists I was named the best. At my waist hung the tiger-head tally; in my hand I grasped the demon-quelling staff. A golden helmet on my head, dazzling in the sunlight; armor on my body, bright as glowing haze. Escorting the imperial presence, I went always in the van; attending court, in and out, I stood above the rest. It was all because the Queen Mother held her Peach Banquet, feasting at the Jasper Pool, inviting all the generals: My hand slipped and broke a jade glass, and every heavenly god's soul flew away in fright. The Jade Emperor flew into a rage and wrath, and bade the Left Minister of the court: 'Strip off his cap, pull off his armor, revoke his rank, and push his body to the execution ground.' It was only thanks to the great barefoot immortal, who stepped from the ranks and memorialized for my release, That I was spared death and given back my life, exempted from punishment—banished to the eastern bank of the Flowing Sands. When full, I lie drowsing in these hills; when hungry, I churn the waves in search of food. Woodcutters who met me lost their lives; fishermen who saw me gave up the ghost. Coming and going, I have eaten many men; over and over, I have spread the miasma of death. And now you dare bring violence to my very door! Today my belly has hopes at last. Never mind if the meat's too coarse to taste—once you're caught, I'll mince you fine for pickled sauce!"

At this Bajie flew into a rage and cursed: "You rotten beast, you've no eye at all! Old Pig here could still pinch the froth from water—how dare you call me coarse and threaten to mince me for sauce! It seems you take me for a dried-up old ham! None of your insolence! Take this rake of your ancestor's!"

When the monster saw the rake coming, he ducked aside with a "Phoenix Nods Its Head" move. The two of them fought their way up out of the water, each treading the waves and mounting the billows. This contest was different from the one before. Just look at them:

The Curtain-Raising General, the Marshal Tianpeng, each displaying his powers—a wondrous sight. That one wheels his demon-quelling treasure staff; this one's nine-toothed rake is quick as thought. Leaping waves that shake the hills and streams, thrusting billows that darken the whole world. Fierce as the Year Star crashing into the banners; evil as the Death-Gate spirit overturning the canopy. This one, red-hearted and steadfast, protects the Tang monk; That one, steeped in crime, has become a monster of the waters. One rake-claw leaves nine trails; one staff-blow routs the very soul. Striving mightily, they delight in the grapple; intent and cunning, each would win the wager. All this, reckoned up, is for the scripture seeker—their anger mounts to heaven and cannot be contained. They churn the waters till bream and carp and perch shed their fresh scales; till turtles, soft-shelled turtles, and giant water lizards bruise their tender shells. Red shrimp and purple crabs perish together; all the gods of the water palace bow toward the surface. You hear the billows rolling like thunder crashing, while sun and moon go dark and all the world is strange.

The two of them fought fully two watches without victory for either. It was truly a case of the copper basin meeting the iron broom, the jade chime set against the golden bell.

Now the Great Sage, guarding the Tang monk, stood by at one side, gazing eagerly at the two of them struggling on the water, but with no way to lend a hand. Presently Bajie feinted once with his rake, feigning defeat, turned, and made for the eastern bank. The monster followed in pursuit, and as they neared the bank the Pilgrim could hold back no longer. Leaving his master, he drew his iron cudgel, leapt to the riverside, and brought it down on the demon's head.

The fiend dared not face it—with a splash he dove back into the river.

Bajie bawled: "You Protector of Horses! You really are a hasty monkey! If you'd held off just a little, I'd have lured him up to high ground, you'd have cut off the riverside so he couldn't turn back—and we'd have taken him, wouldn't we! Now that he's gone in, when will he ever come out again?"

"Blockhead, don't bawl! Don't bawl!" said the Pilgrim, laughing. "Let's go back and see Master."

So Bajie went with the Pilgrim up onto the high bank to see Sanzang.

"You've worked hard, disciple," said Sanzang, rising.

"Never mind the hard work," said Bajie. "Only when we've subdued the fiend and gotten you across the river will the matter be truly settled."

"How went your battle with the fiend just now?"

"The fiend's skill is a match for old Pig's. Right in the thick of it I faked a defeat, and he chased me to the bank. The moment he saw Brother raise his staff, he ran off."

"In that case, what are we to do?"

"Set your mind at rest, Master, and don't fret," said the Pilgrim. "The sky is getting late. Sit here beneath the cliff while old Sun goes to beg a vegetarian meal. Eat and sleep, and we'll decide tomorrow."

"Well said," said Bajie. "Go quickly and come back quickly."

The Pilgrim leapt at once into the clouds, went straight to a household due north, and returned with a bowl of vegetarian food, which he offered to his master.

The master marveled at his speed: "Wukong, when you went to that house to beg food, why didn't you ask them for a plan to cross the river? Wouldn't that be better than struggling with this monster?"

"That house is a long way off—five to seven thousand li from here," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "How would they know the ways of this water? What good would asking them do?"

"There you go lying again, brother," said Bajie. "Five to seven thousand li—how could you go and come so fast?"

"What do you know?" said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun's somersault cloud covers 108,000 li at one leap. A mere five or seven thousand li—I only have to nod my head twice and bend my waist once, and the round trip is done. What's hard about that?"

"Brother," said Bajie, "if it's that easy, why don't you carry Master on your back—just a nod of the head, a bend of the waist, and leap across? Why all this weary fighting with the fiend?"

"Don't you know how to ride the clouds? Why don't you carry Master across?"

"Master's flesh and bones are mortal and heavy as Mount Tai. How could my cloud-riding bear him? It would take your somersault cloud."

"My somersault cloud, mind you, is also cloud-riding—only it goes somewhat farther. If you can't carry him, how could I? As the ancients said: 'To move Mount Tai is light as a mustard seed, but to carry a mortal man—the red dust cannot be shed.' With fiends and venomous monsters like this one, they can use their snatching magic and raise a wind, dragging a man hither and thither along the ground—but they cannot carry him up into the sky. Tricks of that sort, old Sun can use as well as anyone. There's also the body-hiding spell and the land-shrinking spell—old Sun knows them all.

"But the point is that Master must journey through all these strange lands to the last; he cannot be carried over his sea of suffering. That is why he cannot advance a single step.

"You and I can only act as his guards, keeping his body alive and his life in being. We cannot suffer these trials in his place, and we cannot fetch the scriptures for him. Even if you or I could go ahead and see the Buddha, the Buddha would not willingly give the scriptures to the likes of us. As the saying goes: 'What is gotten easily is held cheap.'"

At this the blockhead listened meekly and accepted it all.

So they ate a bit of plain vegetarian food without any dishes, and master and disciples rested beneath the eastern cliff of the Flowing Sands River.

Early the next morning Sanzang said: "Wukong, what's the plan for today?"

"No great plan—Bajie must go into the water again."

"Brother," said Bajie, "you like to keep your hands clean, so you arrange for me to go into the water."

"Worthy brother, this time I won't be hasty. Just lure him up, and I'll block the riverbank so he can't get back. We're determined to capture him."

A fine Bajie indeed! He wiped his face, roused his spirits, took his rake in both hands to the river's edge, parted the waters, and once more dove down to the fiend's lair.

The monster had just awakened from sleep when he heard the water splashing, and turned his head sharply, opening his eyes to see Bajie descending, rake in hand. He bounded out, blocked his way, and shouted: "Not so fast! Not so fast! Look to my staff!"

Bajie raised his rake and parried: "What sort of mourner's staff is that, that my ancestor should 'look to' it!"

"You really don't know a thing!" said the monster. "This treasure staff of mine has a name of great renown—it is a branch of the suolo tree in the palace of the moon. Wu Gang cut it from the tree, and Lu Ban's craftsmanship fashioned it. Within it runs a core of gold; around it wind ten thousand strands of pearly silk. It is named the treasure staff, skilled at quelling demons; it guards the Hall of Divine Mists and subdues monsters. Because I was commissioned a great general, the Jade Emperor granted it me to carry at my side. Long or short, as my heart pleases; thick or thin, just as I will. It escorted the imperial presence at the Peach Banquet; it attended the court on high. Standing watch in the halls, it was saluted by the assembled sages; raising the curtain, it received the bows of the immortals. It has been nurtured into a numinous, divinely weapon—not some mortal tool of the human world. Since I was banished from the Gate of Heaven, it has ranged freely with me across the outer seas. I don't mean to boast, but no spear or sword under heaven can compare with it. Look at that rusty nail-rake of yours—it's fit for nothing but hoeing fields and banking up vegetables!"

Bajie laughed: "You under-beaten rotten beast! Never mind banking vegetables—just one brush of this rake will leave you nowhere to stick a plaster, with nine holes bleeding all at once! And if you don't die of it, you'll carry tetanus to your grave!"

The monster cast aside all form and, beneath the water, fought Bajie once more up to the surface. And this bout was indeed different from the others. Just look:

The treasure staff wheels; the nail-rake strikes—words mismatched, they are no kin. Only because the Mother of Wood overcomes Earth's blade do the two of them clash like this. No winner yet, no turning of the tide; churning waves and washing billows, no peace between them. How can this one's fury be contained? How can that one's hurt endure the shame? Rake comes, staff parries—each plays the hero; the rolling waters of the Flowing Sands turn vicious. Haughty and high-strung, toiling and moiling—all for Sanzang's journey to the western regions. The nail-rake, hugely fierce; the treasure staff, perfectly mastered. This one grabs hold and drags toward the bank; that one clutches and plunges him into the water. Their cries like thunderclap stir the fish and dragons; clouds darken, sky goes dim, gods and demons cover. This round they fought back and forth thirty rounds, and still neither had the better.

Once more Bajie played his feigned-defeat trick, dragging his rake behind him as he fled. The monster came chasing after, riding wave and catching billow, pursuing him all the way to the cliffside.

Bajie cursed: "You rotten monster! Come up here! Up on this high ground, with solid footing underfoot, we can fight properly!"

The fiend cursed back: "You scoundrel, you're trying to lure me up so your helper can come at me again! You come down here, and we'll fight in the water." The fiend had grown wary and would not come ashore again; he only sparred with Bajie along the river's edge.

When the Pilgrim saw that the fiend would not come ashore, he burned with impatience, longing to snatch him up in one grab.

"Master," he said, "you sit here while I give him the 'hungry hawk pouncing on its prey.'"

He leapt on his somersault into midair and came swooping down to seize the fiend. The monster was just brawling with Bajie when he heard the wind whistle. He turned his head in a flash, saw the Pilgrim dropping from the clouds, and quickly stowing his staff, plunged headfirst into the water, hiding his tracks and

vanishing without a trace.

The Pilgrim stood on the bank and said to Bajie: "Brother, this fiend has grown slippery. He simply won't come ashore. What now?"

"Hard! Hard! Hard! We can't beat him. Even if I used up all the strength I had at my mother's breast, I could only fight him to a draw."

"Let's go see Master."

The two went back up the high bank to see the Tang monk and told him fully how hard the capture was. The elder's eyes brimmed with tears: "With such difficulties, how shall we ever cross!"

"Don't distress yourself, Master," said the Pilgrim. "This monster lurks deep on the river bottom; it's truly hard going. Bajie, you stay here and guard Master—don't fight him any more—while old Sun makes a trip to the Southern Sea."

"Brother, what are you going to the Southern Sea for?"

"This scripture-seeking enterprise was Guanyin's doing from the start; and it was Guanyin who freed us all. Today the road is blocked at the Flowing Sands River and we can't go on—if we don't have her, what can we do? Let me go fetch her; that's better than battling with this fiend."

"True, true," said Bajie. "Brother, when you go, be sure to give her a message for me: 'Many thanks for your guidance in days past.'"

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "if you're going to invite the Bodhisattva, don't delay—go quickly and come back quickly."

The Pilgrim mounted his somersault cloud at once and headed straight for the Southern Sea. Ah! Before half a watch was spent, he already sighted the borders of Mount Potalaka.

In a moment he dropped from his somersault outside the Purple Bamboo Grove, where the Twenty-Four Heavenly Guardians came forward to meet him: "What brings the Great Sage here?"

"My master is in peril," said the Pilgrim. "I have come to pay my respects to the Bodhisattva."

"Please be seated while we report."

The Guardians on day duty went straight to the mouth of the Tide-Sound Cave and announced: "Sun Wukong has business and requests audience." The Bodhisattva was just at the side of the Treasure Lotus Pond, leaning on the railing admiring the flowers with the Dragon Girl who holds the pearl. Hearing the announcement, she turned from the cloudy rock, opened the door, and bade him enter.

The Great Sage bowed with reverent solemnity and worshipped. The Bodhisattva asked: "Why are you not protecting the Tang monk? What matter brings you to me again?"

The Pilgrim reported: "Bodhisattva, my master, back at Gao Village, took on another disciple called Zhu Bajie—for which we thank the Bodhisattva, who also bestowed on him the religious name Wuneng. We had just passed Yellow Wind Ridge and now have come to the eight-hundred-li Flowing Sands River, which is three thousand li of feeble water. Master could never cross it. And in the river there is a monster of great martial skill. Wuneng fought him three great battles on the water and did him considerable hurt, but could not prevail; the fiend blocks us, and we cannot cross. So I have come especially to tell the Bodhisattva, in hopes you will take pity and carry him across—carry him across."

"You monkey!" said the Bodhisattva. "Showing off your pride again! Couldn't you bring yourself to say you were protecting the Tang monk?"

"We only wanted to capture him and make him ferry my master across," said the Pilgrim. "But water matters—I can't manage them cleverly. Wuneng found his lair and talked with him, but I suppose the scripture-seeking business was never mentioned."

"The monster of the Flowing Sands River is the Curtain-Raising General descended into the world," said the Bodhisattva. "He too is a believer I converted, whom I instructed to protect the scripture seeker. If you had only said you were the scripture seekers from the East, he would never have fought you—he would have submitted without doubt."

"But the fiend is now battle-shy," said the Pilgrim. "He won't come up on the bank, only lurks under the water. How am I to get his submission? How is my master to cross the feeble waters?"

The Bodhisattva then summoned Hui'an, took from her sleeve a little red gourd, and instructed him: "Take this gourd and go with Sun Wukong to the surface of the Flowing Sands River. Just call 'Wujing,' and he will come out. First lead him to submit to the Tang monk; then string those nine skulls of his together and arrange them in the pattern of the Nine Palaces, and set this gourd in the middle. That will make a Dharma boat, able to ferry the Tang monk across the bounds of the Flowing Sands River."

Hui'an respectfully obeyed his master's command, and at once, carrying the gourd, he and the Great Sage left the Tide-Sound Cave and took formal leave of the Purple Bamboo Grove. There is a poem in witness:

The five elements matched and joined with heaven's truth, They recognized the master they served of old. Refining the self and founding the base—that is the wondrous use; Discerning false from true, the cause is seen. When metal returns to its nature, it rejoins its kin; When wood goes seeking feeling, together they sink once more. The two earths complete their work in stillness and silence, And water and water fire are harmonized, without a speck of dust.

The two of them soon brought their clouds down, arriving at the bank of the Flowing Sands River. Zhu Bajie recognized Pilgrim Muzha and led his master forward to greet him. Muzha exchanged courtesies with Sanzang, then greeted Bajie.

"Formerly I was favored with the Venerable One's guidance," said Bajie, "and so attained audience with the Bodhisattva. Old Pig has truly followed the holy teaching, and is happy now to have entered the gates of the Buddha. But with all this rushing about on the road, I have not yet come to give thanks—forgive me, forgive me!"

"Never mind the reunion talk," said the Pilgrim. "Let's call that fellow out."

"Call whom?" asked Sanzang.

"Old Sun saw the Bodhisattva and laid the whole matter before her," said the Pilgrim. "The Bodhisattva said: this monster of the Flowing Sands River is the Curtain-Raising General descended to the world. Because of his crime in Heaven he fell into this river, lost his true form, and became a fiend. He was once converted by the Bodhisattva and vowed to follow a master on the journey to the western heaven. But since we never mentioned the matter of seeking scriptures, he fought us so bitterly. Now the Bodhisattva has sent Muzha with this gourd, to have that fellow join them in making a Dharma boat to ferry you across."

Sanzang bowed to the ground in unending gratitude, made his salute to Muzha, and said: "I beg the Venerable One to make haste."

Muzha took up the gourd and, half on cloud and half on mist, went straight to the surface of the Flowing Sands River, where he called out in a loud, stern voice: "Wujing! Wujing! The scripture seeker has long been here—why do you not submit?"

Now the monster, fearing the Monkey King, had gone back to the river bottom, where he was resting in his lair. Hearing his religious name called, he knew it must be on the Bodhisattva Guanyin's business. Then he heard the words "the scripture seeker is here," and with no fear of axe or halberd, he churned through the waves and thrust out his head—and recognized Pilgrim Muzha.

See how he came up all smiles, bowing in greeting: "Forgive me for failing to welcome you, Venerable One. Where is the Bodhisattva now?"

"My master has not come," said Muzha. "She sent me ahead to instruct you to join the Tang monk at once as his disciple. She bids you take the skulls you wear at your neck, together with this gourd, arrange them by the Nine Palaces, and bind them into a Dharma boat to ferry him across this feeble water."

"Where is this scripture seeker?" asked Wujing.

Muzha pointed: "Isn't that him, sitting on the eastern bank?"

When Wujing saw Bajie, he said: "That wretched beast—wherever he sprang from—he's fought me these two days solid, and never once said a word about seeking scriptures!"

Then he saw the Pilgrim: "And that one—that master of his, his helper—fierce beyond bearing! I won't go."

"That is Zhu Bajie, and this is Sun Wukong the Pilgrim," said Muzha. "Both are disciples of the Tang monk; both were converted by the Bodhisattva. What is there to fear? Come, let us go see the Tang monk together."

Only then did Wujing put away his treasure staff, straighten his yellow-brocade tunic, and leap up onto the bank. Kneeling on both knees before the Tang monk, he said: "Master, your disciple's eyes were without pearls—I did not know your honored face, and I gave you much offense. I beg you, forgive my crime."

"You pus-bag!" said Bajie. "Why didn't you submit sooner? What was all that fighting me about? What kind of talk is that!"

"Don't blame him, brother," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "It's just that we never told him the scripture business or our names."

"Are you truly willing to submit with a sincere heart to my teaching?" asked the elder.

"Your disciple was long ago converted by the Bodhisattva," said Wujing. "She gave me the river for a surname and bestowed my religious name, Sha Wujing—'Sand Awakened to Purity.' How could I not follow the master!"

"Since it is so," said Sanzang—"Wukong, fetch the razor and tonsure him."

The Great Sage did as he was told and shaved his head for him at once.

Wujing came and worshipped Sanzang, then bowed to the Pilgrim and to Bajie, and their precedence by seniority was settled. When Sanzang saw how he bore himself in ritual—truly in the style of a monk—he called him the Sha Monk.

"Since the discipline has been taken," said Muzha, "let's not dwell on formalities. Quickly—make the Dharma boat."

Wujing dared not dawdle. He took down the skulls that hung at his neck, knotted them with cords into the pattern of the Nine Palaces, set the Bodhisattva's gourd in the center, and invited his master down to the bank. The elder boarded the Dharma boat and sat upon it, and it was as steady as a light skiff indeed.

With Bajie supporting him on the left and Wujing holding him on the right, and Pilgrim Sun following behind leading the dragon horse, half on cloud and half on mist, while overhead Muzha kept guard, the

master crossed the bounds of the Flowing Sands River floating serene and steady, over the feeble river with waves calm and wind still. Truly swift as flight, fast as an arrow—before long they had landed on the farther shore, escaped the great flood, with no mud or dragging water; happily with feet dry and hands dry, pure and still, master and disciples stood on solid ground.

Muzha pressed down his auspicious cloud and took back the gourd—and the skulls all at once dissolved into nine gusts of dark wind and vanished without a sound. Sanzang bowed his thanks to Muzha and worshipped the Bodhisattva to the sky.

Truly:

Muzha returned straight to the Eastern Ocean; Sanzang mounted his horse and set his face to the West.

If you would know when at last they won the true fruit and gained the scriptures, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 23

Sanzang Does Not Forget His Roots; Four Sages Test the Meditation Mind

The poem says:

Obeying the Law, they come from the east; the road is long, As autumn winds sigh down the frost-flowers. The stubborn ape is fast locked—loosen not the rope; The unruly horse must be curbed—but lay on no whip. The Mother of Wood and the Lord of Metal were joined from the first; The Yellow Dame and the red child never swerved. Crack open the iron pellet—that is the true message: By prajna-paramita one reaches the further shore.

This chapter tells us that the Way of Seeking Scriptures never departs from the Way of tending the root within one's own body.

The story goes that the master and his disciples, the four of them, awakened to truth and suddenly broke the dusty locks, leaping clear of the sea of nature and the Flowing Sands, free of every hindrance, and set out straight upon the great road west. They traversed green mountains and clear waters without end, and never tired of wild grasses and idle flowers. Truly time flew—and once again it was deep autumn: maple leaves red across the hills, yellow chrysanthemums braving the evening wind; the old cicada's chant grows lazy, the mournful cricket's thoughts run on and on.

The lotus's green fan-like leaves are broken; the orange groves are fragrant with golden pellets. A pitiful few lines of wild geese, dotted far across the sky.

As they walked, without noticing it, the sky grew late.

"Disciples," said Sanzang, "the day is far gone. Where shall we lodge for the night?"

"There you go again, Master," said the Pilgrim. "We monks feed on the wind and lodge on the water, sleep under the moon and in the frost. Anywhere is home. Why ask where we'll sleep?"

"Brother," said Zhu Bajie, "you only know how light and easy your own walking is—what do you care how the others drag? Since we crossed the Flowing Sands River, all this while it's been climbing mountains and crossing ridges, with a heavy load on my shoulders—it's been mighty hard to bear! We'd better find some household: first, to beg a little tea and food; second, to rest and mend our spirits. That's the sensible course."

"Blockhead," said the Pilgrim, "talk like that smacks of grumbling. If you're still dreaming of the easy days back at Gao Village—lolling about, seeking no blessing—forget it. Once you've embraced the orthodox discipline of the Sangha, you must eat bitterness and endure hardship if you would be a disciple."

"Brother," said Bajie, "just look how heavy this luggage load is."

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "ever since you and the Sha Monk came along, I haven't carried it—how would I know how heavy?"

"Brother, just count it up," said Bajie. "Four panels of yellow rattan basketry, eight ropes long and short. Then you must guard against rain and damp—three or four layers of felt wrapping. The carrying-pole might slip, so it's nailed at both ends. A staff of copper-trimmed iron with nine rings; a great rain-cape woven of bamboo silk and rattan. With all this luggage, old Pig has to shoulder it day after day—and you get to be Master's disciple while I'm worked like a hired hand!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Blockhead, who are you talking to?"

"I'm talking to you, brother."

"Then you're talking to the wrong party. Old Sun looks after Master's welfare only—you and the Sha Monk are in charge of the luggage and the horse. Slack off even a little, and your ankle-bone gets a taste of the heavy stick first!"

"Brother, never mind the beating. Beating is bullying with strength. I know your proud and lofty nature; you'll never carry the load. But that horse Master rides—so tall and sleek and fat, carrying nothing but one old monk—couldn't he take a few of these things? That would be brotherly of him."

"You call him a horse!" said the Pilgrim. "He's no mortal horse. He is the son of Ao Run, the Dragon King of the Western Sea, called the Dragon Horse, Third Prince. Because he set a fire that burned the luminous pearl in the palace hall, his own father accused him of rebellion, and his crime violated the law of Heaven. It was the Bodhisattva Guanyin who saved his life. In the perilous gorge of Eagle Sorrow he waited long for Master; and once again the Bodhisattva came in person, removed his scales and antlers, took the pearl from beneath his neck, and only then did he change into this horse, vowing to carry Master to the western heaven to worship the Buddha. These things are each person's own merit and destiny—don't go comparing yourself to him."

When the Sha Monk heard this he asked: "Brother, is he truly a dragon?"

"He is a dragon."

"Brother," said Bajie, "I've heard the ancients say: 'A dragon can spew clouds and breathe out fog, hurl soil and scatter sand; he has the power to whisk away whole mountains and ridges, the magic to overturn rivers and churn the seas.' How is it he walks so slowly today?"

"You want him to go fast? I'll show you him going fast."

A fine Great Sage! He gave his gold-banded cudgel a brandish, and ten thousand paths of colored cloud arose.

When the horse saw the cudgel raised, he feared a beating—his four hooves flew like lightning, and away he shot. The master's hands were too soft to rein him in; the horse gave his unruly nature full head and galloped up the mountain cliffside, before settling at last into a slower pace. Only when his gasping had subsided did the master raise his head and see afar a cluster of pine shade, within it a few rooms and houses, truly imposing. Just look:

A gate drooping with green cypress, a dwelling near the blue mountains. A few pines swaying soft; several stems of bamboo dappled bright. By the fence, wild chrysanthemums hold their frost-touched glory; By the bridge, secluded orchids glow red in the stream's reflection. Whitewashed walls of clay, a courtyard ringed in brick. Lofty halls, most magnificent; great buildings, most serene and still. No cattle or sheep in sight, no chickens or dogs— The autumn harvest done, the farm work must be at rest.

As the master sat his horse gazing slowly about, Wukong and the others caught up.

"Master," said Wujing, "you didn't fall off the horse, I hope?"

The elder scolded: "That rotten monkey Wukong! He startled the horse. If I hadn't kept my seat—!"

The Pilgrim offered a smiling apology: "Don't scold me, Master. It was all Zhu Bajie's fault, saying the horse went too slow—that's why I had him speed up."

The blockhead, having chased the horse and hurried rather too much, was puffing and blowing, grumbling and muttering under his breath: "Done for! Done for! My belly's cramped and my waist's gone slack, the load is heavy, I can barely carry it on—and then he makes me go galloping off after the horse!"

"Disciple," said the elder, "look over there—there's a manor. We can just go ask for lodging."

At this the Pilgrim quickly raised his head to look, and indeed saw over that place a canopy of festive cloud, propitious mists wreathing and shrouding it. He knew at once it must be the transformation of Buddhas or immortals, but he dared not give away the secret of Heaven, and only said: "Good! Good! Good! Let's go ask for lodging."

The elder hurriedly dismounted before a gate-tower with lotus-drooping, elephant-trunk ornaments, painted beams and carved rafters.

The Sha Monk set down the load; Bajie led up the horse: "This household is a rich and solid family, past all doubt."

The Pilgrim was about to walk in, but Sanzang said: "No. We monks must each avoid suspicion—do not enter unbidden. Wait until someone comes out, then ask for lodging with proper courtesy."

Bajie tied the horse and leaned against the base of the wall. Sanzang sat on a drum-shaped stone; the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk sat on the edge of the terrace. But for a long time no one came out.

The Pilgrim, impatient by nature, jumped up and slipped in through the gate to look: there was a great hall of three bays facing south, its curtained windows hung high. On the screen door hung a horizontal scroll painting of "Longevity Mountain and the Sea of Blessing"; on the two gold-lacquered pillars flanking it was pasted a spring couplet on great red paper, which read:

Silken willows drooping by the level bridge at evening; Snow-flakes of fragrant plum in the little courtyard's spring.

In the very center stood a black-lacquered incense table, its luster worn soft with age, and on the table an ancient bronze censer shaped like a beast. Above were six folding chairs, and from the two gable walls hung scrolls of the four seasons.

Just as the Pilgrim was peeping about, he heard footsteps within the rear gate, and out came a woman neither old nor young, who asked in a cooing voice: "Who are you, daring to enter the gate of a widow?"

The Great Sage was flustered and bowed again and again: "This poor monk has come from the Great Tang empire in the East, bearing an imperial decree to worship the Buddha in the West and seek scriptures. Our party numbers four, and passing your treasured region we found the sky growing late. So we hastened to your venerable Bodhisattva's manor to beg the loan of a night."

The woman welcomed them with smiles and pleasant words: "Reverend elder, where are the other three? Please bring them in."

"Master," the Pilgrim called loudly, "please come in!"

Only then did Sanzang enter with Bajie and the Sha Monk, leading the horse and carrying the luggage.

The woman came out to the hall to receive them. Bajie stole a bleary-eyed glance at her. And how do you suppose she was dressed?

A jacket of official-green silk damask threaded with gold, Overlaid with a sleeveless cape of pale red; A sash-skirt of goose-yellow embroidery knotted with colored silk, Set off below by high-soled, flowered shoes. A stylish chignon wound with black gauze, Matched with two-toned hair coiled in dragon curls; A palace-style ivory comb glimmering red and green, Two gold hairpins thrust in aslant. Her cloud-like temples, half gray, spread like phoenix wings; At her ears, twin pendants of ranked pearls and gems. No rouge or powder, yet beautiful still— As gay and charming as a woman young.

When the woman saw the three of them she was even more delighted, and with ceremony invited them into the hall. After greetings all round, each was seated in order and served tea. Behind the screen there suddenly

appeared a maid with two horn-knots and hanging silken tresses, bearing a golden tray and white jade cups; the fragrant tea steamed, and rare fruits breathed their subtle perfume. With embroidered sleeves drawn back, her fingers slender as spring bamboo shoots, she lifted the jade cups and offered the tea to each in turn, bowing to them one by one. When the tea was done, she was ordered to prepare a vegetarian meal.

Sanzang raised his hands and asked: "Venerable Bodhisattva, what is your honorable surname, and what is this place called?"

"This is the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift," said the woman. "In my maiden days my family name was Jia; my husband's family name was Mo. In my youth, unhappily, my husband's parents died early, and my husband and I kept up the ancestral estate. We had ten thousand strings of cash in the family and a thousand qing of good farmland. But in our fate we had no son—only three daughters were born to us. Then, two years ago, great misfortune: I lost my husband, and I have been a widow since. This year my mourning is fulfilled. The fields and property he left behind have no one to hold them—no kinsfolk or family of any sort, only us mother and daughters. To marry into another family would mean giving up this estate. Just now you elders have descended upon us—four of you, I take it, master and disciples. We women folk, mother and daughters, four in all, wish to stay here at home and take husbands. Four of you would suit us exactly. I do not know whether your honored intentions consent or not."

When Sanzang heard this, he played deaf and dumb, closed his eyes and composed his mind, and sat silent, making no answer.

The woman continued: "My household has more than three hundred qing of paddy field, more than three hundred qing of dry field, and more than three hundred qing of mountain orchards and groves. Of yellow water buffalo there are over a thousand head; horses and mules in herds, pigs and sheep past counting. East, south, west, and north, our manors and pasture grounds number sixty or seventy in all. In the house there is rice and grain enough to last eight or nine years unused, silks and satins enough for ten years unworn; gold and silver enough for a lifetime, better than spring hidden in a brocade pavilion—never mind two rows of gold hairpins! If you master and disciples would turn your hearts around, take a marriage into my humble home, and live at ease enjoying wealth and glory—would that not be better than all this weary toiling toward the West?"

Sanzang only sat there like a fool or a simpleton, wordless and mute.

"I was born," the woman went on, "in the third month, on the third day, at the hour of You, in a ding-hai year. My late husband was three years older than I; I am now forty-five. My eldest daughter is called Zhenzhen, twenty this year; my second, Aiai, eighteen; my third, the little one, Lianlian, sixteen—none of them yet betrothed. Though I am, alas, plain myself, my daughters have each a fair share of looks, and in needlework and sewing there is nothing they cannot do. Because my late husband had no son, we raised them as sons; in their childhood they were taught to read the Confucian books, and they all know a little of composing poems and matching couplets. Though we live here in a mountain village, we are not the utterly coarse and vulgar sort. I should think they would be worthy matches for you reverend elders. If you would only open your hearts, let your hair grow long again, and become masters of my household—dressed in silk and satin—that would beat your clay bowls and black robes, your snow-shoes and cloud hats!"

Sanzang sat up on high like a child startled by thunder, a toad drenched in rain—simply dazed and rigid, rolling his eyes and swaying backward. When Bajie heard of such wealth, such beauty, the itch in his heart was past all scratching. Sitting in his chair, it was as if needles were stabbing his backside; he twisted left and right, unable to endure it.

He came forward, tugged his master's sleeve, and said: "Master! This good lady is telling you things—how can you sit there pretending not to hear? At least give her some kind of answer."

The master lifted his head sharply and with a "Bah!" shouted Bajie back: "You wicked beast! We are monks. How could we be moved by wealth, or let beauty turn our heads? What sort of sense would that make!"

The woman laughed: "Pitiful! Pitiful! What good is there in being a monk?"

"Good lady," said Sanzang, "you who live at home—what good is there in that?"

"Sit, reverend elder, and let me tell you the good things of the householder's life. How does it go? There is a poem in witness:

In spring, new silk robes cut in lucky patterns; in summer, light gauze to admire the green lotuses. In autumn, new-brewed sweet glutinous wine; in winter, warm chambers and a wine-flushed face. Through the four seasons, enjoyments of every kind; through the eight festivals, delicacies of every sort. The night of flowery candles, on brocade spread and lined with silk— Better than a wandering monk bowing to Amitabha!"

"Good lady," said Sanzang, "you householders enjoy glory and wealth: you have things to wear and things to eat, sons and daughters around you—good indeed, I grant. But you may not know that we who leave the world also have our own portion of good. How does it go? There is a poem in witness:

To leave home and fix one's resolve is no common thing: The hall of former loves is torn down and toppled. No outer things give rise to idle gossip; Within the body itself yin and yang are one's own. When works are done and merit full, one courts the golden palace; Seeing one's nature, the mind made clear, one returns to one's native home. Better far than fattening on flesh at home, And in old age dropping into a stinking sack of skin!"

At this the woman flew into a temper: "This rude monk has no manners! If you were not come so far from the East, I should have you thrown out. I was truly sincere, in heart and mind, wanting to take you and yours into my family by marriage—and you repay me with words that wound. Very well, you have taken the vows, you have made your vow never to return to the lay life. But surely among your followers there is one my family could take. Why must you be so rigid?"

When Sanzang saw her anger, he could only bow and scrape most humbly, calling: "Wukong, you stay here."

"From the time I was small I've known nothing of such matters," said the Pilgrim. "Let Bajie stay."

"Brother," said Bajie, "don't put one over on me. Let's all take our time deliberating."

"If you two refuse, then let Wujing stay here," said Sanzang.

"Listen to Master!" said the Sha Monk. "Your disciple was converted by the Bodhisattva, received the vows and the discipline, and waited for my master. Since Master took me in, I have received his teaching; yet I have followed him not even two months and done no whit of merit—how could I covet this wealth and rank! I would rather die than go on to the western heaven—never would I do such a treacherous thing."

When the woman saw them all refusing, she turned abruptly behind the screen, and with a bang shut the inner gate.

Master and disciples were left outside, with no tea, no food, and no one coming out again.

Bajie fretted and fumed, grumbling at the Tang monk: "Master, you truly don't know how to manage things—you killed the whole business with your words. You might at least have left a little footing, answered vaguely, humored them into a vegetarian meal. Then tonight we'd have one cozy evening, and tomorrow, agree or not, would be up to the rest of us. As it is, the door is shut in our faces—cold hearth, cold stove, how are we to get through the night!"

"Second Brother," said Wujing, "why don't you become a son-in-law in her family?"

"Brother, don't put one over on me—let's all deliberate."

"Deliberate what?" said the Pilgrim. "If you're willing, let Master become the woman's in-law, and you can be the live-in son-in-law who marries into her house. With a family of such wealth and treasure, they'd surely dower you richly and lay on a proper family feast—and the rest of us would get a little enjoyment out of it too. You stay here and return to the lay life, and everyone's happy. Isn't that the best of both worlds?"

"That's all very well to say," replied Bajie, "but then old Pig would be leaving the world and then re-entering it—putting away one wife and taking another."

"Second Brother, so you already have a sister-in-law?" asked the Sha Monk.

"You still don't know him," said the Pilgrim. "He was the son-in-law of Squire Gao of Gao Village in Wuji—the land of the Uighurs. Because old Sun subdued him, he too received the Bodhisattva's vows; there was nothing for it, I hauled him off and made a monk of him. So he left his former wife and followed Master west to worship the Buddha. Now I expect he's been parted from her so long that the old business has come back to him. The moment he heard of this business, that heart of his was surely stirred. Blockhead, go be a son-in-law to this family—just bow to old Sun a few extra times, and I promise not to inform on you."

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried the blockhead. "You all have the same notion in your hearts, but old Pig alone must be made the fool. As the saying goes: 'A monk is a hungry ghost among the fair.' Who doesn't feel the pull? But you all put on your prim airs and play hard to get, and the whole good business has been wrecked. Now look: no tea, no water, no one to see to lamp or fire. We can suffer through this one night—but that horse has to carry a man and walk the road again tomorrow. If we starve it another night, we might just as well skin it. You all sit here; old Pig will go out and graze the horse a bit."

The blockhead, in a great flurry, untied the reins and led the horse off.

"Sha Monk," said the Pilgrim, "stay and keep Master company here while old Sun follows him and sees where he grazes that horse."

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "go watch him if you like—but don't keep on taunting him."

"I understand."

The Great Sage walked out of the hall, shook his body, transformed into a red dragonfly, flew out the front gate, and caught up with Bajie.

The blockhead led the horse, and wherever there was grass he would not let it graze, but kept clucking and clicking and driving it round toward the rear gate. There was the woman, out behind the gate with her three daughters, idly admiring the chrysanthemums for sport. When the mother and daughters saw Bajie coming, the three girls slipped inside.

The woman stood waiting at the gate: "Where are you off to, little reverend?"

The blockhead dropped the reins, came forward with a bow, and said: "Mother! I've come to graze the horse."

"Your master is too particular by half," said the woman. "Taking a son-in-law into my house—wouldn't that beat playing the wandering monk, trudging the road west?"

Bajie laughed: "They're under the Tang emperor's decree; they dare not disobey a royal command, and won't do such a thing. Just now, up in the front hall, they all put one over on me. And I'm in a fix, torn this way and that—only I fear, Mother, you'll mind my long snout and great ears."

"Mind them? Not I. It's only that my household lacks a master, and taking one in would settle it. But I fear my daughters may find you a little ugly."

"Mother, tell your dear daughters not to be so picky about a husband. Take my Tang monk—fine-looking as he is, he's really not much use. Ugly I may be, but I have a few rhyming lines about myself."

"Let's hear them," said the woman.

Bajie said:

"Though my looks are homely, I work with a will. Give me a thousand qing of land—no oxen needed to plow it. One pass of my rake, and the sown seed sprouts in season. No rain? I can pray for rain. No wind? I can whistle up wind. If the house seems low, I'll raise it two or three stories. If the floor's unswept, I'll sweep it; if the drains are clogged, I'll clear them. Every household matter, great or small— Kicking over heaven and digging through wells, I can do them all."

The woman said: "Since you can manage the household affairs, go back and discuss it once more with your master. If it comes off without a hitch, we'll take you in."

"No need to discuss. He's not my father and mother, after all. Whether I do it or not is up to me."

"Very well, very well," said the woman. "Let me go speak with my daughters."

She slipped inside and, with a bang, shut the rear gate. Bajie did not graze the horse after all, but led it round to the front.

Little did he know that the Great Sage Sun had heard and seen everything. He wheeled his wings, flew back, resumed his true form, and reported first to the Tang monk: "Master, Wuneng is bringing the horse."

"If the horse weren't led," said the elder, "it might take fright and bolt."

The Pilgrim burst out laughing and told the whole business of the woman and Bajie from beginning to end. Sanzang half believed and half doubted.

Presently the blockhead came leading the horse and tied it up. The elder asked: "Have you grazed the horse?"

"There's no decent grass—nowhere to graze a horse."

"Nowhere to graze a horse," said the Pilgrim, "but somewhere to lead one?"

Hearing this, the blockhead knew the news had leaked, and he hung his head and twisted his neck, pouting his lips and wrinkling his brows, saying nothing for a good while.

Then came the sound of a creak as the inner gate opened. Two pairs of red lanterns appeared, with a matching wine-warming pot; fragrant clouds drifted, and rings and pendants chimed—out walked the woman with her three daughters, calling Zhenzhen, Aiai, and Lianlian to bow in greeting to the scripture-seekers. The girls stood ranged in the hall and bowed toward the seats of honor. And they were beauties indeed. Just look at them:

Each with moth-eyebrows sweeping green, powder faces full of spring. Winsome, with beauty to topple kingdoms; graceful, stirring every heart. Flower ornaments reveal their delicate charms; embroidered sashes float, far above the common dust. Where a half-smile breaks, cherry lips part; as they walk slowly, orchid and musk breathe forth. Pearls and kingfisher gems cover their heads, a-tremble with countless precious pins; Subtle fragrance wraps their bodies, dewy-fresh with flowered gold threads fine. Never mind the beauties of Chu, the delicate face of Xi Shi— Truly these were fairy maidens descended from the ninth heaven, Chang'e come forth from the Palace of Vast Cold!

Sanzang pressed his palms together and dropped his head; the Great Sage Sun feigned utter indifference; the Sha Monk turned his back and faced away.

But look at Zhu Bajie: his eyes would not leave them, his lustful heart ran riot, his desire swelled past all bounds. He minced out a whisper, saying softly: "Much trouble to you, fairy ones, for descending among us. Mother, ask the sisters to withdraw, won't you?"

The three girls returned behind the screen, leaving behind a pair of gauze lanterns.

The woman said: "Four reverend elders—will you not give the matter some thought? Which of you will match my little daughters?"

"We have already settled it among ourselves," said Wujing. "The one surnamed Pig is to marry into your household."

"Brother, don't put me forward," said Bajie. "Let's all deliberate further."

"Deliberate further about what?" said the Pilgrim. "You already settled everything nicely behind the back gate—you called her 'Mother' and all. What more is there to deliberate? Master shall be the male in-law; the old lady shall be the female in-law; old Sun will stand surety for the match, and the Sha Monk shall be the go-between. No need to consult the almanac—today is a heaven-blessed, most auspicious day. Come bow to your master and go inside and be a son-in-law."

"It won't do! It won't do! How could one carry on that sort of business!"

"Blockhead, no shilly-shallying. Who knows how many times you already said 'Mother'? What do you mean, it won't do? Say yes quickly, and treat the rest of us to some wedding wine—it'll do us all good."

With one hand he grabbed Bajie, with the other he caught hold of the woman: "Mother-in-law, take your son-in-law inside."

The blockhead's feet stumbled one way and another—whichever way he was to go.

The woman called to the servants: "Wipe down the tables and chairs, lay out the evening meal, and entertain the three in-laws. I'll take the son-in-law to his room."

At the same time she ordered the kitchen staff to prepare a banquet for the family gathering tomorrow morning. The servants received their orders. The three travelers ate their vegetarian meal, hastily laid out the bedding, and settled to rest in the guest quarters—of them no more need be said.

The story tells how Bajie followed his mother-in-law inside, through layer upon layer of rooms past all counting, bumping and blundering, every threshold catching his feet.

"Mother, walk slower. I don't know my way in here—do lead me along."

"All of these are storehouses, granaries, and milling rooms," said the woman. "We haven't even reached the kitchen yet."

"What a great household!" Bump and blunder, around the corners and along the bends, he walked another half while before they came to the inner halls.

"Son-in-law," said the woman, "your senior fellow said today is a heaven-blessed auspicious day, and so had you brought in at once. But everything was so hurried, there was no time to engage a geomancer for the bowing of the nuptials and the scattering of the bed curtains. Just bow eight bows toward the upper seat."

"Mother, you're right. Do take the seat of honor, and let me bow a few bows as well—that will count for the nuptial bowing, and for the thanks to my in-laws too: two in one. Isn't that thrifty?"

His mother-in-law laughed: "Very well, very well. Truly an economical, housekeeping son-in-law. I'll sit, and you bow."

Ah! Through all the hall silver candles blazed. The blockhead bowed toward the upper seat, and when the bows were done, asked: "Mother, which sister will you match me with?"

"There's just the difficulty," said his mother-in-law. "If I give you my eldest daughter, I fear the second will take offense; if I give you the second, I fear the third will grumble; if I give you the third, I fear the eldest will complain. So I remain unsure."

"Mother, if you fear their quarreling, give me all of them—spare the household its squabbling and confusion."

"Out of the question! Would you alone take all three of my daughters!"

"Listen to Mother talk! Who hasn't three wives and four concubines? Even a few more than that, your son-in-law would accept with a smile. In my younger days I learned the arts of endurance in the battle of love; I promise I'd serve every one of them to her delight."

"Not so! Not so! I have here a handkerchief. Set it on your head to cover your face, and try a heaven-ordained match: I shall have my daughters walk past before you, and you stretch out your hands and grab whichever one you catch—that one shall be yours."

The blockhead did as he was told, took the handkerchief, and set it on his head. There is a poem in witness:

The fool knows not the root and source of things; The sword of desire wounds the body, and quietly he is undone. He always swore by the rites of the Duke of Zhou— Today the bridegroom wears the veil.

The blockhead adjusted his veil and said: "Mother, ask the sisters to come out, won't you?"

His mother-in-law called: "Zhenzhen! Aiai! Lianlian! Come all, and try the heaven-ordained match with your husband!"

There was heard only the ringing of rings and pendants, the fragrance of orchid and musk, as though fairy maidens were passing to and fro, and the blockhead truly stretched out his hands to grab. He flung himself left and right, bumping this way and that, touching no one on either side.

Back and forth, who knew how many girls were moving about—he could not lay hands on a single one. Lunging east, he hugged a pillar; lunging west, he pawed a panel wall. Dizzy from running to both ends, he could not stand steady and kept falling down. Forward he kicked against the door panels; backward he splashed against the brick walls. Bump after blunder, until his snout was swollen and his head was black and blue.

He sat down on the floor, gasping and puffing: "Mother! Your daughters are such slippery minxes—not one of them to be caught. What's a man to do! What's a man to do!"

The woman lifted his veil: "Son-in-law, it's not that my daughters are slippery. They all defer to one another, each unwilling to take you."

"Mother," said Bajie, "if they're unwilling to take me—then you take me!"

"Fine son-in-law, you are! No respect for rank or age—reaching even for your mother-in-law! My three daughters are cleverest at heart: each of them has made a pearl-embroidered brocade undershirt. Whichever one's shirt you can wear, that one shall take you."

"Good! Good! Good! Bring all three and let me try them on. If I can wear them all, let them all take me."

The woman went into the inner room and brought out only one, handing it to Bajie. The blockhead stripped off his black-brocade tunic, took the undershirt, and pulled it on. Before he had even tied the sash, with a thump he toppled to the floor—several cords had seized him and bound him fast. The pain was past enduring, and by then the women had all vanished.

Now the story tells how Sanzang, the Pilgrim, and the Sha Monk woke from sleep to find the east already paling. They suddenly opened their eyes and raised their heads to look. Where now were the great buildings and lofty halls? Where the carved beams and painted rafters? Every one of them had slept in a pine and cypress wood.

In alarm the elder hastily called for Wukong. "Brother," said the Sha Monk, "we're done for! Done for! We've met with ghosts!"

The Great Sage Sun knew perfectly well, and said with a faint smile: "What are you saying?"

"Look where we've been sleeping!"

"Sleeping under these pines is easy enough," said the Pilgrim. "My only worry is where that blockhead is suffering."

"Who's suffering?"

"Yesterday that family, mother and daughters—who knows what Bodhisattvas they were, manifesting themselves to test us. I expect they left at midnight, and only poor Zhu Bajie is left suffering." At this Sanzang pressed his palms together and bowed to the sky. And there, on an ancient cypress tree behind them, a paper note fluttered and swayed.

The Sha Monk hurried to fetch it, and when the master looked, it held eight lines of verse:

"The Old Mother of Mount Li had no mind for the mortal world; The Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea invited her down the mountain. Puxian and Manjusri, too, came all as guests, Transformed into beauties here within the wood. The holy monk has virtue and no common taint; Bajie has no meditation, and more than his share of lust. From now on, quiet your hearts and mend your ways— For if you slacken, the road ahead will be hard!"

As the elder, the Pilgrim, and the Sha Monk were chanting this verse, they heard from deep in the wood a loud voice crying: "Master! It's strangling me to death! Save me! I'll never dare again!"

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "is that Wuneng calling?"

"It is," said the Sha Monk.

"Brother, pay him no mind; let's be off," said the Pilgrim.

"That blockhead may be dull and stubborn by nature," said Sanzang, "but he is thoroughly simple and honest at heart, and he has the strength to carry the luggage. For the sake of the Bodhisattva's kindness in days past, save him and let him come along. I reckon he'll never dare again."

The Sha Monk rolled up the bedding and packed the load; the Great Sage Sun untied the horse and led it as the Tang monk went into the wood to look. Ah! Truly it is:

In cultivation on the right path, one must be careful and watchful; Sweep away love and desire, and of yourself you return to truth.

If you would know how the blockhead fared, for weal or woe, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 24

The Great Immortal of Longevity Mountain Entertains an Old Friend; In Wuzhuang Temple the Pilgrim Steals the Ginseng Fruit

The story tells how the three of them went into the wood and found the blockhead bound fast to the tree, crying out at every breath, his pain past bearing.

The Pilgrim came forward, laughing: "A fine son-in-law! Not up yet at this hour to thank your in-laws, not off to Master's to report the happy news—still here playing the acrobat for fun! Bah! Where's your mother? Where's your wife? What a trussed-up, strung-up son-in-law!"

When the blockhead saw them come to taunt and shame him, he clenched his teeth, bore the pain, and dared not cry out. The Sha Monk could not bear the sight; he set down the luggage, went up, untied the cords, and got him down. The blockhead could only kowtow and bow to them again and again, his shame indeed past enduring. There is a "West River Moon" in witness:

Desire is the sword that wounds the body; Covet it, and ruin is sure to follow. A lovely girl of sixteen, in her fine array, Is fiercer and more dreadful than any yaksha. There is but one original root, And not the smallest profit to stuff in the sack. Store your capital away with care; Guard it fast, and let no wantonness loose.

Then Bajie scooped up earth, burned incense, and worshipped toward the sky.

"Do you know those Bodhisattvas?" asked the Pilgrim.

"I was struck senseless, dizzy and dim of eye," said Bajie. "How could I tell who they were?"

The Pilgrim handed him the note. When Bajie saw it was verse, his shame grew greater still.

"Second Brother has rare virtues indeed," said the Sha Monk, laughing, "to move four Bodhisattvas to come make a match for you!"

"Brother, speak of it no more—it was wicked beyond all bounds! From this day on I'll never dare misbehave again. Even if my bones crack under the load, I'll only shoulder the burden and follow Master to the western regions."

"That's more like it," said Sanzang.

The Pilgrim then led his master back onto the high road. Dining on the wind and lodging on the water as they went, they traveled a long while, until suddenly a high mountain stood barring the way. Sanzang reined in his horse and stayed his whip: "Disciples, there is a mountain ahead. We must go carefully—fear lest some demon makes trouble and harms our company."

"With the three of us before your horse, what demon is there to fear?" said the Pilgrim. So the elder went forward with an easy mind. And truly it was a fine mountain:

High and steep beyond measure, its whole form vast and strange. Its root joins the vein of Kunlun; its summit rubs the vault of heaven. White cranes come often to roost on its junipers and cypresses; Black gibbons now and again hang from its vines and creepers. Sunlight on the sunlit woods: a thousand folds of red mist wreathing; Wind rising in the shaded ravines: ten thousand ribbons of colored cloud flying. Secluded birds cry wildly among the green bamboo; Golden pheasants battle together amid the wild flowers. See the Thousand-Year Peak, Five-Blessing Peak, Lotus Peak, towering and terrible, shooting forth rays of light; The Ten-Thousand-Year Rock, Tiger-Tooth Rock, Three-Pointed Rock, jutting and gleaming, breathing propitious airs. Before the cliffs the grasses flourish; on the ridges the plum blossoms breathe perfume. Thorns and brambles dense and dark; irises and orchids faint and cool. In the deep woods, eagle and phoenix

gather a thousand birds; in the ancient caves, the qilin rules ten thousand beasts. The ravine waters have feeling, winding and twisting, lingering as they go; The peaks and summits never end, fold upon fold, circling round again. And see the green locust trees, the mottled bamboo, the blue pines, a thousand years contending in lush glory; The white plum, the red peach, the emerald willow, bright through three springs rivaling in beauty. Dragons moan, tigers roar; cranes dance, gibbons cry. Elk deer come out from the flowers; blue luan birds sing to the sun. Truly an immortal mountain, a blessed land indeed— Penglai and the Parks of Heaven are no more than this. And see the flowers blooming and fading on the mountain's head, the clouds going and coming on the ridges' peaks.

From horseback Sanzang said with delight: "Disciples, ever since I set out for the West, I have passed through many mountains and rivers, but all were craggy, perilous, steep places—none like the fine scenery of this mountain. Truly its secluded charm is beyond the common. If the Thunderclap Monastery were not far off, we might go to see the World-Honored One in all seemly order."

"Early days yet! Early days yet!" said the Pilgrim, laughing. "We're nowhere near!"

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "how far is it to the Thunderclap Monastery?"

"A hundred and eight thousand li. Of ten parts of the road, we haven't yet walked one."

"Brother," said Bajie, "how many years will it take to get there?"

"That road—for you two worthy brothers, ten days or so might do it. For old Sun's walking, I could make fifty round trips in a day and still see daylight. But for Master—never hope! Never hope!"

"Wukong," said the Tang monk, "by your reckoning, when could I ever arrive?"

"You'd walk from childhood to old age, grow old and young again, and a thousand cycles of old and young would hardly suffice. Only see your true nature, keep your resolve sincere—and at every turn of your thoughts, wherever your heart turns back and looks, there is Vulture Peak."

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "though this is not the Thunderclap Monastery, to judge by the scenery, some worthy person must dwell here."

"Well said. There is surely nothing wicked here—this must be the home of sage monks or immortals. Let's amble along and enjoy ourselves."

Of that no more need be said.

Now this mountain was called Longevity Mountain, and on it stood a temple called Wuzhuang Temple. In the temple dwelt an immortal whose Daoist title was Zhenyuanzi, and whose byname was "Fellow Peer of the World." The temple produced a certain unique treasure: when Chaos was first divided, when the primal haze was first parted, in the time before Heaven and Earth were opened, this numinous root was produced.

In all the four great continents of the world, only Wuzhuang Temple in the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift produced it. It was called "Grass-Returned Cinnabar," and also "the ginseng fruit." It blossomed once in three thousand years, bore fruit once in three thousand years, and took another three thousand years to ripen—ten thousand years at the very least before it could be eaten. In those ten thousand years, only thirty fruits formed. The fruit's appearance was like a child not yet three days old, complete in its four limbs, all its five features present.

If a man with destiny smells the fruit but once, he will live three hundred sixty years; eat one, and he will live forty-seven thousand years.

That day the Great Immortal Zhenyuan had received a note from the Primeval Lord of Heaven, inviting him to the Miro Palace in the Shangqing heaven above, to hear a discourse on the "Dao Fruit of Primal Chaos."

The scattered immortals who had gone out from the Great Immortal's gate were past counting, and at that time he still had forty-eight disciples, all perfected Daoists who had attained the Way.

That day he took forty-six of them up to the upper world for the lecture, leaving behind two of the very youngest to keep house: one called Qingfeng, "Pure Breeze," the other Mingyue, "Bright Moon." Qingfeng was only one thousand three hundred twenty years old; Mingyue had just turned one thousand two hundred.

Zhenyuanzi instructed the two boys: "I must not disobey the Great Venerable Lord's summons—I am going to the Miro Palace to hear the lecture. You two keep careful watch at home. Before many days an old friend will pass this way—do not neglect him. Pick two of my ginseng fruits and give them to him to eat, as a token of our old friendship."

"Who is Master's old friend?" asked the boys. "Please tell your disciples, that we may receive him properly."

"He is a holy monk under the Tang emperor of the Eastern lands," said the Great Immortal, "whose religious title is Sanzang—a monk now traveling to the western heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures."

The boys laughed: "Confucius said, 'Those whose Ways differ cannot make plans together.' We are of the Grand Unity's school of the Dao—how could we ever have made the acquaintance of that monk?"

"What do you know?" said the Great Immortal. "That monk is the reincarnation of the Golden Cicada, the second disciple of the venerable Buddha of the West, the Tathagata. Five hundred years ago I met him at the Ullambana assembly. With his own hands he passed me the tea—a son of the Buddha honoring me—and so he is my old friend."

The two immortal boys, hearing this, respectfully obeyed their master's command.

As the Great Immortal was departing, he cautioned them once more: "My fruits are numbered. Give him only two—no more."

"When the garden was opened," said Qingfeng, "the whole company shared two of them. There are still twenty-eight on the tree—we dare not waste more."

"Though the Tang monk Sanzang is an old friend," said the Great Immortal, "you must guard against his underlings making trouble. Do not let them know."

The two boys received their orders, and the Great Immortal rose into the air with his disciples and went straight to the heavenly realm.

Now the story tells how the Tang monk and his party were enjoying the mountain when they suddenly raised their heads and saw a cluster of pines and bamboo, with storied towers and pavilions rising above.

"Wukong," said the Tang monk, "what place is that over there?"

Looking, the Pilgrim said: "That spot is either a temple or a monastery. Let's hurry over, and when we get there we'll know for sure."

In a little while they came to the gate and looked about. See the cool seclusion of the pine slopes, the quiet charm of the bamboo paths. White cranes came and went, escorting the drifting clouds; monkeys above and below from time to time offered fruit. Before the gate, the pond was broad and the tree shadows long; the rocks were cracked and the moss-flowers broken through. The palaces rose dense and dark to the purple pole of heaven; towers and terraces floated dim, as red mists came dropping down. Truly a blessed land and numinous region, a cloudy grotto of Penglai.

Little to do with mortal men; in silence, the Dao heart is born. Blue birds ever carry the Queen Mother's messages; the purple luan often brings the scriptures of Lord Lao Zi. The towering style of the Way could

never be seen to the end— Truly the dim and distant dwelling of immortals.

Sanzang dismounted, and by the left side of the mountain gate saw a stone tablet bearing ten great characters: "The Blessed Land of Longevity Mountain; the Cave Heaven of Wuzhuang Temple."

"Disciples," said the elder, "it is indeed a temple."

"Master," said the Sha Monk, "to judge by the brightness of the scene, worthy folk must surely dwell within. Let's go in and have a look—if our journey succeeds and we return east, this will be one of the sights along the way."

"Well said," said the Pilgrim.

So in they all went together, and saw on the second gate a pair of spring couplets:

The mansion of immortals who live forever, unaging; The home of Daoists whose years last as long as Heaven's own.

The Pilgrim laughed: "This Daoist talks big to scare folk. Five hundred years ago, when old Sun was wreaking havoc in Heaven, I stood at Lord Lao Zi's very gate—and never saw words like these."

"Never mind him—in we go," said Bajie. "Perhaps this Daoist has a bit of virtue after all; you never can tell."

Inside the second gate, they saw two little boys come hurrying out. See how they were dressed:

Their bones pure, their spirits bright, their faces lovely; Hair knotted in horn-tufts, short locks tousled. Their Daoist robes trail mists naturally about the collar; Their feathered garments flutter wind in the sleeves. A ringed sash tightly bound in a dragon-head knot; Straw sandals lightly wound with silkworm-mouth floss. A bearing extraordinary, beyond the common sort— These were indeed Qingfeng and Mingyue, the two immortal boys.

The boys bent their backs and bowed, coming out to greet them: "Venerable master, forgive us for failing to welcome you. Please be seated."

The elder was pleased, and went up with the two boys to view the main hall. It was a great hall of five bays facing south, all carved lattice-work, bright above and shaded below. The immortal boys pushed open the lattice doors and invited the Tang monk into the hall. There on the center wall hung the two great characters "Heaven" and "Earth" in five-colored mounting, and a vermilion lacquer incense table was set out, on which stood a pair of golden censer and vase, with convenient whole incense sticks by the censer.

The Tang monk came forward, took incense with his left hand, placed it in the censer, and bowed in worship three times round.

When the bows were done, he turned and said: "Immortal youths, this Wuzhuang Temple of yours is truly a western immortal realm. Why do you not offer incense to the Three Pure Ones, the Four Emperors, and the ministers of the heavens, but serve only the two characters 'Heaven' and 'Earth'?"

The boys laughed: "We'll not hide it from you, venerable sir. Of these two characters—the upper one, by rights of ritual, may still deserve it; but the lower one cannot yet receive our incense. They were flattered out by our master."

"What do you mean, flattered out?"

"The Three Pure Ones are our master's friends; the Four Emperors are our master's old acquaintances; the Nine Luminaries are our master's juniors; the Year-Star officials are our master's humble guests."

At this the Pilgrim laughed until he staggered. "Brother, what are you laughing at?" asked Bajie.

"They always say old Sun knows how to pull ghosts—turns out this Daoist boy knows how to rope the wind!"

"Where is your master?" asked Sanzang.

"Our master has been invited by a summons from the Primeval Lord of Heaven to the Miro Palace in the Shangqing heaven to hear a discourse on the 'Dao Fruit of Primal Chaos.' He is not at home."

The Pilgrim could not hold back a shout: "You saucy Daoist brat! You don't even know who we are—who do you think you're playing ghosts before? What empty airs are you putting on! Who in the Miro Palace is such a Grand Unity heavenly immortal as to invite you—a sloppy ox-hoof like you—to lecture on anything!"

Seeing his anger, Sanzang feared the boys would answer back and stir up trouble.

"Easy, Wukong, no quarreling," he said. "Now that we're in, to turn straight out again would show a want of feeling. As the saying goes: 'The egret does not eat egret flesh.' Since their master is away, why badger them? You go to the front gate and graze the horse; Sha Monk, watch the luggage; Bajie, untie the bundle. Take out some rice, borrow their stove, and cook a meal. When we leave, we'll give them a few coppers for firewood, and that will be that. Each to his task—and let me rest here a while. When the meal is done, we'll go."

The three of them went off, each to his task.

Mingyue and Qingfeng praised them endlessly in private: "What monks! Truly holy ones of the West descended into the world, their true essence unclouded. Master ordered us to receive the Tang monk and give him ginseng fruit, to show our old friendship—and also warned us to guard against his underlings making trouble. And sure enough, those three have fierce, stubborn faces and coarse, rough natures. Happily, we've managed to send them off elsewhere. If they were at his side, the ginseng fruit would never so much as meet his eyes."

"Brother," said Qingfeng, "we still don't know whether that monk really is Master's old friend. Let's ask him, and make no mistake."

So the two boys came forward again: "May we ask, venerable sir—are you the Tang Sanzang of the Great Tang, traveling to the western heaven to fetch scriptures?"

The elder returned their bow: "This poor monk is he. How did you know my humble name, immortal youths?"

"When our master left," said the boys, "he instructed us disciples to receive you from afar. But your carriage came faster than expected, and we failed to meet you. Venerable sir, pray be seated while your disciples prepare tea."

"We would not presume."

Mingyue hurried to his room, brought a cup of fragrant tea, and offered it to the elder.

When the tea was done, Qingfeng said: "Brother, we must not disobey our master's command. Let's you and I go fetch the fruit."

The two boys took leave of Sanzang, went together to their room; one took the golden striker, one took a cinnabar-red tray lined with a silk handkerchief laid in the bottom, and they went straight to the ginseng garden. Qingfeng climbed the tree and knocked the fruit down with the golden striker; Mingyue stood below, catching them in the tray.

In a moment two fruits were knocked down, caught in the tray, and brought straight to the front hall and offered: "Father Tang, our Wuzhuang Temple is a rude and barren place on wild soil, with nothing worthy to

offer. Here are two humble fruits of our soil, to slake your thirst."

When the elder saw them, he started back trembling, putting three feet between himself and them: "Bless us! Bless us! This year the harvest is plenteous and the season ripe—how can this temple be so famished as to eat people? These are children not yet three days old! How could they slake my thirst?"

Qingfeng thought privately: "This monk, muddling through the arena of tongues and the sea of right and wrong, has grown all fleshly eyes and mortal substance—he does not know our immortal family's unique treasure."

Mingyue came forward: "Venerable sir, this thing is called the ginseng fruit. There's no harm in eating one."

"Nonsense! Nonsense! When his mother and father conceived him, who knows how much suffering they bore before he was born—and born not three days ago at that. How could you take him and serve him up as a fruit?"

"It truly grows on a tree," said Qingfeng.

"Rubbish! Rubbish! Can trees bear human beings? Take it away—wicked, utterly wicked!"

The two boys, seeing him refuse a thousand times over, could only take the tray back to their own room.

Now the fruit was a strange thing: it could not be kept long. Kept too long, it stiffened and was no good to eat. So the two of them, back in their room, took one each, sat on the edge of the bed, and simply ate them up.

Ah! But here was the thing! Their room shared a wall with the kitchen, and whatever was whispered on this side could be heard plainly on that. Bajie was in the kitchen cooking the rice, and he had already pricked up his ears at the talk of fetching the golden striker and the cinnabar tray. Then he heard them say that the Tang monk did not know the ginseng fruit, and that they had taken them to their room to eat themselves—and the water ran from his mouth beyond all holding: "How can I get just one, to taste something new?"

But his own body was clumsy and heavy; he could not manage it himself. He could only wait for the Pilgrim to come and plot with him. There at the stove he had no heart to feed the fire, but kept craning his neck out to look.

Before long he saw the Pilgrim come leading the horse, tie it to a locust tree, and walk straight toward the rear.

The blockhead waved wildly with his hand: "Over here! Over here!"

The Pilgrim turned about and came to the kitchen door: "What are you bawling about, blockhead? Think there isn't enough rice? Let the old monk eat his fill—we'll beg more at some big household up ahead."

"Come in—it's not about the rice. There's a treasure in this temple. Do you know of it?"

"What treasure?"

"If I tell you, you won't have seen it; if I show you, you won't know it."

"This blockhead is laughing at old Sun. Five hundred years ago, when old Sun was seeking the immortal Way, I too wandered the corners of the sea and the ends of the earth. What have I not seen?"

"Brother, have you ever seen a ginseng fruit?"

The Pilgrim started: "That, truly, I have never seen. But I've often heard it said that the ginseng fruit is the Grass-Returned Cinnabar—that whoever eats it gains great length of years. Where would there be any now?"

"There's some here. The boys brought two for Master, but the old monk didn't know what they were—took them for children not yet three days old—and didn't dare eat. And those boys are slackers past compare! If Master wouldn't eat, they should have given them to us—but they hid it from us, and just now, in that room next door, they've been gobbling them up, one apiece, and it's made the water flood in old Pig's mouth. How can I get one, just to taste? I figure you're nimble enough—sneak into their garden and steal a few for a taste. What do you say?"

"Easy. Old Sun goes—hand to hand, they'll be caught."

He spun around at once and started for the front.

Bajie caught hold of him: "Brother, I heard them in that room saying they were going to use some golden striker to knock them down. Make a clean job of it, and don't let the news leak."

"I know, I know."

The Great Sage used the body-hiding spell, slipped into the Daoist boys' room, and looked: the two boys, having eaten their fruits, had gone up to the hall to talk with the Tang monk and were not in the room. The Pilgrim searched all around for the golden striker, and saw hanging on the window lattice a bar of red gold, some two feet long and a finger thick, with a garlic-bulb swelling at the end and an eyelet at the top, threaded with a green silk cord.

"This must be the thing called the golden striker," he said.

He took it down, left the room, and went straight to the rear. Pushing open a pair of doors, he raised his head and looked—ah! It was a flower garden! Just look:

Vermilion railings, precious balustrades, winding steps and artificial peaks. Rare flowers vying in beauty with the fair sun; emerald bamboo contending in green with the blue sky. Beyond the floating-cup pavilion, a bend of green willows trails like drifting smoke; Before the moon-viewing terrace, clusters of tall pines like splashed indigo. Red and glowing, the brocade-nest pomegranate; green and clinging, the embroidered-cushion grass. Soft and downy, the blue sand orchid; rippling and bright, the stream-side water. Red cassia mirrored in the golden well's wutong tree; brocade locust beside the vermilion rail and jade-laid steps. There are thousand-petaled peaches, red or white; there are ninth-autumn chrysanthemums, fragrant or gold. Trellises of rubus shade the peony pavilion; hibiscus terraces join the herbaceous-peony beds. Never seen to the end: the gentleman bamboo that defies the frost, the grandee pine that bullies the snow. And there are crane courts and deer houses, square ponds and round pools; Fountains flowing like shattered jade, earth-blossoms heaped like gold. The north wind bursts the plum blossom white; spring comes and punctuates the crabapple red.

Truly the first immortal scenery of the human world, the very chief of the flower groves of the West.

The Pilgrim looked his fill, then saw yet another gate. Pushing it open, he found a kitchen garden:

Planted through the four seasons with vegetables: spinach, celery, chard, ginger shoots, Bamboo shoots, yams, melons, gourds, water oats, Scallions, garlic, coriander, chives, and shallots, Napa and crown daisies and sow thistle—gourds and eggplants must all be set out, Turnips and radishes banked in earth, red amaranth, green cabbage, purple mustard.

The Pilgrim laughed: "So he's a Daoist who grows and eats his own."

Past the kitchen garden he came to yet another gate. Pushing it open—ah! There in the very center stood a great tree, truly lush with green branches, shadowy with dense green leaves. The leaves were shaped like plantain leaves, and it rose over a thousand feet straight up, its girth at the root seven or eight zhang around. The Pilgrim leaned against the tree and looked up: there, on the branch facing south, a ginseng fruit showed,

truly like a little child.

At its tail-end was a little stem-knob, and there it hung fixed upon the branch, its arms and legs waving, nodding and swaying its head, and when the wind passed it seemed to sound. The Pilgrim's delight was past all bounds, and he praised it privately: "What a thing! Rare indeed! Rare indeed!"

Leaning on the tree, with a swish he went scrambling up.

That monkey was, after all, the very master of climbing trees and stealing fruit. He knocked once with the golden striker, and the fruit fell down with a plop. He jumped down after it to look—nothing! Silent, invisible. He searched all about in the grass, and there was no trace of it.

"Strange! Strange! If it had feet and could walk, still it couldn't jump over the wall. I know—it must be the garden's local deity, unwilling to let old Sun steal his fruit. He's taken it in!"

So he made a spell with his fingers, recited the word "Om," and summoned the local deity of the garden before him. The deity bowed to the Pilgrim: "Great Sage, you called for this little god—what are your commands?"

"Don't you know old Sun is the most famous thief in all the world? In the old days I stole the peaches of immortality, made off with the imperial wine, and pilfered the elixir—and never a soul dared claim a share from me. How is it that today, when I steal one single fruit, you skim off my share and carry it away? This fruit grows on a tree—even a bird flying past ought to have a share. What great harm in old Sun's eating one? Why should you scoop it away the moment it drops?"

"Great Sage, you wrong this little god. That treasure belongs to the earth immortals; this little god is but a ghost immortal—how would I dare take it? Even to smell it is a fortune beyond me."

"If you didn't take it, how did it vanish the moment it dropped?"

"Great Sage, you know only that this treasure lengthens life—you don't know its origin."

"What origin has it?"

"This treasure blossoms once in three thousand years, bears fruit once in three thousand years, and ripens only after another three thousand. Ten thousand years at the very least, and only thirty fruits form. One with destiny who smells it lives three hundred sixty years; one who eats it lives forty-seven thousand years. But it fears the five elements."

"How does it fear the five elements?"

"This fruit falls when it meets metal; withers when it meets wood; dissolves when it meets water; scorches when it meets fire; enters the earth when it meets soil. To knock it down you must use a golden instrument. When it's knocked down, you must catch it on a tray lined with a silk handkerchief; if it touches anything of wood, it withers, and even eaten it grants no length of years. To eat it you must use a porcelain vessel and dissolve it in pure water—meeting fire it scorches and is ruined. As for entering the earth: when you, Great Sage, knocked it to the ground just now, it burrowed straight down into the soil. This soil is forty-seven thousand years old; a steel drill could not bore into it the slightest bit—it's three or four parts harder than pig iron. That is why whoever eats of it lives forever. If you doubt me, Great Sage, just strike the ground here and see."

The Pilgrim drew his gold-banded cudgel and smote the ground once—with a clang the cudgel bounced back, and the earth bore not a mark.

"Indeed! Indeed! This cudgel of mine smashes stone to powder and leaves its mark even on pig iron—how could this one blow do no harm at all? In that case I wronged you. You may go."

The local deity returned at once to his own shrine.

The Great Sage had his plan all laid. He climbed the tree, worked the striker with one hand, and with the other held out the front flap of his brocade tunic as a pouch to catch them. Threading through the branches, parting the leaves, he knocked down three fruits, caught them in his lap, jumped down from the tree, and came straight to the kitchen.

Bajie laughed: "Brother, did you get any?"

"What's this in my hand? Old Sun's hand-to-hand catch. But we mustn't leave out the Sha Monk—give him a call."

Bajie waved and called: "Wujing! Come here!"

The Sha Monk abandoned the luggage and ran into the kitchen: "Brother, what do you want?"

The Pilgrim opened his tunic-pouch: "Brother, what do you make of this?"

The Sha Monk looked: "Ginseng fruit!"

"Good! So you know it. Where did you eat one before?"

"Though your little brother never ate one," said the Sha Monk, "in the old days, as Curtain-Raising General, escorting the imperial carriage to the Peach Banquet, I once saw the overseas immortals present this fruit to the Queen Mother on her birthday. Seen I have, but eaten—never. Brother, might I have a little taste?"

"No need to ask—brothers, one apiece."

So the three of them each took a fruit and enjoyed it.

Now Bajie's food-gullet was wide and his mouth was wide too; and besides, hearing the boys eating had set the gluttony-worm stirring in him, so the moment he saw the fruit he grabbed it, opened his mouth, and with one gulp swallowed it whole. Then he rolled his eyes and played the fool: "What were you two eating?"

"Ginseng fruit," said the Sha Monk.

"What did it taste like?"

"Don't mind him, Wujing!" said the Pilgrim. "You ate yours first—what are you asking us for?"

"Brother, I ate in too much of a hurry—not like you two chewing slow and fine, tasting the flavor. I didn't even know whether it had a pit, and down it went. Brother, be a friend all the way! You've set my gluttony-worm stirring—go get one more, and old Pig will eat it slow and proper."

"Brother, you know no moderation! This thing is not rice food or wheat food, to be eaten to bursting when you meet it. Ten thousand years produce only thirty of them—that we ate even one apiece shows rare destiny, no small affair. Enough! Enough! Enough!"

He rose, and with the golden striker in hand, slipped it secretly through the window lattice into the Daoist boys' room, and thought no more of it.

The blockhead kept up his nagging and muttering—and it so happened that the two Daoist boys came back into their room to fetch tea for offering, and heard Bajie still bawling something about "ginseng fruit not eaten with relish—one more to eat would be just the thing."

Qingfeng heard it, and his heart misgave him: "Mingyue, do you hear that long-snouted monk going on about 'wanting another ginseng fruit to eat'? When Master left he cautioned us against his underlings making trouble—could it be they've stolen our treasure?"

Mingyue turned his head: "Brother! Bad! Bad! How did the golden striker come to be lying on the floor! Let's go look in the garden!"

The two of them hurried off in a rush, and there was the flower garden standing open.

"I shut this gate," said Qingfeng. "How has it come open?"

They hurried through the flower garden, and found the kitchen-garden gate open too. Rushing into the ginseng garden, they leaned against the tree and counted above, going back and forth, to and fro—and there were only twenty-two.

"Can you do sums?" said Mingyue.

"I can. Say on."

"There were thirty fruits to begin with. When Master opened the garden, the company shared two—twenty-eight remained. Just now we knocked down two for the Tang monk—twenty-six remained. Now only twenty-two are left—are we not short four? No need to say more: that pack of scoundrels has stolen them. Let's go scold the Tang monk."

Out the garden gate the two came, straight to the hall, and pointing at the Tang monk they cursed him bald pate before and bald pate behind, filthy words and foul speech without pause—a thieves' scurry of abuse, stinking short and reeking long, bawling in high ill temper.

The Tang monk could not bear it: "Immortal youths, what is all this noise? Compose yourselves. If you have something to say, say it slowly—don't talk such wild, scattered nonsense."

"Are you deaf?" said Qingfeng. "I'm speaking the blunt truth—don't you understand? You stole and ate our ginseng fruit. Why shouldn't I say so?"

"What does the ginseng fruit look like?"

"The ones just brought for you to eat—the ones you said looked like little children!"

"Amida Buddha! The sight of those things alone set my heart pounding and my courage trembling—would I dare steal them to eat? Even mad with gluttony, I would not do a thief's deed. Don't wrong an innocent man."

"Though you didn't eat, you have underlings who would steal to eat!"

"That may well be. But don't bawl—let me ask them. If they truly stole, I'll have them pay you back."

"Pay! As if money could buy them anywhere!"

"Even if money couldn't buy them—as the saying goes, 'Righteousness is worth a thousand gold.' Let them make you a bow of apology, and let it end there. Besides, we don't yet know whether it was them or not."

"How could it not be them? They're over there this very minute, bawling over how to divide them unevenly!"

The Tang monk called: "Disciples—all of you come here!"

The Sha Monk heard it: "Bad! The game's up! The old master's calling us, and the little Daoist boys are cursing us with such relish—if the old business hasn't leaked out, what has?"

"Shame that kills!" said the Pilgrim. "It's nothing but a matter of eating and drinking. But if it comes out, then we're the ones who stole a treat. Only—say nothing."

"Right, right," said Bajie. "Deny it all."

The three of them had no choice but to come out of the kitchen and go up to the hall.

Ah! If you would know how they wrangled out of it, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 25

The Immortal Zhenyuan Pursues and Captures the Scripture-Seeking Monks; Pilgrim Sun Wreaks Havoc in Wuzhuang Temple

The story continues. When the three brothers returned to the hall, they said to their master, "The rice is nearly cooked. What did you want with us?"

"Disciples," said Sanzang, "it was not about the rice. This temple has something called ginseng fruit—things that look just like little children. Which of you stole one and ate it?"

"I'm the honest one," said Bajie. "I don't know anything about it. I never saw a thing."

"It's the one who's laughing!" cried Qingfeng. "It's the one who's laughing!"

Pilgrim shouted, "Old Sun was born with this laughing face! Just because you've mislaid some fruit, does that mean I'm not allowed to smile?"

"Disciple, calm your anger," said Sanzang. "We are men who have left the world. We must not tell lies, nor eat food that wrongs our conscience. If you really ate his fruit, apologize to him. What good does such stubborn denial do?"

Seeing that his master spoke reason, Pilgrim told the truth. "Master, it wasn't my doing. Bajie heard those two boy-immortals through the wall talking about eating ginseng fruit, and he wanted a taste of something new, so he had old Sun go knock down three of them, and the three of us brothers each ate one. Now that they're eaten, what do you want to do about it?"

"He stole four of them, and this monk still says he's not a thief!" cried Mingyue.

"Amida Buddha!" said Bajie. "If four were stolen, how come only three were brought out to divide? Somebody held one back on the side from the very start!"

The blockhead just kept up his senseless bawling. But the two boy-immortals, having heard the truth confirmed, only cursed and reviled them all the more.

The Great Sage's rage was now beyond bearing. His steel teeth ground together; his fiery eyes rolled wide; he gripped and re-gripped his gold-hooped staff, holding himself in, holding himself in. "These boys are insufferable! If they'd only cursed us to our faces, I could swallow a little of it. But I'll give them a plan that finishes them off for good—let's see them all enjoy their fruit then!"

What a Pilgrim! He plucked one hair from the back of his head, blew on it a magic breath, cried "Change!"—and it became a false Pilgrim, which stayed close beside the Tang monk, keeping company with Wuneng and Wujing, patiently enduring the boy-immortals' shouting and cursing. His true self slipped out of his body in spirit form, leaped up on a cloud, and went straight to the ginseng garden. There he drew his gold-hooped staff and dealt the tree a single crashing blow—then, exerting the supernatural strength that could topple mountains and move ridges, he gave the tree one mighty shove and pushed it over.

Alas! The leaves fell, the branches splayed apart, the roots came up out of the earth—and the Daoists' Grass-Returned Cinnabar was cut off forever! Having toppled the tree, the Great Sage searched among the branches for fruit, but could he find even half a one? Of course not. This treasure fell at the touch of metal, and the edge of his staff was wrapped in gold; iron, moreover, is one of the five metals besides. That is why, the moment the staff struck, the fruit had all been shaken down. And once down, it met the earth and sank into the soil; and so there was not a single fruit left up above.

"Good! Good! Good!" he said. "Now nobody gets any!"

He put away his staff and came straight back. With one shake of his hair he drew it back onto his body. All those people, with their mortal eyes and fleshly bodies, could see nothing of what had happened.

Now the boy-immortals had cursed them for a long while, until at last Qingfeng said, "Mingyue, these monks can really take abuse. We've been scolding them like a couple of hens for half the day, and there hasn't been so much as a peep out of them. I suppose they really didn't steal and eat any. Perhaps the tree is so tall and the leaves so thick that we counted wrongly. Let's not curse them for nothing. Come, you and I will go count again."

"You're right," said Mingyue.

The two of them went back to the garden, and there they saw it: the tree toppled over, its branches splayed wide, the fruit gone and the leaves fallen. Qingfeng's legs went soft and he fell head over heels; Mingyue's back turned to jelly and he shook all over. Both their souls flew out and scattered in fright. There is a poem to prove it:

Sanzang came west to Longevity Mountain; Wukong destroyed the Grass-Returned Cinnaban. Branches splayed, leaves fell, the immortal roots lay bare— Bright Moon and Clear Wind were chilled with hearts' despair.

The two of them collapsed in the dust, babbling incoherently. "What shall we do? What shall we do? The elixir-source of our Wuzhuang Temple is destroyed! The heirloom of our immortal house is cut off! When Master comes home, how are we ever going to answer him?"

Mingyue said, "Brother, don't wail. Let's straighten our clothes and caps, and whatever we do, let's not alarm these monks. This was nobody else—it must have been that hairy-faced, thunderbeak fellow. He slipped out his spirit and worked some magic to wreck our treasure. If we try to reason with him, the scoundrel will only deny everything, and if we argue, it will come to blows. And think—how could the two of us ever stand against their four? Better to trick them: we'll say the fruit was never missing, that we counted wrong, and go apologize to them. Their rice is already cooked; when they sit down to eat, we'll add a few extra side dishes. One of them on either side of the door—when each of them picks up his bowl, you stand at the left of the door and I'll stand at the right, and bang! we'll slam the doors shut and lock them. We'll lock every gate in this place, one layer after another, and not let them out. When Master comes home, he can deal with them however he pleases. The Tang monk is an old friend of Master's; if he spares them, that's Master's favor to show. If he doesn't spare them, then at least we've got the thieves caught red-handed, and perhaps our own guilt may be excused."

Qingfeng heard him out. "Right! Right!"

The two pulled themselves together, forced a look of cheerfulness, came straight from the back garden to the hall, and bowed low with clasped hands to the Tang monk. "Master, our words just now were coarse and rude, and we gave you great offense. Don't be angry—please, don't be angry."

"What do you mean?" asked Sanzang.

"The fruit wasn't missing after all," said Qingfeng. "The tree is so tall and the leaves so thick that we couldn't see clearly. We've just been back to count again, and they're all there, right to the last one."

At that, Bajie seized the chance to lord it over them: "You two youngsters! Too young to know how to behave—bursting in with your wild curses, damning us with your bare lips, accusing us for nothing! Shameful! Simply shameful!"

Pilgrim understood perfectly, but he said nothing. "Lies! All lies!" he thought. "The fruit is done for, finished—so why are they talking like this? ... Unless they have some way to bring the dead back to life..."

"Well then," said Sanzang, "serve up the rice, and we'll eat and be on our way."

Bajie went to fill the rice bowls, while the Sha Monk set out the tables and chairs. The two boy-immortals hurried to bring side dishes—pickled melon, pickled eggplant, radishes in wine lees, vinegar-soaked beans, salted taro, and quick-pickled mustard greens, seven or eight little plates in all—and set them before master and disciples for their meal. They also brought a pot of good tea and two teacups, and stood in attendance on either side.

The four travelers had scarcely picked up their bowls when the two boys, one at each side, slammed the doors shut and shot home a double-tongued bronze lock.

Bajie laughed. "These boys have got it wrong. The customs in this place are terrible! Why on earth would you shut people indoors to eat?"

"Exactly, exactly," said Mingyue. "You just eat your meal, and we'll open up presently."

Qingfeng cursed: "You thieving, food-thieving bald robbers! You ate my immortal fruit—that alone is the crime of wantonly helping yourself to the produce of another's garden! And then you pushed over my immortal tree and destroyed the immortal root of our Wuzhuang Temple—and you've still got the gall to run your mouths! If you ever want to reach the West and behold the Buddha's face, it'll only be by turning back into babes in cradles and being born all over again!"

At these words Sanzang put down his rice bowl, and his heart sank like a stone.

The boy-immortals locked the front mountain gate and the second mountain gate, every one, then came back to the front of the main hall and let loose with harsh words and foul, calling them thieves before and thieves behind, cursing until the sky darkened toward evening, and only then went off to eat. Supper done, they retired to their rooms.

The Tang monk grumbled at Pilgrim: "You monkey head! You're forever running headlong into trouble! You ate their fruit—then you could have taken a scolding, let them curse you a few rounds, and that would have been that. But why did you have to push over their tree? If this matter were taken to court, even if your father were the magistrate, he couldn't argue you out of it!"

"Master, don't fret," said Pilgrim. "Those boys have gone to bed. Wait till they're sound asleep, and we'll set out tonight and travel all night."

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "every gate is locked, shut tight as can be. How do we get out?"

"Never mind, never mind," said Pilgrim with a laugh. "Old Sun has his own methods."

"As if I worried you lacked methods!" said Bajie. "One twist and you turn into some gnat or midge and flit right out through the cracks in the lattice. It's only poor wretches like us who can't transform who'll be left here holding the bag and taking the punishment!"

"If he plays that trick and goes off without you and me," said the Tang monk, "then I'll start reciting the Old Words Sutra, and see how he likes that!"

Bajie heard this, and half worrying and half laughing, said: "Master, what kind of talk is that? I've heard of the Shurangama Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, the Peacock Sutra, the Guanyin Sutra, and the Diamond Sutra in the Buddha's teaching—but I've never heard of any 'Old Words Sutra'!"

"Brother, you don't know," said Pilgrim. "This band on my head was given by the Bodhisattva Guanyin to my master. The master coaxed me into putting it on, and now it's rooted there like a growing thing—there's no getting it off. It's called the Tight-Fillet Spell, and it's also called the Tight-Fillet Sutra. That 'Old Words Sutra' of his—this is it! Whenever he recites it, my head aches. That's the device he holds over me. Master,

don't recite it! I will never fail you—I promise you we'll all get out together, every one."

While they talked, the sky went dark, and before they knew it the moon had risen in the east.

"Now," said Pilgrim, "all sounds are still, and the icy wheel of the moon shines bright. A perfect time to be on our way."

"Brother," said Bajie, "stop your tricks! Every gate is locked and barred. Walk where?"

"Watch this!" said Pilgrim.

What a Pilgrim! He took his gold-hooped staff in hand, worked the Lock-Breaking Spell, and pointed at the doors. With a sudden clatter, the double tongues of every lock, layer after layer, dropped to the floor, and the door leaves flew open with a bang.

"Some skill!" Bajie said with a laugh. "Even a tinker with all his soldering irons couldn't be this quick about it!"

"These doors are nothing to make a fuss over," said Pilgrim. "If I pointed at the South Gate of Heaven, it would open too."

They invited their master out the gate and onto the horse; Bajie shouldered the load, the Sha Monk led the horse, and they set off straight down the western road.

"You all go on slowly ahead," said Pilgrim. "Let old Sun go back and arrange for those two boys to sleep for a month."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "you must not harm their lives! Or there'll be another crime of hurting people after gaining their goods."

"I know," said Pilgrim.

He slipped back inside and came to the door of the room where the boy-immortals slept. Now from his belt he took two sleep bugs—he had won them from Virudhaka, the Growth Heavenly King, playing guessing games at the East Gate of Heaven. He popped them in through the lattice of the window, and they crawled straight onto the boys' faces, and the two slept snoring, dead to the world, past all hope of waking.

Only then did he bound off on his cloud, catch up with the Tang monk, and race westward along the high road. That night the horse never paused in its tracks, and they traveled until daybreak.

"This monkey head is the death of me!" cried Sanzang. "All because of your appetite, I've been kept awake a whole night!"

"Don't keep on grumbling," said Pilgrim. "It's light now. Rest here a while in the woods by the roadside and gather your spirit before we go on."

The elder had no choice but to dismount. Leaning against the root of a pine, he made do with it as a meditation couch and sat down. The Sha Monk set down his load and dozed; Bajie pillowed his head on a rock and slept. The Great Sage Sun, for his part, was in high spirits—look at him leaping through the trees and swinging from branches, playing to his heart's content. Of the four of them resting there, we say no more.

Now tell it of the Great Immortal. When the assembly at the Palace of Primordial Origin broke up, he led his junior immortals out of the Tushita Heaven, straight down from the jasper skies, dropped his auspicious cloud, and soon arrived at the gate of Wuzhuang Temple on Longevity Mountain.

Looking around, he saw the temple gates standing wide open and the ground swept clean. The Great Immortal said, "Clear Wind and Bright Moon have really proved useful. Ordinarily by the time the sun is

three zhang high they still haven't stretched their backs. Today, with us away, they've actually risen early, opened the gates, and swept the floors."

The junior immortals were all pleased. But when they walked up to the hall, not a stick of incense was burning; there was no trace of a soul—and where were Bright Moon and Clear Wind?

"The two of them must have made off with our things," said the immortals, "because we were away."

"Impossible!" said the Great Immortal. "Men who cultivate immortality would never have such wicked hearts! I expect they forgot to shut the gates last night before going to bed, and this morning they still haven't woken."

The immortals went to the door of their room and looked: sure enough, the door was shut, and inside came the sound of deep snoring. But pound on the door and shout as they might, could they wake them? The immortals pried the door open and dragged them off the bed by main force, and still they would not wake.

The Great Immortal laughed. "Fine immortal boys! Those who have become immortal are full of spirit and never want for sleep. How can they be sunk in slumber like this? Surely someone has played a trick on them. Quick, bring water!"

A boy hastily fetched half a bowl of water and handed it to the Great Immortal. He recited a spell, took a mouthful, and sprayed it on their faces, whereupon the demon of sleep was straightaway dispelled.

The two came to themselves. Their eyes flew open; they rubbed their faces, looked up, and recognized their immortal master, the Lord Who Is the World's Contemporary, and the assembled immortal brothers. In their panic, Qingfeng bowed his head and Mingyue knocked it on the floor: "Master! Your old friend—that monk from the East—he and his lot are a band of brigands, fierce beyond all measure!"

"Don't be frightened," said the Great Immortal with a smile. "Tell me slowly."

"Master," said Qingfeng, "soon after you left that day, there indeed came a Tang monk from the East—four monks in the party, five souls counting the horse. Your disciples dared not disobey your orders: we asked him his business, and we brought him two ginseng fruit as you instructed. But the elder, with his worldly eyes and foolish heart, did not recognize our immortal treasure. He said they were infants not yet three days old, and again and again refused to eat—so your disciples ate one each. But then, that under his command are three disciples, and one of them is surnamed Sun, called Pilgrim Wukong, who first stole four fruit and ate them. When your disciples reasoned with him, speaking a few honest words of rebuke, he would not have it. In secret he worked some trick of slipping out of his body—oh, misery!"

At this point neither boy could hold back the tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Did the monk beat you?" asked the immortals.

"He didn't beat us," said Mingyue. "He only pushed over our ginseng tree."

At these words the Great Immortal showed not a trace of anger. "Don't cry, don't cry. You don't know that this Sun is himself a Scatter Immortal of the Grand Unity; he once wreaked havoc in Heaven, and his magic powers are vast. So he has toppled the treasure tree. Tell me—do you know those monks by sight?"

"We know them all," said Qingfeng.

"Then come with me, both of you. Disciples, get the instruments of punishment ready, and wait till I come back to beat them."

The immortals took his orders. The Great Immortal rose on auspicious light with Bright Moon and Clear Wind to overtake Sanzang; in a moment they had covered a thousand li. From amid the clouds the Great

Immortal looked west: no Tang monk to be seen. Turning his head to look east, he found he had overshot them by more than nine hundred li. For the elder had traveled without pause all night and covered only a hundred and twenty li, while the Great Immortal in one leap of his cloud had gone more than nine hundred li past them.

"Master," said the boy-immortals, "the one sitting under the trees by the roadside is the Tang monk."

"I've seen him already," said the Great Immortal. "You two go back and get ropes ready, and leave him to me to take." Qingfeng went back first; of him no more.

The Great Immortal pressed down his cloud, shook his body, and changed himself into a wandering Daoist of the Complete Truth. And how did he look?

A hundred-patched robe he wore on his frame, A Lü Gong sash at his waist he tied; A chowry tail in hand he swayed, On his fish-drum gently rapped and sighed. Three-earred straw sandals on his feet, A Nine-Yang cap was wound round his head; His sleeves were filled with drifting wind, And he sang "The Moon Hangs High" as he sped.

He walked straight up under the trees and called out loudly to the Tang monk, "Venerable sir, your humble Daoist salutes you!"

The elder hurriedly returned the greeting. "Forgive me for failing to see you coming! Forgive me!"

"Venerable sir," asked the Great Immortal, "where do you come from? Why do you sit in meditation by the roadside?"

"This poor monk," said Sanzang, "has been sent by the Great Tang in the eastern land to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. Passing through here, I stopped merely to rest a while."

The Great Immortal feigned surprise. "Since the elder came from the east, did you by chance pass my humble mountain?"

"I know not which precious mountain the immortal palace might be," said the elder.

"Longevity Mountain, Wuzhuang Temple—that is where your humble Daoist makes his home."

When Pilgrim heard this—being a man with something on his mind—he answered quickly: "We didn't! We didn't! We came along the high road the whole way."

The Great Immortal pointed at him and laughed. "You brazen ape! Who do you think you're fooling? You stayed in my temple, pushed over my ginseng tree, and fled here in the night—and you still won't confess! What are you trying to cover up? Don't run! Hand my tree back, right now!"

At these words Pilgrim's anger blazed up. He drew his iron staff, and without another word brought it crashing down on the Great Immortal's head. The Great Immortal swayed aside and dodged it, then stepped up on an auspicious cloud straight into the air. Pilgrim too mounted the clouds and chased him up in fury. In midair the Great Immortal showed his true form. Look how he was arrayed:

A purple-gold crown upon his head, The carefree crane cloak on him thrown; Cloud-soled shoes upon his feet, A silk band round his waist was wound. His body bore a boy's fair form, His face was like a beauty's own; Three strands of beard beneath his chin, Crow-feather locks above it shone. No weapon did he bear to meet the Pilgrim's charge— Only a jade chowry in his hand was thrown.

The Pilgrim struck wildly, high and low, raining blows with his staff. The Great Immortal parried left and right with the jade chowry, endured two or three rounds, then employed the device of the Sleeve of the Cosmos: in the clouds he spread his robe sleeve wide to catch the wind, and with a sweep it came flashing

over, and in one sleeve he scooped up all four monks and the horse besides.

"We're done for!" cried Bajie. "We've been stuffed in a fish creel!"

"Blockhead, it's not a creel," said Pilgrim. "He's bagged us in his sleeve."

"That's nothing," said Bajie. "Wait till I give it a few strokes of my rake and gouge a hole in it, and we'll drop right out. Then we can just say he wasn't careful, didn't hold us fast, and we fell out."

The blockhead hacked wildly at the sleeve with his rake—but could he so much as scratch it? Pinched in the fingers it was soft enough, but strike it and it was harder than iron.

The Great Immortal wheeled his auspicious cloud and landed at Wuzhuang Temple, where he sat down and called for ropes. The junior immortals waited on him one by one. And look: from his sleeve, one after another, as if plucking puppets, he drew out the Tang monk and bound him to a pillar under the eaves of the main hall; then he drew out the other three and tied each to a pillar. The horse too he brought out and tethered in the courtyard with a fodder basket before it; the luggage he flung down under the corridor.

Then he said: "Disciples, these monks are men who have left the world. We must not use blades or spears on them, nor apply ax or halberd. Bring out the leather whip and give them a flogging, to vent my spleen over the ginseng fruit!"

The immortals hurriedly brought out a whip. It was no whip of oxhide, sheepskin, deer-hide, or calfskin—it was a Seven-Star Whip made of dragon hide, kept soaking in water.

A strong young immortal gripped the whip firmly and asked, "Master, whom shall we flog first?"

"The Tang Sanzang is the eldest and dishonors his station. Flog him first."

When Pilgrim heard this he thought to himself: "My old master can't stand a beating. If one round of the whip finishes him, wouldn't that be a sin on my head?"

Unable to bear it, he spoke up. "Sir, you've got it wrong. I stole the fruit, I ate the fruit, and I pushed over the tree. Why not flog me first? What's the use of beating him?"

The Great Immortal laughed. "This brazen ape has quite a sharp tongue! Very well then—flog him first."

"How many strokes?" asked the young immortal.

"Thirty strokes, one for each fruit," said the Great Immortal.

The young immortal swung the whip and laid on.

Now Pilgrim, fearing the immortals' law was potent, kept his fiery eyes fixed wide open, watching where the blows would fall. They fell on the legs. So Pilgrim gave his waist one twist, cried "Change!"—and turned them into two legs of wrought iron. Let him lash away as he pleased! The young immortal laid on stroke after stroke, thirty in all, and by then the sky was nearing noon.

The Great Immortal gave further orders: "The Tang Sanzang must still be flogged for lax discipline in letting his unruly disciples run wild."

Again the young immortal swung the whip, but Pilgrim said, "Sir, you're wrong again. When the fruit was stolen, my master knew nothing of it—he was in your hall talking with your two boys. The whole business was done by us brothers. And even if he bears the guilt of lax discipline, I, his disciple, ought to take the strokes for him. Flog me some more instead."

The Great Immortal laughed. "This brazen ape is a cunning, wily rascal—yet he has a certain filial decency. Very well, flog him again."

And the young immortal gave him thirty more.

Pilgrim looked down at his legs: they shone like polished mirrors, worn bright by the beating, and he felt neither ache nor tickle.

By now the sky was darkening toward evening. "Soak the whip in the water," said the Great Immortal, "and we'll torture them again tomorrow."

The young immortal put the whip away to soak, and they all retired to their rooms. When the evening meal was done, all went to sleep; of this we say no more.

The elder's tears fell in streams as he grumbled at his three disciples: "You go looking for trouble, and I have to suffer for it here. How did this ever come about?"

"Stop your grumbling," said Pilgrim. "When they flogged, they flogged me first, and you never took a single stroke. What are you sighing about?"

"Though I wasn't beaten," said the Tang monk, "being bound this tight hurts me all over."

"Master," said the Sha Monk, "here are two more bound alongside you to keep you company."

"All of you, quiet," said Pilgrim. "In a little while we'll be on our way."

"There goes Brother with his tricks again!" said Bajie. "These hemp ropes have been sprayed with water and cinched down tight! They're a far cry from the hall doors you burst open with that Lock-Breaking Spell of yours!"

"I don't boast," said Pilgrim, "but let them spray three-strand hemp rope with water—even palm cables as thick as bowls are no more to me than an autumn breeze!"

While they talked, all sounds had died away; the streets of heaven were still. What a Pilgrim! He made himself small, slipped right out of the ropes, and said, "Master, let's go!"

The Sha Monk panicked. "Brother, save us too!"

"Softly! Softly!" He then unbound Sanzang and let down Bajie and the Sha Monk; they tightened their tunics, saddled the horse, gathered the luggage from under the corridor, and all went out the temple gate together.

Then he told Bajie: "Go cut down four willow trees from the cliff's edge."

"What do you want them for?" asked Bajie.

"They have their use! Fetch them quick!"

The blockhead had a good store of brute strength. Off he went, and with one thrust of his snout per tree, he rooted up four of them and carried them back in a bundle. Pilgrim snapped off the top branches, then he and his brother went back inside and bound the original ropes to the pillars as before.

The Great Sage recited a spell, bit the tip of his tongue, and sprayed the blood onto the trees, crying "Change!" One trunk became the elder, one became Pilgrim himself, and the other two became the Sha Monk and Bajie—all so alike in face and form that if you questioned them they would answer, and if you called their names they would respond. Only then did the two of them stride away and catch up with their master. That night, as before, the horse never paused, and they fled far from Wuzhuang Temple.

They traveled until daybreak. The elder, nodding and swaying on the horse, dozed in the saddle. When Pilgrim saw this he called out, "Master, this won't do! How can a man who has left the world suffer so? Old Sun can go a thousand nights without sleep and never feel weary. Come down off the horse—don't let

travelers on the road see you and laugh at you. Let's rest a while in this sheltered hollow below the slope where the wind gathers, and then go on."

Of master and disciples resting there for a time, we say no more.

Now tell it of the Great Immortal. At daybreak he rose, took his morning meal, came out to the hall, and called for the whip. "Today it's the Tang Sanzang's turn to be flogged."

The young immortal took up the whip and addressed the Tang monk: "Now it's you." The willow tree answered him: "Lay it on." Cracking blows—thirty of them.

He swung the whip around to Bajie. "Now it's you." The willow tree also answered: "Lay it on." And when he came to the Sha Monk, that one too answered, "Lay it on." But when he came to flog Pilgrim—the true Pilgrim out on the road suddenly gave a shudder. "Not good!"

"What's the matter?" asked Sanzang.

"I changed four willow trees into the four of us, master and disciples. I supposed that after beating me twice yesterday he wouldn't flog today. But he's beating my double, and so my true body shudders. I'll undo the spell." And in haste Pilgrim recited the spell and withdrew the magic.

Look at those boy-immortals, scared out of their wits: they dropped the leather whip and ran to report. "Master! The first one we beat was the Tang monk—but those we've been beating just now are nothing but willow roots!"

The Great Immortal heard this and laughed coldly, unable to contain his admiration. "Pilgrim Sun—truly a fine Monkey King! I'd heard how he wreaked havoc in the Palace of Heaven, and the nets of earth and snares of heaven could not hold him. So it's true! If he had run off, well and good—but to tie up willow trees here to answer for them under borrowed names—he shall by no means be spared! After him!"

At the word, the Great Immortal leaped up on his cloud and gazed west—and there were the monks, the luggage on the pole, the horse urged along, plodding down the road.

The Great Immortal sank down his cloud and shouted, "Pilgrim Sun! Where do you think you're going? Give me back my ginseng tree!"

Bajie heard him and cried, "Done for! Here comes our old enemy again!"

"Master," said Pilgrim, "wrap up the word 'mercy' for now and let us play the villain in earnest—finish him off once and for all, and then make our getaway." The Tang monk heard this and trembled, offering no reply. The Sha Monk grasped his precious staff, Bajie raised his rake, and the Great Sage swung his iron staff; all together they charged, surrounded the Great Immortal in midair, and struck and hacked at him wildly. Of this fierce battle there is a poem to prove it:

Wukong did not know the immortal Zhenyuan's power; The Lord Who Is the World's Contemporary, subtler still. Three magic weapons rained their furious blows, One chowry tail waved light as gossamer. It parried left and right through every thrust, Behind it blocked, in front it met each wheel. Night goes, morning comes, and still no escape— How long delayed, when will they reach the Western Heaven?

The three brothers each raised his magic weapon and attacked together, while the Great Immortal merely warded and parried with his fly-whisk. Before half a watch had passed, he spread his robe sleeve, and once again swept all four monks, the horse, and the luggage into it with one scoop. He wheeled his cloud and returned to the temple, where the immortals received him and the immortal master took his seat in the hall. One by one he hauled them out of his sleeve. The Tang monk he bound to the low locust tree below the steps; Bajie and the Sha Monk he tied to trees on either side; and Pilgrim he trussed up and threw down.

"I suppose this is the interrogation," said Pilgrim.

In a moment they were all bound fast. Then he called for ten bolts of long cloth to be brought.

Pilgrim laughed. "Bajie! This gentleman has kind intentions—he's brought cloth to make us monk's robes with wide sleeves! We'll trim it down a bit and make them one-piece instead."

The young immortals carried out bolts of homespun cloth.

"Wrap the Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie, and the Sha Monk in cloth!" ordered the Great Immortal.

The immortals swarmed forward and wrapped them.

"Fine! Fine! Fine!" laughed Pilgrim. "Buried alive in broad daylight!"

In a moment the wrapping was done. Then he called for lacquer to be brought. The immortals hurriedly fetched some raw and cooked lacquer of their own gathering and own drying, and lacquered the three of them all over their cloth wrappings, leaving only their heads and faces out.

"Sir," said Bajie, "the top part doesn't matter—but do leave some holes down below, so we can relieve ourselves."

Then the Great Immortal ordered the great cauldron brought out.

"Bajie, what luck!" laughed Pilgrim. "They're bringing out a cauldron—I expect they mean to cook rice for us."

"Well enough," said Bajie. "Let us eat a little rice and die full-bellied ghosts—it'll look better that way."

The immortals indeed hauled out a great cauldron and set it up below the steps.

The Great Immortal called for dry firewood to be stacked and a fierce blaze kindled, and ordered: "Fill the cauldron to the brim with clear oil and boil it scalding hot. Plunge Pilgrim Sun into the oil and fry him well, to avenge my ginseng tree!"

When Pilgrim heard this he was secretly delighted. "Just what old Sun was wishing for! I haven't had a bath in all this while, and my skin's been getting dry and itchy. A good scalding soak—I'm deeply grateful for the hospitality!"

In a moment the oil was about to boil. But the Great Sage kept his wits about him, fearing that the immortals' law would be hard to fathom and that in the oil cauldron he could hardly play his tricks. He glanced quickly around, and saw that east of the terrace below stood a sundial platform, and to the west a stone lion.

Pilgrim bounded over to the west, bit the tip of his tongue, spat a mouthful of blood on the stone lion, and cried "Change!" It turned into his very own likeness, bound and trussed just as he had been. Meanwhile his primal spirit slipped out and rose into the clouds, looking down on the Daoist from above.

Just then a young immortal reported: "Master, the oil is at a full boil."

"Take Pilgrim Sun and drop him in!" ordered the Great Immortal.

Four immortal boys tried to lift him and could not; eight came and still could not; four more were added, and they could not either.

"This monkey clings to the earth like homesick clay," said the immortals. "Small he may be, but solid!"

So twenty young immortals heaved him up together, carried him to the cauldron, and flung him in. There was a great crack and a splash of boiling oil that spattered the faces of the little Daoists with great scalding blisters!

Then the fire-tending boys were heard shrieking: "The cauldron's leaking! The cauldron's leaking!"

Hard were the words out of their mouths when the last of the oil drained away and the bottom of the cauldron broke through—for what should be inside but a stone lion!

The Great Immortal flew into a towering rage. "This brazen ape—insolence itself! He played his trick right before my eyes! If he had run off, well and good—but then he must go and smash my stove too! The wretched ape—I'd catch him in vain anyway. Even caught, he'd be like kneading sand or handling quicksilver, like clutching at shadows and chasing the wind. Enough! Enough! Enough! Let him go. Untie the Tang Sanzang, set up a fresh cauldron, and fry him instead, to avenge my ginseng tree."

The young immortals set to work at once, stripping off the cloth and lacquer.

Pilgrim, in midair, heard every word clearly, and he thought: "Master will never hold out. If he goes into the oil cauldron, one boil will kill him, two boils will crisp him, and by three or five boils they'll have boiled him into a pulpy mess of a monk! I must go save him."

What a Great Sage! He pressed down his cloud, stepped forward with hands clasped, and said: "Don't tear up that cloth and lacquer—I've come to take my turn in the oil."

The Great Immortal exclaimed in wrath: "You ape! How did you play your trick and smash my stove?"

Pilgrim laughed. "You ran into me—so your stove was bound to be smashed. What's that to do with me? Just now I was quite ready to accept a little of your hospitality in oil broth and oil gravy. But my bowels and bladder were on the point of bursting, and if I'd opened the floodgates in the cauldron, I'd have fouled your cooking oil and made it no good for dressing vegetables. Now that I'm emptied clean inside and out, I'm fit for the pot. Don't fry my master—fry me."

At these words the Great Immortal laughed coldly, walked out of the hall, and seized him by the arm.

What words were spoken, and how at last they escaped—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 26

Sun Wukong Seeks a Prescription on the Three Islands; Guanyin's Sweet Dew Restores the Tree to Life

In verse:

To dwell in the world, you must keep a blade upon the heart; To cultivate the self, remember "er" with "cun" close by.

[Translator's note: the first couplet is a character-splitting riddle—a blade (ren 刃) set upon a heart (xin 心) spells ren 忍, "forbearance"; "cun" 寸 set beside "er" 而 spells nai 耐, "patience."]

The proverb says the blade is where the living's made— Yet thrice think first, and curb both wrath and guile. The highest men, who strive with none, are famed through ages past; The sages, cherishing virtue, carried on their day. For every stubborn man there is one more stubborn still; In the end it all comes down to emptiness and blame.

The story continues: the Great Immortal Zhenyuan took the Pilgrim by the hand and said: "I know your powers well enough, and I have heard your famous name. But this time you have flouted all reason and outraged your conscience. Dodge and feint as you may, you will not slip out of my hands. I could argue this case with you all the way to the Western Heaven, into the presence of your Buddha himself, and you would still owe me a living ginseng fruit tree. None of your magic tricks, now!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "What a small-minded fellow you are, sir! If it's a living tree you want, where's the difficulty? Had you said so in the first place, wouldn't it have spared us this whole quarrel?" The Great Immortal said: "Spared the quarrel? And you think I'd simply have let you off?" The Pilgrim said: "You release my master, and I'll hand you back a living tree—how's that?" The Great Immortal said: "If you have such powers as that, and can cure the tree back to life, I will bow to you eight times and swear brotherhood with you." "No trouble at all," said the Pilgrim. "Let them go, and old Sun guarantees to return you a living tree." The Great Immortal reckoned he could not get away anyhow, and gave orders to release Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk.

The Sha Monk said: "Master, who knows what trick Brother is up to this time?"

"What trick!" said Bajie. "This is what's called the face-favoring-ghost trick! The tree is dead—how could it ever be doctored back to life? He's putting on a pretty show, begging leave to go find a cure for the tree, just to wriggle loose and be off on his own—do you suppose he'll spare a thought for you and me?"

Sanzang said: "He would never dare abandon us. Let's ask him where he means to go for his cure." So he called: "Wukong, how could you fool the immortal elder into setting us free?"

"Old Sun spoke the honest truth," said the Pilgrim, "how did I fool him?"

"Where will you go to seek a prescription?" asked Sanzang.

"The ancients say, prescriptions come from over the sea," the Pilgrim replied. "I am going up onto the Eastern Ocean to roam the Three Islands and the Ten Continents, to call on the aged immortals and holy elders, and beg from them a method of raising the dead to life. I guarantee I shall bring his tree back alive."

"How long before you return?" asked Sanzang.

"Only three days."

"Very well, we shall take you at your word and grant you three days. If you come back within the three days, all well; if you are not back after three days, I shall start reciting that little sutra of ours."

"As you command, as you command," said the Pilgrim.

Watch him hitch up his tiger-skin kilt in a hurry and go out the door to say to the Great Immortal: "Set your heart at rest, sir—I'm off, and I shall be back. But you must wait upon my master well: three teas and six meals every day, no skimping. If anything is lacking, old Sun will settle accounts with you when he returns, and start by knocking the bottom out of your cooking pot. When his clothes get grubby, have them washed and starched for him. If his face goes the least bit sallow, I won't have it; and if he gets thinner, I'm not going anywhere."

"Go, go," said the Great Immortal. "I promise you he shall not go hungry."

A fine Monkey King! He leapt at once onto his somersault cloud, left Wuzhuang Temple, and headed straight out over the Eastern Ocean. In mid-air, swift as a lightning flash, quick as a shooting star, he soon reached the immortal land of Penglai. Pressing down his cloud, he looked carefully about him—a truly fine place! There is a poem in proof:

A fairy country of the earth, the roost of ranks of saints; Penglai, closing and opening, masters the waves. The Jasper Terrace's reflection dips—the heart of heaven is cold; The towering palace's light rides high upon the sea. Five-colored mists and clouds hold pipes of jade; The stars and moon of the ninefold sky shine on the golden turtle. The Queen Mother of the Western Pool comes here time and again, Toasting the three immortals with peaches yet once more.

The Pilgrim could never see enough of the immortal scenery, and went straight on into Penglai. As he walked along, outside the White Cloud Cave, in the shade of the pines, he saw three old fellows playing go. The one watching the game was the Star of Longevity; the two bent over the board were the Star of Fortune and the Star of Prosperity.

The Pilgrim went up to them and called: "My respects, little brothers!"

The three stars swept the board aside, returned his bow, and said: "Whence comes the Great Sage?"

"I've come especially to find you for a bit of fun."

The Star of Longevity said: "I heard that the Great Sage forsook the Way for the Buddha's teaching, and escaped with his life to protect the Tang monk on the journey to the Western Heaven for the scriptures, toiling day after day along the mountain roads. Where would you find the leisure to come and play?"

"To be quite honest with you gentlemen," said the Pilgrim, "old Sun, bound for the West, has met with a small holdup on the road, and has come to ask a trifling favor. I wonder—will you hear me out?"

"What place? What holdup?" said the Star of Fortune. "Pray tell us plainly, that we may judge the matter."

"Passing Longevity Mountain, I ran into a stop at Wuzhuang Temple."

The three elders started up in alarm: "Wuzhuang Temple is the immortal palace of the Great Immortal Zhenyuan. Surely you haven't gone and stolen his ginseng fruits to eat?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "So what if I ate them? What's that worth?"

"You monkey—you've no sense of better or worse!" said the three elders. "One sniff of those fruits and you live three hundred sixty years more; eat a single one, and you live forty-seven thousand years. It is called the Grass-Returned Cinnabar of Longevity. Our own Way falls far short of his! He came by his so easily, and by right of it lives as long as Heaven itself; while we must still nurture our essence, refine our breath, preserve

our spirit, harmonize dragon and tiger, seize Kan to fill in Li—and who knows how much toil that costs? How can you say his fruits aren't worth much? In all the world there is only this one numinous root!"

"Numinous root! Numinous root!" said the Pilgrim. "I've gone and severed that root for him!"

The three elders were horrified: "What do you mean, severed?"

"The day before yesterday we were at his temple. The Great Immortal was away from home, and only two little boys received my master; they presented two ginseng fruits to him. My master did not know what they were, took them for infants not yet three days old, and refused again and again to eat. So the boys carried them off and ate them themselves, without so much as offering us a taste. Thereupon old Sun went and stole three of them, and the three of us brothers ate them up. But those boys, knowing no better, cursed us front and back—'thief' here, 'thief' there—without ever stopping. Old Sun lost his temper, struck their tree one blow with his cudgel, and knocked it flat to the ground: every fruit gone from the tree, boughs splayed, leaves fallen, roots bared, branches hurt—dead and withered. Then those boys locked us in, but old Sun twisted open the lock and we got away. Next morning at dawn that master of theirs came home and chased after us. In the course of the questions our words clashed, so we fought him; but he dodged once, spread out his sleeve, and swept the whole lot of us into it. Roped and corded, interrogated and flogged, we were beaten for a whole day. That night we escaped again, and again he caught up and bagged us as before. Though he carried not an inch of iron, he warded us off with nothing but a horsetail whisk, and with the three weapons we brothers had, we never once managed to touch him. This time he played the same trick again: he rolled my master and my two brother-disciples up in bolts of cloth, and me he meant for the oil cauldron. But I pulled off another escape-trick and got away, and broke his cauldron to pieces into the bargain. Seeing he could not hold me, he grew quite wary of me. So I made it up with him: he should release my master and my brother-disciples, and I would cure his tree and guarantee it alive—only thus did the two of us come to peace. Then I remembered that prescriptions come from over the sea, so I have come especially to these immortal lands to visit you three little brothers. If you have any prescription that can cure a tree, pass one on to me, quick, and save the Tang monk from his sufferings."

Hearing this, the three stars were troubled too. "You ape—you cannot size up men at all!" they said. "That Zhenyuanzi is the Patriarch of Earth Immortals; we ourselves are of the ancestry of the spirit immortals. Though you have attained to the rank of a celestial, you are still only an unranked Grand Unity immortal, not yet of the true stream—how could you ever have slipped his hand? Had the Great Sage killed some beast that runs or bird that flies, some insect or scaled creature, a single grain of our millet elixir could have brought it back to life. But the ginseng fruit is the root of an immortal tree—how is it to be cured? No prescription, no prescription."

At this word that there was no prescription, the Pilgrim's two brows locked together and a thousand furrows creased his forehead.

"Great Sage," said the Star of Fortune, "if there is none here, there may be elsewhere. Why fall into despair at once?"

"'Seek elsewhere' is easy enough to say," the Pilgrim replied. "Old Sun would think nothing of roaming the very ends of the earth and sky, of tramping clear through the thirty-six heavens. But that venerable Tang master of mine is strict in discipline and narrow of patience: he has given me a limit of only three days. If I am not back within three days, he will start reciting the Band-Tightening Spell."

The three stars laughed: "Good! Good! Good! If it were not for that little spell to keep you in check, you would be drilling your way up through Heaven again."

The Star of Longevity said: "Set your heart at rest, Great Sage, and do not fret. Though the Great Immortal is of the elder generation, he is an old acquaintance of ours. For one thing, it is long since we paid him our

respects; for another, this will do you a favor. The three of us will go together to call upon him, speak for you there, and tell that Tang monk not to recite his Band-Tightening Spell. Never mind three days or five—we shall not take our leave until you come back with your prescription."

"Grateful! Grateful!" said the Pilgrim. "Then bestir yourselves, three little brothers—I am off." Of the Great Sage's parting from the three stars we say no more.

Now the story tells how the three stars mounted their auspicious light and came straight to Wuzhuang Temple. Everyone in the temple suddenly heard cranes crying across the wide sky: the three elders were arriving. Just look at them:

Auspicious light clustering thick, filling the sky; Fragrance upon fragrance drifting down the clouds. A thousand ribbons of colored mist guard their feathered robes; One wafer of light cloud bears up their immortal feet. The blue luan flies, the scarlet phoenix sweeps after, Sleeves trailing fragrant wind that sweeps along the ground. Dragon-headed staves in hand, their faces beam with joy; White beards like hanging jade brush softly on their chests. Faces of children, merry and free of care, Sturdy frames and heroic vigor—blessed indeed. They hold the star tallies and add to the Sea House of years, Gourd and precious registers hanging at their waists. Myriad eras, thousand decades of fortune and long life, Lodging wherever fate wills, among Ten Continents and Three Isles. Ever coming to the world below to bring a thousand blessings, Ever adding a hundred joys among the sons of men. All heaven and earth they bless with rank and rich content— Boundless fortune, endless life, today made glad. Three elders ride the auspicious light to greet the Great Immortal: The hall of blessings brims with harmony past all measure.

[Translator's note: "adding to the Sea House" (haiwu tianchou) is a conventional birthday blessing: tallies dropped one by one into a mythical house of longevity by the sea each stand for another age of the world.]

The immortal boys saw them and hurried in to report: "Master, the Three Stars of the Sea have come."

Zhenyuanzi was chatting at ease with Tang Sanzang and his disciples; at the report he came down the steps to welcome them.

When Bajie saw the Star of Longevity, he went up, seized hold of him, and laughed: "You bald old pate! Not seen for ages, and still as careless as ever—you couldn't even bring a hat along."

With that he clapped one of his own monk's caps onto the old star's head, slapped his hands together, and roared with laughter: "Good! Good! Good! 'A cap on the head, and a raise in the salary!'"

[Translator's note: Bajie's cry jiaguan jinlu means "promotion and an increase of official salary," punning on lu 禄, the name of the Star of Prosperity.]

The Star of Longevity flung the cap off and cursed: "You great clodhopper! Grown so big, and still cannot tell high from low!"

"I'm no clodhopper," said Bajie. "It's you lot who are really slaves!"

"You're the clodhopper," said the Star of Fortune, "and yet you dare call us slaves!"

Bajie laughed again: "If you're not somebody's slaves, how come you're called 'Add-Longevity,' 'Add-Fortune,' and 'Add-Salary'?"

Sanzang shouted Bajie away, hurriedly straightened his robes, and bowed to the three stars.

The three stars greeted the Great Immortal with the ceremony owed by the younger generation, and only then did all sit and talk.

When they were seated, the Star of Prosperity said: "Long absent from your honored presence, we have failed in our respects. Today, because the Great Sage Sun has troubled your immortal mountain, we have come especially to see you."

"Has Pilgrim Sun gone off to Penglai?" asked the Great Immortal.

"He has," said the Star of Longevity. "Having harmed the Great Immortal's cinnabar tree, he came to us to beg a prescription to cure it. We had none, and he has gone elsewhere to search. We feared only that he would overstep the holy monk's three-day limit and bring on the Band-Tightening Spell. So we have come, first to pay our respects, and second to beg a little more time."

Hearing this, Sanzang hastened to answer: "I'll not recite it! I'll not recite it!"

Just then Bajie came running in again, seized the Star of Fortune, and demanded fruit to eat. He rummaged wildly through his sleeves, groped about his waist, and kept peeling back the star's robes to search him.

Sanzang laughed: "Whatever are the manners of that Bajie!"

"It's not bad manners," said Bajie. "This is called 'every turn brings fortune.'"

[Translator's note: another pun—to rummage and turn things over (fan 翻) sounds like "each and every" (fan 番); searching the robes of the Star of Fortune "brings fortune with every turn."]

Sanzang ordered him out again. The blockhead slouched out the door, then stood glaring at the Star of Fortune, eyeing him without a blink and gnashing his teeth.

"Clodhopper!" said the Star of Fortune. "Where have I ever offended you, that you should glare at me so?"

"It's not hate," said Bajie. "This is called 'turning back to gaze on fortune.'"

Out the door, the blockhead caught sight of a young boy carrying four teaspoons, just going to fetch cups and fruit to serve the tea. He snatched them all in one grab, ran up into the hall, took up the little stone chime, and hammered away at it with his hand, disporting himself first at one end and then the other.

"This monk," said the Great Immortal, "grows less and less respectful!"

"It isn't disrespect," said Bajie with a grin. "This is called 'good cheer in all four seasons.'"

[Translator's note: the four teaspoons pun on "the four seasons" (sishi 四时), and the chime (qing 磬) puns on "celebration" (qing 庆).]

But no more of Bajie's clowning and pestering. The story turns to the Pilgrim, who soared from Penglai on his auspicious cloud and soon came to the immortal mountain of Fangzhang. A truly wonderful place—there is a poem in proof:

Fangzhang towers lofty, a heaven set apart; In the halls of Great Mystery the immortals gather. The purple terraces light the road of the Three Pure Ones; Flowers and trees float fragrance on five-colored mist. Golden phoenixes flock of themselves to the blossom towers; Who needs compel the jade unguent to water the magic-fungus fields? Green peaches and purple plums newly ripe— Once more ten thousand years go by, and word is brought to the immortals.

The Pilgrim pressed down his cloud, in no mood to enjoy the scenery. As he walked along, he smelled a fragrant wind heavy with scent and heard the cry of dark cranes; on the other side there was an immortal. Just look at him:

Ten thousand rays of rosy light fill the sky; Colored mists drift and sway, the gleam unbroken. The scarlet phoenix bearing a flower is brighter still; The blue luan dances, its voice sweet and lovely. Fortune vast as

the Eastern Sea, long life lasting as the hills, A face like a little child's, a body hale and strong. In his gourd is hidden the ageless elixir of the cave-heaven; At his waist hangs the seal of long life that grows with the days. Time and again he has sent down blessings among men, And often has dissolved men's misfortunes in the world below. Emperor Wu once summoned him and lengthened his span; He attends the Peach Banquet at the Jasper Pool each season. He teaches the monks and frees them from their worldly ties, Points open the Great Way, bright as a lightning flash. He has crossed the seas to wish men a thousand autumns, And often goes to the holy mountain to behold the Buddha's face. His holy title is the Great Emperor Donghua—Foremost of immortals in the fellowship of mist and cloud.

Pilgrim Sun went up to meet him face to face and hailed him: "Divine Lord, my respects!"

The Divine Lord hurriedly returned the bow: "Great Sage, forgive my failure to welcome you. Pray enter my humble dwelling for a cup of tea." And he took the Pilgrim by the hand, and they went in together.

It was truly a palace of shell, an immortal palace—jasper pools and jasper towers past all seeing. They had only just sat down to await the tea when from behind the emerald screen came a youth. How was he dressed?

A Daoist robe that shimmers like drifting rosy cloud, A sash of knotted silk, its light in glittering disarray. On his head a kerchief of black silk, its cloth set out with stars; On his feet sandals of plaited rush for roaming the sacred peaks. He has refined his primal truth and shed his mortal shell; When his merit was perfected, his heart knew full content. He has seen through the source and stream of essence, breath, and spirit, And knows his own true master without slip or error. Escaping fame, he now delights in boundless life; The rounds of sixty years can lay no hold on him. Round the winding galleries he turns, up the precious towers, And thrice has plucked the peaches of the heavens. From the emerald screen, wreathed in pale fragrant cloud, This young immortal is Dongfang Shuo.

At the sight of him the Pilgrim laughed: "So the little thief is here! No peaches at the Divine Lord's for you to steal!"

Dongfang Shuo advanced, bowed to his master, and answered: "Old thief, what are you doing here? No elixir at my master's for you to steal!"

"Manqian!" the Divine Lord called out. "None of your nonsense—see about the tea." Manqian was Dongfang Shuo's Daoist name. He hurried inside and brought out two cups of tea.

When they had drunk, the Pilgrim said: "Old Sun has come with a small matter in hand. I wonder—will you grant it or not?"

"What matter?" said the Divine Lord. "You have only to say."

"Of late, escorting the Tang monk westward, we passed Longevity Mountain and stopped at Wuzhuang Temple. Because his young boys behaved without manners, I lost my temper for a moment and pushed over his ginseng fruit tree. Hence this holdup: the Tang monk cannot get away. I have come specially to your honored realm to beg a prescription to cure it. I earnestly hope you will consent."

"You monkey!" said the Divine Lord. "You never stop to reckon one from two before you blunder into trouble wherever you go. Zhenyuanzi of Wuzhuang Temple—his holy title is 'Compeer of the World,' and he is the Patriarch of Earth Immortals. How could you go and cross him? That ginseng fruit tree of his is the Grass-Returned Cinnabar. To steal and eat the fruits was crime enough; but to topple the tree as well—do you suppose he would let it rest?"

"Just so," said the Pilgrim. "We did get away, but he caught up with us, scooped the whole lot of us into his sleeve like so many sweat-rags—so I've been swallowing my anger. Nothing for it but to promise him I would seek a prescription and cure it. That is why I have come to beg you."

"I have a single 'Grand Unity Elixir of the Ninefold Refinement,'" said the Divine Lord, "but it can only cure the living creatures of this world; it cannot cure a tree. A tree is the spirit of wood and earth, fed by Heaven and moistened by Earth. A common fruit tree of the mortal world might yet be treated—but Longevity Mountain is a blessed land from before the making of the world, Wuzhuang Temple is the cave-heaven of the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift, and the ginseng fruit is a numinous root from the days when Heaven was parted from Earth. How could it be cured? No prescription! No prescription!"

"Since there is no prescription, old Sun will take his leave."

The Divine Lord still wished to keep him for a cup of jade nectar, but the Pilgrim said: "My errand of rescue is pressing—I dare not linger long." So he mounted his cloud and came on to the island of Yingzhou.

Another fine place. There is a poem in proof:

Pearl trees glitter, shining in the purple mist; The palaces of Yingzhou touch upon all the heavens. Green hills and blue waters, magic blossoms bright; Jade nectar, Kunwu steel, and stone as hard as iron. The five-colored jade cock crows at the sea's sunrise; The thousand-year scarlet phoenix drinks the cinnabar mist. Men of the world never plumb the world within the gourd— Spring light beyond all forms, a hundred million years.

When the Great Sage reached Yingzhou, beneath the cinnabar cliffs and pearl trees he saw several white-haired, white-bearded elders—immortals with the faces of children and cranes' plumes for hair—playing go and drinking wine, chatting, laughing, singing. Truly:

Auspicious clouds fill with light; Happy vapors float their fragrance. Colored luan cry at the mouth of the cave; Dark cranes dance upon the peak. Green lotus root and water peaches wash down the wine; Crosswise pears and fire dates yield a thousand autumns of life. Not one of them hears an imperial summons— Their names stand on the registers of the immortals. Free and easy, they drift wherever the waves may toss; Serene and loose, they take their ease in quiet seclusion. The sixty-year rounds of heaven cannot bind them; Through all the earth and sky they wander as they will. Dark apes offer fruit, in pairs attending, fond and loving; White deer with flowers in their mouths bow down by twos, devoted without end.

As the old fellows were enjoying their wine, the Pilgrim shouted out at the top of his voice: "What's wrong with taking me along for a little fun!"

At the sight of him the immortals hurried forward with quick steps to greet him. There is a poem in proof:

The numinous root, the ginseng fruit tree, is broken; The Great Sage seeks the immortals, begging their wondrous art. Coiling cinnabar clouds break from the treasured grove— The Nine Elders of Yingzhou come out to meet him.

The Pilgrim knew them for the Nine Elders, and laughed: "Taking your ease as ever, old brothers!"

"Had the Great Sage kept to the straight path in the old days," said the Nine Elders, "and not made havoc in the Palace of Heaven, you would be even more at ease than we. But now, we hear, you have returned to the truth and go westward to worship the Buddha—how did you ever find time to come here?"

The Pilgrim laid the whole matter before them—how he sought a prescription to cure the tree.

The Nine Elders too were greatly startled: "What a troublemaker you are! A troublemaker indeed! We truly have no prescription."

"Since you have none, I'll bid you farewell for now."

The Nine Elders tried to keep him for jade nectar and green lotus root, but the Pilgrim flatly refused to sit; standing, he drank one cup of their nectar and ate one piece of root, then hurriedly left Yingzhou and turned

back across the Eastern Ocean. Soon he caught sight of Mount Potalaka not far off; he pressed down his cloud and went straight onto Potalaka Rock, where he found the Bodhisattva Guanyin in the Purple Bamboo Grove, expounding the sutras and teaching the Law with the great gods of all the heavens, with Muzha and the Dragon Girl. There is a poem in proof:

The sea-lord's city towers high, its happy vapors dense; And stranger, rarer things await beyond all telling. Know this: beyond a thousand veiled and shadowed forms, All issues from that one most faint and subtle essence. The Four Holy Ones, receiving the teaching, win the fruit of truth; The Six Worlds of the common, hearing it, escape their cages. In the grove there dwells another taste of truth: Flowers and fruits in fragrant clusters, red upon the trees.

The Bodhisattva had already seen the Pilgrim coming, and sent the Guardian Deity of the Mountain to receive him.

The great deity came out of the grove and called: "Sun Wukong, where are you bound?"

The Pilgrim lifted his head and shouted back: "You great bear! Am I a Wukong for the likes of you to call? If old Sun had not spared you back then, you would long since have been a corpse-ghost on Black Wind Mountain! Today you have followed the Bodhisattva, received the good fruit, dwell upon this immortal mountain, and ever hear the teaching of the Law—and you cannot bring yourself to call me one word of 'lord'?"

That black bear had truly won the true fruit: as Guardian of Potalaka at the Bodhisattva's side, honored as a great deity, he owed it all to the Pilgrim.

So he could only force a smile: "Great Sage, the ancients said, 'A gentleman does not dwell on old wrongs.' Why keep harping on it? The Bodhisattva sent me to welcome you."

Then the Pilgrim, solemn and reverent, went with the great deity into the Purple Bamboo Grove and bowed before the Bodhisattva.

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "how far along the road has the Tang monk come?"

"He has reached Longevity Mountain in the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift," said the Pilgrim.

"On Longevity Mountain there is Wuzhuang Temple. Have you met the Great Immortal Zhenyuan?"

The Pilgrim knocked his head upon the ground: "It was at Wuzhuang Temple, Holy One. Your disciple did not know the Great Immortal Zhenyuan; I ruined his ginseng fruit tree and gave him offense, and he has trapped my master there, unable to go forward."

The Bodhisattva understood it all already, and scolded: "You wicked ape, you know no better! That ginseng fruit tree is a numinous root from the days when Heaven was parted from Earth, and Zhenyuanzi is the Patriarch of Earth Immortals—even I yield him three points. How could you go and break his tree!"

The Pilgrim bowed again and again: "Your disciple truly did not know. That day the Great Immortal was away from home; only two immortal boys attended us. It was Zhu Wuneng who knew he had the fruits and wanted to taste one fresh, and your disciple did indeed steal three of them, and we brothers shared them out. The boys found out and cursed us without end; your disciple lost his temper and pushed their tree over. The next day their master came home, caught up with us, bagged the whole lot of us in one sleeve, roped us, flogged us, beat us for a full day. That night we escaped, but he caught us again and bagged us as before. After the third time and the second, there was truly no escaping him, and I promised to cure his tree. Just now I have been seeking a prescription across the seas, roaming all Three Islands, and none of the immortals had the power. Therefore your disciple has come with single-hearted devotion to bow before the Bodhisattva. I humbly pray that in your compassion you will look down and grant one prescription, to save the Tang monk

and let him soon go on toward the West."

"Why did you not come to see me sooner," said the Bodhisattva, "instead of hunting all over the islands?"

At these words the Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "Luck at last! Luck at last! The Bodhisattva must surely have a prescription!"

He pressed forward and begged again.

"The sweet dew in the bottom of my pure vase," said the Bodhisattva, "is good for curing immortal trees and numinous sprouts."

"Has it ever been put to the proof?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Put to the proof indeed," said the Bodhisattva.

"What proof?"

"Years ago Lord Lao Zi made a wager with me. He pulled up my willow twig, put it into his elixir furnace and baked it dry and scorched, then sent it back to me. I took it and set it in my vase, and in one day and one night it was green of branch and green of leaf again, just as it had been before."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Luck at last! Luck at last! If a baked and scorched twig can be cured back to life, what difficulty can there be with a tree that was only pushed over!"

The Bodhisattva instructed the assembly: "Guard the grove; I go, and shall return." Then, bearing the pure vase in her hand—with the white parakeet caroling sweetly ahead of her, and the Great Sage Sun following behind—she set out. There is a poem in proof:

Her jade-white rays, her golden form—the world cannot fathom her; She is the Compassionate One, the Savior of the Afflicted. In kalpas past she met the Immaculate Buddha, And thus has won her body of blessed deeds. Life after life the waves of the sea of desire have stilled; The field of her heart holds not one speck of dust. Long has the sweet dew proven the true and wondrous Law— It will keep the precious tree forever in its spring.

Now the story tells how the Great Immortal in the temple was conversing quietly with the three elders when the Great Sage Sun suddenly pressed down his cloud, shouting: "The Bodhisattva is here! Quick, receive her! Receive her!"

The three stars, Zhenyuanzi, and Sanzang with his disciples, all in a flurry, hurried out of the precious hall together to welcome her. The Bodhisattva brought her auspicious cloud to rest, first exchanged courtesies with Zhenyuanzi, then saluted the three stars. When the rites were done she took the seat of honor, and there before the steps the Pilgrim led the Tang monk, Bajie, and the Sha Monk in bowing to her.

The immortals of the temple came too to pay their respects.

Said the Pilgrim: "Great Immortal, no need to hesitate—set out the incense table at once, and ask the Bodhisattva to cure that fruit tree of yours."

The Great Immortal bowed and thanked the Bodhisattva: "A trifling affair of my own—how could I presume to trouble the Bodhisattva to descend?"

"The Tang monk is my disciple," said the Bodhisattva, "and Sun Wukong has offended you, sir. It is only right that your precious tree be made good."

"Since it is so," said the three elders, "no more polite refusals. Let us all go into the garden and see."

The Great Immortal at once ordered the incense table set out and the rear garden swept clean; the Bodhisattva was invited to lead the way, the three elders following.

Sanzang and his disciples, together with the immortals of the temple, all came into the garden to watch. The tree lay fallen on the ground, the earth split open, the roots laid bare, leaves fallen, branches withered.

The Bodhisattva called: "Wukong, hold out your hand."

The Pilgrim opened his left hand. Dipping her willow twig into the sweet dew of the vase, the Bodhisattva drew upon his palm a magic character for raising the dead to life, and bade him set it beneath the roots of the tree, watching until water came forth—that would be the measure of it.

The Pilgrim clenched his fist and thrust it down under the roots of the tree; in a moment there welled up a pool of clear spring water.

"That water must not touch any vessel of the Five Elements," said the Bodhisattva. "You must ladle it out with a jade dipper, raise the tree upright, and pour from the crown downward. Then root and bark will knit together of themselves, leaves will grow and buds put forth, the branches will turn green, and the fruit appear."

"Little Daoists!" cried the Pilgrim. "Fetch a jade dipper, quick!"

"In this poor Daoist's wild mountain," said Zhenyuanzi, "we have no jade dipper—only jade tea bowls and jade wine cups. Will they serve?"

"So long as it is jade, and can ladle water, that will do," said the Bodhisattva. "Bring them and let me see."

The Great Immortal ordered the little boys to bring out some two or three dozen tea bowls and four or five dozen wine cups, and they ladled out the clear spring from beneath the roots. The Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk hoisted the tree up, set it upright and true, and heaped the soil back about it; then cup by cup they presented the sweet spring from the jade vessels to the Bodhisattva. With her willow twig she sprinkled it finely over the tree, all the while reciting sutras and spells.

Before long, all the water they had ladled out had been sprinkled, and sure enough the tree stood as of old, green-branched and green-leaved, dense and shady, with twenty-three ginseng fruits upon it.

The two boys, Qingfeng and Mingyue, said: "That day, when the fruits went missing, we counted over and over and made out only twenty-two. Now that it has come back to life, how has there come to be one more?"

"Time reveals a man's heart," said the Pilgrim. "That day old Sun stole only three. One of them fell to the ground, and the local deity said this treasure sinks into the earth the moment it touches soil—but Bajie kept bawling that I had palmed one for myself. So the rumor got loose, and the tangle has lasted until this very day, when the truth is clear at last."

"The reason I would use no vessel of the Five Elements," said the Bodhisattva, "is that I knew this thing stands in fear of the Five Elements."

The Great Immortal was overjoyed, and at once ordered the golden striker brought, knocked down ten of the fruits, and invited the Bodhisattva and the three elders back into the precious hall—first to give thanks for her labor, and second to hold a ginseng-fruit feast.

The lesser immortals set out the tables and chairs and spread the red-lacquered trays: the Bodhisattva was given the seat of honor at the head, the three elders the seats of honor on the left, the Tang monk the seat of honor on the right, with Zhenyuanzi seated before them as host. Each ate one fruit. There is a poem in proof:

In Longevity Mountain's ancient cave-heaven, The ginseng ripens once in nine thousand years. The numinous root once bared—its sprouts and branches hurt; The sweet dew nourished it, and fruit and leaves were whole. The three elders, met in joy, were all old friends of old; The four monks' happy meeting was a bond from former lives. Now that they all have tasted of the ginseng fruit, Every one is an immortal, deathless and unaging.

At this feast the Bodhisattva and the three elders each ate one fruit; the Tang monk, knowing at last that it was a treasure of the immortals, ate one too. Wukong and his two brothers each had one, Zhenyuanzi ate one in company, and the immortal folk of the temple divided one among them.

Then the Pilgrim gave thanks to the Bodhisattva, who returned to Potalaka Rock, and saw the three stars straight back to the island of Penglai. Zhenyuanzi laid on a feast of vegetarian dishes and wine, and swore brotherhood with the Pilgrim. Truly it is, "no fight, no friendship"—the two households had now become one. Master and disciples, four in all, went happily to their rest as evening fell. And so the elder at last had won his chance:

By happy fate he ate the Grass-Returned Cinnabar, To live long years—yet still must bear the demons' trials.

How they parted on the morrow—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 27

The Corpse Demon Thrice Plays Her Trick on Tang Sanzang; The Holy Monk in Wrath Banishes the Handsome Monkey King

The story continues: on the morrow, at first light, Sanzang and his disciples packed up and pressed forward. Zhenyuanzi, now sworn brother to the Pilgrim, was of one heart and mind with him and could not bear to let them go; he laid on entertainment after entertainment, and they stayed five or six days running. The elder, since eating the Grass-Returned Cinnabar, felt truly as if reborn—his spirit buoyant, his body strong. His heart was set on fetching the scriptures; how could he bear to linger? There was nothing for it, and they set out.

Master and disciples bade farewell and took the road, and soon beheld a high mountain. Sanzang said: "Disciples, there is a steep and perilous mountain ahead. I fear the horse cannot pass—we must all be very careful."

"Set your mind at ease, Master," said the Pilgrim. "We shall manage it well enough."

A fine Monkey King! Out before the horse he went, cudgel across his shoulder, hewing open the mountain path, climbing the high cliffs—past all seeing were the heaped peaks and crags, the winding ravines and hollows. Tigers and wolves moved in columns; muntjacs and deer traveled in herds. Countless roe deer and wild boar came jostling in clusters; foxes and hares covered the hills in swarms. Pythons a thousand feet long, serpents ten thousand feet tall: the pythons breathed out gloomy fog, the serpents belched uncanny wind. Brambles and thorns sprawled over the roadside; pines and nan-trees stood graceful on the ridges. Climbing fig and vines filled the eye; fragrant grasses ran to the horizon. Their shadows fell toward the northern deep; the clouds broke open south of the Dipper's handle. Old through myriad ages with the primal breath, a thousand towering peaks arrayed in cold sunlight.

The elder's heart quaked on horseback. The Great Sage Sun put forth his powers, whirling his iron cudgel and giving one great roar, till the wolves and beasts fled helter-skelter and tigers and leopards bolted away.

Master and disciples entered that mountain. As they were passing the most craggy heights, Sanzang said: "Wukong, I have grown hungry this day. Where can you go and beg us some food?"

The Pilgrim put on a smiling face: "Master, you are not being very clever. Here we are halfway up a mountain—no village ahead, no inn behind; even with money in hand there is nowhere to buy. Where am I to go looking for food?"

Sanzang was displeased, and he scolded: "You monkey! Think back—on the Mountain of Two Frontiers, when the Tathagata had you crushed beneath the stone coffer, your mouth could talk but your feet could not walk. It was I who saved your life, rubbed your crown and gave you the precepts, and took you as my disciple. How is it you will not exert yourself, but always harbor this lazy heart?"

"Your disciple has been most diligent," said the Pilgrim. "When was I ever lazy?"

"If you are so diligent, why not beg me some food? How can I travel hungry? And with the miasmal vapors of these mountains, how are we ever to reach the Thunderclap Monastery?"

"Do not be angry, Master, and say no more," said the Pilgrim. "I know your honored temper is proud; if I slack the least little bit, you will be reciting that spell of yours. Dismount and sit quietly while I look for some place where people live, and go beg food there."

With one bound the Pilgrim leapt up into the clouds, shaded his eyes with his hand, and peered all around.

Alas, the Western road was lonely indeed—no farms or hamlets anywhere, nothing but woods and woods and scarcely a sign of human life. After looking a long while, he saw on the due south a high mountain, and on its sunny face a patch of bright red dots. The Pilgrim pressed down his cloud and said: "Master, there is food to be had."

The elder asked what it might be. "There's no house here where we can beg rice," said the Pilgrim. "But on that southern mountain there is a stretch of red—it must be mountain peaches ripe through. I'll go pick a few to stay your hunger."

Sanzang was delighted: "If a monk may have peaches to eat, that is the finest of fare! Go quickly!"

The Pilgrim took the alms bowl, leapt up on his auspicious light—watch him tumble through the heavens, trailing cold air—and in a moment he was off to the southern mountain to pick peaches. Of this we say no more.

Now as the common saying goes: where the mountains are high there must be monsters; where the ridges are steep, demons are bred. And sure enough, on this mountain there was a demon, and the Great Sage Sun's going had startled her. Riding the murky wind up in the clouds, she saw the elder sitting on the ground, and her joy knew no bounds: "Luck! Luck! For years now everyone has told of the Tang monk from the East going to fetch the Great Vehicle. He is the reincarnation of the Golden Cicada, an original body ten lifetimes in the cultivating. Whoever eats a piece of his flesh shall live long and never age. And today, in truth, he has come!"

The demon started forward to seize him, but saw that at the elder's left and right stood two great generals guarding him, and dared not approach. And who were those two great generals, you ask? Bajie and the Sha Monk. Though Bajie and the Sha Monk had no very great powers, Bajie had been Marshal Tianpeng, and the Sha Monk the Curtain-Raising General; their awesome aura had never leaked away, and so she dared not come near.

"I'll just play a trick on him," said the demon, "and see what comes of it."

A cunning demon indeed! She stopped her murky wind, and in a hollow of the mountain shook her body and changed into a girl with a face like the moon and features like flowers—brows clear and eyes fine past all telling, teeth white and lips red. In her left hand she carried a blue sand-clay pot, in her right a green porcelain flask, and she came straight toward the Tang monk from west to east. The holy monk, resting by the mountain crag, suddenly saw a skirted woman drawing near:

Kingfisher sleeves lightly swaying, veiling fingers of jade; Hunan silk skirt trailing aslant, revealing golden lilies. Sweat bedewed her powdered face, a flower holding dew; Dust brushed her moth-antenna brows, willows laden with mist. Watch her closely, fixing the eyes upon her— See her walk, and walk, until she reaches his side.

Sanzang saw her and called: "Bajie, Sha Monk! Wukong said only that this was open wilds with never a soul in it—look, is that not a person coming along?"

"Master," said Bajie, "you and the Sha Monk sit here while old Pig goes to have a look." The blockhead set down his rake, straightened his tunic, and with much swaying and swishing put on the air of a refined gentleman, going straight forward to meet her. Truly, seen from afar it is hard to tell; seen up close, it is plain. And how did that girl look?

Ice-pure flesh enfolding bones of jade, Her collar showing a bosom of cream. Willow brows heaped with dark, kingfisher green; Almond eyes flashing like silver stars. A face and bearing lovely as the moon's, A nature limpid, as if born so. A body like a swallow hidden in the willows, A voice like an oriole warbling in the wood. A crabapple half open, veiled in dawn sun; A peony newly blown, toying with spring light.

When Bajie saw how pretty she was, mortal desire stirred in the blockhead at once, and he could not hold back his babble: "Lady Bodhisattva, where are you bound? And what is that you are carrying in your hands?"

She was plainly a monster, but he could not recognize her.

The girl answered promptly, again and again: "Venerable sir, in this blue clay pot is fragrant rice, and in the green flask, fried wheat gluten. I have come here for no other reason: I made a vow to feed monks, and have come to fulfill it."

Hearing this, Bajie was overjoyed. He whirled around at once and ran off like a pig in a whirlwind to report to Sanzang: "Master! Heaven looks after good men! Master is hungry, and you sent Brother to beg food, and where that monkey has gone off to play at picking peaches, who knows? And too many peaches upset the stomach, and sit heavy besides. Look—isn't that a monk-feeding woman coming?"

The Tang monk did not believe it: "You clodhopper, what nonsense! All this way we have come, and never met so much as one good person—where should a monk-feeder come from?"

"Master, is she not just there?" said Bajie.

At the sight, Sanzang scrambled quickly to his feet, pressed his palms together at his chest, and said: "Lady Bodhisattva, where is your home? What family are you of? And what vow brings you here to feed monks?"

She was plainly a demon, but the elder could not recognize her either.

Seeing the Tang monk ask her history, the demon on the spot spun a tissue of lies, wheedling him with honeyed words: "Venerable sir, this mountain is called White Tiger Ridge, where snakes turn back and beasts are afraid; due west below it is my home. My parents are living; they read the scriptures and love doing good, and feed monks from near and far and every quarter. Only, being without a son, they sought blessing by doing blessed deeds, and I was born, your slave girl. They wished to raise our station by marrying me into some family; but fearing there would be none to lean on in their old age, they took in a husband for me instead, to care for them in age and bury them at the end."

At this Sanzang said: "Lady Bodhisattva, there is an error in what you say. The classic teaches: 'While your parents live, do not travel far; and if you travel, have a fixed destination.' If your parents are living, and have even taken in a husband for you, then if you have a vow in your heart, let your husband repay it, and that would be that. How is it you walk these mountains by yourself, without even a serving girl attending you? This is not the way of a proper wife."

The girl laughed sweetly and hastened with pretty words: "Venerable sir, my husband is in the hollow on the north side of the mountain, hoeing the fields with some hired men. This is the midday meal your slave girl cooked, to carry out to those men. Only because it is the fifth month, the height of summer, with no one to send, and my parents being old, I brought it myself. Meeting you three come from afar, I thought of my parents' love of good deeds, and so would offer this rice to the monks. If you do not despise it, I would gladly make my humble gift."

"Worthy, worthy!" said Sanzang. "But my disciple has gone to pick fruit and will soon be back, and I dare not eat. If I, a monk, ate your meal, and your husband came to know of it and scolded you, would not the blame be laid on this poor monk?"

Seeing that the Tang monk would not eat, the girl beamed all over: "Venerable sir, my parents' feeding of monks is a small thing; my husband is even more a good man—his whole life he has loved mending bridges and repairing roads, cherishing the old and pitying the poor. If he hears this food was carried out and eaten by so venerable a master, why, between us husband and wife it will be better than usual by half."

Still the Tang monk would not eat, and meanwhile Bajie beside him was fit to burst with fury. The blockhead thrust out his lips and grumbled: "Monks without number under heaven, and never one like this old monk of ours—so weak and wavering! A ready-cooked meal, and he will not eat his share of it, but waits for that monkey to come, so he can eat a four-man share!"

And without letting anyone speak, he butted the pot over with his snout and was about to fall to.

Just then the Pilgrim, having picked a few peaches on the southern peak, came somersaulting back, bowl in hand. Opening his fiery eyes with their golden pupils, he took one look and knew the girl for a demon. Setting down the bowl, he whipped out his iron cudgel and struck at her head. The elder, terrified, grabbed hold of him with his hand: "Wukong! You come dashing over here to strike whom?"

"Master, this woman before you—do not take her for a good person. She is a demon, come to trick you."

"You monkey!" said Sanzang. "Once upon a time you had some eyes in your head—how came you to talk such nonsense today! This lady Bodhisattva has such a good heart, and wants to feed us with this rice—how can you say she is a demon?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, what would you know of it! Back when old Sun was a demon in the Water Curtain Cave, whenever he fancied human flesh, this is how it went: I would turn to gold or silver, or into a manor house, or a drunken man, or a pretty woman. Some fool would fall in love with me, and I would bewitch him into the cave, and have my pleasure of him as I pleased, steamed or boiled; and what couldn't be eaten I would dry in the sun against a rainy day! Master, had I come late, you would surely have fallen into her snare and met her cruel hand!"

But the Tang monk would not believe it; she was only a good person, he said.

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "I know what is in your heart. At the sight of those looks of hers, the mortal desire must have stirred in you. If such is truly your mind, then let Bajie fell a few trees, and the Sha Monk gather some grass, and I will play carpenter: we'll throw up a nest of a hut right here, and you may consummate the marriage with her, and the rest of us will all go our ways—wouldn't that be a career for you? Why toil and trudge off to fetch any scriptures!"

The elder was a soft and gentle soul at bottom; how could he swallow those words? His bare head flushed crimson to the very ears. And while Sanzang stood thus in shame, the Pilgrim's temper rose again: out came the iron cudgel, and he struck the demon full in the face. That monster had some skill: she used the corpse-freeing trick—when the Pilgrim's cudgel came down, she bestirred herself and slipped away beforehand, leaving a false corpse lying dead upon the ground.

The elder shook with terror, muttering: "This monkey is truly without manners! Repeatedly warned, and never listening—taking a human life without cause!"

"Do not be angry, Master," said the Pilgrim. "Come and see what is in this pot." The Sha Monk steadied the elder, and they came near to look. Where was the fragrant rice? It was a pot of long maggots with trailing tails. And it was no wheat gluten either, but a few frogs and toads, hopping and jumping all over the ground.

Now the elder believed a third part of it. But how could he withstand Bajie, who could not swallow his spleen, standing by and dropping his poison in eight parts: "Master, about this girl: she is a farm wife of these parts, out carrying food to the fields, who met us on the road. How does Brother make her out to be a monster? Brother's cudgel is heavy; he came rushing up to try his hand with one stroke, and unluckily killed her. Then, fearing you would recite the Band-Tightening Spell, he deliberately used a blinding trick—changed things into this shape to fool your eyes, so you would not recite the spell."

With that one speech, the Tang monk's ill luck had come: he truly believed the blockhead's goading, and with his fingers formed the spell-sign and began reciting the spell. At once the Pilgrim cried: "My head! My head! Stop! Stop! If you have something to say, say it!"

"What is there to say!" said the Tang monk. "A monk must always be ready to help, and never let a kind heart leave his thoughts. When he sweeps the ground he fears to hurt the lives of ants; out of pity for the flying moth he keeps a gauze over the lamp. Yet you commit violence at every step, beating to death this innocent person. What good are the scriptures you fetch? Go back!"

"Master, where would you have me go back to?"

"I will not have you for a disciple."

"If you will not have me for a disciple," said the Pilgrim, "I fear the road to the Western Heaven will go unfinished for you."

"My life is with Heaven. If some demon is fated to steam me and eat me, then steamed I shall be; even boiled, it could not be reckoned otherwise. Do you mean to say you could save me from my appointed hour? Go back, and quickly!"

"Master, if I go back, that is well and good; only I shall not have repaid your kindness."

"What kindness have I done you?"

At that, the Great Sage fell to his knees and knocked his head: "Old Sun, for making havoc in Heaven, brought down the calamity that broke his body, and my Buddha crushed me beneath the Mountain of Two Frontiers. Happily the Bodhisattva Guanyin gave me the precepts and the discipline, and happily Master freed me from that body. If I do not go with you to the Western Heaven, it will be plain that I knew kindness and did not repay it—no gentleman that, but a name cursed through ten thousand ages."

Now this Tang monk was a holy monk of compassion. Seeing the Pilgrim plead so piteously, his heart turned once more: "Since you put it that way, I spare you this once. Do not be unruly again. If you go on doing evil as before, I shall recite that spell twenty times over!"

"Thirty times, if you like—only I shall not beat people again." Then he waited upon the Tang monk as he mounted, and offered up the peaches he had picked.

The Tang monk ate a few on horseback, to stay his hunger for the time being.

Now the story turns to that demon, who had escaped with her life into the air. The Pilgrim's cudgel had not killed her: her spirit had gone out of the body. Up in the clouds she gnashed her teeth, hating the Pilgrim in secret: "For years I had only heard tell of his powers; today I saw that the talk was no lie. That Tang monk had already ceased to know me, and was about to eat. Had he but bowed his head and sniffed at that rice, I would have seized him in one grab—would he not then have been mine? And who could have thought the wretch would come bounding back and spoil my business, and very nearly cudgel me besides. To let this monk go would truly be labor lost. Down I go, to play another trick on him."

A cunning demon! She pressed down her murky wind, on the slope below the forward hill shook her body, and changed into an old woman, past eighty years of age, leaning on a crook-headed bamboo staff, weeping as she came, one sob to every step.

At the sight Bajie was alarmed: "Master! This is bad! That old dame is coming looking for someone!"

"Looking for whom?" asked the Tang monk.

"The one Brother killed must have been her daughter," said Bajie. "This must be her mother, come hunting for her."

"Brother, none of your nonsense!" said the Pilgrim. "That girl was eighteen; this old woman is eighty. How could a woman of sixty-odd still bear a child? She is an impostor beyond doubt. Wait till old Sun goes and has a look."

A fine Pilgrim! Striding forward, he drew near to look at that monster:

False-changed, an old granny she, Her two temples white as ice and snow. Slow, slow she walks along, Her steps faint, faint with age. A frail body, thin and spare, A face like a withered cabbage leaf, Cheekbones jutting upward, Lips thrusting down below. Old age is not as youth was then: Her whole face is a mass of lotus-leaf folds.

The Pilgrim knew her for a demon, and without another word raised his cudgel and struck at her head. When the monster saw the cudgel rise, she bestirred herself as before: out went her primal spirit again, escaping her true body, and another false corpse lay dead beside the mountain road.

At the sight the Tang monk tumbled off his horse in fright and lay at the roadside. Without one word more, he recited the Band-Tightening Spell over and over, a full twenty times through. Poor Pilgrim! The band squeezed his head into the shape of a waisted gourd, and the pain past all bearing; he rolled over and pleaded: "Master, stop reciting! If you have anything to say, say it!"

"What is there to say! A monk hears good words, and does not fall into Hell. I exhort and convert you like this, and still you do nothing but violence—one innocent beaten to death, and then another! What do you call that?"

"She was a demon," said the Pilgrim.

"You monkey talk nonsense!" cried the Tang monk. "As if there were demons by the dozen like that! You are one who has no heart for good, and every intent to do evil. Be gone!"

"Master sends me away again. Well, if go I must, I go—only one thing will not do."

"And what thing will not do?" asked the Tang monk.

"Master," said Bajie, "he means to divide the luggage with you. After serving you as a monk all these years, is he to go back empty-handed? Give him a couple of things out of the bundle—one of those worn-out shirts, say, or a tattered cap."

At this the Pilgrim's rage boiled over: "You snub-nosed clodhopper! Old Sun has kept the teaching of the Sangha from the first, without one thread of jealousy or hankering greed—and you say I want to divide the luggage?"

"If you are neither jealous nor hankering," said the Tang monk, "why will you not go?"

"To tell Master the truth: five hundred years ago, when old Sun dwelt in the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the full flower of his might, he had subdued the demons of seventy-two caves, with forty-seven thousand minions at his command. On his head the purple-gold crown; on his body the ochre-yellow robe; at his waist the Lantian jade belt; on his feet the cloud-treading boots; in his hand the As-You-Will gold-banded cudgel—old Sun truly was somebody in those days. But since I passed through sin into nirvana, shaved my head and embraced the true teaching of the Sangha, and became your disciple, this golden band has been clamped upon my head. If I went back like this, I could hardly face the folk of my old home. If indeed you will not have me, Master, then recite the Band-Loosening Spell once, take this band off and hand it over to you, to clap on someone else's head, and I shall go off content—it would be something, at

least, for having followed you. Or is even that much human feeling denied me?"

The Tang monk was startled: "Wukong, at the time the Bodhisattva privately gave me only the Band-Tightening Spell; there is no Band-Loosening Spell at all."

"If there is no Band-Loosening Spell, then take me along with you a little farther."

The elder had no choice: "Rise, then. Once more I spare you—but no more violence."

"I dare not, I dare not." And once more he waited upon his master's mounting, and cleared the way onward.

Now that demon—by the Pilgrim's second cudgel she had not been killed either. Up in mid-air the monster could not praise him enough: "What a Monkey King! What eyes! Transformed as I was, he still knew me. These monks travel fast. Once past this mountain, forty li westward, they are out of my jurisdiction. If some other demon snatched him up, why, folk would laugh their mouths askew, and my own heart would break with the sting of it. Down I go again, to play one more trick on him."

What a demon! Pressing down her murky wind, at the foot of the slope she shook her body and changed into an old man. And truly:

White hair like Peng Zu's, hoary beard outdoing the Star of Longevity; Jade chimes ringing in his ears, golden stars flickering in his eyes. In his hand a dragon-headed staff, On his body a light crane-feather cloak. His telling beads pinched between his fingers, His mouth reciting the namu sutras.

The Tang monk saw him from horseback and rejoiced in his heart: "Amitabha! The West is truly a blessed land! That old man can hardly walk the road, yet still he manages to recite the sutras."

"Master, hold your praises," said Bajie. "That is the root of the trouble."

"How so, the root of trouble?"

"The Pilgrim killed his daughter, and then killed his old wife," said Bajie. "This must be the old man himself, come hunting for them. If we fall into his clutches—why, Master, you will owe a life, and be sentenced to death; old Pig, as accessory, will be banished to the army; the Sha Monk, for shouting orders, will be set to a staging station. And the Pilgrim will just use some escape trick and be off—won't the three of us be left holding the blame?"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he said: "This muddle-headed fool, with such blather—why, it will frighten Master out of his wits. Wait till old Sun goes and has another look."

Hiding his cudgel about him, he walked forward to meet the monster and hailed him: "Old sir, where are you bound? How is it you walk the road and recite sutras both at once?"

The demon had misjudged her measure, taking the Great Sage Sun for a common fellow, and answered: "Venerable sir, your old servant has lived here all his life, loving good deeds and feeding monks, reading sutras and reciting the Buddha's name. Fate gave me no son—only one little daughter, and a husband taken in for her. This morning she carried food out to the fields, and must have met a tiger's mouth. Her old mother went first to look for her, and has not come back either; of either of them not a trace. Your old servant has come out to look for them. If indeed their lives have been destroyed, there is nothing for it; I shall gather up their bones and carry them home, and bury them in the family plot."

The Pilgrim laughed: "I am the ancestor of all tiger-catchers—and you think to fool me with a ghost hidden up your sleeve? You may deceive the rest, but you will never deceive me! I know you for a demon!"

The demon was struck dumb.

The Pilgrim drew out his cudgel and communed with himself: "If I do not strike him, it will look as though he had put one over on me; if I strike him, I fear Master will recite that spell." Then he thought again: "If I do not kill him, the moment may come when he snatches Master up in an unguarded moment—and then what fresh toil and pains to rescue him? Better strike! And when I have killed him with one blow and Master recites the spell—well, the proverb says: 'Even a vicious tiger will not eat its own young.' With old Sun's honeyed words and glib and nimble tongue, I can coax him round; it will all come right in the end."

A fine Great Sage! He recited a spell and summoned the local deity of the place and the mountain god, saying: "This demon has thrice come to make sport of my master, and this time I mean to kill her. Stand witness for me in mid-air, and let her not escape." The deities heard the command—and who would dare disobey? All kept watch in the clouds. Where the Great Sage's cudgel fell, the demon was struck down, and this time the light of her spirit was snuffed out.

The Tang monk on horseback shook with fright once more, speechless.

Bajie stood by and laughed again: "A fine Pilgrim! Mad as the wind! Only half a day on the road, and he has beaten three people to death!"

The Tang monk was about to recite the spell, when the Pilgrim rushed to the horse and cried: "Master, do not recite! Do not recite! Come and look at her shape." And there on the ground lay a heap of white bones.

The Tang monk was greatly startled: "Wukong—that person has only just died. How is she already turned to a heap of bones?"

"She was a corpse-demon, a lurking spirit that made trouble," said the Pilgrim, "beguiling travelers and destroying their substance. I have killed her, and she has shown her true form. There is a line of characters on her spine: it reads, 'Lady White Bone.'"

At this the Tang monk was half convinced—but how could he withstand Bajie at his side, dropping his poison: "Master, his hand is heavy and his cudgel cruel. Having killed these people, and fearing you would recite that spell of yours, he changed her into this shape on purpose to blind your eyes!"

And the Tang monk's ears were soft indeed: he believed him again, and began reciting once more. The Pilgrim could not stand the pain; kneeling by the roadside he could only cry: "Stop! Stop! If you have words, speak them quickly!"

"You monkey-head! What words could there be! A monk doing good is like the grass in a spring garden: you do not see it grow, yet it grows greater day by day. A man doing evil is like the whetstone: you do not see it wear away, yet day by day it is diminished. Here in this wild waste you have beaten three people to death in a row, with no one to bring the charge and no foe to press it. But if you reach the cities, where the crowds of men are gathered, and swing that mourning staff of yours, knowing good from bad no longer, and start beating people at random and bring on some great calamity—how am I to get clear of it myself? Go back!"

"Master, you wrong me. This creature was a demon, plain and plain, with a true heart to harm you. I killed her and rid you of the harm, and you could not see it; instead you believed the blockhead's slander and cold words, and drive me out again and again. The proverb says: a thing may stand twice, but not three times. If I did not go now, I should truly be a shameless low creature. I go, I go! Yet once I have gone, you will have no one at your side."

The Tang monk flared up: "This wicked ape grows ruder still! As it appears, only you count as a person—and Wuneng and Wujing are not persons?"

When the Great Sage heard him say that those two were persons, his grief was past holding back, and he said miserably to the Tang monk: "Oh, bitter! In that day, when you left Chang'an, it was Liu Boqin who saw you

on your way; and when you came to the Mountain of Two Frontiers and freed me and I bowed to you as master—I have gone through ancient caves and entered deep forests for you, seized demons and captured monsters, won you Bajie, gained you the Sha Monk, eaten every bitterness there is. Today you turn your clear eyes to folly, and only tell me to go back: this is 'the birds gone, the bow is stored; the hare dead, the hound is boiled!' Enough, enough! Only—there is still that Band-Tightening Spell."

"I will never recite it again."

"That is hard to say. When you fall among poison demons and cruel trials and cannot escape, and Bajie and the Sha Monk cannot save you—then, thinking of me, you will not be able to help reciting it, and though I were ten thousand li away, my head would ache. Better that I should not think of coming back to see you."

The more the Tang monk heard of this talk and that talk, the angrier he grew. He rolled out of the saddle, called the Sha Monk to take paper and brush from the bundle, drew water from the stream and ground ink upon a stone, and wrote out a letter of banishment, which he handed to the Pilgrim: "Monkey-head! Take this as your warrant. I will have you for a disciple no more! If ever I see you again, let me fall into the Avici Hell!"

The Pilgrim hastened to take the letter: "Master, there is no need for oaths. Old Sun will go." He folded the paper and put it in his sleeve, then once more entreated the Tang monk gently: "Master, I have followed you all this way, and been guided by the Bodhisattva besides. Now it ends halfway, with no merit achieved. Sit, I beg you, and receive one bow from me, and then I can go with an easier heart."

The Tang monk turned away and would not look at him, muttering under his breath: "I am a good monk; I will not take the obeisance of you wicked wretch!"

Seeing himself ignored, the Great Sage used a body-beside-body spell: plucked three hairs from the back of his head, blew on them a breath of magic air, and cried "Change!"—and there were three Pilgrims, himself making four, who ringed the master round on four sides and bowed.

The elder could not dodge aside on either hand, and so, willy-nilly, received one bow after all.

The Great Sage leapt up, shook his body, and gathered in the hairs. Then he instructed the Sha Monk: "Worthy brother, you are a good man—only be careful to keep your guard against Bajie's tattling and palavering, and be very watchful on the road. If the moment comes when some demon seizes Master, say that old Sun is his eldest disciple. The hairy fiends of the West have heard of my powers, and will not dare harm my master."

"I am a good monk," said the Tang monk, "and I will not speak the name of you wicked wretch. Go back."

The Great Sage saw that the elder would not turn his heart back, try as he might, and at last there was nothing for it but to go. Watch him:

Holding back tears, he knocks his head and takes leave of the elder; Bearing his grief, he leaves his charge with the Sha Monk. His head sweeps aside the grass upon the slope; His two feet trample down the vines upon the ground. Up to Heaven, down to earth, he wheels like a turning star; Crossing seas, flying over mountains, he is first of all. In a moment's time no shadow of him is seen; In an instant he speeds back along his ancient road.

Watch him swallow his wrath, bid his master farewell, mount the somersault cloud, and make straight for the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. Alone and desolate he flew, when suddenly the sound of water came dashing upon his ears. Looking down from mid-air, the Great Sage saw it was the roar of the tide of the Eastern Ocean. At the sight of it he thought of the Tang monk again, and the tears rolled down his cheeks; he stopped his cloud and stood, and only after a long while moved on.

Whether this journey led to further turns or no—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 28

On the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit the Host of Demons Gather in Brotherhood; In the Black Pine Forest Sanzang Meets a Demon

The story continues: though the Great Sage had been driven away by the Tang monk, he went on thinking of him, sighing without end. Soon he caught sight of the Eastern Ocean. "It is five hundred years," he said, "since I last traveled this road!"

And then he saw the sea:

Misty waves spreading vast, great billows heaving slow. Misty waves spreading vast, they join the River of Heaven; Great billows heaving slow, they thread the veins of Earth. The tide comes surging in, the water soaks the winding bays— The tide comes surging, like spring thunder rolling its triple crash; The water soaking the bays, like a mad wind blowing through high summer. The blessed elders who ride dragons must come and go with furrowed brows; The immortal lads who straddle cranes must cross it, indeed, in care. Near the shore no village or shrine; Along the water few fishing boats. The waves roll up a thousand years of snow; The wind breeds autumn in the sixth month. Wild fowl come and go as they please; Sand birds sink and float at will. Before the eye no angler sits; Only the crying gulls are in the ear. The fish at play beneath the sea are glad; The passing geese at heaven's edge are sad.

The Pilgrim gave one leap and cleared the Eastern Ocean, coming at once to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. Pressing down his cloud, he opened his eyes and looked: on that mountain flowers and grass were gone, mists and rosy vapors utterly vanished; peaks and crags had collapsed, the forest trees scorched and withered. Why was it so?

Only because his havoc in Heaven had brought him up to the world above, this mountain had been burned and wrecked by Erlang the Sagely and Miraculous at the head of the seven brothers of Mount Mei. The Great Sage's grief redoubled, and there is an old-style poem on the ruined mountain's desolation in proof. It says:

I look back at the immortal mountain, and the tears fall in streams; Facing the mountain, in utter desolation, my sorrow deepens still. I thought at the time the mountain had come to no harm; Today at last I learn the very earth has suffered loss. Hateful it is that Erlang destroyed my home— The Little Sage, for shame, trampled on me so! He did his violence, digging up the tombs of my ancestors, For nothing wrecking the foundations of my fathers' graves. The rosy mists that filled the sky are all dissolved away; The winds and clouds that overspread the earth are scattered, thinned to air. On the eastern ridge no spotted tiger roars; On the western hill where is the white ape's cry? In the northern stream the fox and hare have left no trace; In the southern valley the roe and boar are gone without a shadow. The green rocks are burned to a thousand clods of earth; The azure sand has crumbled into a heap of mud. The tall pines by the cave all lean and topple; The emerald cypresses before the cliff are few and spare. The cedars and fir, the locust and juniper, chestnut and sandalwood, all scorched; The peach, apricot, plum and pear, the jujube trees—finished, all of them. With cudrania gone and mulberry gone, how shall we feed the silkworms? With willows sparse and bamboo scant, where shall the birds alight? The cunning stones upon the peaks are crumbled into dust; The springs at the ravine's bottom run dry, all overgrown with grass. Before the cliff the earth is black, no magic mushroom or iris there; Along the roadside red mud, with fig and vines for company. The birds that flew here yesterday—where do they fly today? The beasts that ran here once—on what mountains do they run? The leopard hates the python, in these tumbled ruins; The crane shuns the serpent, in this scene of decay. I must have done some evil deed in days gone by, To suffer such hard days before my eyes.

Just as the Great Sage stood grieving, there came a burst of sound from the slope of fragrant grass, out of the hollow of the brambles, and seven or eight little monkeys leapt forth. They crowded around him, ringed him

in, and knocked their heads, crying loudly: "Grandpa Great Sage! So today you have come home!"

"Why do none of you play or sport," asked the Handsome Monkey King, "but every one of you hides away without a trace? I have been here a good while, and never a sign of you—why is that?"

When the monkeys heard, one and all they shed tears and told him: "Ever since the Great Sage was captured and taken up above, we have suffered at the hands of the hunters—past all enduring! How could we withstand their stiff crossbows and strong bows, their yellow hawks and savage dogs, their nets and nooses, their guns and hooks? So, each cherishing his own life, none of us dared come out and play; we could only hide deep in the caves and keep far from our old haunts, stealing grass to eat on the slopes when hunger came, and sucking clear water from the stream when thirst came. Just now we heard Grandpa Great Sage's voice, and came especially to greet you. We humbly pray you will protect and support us."

At these words the Great Sage's misery grew the deeper, and he asked: "How many of you are left on this mountain?"

"Old and young together, only a thousand or so."

"When I left, there were forty-seven thousand demons in all," said the Great Sage. "Where have they gone?"

"Ever after Grandpa left," the monkeys said, "Erlang set fire to this mountain, and more than half were burned to death. We crouched in the wells, burrowed into the stream, hid under the iron-slab bridge, and so kept our lives. When the fire died and the smoke cleared, we came out, but with no flowers or fruits to sustain us, we could hardly survive, and half went off elsewhere. Of the half that stayed and bore the bitterness in the mountain, these two years the hunters have carried off half again."

"What did they carry you off for?" asked the Great Sage.

"Those hunters are hateful!" said the monkeys. "The ones of us shot by arrows or speared, or poisoned or beaten to death, they carried off to skin and bone, stewed in sauce or steamed in vinegar, fried in oil or stir-fried with salt, and eaten as a relish with their rice. And any that were netted or noosed they took away alive, and made them leap through hoops and do tricks, turn somersaults and stand on their hands, while gongs crashed and drums rolled in the public streets—making playthings of them in every way imaginable."

At this the Great Sage's fury grew very great. "Who is in charge in the cave?" he asked.

"The two marshals Maliu and the two generals Benba still govern us," the demons said.

"Go in and tell them I have come."

The little demons bustled through the gates to report: "Grandpa Great Sage has come home!" At the news, Maliu and Benba hurried out, knocked their heads, and welcomed him into the cave.

The Great Sage sat in the midst, and the host of demons bowed in ranks before him, saying: "Grandpa Great Sage, we heard lately that you had won your life back, and were escorting the Tang monk to the Western Heaven for the scriptures. Why have you not gone to the West, but returned to your own mountain?"

"Little ones," said the Great Sage, "you do not know. That Tang Sanzang cannot tell the worthy from the worthless. For him I trapped monsters and seized demons all along the road, spending every power I ever had, time and again beating demons to death—and he said I did violence and worked evil. He would not have me for a disciple, and drove me back, writing a letter of banishment as warrant, never to employ me again."

At this all the monkeys clapped their hands and roared with laughter: "Luck! Luck! Who wants to be a monk? Come home, and take us along for a few years of fun!" And they called: "Quick! Bring in the coconut wine, to welcome Grandpa home!"

"No wine yet," said the Great Sage. "Tell me—how often do those hunters come to my mountain?"

"Great Sage," said Maliu, "there is no telling the season of it—they pester us here day after day."

"And why have they not come today?"

"They are coming now, by the look of it."

The Great Sage gave his orders: "Little ones, all of you go out and gather up the stones this mountain fire has baked brittle, and pile them up for me—thirty or forty to a pile, fifty or sixty to a heap. Pile them up; I shall have use for them."

The little monkeys swarmed like a hive of bees, leaping heaven and stabbing earth, and hauled the stones into a great many piles. When the Great Sage had seen to it, he cried: "Little ones, all of you hide away inside the cave, and let old Sun work his magic."

The Great Sage climbed to the mountain top and looked. There on the southern side drums were booming, gongs clanging, and up came a thousand and more men and horses, all with hawks on their arms and dogs at heel, swords and spears in hand. The Monkey King looked carefully at those men: they came on with a wicked air. Fine fellows, and truly doughty! Just look at them:

Fox pelts covering head and shoulder, Brocade and silk wrapped about chest and waist. Wolf-tooth arrows in the quiver, The jeweled carved bow at the hip. Men like mountain-searching tigers, Horses like ravine-leaping dragons. In packs they lead their dogs, On arm-fists their hawks are perched. Hawking baskets carry their cannon, And at their wrists the sea-east falcons. A hundred loads of birdlime poles, A thousand rabbit-forks and more. Ox-head nets to block the road, The King of Hell's own noose-ropes too. Together they raise a shouting clamor, Scattered wide as stars over the sky.

Seeing those men deploying onto his mountain, the Great Sage's heart filled with fury. His fingers formed the spell-sign, his mouth muttered the words of power; from the quarter of the southeast he drew in a breath of air, and whoosh!—blew it out, and it became a wild wind. What a wind! Just look:

It lifts the dust and sows the soil, It fells the trees and wrecks the woods. The sea waves tower up like mountains, The heaving floods come surging in. Heaven and earth swim dark and dizzy, Sun and moon turn dim and dun. One blast shakes the pines like a tiger's roar; Suddenly it whips through the bamboo like a dragon's moan. The ten thousand hollows howl with heaven's own breath, Flying sand and rolling stones wound men at random.

The Great Sage raised this great wind and sent the broken stones flying and whirling upon it. Poor thousand and more men and horses: stone after stone shattered crow-black heads to bits, sand flew and sea-horses were hurt every one.

[Translator's note: the following quatrain is built entirely on the names of Chinese drugs—ginseng, officinal cinnamon, aconite, betel nut, light-powder (a white cosmetic-cum-poison), and the "red bride" (a blister-beetle)—so that the battle scene reads as a druggist's inventory of the slain.]

The ginseng and the cinnamon hurry about the ridge; Blood dyes the cinnabar ground. The aconite cannot return to its old home; How shall the betel nut get back to its village? The corpses lie in light-white powder on the mountain field, While the red bride at home gazes and waits. There is a poem in proof:

The men dead, the horses dead—how shall they return home? Wild ghosts and lonely souls in tangles like hemp. Alas for the valiant heroes, so doughty once, Who could not tell the worthy from the worthless, and dyed the sand.

The Great Sage pressed down his cloud, clapped his hands, and laughed aloud: "Luck! Luck! Ever since I submitted to the Tang monk and turned monk, he was forever lecturing me: 'A thousand days of doing good, and the good is still not enough; one day of doing evil, and the evil is more than plenty.' The words are true indeed! I followed him, killed a few demons for him, and he blamed me for violence. Today I come home—and finish off this whole pack of hunters!"

He called: "Little ones, come out!" When the wild wind had passed, the monkeys heard the Great Sage calling, and one after another they came leaping out.

"Go down to the southern slope," said the Great Sage. "Strip the clothes off those dead hunters and bring them home; wash them clean of blood and wear them against the cold. Push the corpses of the dead into the ten-thousand-fathom deep pool. Drag the fallen horses here, skin them, make yourselves boots, and pickle the meat to eat slowly. Take their bows, arrows, spears, and swords and drill yourselves in arms. Gather up their flags of every color, and bring them to me for my own use."

The monkeys, one and all, took their orders.

The Great Sage took the flags apart, washed them, and pieced them into one great banner of many colors, bearing fourteen characters: "Rebuild the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, Restore the Water Curtain Cave—The Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

He set up the pole and hung the banner outside the cave, and day by day he summoned demons and gathered beasts, laid in hay and stored grain—and of the word "monk" nothing more was said. His connections were great and his powers were high: he went to the dragon kings of the four seas and borrowed sweet rain and immortal water, and washed the mountain green again. Before, he planted elms and willows; behind, pines and nan-trees; peaches, plums, jujubes, and apricots—nothing was lacking. Free and unfettered, he dwelt in peace and took his ease. Of this we say no more.

Now the story tells how the Tang monk, giving ear to a crooked nature, had let loose the ape of his mind. He climbed into the saddle; Bajie cleared the way before, the Sha Monk bore the luggage behind, and they traveled west. Past White Tiger Ridge they went, and suddenly came upon a belt of wooded hills—truly a place of vines climbing and creepers winding, cypresses emerald and pines green.

"Disciples," called Sanzang, "the mountain road is rugged and hard going; and here again are clustered pine woods, trees serried and dense. We must be very careful—there may be demons and demon beasts."

Watch the blockhead bestir his spirit: he told the Sha Monk to lead the horse, and with his rake cleared the path, leading the Tang monk straight into the pine forest.

As they walked, the elder reined up his horse: "Bajie, I have grown truly hungry this day. Where can you find some food for me?"

"Master, pray dismount and wait here," said Bajie, "while old Hunter goes looking."

The elder dismounted; the Sha Monk set down the load, took out the alms bowl, and handed it to Bajie. "Off I go," said Bajie.

"Where to?" asked the elder.

"Never mind. This time I shall go chisel the ice for fire and bring back a meal; I shall press the snow for oil and come with rice."

Watch him leave the pine woods and travel westward more than ten li without ever meeting a single house—truly a place of wolves and tigers, without human habitation.

The blockhead walked himself weary, communing inwardly: "In the old days, when the Pilgrim was with us, whatever the old monk wanted, he had. Now it has fallen to my lot—truly it is, 'only the householder knows the price of fuel and rice; only the parent knows the debt of a child.' There is simply nowhere to beg."

And as he walked, drowsiness came over him. He thought: "If I go straight back and tell the old monk there was nowhere to beg food, he will not believe I walked all that way. I must dawdle another hour or so before I go back and report. Well, well—I'll just lie down for a nap in this grass." The blockhead poked his snout into the grass and lay down. He had meant to doze only a moment before getting up; but who knew that a man worn out with walking, once his head drops, just goes on snoring and snoring?

Leaving Bajie to his sleep, the story turns to the elder in the forest, with hot ears and twitching eyes, uneasy in body and mind. He turned quickly and called the Sha Monk: "Wuneng went out to beg food—why is he not back at this hour?"

"Master, you don't know him yet," said the Sha Monk. "He has seen how many households in the West feed monks, and his belly is a big one—do you suppose he thinks of you? He will only come when he has eaten his fill."

"Just so, just so," said Sanzang. "If he is off there feasting, how are we to find him? It is growing late, and this is no place to lodge—we must find ourselves shelter."

"No matter, Master," said the Sha Monk. "Sit you here, and I will go find him."

"Yes, yes. Never mind whether there is food or no—finding a lodging is what matters."

The Sha Monk grasped his precious staff and went straight out of the pine woods to look for Bajie.

The elder sat alone in the forest, weary and heavy at heart. Rousing his spirits, he sprang up, gathered the luggage together in one place, tied the horse to a tree, took off the bamboo hat he wore, planted his tin staff firm, straightened his black robe, and strolled slowly through the quiet wood, to ease his melancholy as best he could. The elder had looked his fill of wild grasses and mountain flowers when the noise of birds returning to their nests became past bearing. For the woods were all deep grass and narrow paths, and with his thoughts in such disorder, he went astray.

For one thing, he wished to ease his gloom; for another, he hoped to find Bajie and the Sha Monk. But the two of them had walked the straight westward road, while the elder, after wandering a while, had turned off toward the south. Out of the pine woods, he suddenly lifted his head: on the other side, golden light flashed and shimmered, colored vapors went billowing up. Looking closely, he saw it was a pagoda, its golden top gleaming. It was the light of the westering sun, shining upon the golden summit.

"A pity your disciple has no share of fortune!" he said. "Ever since leaving the East, I vowed: whatever temple I pass, I will burn incense; whatever Buddha I see, I will worship; whatever pagoda I meet, I will sweep. Is that not a pagoda of gold, shining yonder? How did I ever miss that road? Below the pagoda there must be a monastery; within the monastery there must be monks. Wait—let me go and see. The luggage and the white horse should be safe here, I suppose, for no one travels this way. If there is a convenient place, we can all lodge together when the disciples come."

Alas! The elder's ill luck had arrived. Watch him stride forward, straight to the side of the pagoda. And look:

Stone cliffs ten thousand fathoms high, The mountain great, touching the blue empyrean. Its roots join the deep earth, Its peak thrusts up to heaven. On either side, thousands of scattered trees; Before, behind, vines winding a hundred li. Flowers mirrored on grass-tips, wind-borne shadows; Water flowing through cloudy clefts, a moon without roots. Fallen trees lie bridging the deep ravine; Withered vines hang knotted on the gleaming peaks. Beneath the stone bridge, clear springs come rolling; On the terrace, white powder bright

forever. Seen from afar, it is like the paradise of the Three Isles; Seen up close, it is as the blessed realm of Penglai. Fragrant pines and purple bamboo wind about the mountain stream; Crows, magpies, gibbons, and monkeys thread the towering ridges. Outside the cave door, beasts that come and go file past in rows; Within the woods, birds that sally out and return fly in flocks. Green, green, the fragrant grasses flourish; Bright, bright, the wild flowers open. The place, for all its seeming, is a haunt of ill; And the elder, unlucky, comes blundering in.

The elder stepped forward, and just as he came beneath the pagoda gate, he saw a speckled bamboo curtain hanging inside. Breaking stride, he entered, lifted the curtain, and went on in—and suddenly raised his head: on a stone bed, lying on its side, was a demon. And what did he look like?

A face of blue indigo, white tusks for teeth, One huge mouth gaping wide. On either side his temple-hair, in tangles wild, Is dyed with rouge to crimson hues; That beard of three or four stately rows Might be the clustered buds of lychees fresh. A parrot-beak of a nose thrusts upward, And eyes like morning stars stare hard. Two fists like a monk's alms bowl, A pair of blue feet like gnarled roots on a sheer cliff. Slung loosely on him, a pale yellow robe, Outshining any brocade cassock. The blade he grasps gleams bright and flashing; The slab he sleeps on is smooth and without flaw. He has ranked his imps in columns like a swarm of ants; He has held his court among the elder fiends like bees in session. Watch his awesome, towering majesty— The whole crowd shouts at once: "Sire!"

He has quaffed wine beneath the moon with shadow-companions three; He has poured his tea when wind rose 'neath his arms— Watch the vastness of his powers: One blink of those lowered eyes, and he has ranged the ends of the earth.

The wild woods clamor with birds; Deep in the thickets sleep dragons and snakes. Where the immortals plow, white jade grows; Where adepts tend the fire, cinnabar is bred. Small as this cave door is, it is not yet Avici Hell— [Translator's note: Avici, the lowest and most unrelentingly painful of the Buddhist hells.] But that grim-faced monster is a very ox-headed yaksa.

At the sight of him, the elder recoiled a step in terror, his whole body numb and prickling, both legs weak and soft, and he hastily turned to flee. He had barely turned when the demon—for his spiritual sense was truly keen—opened his golden-eyed demon orbs and called: "Little ones, see what sort of person stands outside the gate!"

A little demon poked his head out and looked, saw a bare-crowned elder, and scurried back inside to report: "Great King, there is a monk outside—a round head and a big face, ears hanging to his shoulders, a sleek and tender body all over, a fine delicate skin: a very fine monk!"

At this the demon laughed aloud: "This is what they call a fly on the snake's head—food and clothing that come of their own accord. Little ones, all of you—quick, after him! Seize him and bring him here, and there will be a rich reward!"

The little demons swarmed like a hive of bees, crowding forward in a body. Sanzang saw them: though his heart flew like an arrow and his feet sped like the wind, his heart pounded, his gall quivered, his legs were weak and his feet were numb—and besides, the mountain path was rugged, the woods were deep, the sun was setting: how could his steps move at all? The little demons picked him up flat and carried him off. Truly:

The dragon in shallow water is sport for the shrimp; The tiger fallen on the plain is bullied by dogs. If good fortune's path must always meet with hindrance, Who ever met such obstacles as the Tang monk going west?

Watch the little demons carry the elder in and set him down outside the bamboo curtain, then gleefully announce: "Great King, we have taken a monk and brought him in!"

The old demon stole a glance at him: straight from the crown, a face of dignity—truly a fine monk. And he thought in his heart: "A monk as fine as this must be a personage from above, no common thing. If I do not put on some awesomeness, how will he ever submit?" In a flash he borrowed the tiger's terror for the fox's use: his red beard bristled upright, his bloody hair stood toward heaven, his eyes cracked wide, and with one great shout: "Bring that monk in!" The demons thundered their answer—"Yes!"—and shoved Sanzang bodily inside.

This is the proverb indeed: "Under the low eaves, how dare one not bow the head!"

Sanzang could only press his two palms together and make his bow. The demon said: "What monk are you? From where have you come, and where are you going? Speak quickly, and plainly!"

Sanzang said: "I am a monk of the Tang empire, bearing the rescript of the Great Tang emperor, journeying to the West to seek the scriptures and gathas. Passing your honored mountain, I came especially to pay reverence at the pagoda. I little thought to disturb your awful majesty; I humbly beg forgiveness for my trespass. When I have gone on to the West and fetched the scriptures back to the East, your noble name shall stand recorded forever."

At this the demon roared with laughter: "I said he must be a personage from a great kingdom, and so it is! I was just wanting to eat you—and here you have come! Splendid! Splendid! To think I might have let you slip by! You are food for my mouth, fated to come blundering in: set free, you would not be set free; run, you would not run away!" He called to the little demons: "Take that monk away and bind him!" And sure enough the little demons crowded forward, roped and corded the elder, and lashed him to the soul-fixing stake. The old demon, blade in hand, questioned him again: "Monk, how many are in your party? Do not tell me one man would dare go up to the Western Heaven alone?"

Sanzang, seeing the blade in his hand, answered honestly: "Great King, I have two disciples, named Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing. Both have gone out of the pine woods to beg food. There is also a carrying-pole of luggage and a white horse, all left in the pine woods."

More luck! thought the old demon. "Two disciples—with you, three; with the horse, four—enough for one meal!"

"We will go catch them," said the little demons.

"No, do not go out. Shut the front gate. When those two come back from begging food, they are sure to look for their master to eat; failing that, they are sure to come looking at my gate. The proverb says: business that comes to the door is easiest to do. We will wait and take them at our leisure." And the little demons shut the front gate.

Leaving Sanzang in his tribulation, the story tells how the Sha Monk left the woods to find Bajie, a good ten li and more, without seeing so much as a village. He was standing on a rise, looking about, when he heard voices in the grass. Hastily he poked the deep grass aside with his staff—and there was the blockhead in the midst of it, talking in his sleep!

The Sha Monk seized him by the ear and woke him with a shout: "A fine blockhead you are! Master sent you to beg food—did he give you leave to sleep here?"

The blockhead roused himself with a start: "Brother—what time is it?"

"Up, quick! Master says, food or no food, never mind—we are to look for a place to lodge."

Still half in a muddle, the blockhead took up the alms bowl, shouldered his rake, and came straight back with the Sha Monk. Reaching the woods and looking—no master to be seen.

The Sha Monk grumbled: "It is all your doing, blockhead, never coming back with the food. Some demon must have carried off Master."

"Brother, no nonsense," said Bajie with a laugh. "That wood is a clean and quiet place; there are certainly no demons there. I expect the old monk could not sit still, and went off somewhere to take the air. Let us go find him."

So the two of them led the horse, shouldered the load, gathered up the bamboo hat and tin staff, and went out of the pine woods to look for their master.

And this time the Tang monk was not fated to die. The two of them hunted a while without finding him, when suddenly they saw, away on the due south, a golden light flashing.

"Brother," said Bajie, "the lucky are lucky indeed! Look—Master has gone to that house of his. That shining thing is a pagoda: who would dare show him scant courtesy? They are sure to have laid on a vegetarian meal and kept him there to enjoy it. If we do not hurry, we can still catch up and get a share of the food."

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "we cannot yet tell good fortune from bad. Let us go and see."

The two of them marched boldly up to the gate—and ah! it was shut. Across the top of the gate lay a white jade slab, carved with six great characters: "Wave-Moon Cave, Bowl Mountain."

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "this is no monastery—it is a demon's cave. If our master is in there, it does not look good."

"Fear not, brother," said Bajie. "Tether the horse and guard the luggage while I go sound out the news." The blockhead raised his rake, strode forward, and bawled: "Open the gate! Open the gate!"

Within the cave, a little demon on gate duty opened the door, and at the sudden sight of the pair of them scurried back inside to report: "Great King! Business is at the door!"

"What business?" asked the old demon.

"Outside the cave gate," said the little demon, "there is a long-snouted, big-eared monk, and a monk of dismal complexion, calling at the door!"

The old demon was overjoyed: "It must be Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk, come hunting for him! Ah, but they can hunt! However did they hunt their way to my very gate? With faces so fierce and stubborn, they are not to be slighted." He called: "Bring my armor!"

The little demons carried it out, he buckled it on, took his blade in hand, and marched out of the gate.

Now Bajie and the Sha Monk were waiting before the gate, and they saw the demon come out with a wicked and dangerous air. How was he dressed?

A green face, red beard, crimson hair streaming, Golden armor gleaming and flashing bright. A belly-guard at his waist, a chalcedony belt; Breast-plates and harness, a cloud-striding sash. Idly he stands before the mountain, the wind roaring; Gloomily he roams beyond the seas, the waves surging. A pair of indigo-blue hands of taut sinew Grip fast the soul-hunting, life-taking blade. Would you know this creature's name and surname? The sound of it rings out: "Yellow-Robe" he is called.

The old demon Yellow-Robe came out of the gate and demanded: "What monks are you, making this clamor at my door?"

"Your granddad's son!" said Bajie. "Don't you know me? I am your lord and master! I am sent by the Great Tang to the Western Heaven! My master is the emperor's sworn brother, Sanzang. If he is in your house, hand him out at once, and spare me the trouble of raking my way in!"

The demon smiled: "Yes, yes, yes—there is indeed a Tang monk in my house. I have not slighted him either: I have ordered him some human-meat dumplings for his meal. Why not come in and have one yourselves—what do you say?"

And the blockhead took him at his word and was actually about to go in, when the Sha Monk caught him fast: "Brother, he is fooling you! Since when have you eaten human flesh?"

Only then did the blockhead come to his senses. He whipped out his rake and struck straight at the monster's face. The creature turned aside and dodged, met it with his steel blade, and the two of them, both putting forth their powers, rose onto the clouds and leapt into mid-air to fight. The Sha Monk dropped the luggage and the white horse, raised his precious staff, and rushed to join the attack. Now it was two savage monks and one wicked demon, there in the clouds—and what a battle it was! Truly:

Staff rises, blade meets it; rake comes, blade parries. One demon general displays his might; Two holy monks reveal their powers. The nine-toothed rake is truly heroic; The demon-quelling staff is dreadful indeed. Come at them from before, behind, left, and right all together— That Yellow-Robe fears none of it. See his steeled blade gleam and flash like silver; Truly his powers are vast beyond telling. They fight till the whole sky is wreathed in fog and cloud, Till half the mountain's cliffs come crashing down. One fights for his good name—how could he ever quit? One fights for his master—fearless to the end.

The three of them, there in mid-air, back and forth, fought several dozen rounds, and still victory was undecided. Each with his life at stake, they could truly neither part nor spare.

How the Tang monk was saved—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 29

Freed from Peril, the River-Floated Monk Reaches a Foreign Kingdom; Entrusted with the King's Favor, Bajie Returns to the Mountain Forests

In verse:

Deluded thoughts—do not force them out of being; True suchness—why must it be sought? The root and self-nature must be cultivated before the Buddha; Delusion and awakening—who comes first, who last? Awake—and in one instant you are made right; Deluded—and for myriad kalpas you sink in the stream. If in a single thought you accord with true cultivation, The sins of Ganges-sand grains are burned away to none.

The story continues: Bajie and the Sha Monk had fought the monster through thirty rounds, and still victory was undecided. Why, you ask, was victory undecided? If it came to a contest of powers, never mind two monks—not twenty monks could have withstood that demon. It was only because the Tang monk was not fated to die: unseen, the guardian deities of the Law protected him, and in the air the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Guardians of the Five Quarters, the Four Officers of Duty, and the eighteen Protectors of the Faith were aiding Bajie and the Sha Monk.

Leaving the three combatants to their battle, the story turns to the elder weeping in the cave, thinking of his disciples, the tears streaming from his eyes: "Wuneng! Who knows in what village you have met some kind friend, and are feasting on temple food! Wujing! And where may you be looking for him—will you ever meet? Who could tell that I would meet a demon and suffer here! When shall I see you both again, escape this great tribulation, and hasten to the Holy Mountain!"

Just as he wept in his sorrow, a woman came walking out of the cave, steadying herself on the soul-fixing stake, and called: "Venerable sir, whence do you come? Why has he tied you up here?"

The elder heard, and through his tears stole a glance at her: a woman of about thirty. "Lady Bodhisattva," he said, "there is no need to ask. I am already a dead man, walking in at your very door. If you mean to eat me, eat me and have done—why all the questions?"

"I am no eater of men," said the woman. "My home is more than three hundred li west of here, where there is a city called the Kingdom of Baoxiang. I am the third princess of that king; my milk-name is Baihuaxiu. Thirteen years ago, on the night of the fifteenth of the eighth month, as I was enjoying the moon, this demon snatched me away with a gust of wild wind, and for thirteen years I have been his wife. Here I have borne him sons and daughters, with never a word reaching the court. I think of my father and mother, whom I cannot see. Whence do you come, that he has taken you?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk is one sent to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures. Out for an idle stroll, I blundered in here by mistake. Now he means to catch my two disciples as well, and steam the lot of us together."

The princess managed a smile: "Take heart, venerable sir. Since you are one of the scripture-seekers, I can save you. Baoxiang lies on the high road of your journey west. Carry a letter for me, to be delivered to my father and mother, and I shall tell him to spare you."

Sanzang nodded: "Lady Bodhisattva, if you can save this poor monk's life, I will gladly be your letter-carrier."

The princess hurried to the rear, wrote a letter home on a single sheet, sealed and secured it, then came to the stake, released the Tang monk, and gave him the letter.

Freed at last, the Tang monk held the letter in both hands: "Lady Bodhisattva, my thanks for the kindness of my life restored. When this poor monk passes through your country, I will surely deliver it to the king. Only I fear that after so long a time your father and mother may be unwilling to acknowledge you. What then? Do not blame this poor monk for speaking a falsehood."

"No matter," said the princess. "My royal father has no son; only us three sisters were born to him. If he sees this letter, he will surely wish to see me."

Sanzang tucked the letter tightly into his sleeve, thanked the princess, and turned to go; but she caught hold of him: "You will never get out by the front gate! The great and small demons are all outside, waving banners and shouting, beating drums and clashing gongs, cheering their Great King on as he battles your disciples. Go out the back gate. If the Great King catches you, he will at least put you to the question; it is the little demons I fear—seize you they will, with no telling good from bad, and hurt you alive before your time. Wait while I go before him and put in a word for you. If the Great King lets you go, wait till your disciples ask his leave and find you, so that you can travel on together."

Sanzang knocked his head to her, obeyed her instructions carefully, took his leave of the princess, slipped out the back gate, and not daring to go far, hid his body in a thorn thicket.

Now the princess, her mind full of cunning plans, hurried forward and out the gate, parting the crowd of great and small demons. Ding-ding, dang-dang—the weapons clashed: Bajie and the Sha Monk were battling the monster in mid-air.

The princess called in a loud voice: "Yellow-Robe!"

Hearing his princess call, the demon king dropped Bajie and the Sha Monk at once, pressed down his cloud, stuck his steel blade upright, and took the princess's arm: "Wife, what have you to say?"

"Lord," said the princess, "just now, as I lay within the silken bed-curtains, in my dreaming soul I suddenly saw a spirit in golden armor."

"What spirit in golden armor?" said the demon. "What was he doing at my door?"

"When I was a little girl in the palace," said the princess, "I made a secret vow before the gods: if I might be given a worthy husband and royal son-in-law, I would climb the famous mountains, worship at the abodes of immortals, feed monks, and give alms. But since I was matched with you, in all our happy married life I have never once mentioned it. That spirit in golden armor came to claim my vow, and his shout woke me—and it was all a dream of the southern branch.

[Translator's note: "a dream of the southern branch" (nanke yi meng) means a brief dream of illusory glory, from the tale of a man who dreamed a whole lifetime of splendor beneath a locust branch.]

"So I hurried to make myself presentable and come tell you, my lord—and what should I see but a monk tied to the stake. I earnestly beg you, in your mercy, to look upon my small sincerity and spare that monk: count it as feeding monks in payment of my vow. I wonder, lord—will you grant it?"

"Wife," said the demon, "how suspicious you are! What great matter is that? When I want to eat a man, where cannot I scoop up a few to eat? One mere monk here or there—let him go."

"Lord, let him go by the back gate."

"What a bore! Letting him go is letting him go—what do I care whether it's back gate or front gate?"

So he took up his steel blade and called in a loud voice: "You there, Zhu Bajie! Come here! It is not that I fear you, or will not fight you—it is for the sake of my wife that I spare your master. Go quickly to the back gate, find him, and be off toward the West. If ever you invade my borders again, I shall most certainly not

spare you!"

When Bajie and the Sha Monk heard these words, it was as if they had been sent back from the gates of the King of Hell. They hurriedly led the horse and shouldered the load, scuttled away like rats, rounded the back gate of Wave-Moon Cave, and called: "Master!"

The elder knew their voices and answered from the thorn thicket. The Sha Monk hewed open a path through the grass, steadied his master, and helped him hastily onto the horse. Here the cruel and venomous had all but met them with a blue-faced ghost; warmhearted and attentive, they were blessed with Baihuaxiu.

The giant turtle has slipped the golden hook: Lashing its tail, shaking its head, it swims away with the waves.

Bajie led the way before, the Sha Monk followed behind; out of the pine woods they went and onto the high road. And watch the two of them, jawing and jawing, grumbling and blaming, with Sanzang forever making peace between them. At dusk they sought their lodging; at cockcrow they rose to watch the sky; stage by stage, long pavilion and short, and before they knew it they had come two hundred ninety-nine li. Suddenly they raised their heads: there stood a fine city—it was the Kingdom of Baoxiang.

Truly a splendid place:

Clouds far and faint, roads stretching long. Though the land lie a thousand li away, Its scenes are rich as any at home. Auspicious vapors and happy mists enfold it; Pure winds and the bright moon go beckoning there. Towering, precipitous, the distant hills Unroll a painted scroll; Babbling, murmuring, the flowing streams Splash and shatter their jasper. Plowland runs ribband on ribband of fertile fields; Harvest-rich, the dense new shoots promise food. A few households fish the triple bends of the stream; Woodsmen shoulder one load from a double peak of pepper-trees. Outworks and city walls, fortifications firm as metal and boiling springs; House after house, door after door, each at ease and unconstrained. Ninefold high towers like palace halls; Ten-thousand-fathom terraced stages like prize banners. There too the Hall of the Great Ultimate, the Canopy Hall, the Incense-Burning Hall, the Hall of Contemplating Letters, the Hall of Promoting Governance, the Hall of Prolonged Worthies—hall upon hall of jade steps and golden stairs, where civil caps and martial helms stand arrayed. There too the Palace of Great Brightness, the Zhaoyang Palace, the Palace of Long Joy, the Huaqing Palace, the Jianzhang Palace, the Weiyang Palace—palace upon palace of bells and drums, pipes and flutes, washing away the spring sorrows of the boudoir. In the forbidden gardens, dew-flowers powder tender faces; Along the palace moat, wind-blown willows dance their slender waists. On the thoroughfares, the capped and belted ones ride in state, five horses in their train; In the quiet byways, the bow-bearing ones part the clouds and mist and pierce two eagles with a single shaft. Lanes of flowers and willows, towers of pipes and strings—spring winds yield nothing to Luoyang Bridge. The scripture-seeking elder looks back toward Great Tang, and heart and gall are rent; The master-following disciples rest their shoulders at the little post station, and dream-souls melt away.

They could not see enough of the scenery of Baoxiang. Master and disciples, three in all, gathered up the luggage and the horse, and lodged for the night in the post station.

The Tang monk walked to the gate of the court and said to the ambassador of the palace gates: "A monk of the Tang empire is here, wishing audience with the throne to have his travel documents examined and stamped. I beg you to transmit my request."

The officer of the yellow gates hurried to the white jade steps and memorialized: "Ten Thousand Years! A lofty monk of the Tang requests audience to have his travel documents examined and stamped."

The king heard that it was the great empire of Tang, and moreover a holy monk from afar, and his heart was glad; he approved at once, crying: "Summon him in!" Sanzang was led before the golden steps, and performed the dance of homage and the mountain-shout of obeisance.

The civil and military officials on either side could not help exclaiming: "Truly a personage of a great empire—such easy grace in rite and music!"

The king said: "Venerable sir, what business brings you to our kingdom?"

Sanzang said: "This humble monk is a son of the Buddha of the Tang empire, bearing the rescript of my Son of Heaven, journeying to the Western Heaven to seek the scriptures. I set out with travel documents, and at Your Majesty's great kingdom it is proper that they be examined and exchanged. Thus, not knowing better, I have presumed to startle the dragon countenance."

The king said: "If you carry the documents of the Tang Son of Heaven, bring them up for us to see."

Sanzang offered them up with both hands; they were unfolded and laid upon the imperial desk. They read:

"The Emperor of the Great Tang in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, ruling by the mandate of Heaven, issues this document of passage: We, of meager virtue, have inherited the great patrimony, serving the gods and governing the people, treading as upon thin ice, morning and night in dread. Formerly, through Our failure to save the old dragon of the Jing River, We incurred the condemnation of the August Lord on High; Our three souls and seven spirits passed in a flash to the courts of the shades, and We became the guest of the Impermanent One. Because the span of Our yang life was not yet run out, the dark sovereigns in mercy released Us to live again; We spread wide the assemblies of goodness and built altars for the deliverance of the dead. Grateful, We received the Bodhisattva Guanyin, the Savior of Suffering, whose golden body appeared and instructed Us that in the West there is Buddha and there are scriptures, able to save the darkened dead and release the lonely souls. We have specially commissioned the master of the Law Xuanzang to journey afar through a thousand mountains, to seek and inquire after the scriptures and gathas. Should he arrive at the various kingdoms of the West, let them not extinguish the bond of goodness, but by this document let him pass. Given under seal. Thirteenth year of Zhenguan of the Great Tang, an auspicious day of autumn, document issued before the throne." (Upon it were nine precious seals.)

The king read it, took the jade seal of his own kingdom, affixed it with his signature flourish, and handed the documents back to Sanzang.

Sanzang gave thanks for the favor, put away the documents, and memorialized again: "This poor monk comes, first, to have his documents examined, and second, bearing a letter of family to deliver to Your Majesty."

The king was overjoyed: "What letter?"

"Your Majesty's third princess," said Sanzang, "was carried off by the Yellow-Robed demon of Wave-Moon Cave on Bowl Mountain. This poor monk met her by chance, and thus brings her letter."

At these words the king's eyes brimmed with tears. "Since the princess disappeared thirteen years ago," he said, "we know not how many civil and military officials have been demoted and dismissed, how many maids and eunuchs, within the palace and without, have been beaten to death. It was said only that she had walked out of the palace and lost her way, and could nowhere be found; the households of the whole city were questioned past counting, and never a trace. How could we know it was a demon that had carried her off! Today, suddenly to hear these words—no wonder grief overcomes me and my tears fall."

Sanzang took the letter from his sleeve and presented it.

The king received it, and at the sight of the two characters "safe and well" his hands went weak; he could not unfasten the letter, but gave orders to summon a grand academician of the Hanlin Academy to read it aloud before the throne. The academician mounted the hall at once; before the throne stood the civil and military officials, behind it the consorts and palace ladies, all with ears inclined to the letter. The academician

unsealed it and read aloud. It said:

"Your unworthy daughter Baihuaxiu bows her head a hundred times before the throne of her greatly virtuous royal father, Ten Thousand Years, in the Dragon and Phoenix Hall, before the three palace mothers in the Zhaoyang Palace, and before the assembled worthies, civil and military, of the whole court: Your poor daughter, happily born of the palace, is grateful beyond all words for your ten thousand toils in rearing her, yet has been unable to serve you with all her strength, gladdening your faces with her devotion. On a fine night, the fifteenth of the eighth month, thirteen years ago, by the grace of my royal father's decree each palace laid out a banquet, to enjoy the flower of the moon and share the pure delights of that festive evening. In the midst of the merriment, all unknowing, a fragrant wind arose, and there flashed forth a demon king with golden eyes, a blue face, and green hair, who seized your daughter, mounted a beam of auspicious light, and carried her straight away to a deserted place among half-wild mountains. Unable to resist or escape, she was forced by the demon's violence to be his wife. Thus, helpless, she has endured thirteen years, and has borne two demon children, spawn of that monster. Of this, truly, a thing that disgraces human bonds and wounds all decency, she ought not to send word, so as not to stain your honor; yet she feared only that after her death the truth would never be known. Just as she nursed her grievance and yearned after her parents, a holy monk of the Tang, by chance, was seized by the demon king as well. It was your daughter who, with dripping tears, wrote this letter and boldly set him free, entrusting him to carry this scrap of paper as a token of her heart. She humbly prays her royal father to look down in pity and send his generals swiftly to Wave-Moon Cave on Bowl Mountain to capture the Yellow-Robed Demon and bring your daughter back to the court—this would be a kindness remembered forever. Hasty and wanting in reverence, she awaits word. Your unfilial daughter Baihuaxiu bows her head again and again."

When the academician had finished the letter, the king wept aloud; the three palaces wept; the civil and military officials grieved; before and behind, all mourned together.

The king wept a long while, then asked the assembled officials: "Which of you dares raise troops and lead generals, to capture the demon for Us and save Our Baihua princess?"

He asked several times, and not one man dared answer—truly, generals carved of wood, officials molded of clay. The king's heart filled with bitterness, and his tears gushed like a spring.

Then the assembled officials bowed low and memorialized: "Let Your Majesty cease grieving for a moment. The princess has been lost, and thirteen years have passed without word. Now, by chance, comes this holy monk of the Tang bearing a letter—whether it be true, we do not yet know. Besides, we are all common men with common horses, trained in the books of war and military strategy: we can but set formations and pitch camps, to keep the state free from invasion. That demon comes on clouds and goes in mists; we can never meet him face to face—how are we to campaign against him and rescue her? Consider: this seeker of scriptures from the East is a holy monk of a great empire. This monk's Way is so high that dragons and tigers submit; his virtue so weighty that ghosts and gods revere him; he must surely have the art of subduing demons. As the ancients said: 'Whoever comes to tell of trouble is himself the man of trouble.' Let us ask this venerable elder to subdue the demon and save the princess—that would be the one sure plan."

Hearing this, the king turned quickly to entreat Sanzang: "Venerable sir, if you have the means—if you will use your magic powers, capture the demon, and save Our child and bring her back to court—then you need not go on to the West to worship the Buddha. Let your hair grow long and keep your head; We will swear brotherhood with you and share the dragon bed, sharing wealth and honor together. What say you?"

Sanzang hurriedly memorialized: "This poor monk knows crudely how to recite the Buddha's name; in truth he cannot subdue demons."

"If you cannot subdue demons," said the king, "how did you dare go to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha?"

Cornered, the elder had to reveal his two disciples: "Your Majesty, this poor monk could never have come here alone. He has two disciples, skilled at opening roads through mountains and bridging waters, who have protected him to this place."

"How unreasonable of you, monk!" said the king. "If you have disciples, why did you not bring them in together to see Us? At court, though We might lack a gift to their liking, there would surely have been a share of vegetarian fare for them."

"My disciples are ugly," said Sanzang. "I dared not bring them into court unbidden, fearing to startle and injure Your Majesty's dragon body."

At that the king laughed: "Listen to the monk! Would We, then, be afraid of him?"

"I dare not say. My elder disciple's surname is Zhu; his religious names are Wuneng and Bajie. He was born with a long snout and protruding tusks, a bristling mane and flapping ears, a coarse body and a great belly, and he raises a wind as he walks. My second disciple's surname is Sha; his religious names are Wujing, and he is a monk. He was born twelve feet tall, with arms of full breadth, a face like blue indigo, a mouth like a basin of blood, eyes that flash and gleam, and teeth ranged like nails. They are both of such appearance—that is why I dared not bring them into court."

"Since you have described them thus," said the king, "what have We to fear from them? Summon them in." At once he sent a golden tablet to the post station to invite them.

When the blockhead heard the summons, he said to the Sha Monk: "Brother, you see now—you said I shouldn't deliver letters, and here you see the benefit of delivering them. Master must have delivered the letter, and the king said, 'the letter-carrier must not be slighted'—he is surely laying on a banquet in his honor. And his appetite being what it is, and having us two in mind, he named us—so here comes the golden tablet to invite us. We shall all eat our fill, and tomorrow travel the better for it."

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "who knows what it's about. Let us be going."

So they handed the luggage and horse over to the keeper of the station, took their weapons with them, and followed the golden tablet into court. Coming at last before the white jade steps, they stood to left and right, bowed a greeting to the throne—and then never budged again.

The civil and military officials, every one of them afraid, all said: "These two monks—their looks are ugly enough, but they are so crude! They see our king, and will not even kneel; they finish their bow, straighten up, and stand there stock-still. Strange! Strange!"

Bajie heard them: "Gentlemen, do not discuss us so; we are what we are. At first glance we are somewhat ugly, it is true—but look at us a while, and we bear looking rather well."

The king, at the sight of his ugliness, was already startled; when he heard the blockhead speak, he trembled the more, could not keep his seat, and tumbled off the dragon bed—luckily the attendant officers caught and raised him up.

The Tang monk, in a flurry, knelt before the hall, knocking his head without cease: "Your Majesty, this poor monk deserves ten thousand deaths, ten thousand deaths! I said my disciples were ugly and dared not appear at court, for fear of harming the dragon body—and in truth they have alarmed the throne."

The king came trembling near, raised him up, and said: "Venerable sir, it was well you warned Us beforehand! Had you not, and We had seen him suddenly, We must have been frightened to death!" The king

a long while composed himself, then asked: "Venerable Zhu and Venerable Sha—which of you is skilled at subduing demons?"

The blockhead, never one to weigh matters, answered: "Old Pig can subdue them."

"How do you go about subduing them?" asked the king.

"I was the Marshal Tianpeng," said Bajie. "Only for a crime against the heavenly code was I cast down into the world below—happily now I have turned to the true faith and become a monk. Of all who have come from the East to this place, the number one at subduing demons is me."

"Since a heavenly general descended to earth," said the king, "you must surely be skilled at transformation."

"I dare not claim it," said Bajie. "But I do know a few changes, more or less."

"Transform once for Us to see."

"Set me the subject, that I may change to fit the pattern."

"Something large, then."

Now Bajie had his thirty-six transformations; before the steps he showed off his art: he formed the spell-sign, muttered the words, shouted "Grow!"—arched his back, and grew eight or nine zhang tall, like a very god of the open road.

The two ranks of civil and military officials shook and trembled; the king and his court stood gaping in a daze.

Then the hall-guard general asked: "Venerable sir, growing to such a height—to what place must you grow before there is an end and limit?"

And the blockhead, ever ready with blockhead talk, answered: "It depends on the wind. With an east wind, it's bearable; a west wind, it will pass; but if a south wind rises, I'd poke a great hole clean through the blue sky!"

The king cried out in alarm: "Put away your magic powers! We understand your transformations now." Bajie drew himself down, resumed his own form, and stood attending before the steps.

The king asked again: "Venerable sir, when you go, what weapons will you engage him with?"

Bajie whipped the rake out from his waist: "Old Pig uses a nail-rake."

The king laughed: "What a disgrace to the family honor! Here We have whips, canes, mace-hammers, sabers, spears, battle-axes, swords, halberds, spears, and sickles—choose any one that suits your hand and take it. What sort of weapon is a rake?"

"Your Majesty does not know," said Bajie. "This rake of mine, coarse and clumsy as it looks, has been my constant companion since my youth. When I was marshal in the Water Palace of the Heavenly River, commanding and guarding eighty thousand water troops, it was all by the strength of this rake. Now, come to the mortal world, I guard my master with it: smash through the dens of tigers and wolves when we meet mountains, overturn the lairs of dragons and clams when we meet water—all by this rake." At these words the king was greatly pleased, and believed him.

He at once commanded the nine consorts and ladies-in-waiting: "Bring the whole jar of the imperial wine from Our own table, to speed the venerable elder on his way." Then he filled a goblet to the brim and offered it to Bajie: "Venerable sir, this cup of wine is but a small token of our thanks for your toil. When you have caught the demon and brought Our little daughter home, there will be a great banquet in your honor, and a

rich reward of a thousand in gold."

The blockhead took the cup in his hand—and though his person was rough, his manners were almost refined: he made a deep bow to Sanzang: "Master, this wine should rightly have begun with you; but since it is the king's gift to me, I dare not refuse. Let old Pig drink first, to raise his spirits for catching the demon." And the blockhead drank it off in one draught, then poured a second goblet and handed it to his master.

Sanzang said: "I do not drink wine. Let your brothers have it." The Sha Monk came forward and received it.

Then Bajie raised cloud beneath his feet and soared straight up into the sky. The king saw it: "The Venerable Zhu can ride the clouds too!"

The blockhead gone, the Sha Monk drank off his wine as well, and said: "Master! When the Yellow-Robed Demon held you, the two of us fought him to a standstill, no more. If Second Brother goes alone now, I fear he cannot beat him."

"Just so, disciple," said Sanzang. "Go then, and lend him your aid."

Hearing this, the Sha Monk leapt up onto the clouds as well.

The king, alarmed, caught hold of the Tang monk: "Venerable sir, stay and sit with Us a while—do not go riding off on the clouds too!"

"Poor me! I could not go half a step if I would!" And there the two of them conversed in the hall. Of them we say no more.

Now the story tells how the Sha Monk caught up with Bajie: "Brother, here I am."

"Brother, what have you come for?"

"Master sent me to lend you a hand."

Bajie was overjoyed: "Well said, and well come! If we two strive with one heart and go catch that monster—well, whatever comes of it—our names will ring through this kingdom." Watch them:

Thick auspicious light bears them past the kingdom's bounds; Wreathing happy vapors carry them from the royal city. Bearing the king's command they come to the mountain cave, Striving with one heart to seize the monstrous fiend.

The two of them, in no long time, reached the mouth of the cave and pressed down their clouds. Bajie whipped out his rake, and with all his strength struck at the gate of Wave-Moon Cave, battering a hole the size of a bushel basket in the stone doors.

The little demons on gate duty, terrified, opened the doors, saw the two of them, and scurried back inside to report: "Great King, this is bad! That long-snouted, big-eared monk and that dismal-faced monk have come again and smashed the gates to bits!"

The demon started: "Those must be Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing again. I spared their master—how dare they come back and batter my gates!"

"I expect they forgot something," said a little demon, "and have come to fetch it."

"Nonsense!" snapped the old demon. "Forgot something—would they dare come smashing at my gates for that? There is surely a cause!"

He buckled on his armor in haste, took up his steel blade, marched out, and demanded: "Monks! Since I spared your master, how dare you come battering at my gates again?"

"You wicked monster—what a fine deed you've done!" said Bajie.

"What deed?"

"You tricked the third princess of Baoxiang into this cave, forced her by violence to be your wife, and have kept her thirteen years—it is time you gave her back! By command of the king I have come especially to seize you. Get inside quickly, tie yourself up with the ropes, and come out—it will spare old Pig the trouble of lifting a hand!"

At these words the old demon's fury was past all bounds. Watch him: with a grinding snap he clenches his steel teeth; with a whirl he rolls his round eyes; with a flourish he raises high his blade; and, all dripping red, he hews down at the head. Bajie turned aside and dodged, met him with the nail-rake full in the face, and behind came the Sha Monk, raising his precious staff and rushing forward to strike as well. This battle on the mountain top was different from the one before. Truly:

A word wrong, a phrase missed, and anger is roused; A poison heart, a wounded feeling, and fury is born. This demon king's great steel blade hews down upon the head; That Bajie's nine-toothed rake comes head-on to meet it. Sha Wujing flings wide his precious staff; The demon king parries the divine weapons. One fierce monster, two holy monks, Back and forth, in fine array. This one cries: "You cheated the king's daughter—a crime deserving death!" That one cries: "You poke your nose where fools rush in!" This one cries: "You forced marriage on the princess—you wound the state!" That one cries: "What's it to you?—spare us your strife!" Reckon it up: all for a letter carried, That monk and demon neither know any peace.

On that mountain slope they fought eight or nine rounds, and Bajie's strength began to fail: the rake grew hard to lift, his breath and muscle giving out. Why could he not beat him? When the battle first began, the guardian deities of the Law—since the Tang monk was in the cave—were secretly aiding Bajie and the Sha Monk; hence they had held him merely to a standstill. Now all the deities were in the Kingdom of Baoxiang guarding the Tang monk; and so the two of them were outmatched.

"Sha Monk," said the blockhead, "step up and fight him a while—old Pig needs to go relieve himself." And caring nothing for the Sha Monk, off he slunk in one streak into the wormwood and creepers, thorns and brambles, diving in headlong, good or bad, scalp scratched, snout and face torn, rolled himself up, and lay down—not daring to come out again, but leaving one ear on watch for the clash of arms.

Seeing Bajie gone, the demon rushed at the Sha Monk. The Sha Monk had no time to parry; the monster seized him with one grab, carried him into the cave, and the little demons bound him hand and foot, hog-tied.

Whether he lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 30

The Wicked Demon Invades the True Teaching; The Horse of the Will Recalls the Ape of the Mind

The story continues: the monster had the Sha Monk bound, but neither killed him nor beat him, nor so much as scolded him. Taking up his steel blade, he communed with himself in secret: "This Tang monk is a personage of a great empire; he must know propriety and right. Surely he would not have spared my life and then sent his disciples to seize me? Ah—it must be that wife of mine has sent some letter to that kingdom of hers, and the news has leaked! I'll go question her."

Then a sudden ferocity rose in the monster, and he would have killed the princess.

Now the princess knew nothing of it. She had just finished her toilette and came tripping forward, to find the monster glaring, brows knotted, gnashing his teeth. Still she met him with a smiling face: "What troubles you so, lord?"

"You dog-hearted, worthless woman!" the monster burst out. "No sense of human bonds at all! When I first brought you here, you had not half a word to say against it. The brocade you wear, the gold you deck yourself in—whatever you lacked I went and found; the comforts of all four seasons, the tender love of every day! How is it you think only of your father and mother, without one spark of a wife's heart?"

At this the princess fell to her knees in terror: "Lord, why do you speak of parting today?"

"Parting for you, or parting for me—that remains to be seen!" said the monster. "I had caught that Tang monk and was reckoning on enjoying him; why did you not tell me first, and set him free? It was you who secretly wrote a letter and had him carry it for you—else how came those two monks battering at my gate, demanding that I send you home? Was this not your doing?"

"Lord, you wrong me. When did I ever send any letter?"

"Still you wrangle! Here I hold the very witness—what better proof could there be?"

"Who is it?"

"The Tang monk's second disciple, the Sha Monk."

Now when a man stands at death's door, who is willing to die? She could only brazen it out.

"Lord, calm your anger," said the princess, "and let us go ask him together. If there truly was a letter, then beat me to death and I shall bear it gladly; but if there was no letter, would you not have killed your slave-girl for nothing?"

At that the monster would hear no more. He swung open a blue-indigo hand big as a winnowing basket, seized the princess by her ten thousand golden-thread, jade-leaf hairs, dragged her forward, flung her to the ground, and with steel blade in hand came to try the Sha Monk, snapping: "Sha Monk! You two had the gall to come battering at our gates—was it that this woman sent a letter to that kingdom, and the king sent you?"

The Sha Monk, bound there, saw how savage the demon was—had thrown the princess to the ground, blade in hand, ready to kill. And he thought to himself: "Plainly it was she who sent the letter and saved my master—a kindness beyond all measure. If I say so outright, he will kill the princess—and would that not be repaying kindness with enmity? Enough, enough! Old Sha has followed my master all this way without one inch of merit to repay him. Today I am already bound; let this life of mine repay my master's debt of kindness."

So he shouted: "You monster, no more of your savagery! What letter had she, that you wrong her so and would take her life? We came here to demand the princess of you for a reason. Because you trapped my master in your cave, my master saw the princess—her looks, her ways. When we reached Baoxiang to have our documents examined, the emperor had portraits of the princess drawn and inquiries made everywhere; and he asked my master whether along the road he had seen any likeness of her. So my master spoke of the princess, and the emperor knew her for his child, and bestowed on us the imperial wine, sending us to seize you and bring his princess back to the palace. That is the truth of it—what letter was ever written? If you mean to kill, kill old Sha; do not murder the innocent—it would be a grievous wrong against the Way of Heaven!"

Hearing the Sha Monk speak so boldly, the demon dropped his blade, raised the princess in both arms, and said: "I was rough and hot-headed, and gave you offense—forgive me, forgive me." Then he smoothed her black tresses, set her hair high upon her head in its jeweled knot, all gentleness and warmth, smiling and soothing, coaxed her within, seated her in the place of honor, and made his apology. The princess, being a woman of watery heart, saw him so earnest in his respect, and her heart turned once more: "Lord, if you remember the love of husband and wife, have them loosen the Sha Monk's ropes a little." At that the old demon ordered the little ones to untie the Sha Monk and lock him up there.

The Sha Monk, freed but locked away, rose to his feet and rejoiced inwardly: "As the ancients said, 'Give another convenience, and you give yourself convenience.' Had I not given her convenience, would he ever have had them loosen my bonds?"

Then the old demon ordered a banquet laid, to apologize to the princess and steady her fright.

When they had drunk to half-merry, the old demon suddenly changed into fresh, bright clothes, took a precious sword and hung it at his waist, and turning, stroked the princess: "Wife, you stay home and drink, and mind our two children—and do not let the Sha Monk go. While that Tang monk is in that kingdom, I'll make an early call and pay my respects to the family."

"What family?" asked the princess.

"Your royal father. I am his son-in-law; he is my father-in-law—how could I not go and be recognized?"

"You cannot go."

"Why can I not go?"

"My royal father's kingdom was not won by horses and battle; it is a patrimony handed down from his ancestors. Crowned as crown prince from childhood, he has never traveled far beyond the city gates, and has never seen such a fierce fellow as you. With that face and those looks of yours, so frightfully ugly, the sight of you might scare him—and that would spoil everything. Better by far not to go at all."

"In that case, I shall change into a handsome fellow and go."

"Change then, and let me see."

A cunning monster! Right there amid the banquet he shook his body and turned into a handsome young man. And truly he looked:

Refined and elegant of bearing, striking and tall of frame, His speech in the courtly style, His bearing at the very flower of youth. His talent—like Zijian's, he could toss off a poem with ease; His looks—like Pan An's, he might catch the tossed fruit of admiring girls.

[Translator's note: Zijian, the poet Cao Zhi, proverbial for genius; Pan An, proverbial for male beauty, so handsome that women threw fruit at him.]

On his head a magpie-tail cap, his raven hair sleeked down; On his body a gown of gauzy jade-silk, wide sleeves floating welcome. On his feet black boots with flowered folds; At his waist a phoenix belt, gleaming bright. In spirit truly a marvelous man, Lofty as a ravine, towering as the sky—a fine and handsome lord.

The princess was delighted at the sight.

The demon laughed: "Well, wife—is it a good change or not?"

"A good change! A good change! But once you enter the court, my royal father, whose love of kin cannot be extinguished, will surely have the civil and military officials keep you for wine and feasting. If amid the drinking—oh, be careful a thousand times, be wary ten thousand times—do not let your true face show, or the cat's paws peep out, or the news leak, and then there will be no more gentility about you!"

"No need for instructions," said the old demon. "I know what to do."

Watch him mount his cloud; soon he reached the Kingdom of Baoxiang, pressed down his cloud-light, walked to the outer gate of the court, and said to the ambassador of the palace gates: "The third royal son-in-law comes especially to see the throne; I beg you transmit my request."

The officer of the yellow gates came before the white jade steps and memorialized: "Ten Thousand Years! The third royal son-in-law requests audience, and awaits the summons outside the court gates."

The king, who was talking with the Tang monk, started at the words "third son-in-law," and asked his officials: "We have only two sons-in-law. How comes there a third?"

"The third son-in-law," said the officials, "must surely be the demon."

"Shall We summon him in?"

The elder's heart quailed: "Your Majesty, a demon is called a demon because what is not jing is not numinous.

[Translator's note: a play on words—the character jing 精 means both "demon" and "essence, subtlety."]

He can know past and future; he can ride the clouds. Summon him, and he comes in; do not summon him, and he comes in all the same. Better summon him in—it will spare us a quarrel."

The king approved, and gave the summons. The monster was led before the golden steps, where he too performed the dance of homage and the mountain-shout of obeisance. The officials, seeing him so handsome, dared not take him for a demon; with their fleshly eyes and common bodies, they took him for a good man. The king, seeing him tower ravine-high and heaven-high, took him for a pillar that would uphold the age, and asked: "Son-in-law, where is your home? Of what land are you? When did you wed Our princess? How is it you come to be recognized only today?"

The old demon knocked his head: "Sovereign lord, your servant is of a household of Bo Moon Manor on Bowl Mountain, east of the city."

"How far is that mountain from here?"

"Not far—only three hundred li."

"Three hundred li of road—how could Our princess have gotten there, to be wedded to you?"

With glib words and flowery phrases, all false feeling and sham intent, the demon answered: "Sovereign lord, from childhood your servant loved the bow and the horse, and lived by hunting. Thirteen years ago, leading several dozen household servants, hawks flying and dogs running, I suddenly spied a fierce tiger,

striped and dappled, carrying a woman on its back, making down the mountainside. Your servant drew his bow and with one arrow brought the tiger down; then he carried the woman to my manor, revived her with warm water and warm broth, and saved her life. When I asked her of what house she was, she never once breathed the word 'princess.' Had she said she was Your Majesty's third daughter, how would I have dared deceive my heart and wed her on my own? I would have presented her on the golden throne, and begged some office, great or small, for my honor. But because she said she was the daughter of a common family, your servant kept her at the manor—and beauty matched with talent, both of one mind, we were wed, and so the years have passed. After the wedding, I meant to slaughter that tiger and invite all my kin to the feast, but the princess bade me spare it. The reason she gave was put in a few very fine words:

'To Heaven and Earth we trust, to make us man and wife; No go-between, no witness, joined us in our vow. The red thread had bound our feet together in a life before— So let the tiger stand for matchmaker now.'

"For those words your servant loosed the tiger's cords and spared its life. With its arrow wound, off it went, kicking up its heels and lashing its tail. Who knew that, winning its life, it would cultivate in those mountains these several years, tempering its body into a spirit, bent wholly on beguiling men and destroying them? Your servant has heard that in years past there were others who went seeking the scriptures, all said to be the Tang monk from the Great Tang. I fear this tiger did away with the Tang monk, took his papers, and changed itself into the likeness of a scripture-seeker, and now stands in the court deceiving Your Majesty. Sovereign lord—upon that embroidered stool sits the very fierce tiger that carried off the princess thirteen years ago! He is no true scripture-seeker at all!"

And that king of watery will, with his deluded fleshly eyes that could not tell a demon, took the monster's every lying word for solid truth: "Worthy son-in-law, how came you to know this monk for the old tiger that carried off the princess?"

"Sovereign lord," said the demon, "in the mountains I ate tiger and I wore tiger; I slept with them and rose with them—how could I not know one?"

"If you know him, make him show his true form for Us to see."

"Lend me half a cup of pure water," said the monster, "and I shall make him show his true form."

The king bade an officer fetch water and hand it to the son-in-law. Taking the water in his hand, the monster sprang up, came forward, used the black-eye body-fixing spell, muttered a spell-word, spewed the water full in the Tang monk's face, and cried "Change!" The elder's true body vanished from the hall, and he turned into a fierce striped tiger. Then sovereign and courtiers saw with one accord what that tiger looked like:

A white brow and a round head, a flowered body and lightning eyes. Four legs thrust straight and stark; Twenty claws hooked, curved, and sharp. Saw teeth filling the mouth; pointed ears reaching the brows. Savage as some monstrous great cat in shape, Fierce and mighty as a yellow calf in form. Stiff whiskers stick straight out like silver rods; Its flicking tongue, quick and supple, breathes out evil fumes. Truly a fierce and dappled beast of prey— Gust on gust of awesome wind fills the precious hall.

At the sight, the king's soul flew and his spirit scattered, and the officials all fled to hide. A few bolder generals led the officers and men in a rush forward, hacking away with every sort of weapon. Had it not been that the Tang monk was fated not to die—even twenty monks would have been beaten to a pulp. At that moment, luckily, the Dings and Jias, the Guardians, the Duty Officers, and the Protectors of the Faith were secretly shielding him in mid-air, so that all those men's weapons could not wound him.

The ministers raged till nightfall, when at last they took the tiger alive, locked it with iron chains, put it in an iron cage, and confined it in the court chamber.

The king then gave orders for the Court of Imperial Entertainments to spread a grand banquet, in thanks to the son-in-law for his saving rescue—else they had all but perished at that monk's hands. That evening the court dispersed, and the demon entered the Hall of Silver Peace. There he chose eighteen palace beauties to play and sing and dance, plying the demon with wine and merriment. The monster sat alone at the head, with ranks of delicate beauty on either hand—watch him enjoy himself!

When the drinking had gone past the second watch, and drunkenness rose in him, he could no longer hold in his true nature: he leapt up with a great laugh, showed his own form, and suddenly gave rein to his cruel heart. Spreading his basket-sized paw, he snatched over a lute-playing girl and crunched a bite from her head. The seventeen palace beauties fled for their lives, running and hiding in every direction. Just look at them:

The palace maids in terror, the painted ladies in panic. The palace maids in terror—like hibiscus beaten by night rain; The painted ladies in panic—like peonies dancing in the spring wind. They smash the lute to save their lives; They tumble, injuring themselves on zithers, to escape. Out the door, they cannot tell south from north; Fleeing the hall, they never mind east or west. Jade faces bumped and bruised, Delicate features cracked and torn. Every one runs for her life, Each and all scattering to save themselves.

And those who got out dared not cry out; the night being deep, they dared not alarm the throne; they all hid beneath the low walls and eaves, trembling. Of them we say no more.

Now the monster sat above, pouring and drinking for himself. With each cup he dragged over a body and gnawed a couple of bloody mouthfuls. Inside, he feasted; outside, word ran from mouth to mouth: "The Tang monk is a tiger spirit!" The rumor flew and swelled, till it reached the Gilded Pavilion post station. By then the station was empty—only the white horse stood at the trough, eating its hay and grain.

He was, in truth, the little dragon prince of the Western Sea, who for a crime against the heavenly code had been sawed of horn and stripped of scales, changed into a white horse, and set to bear the Tang monk westward for the scriptures. Suddenly he heard people say the Tang monk was a tiger spirit, and he too communed with himself: "My master is plainly a good man; some monster must have changed him into a tiger spirit and done him harm. What's to be done? What's to be done? Eldest Brother has been gone so long—and not a word from Bajie or the Sha Monk!"

He held out till the second watch, when all sounds were still; then at last he leapt up, saying: "If I do not save the Tang monk tonight, this work of merit is finished! Finished!"

He could bear it no longer: he snapped the halter, shook loose the saddle and bridle, sprang up in haste and revealed his transformation, became a dragon again, mounted the black clouds, and rose straight into the ninth heaven to look about. There is a poem in proof:

Sanzang came west to worship the World-Honored One, And on the road met wicked demon mist. Tonight, changed to a tiger, he cannot 'scape his doom— The white horse, drooping his rein, must save his lord.

From mid-air the little dragon saw the Hall of Silver Peace ablaze with lanterns and candles—upon the eight vermilion candelabra burned eight tall candles. He lowered his cloud and looked carefully: the demon sat alone above, coolly drinking wine and eating human flesh.

The little dragon laughed: "This wretch is a failure! The cat's paws are out, the game is up, and still he flattens the scales and eats men—he's really going places! But where my master is now, I do not know—only this wicked monster stands in the way. Wait—let me go play a trick on him. If I get my chance, it will be no too late to seize the demon and save my master."

A fine dragon prince! He shook his body, changed into a palace beauty—light of body, charming of bearing—and tripped quickly within. To the demon she made a deep curtsy: "Son-in-law, pray do not take my life. I have come to pour your wine."

"Pour, then," said the demon.

The little dragon took the flagon and filled his cup; the wine stood a third of an inch above the brim of the cup, yet did not spill over. This was the little dragon's water-pinning spell. The monster did not know it, and rejoiced: "You have real skill!"

"I can pour it a good bit higher still," said the little dragon.

"Pour higher, then! Pour higher!" And he held up the cup while she poured, and the wine rose only the higher—like a thirteen-story pagoda, tapering to its tip, brimming full, and never a drop spilling over. The monster stretched his snout over, drank off one cup, dragged over a dead body and took a bite, then asked: "Can you sing?"

"I know a little," said the little dragon, and to tune and rhythm sang a little song, and offered another cup.

"Can you dance?" asked the demon.

"I know a little of that too—but with empty hands, it will not look well."

The monster lifted his robe, unbuckled the precious sword he wore at his waist, drew it from its sheath, and handed it to the little dragon. The little dragon took the blade and kept his wits about him: before the banquet he wheeled it—up three, down four, left five, right six—and put forth the flowered sword-play. The demon watched open-eyed; and the little dragon dropped the flowers of the art and slashed at the demon's head.

A cunning monster! He dodged aside in a flash—but in his flurry he seized a candelabrum and parried the precious blade. The candelabrum was wrought of solid iron, eight or ninety pounds with the handle. Out of the Hall of Silver Peace they went; the little dragon showed his true form, mounted the clouds, and fought the demon there in mid-air. And what a battle in the dark! See it:

That one, a monster bred on Bowl Mountain; This one, a true dragon banished from the Western Sea. One sheds its rays like spitting white lightning; One breathes its valor like bursting red clouds. One is like a white-tusked elephant come down among men; One like a golden-clawed wildcat flown to the world below. One a jade pillar upholding Heaven; One a golden beam bridging the seas. A silver dragon wheels and dances; A yellow fiend rolls and tumbles. On left and right the precious blade knows no slack; Back and forth, without rest, swings the candelabrum.

The two of them fought eight or nine rounds in the clouds, and the little dragon's hands went soft and his sinews numb, while the old demon's body stayed strong. The little dragon, unable to hold out, sent his blade flying at the demon; but the demon had the art of catching blades—caught the precious sword in one hand, and with the other flung down the candelabrum and struck. The little dragon had no time to parry: the blow caught him on the hind leg. In frantic haste he pressed down his cloud—and it was the imperial water river that saved his life.

The little dragon plunged beneath the water. The demon chased and hunted for him in vain, then took his precious blade and his candelabrum, returned to the Hall of Silver Peace, and drank his wine and slept as before. Of him we say no more.

Now the little dragon lurked at the bottom of the water; half a watch passed without a sound, and only then did he clench his teeth, endure the pain in his leg, leap up, tread the black clouds, and return straight to the post station, where he changed back into the horse as before and lay down by the trough. Poor thing—soaked to the skin, the leg bearing its wound. Then it was:

The horse of the will and ape of the mind both scattered and lost; Metal Lord and Wood Mother both withered and fallen. The Yellow Dame is wounded and all are parted— With the Way dissolved and duty frayed, how can the work be done!

Leaving Sanzang in his calamity and the little dragon in his defeat, the story tells of Zhu Bajie. Ever since he left the Sha Monk, he had buried himself in the grass, rooting himself out a pig-shaped wallow. That one sleep lasted till well past midnight. Waking, he did not even know where he was; he rubbed his eyes, gathered his wits, and cocked an ear to listen—ah! Just as the saying goes:

Deep in the mountains, no dog barking; Wild on the wastes, few cocks crowing.

He saw the stars wheeling and the Dipper turning; it was about the third watch. "If I go back to rescue the Sha Monk," he thought, "truly one thread makes no cord and one palm cannot clap. Enough! Enough! I shall go into the city, see Master, get the reigning emperor's sanction, pick a troop of doughty men, and come with old Pig tomorrow to rescue the Sha Monk."

The blockhead leapt at once upon his cloud and made straight back for the city; in half an instant he reached the post station. All was still, the moon bright. In the two corridors he hunted and found no master—only the white horse lying asleep over there, soaked with water from head to hoof, with a blue bruise the size of a plate on one hind leg.

Bajie cried out in dismay: "Double bad luck! The dead creature hasn't even been on the road—how is he sweating, and his leg bruised? Some villains must have robbed Master and beaten the horse."

The white horse knew Bajie, and suddenly human speech came from his mouth: "Brother!" The blockhead fell over in fright, scrambled up, and made for the door—but the horse stretched out his body and caught hold of his black gown in his teeth: "Brother, do not fear me."

Trembling, Bajie said: "Little brother, how comes it you speak today? Whenever you speak, some great misfortune must be at hand."

"Do you know Master is in trouble?"

"I do not."

"No, you do not! You and the Sha Monk showed off your powers before the emperor, thinking to overthrow the demon and win reward and favor—and you never thought the demon's powers were so great and your skills so small that you could not withstand him. One of you might at least have come back with word—but not a whisper has come! The demon changed himself into a handsome scholar, walked into the court, claimed kinship with the emperor, and turned my master into a fierce striped tiger. Now he has been caught by the ministers and locked in an iron cage in the court chamber. When I heard of this torment, my heart was cut as with a knife. You have been gone these two days and did not know—I feared for his very life. I could only take dragon form and go to the rescue; but reaching the court, I could not find my master. When I came outside the Hall of Silver Peace, I met the demon, changed myself into the likeness of a palace beauty, and tried to trick the monster. The demon bade me dance the sword for him, so I watched my chance and slashed at him—but he dodged, and with both hands swung the candelabrum and beat me. I flung my blade at him; he caught it, flung down the candelabrum, and struck my hind leg—so into the imperial water river I dived, and so escaped with my life. The blue mark on my leg is where his candelabrum struck."

Bajie heard him out: "Can such things truly be?"

"Do you think I am fooling you?"

"What's to be done? What's to be done! Can you manage to walk?"

"And if I could walk, what then?"

"If you can walk, then walk yourself down to the sea. Old Pig will shoulder the luggage and go back to Gao Village and return to the furnace—be a son-in-law again!"

At that the little dragon bit fast into his gown and would not let go, the tears dropping from his eyes: "Brother! By all that's holy, do not turn lazy!"

"And if I don't turn lazy, what then? Brother Sha is taken; I cannot beat him. If we don't break up the partnership now, what are we waiting for?"

The little dragon was silent a long while, and then, still weeping: "Brother, speak no more of breaking up. If Master is to be saved, you need only go fetch one person."

"And who would you have me fetch?"

"Mount your cloud this very moment and return to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and fetch our eldest brother, Pilgrim Sun. He still has the great magic power to subdue demons; he is sure to save Master—and to avenge this defeat for you and me."

"Little brother, fetch someone else, anyone else. That monkey and I are not on good terms. Back on White Tiger Ridge, after he killed that Lady White Bone, he blamed me for egging Master on to recite the Band-Tightening Spell. I only meant it for fun—I never thought the old monk would take it seriously and recite it, and drive him away. Who knows how he hates me for it? He will surely refuse to come. And if a single word goes wrong—that mourning staff of his is heavy. If he loses his temper and lands a few blows, not knowing high from low, how am I to live?"

"He will never strike you. He is a Monkey King of honor and righteousness. When you see him, do not say at once that Master is in trouble—say only that Master is thinking of him. Coax him along, and when he comes here and sees this state of things, his indignation will surely be roused; without fail he will match himself against that demon, and the demon is as good as caught, and Master saved."

"Very well, very well. Since you are so wholehearted, if I did not go, it would look as if I lacked the heart. This time I go: if the Pilgrim will come, I shall come back together with him; if he will not come—then do not look for me either, for I shall not be back."

"Go, go—he is sure to come."

And truly the blockhead gathered up his nail-rake, straightened his tunic, leapt up, trod the cloud, and made straight for the east. This time, too, the Tang monk was fated to live: the blockhead met a fair wind, pricked up his two ears like sails, and soon crossed the Eastern Ocean and pressed down his cloud. Unnoticed, the sun came up; he entered the mountains looking for the way. As he walked, he suddenly heard voices.

Bajie looked carefully: it was the Pilgrim, there in a hollow of the mountain, gathering his host of demons. He sat upon a stone cliff, and before him stood more than twelve hundred monkeys, ranked and ordered by precedence, crying "Ten Thousand Years! Grandpa Great Sage!"

"Well, this is the life! This is the life!" said Bajie. "No wonder he would not stay a monk—nothing would do but coming home! So this is the good of it: an estate as big as this, and all these little monkeys to wait on him! If old Pig had a mountain like this, he'd be no monk either. But now that I'm here, what's to be done? I must see him, that's certain." The blockhead stood somewhat in awe of him and dared not present himself openly; so along the edge of the grassy cliff he sidled, and sidled, and squeezed himself in among the twelve or thirteen hundred monkeys, bowing his head with the rest of them.

But the Great Sage Sun sat high, and his eyes were sharp and quick, and he saw the fellow plain. "That one in the ranks bowing all out of order," he asked, "is a foreigner. Where does he come from? Bring him up!"

Before the words were out, the little monkeys swarmed like bees, pushed Bajie forward, and pinned him to the ground.

"Where do you come from, foreigner?"

Bajie kept his head down: "Your servant is honored by the question. I am no foreigner—an old acquaintance, an old acquaintance."

"All the monkeys of this Great Sage's host are of one likeness," said the Pilgrim. "That face of yours is of another sort altogether, lumpish and uncouth—you must be a demon from elsewhere. Very well: if you come from elsewhere and wish to join my host, first present your registration paper and report your name, that I may keep you here to fill the ranks. If I do not keep you, how dare you come bowing here in disorder!"

The blockhead, head down, snout thrust out: "For shame! Dragging out that face of yours! We were brothers for years, and now you pretend not to know me—calling me a foreigner!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Raise your head and let me see." The blockhead stuck his snout straight up: "Look at this! Maybe you don't know my face—but surely you know the snout!"

The Pilgrim could not help laughing: "Zhu Bajie!" At the one call the blockhead rolled upright: "That's me! That's me! I'm Zhu Bajie!" And he thought: "If he knows me, we can talk."

"Why are you not following the Tang monk to fetch the scriptures," asked the Pilgrim, "but come here instead? I expect you offended your master, and he banished you back too? Where's your letter of banishment? Hand it here."

"I never offended him, and he wrote no letter, and never banished me."

"No letter, and no banishment? Then what are you doing here?"

"Master thinks of you, and sent me to fetch you."

"He does not want me, and he does not think of me. That day he swore an oath to Heaven and wrote the banishment letter with his own hand—how would he think of me now, or send you all this way to fetch me? Most certainly I shall not go."

Bajie, lying on the spot, blurted: "He truly thinks of you! Truly, truly thinks of you!"

"How does he think of me?"

"Master was riding along, and he called 'Disciples!'—and I did not hear him, and the Sha Monk played deaf. So Master thought of you, and said we were no use, and that you were ever the bright and clever one: call, and you answered; ask one thing, and you answered ten. Thinking of you like this, he sent me expressly to fetch you. I beg you, come with me—first, not to disappoint his longing; second, not to waste my long journey."

At that the Pilgrim leapt down from the cliff, took Bajie by the hand, and said: "Worthy brother, you have come a weary way—come and sport with me a while."

"Brother, this place is far from the road, and I fear Master's longing if we are slow—I'll not play."

"You have come all this way—come, see what my mountain looks like." The blockhead dared not refuse outright, and could only walk along with him.

The two went hand in hand, arm in arm, with all the little demons trailing behind, up to the very summit of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. A fine mountain! Since the Great Sage's return, these few days had seen it restored as good as new. Just look:

Green as if carved from kingfisher jade, high as if rubbing the clouds. Round about, tigers crouch and dragons coil; On every side, gibbons cry and cranes call. At dawn, clouds seal the mountain top; At dusk,

watch the sun hang in the woods. The flowing stream babbles like jade pendants chiming; The ravine springs drip like some lapis zither played. Before the mountain, sheer cliffs and precipices; Behind the mountain, flowers and trees in riotous bloom. Above, it joins the basin where the Jade Maiden washes her hair; Below, it takes the streams divided from the River of Heaven. Heaven and Earth joined their beauty here to rival Penglai; The pure and the turbid reared between them a true cave-heaven. The painter's wondrous brush could scarce set it down; The immortal's heavenly skill could not limn it true. Delicate strange rocks, and rocks delicately strange; Delicate beyond words, the many-colored peaks upon the crest. The sun's rays set a thousand purple flashes moving; Happy vapors sway ten thousand waves of red cloud. A cave-heaven and blessed land there is upon the earth— New trees and new flowers all over the mountain.

Bajie could not see enough of it, and his heart was full of joy: "Brother, what a place! Truly the first mountain under heaven!"

"Worthy brother," said the Pilgrim, "could a man live here?"

"Listen to you!" Bajie laughed. "A precious mountain, a cave-heaven and blessed land—and you talk of getting by day to day!"

They talked and laughed a good while, then went down the mountain; and there by the roadside they saw several little monkeys bearing purple-clustered grapes, fragrant pears and jujubes, golden loquats, and crimson bayberries, kneeling by the road and calling: "Grandpa Great Sage, pray take your morning meal!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "My brother Zhu has a great belly—fruit will hardly serve him for a meal. Well, well—do not scorn our humble fare; take a few by way of refreshment."

"Great belly or no," said Bajie, "one must do as the countryside does. Hand them round, hand them round—I'll try a few for the novelty."

The two ate their fruit, and the sun climbed. The blockhead, dreading lest he be too late to save the Tang monk, kept pressing: "Brother, Master is yonder longing for you and me. I beg you, come with me soon."

"Worthy brother, let me take you into the Water Curtain Cave for a while."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, but Master has waited long—let us skip the cave."

"Since you put it so, I dare not keep you. Let us part here."

"Brother—you are not coming?"

"Where would I go? Here neither Heaven claims me nor Earth governs me—free and unfettered. If I will not play, why should I be a monk? I am not going. Go by yourself. But carry this word back to the Tang monk: since he drove me away, let him think of me no more."

The blockhead heard him out and dared not press hard, fearing lest pressing rouse his temper and he fetch him a couple of cudgel-blows; nothing for it but to bow and mutter farewell and find his road away. When the Pilgrim saw him gone, he sent two quick little monkeys to follow Bajie and hear what he said.

And truly, when the blockhead had gone down the mountain not three or four li, he turned, pointed back at the Pilgrim, and cursed: "That monkey—won't be a monk, plays at being a demon instead! That macaque! I came all this way in good faith to fetch him, and he won't come! Well, if you won't come, then don't!"

A few steps, and a few more curses.

The two little monkeys ran swiftly back to report: "Grandpa Great Sage, that Zhu Bajie is not much of an honest fellow—walk a little, curse a little!"

The Great Sage's fury rose: "Bring him back!" And the monkeys flew over the ground, caught up with Bajie, toppled him shoulder over heels, seized his mane and pulled his ears, dragged his tail and plucked his hair, and hauled him back.

How they handled him, and whether he lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 31

Zhu Bajie Righteously Provokes the Monkey King; Pilgrim Sun Subdues the Demon by Cunning

Righteousness bound them as brothers of one womb; The Dharma returned to original nature. Metal compliant, Wood subdued, the true fruit was achieved; Mind-Ape and Wood-Mother merged in the elixir's source. Together they climb to the World of Ultimate Bliss, Together they enter the Dharma Gate of Non-Duality. The scriptures are the great high road of cultivation; The Buddha matches each one's own primal spirit. Elder brother and younger joined in the threefold covenant; Demons and monsters, lust-formed, answer to the Five Elements. Cut away the six paths of rebirth, And straight to the Thunderclap Monastery you go.

[Translator's note: "Mind-Ape" and "Wood-Mother" are the inner-alchemy code names of Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie used throughout the novel.]

Now tell how the idiot was seized by a whole tribe of monkeys, who hauled him, dragged him, and tugged him about until his tunic was torn to rags, while he muttered and grumbled to himself: "Done for! Done for! This time there'll be a killing!"

Before long they came to the mouth of the cave.

The Great Sage was sitting on the rocky cliff above, and he cursed: "You chaff-guzzling wretch! Going off was one thing—but how dare you curse me?"

Bajie knelt on the ground and said: "Brother, I never cursed you. If I cursed you, may my tongue-root be chewed off! I only said that since my brother wouldn't go, I'd go report to Master myself—how would I dare curse you?" The Pilgrim said: "How could you ever fool me? Pull my left ear upward, and I can hear the talk of the Thirty-Three Heavens; pull my right ear downward, and I can hear the Ten Kings of Hell and the judges settling their accounts. You cursed me every step of the road—could I fail to hear it?" Bajie said: "Brother, I knew you were up to your sneaky tricks—you must have turned yourself into some little thing and followed me to listen." The Pilgrim shouted: "Little ones, bring the big sticks! First give him twenty strokes on the anklebones, then twenty across the back, and then I'll see him off with my iron staff!" Bajie panicked and kowtowed: "Brother, for Master's sake, a thousand times I beg you—spare me!" The Pilgrim said: "Much that Master cares for me, with all his fine benevolence!" Bajie pressed on: "Brother, if not for Master's sake, then for the sake of the Bodhisattva from the Southern Sea—spare me!"

At the mention of the Bodhisattva the Pilgrim softened by three parts. "Brother," he said, "since you put it that way, I'll not beat you—for now. But you'll tell me the honest truth, no hiding. Where is Master in trouble, that you come here to fool me?" Bajie said: "Brother, there's no trouble at all—I just missed you." The Pilgrim cursed: "You beatable wretch! Still telling your lies? Old Sun's body may have come back to the Water Curtain Cave, but his heart has followed the scripture-seeking monk. That master of ours meets peril at every step and calamity in every place. Tell me quickly, and spare yourself a beating!"

Hearing this, Bajie knocked his head on the ground and pleaded: "Brother, I meant to keep it from you and trick you into coming—I never dreamed you were so sharp. Spare me the beating, let me up, and I'll tell you everything." "Very well, get up and talk." The monkeys loosed their grip, and the idiot scrambled to his feet, looking all around him. "What are you staring at?" asked the Pilgrim. "Seeing which road looks open—good for running." "And where would you run to? I'd give you three days' head start, and old Sun would still have the skill to run you down! Speak quickly! If you rouse my temper once more, there'll be no mercy!" Bajie said: "To tell you the truth, brother, ever since you went back, Sha Monk and I have been escorting Master along the road. We came to a black pine forest; Master dismounted and sent me to beg for food. The way was far, not a household in sight, and I was worn out, so I lay down in the grass for a little sleep.

Who knew that Sha Monk would leave Master and come looking for me. You know Master has no gift for sitting still: he strolled through the woods admiring the scenery, and coming out of the forest he saw a golden pagoda shining. He took it for a monastery—but under the pagoda there was a demon named Yellow-Robe, who seized him. Later, when Sha Monk and I returned to look for him, we found only the white horse and the baggage, and no Master. We tracked them to the mouth of the cave and joined battle with that monster.

Master, inside the cave, was lucky enough to find a savior: the third daughter of the king of the Kingdom of Baoxiang, whom the monster had carried off years before. She wrote a letter home and entrusted it to Master, then spoke on his behalf and got him released. When we reached the kingdom and delivered the letter, the king asked Master to subdue the demon and win the princess back. Brother, you know well enough—could that old monk subdue demons? The two of us went back and fought him again.

Who knew the monster's powers were so vast? He captured Sha Monk too, and I fled from the battlefield and hid in the grass. The monster then transformed himself into a handsome scholar, entered the court, claimed kinship with the king, and turned Master into a tiger. Once more we were lucky: the white dragon horse took on his dragon body by night and went into the city to look for Master. He never found Master, but he ran into the monster drinking in the Silver Peace Hall. He changed into a palace maid, served his wine and danced with a blade, hoping to cut him down when the chance offered—only to have the monster strike and wound his foreleg with a cherry-red staff.

It was he who sent me to fetch you, elder brother, saying: 'Your elder brother is a gentleman of honor and righteousness. A gentleman does not hold old grudges—he will surely come to save Master from this peril.' I beg you, brother, remember the saying 'A teacher for a day, a father for life'—save him, a thousand times save him!"

The Pilgrim said: "You idiot! When I took my leave I told you over and over: 'If demons or monsters seize Master, tell them old Sun is his eldest disciple.' Why didn't you mention me?" Bajie thought to himself: "Asking a general to come works worse than provoking him—let me provoke him a little." Aloud he said: "Brother, I'd have done better not to mention you! Mentioning you only made him worse!" "How so?" "I said: 'Demon, none of your insolence! Don't harm my master! I have an elder brother called Sun the Pilgrim. His powers are vast, and he is a master at subduing demons. When he comes, you'll die without a grave to hold your bones!' At those words the monster only grew the more enraged, and he cursed: 'Who's this Sun the Pilgrim? Am I supposed to fear him? If he comes, I'll flay his hide, snap his sinews, gnaw his bones, and eat his heart! Let him be a skinny monkey—I'll mince him fine and fry him in oil!'" At this the Pilgrim scratched his ears and clawed his cheeks, hopping about in a fury: "Who dares curse me like that!" Bajie said: "Calm yourself, brother. That was the Yellow-Robed Demon cursing you—I was only quoting him for your benefit." The Pilgrim said: "Rise, worthy brother. It's not that I couldn't go—but since the demon dares curse me, I cannot not subdue him. I'll come with you. Five hundred years ago, when old Sun wrought havoc in Heaven, every divine general in all the sky, at the sight of me, bent his back and bowed, every mouth crying 'Great Sage.' And this demon has the insolence to curse me behind my back and to my face! This time I'll seize him and hack him to ten thousand pieces, to avenge the insult! Once my revenge is done, I'll come straight back." Bajie said: "Just so, brother. Go and seize the demon and take your revenge; then whether you come back or not is entirely as you please."

At that the monkey leapt down from the cliff, dashed into the cave, shed his demon garb, straightened his brocade tunic, tightened his tiger-skin kilt, took up his iron staff, and strode straight out the door.

The monkeys, alarmed, crowded round to stop him: "Grandpa Great Sage, where are you going? Take us along to play for a few years!"

The Pilgrim said: "Little ones, what talk is that! This business of mine, escorting Tang Sanzang—Heaven above and Earth below, all know that Sun Wukong is Tang Sanzang's disciple. He didn't really drive me

home; he sent me home to look around, let me come home and take my ease. Now, just because of this affair, you must all guard the family estate with care—plant your willows and set out your pines in season, and let nothing fall to ruin. Wait until I have gone back to escort Tang Sanzang and fetched the scriptures to the land of the East. When the work is done, I shall come back to share the joys of innocent nature with you all." The monkeys each took the command.

Then the Great Sage took Bajie's hand, and they mounted the clouds together, left the cave, crossed the Eastern Ocean, and on reaching the western shore stayed their cloud-glow. The Pilgrim called: "Brother, you go on slowly here while I drop down to the sea and wash myself clean."

Bajie said: "We're in a hurry—what's all this about washing?" The Pilgrim said: "You wouldn't know. Since I came back, these last few days I've picked up some of the reek of demons about me. Master is a great one for cleanliness—I'm afraid he'd be disgusted." At this Bajie knew for the first time that the Pilgrim's heart was wholly true, with nothing else in it.

In a moment he had washed, and they mounted the clouds again and pressed on westward. Presently they saw the golden pagoda shining. Bajie pointed: "Isn't that the Yellow-Robed Demon's home? Sha Monk is still inside his house."

The Pilgrim said: "You wait up in the sky while I go down and look over his gateway, so I may meet the demon in proper battle array." Bajie said: "Don't go—the demon isn't home." The Pilgrim said: "I know." What a Monkey King! He brought down his auspicious light and went straight to the cave gate to look. There he saw two little boys playing with curved-headed sticks, batting a furry ball, competing for the hole. [Translator's note: "competing for the hole" (qiangwo) was a children's game rather like field hockey.] One was ten or so, the other eight or nine. As they played, the Pilgrim rushed up, and caring nothing for whose household they belonged to, seized each by the topknot and hauled them over. [Translator's note: the topknot was the little tuft of hair left unshaved on a child's crown.] The children were terrified out of their wits, screaming and cursing and bawling all at once, which alarmed the little demons of Wave-Moon Cave, who rushed in to report to the princess: "Madam, someone has carried off the two young masters!" Those two children were the princess's own, borne to the monster. At the news she hurried out of the cave door, and there was the Pilgrim standing on the high cliff, holding the two children, plainly meaning to dash them to the rocks below. In her terror the princess cried out at the top of her voice:

"You there, good sir! I've done you no wrong—why seize my sons? Their father is a fierce one; if the least harm comes to them, he will never rest till he's even with you!"

The Pilgrim said: "You don't know me? I am Sun Wukong the Pilgrim, eldest disciple of Tang Sanzang. I have a junior brother, the Sha Monk, inside your cave—go and release him, and I'll hand you back these two boys. Two for one, as it were—you'd be getting the better of the bargain." At these words the princess hurried inside, dismissed the few little demons guarding the door, and with her own hands untied Sha Monk.

Sha Monk said: "Princess, you mustn't free me. When your monster comes home and asks you for me, it will only bring trouble and abuse on your own head."

The princess said: "Venerable one, you are my benefactor. You argued my case in the family letter and saved my life, and I had already set my heart on freeing you. Who could have known that outside the cave door your eldest brother Sun Wukong would arrive, bidding me release you?"

Ah! When Sha Monk heard the three words "Sun Wukong," it was like clarified butter poured over his crown and sweet dew moistening his heart—a joy born in his very face, a springtime flooding all his breast. It was not like hearing that some mere man had come; it was as though he had picked up a slab of gold or jade.

See him shake out his sleeves, straighten his robe, walk out through the door, and salute the Pilgrim: "Brother, you have truly dropped from the heavens! I beg of you, save me!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You little shaved rascal! When Master recites the Band-tightening Spell, would you put in so much as one kind word for me? You all just wag your tongues and show off! If you wanted to escort Master, why aren't you walking the western road—what are you squatting here for?" Sha Monk said: "Brother, say no more. A gentleman does not rake up the past. I am a general of a routed army—not the man to boast of valor. Just save me, that's all I ask!" The Pilgrim said: "Come up here."

Then Sha Monk leapt up onto the rock cliff.

Now tell how Bajie, hovering in the air, saw Sha Monk come out of the cave, pressed down his cloud, and shouted: "Sha brother, bear up! Bear up!"

Sha Monk turned to look: "Second Brother, where did you come from?" Bajie said: "Yesterday I lost the battle, and in the night I entered the city and met the white horse. I learned Master was in trouble—that the Yellow-Robe Demon had used magic and turned him into a tiger. The white horse and I talked it over, and I came to fetch our elder brother." The Pilgrim said: "Idiot, save your long-lost greetings. Take these two children, the pair of you, carry them into Baoxiang city, and provoke that monster into coming out—I'll wait here to beat him." Sha Monk said: "Brother, how do we provoke him?" The Pilgrim said: "The two of you mount your clouds, stand above the Golden Chime Hall, and without more ado dash those children down before the white jade steps. If anyone asks who you are, say: 'These are the sons of the Yellow-Robed Demon—we two have brought them in!' When the monster hears it, he's certain to come rushing back, and I needn't enter the city to fight him. For if we did battle over the city, we'd be spraying clouds and puffing fog, kicking up dirt and scattering dust, frightening the court, the officials, and all the common folk—no peace for anyone." Bajie laughed: "Brother, whenever there's work to do, you always leave us holding the bag." The Pilgrim said: "How do I leave you holding the bag?" Bajie said: "These two children you grabbed are already scared out of their wits; by now they've cried themselves hoarse, and in another little while they'll certainly be dead. We dash them down and smash them into meat patties—do you think the monster will simply let that pass when he catches up? He'll have us two pay with our lives for his sons. And you? You'll stand there with clean hands—not even a witness against you! If that isn't leaving us holding the bag, what is?" The Pilgrim said: "If he grabs at you, the two of you fight him and fall back this way. There's a broad battlefield here, and I'll be waiting to give him a thrashing." Sha Monk said: "Just so, just so—eldest brother speaks sense. Let's be going." And the two of them, leaning on their prowess, carried the children off.

The Pilgrim jumped down from the rock cliff to beneath the pagoda gate. The princess said: "You monk—no honor, no faith at all! You said if I released your brother-disciple, you'd give me back my children. Your brother-disciple is free, yet you keep my children and come stand at my very door—what is the meaning of this?"

The Pilgrim put on a smiling face: "Don't be angry, Princess. You've been here a long, long while—I'm taking your young sons off to meet their grandfather." The princess said: "Monk, none of your insolence! My Yellow-Robe Lord is not like other men. If you've frightened my children out of their wits, you'll have to soothe the fright out of them."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Princess, a person born between Heaven and Earth—how is it that anything comes to be an 'offense'?"

The princess said: "I know how." The Pilgrim said: "You're a woman—what would you know?" The princess said: "From childhood in the palace I received my parents' teaching. I remember the old books say: of the three thousand offenses under the five punishments, none is greater than unfiliality."

The Pilgrim said: "Then you are just such an unfilial person. 'Father, you begot me; mother, you reared me. Alas, alas, my parents—begetting me and rearing me, what toil and pain they bore!' [Translator's note: a quotation from the Book of Songs.] Filial piety is the source of the hundred conducts, the root of the ten thousand virtues. Yet you have given your body to keep company with a demon, and never once turn your thoughts to your father and mother. If that is not the crime of unfiliality, what is?" At these upright words the princess flushed red to the ears, ashamed beyond all bearing, and burst out despite herself: "Venerable one, your words are most just. How could I not long for my parents? But this demon tricked me and carried me off here; his rules are strict, my feet can scarcely walk, the road is far and the mountains are many, and there is no one to carry word for me. I thought of killing myself, but I feared my parents would suspect I had run away, and the matter would never be cleared. So I have had no choice but to drag out my wretched breath—truly a great sinner between Heaven and Earth!" And as she spoke, her tears gushed forth like a spring.

The Pilgrim said: "Grieve no more, Princess. Zhu Bajie told me of you—how you wrote a letter that once saved my master's life, and how even in that letter there was longing for your parents. Old Sun has come to seize the demon for you, take you back to court to see your father, find you another good match, and let you wait upon your parents to the end of their days. What do you say?"

The princess said: "Monk, don't go seeking your own death. Yesterday your two brothers—fine stout fellows—could not get the better of my Yellow-Robe Lord. A skinny, bony wretch like you, the very image of a crab with its bones all grown on the outside—what powers could you have, to talk of seizing demons?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "So you have no eye for people. The proverb says: a bladder, big as it is, weighs nothing at all; a scale-weight, small as it is, presses down a thousand catties. Their looks—big and useless: walking, they strain against the wind; dressing, they waste cloth; for kindling they're hollow at heart; at the crown they're soft in the small of the back; at table they labor with no gain. Old Sun, small as he is, is all sinew and knuckle."

The princess said: "Do you truly have some skill?" The Pilgrim said: "My skill you've never set eyes on: I subdue demons to perfection and master monsters past compare." The princess said: "Then don't you go ruining things for me." The Pilgrim said: "I'll surely ruin nothing." The princess said: "Since you can subdue demons and master monsters, how will you take this one?" The Pilgrim said: "You go hide yourself, out of my sight. If he comes while you're standing there, my hands and feet will be hampered—I'm afraid your affection for him still runs deep, and you couldn't bear to part with him." The princess said: "How could I not bear to part with him? My lingering in this place was never my own choice!" The Pilgrim said: "Thirteen years you've been wife to him—how could there be no feeling between you? When I see him, there'll be no playing about: one staff will be one staff, one fist one fist; I must beat him to the ground before you can return to court and see your father."

The princess did as the Pilgrim said and hid herself away in some quiet spot—for indeed her karmic marriage was due to end, and hence the coming of the Great Sage. The Monkey King hid the princess away, then shook his body, changed his form, and transformed into the very image of the princess, returned into the cave, and waited there for the monster.

Now tell how Bajie and Sha Monk carried the two children into the Kingdom of Baoxiang and dashed them down before the white jade steps. Pitiful to tell! They were smashed flat like meat patties, fresh blood spattering, bones ground to powder. The whole court of officials cried out in alarm: "Disaster! Disaster! Two men have fallen from the sky!" Bajie shouted at the top of his voice: "Those children are the sons of the Yellow-Robed Demon—the old hog and Brother Sha have carried them here!"

The monster was still in the Silver Peace Hall, not yet sober from the night's drinking, deep in a drunken sleep. Hearing someone call his name, he rolled over, raised his head to look, and there in the clouds were

Zhu Bajie and Sha Monk, bawling out.

The demon thought to himself: "Zhu Bajie is one thing—but Sha Monk is tied up at my house. How did he get out? How could my wife have released him? And how did my children fall into their hands? This must be Zhu Bajie's scheme, unable to get me out to fight, come to bait me. If I fall for the bait and go fight him—hmph! I'm still sick with wine! If he lands one rake on me, my prestige will be finished and the whole trick exposed. Better to go home first and see whether they're my sons or not, and settle accounts with them after."

What a demon! Without even taking leave of the king, he slipped away through the hills and forests and made straight for the cave to check the news. By now the court already knew him for a monster: in the night he had eaten a palace maid, and seventeen others had escaped with their lives and reported the whole matter to the king at the fifth watch. And when he too went off without taking leave, they knew beyond all doubt that he was a demon. The king then ordered his officials to keep close guard over the sham tiger—but of that we say no more.

The demon returned straight to the mouth of the cave. When the Pilgrim saw him coming, he devised a way to gull him: he squeezed his eyes, and the tears came pattering down like rain; wailing to Heaven and Earth, stamping his feet and beating his breast, he howled and sobbed there in the cave. For the moment the demon could not tell the false from the true. He came up and put his arms around "her": "Wife, what has happened, that you grieve so?" The Great Sage had his lies ready woven, his fictions neatly molded, and tearfully he told him:

"My lord! As the saying goes, a man without a wife has no master over his wealth; a woman without a husband has nothing to lean upon! Yesterday you went to court to claim kinship—why did you never come home? This morning Zhu Bajie carried off Sha Monk, and then seized our two children as well. I begged and pleaded, but he would show no mercy. He said he was taking them to court to meet their grandfather. Half the day has gone by and no sign of the children—are they alive or dead? And you never came home—how am I to bear it?

That is why I cannot hold back my grieving." At these words rage boiled up in the demon's heart: "Were they truly my sons?" "Truly," said the Pilgrim. "Zhu Bajie carried them off." The demon hopped about in fury:

"Done for! Done for! My sons have been dashed to death! There's no bringing them back to life! Nothing for it but to take that monk and make him pay with his life for my sons! Wife, stop your crying. How do you feel within yourself? Let me doctor you a little."

The Pilgrim said: "There's nothing much wrong with me—I only cannot bear the loss of my children, and I've cried myself into a pain of the heart." The demon said: "No matter. Get up. I have a treasure here; let me but touch it to the place that hurts, and the pain will be gone. Only be careful—don't let your thumb flick it. If a thumb so much as flicks it, my true form will show through." Hearing this, the Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "This wretched monster is honest after all—no tortures applied, and he confesses on his own. When he brings out his treasure, I'll give it a flick and see what kind of monster he is." The demon took the Pilgrim by the hand and led him straight into the deepest, most sealed recesses of the cave.

There he spat from his mouth a treasure the size of a hen's egg: a luminous inner elixir, a sarira. The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "What a thing! Who knows how many sessions of seated work went into it, how many years of fiery trials endured, how many cycles of male and female matched, to refine this elixir-sarira! Today old Sun's luck has run great, to meet with it." The monkey reached out and took it. Where was there any pain? He felt the place purely for form's sake, then flicked it with one finger. The demon panicked and snatched at it—but think for yourself: how quick that monkey is! He gulped the treasure down in one swallow.

The demon clenched his fist and struck. The Pilgrim blocked it with one hand, wiped his face with the other, and showed his true form, crying: "Monster! None of your insolence! Look closely—who am I?"

The demon stared at him, greatly startled: "Why—wife! What face is this you've put on?" The Pilgrim cursed: "Wretched monster! Who's your wife? You don't even know your own ancestor!" The demon suddenly came to his senses: "I seem to know you, somehow." The Pilgrim said: "I'll not beat you yet—look again." The demon said: "Your face is familiar, but for the moment I can't put a name to it. Who are you, truly, and where do you come from? Where have you stowed my wife away, that you come to my house and swindle me out of my treasure? Insolent! Detestable!" The Pilgrim said: "So you don't know me. I am Tang Sanzang's eldest disciple, Sun Wukong the Pilgrim—I'm your ancestor of five hundred years back!" The demon said: "Nonsense! Nonsense! When I captured Tang Sanzang, I knew he had only two disciples, Zhu Bajie and Sha Monk. No one ever spoke of anyone surnamed Sun. You must be some freak from who knows where, come here to cheat me!" The Pilgrim said: "I didn't come along with those two. My master, because old Sun was ever beating demons and had killed such numbers—and he being a man of compassion and goodness—drove me home; that's why I wasn't traveling the road with him. You simply don't know your ancestor's name and surname." The demon said: "What a fine fellow you are! Expelled by your own master—and you still have the face to come see him!" The Pilgrim said: "Wretched monster, do you not know the saying: a teacher for a day, a father for life—and between father and son no feud lasts overnight! You did harm to my master—how could I not come to save him? Harming him were bad enough, but you cursed me behind my back and before my face—what do you say to that?" The demon said: "When did I ever curse you?" The Pilgrim said: "Zhu Bajie said so." The demon said: "Don't you believe him. That Zhu Bajie, with his pointed snout, is clever at carrying wives' tongues—how can you listen to him?" The Pilgrim said: "Never mind that idle talk. Just this: old Sun has come to your house today, and you have given a guest from afar a cold welcome indeed. Though you've no wine or food to set before him, a head you certainly have—stretch it out quickly, and old Sun will give it one stroke of the staff by way of tea!" At the talk of beating, the demon laughed aloud: "Sun the Pilgrim, you've misreckoned! If you mean to fight, you should never have followed me in here. My demons, great and small, still number a hundred and more. Though you were covered all over with hands, you could never fight your way out of my door." The Pilgrim said: "No more of your blather! Never mind a hundred—were there thousands upon tens of thousands, so long as each one is checked off and tallied, no stroke of mine will fall empty, and I'll wipe you out, root and branch, beyond all trace!"

At these words the demon hastily passed the order: all the demons of mountain-front and mountain-back, all the monsters within the cave and without, were mustered at once, each gripping his weapon, packing tight the three and four successive gates, letting nothing through. Seeing this, the Pilgrim was delighted to the bottom of his heart. With both hands he stroked his staff, shouted the word "Change!", turned into a figure with three heads and six arms, and with one shake of the gold-banded cudgel turned it into three gold-banded cudgels.

Watch him: six hands wielding three staves, fighting his way straight through—just like a tiger bursting into a flock of sheep, an eagle sweeping into the chicken coop. Pitiful, those little demons! Those he butted had their heads smashed to powder; those he grazed bled like flowing water! Back and forth, across and over, he rampaged as though entering an empty land.

Only one old demon was left, who charged out the gate cursing: "Damned monkey! What a scoundrel you are—coming to a body's own house to play the bully!"

The Pilgrim wheeled round quickly and beckoned with his hand: "Come! Come! Only when I've beaten you down will it count as merit!"

The monster raised his precious blade and hacked at his head. What a Pilgrim! He whipped out his iron staff and met him face to face. This battle they fought on the mountaintop, half in cloud and half in mist:

The Great Sage's powers were great; the demon's skill was high. This one leveled crosswise his gold-banded staff; that one slanted up his dipped-steel blade. The blade rose, unhurried, bright as dawn-clouds aflame; the staff parried, lightly, colored mists adrift. Back and forth they guard their crowns, wheeling over and over; to and again they swing their bodies, turning round upon round. One shifts his face with every passing wind; the other on the spot gives his body a shake. That one's fiery eyes flare wide, ape arms outstretched; this one's golden gleams dazzle bright, tiger-waist bent low. You come, I go, locked in combat; blade greets staff, parry answering blow. The Monkey King's iron staff goes by the Three Strategies; the monster's steel blade follows the Six Secret Teachings. [Translator's note: two ancient manuals of the art of war.] One, long practiced in cunning, is lord of the demons; the other, lavish with magic power, guards Tang Sanzang. The fierce Monkey King grows ever fiercer; the heroic monster grows more heroic still. Neither heeds life or death, battling in mid-air—all for Tang Sanzang, who yet worships the Buddha far away.

The two of them fought fifty or sixty rounds, and neither had the upper hand.

The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "This wretched monster—that blade of his can truly hold its own against old Sun's staff. Let old Sun show him an opening and see whether he knows enough to take it."

What a Monkey King! Both hands raised the staff in the posture of the "High Horse-Prancing Probe."

The demon, blind to the trick, saw the opening, whirled his precious blade, and chopped straight for the lower quarters. The Pilgrim swiftly swung round into "Great Level at Center," flicked that blade aside, then followed with "Stealing the Peach Beneath the Leaves," brought the staff down on the demon's crown—and struck him clean out of sight. He hastily drew back his staff to look: no demon. The Pilgrim was amazed: "My son! He couldn't take a single blow—beaten clean out of sight. If he were truly beaten to death, there should at least be some bloody pulp; how is there not the faintest trace? He must have fled."

He sprang up into the clouds to look: on every side, not a stir.

"These eyes of old Sun, wherever they look, see everything in one sweep—how could he have fled so slickly? I have it: the monster said he half recognized me. He must be no common demon of the mortal world—he's likely a spirit come down from Heaven."

For the moment the Great Sage could not master his wrath. Gripping his iron staff, he somersaulted straight up to the South Gate of Heaven. Pang, Liu, Gou, Bi, Zhang, Tao, Deng, Xin, and the rest, in alarm, bowed low on either side, not daring to bar his way, and let him charge through the heavenly gate, all the way to the Hall of Universal Brightness.

The four Heavenly Masters, Zhang, Ge, Xu, and Qiu, came forward at once and asked: "What brings the Great Sage here?" The Pilgrim said: "While escorting Tang Sanzang to the Kingdom of Baoxiang, there was a demon who deceived the king's daughter and did harm to my master. Old Sun joined battle with him, and in the very midst of the fight the monster vanished. I suspect he is no demon of the mortal world below, but a spirit from Heaven above, and I have come to make inspection: which of the watches has let slip some demon god?" At this the Heavenly Masters went in to the Hall of Divine Mists and reported. By imperial command an inspection was made: the Star Officers of the Nine Luminaries, the Twelve Houses of the zodiac, the Five Bushels of east, west, south, north, and center, the host of stars of the River of Heaven, the Five Sacred Peaks and the Four Streams, all the gods of all the firmament—every one was above at his post; not one had dared leave his station.

They then checked the twenty-eight mansions outside the Palace of Dipper and Ox—there were only twenty-seven, and the Star Kui alone was missing. The Heavenly Masters returned and reported: "The Wood Wolf of Kui has descended to the world below."

The Jade Emperor asked: "How long has he been away from Heaven?" The Heavenly Masters said: "He has missed four musters. Roll call comes every three days—thirteen days have passed." The Jade Emperor said: "Thirteen days in Heaven are thirteen years below."

He then ordered that demon's own department to bring him back up to the upper world. The twenty-seven star officials received the decree, went out the heavenly gate, and each recited his incantation, stirring the Star Kui. And where do you suppose he was hiding? He was one of the divine generals whom the Great Sage had terrified in the days of the havoc in Heaven, and he had slipped into a mountain ravine to lurk through his trouble, the watery vapor veiling his demon cloud—that is why no one had seen him. Only when he heard his own department's officials reciting the spell did he dare come out, and he followed them up to Heaven.

The Great Sage blocked the heavenly gate and would have beaten him, but fortunately the other stars talked him round, and the monster was escorted before the Jade Emperor.

The monster took the gold placard from his waist, knelt below the hall, and kowtowed in confession of his guilt. The Jade Emperor said: "Wood Wolf of Kui, the upper world has boundless sights to enjoy—why forgo them to sneak off to some corner below?"

The Star Kui kowtowed and reported: "Spare your servant the death penalty, Your Majesty. That princess of the Kingdom of Baoxiang is no common mortal. She was the Jade Girl who tended the incense in the Hall of Spreading Fragrance, and because she wished to have secret dealings with your servant, I feared to defile the pure precincts of the heavenly palace. She yearned for the mortal world and went down first, to be born within the inner palace. I, unwilling to break our former pledge, transformed myself into a demon, seized a famous mountain, and carried her off to my cave, where I paired with her as husband and wife for thirteen years. Every sip and every peck is predestined—and now the Great Sage Sun has come and brought the matter to its completion." At these words the Jade Emperor took back the gold placard and banished him to the Tushita Palace to tend the fires for Lord Lao Zi, serving on half pay. If he did well, he would be restored to office; if not, his crime would be redoubled.

The Pilgrim, seeing the Jade Emperor dispose of matters in this fashion, was pleased at heart. He bowed a deep bow toward the throne, then said to the assembled gods: "My thanks for your trouble, everyone." The Heavenly Masters laughed: "That monkey is the same rustic as ever. We rounded up the monster god for him, and instead of thanking Heaven for its grace he just bows and bustles off." The Jade Emperor said: "So long as he's satisfied, the peace of Heaven is cheaply bought."

The Great Sage brought down his auspicious light and returned straight to Wave-Moon Cave on Bowl Mountain, brought out the princess, and was just recounting how the demon who yearned for the mortal world had been taken away—when from halfway up the sky came the loud cries of Bajie and Sha Monk: "Elder brother, there are demons—leave a few for us to beat!"

The Pilgrim said: "The demons are wiped out to the very last." Sha Monk said: "Since the demons are all destroyed and nothing holds us here, let us bring the princess into the court. Close your eyes, brothers—we'll use the earth-shrinking spell." The princess heard the wind whistling past her ears, and in an instant they were back in the city. The three of them brought the princess up to the Golden Chime Hall, where she bowed to her father the king and her mother the queen, greeted her sisters, and all the officials came forward to pay their respects. Then at last the princess addressed the throne:

"It was thanks to the boundless magic of the Venerable Sun, who subdued the Yellow-Robed Demon and brought your handmaid home to the kingdom." The king asked: "What sort of monster was this Yellow-Robe?" The Pilgrim said: "Your Majesty's son-in-law was the Star Kui from the upper world, and Your Majesty's daughter was the Jade Girl who tended the incense. Because she yearned for the mortal world she descended among men—no small matter, but all was set by former lives and former bonds: these

kinships were fated from the start. As for the monster—old Sun went up to the heavenly palace and reported to the Jade Emperor, who found that he had missed four musters, thirteen days in the world below, that is, thirteen years; for one day above is one year below. He then dispatched the star officials of his own department to take him back up, and he has been banished to the Tushita Palace to win merit. And so old Sun has brought Your Majesty's daughter safely home." The king thanked the Pilgrim for his kindness, and then gave orders: "Come, let us go see your master."

The three of them went straight down from the treasure hall, and with the officials went to the court chamber, carried out the iron cage, and loosed the iron chain from the sham tiger. To everyone else he looked a tiger; to the Pilgrim alone he was a man. The master had been bewitched under the demon's magic and could not walk; his mind was perfectly clear, but his mouth and eyes would not open.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, what a fine monk you are—however did you come to put on such a wicked face? You blamed me for violence and wickedness and drove me away; you wanted to set your whole heart on goodness—and how did you come by a face like this?"

Bajie said: "Brother, save him and have done—don't keep picking at his sores."

The Pilgrim said: "You're forever egging him on—you're his favorite good disciple, no mistake. If you won't save him, why come bothering old Sun? I told you plainly at the time: once the demon was subdued and my revenge for the cursing was taken, I would go back." Sha Monk stepped forward and knelt: "Brother, the ancients say: for the monk's own sake, no—but for the Buddha's sake, yes. Since you have come all this way, we beg you, save him. If we two could have saved him ourselves, we'd never have traveled all that weary way to fetch you." The Pilgrim raised him up with his hand: "How could I ever have it in my heart not to save him? Fetch water, and quickly." Bajie flew like a shooting star to the post station, brought back the luggage and the horse, took out the purple gold alms bowl, filled it half full of water, and handed it to the Pilgrim.

Taking the water in his hands, the Pilgrim recited the true spell, and with one spray dashed it over the tiger's head and face, dissolving the demon magic and dispersing the tiger-essence.

The elder showed his true form, gathered his spirit, and opened his eyes, and there at last he knew the Pilgrim. Clutching him tight: "Wukong! Where have you come from?"

Sha Monk stood in attendance at the side and told the whole of it: how they had fetched the Pilgrim to subdue the demon, save the princess, disperse the tiger-essence, and come back to court—all of it he recounted in full.

Sanzang thanked him without end: "Worthy disciple, I am indebted to you—indebted to you! From here straight to the Western Heaven, and straight back to the East, to report to the Tang emperor. Your merit stands first."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Say no more, say no more! Only don't recite 'that spell'—that is kindness and love enough for me." Hearing this, the king once more expressed his thanks to the four of them, prepared a vegetarian banquet, and threw open the Eastern Pavilion. Master and disciples, having received the royal grace, took leave of the king and set off toward the west, and the king with all his officials escorted them a long way. And this was truly:

The sovereign returns to his treasure hall to settle the realm; The monks depart for the Thunderclap, to worship the Buddha.

But as for what happened after this, and when they would reach the Western Heaven—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 32

On Flat-Top Mountain the Duty God Delivers a Warning; In Lotus Cave the Wood-Mother Meets Disaster

The story tells how Tang Sanzang had Sun the Pilgrim back again, and master and disciples, of one heart and one body, went on together toward the West. Since saving the princess in the Kingdom of Baoxiang, they had been escorted out of the western gate by sovereign and court, and no telling could exhaust the tale of their journey—hunger fed on the road, thirst quenched on the road, resting by night and walking by day. And now they had come upon the season of full spring:

Light breezes comb the willows, green as silk; The lovely scene invites a poem's praise. The hours hasten the birds to song; Warmth coaxes the flowers open; Fragrant bloom covers all the ground. In the crabapple courtyard a pair of swallows arrives— 'Tis just the time to savor spring. On the dusty roads of the red world, in silks and gauze, Strings and pipes sound, and girls play grass-games and pass the cup.

As master and disciples walked along enjoying the view, another mountain rose to bar their way. Tang Sanzang said: "Disciples, be careful. Ahead lies a high mountain—I fear tigers and wolves may block the way."

The Pilgrim said: "Master, those who have left the world should not talk like those still in it. Do you remember the Heart Sutra of the Crow's Nest Monk: 'The mind has no hindrance; because there is no hindrance, it has no fear, and it is far removed from inverted dream and delusion'? All you need do is sweep the filth from your mind and wash the dust from your ears. Unless you suffer bitterness upon bitterness, you cannot rise above other men. Don't worry. With old Sun here, even if the sky itself came crashing down, I'd guarantee no harm. What are a few tigers and wolves to fear!"

The elder drew up his horse and said:

"When by imperial command I left Chang'an, My single thought was to go west and worship the Buddha's face. In the lands of the relics, golden images in splendor; In the pagodas, the jade radiance of his brow. I have sought out every nameless water under heaven, And trodden every mountain where no man has trod. Chasing on and on through wave upon wave of mist— When will this body of mine win its ease?"

At these words the Pilgrim laughed heartily: "You want an easy body, Master? What difficulty is there in that? Once our work is achieved, the ten thousand attachments all cease, and all things are emptiness. Then, quite naturally and of itself, will you not have an easy body?"

Hearing this, the elder could only take joy and forget his sorrow. He loosed the reins to hasten the silver steed, gathered the bridle to urge on the jade dragon. Master and disciples climbed the mountain, and it was perilous in the extreme—a truly towering, splendid mountain:

Lofty ridges, soaring; sharp peaks, knife-cut. By the deep, winding gullies, beside the lonely sheer cliffs. By the deep, winding gullies, one hears only the hula-la of a swimming serpent rolling over; Beside the lonely sheer cliffs, one sees a tiger bursting from the woods, lashing its tail. Look upward: the crests jut jagged through the blue empyrean; Turn and gaze: the ravines plunge dark, verging on the vault of heaven. Climbing high, it is like a ladder, like a stool; Descending low, it is like a trench, like a pit. Truly a mountain of strange and jagged crests, In truth a cliff-face of linked knife-points and sheared walls. On the jagged crests, the herb-gatherer thinks with dread of crossing; Before the sheared walls, the woodcutter cannot move a single step. Wild sheep and wild horses dart and crisscross; Cunning hares and mountain oxen move as if in battle array. The height veils sun and blots out the stars; And always there are savage beasts and gray wolves. The grassy paths blur and baffle the horse— How shall we ever reach the Thunderclap and see the King of

Buddha?

The elder reined in his horse to study the mountain. Just where the way grew most difficult, on a green mossy slope, there stood a woodcutter. And how was he dressed?

On his head an old indigo felt hat; On his body a patched black hemp robe. The old indigo felt hat—shutting out smoke and sun, a rare thing truly; The patched black hemp robe—taking joy and forgetting sorrow, seldom seen. In his hand a steel axe, ground swift and bright; With his blade he fells dry wood and binds it tight. On his carrying-pole, the colors of spring—through all four seasons, a mellow warmth; Beyond his body, an idle heart—ever beneath the pale light of the three stars. To old age he lives just as his lot allows—What glory or disgrace ever bars his mountain way?

That woodcutter was just then felling rotten firewood before the slope when he suddenly spied the elder coming from the east.

He stopped his axe-haft and came out of the woods, hastened over, climbed onto the rock cliff, and called out to the elder in a loud voice: "Venerable one bound westward! Pause a moment. I have a word of warning for you: on this mountain there is a band of venomous demons and savage monsters who feed on travelers going east or west."

At these words the elder's soul flew and scattered; trembling, he could not sit steady in his carved saddle. He turned his head quickly and called his disciples: "Did you hear that woodcutter's warning—venomous demons and savage monsters on this mountain? Who will go and question him closely?" The Pilgrim said: "Rest easy, Master. Let old Sun go and ask him the truth of the matter."

What a Pilgrim! He strode off and went straight up the mountain, hailed the woodcutter as "Elder Brother," and made his bow. The woodcutter returned the greeting: "Venerable one, what brings you here?" The Pilgrim said: "I'll not hide it from you, Elder Brother. We have been sent by the emperor of the East Land to fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven. That man on horseback is my master, and he is something of a coward. Just now you were kind enough to warn us of venomous demons and savage monsters, so I have come to ask one thing:

How many years old is that demon, how many years that monster? Is he a practiced hand, or a raw novice? Pray tell me honestly, Elder Brother, and I shall have the mountain god and the local deity escort him out of the province." [Translator's note: "escort him out of the province"—to have him deported, like a vagrant, by the local divinities.]

At these words the woodcutter threw back his head and roared with laughter: "So you're a mad monk."

"I'm not mad," said the Pilgrim. "That was honest talk." The woodcutter said: "If it was honest talk, how dare you speak of having him escorted away?" The Pilgrim said:

"Puffing up his prestige like that, babbling wild nonsense to block the road and scare us—could it be you're kin to him? If not kin, then neighbor; if not neighbor, then friend."

The woodcutter laughed: "You mad, wild monk—utterly without reason! I came out of good will, specially to warn you so you'd be on your guard morning and evening as you travel, and you turn it round against me. Never mind that I don't know where these demons come from—suppose I did: how would you dare deport them? And where would you send them?"

The Pilgrim said: "If he's a demon of Heaven, I hand him to the Jade Emperor; if a demon of Earth, to the Bureau of Earth. Those of the West go to the Buddha; those of the East, to the Sage. Those of the North I hand to the True Warrior; those of the South, to the Virtue of Fire. A flood-dragon spirit goes to the Lord of the Seas; a ghostly pest goes to King Yama—each has his place and his direction. Old Sun knows people

everywhere. I'd issue one writ and have him deported at a dead run before the night was out." At that the woodcutter could not hold back cold laughter: "You mad, wild monk! You've been drifting about the countryside, I suppose, and learned a few charm-drawing, water-spelling arts—good enough for driving off evils and binding ghosts. You've never yet run into monsters as vicious as these." The Pilgrim said: "What makes them so vicious?" The woodcutter said: "The road across this mountain runs six hundred li and more, and it is called Flat-Top Mountain. In the mountain there is a cave called Lotus Cave. In the cave are two demon chiefs. They have posted pictures and portraits to capture monks; they have copied the names and inquired after the surname, meaning to eat Tang Sanzang.

"If you'd come from anywhere else, no matter. But with the least connection to the word 'Tang'—don't even dream of getting through, getting through!"

The Pilgrim said: "We've come precisely from the Tang court."

The woodcutter said: "Then they'll want to eat you indeed." The Pilgrim said: "What luck! What luck! Only—how will they eat us?" The woodcutter said: "What do you care how they eat you?" The Pilgrim said: "If they eat the head first, that's fine and fun; if they start with the feet, that's hard lines." "What do you mean, head first? What do you mean, feet first?" The Pilgrim said: "You've never been through it. If they eat the head first—one bite, and I'm dead; then let them fry, braise, stew, or boil me, I'll feel no pain. But if they start with the feet—they gnaw the anklebones, chew the calves, work up to the backbone, and I still can't manage to die—wouldn't that be suffering in bits and scraps? That's what I call hard lines." The woodcutter said: "Monk, where would they find so much time? They'd simply seize you, tie you up, pop you in a steamer, and eat you whole." The Pilgrim laughed: "Even better! Even better! No pain worth minding—I'd only suffer a little stuffy discomfort." The woodcutter said: "Don't you make fun, monk. Those monsters carry five treasures on them, and their powers are vast beyond measure. Even if you were a pillar propping up Heaven or a beam straddling the sea, escorting this Tang monk through would still make your head swim a few times." The Pilgrim said: "Swim how many times?" The woodcutter said: "Three or four times, at least." The Pilgrim said: "No matter, no matter.

"In a year we commonly swim seven or eight hundred times. Three or four swims come easy—swim, swim, and they're over."

What a Great Sage—utterly without fear, his whole heart set only on escorting Tang Sanzang! He left the woodcutter, wheeled round, and strode back down to the slope and the horse's head: "Master, nothing much the matter. There is a demon or two about, but the folk here are timid and take him to heart. With me along, what is there to fear? Let's be walking! Let's be walking!"

Hearing this, the elder could only ease his mind and follow. Just as they were walking on, the woodcutter was gone.

The elder said: "How is it that the woodcutter who warned us has vanished?"

Bajie said: "Our luck's out—we've run into a daytime ghost." The Pilgrim said: "He's probably gone into the woods to gather firewood. Let me go take a look." What a Great Sage! He opened his fiery eyes with golden pupils and scanned mountain after mountain, ridge after ridge—no trace anywhere.

Suddenly he raised his head and looked into the clouds, and there it was: the Duty God of the Day. He sprang into the clouds, caught up with him, cursed him a few times for a shaggy wretch, and demanded: "Why didn't you come out and say your say straight, instead of changing yourself like that to make sport of old Sun?"

The Duty God hastened to bow: "Great Sage, forgive my late warning—no offense, no offense. These monsters truly have vast powers and endless transformations. Only look to your nimbleness and cleverness, put your divine cunning in motion, and guard your master with the greatest care. If you slacken by so much

as a little, the road to the Western Heaven may not be traveled at all."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim dismissed the Duty God, took the warning deep to heart, brought down his cloud, and returned to the mountainside.

There were the elder, Bajie, and Sha Monk clustered together on the way. He thought to himself: "If I tell Master plainly what the Duty God said, Master is not up to it—he'd surely start weeping. But if I don't tell him the truth, I'd be leading him along with his head in a bag. As the saying goes, new to the reed-marsh, one knows not the depths. Suppose the demons fished him up—wouldn't that just mean more trouble for old Sun? Better first to take Bajie in hand, and send him out to fight a round with the monster. If he can beat him, that's a merit to his credit; if he hasn't the skill and gets captured, it won't be too late for old Sun to go rescue him—and it will nicely show off my own powers and make my name."

As he was turning it over, questioning his own heart, he thought: "Only, Bajie is lazy—if he won't come forward, and Master is a bit given to sparing him, old Sun must put a checkrein on him." What a Great Sage! Watch him put up a false front: he rubbed his eyes, rubbed out some tears, and walked straight ahead to meet his master, weeping. When Bajie saw it, he cried out at once:

"Sha Monk, set down the load! Bring out the luggage! Let's divide it up, the two of us!"

Sha Monk said: "Divide what, Second Brother?" Bajie said: "Divide it, I say! You go back to the Flowing Sands River and play the monster again; the old hog will go back to Gao Family Village and look up his wife. We'll sell the white horse, buy a coffin, and see Master off in his old age—and everyone scatter! Who's going to the Western Heaven anyhow?" The elder, hearing this from horseback, said: "You lout! We're on the road—how can you talk such nonsense again?" Bajie said: "Your son's the one talking nonsense! Don't you see Sun the Pilgrim over there, coming along crying? He's a hero who bores into the sky and burrows into the earth, whom axe-cuts and fire-burns and boiling oil cannot frighten—and now he's wearing the cap of sorrow, coming along with tears streaming. It must be that the mountain is frightfully steep and the demons terribly fierce. How could soft, weak creatures like us ever get through?" The elder said: "Hold your foolish talk. Let me ask him and see what he has to say." He asked: "Wukong, whatever it is, we should discuss it face to face. Why are you grieving by yourself? A tear-bag face like that—you're trying to frighten me with a tiger!" The Pilgrim said: "Master, that one who brought the warning just now was the Duty God of the Day. He said the demons are fierce and this stretch is hard going. And it's true: the mountain is high and the road precipitous—we cannot get through. Let us go another day." At this the elder grew frightened and dismayed; he clutched the Pilgrim's tiger-skin kilt: "Disciple! Of three stretches of road we have walked a stretch and a half—why speak of turning back?" The Pilgrim said: "It's not that I'd spare any effort—but I fear the demons are many and our strength is thin, and we march alone. Even if we were a block of iron, how many nails could the furnace beat out of it?" The elder said:

"Disciple, what you say is true—alone, a man is hard put to it. The art of war says: the few cannot withstand the many.

But here I have Bajie and Sha Monk, both disciples, yours to dispatch and deploy. Let them be your guard-generals and helpers—joining strength, joining hearts, sweeping the mountain path clean, and leading me across the mountain. Will not all of us then attain the true fruit?"

All this squirming of the Pilgrim's had been to coax out those very words from the elder. He wiped his tears and said: "Master, if we're to cross this mountain, Zhu Bajie must agree to two conditions of mine; then there's three parts in ten of getting through.

"If he won't do as I say, and can't take a hand in my place, then not half a part in ten may we hope for." Bajie said: "If our elder brother won't go, let's scatter and have done—don't go dragging me in." The elder said: "Disciple, just ask your elder brother and see what he has you do." So the idiot actually said to the Pilgrim:

"Brother, what would you have me do?" The Pilgrim said: "The first task is to watch Master; the second is to go scout the mountain." Bajie said:

"Watching Master is sitting; scouting the mountain is walking. You can't mean for me to sit a while and then walk, walk a while and then sit—how could I look after both at once?"

The Pilgrim said: "I don't mean for you to do both at once—just take one of the two." Bajie laughed again: "That's easy enough settled. But what's 'watching Master,' and what's 'scouting the mountain'? Explain it to me first, and let me pick the one that suits me." The Pilgrim said: "Watching Master: when Master goes to relieve himself, you attend him; when Master wants to walk, you support him; when Master wants food, you go beg it. If he goes a little hungry, you deserve a beating; if his face goes a little sallow, you deserve a beating; if his body gets a little thin, you deserve a beating." Bajie panicked: "That's hard! Hard! Hard! Attending and supporting—nothing to that; even carrying him on my back without leaving his side would be easy. But if you send me to the farms to beg food—on this western road nobody knows me for a scripture-seeking monk; they'd take me for some half-grown sturdy hog escaped from the hills, rally a whole crowd with forks and rakes and brooms, bear the old hog to the ground, carry me home to slaughter, and salt me down for the New Year. Wouldn't that be catching the plague for nothing?"

The Pilgrim said: "Then go scout the mountain." Bajie said: "And what does scouting the mountain amount to?" The Pilgrim said: "Go into this mountain, find out how many demons there are, what mountain it is, what cave it is—then we can get through." Bajie said: "That's small stuff. The old hog will go scout the mountain." And the idiot tucked up his robe, gripped his nail-rake, and swaggering grandly marched into the deep mountains, chest high, onto the great road.

The Pilgrim, watching from the side, could not help snickering coldly.

The elder scolded: "You wild ape! Not a shred of brotherly love in you—nothing but jealousy in your heart. You put on this fox-cunning, honey words and flattering looks, trick him into scouting the mountain, and then stand there laughing at him!"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm not laughing at him—there's savor in my laugh. You watch: Zhu Bajie, once he's off, will do no scouting and won't dare face any demon. He'll find some spot to hide in for half a day, then cook up a lie to fob us off with." The elder said:

"How can you know him so well?"

The Pilgrim said: "I reckon that's what he's like. If you don't believe me, let me follow along and watch and listen—first, to back him up with a few tricks against the demons; second, to see whether he has any true heart for worshiping the Buddha." The elder said: "Very well, very well—only don't you go tormenting him." The Pilgrim promised, went straight up the slope, shook his body, and changed into a tiny gadfly-midge.

And what a light, neat transformation it was! See it:

Wings thin, riding the wind without effort; Waist sharp and slender as a needle. It threads the rushes, skims the grasses, passes under flower shade— Swifter than a shooting star, and then some. Eyes bright and glittering; Voice faint and murmuring. Of all the insect kind, it is the smallest, Dainty, unhurried, deep in cunning. Many an idle day it rests in the quiet woods— A body wholly hidden, a thousand eyes could not find it. Whirr—one beat of its wings, and away!

It flew off, caught up with Bajie, and perched behind his ear, at the root of his bristles.

The idiot tramped along all unaware that anyone was riding him. After seven or eight li of walking he flung down his rake, turned his head, glared back the way they had come toward Tang Sanzang, and let loose with hands and fingers flying: "You spineless old monk! You tricksy Bimawen! You milk-livered Sha Monk!

Them—all of them—taking their ease, and the old hog sent out to wear his legs off! We're all fetching scriptures, all of us hoping for the true fruit—so why is it me who has to scout the mountain! Ha-ha-ha! If I know there are demons, I'll keep well out of their way. Not even halfway there, and he sends me out looking for them—what luck, what luck! I'll find me a place to sleep, sleep my sleep, then go back and answer them vague and hazy—say I've scouted the mountain—and that'll settle the account."

The idiot, mightily pleased with his cleverness, shouldered his rake and trudged on.

In a hollow of the mountain he found a slope of red grass, dove straight in, used the rake to pat himself a bed on the ground, flopped down with a roll, stretched out his waist, and said: "Sweet! Not even Bimawen ever lived as free as this!" [Translator's note: Bimawen, "Stable-Keeper of Heaven," was the lowly post Sun Wukong once held in the celestial stables—a standing sore point with him.]

For the Pilgrim was behind his ear-root, listening to every word. Unable to hold back, he flew up to play one more trick on him. He shook his body again and changed into a woodpecker-insect. See it:

An iron beak, sharp-pointed, glossy red; Kingfisher plumes, brilliant and bright. A pair of steel claws keen as nails— Though its belly be empty, what matter, the woods are still. It loves best a rotten, crumbling snag; It takes against the lone old tree. Round eyes, spread tail, quick and nimble— Its pecking tap-tap-tap is sweet to hear.

This bird-sprite, neither big nor small—on the scales it would weigh no more than two or three ounces, with a red-copper beak and black-iron feet—came whirring down on the wing. Bajie had toppled over and was fast asleep. It pecked him one peck, smack on the lips. The idiot scrambled up in a fright, bawling: "A demon! A demon! Stabbed me with a spear and gone! My mouth hurts like anything!" He put out a hand and felt—blood was oozing out. "Ill luck!" he cried. "I've had no happy news coming—why is my mouth hung with red?"

He stared at his bloody hand, muttering and grumbling, glancing this way and that, but saw nothing stirring. He said:

"No demon about—so what stabbed me with a spear?"

Suddenly he raised his head to look: it was a woodpecker-insect, flying in midair.

The idiot ground his teeth and cursed: "You dead wretch! It's bad enough being bullied by Bimawen, without you bullying me too! I see it all now. He surely doesn't take me for a human being—he takes this snout of mine for a length of black rotten dead wood with grubs inside, and pecked it hunting for grubs. Well then, I'll tuck my snout in my shirt and sleep."

The idiot flopped down and rolled over to sleep again. The Pilgrim flew back and pecked him once more behind the ear. The idiot scrambled up in a panic: "This dead wretch is too much of a pest! This must be his nest here—laying eggs, raising broods, afraid I'll take up the room, so he pesters me like this. Enough! Enough! Enough! No more sleeping!"

He shouldered his rake, marched out of the red-grass slope, and found the road and trudged on.

And wasn't Sun the Pilgrim delighted—didn't it just topple the Handsome Monkey King over with laughter! "This lout," said the Pilgrim, "with both eyes wide open can't even tell his own family!"

What a Great Sage! He shook his body once more, turned again into the little gadfly-midge, perched behind Bajie's ear, and never left his body. The idiot walked deeper into the mountains, another four or five li, until in a hollow he came upon three square bluestones, each the size of a tabletop. The idiot set down his rake and bowed a deep bow to the stones.

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "This idiot! A stone isn't a person—it can't talk, can't return a bow. What's he bowing to it for? The muddled fool!"

For the idiot was taking those stones for Tang Sanzang, Sha Monk, and the Pilgrim, and rehearsing before them.

He said: "When I get back and see Master, if he asks whether there are demons, I'll say there are demons. If he asks what mountain, and I were to say one molded of mud, made of earth, beaten of tin, cast of bronze, steamed from dough, pasted of paper, or drawn with a brush—when they hear it, they'd say I'm stupid; say that, and they'd say it doubly. I'll just say it's a stone mountain. If he asks what cave, I'll say a stone cave too.

"If he asks what gate, I'll say an iron-sheet gate studded with nails. If he asks how far it goes inside, I'll say three courtyards deep. And if he presses further and asks how many nails on the gate, I'll say the old hog was too flustered to remember exactly. With the story all patched together here, I'll go fob off that Bimawen!"

The idiot had his fabrication fused and finished. He dragged his rake and started back the way he had come—little knowing that the Pilgrim, behind his ear, had heard every word of it plainly. When the Pilgrim saw him turning back, he beat his two wings, flew back ahead of him, resumed his true form, and presented himself to the master.

The master said: "Wukong, you're back. Why isn't Wuneng back with you?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "He's off back there cooking up his lie—he'll be along presently." The elder said: "With those two ears of his flapped down over his eyes, a dull, clumsy creature—how could he cook up any lie? It's you again, kneading some ghost-talk to pin on him." The Pilgrim said: "Master, you're always shielding him like this. It so happens there's question-and-answer to prove it." And he told it all beforehand: how the idiot had burrowed into the grass to sleep, been pecked awake by a woodpecker-insect, bowed to the stones, and made up his tale of the stone mountain, the stone cave, the iron-sheet gate, and the demons.

Scarcely was the tale told when the idiot came trudging up, head bowed, still mumbling his lines for fear he'd forget the lie.

The Pilgrim shouted at him: "Idiot! What are you reciting?"

Bajie flipped up an ear and looked: "I'm here already!" The idiot came forward and knelt down. The elder raised him up: "Disciple, you've had a hard time." Bajie said: "That I have.

"A walking man, a mountain-climbing man—no one works harder."

The elder said: "Are there demons?" Bajie said: "Demons! Demons! A whole heap of demons!" The elder said: "How did they send you off?" Bajie said: "They called me their Hog Ancestor, their Hog Grandpapa, laid out starch-soup and vegetarian dishes, fed me a full meal, and said they'd beat the drums and fly the banners to see us over the mountain." The Pilgrim said: "I suppose you fell asleep in the grass, and that was sleep-talk?" At this the idiot shrank three inches with terror: "Grandpa! If I slept, how could he know it?" The Pilgrim stepped up, seized him with one grab: "Come here while I ask you a thing or two." The idiot panicked again, trembling all over: "Ask, then—why grab and haul?" The Pilgrim said: "What mountain is it?" Bajie said: "A stone mountain." "What cave?" "A stone cave." "What gate?" "An iron-sheet gate, nailed with nails." "How far inside?" "Three courtyards deep." The Pilgrim said: "You needn't say the rest—I remember it well. Lest Master doubt you, I'll say it for you." Bajie said: "The cheek of it! You never went—what could you know, to say it for me?" The Pilgrim laughed: "'How many nails on the gate? Say the old hog was too flustered to remember.' Isn't that it?" The idiot fell to his knees in a great hurry.

The Pilgrim said: "And you bowed to the stones, took them for us three, questioned and answered them to and fro—wasn't it so? And then: 'When I've got my lie all patched, I'll go fob off that Bimawen!' Wasn't it

so?"

The idiot could only kowtow without pause: "Elder brother, I went to scout the mountain—surely you didn't go along with me to listen?" The Pilgrim cursed: "You chaff-guzzling lout! Such a critical spot, and you're sent to scout, and you go off to sleep! If that woodpecker hadn't pecked you awake, you'd be sleeping there yet. And once pecked awake, you cook up a whopper of a lie—how could that not ruin the whole business? Stretch out that ankle of yours—five strokes of the staff, to stay in your memory!" Bajie panicked: "That mourner's staff of yours is heavy—one graze and the skin drops, one brush and the sinew's hurt—five strokes would be the death of me!"

The Pilgrim said: "If you fear the rod, why did you lie?"

Bajie said: "Brother, dear brother—just this once, and never again." The Pilgrim said: "Once, then—three strokes." Bajie said: "Grandpa! Not half a stroke could I stand!" The idiot, at his wits' end, clutched at the master: "Put in a kind word for me." The elder said: "When Wukong said you were lying, I wouldn't believe it. Now that it's so, you truly deserve the beating. But just now, crossing this mountain, I'm short of hands to call on. Wukong, spare him for the moment—beat him after we're across." The Pilgrim said: "The ancients say: to obey a father's and mother's words is called great filiality. Since Master says no beating, I'll spare you—for now. Go scout the mountain again. If you lie once more and ruin the business, I'll not spare you a single stroke!" The idiot could only scramble up and dash onto the great road again.

Watch him now: suspicion breeding ghost-shadows, at every step suspecting it is the Pilgrim transformed and dogging him, so that at the sight of anything at all he takes it for the Pilgrim. Seven or eight li along, he saw a tiger come loping over the mountainside, and he didn't fear it; he raised his nail-rake and said:

"Elder brother, come to hear my lying? This trip I'm not inventing anything." Farther on, a fierce mountain gust came roaring—one whump, and it snapped a withered tree and sent it rolling to his very feet. He stamped his feet and beat his breast: "Brother! What's the meaning of this! One word that I'll not dare invent a lie—and now you change into a tree to beat me!"

Walking on again, he saw a white-necked crow that cawed caw-caw several times right over his head. Again he said: "Brother, shame on you! Shame on you! I said I'd invent nothing and I'll invent nothing—why keep turning into a crow? Coming to listen, are you?"

The truth was, this time the Pilgrim had not followed him at all; it was his own startled fancy, his wild doubts and wild guesses, so that everything under heaven seemed to him the Pilgrim at his heels. But leave the idiot to his terrors.

Now tell: the mountain was called Flat-Top Mountain, and the cave was called Lotus Cave. In the cave were two demons: one called the Golden Horn King, one the Silver Horn King.

The Golden Horn King was sitting in state, and he said to Silver Horn: "Brother, how long is it since we scouted the mountains?"

Silver Horn said: "Half a month and more." Golden Horn said: "Brother, go and scout with me today." Silver Horn said: "What's this sudden scouting today?" Golden Horn said: "You don't know. Word has lately come that the Tang court of the East Land has sent the emperor's sworn brother Tang Sanzang westward to worship the Buddha—a party of four, called Sun the Pilgrim, Zhu Bajie, and the Sha Monk, five souls counting the horse. Find out where he is, and bring him to me." Silver Horn said: "We eat people—where couldn't we scoop up a few? Let this monk pass on his way." Golden Horn said: "You don't understand. When I left the bounds of Heaven, I heard it said:

"Tang Sanzang is the Venerable Golden Cicada descended to the mortal world, a good man who has cultivated his conduct through ten lifetimes, with never a drop of his primal yang spent. Whoever eats his

flesh will lengthen his years and live forever." Silver Horn said: "If eating his flesh brings long life, why sit in meditation, why pile up merit, why refine the dragon and the tiger, why match the female and the male?

"We should just go eat him. Wait—I'll go seize him."

Golden Horn said: "Brother, you're too hot-headed—don't rush. If you walk out that door and seize every monk you meet, good or bad, and he turns out not to be Tang Sanzang, wouldn't that be a pity? I remember his likeness: I once had his whole party's portraits drawn. Take them, and whenever you meet a monk, check him against the pictures."

He also told him which man bore which name, one by one. Silver Horn took the portraits, learned the names, went straight out of the cave, mustered thirty little demons, and set out to patrol the mountain.

Now Bajie's luck was out. Just as he was walking along, whom should he run plump into but the demon horde, blocking his way face to face:

"You there! Who are you?"

The idiot looked up, flipped back an ear, saw they were demons, and panicked. He thought to himself: "If I say I'm a scripture-seeking monk, they'll scoop me up. I'll just say I'm a traveler." The little demons reported: "Great King, a traveler." Of those thirty little demons, some knew the pictures and some didn't; and some stood at the side, listening and pointing, and said: "Great King, this monk looks like the Zhu Bajie in the picture." They called to hang up the portrait-scrolls. Bajie saw them and was greatly alarmed: "No wonder I've had no spirit these last days—they've gone and sent my portrait ahead of me!" The little demons held the scrolls up on spear-points, and the Silver Horn King pointed with his finger: "This one on the white horse is Tang Sanzang. This hairy-faced one is Sun the Pilgrim." Bajie heard it and muttered: "City God! If you'll only leave me out of the picture, I'll vow you a hog's head and the three offerings, and the finest purification mass there is." He mumbled on, promising offerings right and left.

The demon went on: "This tall dark one is the Sha Monk. This long-snouted, big-eared one is Zhu Bajie."

The idiot, hearing himself described, panicked and tucked his snout into his shirt to hide it.

The demon shouted: "Monk! Stick out that snout!"

Bajie said: "A defect from the womb—it won't come out." The demon ordered the little demons to hook it out with hooks.

Terrified, Bajie thrust out his snout: "It's only a homely little thing—there, see? If you want to look, look—what's all the hooking for?"

The demon knew him for Bajie, whipped out his precious blade, and stepped up to hack at him.

The idiot raised his nail-rake and held him off: "My son! None of your insolence! Taste my rake!"

The demon laughed: "This monk took the tonsure halfway through life." Bajie said: "Good son! Some discernment! However did you know your papa took the tonsure halfway through life?"

The demon said: "The way you wield that rake—you must have worked a garden patch with it, and stolen it from some household."

Bajie said: "My son, where would you know your papa's rake from? This is no garden-patch rake. This here is:

Dragon-claw teeth, cast in giant fangs; Gold-inlaid, fashioned in tiger form. When it meets a foe, cold winds spray; When locked in combat, flames spring forth. It clears away Tang Sanzang's obstacles, And catches demons on the western road. Swung, its smoke and glow eclipse the sun and moon; Swirled, its murky

clouds darken the Dipper's stars. It fells Mount Tai—the old tiger trembles; It overturns the great sea—the old dragon's startled. Devil, though you have your tricks— One rake, nine bloody holes!"

Hearing this, the demon would by no means yield. He took his seven-star sword, spread open his routines, and with Bajie passed back and forth, gambling battle in the mountains, twenty rounds, and neither had the better.

Bajie worked up his fury and met him stroke for stroke, reckless of death. The demon, seeing him flip back his ears, spray sticky slaver, whirl his rake, and come on bawling and roaring, felt something close to dread himself. He turned his head, called the little demons to join in, and they all closed on him at once. One against one would have been well enough. But when he saw the whole swarm of little demons surging at him, Bajie lost his nerve; he could not ward them off, broke, and turned to run.

But the ground was uneven; not looking where he trod, a trailing vine of gourd-creeper caught his foot and pitched him headlong. Scrambling up, just getting under way again, a little demon lying flat on the ground seized his heel—flop!—and down he went a second time, face-first in the dirt like a dog eating filth. The whole pack caught him up and pinned him: they grabbed his bristles, pulled his ears, tugged his feet, hauled his tail, bore him up shoulder-high, and hauled him, carried him, dragged him off into the cave. Ai! It was truly:

When the demon-outbreak rises in a body, it is hard to wipe away; When calamity is bred in ten thousand forms, it is not easily removed.

But as for whether Zhu Bajie lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 33

The Heterodox Way Bewilders the True Nature; The Primal Spirit Comes to Aid the Original Mind

Now the monster had Bajie hauled into the cave, and said: "Elder Brother! I've captured one!"

The old demon was delighted: "Bring him for me to see." The Second Demon said: "Well, isn't this he?" The old demon said: "Brother, you've got the wrong one. This monk is worthless." Bajie, quick to pick up the thread, said: "Great King, a worthless monk—let him go, do! It would be a sin!" The Second Demon said: "Don't let him go, Elder Brother. Worthless or not, he's one of Tang Sanzang's party—called Zhu Bajie. Dunk him in the clean-water pool out back for now; when the bristles have soaked off, salt him down, dry him in the sun, and keep him for a rainy day to go with the wine." Hearing this, Bajie said: "Ill luck! We've run into a demon in the cured-meat trade!" The little demons carried Bajie in and threw him into the water—but of that, no more.

Now Tang Sanzang sat before the slope with hot ears and twitching eyes, ill at ease in body. He called: "Wukong! Why is it that this scouting trip of Wuneng's takes him so long with no return?"

The Pilgrim said: "Master still doesn't know his heart." Sanzang said: "What heart has he?" The Pilgrim said: "Master, if this mountain really held demons, he couldn't have gone half a step—he'd have made a great show of terror and come running back to report to me. It must be there are no demons, and the road is quiet, and he's simply gone straight on." Sanzang said: "And if he truly has gone on, where are we to meet? This is open, empty wilderness—not like the market towns and city wells." The Pilgrim said: "Don't worry, Master; pray mount the horse. That idiot is lazy, so he's surely walking slow. Give the horse a little urging; we'll catch up with him for certain and go on together." So Tang Sanzang mounted, the Sha Monk shouldered the load, and the Pilgrim led the way ahead, up the mountain.

Now the old demon called the Second Demon again: "Brother, since you've taken Bajie, Tang Sanzang must be close at hand. Go scout the mountain once more, and on no account let him pass." The Second Demon said: "Going, going."

Watch him hastily muster fifty little demons and go up the mountain to patrol.

As they walked along, they saw auspicious cloud wisping and auspicious vapor spiraling. The Second Demon said: "Tang Sanzang is coming." The demons said: "Where is Tang Sanzang?" The Second Demon said: "Over a good man's head, auspicious cloud crowns the summit; over a wicked man's head, black vapor storms the sky. That Tang Sanzang is the Venerable Golden Cicada descended to the mortal world, a good man who has cultivated his conduct through ten lifetimes—that is why such cloud is wreathing there." None of the demons could see it. The Second Demon pointed with his finger: "There—isn't that he?" At that very moment Tang Sanzang, on horseback, gave a sudden shiver. Another point of the finger—another shiver.

Three times he pointed, and three times Tang Sanzang shivered, his heart and spirit restless. "Disciples," he said, "why do I keep shivering so?"

Sha Monk said: "The shivering must mean your food-induced illness is acting up." The Pilgrim said: "Nonsense. Master is walking these deep mountains and steep ridges—no doubt a little fright and too much care. Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! Let old Sun play his staff along the way for you, to calm your fright." What a Pilgrim! He flourished open his staff and spun out a few routines before the horse—up three, down four, left five, right six—all by the Six Secret Teachings and the Three Strategies, working his divine powers.

The elder watched from horseback: a thing rarely seen in the world, wholly unmatched upon earth. He cut a path and pressed straight ahead—and it nearly frightened the monster out of his wits.

The demon, watching from the summit, saw his soul fly and his spirit scatter, and he cried out despite himself: "For years I've heard tell of Sun the Pilgrim—only today do I know the words were no empty rumor but very truth."

The demons came forward: "Great King, why puff up another's spirit and snuff out your own prestige? Who are you praising?" The Second Demon said: "Sun the Pilgrim's powers are vast. Tang Sanzang cannot be eaten." The demons said: "If you have no means, Great King, let a few of us go report to the Eldest Great King; have him muster every soldier in the cave, great and small, spread out in battle array, join strength and unite hearts—where could he escape to?" The Second Demon said: "You've never seen that iron staff of his—it has the valor that ten thousand men could not withstand. Our cave holds no more than four or five hundred soldiers. How could they stand up to one blow of it?" The demons said: "If that's so, Tang Sanzang can't be eaten—then didn't we take Zhu Bajie by mistake? Let's give him back now and be done." The Second Demon said: "We didn't exactly take him by mistake, and we can't exactly send him back lightly. In the end we mean to eat Tang Sanzang; it's only that for the moment we cannot." The demons said: "Then we wait a few years?" The Second Demon said: "No need for years. As I see it, this Tang Sanzang can only be plotted for gently, not snatched by force. If we try to seize him by might, we won't get so much as a sniff of him. He must be won over gently, cozened until his heart is at one with ours—then, out of gentleness, a plan can be laid to entrap him." The demons said: "If the Great King has settled on a plan to take him, can you use us?" The Second Demon said: "All of you return to your posts, and breathe not a word to the Eldest Great King. If he is disturbed, the news will surely leak and spoil my plan. I have transformations and magic of my own, enough to take him."

The demons scattered, and he alone leapt down from the mountain. Beside the road he shook his body and transformed into an aged Daoist priest. And how was he dressed? See him:

A star-bright cap gleaming, crane-white hair in wisps. A feathered robe ringed with embroidered sash, Cloud shoes stitched with yellow palm-fiber. Spirit clear, eyes bright as an immortal guest's; Body hale, limbs light as an old god of long life. Never mind your black-ox Daoist masters— He'd outshine the most famous worthies of the way. A false image decked out like a true one, Counterfeit feeling molded like the real.

Beside the great road he played a Daoist who had broken his leg: his foot dripping blood, groaning and moaning, crying over and over: "Help! Help!"

Now Tang Sanzang, trusting in the Great Sage Sun and the Sha Monk, was coming along in good spirits. Just as they were walking, he heard the cry: "Master, save me!" Hearing it, Sanzang said: "Mercy! Mercy! In this wild wilderness, with not a cottage for miles around—who is crying? It must be someone fallen in terror before tigers, leopards, wolves, and beasts." The elder turned his fine horse and called: "Who is the one in distress? Come out." The monster crawled out of the grass clumps, came before the elder's horse, and thumped his head on the ground without stop.

Sanzang, seeing from horseback that he was a Daoist and very aged besides, was sorely troubled at heart. He dismounted in haste and raised him: "Rise, pray rise." The monster cried: "Pain! Pain! Pain!" Releasing his hand to look, Sanzang saw blood streaming from his foot, and asked in alarm:

"Sir, where do you come from? How did you wound that honored foot?"

With cunning words and flowery phrases, in false feeling and sham sincerity, the monster said: "Master, west of this mountain there is a quiet and secluded temple, and I am a Daoist of that temple." Sanzang said: "If you serve the incense and rehearse the scriptures in your own temple, why wander idly here?" The demon said: "The day before yesterday, at a patron's house south of the mountain, I was invited with the Daoist brotherhood to pray to the stars and share out blessings; it was late when it broke up. My disciple and I traveled the road together. In a deep defile we suddenly met a striped fierce tiger, which carried off my

disciple. I fled for my life, trembling, tripped, and fell on a rocky slope, hurting leg and foot, and I cannot find my way back. Today Heaven has blessed me indeed, to meet you, Master. I beg you, Master, in boundless compassion, save my life. If I can but reach the temple, even if I must pawn my body and sell my life, I will surely repay this deep kindness." Sanzang heard, took it all for truth, and said: "Sir, you and I are both men with but one life apiece. I am a monk, you are a Daoist—our caps and gowns differ, but the principle of cultivation is one. Were I not to save you, I would be no man of the cloister. Save you I will—only, you cannot walk." The monster said: "I cannot even stand. How could I walk?" Sanzang said: "Very well, very well. I can still walk. Let me lend you my horse for a stretch; when we reach your temple, you give me back my horse." The monster said: "Master, I am moved by your kindness—but my thigh and hip are hurt from the fall. I cannot ride." Sanzang said: "True enough." He called the Sha Monk: "Put the luggage on my horse, and carry him a stretch on your back." Sha Monk said: "I'll carry him." The monster turned his head quickly, shot Sha Monk a slanting glance, and said: "Master, I was terrified by that fierce tiger. At the sight of this ill-omened, dark-faced master, I grow only more frightened. I dare not have him carry me." Sanzang called: "Wukong, then you carry him." The Pilgrim answered again and again: "I'll carry him! I'll carry him!" And the demon there and then settled on the Pilgrim, submitting sweetly to being carried by him, and said not another word.

Sha Monk laughed: "This old Daoist has no eye for faces! My carrying him won't do—it must be him carrying me. Wait till Master isn't looking: on some three-cornered rock he'll snap every sinew in your body!"

The Pilgrim took him up, laughing through his teeth: "You wild demon, how dare you come provoke me? Have you never asked what years old Sun counts? A ghost-tale like yours may fool Tang Sanzang—do you think it can fool me? I know you for a monster of this mountain, bent on eating my master. But my master is no common fare—yours to eat! If you mean to eat him, you'll have to share at least half with old Sun." The demon, hearing the Pilgrim's muttering, said: "Master, I am a good family's son and grandson, turned Daoist.

Today, unluckily, I met the peril of tiger and wolf. I am no demon."

The Pilgrim said: "If you fear tigers and wolves, why don't you recite the Northern Dipper Sutra?"

Tang Sanzang was just then mounting, and hearing this, scolded: "You wild ape! To save one life surpasses building a seven-story pagoda. Carry him, and carry him—that will do. What's all this about Northern Dipper Sutars and Southern Dipper Sutars!" Hearing this, the Pilgrim said: "This fellow's luck holds! My master is a compassionate, kindly man—yet with a soft outside and a prickly inside. Were I to refuse to carry you, he'd be angry with me.

Carry you I shall—but let us have it clearly agreed first: if you need to pass water or worse, tell me beforehand. If it trickles down my back, the stench would be unbearable, and it would soil my clothes, with no one to wash them."

The monster said: "At my age, do you think I don't understand what you're saying?"

Then the Pilgrim pulled him up, hoisted him on his back, and with the elder and Sha Monk hurried along the great road westward. Where the mountain path was rough and uneven, the Pilgrim walked slowly and carefully, letting Tang Sanzang go on ahead.

Before they had gone three or five li, master and Sha Monk descended into a hollow, out of the Pilgrim's sight, and he grumbled inwardly: "Master, at his great age, still doesn't understand how things are. A road this far—even empty-handed, you'd count your hands a burden; I'd gladly fling everything down—and now he has me carrying this demon on my back! Never mind his being a demon: even were he a good man, at that age he'd have lived long enough—dash him to death and be done. Why carry him?"

Just as the Great Sage was calculating how to dash him, the monster knew it already—and he was skilled at moving mountains. He used a mountain-shifting, sea-upending spell: on the Pilgrim's back he formed a spell-hand, recited the true words, and dispatched Mount Sumeru into the air to press down on the Pilgrim's head.

The Great Sage, alarmed, tilted his head aside, and the mountain came down on his left shoulder and back. He laughed: "My son! What weighty-body trick is this you're using to crush old Sun? That's nothing to fear—only, a balanced load carries well, but a one-sided load is hard to bear."

The demon said: "One mountain won't hold him down!" He recited another spell and dispatched Mount Emei into the air to press down. Again the Great Sage tilted his head aside, and it came down on his right shoulder and back. And see him—bearing two great mountains on his shoulders, flying like a star to catch up with his master!

The demon chief saw it and broke into sweat from head to foot, moisture starting from every pore: "He can carry mountains!" Summoning all his temper, he recited the true words, dispatched Mount Tai into the air, and pressed it squarely down on the Pilgrim. The Great Sage's strength went soft and his sinews numb; crushed under that Mount Tai press, his Three Corpse-spirits leapt, and from his seven apertures sprayed red.

What a demon-monster! Having used his magic to press down the Pilgrim, he mounted a long wind in haste and raced off after Tang Sanzang, reaching down from the clouds to pluck the man off his horse. Sha Monk in terror dropped the luggage, whipped out his demon-quelling staff, and blocked the blow aimed at his head. The demon raised a seven-star sword and came on to meet him. What a battle:

The seven-star sword, the demon-quelling staff, Ten thousand glints of golden light like lightning. This one's round eyes fierce as the Black Killer God; That one's iron face truly the Curtain-Raising General. [Translator's note: Sha Monk's title from his days in Heaven, where he guarded the jeweled curtain of the Hall of Divine Mists.] The monster flaunts his power before the mountain, His one thought to seize Tang Sanzang. This one strains to guard the true monk, His one thought—death sooner than yielding. The two of them spray cloud and puff fog, veiling the heavenly palaces; They kick up soil and scatter dust, hiding the Dipper's stars. They fight till the wheeling red sun pales to nothing, Till the vast earth and all creation reel in gloom.

Back and forth they locked, eight or nine rounds— Till, unforeseen, the Sha Monk was beaten.

The demon, in full fierceness, swung his precious sword in routines that rolled like shooting stars, till Sha Monk grew faint and could no longer hold him off. He turned to flee, but the demon trapped his staff, swung wide a great hand, clutched Sha Monk, tucked him under his left arm, seized Tang Sanzang from the horse with his right hand, hooked the luggage on his toe-tips, opened his mouth, and bit the horse's mane; then, working his carrying spell, with one gust of wind he swept them all off to Lotus Cave, shouting at the top of his voice: "Elder Brother! The monks are all here!"

The old demon heard and rejoiced: "Bring them for me to see." The Second Demon said: "Well, aren't they here?" The old demon said: "Worthy brother, you've got it wrong again." The Second Demon said: "You said take Tang Sanzang." The old demon said: "Take him you did—but you still haven't caught that skilled one, Sun the Pilgrim. Him we must catch before we can enjoy our Tang monk. Until he's taken, touch not one hair of this man. That Monkey King's powers are vast, his transformations many. If we ate his master, would he take it lying down? He'd come brawling at our very gate, and there'd be no peace for us." The Second Demon laughed: "Brother, you do know how to exalt a man!

By your praises he'd be one scarce found in Heaven above and never found on earth below. As I see him, he's nothing much—no powers to speak of."

The old demon said: "And have you caught him?" The Second Demon said: "I've pressed him under three mountains—by now he cannot move an inch. That's how I managed to carry off Tang Sanzang and the Sha Monk, horse and luggage and all." The old demon heard, and his heart filled with joy: "Luck! Luck! With that wretch caught, the Tang monk will be food in our mouths at last!" He called the little demons: "Quick, bring wine! Let us toast our Second Great King's merit!" The Second Demon said: "Brother, hold the wine a moment. Have the little ones fish Zhu Bajie out of the water and hang him up." So they hung Bajie in the eastern corridor, Sha Monk on the west side, and Tang Sanzang in the middle; the white horse was led to the trough, and the luggage carried in.

The old demon laughed:

"Worthy brother, what skill! Three monks taken in two trips. But Sun the Pilgrim, though pinned under mountains, still calls for some scheme. How shall we fetch him in to fill out the steamer?"

The Second Demon said: "Be seated, Elder Brother.

To take Sun the Pilgrim, we needn't bestir ourselves. Just send two little demons with two treasures, and have them bottle him and bring him along."

The old demon said: "What treasures shall we send?" The Second Demon said: "Send my purple gold red gourd, and your mutton-fat jade vase." The old demon brought out the treasures: "Which two shall we send?" The Second Demon said: "Send Meticulous Sprite and Clever Bug." [Translator's note: the names of two little demons, literally "Fine-Eyed Sprite" and "Clever Insect."] He instructed them: "You two take these treasures, go straight to the mountain's utmost summit, hold them bottom-up and mouth-down, and call out 'Sun the Pilgrim!' The moment he answers, he'll be inside. Then at once paste on the seal 'By the urgent command of Lord Lao Zi, as decreed'—and in an hour and three quarters he'll have melted to pus." The two little demons kowtowed, took the treasures, and went out to fetch the Pilgrim—but of that, no more.

Now tell of the Great Sage, held by the demon's spell at the root of the mountains: in suffering he thought of Sanzang, in calamity he murmured the name of the holy monk, crying aloud: "Master! Remember when you came to Double Boundary Mountain and lifted the pressing placard—old Sun escaped his great tribulation, entered the gateway of the teaching, received the Bodhisattva's granted commandments, and lived with you and cultivated with you, one destiny, one aspect, one sight, one knowledge. Who would have thought that here, meeting this demon-obstacle, I'd be pressed under mountains again! Pity! Pity! If you die, it is as fate decrees—but what a waste of Sha Monk and Bajie and the little dragon who became a horse for you! Truly it is: the tall tree catches the wind, and the wind shakes the tall tree; man strives for a great name, and the name undoes the man!"

When he had finished his lament, the pearly tears fell like rain. This alarmed the mountain god and the local deity, and the Guardian spirits of the Five Quarters, who gathered with the Gold-Headed Guardian: "Whose mountain is this?" The local deity said: "Ours." "And who is pressed beneath your mountain?" The local deity said:

"We don't know." The Guardian said: "So you truly don't know. This is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong the Pilgrim, who five hundred years ago wrought havoc in Heaven, who now has turned to the true fruit and become a disciple of Tang Sanzang. How could you lend your mountain to a demon to press him with? You are dead men. If one day he works free, think you he'd spare you? At the lightest, the local deity would be sentenced to a posting at a relay station, the mountain god to military exile—and we should all be charged with criminal negligence." The mountain god and local deity took fright: "Truly we knew nothing, knew nothing. We heard that demon chief recite his mountain-moving spell, and we simply moved the mountain over. Who knew it was the Great Sage Sun?" The Guardian said: "Don't be afraid. As the law says: ignorance is not guilt. Here is my plan: let him out, and don't make him lift a hand against you." The local

deity said: "That would be too much! Set a man free and then get beaten?" The Guardian said: "You don't know. He has an As-You-Will gold-banded cudgel, most formidable: those it strikes die; those it grazes are hurt. One tap snaps the sinews; one brush and the skin drops!" The local deity and mountain god, terrified at heart, took counsel with the Guardians of the Five Quarters, then came before the outer barrier of the three mountains and called: "Great Sage! The mountain god, the local deity, and the Guardians of the Five Quarters come to see you." What a Pilgrim—though the tiger be lean, its bold heart remains. Naturally imposing, in ringing tones he answered: "What do you want with me?" The local deity said: "We beg to inform the Great Sage: we shall move the mountains aside and invite the Great Sage to come out; pardon us our discourtesy." The Pilgrim said: "Move the mountains aside, and no beating for you." He shouted "Begone!"—just like a magistrate passing sentence.

The gods recited their true words and spells, sent the mountains back to their places, and released the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim leapt up, shook off the dust, tightened his kilt, drew the staff from behind his ear, and called to the mountain god and local deity: "All of you stretch out your anklebones—two strokes apiece first, to ease old Sun's frustration!"

The gods were greatly alarmed: "A moment ago the Great Sage gave his word, pardoning our offense. How comes it that the moment he's out, he changes his tune and wants to beat us?" The Pilgrim said: "Fine local deity! Fine mountain god! You don't fear old Sun—but you fear the demon!" The local deity said: "That demon's powers are vast, his magic profound. He recites his spells and summons us to serve in his cave, one of us on duty each day!" At the words "on duty," the Pilgrim's own heart jumped. He lifted his face to the sky and cried aloud: "Heaven! Heaven! Since chaos first divided, since Heaven opened and Earth was set, since the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit gave me birth, I too sought out famous masters everywhere and received the secret of long life. Think of me: changing with the wind, subduing tigers and dragons, wreaking havoc in Heaven, winning the title of Great Sage—yet never once did I browbeat the mountain gods and local deities into serving me. And now this monster, with no decency at all, dares summon mountain gods and local deities as his servants, to stand his watches in turn! O Heaven!

Since you engendered old Sun, why did you also engender this breed?"

While the Great Sage was lamenting, he saw a glow of rosy light come billowing out of a hollow. He said: "Mountain god, local deity—since you serve in that cave, what is that thing that's shining?"

The local deity said: "That is the demon's treasure glowing. Some demon, I suppose, has brought the treasures to subdue you." The Pilgrim said: "Now that will be fun! Let me ask you: who keeps company with him in that cave?" The local deity said: "He loves cinnabar-refining and drug-compounding, and delights in Daoists of the Complete Perfection school." The Pilgrim said: "No wonder he turned himself into an old Daoist priest and cheated my master away. In that case, your beatings are all stayed on credit—go home. Old Sun will fetch him himself." The gods all soared into the air and scattered.

The Great Sage shook his body and transformed into an old Daoist adept. And how was he dressed?

Head bound in twin tufted knots, Body wrapped in a hundred-patch robe. Hand drumming the fish-drum and bamboo clappers, Waist belted with the Sash of Master Lü. Reclining beside the great road, Waiting for the little demon imps. Within moments the demons arrive— And the Monkey King in secret plays his trick.

Before long the two little demons came along. The Pilgrim stretched out his gold-banded cudgel; the demons, not on their guard, tripped over it and went flop on their faces.

They scrambled up, and only then saw the Pilgrim, and bawled: "Scoundrel! Scoundrel! If our Great King didn't hold your sort in such respect, we'd measure you properly!"

The Pilgrim put on a smile: "Measure what? A Daoist meeting a Daoist—we're all one family." The demon said: "Why were you lying there sleeping, tripping me up?" The Pilgrim said: "When a little Daoist boy sees an old Daoist like me, he must take one tumble to pay his respects." The demon said: "Our Great King asks only a few taels of silver as his courtesy money—and you take a tumble as your courtesy money? You must be from some other district—certainly no Daoist of ours." The Pilgrim said: "Indeed I'm not. I've come from Mount Penglai." The demon said:

"Mount Penglai is the realm of the immortals of the sea islands." The Pilgrim said: "If I'm not an immortal, who is?"

The demon's anger turned to delight, and he came forward: "Old Immortal! Old Immortal! We are but carnal eyes and mortal flesh and could not know you; if our words gave offense, don't hold it against us, don't hold it against us."

The Pilgrim said: "I hold nothing against you. As the saying goes, an immortal body does not tread mortal ground—how would you have known? I have come to your mountain today to save one good man and bring him to immortality and the Way. Which of you will follow me?" Meticulous Sprite said: "Master, I'll follow you." Clever Bug said: "Master, I'll follow you." The Pilgrim, knowing all along, asked anyway: "Where do you two come from?" The demons said: "From Lotus Cave." "And where are you going?"

The demons said: "By our Great King's command, to fetch Sun the Pilgrim."

The Pilgrim said: "Fetch whom?" The demons said again: "Fetch Sun the Pilgrim." Sun the Pilgrim said: "Would that be the Sun the Pilgrim who escorts Tang Sanzang to fetch the scriptures?" The demons said: "The very one, the very one. Do you know him too?" The Pilgrim said: "That ape has no manners. I know him, and I'm rather put out with him. I'll go along and help you catch him—call it my contribution to your success." The demons said: "Master, we don't need your help. Our Second Great King has magic: he moved three mountains and pressed him underneath, and he can't budge an inch. He sent us two to bottle him with the treasures." The Pilgrim said: "What treasures?" Meticulous Sprite said: "Mine is the red gourd, his is the jade vase."

The Pilgrim said: "And how do you bottle him?" The little demons said: "We hold the treasure bottom-up and mouth-down, call his name, and the moment he answers, he's inside. Then we paste on a seal, 'By the urgent command of Lord Lao Zi, as decreed,' and in an hour and three quarters he melts to pus." Hearing this, the Pilgrim was secretly startled: "Formidable! Formidable! The Duty God of the Day gave warning of five treasures. Here are two—I wonder what the other three can be?" He laughed aloud: "Brothers, lend me the treasures to have a look." The little demons, knowing nothing of the trick, drew the two treasures from their sleeves and handed them over with both hands.

The Pilgrim saw them and rejoiced inwardly: "Fine things! Fine things! If I just flipped my tail and sprang away with a whoosh, it would be a gift to old Sun outright."

Then he thought again: "No! No! I could snatch them—but it would ruin old Sun's good name. That would be highway robbery in broad daylight." He handed them back: "And you've never seen my treasure yet." The demons said: "What treasure has the Master? Lend it to us mortals too, to ward off calamity." What a Pilgrim! He reached down, plucked one hair from his tail, twiddled it, and cried "Change!"

It turned into a great purple gold red gourd, a foot and seven inches long, and he brought it out from his waist: "Well? Will you look at my gourd?"

Clever Bug took it in his hands, examined it, and said: "Master, this gourd of yours is big and well-shaped, handsome to see—but it's no use."

The Pilgrim said: "How so, no use?" The demons said: "Each of our two treasures can hold a thousand men." The Pilgrim said: "Man-bottlers—and you think them rare? Why, this gourd of mine can bottle the very heavens inside!" The demons said: "It can bottle Heaven?" The Pilgrim said: "Bottle Heaven in earnest." The demons said: "That we doubt. Bottle it and show us, and then we'll believe—else we never shall." The Pilgrim said: "When Heaven annoys me, I commonly bottle it seven or eight times a month; when it doesn't annoy me, I may go half a year without bottling it once." Clever Bug said: "Brother, a Heaven-bottling treasure—let's trade him for it." Meticulous Sprite said: "His bottles Heaven—would he ever trade it for our man-bottlers?" Clever Bug said: "If he won't—throw in the vase as well." The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "A gourd for a gourd, and the vase thrown in—one for two. That's a bargain indeed!" He stepped forward and seized Clever Bug: "Will you trade for the bottled Heaven?" The demon said: "Bottle it and we trade. If we don't, I'm your son!" The Pilgrim said: "Very well, very well. I'll bottle it and let you watch."

What a Great Sage! He bowed his head, formed a spell-sign, and recited a spell, summoning the Day-Wandering God, the Night-Wandering God, and the Guardians of the Five Quarters: "Go at once and report to the Jade Emperor for me: say that old Sun has turned to the true fruit and escorts Tang Sanzang westward to fetch the scriptures; that a high mountain blocks the road and his master has met bitter peril; that the demon's treasure old Sun wishes to coax away in trade. With ten thousand bows, let Heaven be lent to old Sun to bottle up for half a double-hour, to help him succeed. If there is so much as half a word of refusal, I'll march straight up to the Hall of Divine Mists and start a war!"

The Day-Wandering God went straight through the South Gate of Heaven, below the Hall of Divine Mists, and reported to the Jade Emperor, recounting the whole affair. The Jade Emperor said: "That wild ape-head—his tongue knows no bounds! Before, when Guanyin interceded, I released him to protect Tang Sanzang; I even dispatched the Guardians of the Five Quarters and the Duty Gods of the Four Watches to guard him in rotation. And now he wants to borrow Heaven and bottle it! Can Heaven be bottled?" He had barely said it could not when Prince Nezha stepped out from the ranks and memorialized: "Your Majesty, Heaven can be bottled." The Jade Emperor said: "How can Heaven be bottled?" Nezha said: "Since chaos first divided, the light and pure became Heaven, the heavy and turbid became Earth. Heaven is a mass of pure vapor bearing up the palaces of the azure vault—and by theory it is truly hard to bottle. But Sun the Pilgrim is escorting Tang Sanzang west to fetch the scriptures—this is blessing the weight of Mount Tai, goodness deep as the sea. Today we should help him succeed." The Jade Emperor said: "What help do you propose, my prince?" Nezha said: "Let an edict go down to the North Gate of Heaven to borrow the Black Banner from the True Warrior; spread it over the South Gate of Heaven and shut away the sun, moon, and stars—face to face, no man seen; snatching at white, nothing but black. Then we can fool the demon into thinking Heaven has been bottled, and so help the Pilgrim succeed." Hearing this, the Jade Emperor said: "As you have memorialized, so let it be." The prince took the edict, went to the North Gate of Heaven, saw the True Warrior, and told him the whole affair.

The Patriarch handed the banner to the prince.

By now the wandering god had swiftly descended to the Great Sage's ear: "Prince Nezha has come to help you succeed."

The Pilgrim looked up: auspicious clouds wreathing and coiling—gods indeed. He turned to the little demons: "Now to bottle Heaven." The little demons said: "If you're going to bottle it, bottle it—why all this shilly-shallying?" The Pilgrim said: "I was just then gathering spirit and reciting spells." The little demons all stood wide-eyed, watching how he would bottle Heaven. The Pilgrim flung the sham gourd up into the sky.

Think: it was one hair changed—how much could it weigh?

The wind on the summit caught it and carried it drifting and swaying for a good half double-hour before it came down. And on the South Gate of Heaven, Prince Nezha spread the black banner with a great flapping

crackle, shutting away sun, moon, and stars—truly, creation dyed in ink, the universe stained with indigo.

The two little demons were amazed: "When we were talking just now it was barely noon—how has it turned to dusk?"

The Pilgrim said: "Heaven being bottled, there's no telling time—why shouldn't it be dusk?" "And why is it so black?" The Pilgrim said: "Sun, moon, and stars are all bottled inside; outside there's no light. How could it not be black?" The little demons said: "Master, where are you speaking from?"

The Pilgrim said: "Aren't I right in front of you?"

The little demons reached out and touched him: "We hear the words, but see no face. Master, what place is this?" The Pilgrim humbugged them further: "Don't move your feet! This is the shore of the Bo Sea. If your foot slips and you fall, you won't reach bottom for seven or eight days!" The little demons were greatly frightened: "Enough! Enough! Enough! Let Heaven loose! Now we know how it's bottled. If we toy with this any longer, we'll drop into the sea and never get home!" What a Pilgrim! Seeing they took it for real, he recited another spell, stirred the prince, and had the banner rolled up—and at once daylight shone, right high noon.

The little demons laughed: "Wonderful! Wonderful! A treasure like this—if we didn't trade, we'd be no sons of a provident father!"

Meticulous Sprite handed over the gourd, Clever Bug brought out the vase, and together they passed them to the Pilgrim; the Pilgrim handed the sham gourd to the demons.

Having made the trade, the Pilgrim then tied the business off with a knot. He plucked a hair from below his navel, blew on it a breath of immortal air, changed it into a copper coin, and called: "Little boys, take this coin and buy me a sheet of paper."

The little demons said: "What for?" The Pilgrim said: "I'll write you a contract of exchange. You have traded two man-bottling treasures for one Heaven-bottling treasure; lest hearts prove unquiet in after years—time long, days deep, and someone turn repentant—I'll write this, one copy for each to hold as proof." The little demons said: "There's no brush or ink here—what contract could you write? Let's swear an oath instead." The Pilgrim said: "How shall we swear?" The little demons said: "We swear: our two man-bottling treasures, with the vase thrown in, are traded for your one Heaven-bottling treasure. If we repent, may we catch the plague all four seasons of the year!" The Pilgrim laughed: "I shall never repent. If ever I do, may I too catch the plague all four seasons, just like you." The oaths sworn, he sprang up with a whisk of his tail, and leapt before the South Gate of Heaven, thanking Prince Nezha for his help with the banner.

The prince returned to the palace, reported his mission done, and restored the banner to the True Warrior—but of that, no more. And the Pilgrim stood high amid the empyrean, watching the two little demons below.

But how he would deal with them—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 34

The Demon King by Cunning Snares the Mind-Ape; The Great Sage by Nimble Trickery Steals the Treasures

Now the two little demons held the sham gourd in their hands, wrangling over it and examining it, when suddenly they looked up—the Pilgrim was gone.

Clever Bug said: "Brother, even immortals tell lies! He said he'd traded treasures with us and would save us into immortality—how is it he's gone without a word of leave?"

Meticulous Sprite said: "We got the best of that bargain by far—could he really have gone off? Hand me the gourd; let me bottle some Heaven and try it out too." He truly flung the gourd upward—and flap!—it fell right back down. Clever Bug, panicked, said: "Why won't it bottle! Won't bottle! Could it be that Sun the Pilgrim disguised himself as an immortal and tricked our real gourd away with a false one?" Meticulous Sprite said: "None of your nonsense! Sun the Pilgrim is pinned under three mountains—how could he get out? Hand it here; let me try his spell and bottle it." That demon too flung the gourd into the sky, reciting: "If there is so much as half a word of refusal, I'll march straight up to the Hall of Divine Mists and start a war!" Before he finished—flap!—it fell down again.

The two demons said: "It won't bottle! Won't bottle!

It must be a fake." While they were bawling about it, the Great Sage Sun, in midair, heard every word and saw it all plainly. Fearing that if the game dragged on too long, the truth would leak at some critical moment, he gave his body a shake and drew back onto himself the hair that had turned into the gourd—leaving the two demons empty-handed, all four hands.

Meticulous Sprite said: "Brother, hand me the gourd."

Clever Bug said: "You were holding it. Heavens! Where has it gone?" They groped all over the ground, rummaged in the grass, tucked their sleeves in, patted their waistbands—nowhere was it to be found.

The two demons stood staring and quaking: "What now! What now! The Great King entrusted us the treasures and told us to fetch Sun the Pilgrim. Now the Pilgrim isn't fetched, and the treasures are gone into the bargain. How could we dare go back and report? We'll be beaten to death, straight out! What now! What now!"

Clever Bug said:

"Let's run away." Meticulous Sprite said: "Run where?" Clever Bug said: "Anywhere at all. If we go back and say the treasures are gone, it's certain death." Meticulous Sprite said: "Don't run—we'll go back. The Second Great King has always thought well of you; I'll push the blame onto you. If he'll let it pass, we keep our lives; if he won't be talked round, we're beaten to death—right here either way. Better than missing out on both ends. Let's go, let's go!" The two demons talked it over, turned their steps, and headed back to the mountain.

The Pilgrim, in midair, watched them turn back. He shook his body once more, turned into a housefly, flew down, and followed the little demons. But you ask: he being now a fly, where did he keep the treasures? To drop them on the road or hide them in the grass would risk someone finding and taking them—wouldn't that be labor lost? So he kept them on his body. On his body, true—but a fly is no bigger than a bean; how could they fit?

The fact is, those treasures were like his gold-banded cudgel: they were As-You-Will Buddha-treasures, changing with their bearer, now large, now small—so on his body they could be stowed. Whirr—he flew

down, kept close behind the demons, and before long they were at the cave. There sat the two demon chiefs drinking wine. The little demons knelt facing the upper seats, and the Pilgrim perched on the door-frame, cocking an ear to listen.

The little demons said: "Great Kings—" The two old demons stopped their cups at once: "So you're back?" "We're back." "And have you caught Sun the Pilgrim?" The little demons kowtowed and dared not speak. The old demon asked again; again they dared not answer, only kowtow. Asked a third time, the little demons pressed their faces to the floor: "Pardon your small ones ten thousand deaths! Pardon your small ones ten thousand deaths!

We were carrying the treasures along, halfway up the mountain, when we suddenly met an immortal from Mount Penglai. He asked us where we were going, and we answered, to fetch Sun the Pilgrim. At the name Sun the Pilgrim the immortal took a dislike to him too, and offered to help us. We hadn't asked for his help, but we told him the whole business of fetching treasures to bottle a man. That immortal had a gourd too, marvelously able to bottle Heaven.

And we, in a fit of vain fancy, thinking of the family's good: his bottles Heaven, ours bottles men—let's trade, we thought. It was to be gourd for gourd, and Clever Bug threw in the vase besides. Who could have known that an immortal's things will not come near a mortal's hand? Right in the middle of trying them out, he vanished, man and all. We beg you, pardon your small ones the death penalty!"

The old demon heard, and raged like thunder: "Done for! Done for! It was Sun the Pilgrim disguised as an immortal who swindled them away! That ape-head's powers are vast, he knows everyone everywhere—some mangy god or other must have let him out, and he's cheated us of our treasures!"

The Second Demon said: "Calm yourself, Elder Brother. That ape-head is utterly without manners, past bearing. If he had the means to escape, escape he might—but why also steal the treasures? If I lacked the skill to catch him, I would never again be a demon on the western road!" The old demon said: "How will you catch him?" The Second Demon said: "We had five treasures; two are gone; three remain. We must catch him with those." The old demon said: "Which three?" The Second Demon said: "The seven-star sword and the plantain-leaf fan are at my side; the gold rope is kept with our old mother at Dragon-Press Cave on Dragon-Press Mountain. Let's send two little demons to invite Mother to come eat Tang monk's flesh, and have her bring the gold rope to catch Sun the Pilgrim." The old demon said:

"Whom shall we send?" The Second Demon said: "We're not sending good-for-nothings like those!"—and with one shout he had Meticulous Sprite and Clever Bug hauled up.

The two said: "Luck! Luck! Neither beaten nor cursed—and let off just like that."

The Second Demon said: "Summon the two regular attendants, Mountain Tiger and Sea-Leaning Dragon." [Translator's note: the names of two little demons, Bashanhu and Yihailong, "Tiger of the Mountain Crags" and "Dragon Leaning on the Sea."] The two knelt. The Second Demon instructed them: "You must be careful." Both answered: "Careful." "You must be thorough." Both answered: "Thorough." He asked again: "Do you know the way to Old Grandmother's house?" Both answered: "We know it." "Since you know it, be off at once. Go to Old Grandmother's, present our deepest respects, and say she is invited to eat Tang monk's flesh. And she is to bring the gold rope, for we mean to catch Sun the Pilgrim."

The two demons took the command and sped off—little knowing that the Pilgrim at their side had heard every word plainly. He spread his wings, flew after them, caught up with Mountain Tiger, and perched on him. After two or three li he thought to kill the two of them.

Then he thought again: "Killing them would be easy enough. But their grandmother has the gold rope, and I don't yet know where she lives. Let me ask them first, then beat them."

What a Pilgrim! With a whirr he slipped away from the little demons, let them get a hundred paces ahead, then shook his body and changed into a little demon too, wearing a fox-fur cap, his tiger-skin kilt hitched up and belted tight. He caught up with them and called:

"Travelers, wait for me!" Sea-Leaning Dragon turned his head: "Where are you from?" The Pilgrim said: "Good brothers—can't you know your own family?" The little demon said: "Our family has no you." The Pilgrim said: "How could it not have me? Look again." The demon said: "A strange face, a strange face—we've never met." The Pilgrim said: "True—you've never met me. I'm from the outer guard." The demon said:

"An officer of the outer guard—we'd never have met. Where are you bound?"

The Pilgrim said: "The Great King says he sent you two to invite Old Grandmother to eat Tang monk's flesh, and to have her bring the gold rope to catch Sun the Pilgrim. Fearing you two might walk slow, linger over your games, and hold up the business, he sent me to hurry you along." At hearing the matter put to its very bottom, the little demons doubted nothing and took the Pilgrim truly for one of the family; they hurried on at a flying pace, another eight or nine li at a stretch.

The Pilgrim said: "That's a bit too fast. How far are we from home now?"

The little demons said: "Fifteen or sixteen li." The Pilgrim said: "How much farther?"

Sea-Leaning Dragon pointed: "That dark wood yonder." The Pilgrim raised his head: a belt of black forest not far off. He reckoned the old demon must be in or near the wood; he planted his feet, let the little demons go on ahead, then drew out his iron staff, stepped up behind them, and swept their heels with it. Pitiful—so little could they take! The two little demons were swept into a pair of meat patties, and he dragged them by the feet and hid them in the deep grass beside the road.

Then he plucked one hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!", and turned it into Mountain Tiger, while he himself changed into Sea-Leaning Dragon. Disguised as the two little demons, he went straight to Dragon-Press Cave to invite Old Grandmother. This was: the seventy-two transformations, divine powers great; pointing at things and shifting them, skill supreme.

In three or five bounds he was in the wood. As he was searching, he saw two leaves of a stone door, half open, half shut. Not daring to enter unbidden, he could only call out: "Open the door! Open the door!" This startled a female demon who kept the gate; she opened one leaf and said: "Where are you from?" The Pilgrim said: "I'm sent from Lotus Cave on Flat-Top Mountain to invite Old Grandmother." The female demon said: "Come in." At the second gate he craned his head to look within, and there, seated high in the very center, was an old dame.

And what did she look like? See her:

Snow-white temples in wisps, Star-bright eyes agleam. Her face ruddy, but wrinkled deep; Her teeth sparse, but her spirit stout. She looks like a chrysanthemum lingering after frost; Her frame is a pine grown old after rain. White silk bound on her head in a figured kerchief; Gold earrings hung with gems at her ears.

At the sight of her the Great Sage dared not go in; he stood outside the second gate making faces, and burst out crying. And why did he cry? Could it be he feared her?

If he feared her he wouldn't cry. He'd already cozened her treasure and killed her little demons—why weep?

This was the one who had plunged into a cauldron of nine-tripod boiling oil and fried seven or eight days without one tear. It was only that, remembering the tribulations of Tang Sanzang's scripture quest, the tears came welling from his anguished heart and his eyes overflowed. Yet his mind reasoned on: "Old Sun, having shown his skill and turned himself into a little demon to invite this old demon, cannot simply stand and talk

on his feet—he must kowtow to her, that's certain. All my life, for all my heroism, I have bowed to only three: to the Buddha Patriarch in the Western Heaven, to Guanyin in the Southern Sea, and at Double Boundary Mountain, when my master saved me, I bowed to him four times. For him I have worn out the six lobes of my liver and lungs and spent the three hairs and seven apertures of my heart. And what's one scroll of scriptures worth? Yet today I'm made to bow to this monster. If I don't kneel and bow, the game is given away.

Bitter! Reckon it up: only because my master is in bondage do I suffer this humiliation at another's hands!"

At that pass there was nothing for it; he dashed in, knelt facing the seat of honor, and said: "Grandmother—your servant bows." The demon said: "My child, rise." The Pilgrim thought: "Fine! Fine! Fine! That 'my child' comes pat!" The old demon asked: "Where are you from?" The Pilgrim said: "From Lotus Cave on Flat-Top Mountain. By the two Great Kings' command I've been sent to invite Grandmother to eat Tang monk's flesh, and she is asked to bring the gold rope, for we mean to catch Sun the Pilgrim." The old demon was delighted: "What a dutiful son!" And she called for her sedan chair to be brought out.

The Pilgrim thought: "My son! So demons keep sedan chairs too!"

From the back quarters two female demons carried out a rattan sedan and set it outside the gate, hanging round it green silk curtains. The old demon rose and came out of the cave, sat in the sedan, and behind her came several little female demons, carrying her toilette case, holding up her mirror-stand, bearing towels, toting an incense box, attending at her left and right. The old demon said:

"What are you all coming for? I'm going to my own son's place—do you fear there'll be no one there to wait on me, that you must come along to thrust out your chattering mouths? All of you back! Shut the gate and mind the house!"

The little demons indeed all went back, leaving only the two chair-bearers.

The old demon asked: "What are the two messengers called?"

The Pilgrim answered promptly: "He is called Mountain Tiger, and I am called Sea-Leaning Dragon." The old demon said: "You two walk ahead and clear the way for me." The Pilgrim thought: "What luck! The scriptures not yet fetched, and here I am playing yamen-runner for her!" But he dared not resist; he could only lead the way ahead, shouting a great four-part bawl as he went.

After five or six li he sat down on a rock ledge to wait for the chair-bearers to catch up. The Pilgrim said: "How about a little rest? My shoulders ache from the pressing."

The little demons, knowing no better, set the chair down. The Pilgrim, behind the sedan, plucked a hair from his chest, changed it into a big sesame flatbread, and hugged it, gnawing away.

The bearers said: "Officer, what are you eating?"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm ashamed to say. This long road, coming to invite Grandmother, without a farthing of reward—my belly got hungry, so I'm eating a little of the dry rations I brought along before we go on." The bearers said: "Give us a bit to eat too." The Pilgrim laughed:

"Come, come—we're all one family; why stand on ceremony?" The little demons, not knowing good from bad, crowded round the Pilgrim to share the rations—and the Pilgrim whipped out his staff, gave it one turn against their heads: one, but touched by it, was smashed to pulp;

the other, but grazed by it, lay groaning, not dead. Hearing the groans, the old demon poked her head out of the sedan to look—and the Pilgrim leapt before the chair and brought the staff down on her skull with a crash that caved it in: brains spattering, fresh blood welling. He dragged her out to look at her: she was in truth a

nine-tailed fox.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Evil beast! Who are you calling 'Old Grandmother'! If you're Old Grandmother, then you should be calling old Sun your Great-Great-Grandfather!"

What a Monkey King! He searched out her gold rope, tucked it in his sleeve, and rejoiced: "Though that wretched demon has his skills, three of the treasures now bear the surname Sun!" Then he plucked two hairs and turned them into Mountain Tiger and Sea-Leaning Dragon, plucked two more and turned them into the chair-bearers, changed himself into the very image of the old grandmother, and sat in the sedan. The chair was hoisted, and they headed straight back the way they had come.

Before long they reached the mouth of Lotus Cave. The hair-changed little demons went ahead, calling: "Open the door! Open the door!" The little demons keeping the gate opened it: "Mountain Tiger and Sea-Leaning Dragon are back?" The hairs said: "We're back." "And the Grandmother you invited?" The hairs pointed: "Isn't she in the sedan?" The little demons said: "Wait there while I go in and announce." They announced: "Great Kings, Grandmother is come." The two demon chiefs, hearing this, ordered incense tables laid out to receive her.

The Pilgrim heard and rejoiced inwardly: "Luck! Now it's my turn to be somebody! Before, as a little demon, I went to invite the old demon and kowtowed one bow to her. This time, as the old demon—his mother—surely I'll get the full four bows. Small pickings, maybe, but at least I'll have cozened a couple of heads out of them!"

What a Great Sage! He stepped down from the sedan, shook out his clothes, and drew the four hairs back onto his body. The little demons at the gate carried the empty sedan inside while he followed at a slow pace—mincing, simpering, swaying and teetering, every movement the very image of the old demon—as he made his way in. And see: the demons, great and small, all came kneeling to receive him; pipes, drums, and flutes rang out in one bright strain; from the hill-censer curled thick incense smoke.

He went to the main hall, sat down facing south, and the two demon chiefs fell on their knees, kowtowed toward him, and cried: "Mother, your sons salute you!"

The Pilgrim said: "My sons, rise."

Now Zhu Bajie, hanging from the beam, gave a great haw-haw of laughter.

Sha Monk said: "Well done, Second Brother! Hanged till you laugh!"

Bajie said: "Brother, there's meaning in my laugh." Sha Monk said: "What meaning?" Bajie said: "We were afraid it was Grandmother come, and then we'd be steamed and eaten. But it isn't Grandmother—it's an old story come back." Sha Monk said: "What old story?" Bajie laughed: "The Bimawen has come." Sha Monk said: "How do you know it's him?" Bajie said: "Bending over and calling 'my sons, rise'—and behind, up cocks a monkey's tail! I'm hung higher than you, that's how I see clearer."

Sha Monk said: "Hush now—listen to what he says." Bajie said: "Just so, just so."

The Great Sage Sun, seated in the middle, asked: "My sons, what business did you invite me for?" The demon chiefs said:

"Mother, your sons have been remiss of late and not attended to their filial duty. This morning we brothers captured the Tang monk of the East Land. We dared not eat him on our own; we invited Mother to view him alive, so we may steam him for Mother to eat and lengthen her years." The Pilgrim said: "My sons, Tang monk's flesh I'll not eat—I hear that Zhu Bajie's ears are excellent. Cut them off and dress them up for me to go with my wine." Hearing this, Bajie panicked: "Plague take it!

So you came to cut off my ears! If I shout it out, it won't sound nice!"

Ah, for one sensible sentence from the idiot, the secret of the Monkey King's transformation leaked away.

The little demons scouting the mountain and keeping the gate all came tumbling in to report: "Great Kings, disaster! Sun the Pilgrim killed Grandmother and came in her disguise!"

At this, would the demon chiefs hear explanations? The Second Demon whipped out his seven-star sword and slashed at the Pilgrim's face. What a Great Sage! With one sway of his body—red light filled the cave, and he was gone before it struck. A trick like that is fine sport indeed: gathering, it takes form; scattering, it becomes breath. The old demon chief's soul flew and scattered in fright, and the whole horde of spirits stood biting their fingers and shaking their heads.

The old demon said: "Brother, let's return Tang Sanzang, the Sha Monk, Bajie, the white horse, and the luggage to that Sun the Pilgrim, and shut the door on this whole quarrel."

The Second Demon said: "Brother, what talk is that? Who knows how much sweat I spent, what schemes I worked, to carry off those monks! If we let ourselves be scared by Sun the Pilgrim's trickery into meekly handing everything back, we'd be what the proverb calls men who fear the knife and shun the sword—and is that any way for a great fellow to behave?

"Sit you down and fear nothing. I've heard you say Sun the Pilgrim's powers are vast, but though I've crossed him once, I've never tried him in earnest. Bring my armor; let me go seek him and fight three rounds. If he cannot beat me in three rounds, the Tang monk stays our food; if I can't beat him in three fights, then it will be time enough to send the Tang monk back to him."

The old demon said: "Well said, worthy brother." He called: "Bring the armor." The demons carried out the armor; the Second Demon buckled it on, smart and complete, and gripping his precious sword stepped outside the gate, calling: "Sun the Pilgrim! Where have you fled?" By now the Great Sage was up in the clouds; hearing his name called, he turned quickly to look—it was the Second Demon. And see how he was dressed:

On his head a phoenix helm outdazzling winter snow; On his body battle-armor of wrought wrought-iron gleaming. The belt at his waist is of python-dragon sinew; His white-hide boots are pleated in plum-blossom folds. His face is the living True Lord of Guankou; [Translator's note: i.e., Erlang, the deity who once captured Sun Wukong.] His look differs nothing from the Giant Spirit's. The seven-star sword he holds in his hand, His wrath soars to the sky, his might blazing.

The Second Demon shouted from below: "Sun the Pilgrim! Give back my treasures and my mother at once, and I'll let your Tang Sanzang go fetch his scriptures!"

The Great Sage could not hold back his curses: "Wretched monster—you've mistaken your Grandpa Sun! Quickly return my master, my brother-disciples, the white horse, and the baggage, and throw in some traveling money for me to walk west with. If so much as half a 'no' slips through your teeth, go twist yourself a rope and hang—save your grandpa the trouble of lifting a hand." Hearing this, the Second Demon sprang into the air, whirling his precious sword to stab; the Pilgrim whipped out his iron staff and met it hand to hand.

The two of them, in midair—what a battle! Chess meets its match, a general meets his equal. When chess meets its match, neither can hide his flair; when a general meets his equal, both may use their skill. Those two divine champions crossing blades—just like tigers dueling in the southern hills, dragons wrestling in the northern sea. Where the dragons wrestle, scales and armor flash light; when the tigers duel, claws and fangs scatter. Claws and fangs scattering, flinging out silver hooks; scales and armor flashing, bracing plates of iron. This one wheeling and turning—a thousand routines;

that one coming and going—not one instant off guard. The gold-banded cudgel—a mere three hairs' breadth from the crown; the seven-star sword—just a finger's width from the heart. That one's might presses cold upon Dipper and Ox; this one's wrath outdoes the peril of thunder and lightning.

The two fought thirty rounds, and neither had the upper hand.

The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "This wretched monster can actually hold up under old Sun's iron staff! I've already got three of his treasures—what's the use of grinding away at this killing? It only wastes my time. Better to bottle him with the gourd or the vase—far more tidy."

Then he thought: "No! No! As the saying goes: a thing obeys its master. What if I call him and he doesn't answer—wouldn't that spoil the business? Let's try the gold rope with its loop." What a Great Sage! With one hand he worked the staff, holding off the precious sword; with the other he flung up the rope—whisk!—and looped it over the demon chief's head. Now that demon chief had a Rope-Tightening Spell and a Rope-Loosening Spell.

Loop an enemy with it, recite the Tightening Spell, and he can never get free; loop one of your own, recite the Loosening Spell, and no harm comes to him. The demon knew it for his own treasure, recited the Loosening Spell at once, slipped the rope loose, wriggled free—and flung it back at the Pilgrim, catching the Great Sage in its loop before he knew it.

The Great Sage was just about to use the Body-Shrinking Spell to slip away when the demon recited the Rope-Tightening Spell; the loop bit tight—how could he get free? He wriggled it down below his neck: the thing was a gold band clamped round him. The demon gave the rope a yank, hauled him down, and hacked seven or eight blows of the precious sword onto his shining head—the Pilgrim's scalp didn't so much as redden.

The demon said: "This monkey! With a skull that hard, I'll not hack at you. I'll take you home and beat you there. And hand back my two treasures, and be quick about it!"

The Pilgrim said:

"What treasures of yours have I taken, that you dun me for them?"

The demon chief searched him over minutely, head to foot, and searched out the gourd and the vase both; then, leading him by the rope, he hauled him into the cave and said: "Elder Brother, here's one brought in." The old demon said: "Whom have you brought?" The Second Demon said: "Sun the Pilgrim. Come and see! Come and see!" The old demon looked, knew the Pilgrim at once, and his whole face bloomed with joy: "It's him! It's him! Tie him to that pillar with the long rope for our amusement!" And indeed they tied the Pilgrim fast, and the two demon chiefs went into the back hall to drink their wine.

The Great Sage, wriggling and twisting at the foot of the pillar, startled Bajie. The idiot, hanging from the beam, gave a great haw-haw: "Brother, so the ears are off the menu!" The Pilgrim said: "Idiot, hanging comfortably? I'll be out of here presently, and I'll save the lot of you, never fear." Bajie said:

"Shame! Shame! Can't free yourself, and still talks of saving others! Enough, enough! Let master and disciples all die in one spot together—easier to ask the road in the netherworld!"

The Pilgrim said: "None of your blather! Watch me get out." Bajie said: "I'm watching—how will you get out?" The Great Sage kept his mouth talking to Bajie while his eyes sized up the demons. He saw them at their wine within, a few little demons carrying plates and cups, holding flagons and pouring, running busily back and forth without pause—the watch was a little slack.

Seeing no one before him, he worked his magic: he slid out the staff, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!", and it turned into a file of tempered steel. He twisted round the gold band at his neck and

filed—three or five strokes, and it fell in two. He pried open the file's bite and slipped free, plucked one hair, cried "Change!", turned it into a sham body tied in his place, then swayed his true body once and changed into a little demon, standing to one side.

Bajie again bawled from the beam: "Bad! Bad! The one tied up is a fake—the real one's hanging loose!"

The old demon stopped his cup and asked: "What's that Zhu Bajie yelling about?" The Pilgrim, in his little-demon shape, stepped forward: "Zhu Bajie was egging Sun the Pilgrim on to transform and escape; the Pilgrim wouldn't go, and Bajie's been yelling about it." The Second Demon said: "And they said Zhu Bajie was the honest one—so he's dishonest after all! He deserves twenty strokes on the mouth with a stick!"

The Pilgrim went and fetched a stick to beat him. Bajie said: "Beat me gently—and if you beat hard, I'll start yelling, for I know you!"

The Pilgrim said: "Old Sun went through all these transformations for your sakes—how could you let the cat out of the bag? Not one demon in this whole cave knows me. How is it you alone knew?" Bajie said: "You changed your face, but you never changed your rump. Aren't those two red patches on it yours? That's how I knew you."

The Pilgrim then went round to the back, made his way to the kitchen, felt along the bottom of the cauldron, and smeared the soot over both his haunches; then he walked to the front again. Bajie saw him and laughed once more: "Where has that monkey been fooling around all this while, to come back with a black behind?"

The Pilgrim stood as before in attendance, planning to steal the treasures—and with rare presence of mind. He walked up into the hall and tugged the demon's sleeve: "Great King, look at Sun the Pilgrim tied to that pillar, wriggling right and left. He'll wear through that gold rope. Better fetch a thicker, stouter rope and change it for him." The old demon said:

"Well said." He untied the lion-plaque belt from his waist and handed it to the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim took the belt, tied up the sham Pilgrim with it, took down the rope, and coiled it away in his sleeve; then he plucked another hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, changed it into a sham gold rope, and presented it to the demon with both hands. The demon, deep in his cups, never looked closely—he simply put it away. So it was: the Great Sage by nimble trickery showed his skill—a hair bought back the gold rope.

Treasure in hand, he spun round, leapt out the gate, resumed his true form, and shouted: "Demons!"

The little demons at the gate asked: "Who are you, making all this noise?"

The Pilgrim said: "Get inside quick and report to those wretched demons of yours: 'Pilgrim the Sun is here.'" [Translator's note: the Pilgrim invents a "younger brother" whose name is his own name with its syllables reversed—Sun Xingzhe, "Sun the Pilgrim," turned backward into Zhe Xingzhe, "Pilgrim the Sun."] The little demon reported as told. The old demon was astonished: "We've caught Sun the Pilgrim—how can there be a 'Pilgrim the Sun' as well?" The Second Demon said: "Brother, what's to fear? The treasures are all in my hands. Let me take the gourd out and bottle him and bring him in." The old demon said: "Careful, brother." The Second Demon took the gourd, walked out the mountain gate, and saw someone exactly like Sun the Pilgrim, only a shade shorter. He asked: "Where do you come from?" The Pilgrim said: "I'm Sun the Pilgrim's brother. I hear you've seized my elder brother, and I've come to have it out with you." The Second Demon said: "I'm the one who took him; he's locked in our cave. Since you've come, you must want to fight. But I'll not cross weapons with you—I'll only call your name. Do you dare answer me?" The Pilgrim said: "Call me a thousand times if you like—I'll answer you ten thousand!" The demon gripped his treasure, leapt into the air, held it bottom-up and mouth-down, and called: "Pilgrim the Sun!" The Pilgrim dared not answer, thinking: "If I answer, I'll be bottled." The demon said: "Why don't you answer?" The Pilgrim said: "I'm a little deaf—I didn't hear. Call louder." The monster called again: "Pilgrim the Sun!" The Pilgrim below

counted on his fingers and reasoned: "My real name is Sun the Pilgrim; the ghost-name I invented is Pilgrim the Sun. My real name could get bottled, but surely a ghost-name can't." He couldn't hold back—he answered—and whump! he was sucked into the gourd, and the seal pasted on.

For the truth is, that treasure cared nothing whether a name were true or false: catch one breath of an answer, and the man is in.

Inside the gourd, all was pitch black. The Great Sage butted his head upward—it wouldn't budge, and it was packed tight as could be. He grew anxious: "When I was on the mountain, those two little demons told me: gourd or vase, once a man is inside, an hour and three quarters and he melts to pus. Could it be melting me?"

Then his heart rallied: "No fear! It can't melt me! Five hundred years ago, when old Sun wreaked havoc in Heaven, Lord Lao Zi put me in the Eight-Trigram Furnace and smelted me forty-nine days, till I came out with a heart and liver of gold, lungs of silver, a head of bronze, a back of iron, and eyes of fire and gold. An hour and three quarters, indeed! I'll just wait and see what he does!"

The Second Demon carried the gourd in and said: "Elder Brother, brought him in." The old demon said: "Whom?" The Second Demon said: "Pilgrim the Sun—I've got him bottled." The old demon rejoiced: "Sit you down, worthy brother.

"Move nothing. Only when it rattles are we to lift the seal."

The Pilgrim, hearing this, thought: "A solid body like mine—how would it rattle? Only if I melt into thin gravy would it rattle. Let me make water, then. When it rattles, they're sure to lift the seal and open the top—and I'll slip out and away with them!"

Then he thought again: "No, no! The water would rattle, true, but it would foul this tunic. When they shake it, I'll just gather spittle and gargle—gurgle-gurgle—and fool them into lifting the lid; then old Sun will be off." The Great Sage made his preparations, but the demon, deep in his cups, never shook it.

The Great Sage played one more trick to coax him into shaking: suddenly he cried: "Heavens! My ankles have melted!"

The demon didn't shake it.

The Great Sage cried again: "Mother! Even my backbone's melted!"

The old demon said: "When it's melted to the waist, it's melted clean through. Lift the seal and let's look." At those words the Great Sage plucked one hair, cried "Change!", turned it into half a body lying at the bottom of the gourd, while his true body changed into a tiny gadfly-midge perched at the gourd's rim. The Second Demon lifted the seal to look—and the Great Sage was already out; he rolled over and changed into Sea-Leaning Dragon.

Sea-Leaning Dragon being one of the little demons sent to invite Old Grandmother, he stood at the side in his shape.

The old demon craned over the gourd's mouth and peered: there was half a body, feebly stirring. He didn't stop to think true or false, but cried in a fluster: "Brother, clap it on! Clap it on! He isn't melted yet!"

The Second Demon pasted the seal on as before.

The Great Sage, standing by, laughed inwardly: "Little they know old Sun is already here!"

The old demon took the flagon, filled a brimming cup, came forward, and offered it to the Second Demon with both hands: "Worthy brother, let me pass you a cup."

The Second Demon said: "Elder Brother, we've been drinking this half while—why pass cups?" The old demon said: "That you took Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk was well enough—but then you caught Sun the Pilgrim and bottled Pilgrim the Sun. For such merit you deserve several extra cups." The Second Demon, seeing his elder brother so respectful, dared not refuse; but with one hand holding the gourd he could not take the cup with the other, so he handed the gourd to Sea-Leaning Dragon and reached out both hands for the cup—never knowing that Sea-Leaning Dragon was Sun the Pilgrim changed.

See him stand holding the gourd, attentive in his service.

The Second Demon took the wine and drank, and would in turn offer a cup back. The old demon said: "No need to return the toast—I'll drink one with you here."

The two of them kept up their courtesies. The Pilgrim balanced the gourd, eyes fixed, watching the cups pass to and fro between them, their guard wholly down—and he slid the gourd into his sleeve, plucked a hair, changed it into a sham gourd exactly like it, and held it out in his hands. The demon, after his round of pouring, never looked to see true from false; he grabbed the treasure, and each took his seat, settling down to their drinking as before. The Great Sage Sun slipped away, treasure won, and rejoiced inwardly:

"Let the demon chief keep his skills—in the end the gourd still goes by the name of Sun!"

But as for what he did next, and how he saved his master and destroyed the monsters—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 35

The Heterodox Way Flouts Its Might Against the True Nature; The Mind-Ape Wins the Treasures and Subdues the Evil Demons

"When inborn nature is round and bright, the Way flows free of its own accord; Turn yourself about and leap clear of the net. To perfect a thousand changes is no easy thing; To refine the elixir of long life—is that the common lot? Through many turns of pure and turbid, riding the wheel of change, Cleaving through kalpas past counting, bound east or west as one pleases. Free and unfettered beyond all tally of a trillion years, One point of divine radiance rests forever in the Void."

This poem secretly fits the wondrous Way of the Great Sage Sun.

Having won the demon's true treasure, he tucked it in his sleeve and chuckled: "That wretched demon wore himself out trying to catch me—truly it was scooping the moon from the water. But for old Sun to seize him—that would be playing with ice over a fire."

Hiding the gourd, he slipped quietly out the door, resumed his true form, and cried aloud: "Monster-spirits! Open up!" A little demon at the side said: "And who are you this time, that you dare come bawling?" The Pilgrim said: "Go quickly and report to that old wretched demon of yours: 'Pilgrim Sun is here.'" [Translator's note: yet another shuffling of the same three characters—Sun the Pilgrim, Pilgrim the Sun, Pilgrim Sun.] The little demon hurried in and reported: "Great Kings, there's a somebody called Pilgrim Sun at the gate." The old demon was greatly alarmed: "Worthy brother, this is bad! We've stirred up a whole swarm of them! The gold rope is tied around Sun the Pilgrim, the gourd holds Pilgrim the Sun—and now a Pilgrim Sun as well?

It must be that all his brothers have come." The Second Demon said: "Easy, Elder Brother. This gourd of mine holds a thousand men. I've only got one Pilgrim the Sun in it—why fear some Pilgrim Sun? Let me go out and see, and bottle him into the bargain." The old demon said: "Careful, brother."

Watch the Second Demon take up the sham gourd and march out the gate as boldly and loftily as before, calling: "Where are you from, to dare bawl at this gate?"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't you know me? My home is the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit; my ancestral house, the Water Curtain Cave.

For wreaking havoc in Heaven, I long gave up all strife; Now, happily escaped from tribulation, I left the Way and turned to monkhood's use. Received into the teaching, I climb to the Thunderclap, To seek the scriptures and return to true enlightenment. But by the way I've met a wild and wretched demon, And so I've brought my magic into play. Return my Tang monk of the Great Tang, That he may go west and worship the Buddha-sage. Then both our houses end this war, And each keeps to his own realm of peace. Don't rouse old Sun to fury— It'll cost you your old life!"

The demon said: "Come here then. I'll not cross blows with you—I'll only call your name. Do you dare answer?" The Pilgrim laughed: "Call me and I'll answer. But if I called you, would you answer?" The demon said: "When I call you, I have a treasure-gourd that can bottle a man. If you called me, what would you have?" The Pilgrim said: "I have a gourd too." The demon said: "If you have, show it to me." The Pilgrim drew the gourd from his sleeve: "Wretched demon, look!" He flashed it once and hid it back in his sleeve, fearing he might grab for it.

The demon stared, greatly startled: "Where did his gourd come from? How can it be just like mine? Even if both grew on one vine, there'd be some difference of size, some slant of shape—how can it be identical in every part?"

Putting on a solemn face, he called: "Pilgrim Sun! Where did that gourd of yours come from?" The Pilgrim truly did not know its origin, so he caught the demon's own words and tossed the question back: "Where did your gourd come from?" The demon, not knowing it was a stratagem, took it for honest speech and told the whole story from the root: "This gourd came from when chaos first divided, when Heaven opened and Earth was set. There was a Supreme Old Ancestor, Lord Lao Zi, who took on the name of Nüwa, smelted stone to mend Heaven, and saved the whole world of Jambudvipa. Mending his way to the Palace of Qian, at the foot of Mount Kunlun he saw a single stem of immortal vine, and on it grew this purple gold red gourd—it is the very one Lord Lao Zi left behind to this day." Hearing this, the Great Sage picked up his cue: "And that's where my gourd came from too."

"How do you make that out?" said the demon chief. The Great Sage said: "When the pure and turbid first parted, Heaven was not full in the northwest, and Earth was not full in the southeast. The Supreme Dao Ancestor, Lord Lao Zi, took on Nüwa, finished mending the breach of Heaven, and traveled to the foot of Mount Kunlun, where there was a root of immortal vine—and on that vine grew two gourds. The one I got is the male; the one you have is the female." The demon said: "Never mind male and female—so long as it bottles a man, it's a good treasure." The Great Sage said: "Well said. Then I'll let you bottle first."

The demon, mightily pleased, sprang at once into the air, held the gourd up, and called: "Pilgrim Sun!" The Great Sage heard it—and answered eight or nine times without pausing for breath; but he could not be bottled.

The demon came crashing down, stamping his feet and beating his breast: "Heavens! And they said the ways of the world never change! So even a treasure fears its husband—see the female, meet the male, and she dare not bottle him!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Put yours away—now it's old Sun's turn to call you." He sprang at once on the somersault cloud, leapt up, held his gourd bottom-up and mouth-down, took steady aim at the demon, and called: "Silver Horn King!"

The demon dared not keep his mouth shut; he could only answer—and whisk! he was inside. The Pilgrim pasted on the seal, "By the urgent command of Lord Lao Zi, as decreed," rejoicing inwardly: "My son! Today it's your turn to try the goods!"

He brought down his cloud and, gourd in hand, his heart and mind set on nothing but saving his master, came again to the mouth of Lotus Cave. The paths up that mountain were all rutted and uneven, and he with his bandy legs went hobbling and lurching along, so that the gourd jiggled and swished inside, rattling without stop. And why should it rattle?

Because the body of the Great Sage Sun had been through the fire of refinement—it could not be melted in a hurry. The demon, though he could ride cloud and mist, had nothing but spells; at bottom he had never shed his mortal mold, and inside the treasure he simply melted.

The Pilgrim, still not supposing him fully melted, laughed: "My son—is that making water, or gargling? It's an old trade of old Sun's. Short of seven or eight days, when you're thin gravy, I'll not lift the lid to look. What's the hurry? What's the odds? Remembering how easy I got out myself, better I not look for a thousand years!"

Gourd in hand, talking to himself, he arrived unawares at the cave mouth. He gave the gourd a shake—it rattled the more. "Why, it sounds just like a diviner's box. Let old Sun cast a reading, and see what hour my master will get out the door." Watch him, shaking it without stop in his hand, mumbling without stop in his mouth: "King Wen of the Changes, sage Confucius, Master Peach-Blossom Girl, Master Guiguzi." [Translator's note: legendary masters of divination, invoked like patron saints.] The little demons in the cave saw him and cried: "Great King, disaster! Pilgrim Sun has got our Second Great King bottled in the gourd,

and he's casting divinations over him!" At these words the old demon's

soul flew and scattered, his bones went soft and his sinews numb; he flopped to the ground and wailed aloud: "Worthy brother! You and I slipped away from the upper world together, to take our lot in the dust below, hoping to share glory forever as masters of a mountain cave. Who knew that for the sake of one monk your life would be lost, and the bond of brotherhood between us broken!"

The whole cave of demons wept aloud together.

Zhu Bajie, hanging from the beam, heard the whole family bawling, and couldn't help calling out: "Demons, stop your crying and let the old hog explain it to you. The Sun the Pilgrim who came first, the Pilgrim the Sun who came second, the Pilgrim Sun who came after—the same three characters shuffled back and forth, all one man, my elder brother. He has seventy-two transformations; he's been slipping in and out, stole the treasures, and bottled your brother. Your brother is dead already. No use keening over a corpse. Hurry up and scrub the pots and stoves, lay in mushrooms, cloud-ears, tea shoots, bamboo shoots, tofu, wheat gluten, fungus, and greens, invite my master and us brothers down, and we'll recite a scroll of the Rebirth Sutra for your brother."

At this the old demon's rage boiled over: "And they called Zhu Bajie honest—he's the most dishonest of the lot! Making jests to mock me!" He called the little demons: "Hold your mourning. Take Zhu Bajie down and steam him to a pulp. When I've eaten my fill, I'll go settle with Sun the Pilgrim." Sha Monk grumbled at Bajie: "Fine going! I told you not to talk so much—first to be steamed and eaten is the one who talks too much!" Even the idiot felt a few shivers of dread.

A little demon at the side said: "Great King, Zhu Bajie won't steam well."

Bajie said: "Amida Buddha! Which dear brother is piling up hidden virtue? Right—won't steam well at all." Another demon said: "Skin him, and he'll steam fine." Bajie panicked: "Steams fine! Steams fine! Hide and bones may be coarse, but once the water boils, he falls apart—pen him! Pen him!" [Translator's note: a shout to the kitchen-hands to pen the animal up.] In the midst of the uproar, a little demon came in from the front gate to report:

"Pilgrim Sun is back at the gate, cursing!" The old demon was startled again: "This wretch makes light of us—thinks we have no men!"

He called: "Little ones, hang Zhu Bajie back up as before. And count up—how many treasures remain?"

The little demon in charge of stores said: "There are still three treasures in the cave." The old demon asked: "Which three?" The steward said: "The seven-star sword, the plantain-leaf fan, and the vase." The old demon said: "That vase is worthless. It was meant for calling a man—once he answers, he's bottled. Instead we taught the very spell to that Sun the Pilgrim, and got our own brother bottled. No use for it; leave it at home. Bring me the sword and the fan, quick."

The steward presented the two treasures to the old demon at once. The old demon stuck the plantain-leaf fan down the back of his collar, gripped the seven-star sword in his hand, and mustered the demons great and small, three hundred-odd, every one of them ordered to take up spear, twirl staff, coil rope, or wheel blade. The old demon himself donned helmet and armor, threw over all a flame-red silk robe. The demons spread out their battle array, ready to seize the Great Sage Sun.

Now the Great Sage Sun already knew the Second Demon had melted inside the gourd; he had it fastened snug and tight at his waist, and stood gripping his gold-banded cudgel, ready for battle. Then out leapt the old demon, red banners streaming at the gate. And how was he dressed? See him:

The plume on his helmet blazes bright; The belt at his waist gleams with fresh rainbow hues. His armor is scaled like a dragon's hide, Over it a red gown that burns like fire. His round eyes fly open, light flashing like lightning; His steel bristles rise and toss like scattering smoke. Lightly he lifts the seven-star sword; The plantain fan half shadows his shoulder. He moves like running cloud off the mountains and seas; His voice like thunderclap shakes the hills and streams. His dread majesty outfaces Heaven's generals— In wrath he leads his demon host out before the cave.

The old demon hastily ordered the little demons to spread their array, and cursed:

"You ape! Utterly without manners! You have done my brother to death and wounded my own flesh and blood—hateful past bearing!" The Pilgrim cursed back: "You monster begging for death! One demon's life you cannot bear to lose—yet my master, my brother-disciples, and the horse make four living souls, strung up for nothing inside your cave. How can my heart endure it! How can right and reason allow it!

Bring them out quickly and return them, add a generous sum for the road, and see old Sun off with a smile—then I'll yet spare your old demon's dog's life!" The demon would hear no argument; he raised the precious sword and hacked at the Pilgrim's head, and the Great Sage lifted his iron staff to meet him. What a battle, before the cave gate!

The gold-banded cudgel and the seven-star sword— Clashing, their rosy light flashes like lightning. Cold breath rolls chill upon the fighters; Sallow clouds wall off the mountain ridges. That one, for brotherhood's sake, will grant no mercy; This one, for the scripture-seeking monk, no instant's delay. Both houses nurse a single grudge; Two sides each nurse a living wrath. They fight till sky grows dark and earth dims and ghosts and gods are startled, Till the sun pales, the smoke thickens, dragon and tiger war. This one grinds his teeth, filing his jade nails; That one's glaring eyes fling golden flame. Back and forth they flaunt their heroism, Unceasing the whirl of staff and sword.

The old demon and the Great Sage fought twenty rounds without a victor. Then he pointed with the tip of his sword and shouted: "Little demons, all together!" The three hundred-odd spirits surged up as one and ringed the Pilgrim in the center. What a Great Sage! Not a whit afraid, with his one staff he charged left and right, warded behind and covered before.

But the little demons all had their skills; the harder he beat them, the closer they pressed, like cotton wadding wrapping him round—clasping his waist, dragging his legs, none willing to fall back. The Great Sage grew hard pressed and used the Body-Beyond-Body magic: from beneath his left arm he plucked a fistful of hairs, chewed them fine, sprayed them out, and shouted "Change!"—and every hair changed into a Pilgrim.

Watch them: the tall ones wielded staves, the short ones swung fists, and the smallest, with no room to strike, hugged the little demons' ankles and gnawed their sinews—till the little demons were beaten scattered like stars and clouds, all howling in one voice: "Great King, it's no use!

Hopeless! Past hope! The whole mountain, all the ground, is covered with Sun the Pilgrims!" With this Body-Beyond-Body magic the demon host was beaten back, and only the old demon was left, hemmed in the middle, chased east and west with no gate of escape.

In panic the demon raised the precious sword in his left hand, reached his right hand behind his neck, drew out the plantain-leaf fan, faced the southeast, the quarter of Fire, squarely toward the Palace of Li—and with one whump of the fan, fanned downward. And look: flames leapt up from the very ground. For that treasure could fan fire out of plain nothing. The monster was merciless past all pity: seven or eight fans in a row, and the sky scorched and the earth blazed, wild fire soaring. What fire!

That fire was no fire of Heaven, no fire of a furnace, no fire on a hilltop, no fire beneath a stove—it was a point of numinous light-fire drawn forth from the Five Elements themselves. And the fan was no common

thing of the mortal world, no work of human hands, but a treasure born of nature since the opening of chaos. With this fan, fanning this fire—blazing, blazing bright, like red silk ripped by lightning;

glowing, gleaming, like crimson gauze streaming from rosy clouds. Not one thread of gray smoke—all the mountain one sheet of red flame, till the pines on the ridge turned to trees of fire and the cypresses before the cliff became rows of lanterns. The beasts in their dens, greedy for life, bolted west and east; the birds in the woods, sparing their plumage, soared high and flew far. This divine fire drifted through the air and seared—till stone cracked and streams ran dry, and the whole earth turned red!

At sight of this wicked fire even the Great Sage's heart quaked and his gall trembled. "Bad! Bad!" he cried. "Myself I could manage—but my hairs are no use; once they fall into this fire, wouldn't they burn away as easily as singeing hair?"

He gave his body a shake, drew all the hairs back onto himself, left just one changed into a sham body to dodge the fire and escape the calamity, while his true body, fingers locked in the fire-avoiding spell, sprang up on the somersault cloud, slipped clear of the great fire, and made straight for Lotus Cave, minded to save his master.

Reaching the gate in haste, he brought down his cloud—and saw before the cave door a hundred-odd little demons, every one broken-headed and crippled, flesh split and skin torn: all of them wounded by his Body-Beyond-Body magic, standing there moaning and groaning, biting back the pain. At the sight, the Great Sage could not hold in his fierce wicked temper; he whirled up his iron staff and fought his way in, one stroke after another. Pitiful—the long labor of their human bodies' refinement was ended; they were nothing but old hides and bristles again!

Having beaten the little demons out of existence, the Great Sage charged into the cave to free his master—and saw within a glare of flame. It frightened his hands and feet into confusion: "Done for! Done for! The fire has caught at the back gate—old Sun will never save his master now!"

But as he stood trembling he looked closely—and ah! It was no firelight at all, but a shaft of golden light.

He steadied his spirit and peered within: it was the mutton-fat jade vase giving off its glow. His heart leapt for joy: "What a treasure! That vase was the one the little demons carried shining up the mountain, and old Sun won it—then that monster searched it away again. Today it lies hidden here—and it glows as well."

See him steal away with the vase, joyful beyond words—and before even saving his master, he turned and slipped hurriedly out of the cave. Scarcely was he through the gate when he saw the demon chief coming from the south, sword in hand, fan in the other.

The Great Sage Sun had no time to dodge; the old demon raised his sword and hacked at his head. The Great Sage sprang at once onto the somersault cloud, leapt away, and vanished without shadow or trace—but of that, no more.

Now tell of the demon, who came to the gate and found corpses strewn over all the ground—his own host of spirits. He looked up to Heaven and sighed long, then burst into loud weeping that would not stop: "Bitter! Bitter beyond words!" There is a poem in witness:

Hateful, that ape so wild, that horse so wicked and perverse, Their numinous wombs turned down to lodge within the dust of men. One wrong thought, and they left the gates of Heaven; Beside themselves, they tumbled fallen to this mountain. Wild geese that lose the flock—their grief is keen; A demon race cut root and branch—the tears run streaming. When shall the evil be worked out, the lock of sin unfastened, And they return to root, to source, and climb the Pass of Heaven?

The old demon, shame-stricken and distraught beyond measure, wept into the cave, one sob at every step. There stood every household thing and utensil as before—but all hushed and still, without one human form; and the stillness made his grief but the more desolate. Alone he sat in the cave, slumped over the stone table, the precious sword leaning at the table's edge, the fan stuck behind his shoulder—and sank into a dark and dreamless sleep. Truly: joy in the heart makes the spirit brisk; sorrow on the mind brings heavy slumber.

The story turns to the Great Sage Sun, who wheeled his somersault cloud around and stood before the mountain, minded to save his master. He fastened the vase firmly at his waist and went straight to the cave gate to scout.

He saw the two door-leaves open, all quiet within, not a sound of life. Softly stepping, he stole inside—and there was the demon slumped against the stone table, snoring away. The plantain fan had slipped out from his collar and half covered the back of his head; the seven-star sword still leaned at the table's edge. On tiptoe the Pilgrim stole up, drew the fan away, whirled round, and—with a whir—ran out. But the fan's handle had snagged the demon's hair and startled him awake.

He raised his head—Sun the Pilgrim had robbed him! In a frantic flurry he seized his sword and gave chase. But the Great Sage was already out the gate; he stuck the fan at his waist, whirled up his iron staff with both hands, and gave the demon battle. What a fight!

The wretched Demon King, wrath all molten, rage surging past his crown; He could have swallowed the ape down whole and still not eased his heart. With wicked mouth he curses the macaque: "You make your game of me too far! You've done to death so many of my kin, And still come stealing treasures! This day there'll be no quarter— Today we settle who shall live and who shall die!"

The Great Sage shouts back at the demon: "How little wit you have! A pupil battling with his master— Can eggs stacked high hope to shatter stone?"

The precious sword comes, the iron staff goes; The two sides spare no courtesy. Once and again they gamble win and loss; Three turns, four rounds, they show their art. All for the scripture-seeking monk, Who seeks his Buddha-throne on Vulture Peak, Metal and Fire are thrown at odds, The Five Elements disordered, all accord destroyed. They flaunt their might, display their powers; Stones fly and sand swirls—each shows his skill. The battle slowly wears toward the hour of Shen; The demon chief's strength falters first, and he gives ground.

The old demon fought the Great Sage three or four tens of rounds; the day was failing, he could not hold out, broke off the fight, and fled straight to the southwest, bound for Dragon-Press Cave—but of that, no more.

Only then did the Great Sage bring down his cloud, charge into Lotus Cave, and untie Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk. The three of them, freed from peril, thanked the Pilgrim, then asked: "Where have the demons gone?"

The Pilgrim said: "The Second Demon is bottled in the gourd—by now, I should think, melted. The First Demon was just beaten in a round and has gone off to Dragon-Press Mountain in the southwest. Of the whole cave of little demons, old Sun's Body-Beyond-Body magic killed half, and the broken remnants that straggled back were finished off too—that's how I got in here to free you." Tang Sanzang thanked him without end: "Disciple, how much toil you have borne for us!" The Pilgrim laughed:

"Toil indeed! But you only hung there and hurt—old Sun never once stopped his feet. I outdid the couriers of the express relay stations, dashing out and in, back and forth, without rest. It was stealing their treasures that won the demons off."

Zhu Bajie said: "Elder brother, bring out that gourd and let us see it. I expect the Second Demon has melted by now." The Great Sage first untied the vase, then brought out the gold rope and the fan, and only then took

the gourd in hand: "Don't look, don't look! He bottled old Sun first, and old Sun had to gargle to trick him into lifting the lid before I got away. Let none of us lift that lid—I'm afraid he too might play some trick and slip out." Master and disciples, joyful and content, hunted out the rice, flour, and vegetables of the cave,

scrubbed and fired the stoves, laid a vegetarian meal, ate their fill, and settled down to sleep in the cave. The night passed without event, and dawn came again.

Now the old demon went straight to Dragon-Press Mountain, gathered the female demons great and small, and told the whole of it: his mother beaten to death, his brother bottled, the demon soldiery wiped out, the treasures stolen and cheated away. The female demons all wept together.

After a long while of mourning he said: "Hold your grief a little. I still have this seven-star sword at my side. Let us muster your women-soldiers, all of you, and go behind Dragon-Press Mountain to borrow the kin on Mother's side—we are determined to seize that Sun the Pilgrim and be avenged."

Before he finished, a little demon at the gate reported: "Great King, the Old Uncle from behind the mountain is coming, leading a goodly troop of soldiers." The old demon heard, hastily changed into mourning white, and went out bowing to receive him. This Old Uncle was his mother's younger brother, known as the Great King Fox-Seven. Hearing from the scout-demons how his elder sister had been beaten to death by Sun the Pilgrim, who then took her form and stole his nephew's treasures, and had been holding off all comers on Flat-Top Mountain for days,

he had mustered two hundred-odd demon soldiers of his own cave and come especially to swell the battle, stopping first at his sister's house for news. The moment he entered and saw the old demon in mourning, the two wept aloud together. When the weeping had gone on long enough, the old demon bowed down and told the whole story. Fox-Seven's fury blazed; he bade the old demon at once change out of mourning, take up the precious sword, and muster every female demon, join forces all in one, and ride wind and cloud straight for the northeast.

Now the Great Sage had just told the Sha Monk to get breakfast ready, intending to eat and be on the road, when he heard the sound of wind, stepped out the gate to look—and there was a horde of demon soldiers coming up from the southwest.

The Pilgrim was startled, drew back quickly, and called Bajie in haste: "Brother, the demons have fetched reinforcements!"

Tang Sanzang heard, and went pale with fear: "Disciples, what are we to do?" The Pilgrim laughed: "Easy minds! Easy minds! Give me all the treasures here." The Great Sage tied gourd and vase at his waist, tucked the gold rope in his sleeve, stuck the plantain fan behind his shoulder, and gripped his iron staff in both hands. He told the Sha Monk to guard the master and sit fast in the cave, and bade Bajie take his nail-rake and come out with him to meet the enemy.

The monsters spread their array, and there at the head was Great King Fox-Seven.

He had a jade-fair face and a long beard, steel brows and knife-blade ears; on his head a chain-mail helmet, on his body linked armor, in his hand a square-heaven halberd. He bawled his curses: "You reckless wild ape! How dare you bully us so! Stole the treasures, slaughtered our kin, killed our divine soldiers—and now squat in our very cave! Quick now, stretch your necks one by one to receive death, and wipe clean the grudge of my sister's house!"

The Pilgrim cursed back: "You pack of fur-balls courting death—you don't know your Grandpa Sun's skill! Don't run! Take a stroke of my staff!" The monster swerved aside and met him halberd to face. The two of them, on the mountaintop, passed back and forth three or four rounds—then the monster's strength gave, and he broke and fled. The Pilgrim chased him, but the old demon caught him up and fought him three more

rounds, and then Fox-Seven came wheeling back to attack.

On this side Bajie saw it, whipped out his nine-tooth rake, and blocked him. One against one, they fought a long while with no victor. The old demon gave one shout, and the demon soldiers closed in from every side.

Now Tang Sanzang, sitting in Lotus Cave and hearing the battle-cries shake the earth, called: "Sha Monk, go out and see how your brothers fare."

The Sha Monk indeed raised his demon-quelling staff, gave a shout, charged out, and beat back the demon horde. Fox-Seven, seeing the tide turn against him, turned to flee—and Bajie caught up with him and brought the rake down across his back: nine bright-red fountains spurted out. Pitiful—one numinous true nature sped upon its way. They dragged him over, stripped his clothes, and looked: he too was a fox spirit. The old demon, seeing his old uncle done to death, dropped the Pilgrim, gripped his precious sword, and hacked at Bajie; Bajie held him off with the rake.

In the thick of that duel the Sha Monk charged up close, raised his staff, and struck. The demon could not withstand the two; he fled southward on wind and cloud, with Bajie and the Sha Monk in hot pursuit.

The Great Sage saw it, sprang at once into the air, untied the vase, aimed it down at the old demon, and called: "Golden Horn King!" The demon, thinking it was one of his own scattered soldiers calling, turned his head and answered—and whisk! he was drawn inside. The Pilgrim pasted on the seal, "By the urgent command of Lord Lao Zi, as decreed." The seven-star sword fell to the dust—and that too went to the Pilgrim.

Bajie came to meet him: "Brother, you've got the sword—but where's the monster?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Done! He's bottled in this vase of mine." The Sha Monk and Bajie, hearing it, were overjoyed.

Then and there they swept the place clean of every fiend, returned to the cave, and brought the good news to Sanzang: "The mountain is clean, the demons are no more. Pray, Master, mount the horse and let us be on our way." Sanzang's joy knew no bounds. Master and disciples ate their breakfast, packed the luggage and the horse, and pressed westward to find the road.

Just as they were walking, suddenly a blind man stepped out from the roadside, came forward, clutched Sanzang's horse, and cried: "Monk, where are you going? Give me back my treasures!"

Bajie was greatly alarmed: "Done for! The old demon's come dun for the treasures!" But the Pilgrim looked closely—it was the Supreme Old Master, Lord Lao Zi. He hurried forward in dismay and saluted: "Old Sir, where are you bound?" The Old Master mounted at once his throne of the jade bench, standing high in the ninefold empyrean, and called: "Sun the Pilgrim! Give me back my treasures." The Great Sage rose into the air: "What treasures?" Lao Zi said: "The gourd was mine for holding elixirs; the vase, for holding water; the sword, for subduing demons; the fan, for fanning fire; the rope was a sash-belt from my own robe.

"As for those two monsters: one was the boy who watched my golden censer, the other the boy who watched my silver censer. They stole my treasures and fled down to the world below. I could find them nowhere—and now it was you who caught them, and won the merit."

The Great Sage said: "Old Sir, this is truly past all manners—letting your household run wild as fiends. You deserve a charge of failing to keep proper discipline over your staff."

Lao Zi said: "It was no doing of mine; don't wrongly blame the wrong man. It was the Bodhisattva from the sea who asked to borrow them of me three times, and set them here to incarnate as demons—to test whether you master and disciples had the true heart to go on west." At this the Great Sage thought to himself: "This Bodhisattva is a wicked old baggage after all!

When she freed old Sun and bade him escort Tang Sanzang west for the scriptures, I said the road was hard and bitter going, and she promised to come herself to my rescue in every dire pass. And now she's sent fiends to throttle and waylay us instead. A woman who breaks her word—she deserves to go husbandless all her life! If the Old Sir hadn't come in person, I'd never have handed them over. But since you put it that way—take them."

The Old Master received the five treasures, lifted the mouths of gourd and vase, poured out two streams of immortal breath, pointed with his hand—and there stood the two boys of gold and silver again, attending at his left and right. See the ten thousand rays of rosy light!

Ah! Mist-veiled, they return together to the Tushita courtyard; Free and unfettered, they mount straight to the Great Cloud Heaven.

But as for what happened after this—how the Great Sage Sun protected Tang Sanzang, and when they reached the Western Heaven—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 36

The Mind-Monkey Set Right, All Ties Are Subdued; Heterodox Ways Are Split Apart, and the Moon Shines Bright

The story tells how Sun the Pilgrim brought his cloud down to earth and reported to his master everything about the Bodhisattva lending the boy and Lord Lao Zi taking back the treasures. Tang Sanzang thanked him again and again, and now with heart set fast he made his devotions and staked his life on going west. He climbed into the saddle; Zhu Bajie shouldered the luggage; the Sha Monk led the horse by the head; and Sun the Pilgrim, gripping his iron cudgel, cut open the path and led the way straight down the high mountain and onward. Of their nights on the water and meals in the wind, their toil through frost and dew, there is no need to tell at length. After master and disciples had traveled a long while, another mountain rose to block the road.

Sanzang called out loudly from horseback: "Disciples! Look how towering and steep that mountain is. We must be careful and on our guard, lest some demonic obstruction invade us again."

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "don't let your thoughts run wild. Just steady your nature and guard your spirit, and all will be well of itself."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "why must the road to the Western Heaven be so hard? I remember how, after leaving the city of Chang'an, spring turned to summer on the road and autumn waned into winter, year upon year—four or five years now—and still we cannot reach it."

At this the Pilgrim laughed heartily: "We're early yet! Early yet! We haven't even gotten out of the front gate!"

"Don't tell lies, Brother," said Bajie. "Where in the human world is there such a gate?"

"Brothers," said the Pilgrim, "we're still pacing around in the front hall!"

The Sha Monk laughed: "Elder Brother, don't try to frighten me with big talk. Where could there be such a huge hall? And nowhere could you buy a ridgepole that size!"

"Brothers," said the Pilgrim, "the way old Sun sees it, take this blue sky for the roof tiles, the sun and moon for the window lattice, the four mountains and five peaks for the beams and pillars—then Heaven and Earth are just one big open hall!"

When Bajie heard this he said: "Enough! Enough! Let's just wander around a while and then head back."

"No need for wild talk," said the Pilgrim. "Just follow old Sun and keep walking."

What a Great Sage! He slung his iron cudgel across his shoulder, took firm charge of the Tang monk, cut open the mountain path, and pressed straight ahead.

From horseback the master gazed afar at a fine mountain scene, and truly it was: the summit, jagged and piled, rubbed the handle of the Dipper; the treetops seemed to touch the very clouds. From heaps of blue mist one heard from time to time gibbons crying at the valley mouth; amid the tangle of green shade one often heard cranes calling among the pines. Whistling wind, and mountain sprites standing in the streams to make sport of woodcutters; accomplished foxes sitting on the cliff edges to startle and confound the hunters. What a mountain! Look at its precipices towering on eight sides, its perilous steepness on every quarter.

Strange and ancient pines coiled their green canopies; blighted and broken old trees hung with vines and creepers. Spring water flying down in falls—the cold air pierced one to the skin and chilled the hair; the peaks standing sheer and high—the clear wind shot at the eyes and startled the dreaming soul. From time to

time one heard great tigers roaring; often the mountain birds cried out. Herds of muntjac and deer threaded the brambles, leaping to and fro; roe deer and hares in bands sought their wild food, running before and behind. Standing on the grassy slope, one gazed out and saw no traveler at all; walking into the deep hollows, one found wolves and jackals on every side.

This was surely no place where a Buddha ever cultivated his practice— It was altogether a playground for winged birds and running beasts.

The master, trembling with fear, entered this deep mountain, his heart heavy with grief. He reined in his horse and called out: "Wukong! Ever since Yizhi climbed the mountain to vow, Wangbuliuxing saw me out of the city. On the road I met Sanlengzi, and on the way Mazouling hurried my horse. Over the slopes and around the ravines I sought Jingjie; across the ridges and up the mountains I bowed to Fuling. Fangji—this body of mine is like Zhuli; when shall Huixiang bow before the court?"

[Translator's note: this is a poem strung entirely from the names of Chinese medicinal herbs—yizhi (smartweed, "strengthen the mind"), wangbuliuxing ("the king cannot stay"), sanlengzi, madouling, jingjie, fuling, fangji, zhuli, and huixiang ("return in fragrance")—each punning on its literal meaning as well. The master is lamenting how long he has wandered without returning to Chang'an.]

When the Great Sage Sun heard this he laughed coldly: "Master, there's no need for worry, no call for anxiety. Just set your mind at ease and press on, and I promise you: when the work is done, success will come of itself."

Master and disciples lingered over the mountain scenery, walking at their ease, and before they knew it the red wheel of the sun sank westward. Truly:

Ten-li pavilions, and no traveler on the road; In the ninth heaven above, the stars appear. The boats of eight rivers all make harbor; Seven thousand prefectures and counties shut their gates. The six palaces and five offices see officials home; On the four seas and three rivers the fishing lines are drawn. From two towers the sound of bell and drum; One round bright moon fills the whole universe.

The elder, gazing from horseback, saw in the hollow of the mountain stories of towers piled one on another and halls and pavilions ranged story upon story.

"Disciples," said Sanzang, "it is late in the day, and luckily over there, not far off, there are towers and pavilions. It must be some nunnery, Daoist temple, or monastery. Let us go there and beg a night's lodging, and travel on tomorrow."

"Master is right," said the Pilgrim. "No hurry—let me first go and see what sort of place it is." The Great Sage leapt into the air and looked carefully: sure enough, there was a monastery gate. But see: brick walls plastered pink in the character of "eight," golden nails studding the two doors. Storied towers and terraces hidden along the mountain flank; tier upon tier of palace halls secluded within the hills. The Ten Thousand Buddhas Pavilion faced the Tathagata Hall; the Morning Sun Tower answered the Mahavira Gate. A seven-story pagoda harbored clouds and lodging mists; three honored Buddhas manifested their glory.

The Manjusri Terrace faced the Sangharama quarters; the Maitreya Hall leaned against the Hall of Great Compassion. Beyond the Mountain-Viewing Tower, blue light danced; above the Step-on-Void Pavilion, purple clouds arose. Pine gateways and bamboo courts, tender and green; the abbot's rooms and the meditation hall, pure in every part. Refined and secluded, a place of quiet delights; winding paths and streams that welcome and return the guest. Where meditation is practiced, meditating monks expound the Law; in the music chamber many instruments sound. On the Wonder-High Terrace udumbara blossoms fall; before the preaching altar, pattra leaves grow.

Truly it was a Three Jewels land hidden in the woods, a palace of the Brahma King embraced by mountains. Lamplight and incense smoke flickered along the half-wall; a line of fragrant mist hung hazy and dim.

The Great Sage Sun pressed down his cloud and reported to Sanzang: "Master, it is indeed a monastery, and a fine place to beg lodging. Let us go."

The elder let his horse go free and came straight on until he reached the outside of the monastery gate.

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "what monastery is this?"

"My horse's hooves have only just stopped," said Sanzang, "my toes have not yet left the stirrups, and already you ask me what monastery it is! What poor sense you show!"

"Old sir," said the Pilgrim, "you were a monk from childhood, and you must have lectured on the Confucian books before you went on to expound the sutras; your mastery of letters is complete—and then you received the Tang emperor's pardon and favor. With great characters like that on the gate, how can you not read them?"

The elder scolded: "Impudent macaque! What ignorance you speak! I had just been spurring my horse westward, and the setting sun was glaring in my eyes. Though the gate bears characters, they were veiled in dust and grime—that's why I failed to see them."

At this the Pilgrim bent at the waist and stretched himself some two zhang taller, reached up a hand and wiped away the dust, saying: "Master, pray look." There were five great characters: "Built by Imperial Command, the Baolin Monastery."

The Pilgrim shrank back to his own size and said: "Master, who's going in to ask for lodging?"

"I will go in," said Sanzang. "Your faces are ugly, your speech coarse, your tempers hard and your spirits proud. If you offend the monks of this place and they refuse us lodging, it will go badly for us."

"Since that's how it is," said the Pilgrim, "pray go in, Master. No need for more words."

The elder set down his ringed staff, removed his cloak, straightened his robes, put his palms together, and went in through the monastery gate. Inside, on either side behind red-lacquered railings, sat a pair of Vajrapanis, molded and painted with awe-inspiring, ferocious countenances: one with iron face and steel whiskers, seemingly alive; the other with bristling brows and round eyes, as alert as carved ivory. The fists of the one on the left were knotted like raw iron; the palms of the one on the right were ridged like red bronze. Their linked golden armor gleamed and shone; their bright helmets and embroidered sashes fluttered in the wind.

In the West they truly honor the Buddha; in the stone censer between them, the incense fire glows red.

When Sanzang saw this he nodded and sighed long: "If in my Eastern Land someone would mold clay into great Bodhisattvas like these and burn incense and make offerings to them, your disciple would not need to journey to the Western Heaven."

As he was sighing, he passed into the second gate and saw the figures of the Four Heavenly Kings—Dhritarastra the Keeper of Lands, Vaishravana the All-Hearing, Virudhaka the Growth-King, and Virupaksha the Wide-Eyed—set there to signify wind and rain in due season, north, east, south, and west. Passing inside the second gate, he saw four tall pines, each with a lush green canopy spreading like an umbrella. Suddenly he lifted his head: it was the Mahavira Hall, the Precious Hall of the Great Hero. The elder put his palms together in devotion, bowed low, and worshipped.

When he had finished bowing and risen, he passed around the Buddha's altar and came to the rear door, where he saw, seated facing back, a figure of Guanyin Crossing the Southern Sea, delivering all beings. On

the walls around, skilled craftsmen had molded shrimps, fish, crabs, and turtles, heads out and tails showing, disporting themselves in the waves and tides of the sea. Again the elder nodded three or five times, sighing a thousand sighs:

"Pitiful! Even scaly and shelled creatures bow to the Buddha—why will men not cultivate the Way?"

In the midst of his admiration, a Daoist novice came walking out of the third gate.

The novice suddenly caught sight of Sanzang, whose appearance was rare and striking, his bearing far from common, and hurried forward to salute him: "Where has this master come from?" Sanzang said: "This disciple has been sent by the great Tang empire of the Eastern Land to worship the Buddha in the Western Heaven and seek scriptures. Now that I have reached your honored region and the day is nearly gone, I beg the loan of a night's lodging."

"Master, don't take offense," said the novice, "but this is not mine to decide. I am only the novice here who sweeps the floors and rings the bell and does the menial work. Inside there is an old master who manages the monastery. Let me go in and announce you. If he will keep you, I will come out at once to invite you in; if he will not, I dare not delay you."

"I have put you to trouble," said Sanzang.

The novice hurried to the abbot's quarters and reported: "Honored sir, there is someone outside."

The monastic official rose at once, changed his clothes, pressed down his Vairocana cap, draped his cassock over his shoulders, and hurried to open the door to receive him. He asked the novice: "What sort of person has come?" The novice pointed: "Behind the main hall—is that not someone there?" There stood Sanzang, bareheaded, wearing a twenty-five-panel Dharma robe, his feet in a pair of mud-spattered Dharma shoes, leaning against the rear doorway.

When the monastic official saw him he flew into a rage: "You novices deserve a beating! Don't you know that I am the monastic official? Only when gentlemen come from the city to burn incense do I come out to receive them. A monk like this—and you report him to me with a lot of empty flummery and make me come out to greet him! Look at that face of his—no honest man, that. Some wandering cloud-water monk, I daresay, who wants lodging now that the day is late. How can our abbot's quarters suffer such a disturbance! Tell him to go squat under the front corridor—what are you reporting him to me for!"

With that he turned and went back.

When the elder heard this, tears rolled down his cheeks: "Pitiful! Pitiful! Truly it is, a man away from home is cheapened! Your disciple left home as a child and became a monk; I never chanted imprecations or ate meat or harbored evil intent, never read scripture in anger and ruined my meditation heart; never flung tiles or bricks to damage the Buddha hall, never stripped the true gold from an arhat's face. Ah, pitiful! I know not in what lifetime I offended Heaven and Earth, that in this life I should always meet with ill-natured people! If you would not keep us, monk, that would be the end of it—but why speak such lazy, spiteful words, and tell us to go squat under the front corridor? It is well I have not said this to the Pilgrim. If I had, that monkey would come in here, and with one blow of his iron cudgel he would break both your ankles!"

Then the elder said: "Well, well. As the common saying goes, with men, courtesy and music come first. Let me go in and ask him once more, and see what he says."

The master followed in the monastic official's very footprints into the abbot's quarters, where he saw the official, stripped of his outer robes, sitting there in a huff—whether reciting scripture or writing out rituals for some household, who could say? On the desk were piles of paper and cards.

The Tang monk dared not go deep in, but stood in the courtyard and called out with a bow: "Old Prior, your disciple salutes you!"

The monk, already half out of patience at his coming in, returned the salute half-heartedly: "Where do you come from?" Sanzang said: "Your disciple has been sent by the great Tang empire of the Eastern Land to worship the living Buddha in the Western Heaven and seek scriptures. Passing through your honored region, I find the day is late and beg the loan of a night's lodging; tomorrow, before the sky is light, we shall be gone. I earnestly hope the Old Prior will show some convenience."

Only then did the monastic official half rise from his seat: "Are you that Tang Sanzang?" Sanzang said: "I dare not claim it, but your disciple is indeed he." The official said: "Since you are going to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures, how is it you cannot even find the road?"

"Your disciple," said Sanzang, "has never traveled your honored region's roads before."

"Go due west," said he, "only four or five li from here, and you will come to the Thirty-Li Inn. There are households at the inn that sell rice; it is convenient and good for lodging. It is inconvenient here—I cannot keep you wandering monks from afar."

Sanzang put his palms together: "Prior, the men of old have said: nunneries, temples, and monasteries are the posting stations of us wayfaring people; at the sight of a monastery gate, three sheng of rice are our due. Why will you not keep me? What manner of feeling is this?"

The monastic official shouted in anger: "You wandering monk, with your oily mouth and oily tongue!"

"What is meant by an oily mouth and oily tongue?" asked Sanzang.

The official said: "As the ancients put it:

When a tiger enters the city, every family shuts its gate. Though it bites no one today, its name was ruined before."

"How was its name ruined before?" asked Sanzang.

"Years ago," said he, "several wandering monks came and sat down at our monastery gate. Seeing them so poor and shabby, clothes torn, shoes gone, bald heads and bare feet, I pitied their rags and at once invited them into the abbot's quarters and seated them in the place of honor. I entertained them with a vegetarian meal, lent each of them a garment of old clothes, and let them stay several days. Who knew that they, coveting ease and free food and clothing, would give no thought to leaving—and so they stayed seven or eight years! Staying might have been borne, but then they went and did many an unjust thing besides."

"What unjust things?" asked Sanzang.

"Listen to me," said the official:

"In idle hours they tossed tiles along the walls; when bored, they pried nails from the beams. In cold weather they broke window lattice for kindling; in summer they dragged the doors across the paths. They tore banner-cloth to make their leg-wrappings; they stole the aloeswood and swapped it for turnips. They were forever pouring the lamp oil out of glazed vessels, snatching bowls and pots to gamble for winnings."

Hearing this, Sanzang thought to himself: "Pitiful! But is your disciple that spineless a monk?"

He wanted to weep, yet feared the old monks of the monastery would laugh at him; so he quietly dabbed his tears with his sleeve, swallowed his anger, hurried out, and rejoined his three disciples.

The Pilgrim, seeing anger held in his master's face, stepped forward and asked: "Master, did the monks of the monastery beat you?"

"They did not beat me," said the Tang monk.

"They must have beaten you," said Bajie. "If not, why is there still that tearful catch in your voice?"

"Did they curse you?" asked the Pilgrim. "They did not curse me either," said the Tang monk. "If they neither beat you nor cursed you, what is all this misery for? Surely you are homesick?" The Tang monk said: "Disciples, they will not put us up here; it is inconvenient."

"This must be a Daoist establishment," said the Pilgrim with a laugh.

The Tang monk flared up: "Only temples have Daoist priests; monasteries have nothing but Buddhist monks!"

"You're no good at this," said the Pilgrim. "Monks are all the same as us. As the common saying goes, all who sit beneath the Buddha's assembly are people bound by affinity. Sit here, and let me go in and have a look."

What a Pilgrim! He pressed down the golden fillet on his head, tightened the skirt at his waist, gripped his iron cudgel, and marched straight into the Mahavira Hall, where he pointed at the three Buddha statues and said: "You are only clay figures gilded with gold, false images—is there no spirit within you? I, old Sun, am escorting the holy monk of the Great Tang to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the true scriptures. Tonight we come here especially to beg lodging. Make haste and give me your names! If you will not keep us, I'll smash your golden bodies with one stroke of this cudgel and make you show your true form—mud!"

While the Great Sage was raging up front, kicking up a row and babbling threats, a novice came out to light the evening incense, carrying a few sticks to plant in the censer before the Buddha. At the Pilgrim's shout he fell over in terror, scrambled up, caught sight of his face, and fell over again; then, scared out of his wits, he went rolling and tumbling into the abbot's quarters and reported: "Honored sir! There's a monk come from outside!"

"You pack of novices deserve a beating!" cried the monastic official. "I just told you to have him squat under the front corridor—what are you reporting now? Another word and it's twenty strokes!"

"Honored sir," said the novice, "this monk is not like the other one. He looks fierce and savage—spineless-looking."

"What is his appearance?" asked the monastic official.

"Round eyes, ragged ears, a face full of hair, and a mouth like the Thunder God's. He's holding a cudgel, grinding his teeth in fury, looking for someone to thrash."

"Let me go out and look," said the official.

He opened the door—and the Pilgrim came charging in, ugly as could be: a bumpy, lumpy face with jutting cheekbones, two yellow eyes, a jutting forehead; his fangs growing outward, as though he belonged to the crab family, flesh inside and bone outside. The old monk panicked and slammed the abbot's door shut.

The Pilgrim caught up and smashed the door panel open with a crash: "Hurry up and sweep out a thousand clean rooms—old Sun is going to sleep!"

The monastic official hid inside the room and said to the novice: "So it's not just that he's ugly—he's been boasting big, and his boasts have recoiled on him to make that face. Here, counting the abbot's quarters, the Buddha halls, the bell and drum towers, and the two corridors, we haven't three hundred rooms in all—and he wants a thousand rooms to sleep in! Where would they come from?"

"Honored sir," said the novice, "I'm one whose gall is already broken; answer him however you like."

The monastic official, shaking from head to foot, called out loudly: "Venerable pilgrim seeking lodging! This little barren mountain of ours is inconvenient. We dare not presume to keep you—go lodge somewhere else, pray!"

The Pilgrim made his cudgel grow as thick as a basin and stood it bolt upright in the courtyard, saying: "Monk! If it's inconvenient, then you move out!"

"We have lived in this monastery since childhood," said the monastic official. "My master's master handed it down to my master, my master handed it down to us, and we hope to hand it on to our sons and grandsons in turn. Who knows what business this is, barging in and telling us to move?"

"Honored sir," said the novice, "things are very awkward indeed—perhaps we'd better move out. The pole has come smashing through the door."

"Don't talk nonsense!" said the monastic official. "We are four or five hundred monks, old and young, great and small—where would we move to? Move out, and there'd be nowhere to live."

The Pilgrim heard and said: "Monk, if you've nowhere to move, then send one of you out to take a sampling stroke of my cudgel!"

The old monk called: "Novice, you go out and take a sampling stroke of the cudgel for me."

The novice panicked: "Grandfather! A great pole like that—and you tell me to take a sampling stroke!"

"An army is nourished a thousand days for one morning's use," said the old monk. "How can you refuse to go out?"

"That pole—never mind striking with it," said the novice. "If it toppled over, it would squash a man to meat paste!"

"Never mind squash," said the old monk. "Just consider: it stands bolt upright in the courtyard. Walking at night, if a man forgets it's there, he'd crash into it and put a big hole in his head!"

"Honored sir," said the novice, "if you know how heavy it is, what sort of sampling stroke are you sending me out to take?"

While they carried on quarreling among themselves inside, the Pilgrim heard and said: "They can't stand it after all. But if I smashed one of them dead with a blow, my master would blame me for violence again. Wait—let me find something else to smash, and show you."

Suddenly he looked up: outside the abbot's quarters stood a stone lion. He raised his cudgel and with a ping-pang smashed it to rubble and powder.

The monk, peeping through the window lattice, saw it and went limp with terror, bones soft and sinews numb; he scrambled in a hurry beneath the bed, while the novice burrowed into the stove-mouth, both crying without pause: "Grandfather! Heavy cudgel! Heavy cudgel! We can't stand it! Mercy! Mercy!"

"Monks," said the Pilgrim, "I'm not going to hit you. I ask you: how many monks are there in this monastery?"

The monastic official, trembling, said: "Altogether, front and back, there are two hundred and eighty-five house-holds of monks, five hundred monks in all who hold ordination certificates."

"Then hurry and line up those five hundred monks, neat and orderly, in their full-length robes, go out, and escort my master of the Tang dynasty in here—then I won't beat you."

"Grandfather," said the monastic official, "if you won't beat us, we'd carry him in on our shoulders."

"Get going, and quick!" said the Pilgrim.

The monastic official called: "Novice! Never mind your broken gall—say your heart's broken too, you're still going to call all these people to come and receive the venerable Tang grandfather!"

The novice had no choice; staking his life, and not daring to go out the door, he wormed through the dog-hole in the rear wall, ran straight to the main hall, beat the drum on the east and rang the bell on the west. As bell and drum sounded together, they startled the monks, great and small, of the two corridors, who came up to the hall and asked: "It's still early—evening hasn't come yet. What are you ringing the bell and beating the drum for?"

"Quick, change into your robes," said the novice. "Follow the old Prior and form your ranks; go outside the monastery gate to receive the honored lord from Tang."

And so the monks, truly neat and orderly, arrayed themselves in ranks and went out the gate to receive him. Some draped their cassocks, some put on their cloth robes; those who had none wore a straight gown like a great bell; the poorest, who had no long garments at all, tied their waist-skirts together and hung them over their shoulders.

When the Pilgrim saw them he said: "Monks, what clothes are you wearing?"

The monks, seeing how fierce and ugly he was, said: "Grandfather, don't beat us—let us explain. This is cloth we begged for in the city. There are no tailors here, so we made it ourselves—it's called a 'wrap-around-poor.'"

At this the Pilgrim laughed inwardly and herded the monks outside the gate, where they knelt down.

The monastic official kowtowed and called out loudly: "Venerable Lord Tang, pray be seated in the abbot's quarters!"

When Bajie saw this he said: "Master, you're no good at all. When you went in, you came back with tears streaming and a bottle of oil hanging on your lips. How did Elder Brother come by such cleverness, making them kowtow and come out to receive us?" Sanzang said: "You idiot, what a poor sense of propriety! As the common saying goes, even ghosts fear wicked men." Seeing them kowtow and worship, the Tang monk was exceedingly embarrassed, and he came forward, saying: "Gentlemen, pray rise." The monks kowtowed: "Venerable lord, if you would just speak a word of convenience to your disciple, and he'd stop swinging that pole, we would kneel here a month!"

"Wukong," called the Tang monk, "don't beat them."

"I haven't beaten them," said the Pilgrim. "If I had, they'd be past the root by now."

Only then did the monks rise: some led the horse, some shouldered the luggage; they carried the Tang monk, supported Bajie, took the Sha Monk by the arm, and all together entered the monastery gate and came to the abbot's quarters at the rear, where they sat down in due order.

The monks bowed again, and Sanzang said: "Prior, pray rise; there is no need for further ceremony, no need to humble yourself before this poor monk. You and I are both disciples of the Buddha's gate."

The monastic official said: "My lord is an imperial envoy from a superior kingdom, and this little monk failed to receive you. Now that you have come to our barren mountain, forgive us that our worldly eyes did not recognize your honored presence, and that we met so unexpectedly. May I ask, my lord: on the road, do you eat vegetarian food or meat? We must go prepare your meal." Sanzang said: "Vegetarian food." The monastic official said: "Disciples—this venerable lord likes his meat."

"We eat vegetarian too," said the Pilgrim. "We've been vegetarians from the womb."

"Grandfather!" cried the monks. "Such fierce fellows, and vegetarians too!"

One monk of bolder spirit came near and asked again: "Venerable lord, since you eat no meat, how much rice should we cook to suffice?"

"Petty monks!" said Bajie. "What a question! Cook a picul of rice in each household."

At this all the monks panicked, and they went to scrub pots and stoves, arranged tea and rice in every room, raised bright lamps, set out tables and chairs, and waited upon the Tang monk.

When master and disciples had finished the evening meal and the monks had cleared away the dishes, Sanzang gave thanks: "Old Prior, we have troubled your precious mountain."

"We dare not, we dare not," said the monastic official. "Forgive our slowness, forgive our slowness."

"Where," asked Sanzang, "are my disciples and I to lodge for the night?"

"Venerable lord, no hurry," said the monastic official. "We little monks have our own arrangements." He called the novices: "Are there men over there to run errands?" "Yes, honored sir," they said. The monastic official gave his orders: "Let two of you go see to the fodder and feed the Tang lord's horse; let some of you go ahead to the three-room meditation hall in front, sweep it clean, spread the beds and nets, and quickly invite the venerable lord to rest." The novices obeyed, got everything in order, and then came to invite the venerable lord Tang to bed.

Master and disciples led the horse and carried the luggage out of the abbot's quarters and went straight to the door of the meditation hall. Inside, lamplight shone bright; in the two end rooms were spread four rattan-slat beds. When the Pilgrim saw this he called the novice in charge of fodder, had the fodder carried in and set in the meditation hall, picketed the white horse there, and ordered the novices all to leave. Sanzang sat in the middle, with five hundred monks standing in two rows beneath the lamps, all waiting upon him, not daring to lean aside.

Sanzang rose half from his seat: "Gentlemen, pray withdraw, that this poor monk may rest at ease."

The monks absolutely dared not retreat.

The monastic official came forward and instructed the assembly: "Wait until the venerable lord has retired, then return."

"This is retirement enough," said Sanzang. "Please, all of you, go back." Only then did the crowd dare disperse.

The Tang monk stepped out the door to relieve himself and saw the bright moon in mid-heaven. He called: "Disciples!" The Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk all came out and stood in attendance. Moved by the pure brightness of the moonlight and the deep stillness of the jade firmament—truly one wheel shining high and all the earth made clear—he faced the moon and longed for home, and chanted offhand a long poem in the old style.

The poem says:

"The bright soul hangs in the sky, a precious mirror raised; Mountains and rivers sway in its reflection, complete in every part. Jasper towers and jade halls brim with pure light; Ice mirror and silver plate, a crisp air wheeling round. Ten thousand li, this hour, share one clarity; Of all the year, tonight is most bright and fresh. Just like a frost-cake lifted from the vast sea, Or an ice wheel hung in the azure sky. In a strange hostel's cold window, the lonely traveler grieves; In mountain village and wayside inn the old man sleeps. Its

sudden coming to the Han gardens startles autumn temples; Its first arrival at the Qin tower hastens the evening mirror. Yu Liang left verses that pass down Jin history; Yuan Hong, sleepless, floated on a river boat. Light floats on the winecup—cold, without strength; Clear radiance in the courtyard—strong, with immortals in it. At every window and lattice they chant the 'White Snow'; In every courtyard and hall they finger icy strings. Tonight in quiet enjoyment I have come to a mountain temple— What day shall we together return to our old garden?"

When the Pilgrim heard this he came forward and answered: "Master, you know only the moon's radiance and splendor, and your heart yearns for home. You do not understand the meaning within the moon—it is the compass and rule of the image of the Primal Heaven. When the moon reaches the thirtieth day, the metal of the yang soul is utterly scattered and the water of the yin wraith fills the wheel; hence it is pure black without light, and this is called hui, the dark of the moon. At this time it crosses with the sun; in the two days between the dark and the new moon it is quickened by the sun's light and conceives. On the third day the one yang appears; on the eighth day the second yang is born; the soul is half amid the wraith, level as a plumb line—hence it is called the upper crescent, 'upper string.' Now on the fifteenth day the three yangs are complete, and so it is round; this is called wang, the full moon. On the sixteenth day the one yin is born; on the twenty-second, the second yin; then the wraith is half amid the soul, level as a plumb line—hence it is called the lower crescent, 'lower string.' By the thirtieth day the three yins are complete, and it is dark again. This is the meaning of gathering and refining in the Primal Heaven. If we can warm and nourish the two eights and bring the nine-times-nine to completion, then, in that hour, seeing the Buddha will be easy, and returning to the old fields will be easy too. There is a verse:

After the former string and before the latter, The medicine's flavor is mild, its vital breath complete. Gather it, bring it home, refine it in the furnace— With a devoted heart, the fruit of success is the Western Heaven."

When the elder heard this he was suddenly enlightened, understanding the true words clearly, and with a heart full of joy he thanked Wukong.

The Sha Monk, standing by, laughed and said: "Elder Brother, what you say is right, but you have spoken only of before the string belonging to yang and after the string belonging to yin—yang half within yin, the metal that obtains the water. You have not said that water and fire intermix, each with its own affinity, and that all depends on the Mother Earth to match them thus. When the three families meet together without strife, the water is in the Long River and the moon is in the sky."

When the elder heard this, the thatch plugs fell from his understanding. Truly: when one aperture of principle is made clear, a thousand apertures are open; speak out and shatter the unborn, and you are an immortal.

Bajie came forward, grabbed the elder, and said: "Master, don't listen to all this wild talk—you'll lose your sleep.

This moon: Not long lacking, it rounds again— Just like me, born less than perfect whole. At meals they grumble that my belly's big; I take a bowl, they say I slobber too. They're all so clever—blessings earned before; I, poor fool, have only piled up karma. I say: when you have fetched the scriptures and paid the debts Of all three paths of woe, you'll wave your tail and shake your head And go straight up to Heaven!"

"Very well," said Sanzang. "Disciples, you are weary from the road. Go to sleep first, and let me recite a scroll of scripture."

"Master, you're mistaken," said the Pilgrim. "You left home as a child and became a monk; which of the scriptures of your youth do you not know by heart? Besides, you have taken the Tang emperor's command to go to the Western Heaven, see the Buddha, and seek the true texts of the Great Vehicle. Now the work is unfinished, the Buddha unseen, the scriptures unfetched—which scroll is it you mean to recite?"

"Ever since I left Chang'an," said Sanzang, "I have trudged morning after morning and hurried day after day, and I fear the scriptures of my youth have grown rusty. Tonight, having a moment's leisure, let me review them."

"If that's how it is, we'll go to sleep first," said the Pilgrim. The three of them each went to a rattan bed and lay down.

The elder closed the meditation hall door, trimmed the silver lamp high, spread open his scripture book, and read silently to himself. Truly:

The first watch sounds from the tower, and all men's hearths are still; On the wild shores, the fishermen's fires have gone out.

But as for how the elder left that monastery—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 37

The Ghost King Pays a Night Visit to Tang Sanzang; Wukong's Divine Transformations Lead In a Child

The story continues: Sanzang was sitting in the meditation hall of Baolin Monastery, reading a while from the Water Repentance of the Liang Emperor by lamplight, then perusing a while from the True Peacock Sutra, sitting thus until the third watch. Only then did he wrap his scripture books in their bag and was about to rise and go to bed, when suddenly, outside the door, there came a flapping crash, and with a whistling hiss a gust of wild wind swept past.

The elder, fearing the lamp would be blown out, hastily shielded it with the sleeve of his cloth robe; and when he saw the flame flickering bright and dim, his heart began to pound and his gall to quiver. By now drowsiness was creeping over him, and he slumped over the scripture desk and dozed. Though his eyes were closed and his sight was dim, his mind was still clear, and in his ears he could hear, faint and mournful, the eerie wind sighing outside the window.

What a wind! Truly it hissed and whistled, whirled and drifted. Hissing and whistling, it flew the falling leaves; whirling and drifting, it rolled the scudding clouds. The stars filling the sky were all darkened; dust and sand over all the earth came scattering and spraying. One moment it was fierce, one moment it was pure. When pure, it played clear music through pines and bamboo; when fierce, it churned the waves of rivers and lakes. It blew so that mountain birds could find no roost and cried out choking; sea fish, restless, leapt and splashed. East and west, the doors and windows were torn from halls and pavilions; front and rear, the corridors were given over to gods and ghosts.

In the Buddha hall the flower vases were blown to the floor; the glazed lamps toppled and the wisdom-lamps went dim. Incense burners capsized and the ash spewed out; candlesticks tilted and the candle flames streamed sideways. Banners, streamers, and precious canopies were all shaken and torn; the bell tower and drum terrace rocked to their very roots.

As the elder listened in his dream to the wind sweeping by, he suddenly heard, faint and muffled, a call from outside the meditation hall: "Master!" He raised his head and looked through his dream: standing outside the door was a man, dripping wet from head to foot, tears falling from his eyes, calling over and over: "Master! Master!"

Sanzang rose from his seat and said: "Are you some wraith or demon, some spirit or evil devil, come at this deep hour of night to make sport of me? I am no slave to greed, lust, or anger. I am a monk of open and upright light, bearing the command of the great Tang of the Eastern Land, going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Under my hand are three disciples, every one a hero who tames dragons and subdues tigers, a stalwart who sweeps away demons and expels monsters. If they set eyes on you, they will smash your corpse to powder and grind your bones to dust. This I say to you out of great compassion and a heart of mercy. Make haste, hide yourself and flee far away—do not come near my gate of meditation!"

The man leaned against the meditation hall and said: "Master, I am no demon or monster, no wraith or evil spirit."

"If you are none of these," said Sanzang, "why do you come here at this deep hour of night?"

"Master," said the man, "open your eyes and look at me."

The elder looked closely and fixed his gaze upon him—and oh! He saw a man wearing on his head a crown that rose to heaven, girt at the waist with a jasper belt, dressed in a rust-yellow robe of flying dragons and

dancing phoenixes, shod in cloud-topped, embroidered, carefree shoes, and holding in his hand a white jade scepter ranged with the stars of the Dipper and the constellations. His face was like the Long-Life Emperor of the Eastern Peak; his form was like Lord Wenchang, Opener of Culture.

At the sight Sanzang started back, his face changed with alarm, and he hastily bowed and called out in a loud, stern voice: "Your Majesty of what dynasty? Pray be seated!"

He reached out hurriedly to support him—and grasped at empty air. He turned back and sat down. Looking again, there stood the same man. The elder asked: "Your Majesty, of what royal house are you? Emperor of what kingdom? Doubtless your land is in turmoil, slanderous ministers oppress and ravage, and you fled for your life at midnight. If you have something to say, tell it to me."

Then the man, tears dripping down his cheeks, spoke of things past, and grief gathering on his brow, told of the causes gone before: "Master, my home lies due west of here, only some forty li away. There stands a walled city—the place where my kingdom was founded."

"What is its name?" asked Sanzang.

"I will not hide it from you, Master," said the man. "It was I who founded that kingdom and gave it the name: the Black Rooster Kingdom."

"Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "what has thrown you into such terror, that you have come here?"

"Master," said the man, "five years ago in my realm the heavens withheld their rain; no seed would sprout in the ground, and the people starved to death. It was grievous beyond bearing."

Hearing this, Sanzang nodded and sighed: "Your Majesty, the ancients have said: when the ruler is upright, the heart of Heaven is compliant. I suppose you failed in kindness toward your myriad subjects. Now that you have met with famine, why have you fled the city walls? Go back, open your granaries and storehouses, relieve the common people with grain; repent your former wrongs and revive good deeds today; pardon those unjustly condemned under false laws. Then naturally the heart of Heaven will be reconciled, and the rains will fall in season and the winds blow mild."

"My granaries stood empty," said the man, "our money and grain were utterly spent. The civil and military officials of both benches went without their salaries, and even my own table knew no meat. I followed the example of King Yu controlling the floods, sharing sweetness and bitterness alike with all the people; I bathed and fasted, and burned incense and prayed day and night. So it went for three years—and all it brought was dried-up rivers and wells gone dry. Just at the height of that desperate hour, there came from Zhongnan Mountain a Perfected One, a Daoist adept, who could summon the wind and call the rain, turn stone to gold. He first saw my civil and military officials, and afterward was presented to me. I at once invited him to mount the altar and pray—and sure enough, it worked. At the sound of the command tablet, in an instant rain poured down in torrents. I had hoped for three chi of rain to suffice; he said that after so long a drought the earth could not be moistened enough, and sent down two more inches besides. Seeing him so righteous, I swore brotherhood with him with eight prostrations, and we addressed each other as brothers."

"This was a joy of ten thousand parts for Your Majesty," said Sanzang.

"Where would the joy come from?" asked the man.

"Since that Perfected One had such powers," said Sanzang, "whenever you wanted rain you had only to call on him to send rain; whenever you wanted gold, you had only to have him touch stone to gold. What more could you lack, that you should quit your palace towers and come here?"

"I shared bed and board with him for no more than two years," said the man. "Then came a spell of spring weather, red apricots and early peaches bursting into flower, and every household's sons and daughters,

young lords on every corner, all went out to wander and enjoy the spring. At such a season the officials retired to their offices and the palace ladies withdrew to their courts. The Perfected One and I walked hand in hand at a leisurely pace into the imperial garden, until suddenly we came to the edge of the eight-cornered glazed well. I know not what object he threw down into it, but from the well shot ten thousand rays of golden light. He coaxed me over to the well to look at some treasure—and there his murderous heart leapt forth, and with a great shove he pushed me, the widowed one, down into the well. He covered the mouth of the well with a stone slab, heaped earth upon it, and transplanted a plantain tree to grow above. Pitiful me! For three years now I have been dead—a wronged ghost who lost his life in a well!"

When the Tang monk heard that it was a ghost, he went limp with terror, his hair stood on end. There was nothing for it but to question him further: "Your Majesty, what you say is wholly against reason. If you have been dead three years, then with your civil and military officials, your empresses of the three palaces, coming to court through three years of morning audiences, how could they not search for you?"

"Master," said the man, "to speak of his powers—truly they are rare in all the world! No sooner had he done me in than he changed himself in the garden with a shake of his body into my very likeness, without the slightest difference. And now he occupies my throne and has secretly usurped my kingdom. My two benches of civil and military officials, my four hundred court officers, the empresses of the three palaces and the consorts of the six courts—all have become his."

"Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "you are too feeble."

"How so, too feeble?" asked the man.

"Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "this monster has some magic powers indeed; he has taken on your very form and usurped your realm. The officials cannot tell the difference, the consorts cannot know—but you alone know clearly how you died. Why not lodge a complaint before King Yama in the courts of the underworld, and plead your grievance?"

"His magic is vast, and he is thick with all the officials," said the man. "The City God often drinks with him, the Dragon Kings of the seas are all his kin, the God of Mount Tai, Emperor of the Eastern Peak, is his good friend, and the Ten Kings of Hell are his sworn brothers. And so I have nowhere to turn with my complaint."

"If you lacked the means to accuse him in the underworld," said Sanzang, "why come to me in the world of the living?"

"Master," said the man, "how would this wronged soul of mine dare come to your gate? Before your monastery gate stand the Guardian Deva of the Dharma, the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Revealers of the Five Quarters, the Four Duty Officers, and the eighteen Guardian Sangharamas of the Teaching, keeping close watch about your saddle and horse. Just now the Night-Wandering Spirit, with one gust of divine wind, sent me in here. He said that my three years of water-doom are now fulfilled, and bade me come pay my respects to you, Master. He said that under your hand is a senior disciple, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, supremely able to slay monsters and subdue demons. Now I come with a devoted heart to beg and beseech you: come to my kingdom, seize the demon, distinguish the false from the true, and I shall knot grass and carry rings in my mouth to repay your kindness!"

[Translator's note: "knot grass and carry rings" is a classical figure for repaying a debt of gratitude until death, from two old tales of grateful spirits.]

"Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "you have come to ask my disciple to rid you of that monster?"

"Exactly! Exactly!" said the man.

"My disciple is no good at other tasks," said Sanzang, "but when it comes to subduing monsters and catching demons, that is precisely his gift. Yet, Your Majesty, though I might send him to seize the monster, I fear it would be hard to justify."

"How would it be hard to justify?" asked the man.

"Since that monster's powers are so vast," said Sanzang, "and he has become your very double, every official at court, one and all, speaks in harmony with him and is at ease in heart; the palace ladies and consorts, one and all, are united with him in mind and feeling. My disciple, even with all his arts, would never dare strike the first blow. And if the officials seized him, they would say we were deceiving the state and destroying the kingdom, charge us with the great crime of high treason, and trap us inside the walls—would that not be a case of painting a tiger and carving a swan?"

[Translator's note: "painting a tiger, carving a swan"—setting out to do a fine thing and ending with something not merely lesser but bad.]

"There are still others at my court," said the man.

"Splendid! Splendid!" said Sanzang. "Doubtless some royal kinsman or elder guardian, dispatched to garrison some region?"

"No," said the man. "In my own palace there is a crown prince, my own son and heir."

"That prince, I suppose, has been deposed by the demon?" said Sanzang.

"Not at all," said the man. "He sits only in the Golden Chimes Hall, in the Five Phoenix Tower, now studying books with the scholars, now ascending the throne beside the Perfected One. But for these three years the monster has forbidden the prince to enter the inner palace, so that he cannot see his mother."

"What is the reason for that?" asked Sanzang.

"It is a scheme the monster has laid," said the man. "He fears only that if mother and son meet, they will talk things over in their idle hours and weigh the long and short of it, and the truth might leak out. That is why the two never set eyes on each other, and he can dwell there forever."

"Your calamity," said Sanzang, "must have been appointed by Heaven—and it is not unlike my own. Long ago my father was done to death by water bandits, and my mother was seized and possessed by them; three months later she bore me. I escaped with my life on the water, and happily my kindly master of Golden Mountain Monastery rescued and raised me to manhood. I remember that in my childhood I was without father or mother—and here this prince has lost both parents. I am overcome with shame and grief!"

Then he asked again: "Even if you have a prince at court, how am I to meet with him?"

"Why should you not meet him?" said the man.

"He is held in the demon's thrall," said Sanzang, "and cannot see even the mother who bore him. How could a mere monk find access to him?"

"Tomorrow morning he comes out from court," said the man.

"Out from court to do what?" asked Sanzang.

"At tomorrow's early audience he will lead three thousand men and horses, with hawks and hounds, out of the city to hunt," said the man. "You, Master, can surely meet him then. If when you meet him you will speak my words to him, he will believe."

"He is but a mortal of fleshly eyes," said Sanzang, "beguiled by the demon there on the throne. Not a day passes but he calls that creature 'Father King' several times. How will he believe my words?"

"If you fear he will not believe," said the man, "I will leave a token with you."

"What object?" asked Sanzang. The man set down the white jade scepter inlaid with gold that he held in his hand: "This will serve as the token."

"What of this object?" asked Sanzang.

"Ever since the Perfected One took on my likeness," said the man, "the one thing he failed to change was this treasure. When he entered the palace, he said the rain-praying Perfected One had made off with this scepter; from that time to this, three years, he has not had it. If my prince sees it, the sight of it will call up his father, and the vengeance will surely be taken."

"Very well," said Sanzang, "let me keep it, and my disciple will manage the matter for you. But where will you be waiting?"

"I dare not wait," said the man. "As for me, I shall go entreat the Night-Wandering Spirit for another gust of divine wind to carry me into the inner palace, and there entrust a dream to my queen of the principal palace, that mother and son may be of one mind, and you master and disciples of one heart." Sanzang nodded and consented: "Go, then."

The wronged soul kowtowed, bade farewell, and set out; Sanzang rose to see him off—when somehow the ghost caught his foot, tripped, and fell head over heels, and the tumble startled Sanzang awake. It had all been a dream of Nanke!

[Translator's note: "a dream of Nanke"—from a Tang tale of a man who dreamed a whole lifetime in an ant kingdom, and woke to find it empty; a common figure for an illusory dream.]

Startled, he faced the guttering lamp and called out quickly: "Disciples! Disciples!"

Bajie woke and grumbled: "What 'local deity, local deity'? Back in the days when I was a bold fellow, I lived wholly on eating men, feasting on flesh and rich food—happy days indeed! Then you had to go and become a monk, and make us protect you and tramp the roads! It was agreed we'd just be monks—now we're taken for slaves: by day we carry the bundles and lead the horse, by night we hold the chamber pot and warm your feet! And at this hour, instead of sleeping, you call 'disciples'—what for?"

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "just now, dozing over the desk, I had a strange dream." The Pilgrim leapt up and said: "Master, dreams come from thoughts. Before you even reached the mountain you were afraid of monsters; then you fretted that Thunderclap Monastery is far and we may never arrive; then you longed for Chang'an, wondering when you would ever return. So many thoughts, so many dreams. Take old Sun: with one single devoted heart set only on seeing the Buddha in the West, not one dream has ever come to me."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "this dream of mine was no dream of homesickness. I had barely closed my eyes when, after a gust of wild wind, outside the meditation hall there stood an emperor, who said he was the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom, soaked through with water, tears streaming down his face." So it went, and thus it was: he told the Pilgrim every word of the dream.

The Pilgrim laughed: "No need to say more. He came to entrust this dream to you—it is plainly a piece of business sent to look after old Sun. There must be some monster there who has usurped the throne and plotted against the kingdom. Wait till I go and sort out the true from the false with him. That demon—where my cudgel arrives, success will follow at once!"

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "he said the monster's magic powers are vast."

"What do I care how vast!" said the Pilgrim. "Had he known old Sun was coming, he'd have fled with nowhere to go!"

"And I remember he left behind a treasure as a token," said Sanzang.

"Master, don't get tangled up over nothing," said Bajie. "You had a dream—that should be the end of it. Why keep taking it for real?"

"If you won't believe what is straight, beware of the untrue," said the Sha Monk. "Let us light a fire, open the door, and see how things stand."

The Pilgrim opened the door, and they all looked: there in the light of stars and moon, on the step beneath the eaves, lay a white jade scepter inlaid with gold.

Bajie came forward, picked it up, and said: "Brother, what is this thing?"

"This is a treasure held in the hand of a king," said the Pilgrim, "called a jade scepter. Master, since the thing is here, the affair must be true. Tomorrow's monster-catching rests entirely on old Sun—only, you must needs suffer three strokes of bad luck."

"Fine, fine, fine!" said Bajie. "He has a dream, that's all—and you go telling it back to him. What is he not clever at, when it comes to playing tricks on people? Now he's telling you you'll suffer three strokes of bad luck!"

Sanzang went back inside and asked: "Which three?"

"Tomorrow," said the Pilgrim, "you must stand the blame, take the scolding, and eat the plague."

Bajie laughed: "One stroke would be hard enough to bear—how could anyone stand three?"

The Tang monk was a wise elder, and he asked: "Disciple, how do you explain these three things?"

"No need to explain," said the Pilgrim. "First let me give each of you a thing or two."

What a Great Sage! He plucked a hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, and cried "Change!"—and it became a red-and-gold lacquered casket. Placing the white jade scepter inside, he said: "Master, hold this thing in your hands. When the sky lightens, put on your brocade cassock, go sit in the main hall and recite scripture, while I go take a look at that city of his. If he is truly a monster, I'll beat him to death and win merit here; if he is not, then let us not invite trouble."

"Right! Right!" said Sanzang.

"If the prince doesn't leave the city, well and good," said the Pilgrim. "But if he truly comes out, as the dream foretold, I'll surely lead him here to see you."

"And when he sees me, how shall I answer him?" asked Sanzang.

"When he arrives, I'll announce him first," said the Pilgrim. "Then you pull the casket lid open a little. I shall change myself into a little monk two inches tall, and crawl inside the casket, and you hold me in your hands together with it. When the prince enters the monastery he will certainly worship the Buddha. Let him bow however he pleases—just pay him no heed. When he sees you do not rise, he will surely order you seized. Let them seize you: strike you, let him; bind you, let him; kill you, let him."

"Ah!" cried Sanzang. "His military authority is great. If he really killed me, what then?"

"Nothing to fear—I'm here," said the Pilgrim. "When the pinch comes, I will naturally protect you. If he asks, say you are a monk, an imperial envoy from the Eastern Land going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha, fetch scriptures, and present treasures. He will ask what treasures you have. Then you tell him all

about your brocade cassock, and say: 'This is a third-class treasure—there are still a first-class and a second-class better thing besides.' And whenever he asks, say that in this casket there is a treasure that knows five hundred years above, five hundred years below, and five hundred years between—fifteen hundred years in all of past and future things, all of which it knows perfectly. Then let old Sun out. I'll tell the prince all the words of the dream. If he believes, he will go seize that monster—avenging his father the king on the one hand, and winning us a name for honor on the other. If he does not believe, show him the white jade scepter. My only fear is that he is young, and may not recognize it."

Sanzang heard this with great joy: "Disciple, this plan is utterly brilliant! But tell me—of these treasures, one is called the brocade cassock, one the white jade scepter. What name shall we give the treasure you transform into?"

"Call it the Lidi Huo," said the Pilgrim.

[Translator's note: Lidi Huo, "Establish-the-Emperor Wares," is a made-up peddler's name in the original; some scholars hear in it an echo of the earliest Chinese rendering of "Christ" or "God" brought by the Jesuits—here it is simply a fraudulent-sounding name for a soothsaying trinket.]

Sanzang took his word and kept it in mind.

That night master and disciples got no sleep at all. They longed for daybreak, would gladly have nodded the sun up out of the Mulberry and blown the stars from the sky with a breath.

Before long the east grew white. The Pilgrim instructed Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Do not pester the monks or go wandering about. Wait till I have succeeded, and then we shall all travel on together."

Then he took leave of the Tang monk, gave a whistle, and with one somersault leapt into the air. Opening his fiery eyes and gazing due west, he saw indeed a walled city. You ask how he could see it? The city was said to be only forty li from the monastery, and so from his height he could look down and see it plainly. Drawing near and looking carefully, he saw a dreary haze of monstrous mists, demonic winds and an air of resentment drifting everywhere.

The Pilgrim sighed in the sky: "If a true king sat upon the throne, auspicious light and five-colored clouds would gather of themselves; but because a demon has invaded the dragon seat, black vapors seethe and lock the golden gates."

As the Pilgrim was sighing, he suddenly heard cannon fire crashing, and saw the east gate open, and out streamed a column of men and horses: a hunting expedition, bold indeed. See them: sallying at dawn from the forbidden city's east, spreading their circle through the shallow grass. Colored banners unfurl, bright in the sun; white horses gallop, meeting the wind. Alligator drums boom and thunder; javelins thrust in matched pairs. The hawk-bearers fierce and fiery; the hound-leaders dashing and bold. Cannon shake the sky with their roar; limed poles blaze red in the sun. Every man carries a crossbow bolt; every shoulder bears a carved bow.

Nets spread below the hillsides; cords laid along the narrow paths. One cry like a clap of thunder, and a thousand riders close in, brave as war-beasts. The cunning hare cannot save its body; the clever roe finds all its wits at an end. The fox's fate is run; the elk's doom is come. The mountain pheasant cannot fly free—how can the wild fowl escape its bane? All of them mean to seize the hunting grounds and take fierce beasts, to ravage the woods and shoot down the flying birds.

When the hunting party left the city and scattered over the eastern suburbs, before long, some twenty li out in the high fields, there appeared from the central camp a young general, helmet on his head, armor on his body, a figured breastplate and plates laced in eighteen rows, a keen sword of blue steel in his hand, riding a dun horse, a bow at full string at his waist. Truly he had the shadowed presence of a king, the proud bearing of an

emperor. No ordinary man in his deportment; in his every movement, a true dragon showed. The Pilgrim rejoiced in the air: "No need to ask—that is the emperor's son, the crown prince. Let me go play a trick on him."

What a Great Sage! He dropped his cloud, plunged into the army to the front of the prince's horse, shook his body, and changed into a white hare, scampering wildly before the prince's horse. When the prince saw it, it matched his heart's delight exactly: he nocked an arrow, drew the bow full, and with one shot struck the hare. In truth the Great Sage had let himself be hit on purpose; but with quick eye and nimble hand he caught hold of the arrowhead, leaving the feathered shaft to drop behind, and stretching his legs, ran off.

The prince, seeing his arrow strike the jade hare, wheeled his horse and spurred ahead alone in pursuit. But here is the thing: when the horse went fast, the Pilgrim went like the wind; when the horse slowed, the Pilgrim slowed too, keeping always just a little way ahead of him. Thus stage by stage he coaxed the prince along, until he drew him to the gate of Baolin Monastery. There the Pilgrim resumed his own form. The hare was nowhere to be seen; only an arrow stood stuck in the threshold. He dashed straight in, found the Tang monk, and cried: "Master, he's come! He's come!" Then with another change he became a little monk two inches tall and crawled into the red casket.

Now the prince galloped up to the monastery gate, and there was no white hare—only a carved-feather arrow standing in the threshold. The prince started back, his face changing: "Strange! Strange! Plainly my arrow struck the jade hare—where has the hare gone, with only the arrow here? It must be that after so many years it has become a spirit." He pulled out the arrow, raised his head, and saw five great characters over the gate: "Built by Imperial Command, the Baolin Monastery."

"I have it," said the prince. "I remember that years ago my father the king sent an officer from the Golden Chimes Hall with gold and silk for these monks, to repair the Buddha hall and the statues. Who would have thought I'd come here today. Truly: 'Passing by a temple hall, I meet a monk and talk, and gain again half a day's leisure in this floating life.' Let me go in and walk about."

The prince dismounted and was about to enter, when the escorting officers and the three thousand men and horses came up, thronging and crowding, and all entered within the gate. The monks of the monastery, panic-stricken, all came kowtowing to receive them, and escorted them into the main hall, where they bowed in worship before the Buddha statues.

The prince had just raised his eyes to look about, and was on the point of strolling the corridors and enjoying the scenery, when suddenly he saw a monk sitting right in the middle of the hall. The prince flared up: "This monk has no manners! I have come into the mountain with half an imperial cortege—though there was no decree to notify you, and you ought not to receive me from afar, still, now that soldiers and horses stand at your gate, you should at least rise! How can you go on sitting there without moving?" He ordered: "Seize him!"

At the word "seize," the officers on either side fell upon him at once, dragged the Tang monk down, and hurriedly got out ropes to bind him.

The Pilgrim, inside the casket, silently recited a spell and instructed: "Guardian Devas of the Dharma, Six Dings and Six Jias: I am now devising a way to subdue a demon, and this prince, knowing nothing, is about to bind my master with cords. Protect him at once! If he is truly bound, every one of you shall bear the guilt!"

When the Great Sage gave orders in secret, who would dare disobey? They shielded Sanzang fast: some men could not so much as touch his bald head; it was as if a wall stood in the way, and none could come near his body.

The prince said: "Where do you come from, that you use such invisibility magic to flout me!"

Sanzang came forward and saluted: "This poor monk has no invisibility magic. I am a monk of Tang, from the Eastern Land, going to Thunderclap Monastery to worship the Buddha, seek scriptures, and present treasures."

"Your Eastern Land, though it be the Middle Kingdom, is matchlessly poor," said the prince. "What treasures have you? Tell me, and let me hear."

"The cassock on my body is a third-class treasure," said Sanzang. "There are still a first-class and a second-class, far better things besides!"

"Those clothes of yours—half of you covered, half an arm bared—what can they be worth, that you dare call them treasures!" said the prince.

"Though this cassock is not whole," said Sanzang, "there are some lines of verse on it. The poem says:

The Buddha robe, worn from one shoulder, needs no praise; Within it hides true suchness, free of worldly dust. Ten thousand threads, a thousand stitches, complete the fruit; Nine pearls, eight jewels, join the primal spirit. Immortal nymphs and holy maidens reverently wrought it, And left it to a meditation monk to cleanse his soiled body. That you do not rise to greet a king—that might be borne; But your father's wrong unavenged—you live as a man in vain!"

At these words the prince's heart filled with fury: "This scoundrelly monk raves! That half-piece of a garment, and with your glib tongue you puff it up as fine and mighty! In what way is my father's vengeance unavenged? Say on, and let me hear!"

Sanzang stepped forward, put his palms together, and asked: "Your Highness, a man living between Heaven and Earth—how many kindnesses has he?"

"Four kindnesses," said the prince.

"Which four?" asked Sanzang.

"The kindness of Heaven and Earth in sheltering and bearing us," said the prince, "of sun and moon in shining upon us, of the king in giving us soil and water, and of father and mother in raising us."

Sanzang smiled: "Your Highness speaks amiss. Man has only the shelter of Heaven and Earth, the shining of sun and moon, and the king's soil and water. Where would this kindness of parents' nurture come from?"

The prince grew angry: "Monks—a pack of idle vagrants, shorn of hair and rebels against the sovereign! Without a father and mother to raise him, from where would a man's body come?"

"Your Highness," said Sanzang, "this poor monk cannot say. But in this red casket there is a treasure called the Lidi Huo, which knows five hundred years above, five hundred years between, five hundred years below—fifteen hundred years in all of past and future things. It will tell you of the kindness of a father's and mother's nurture. It has kept this poor monk waiting here a long while."

When the prince heard this, he ordered: "Bring it, that I may see." Sanzang pulled open the casket lid, and the Pilgrim leapt out, waddle-teeter, waddle-teeter, running back and forth on either side.

"What sort of things can that starry little mite of a man know?" said the prince.

The Pilgrim, taking offense at his smallness, used a little magic: he stretched his waist, and lo, he was three feet four or five inches tall.

The soldiers gasped: "If he grows this fast, in a few days he'll burst right through the sky!"

When the Pilgrim had grown back to his full height, he grew no more.

Then the prince asked: "Lidi Huo—this old monk says you know the good and ill fortune of past and future. Do you divine with a turtle shell? Do you cast lots with yarrow stalks? Do you read people's fortunes from the lines of books?"

"I use none of those," said the Pilgrim. "I rely wholly on my three-inch tongue, and all things under the sun I know."

"This fellow raves again," said the prince. "From of old, the Book of Changes has been utterly profound and subtle, divining every good and ill fortune under heaven, so that men know what to seek and what to shun—hence the turtle shell for divining and the yarrow stalks for casting lots. By your words, on what principle do you rely, that you dare babble of fortune and disaster and confound men's hearts?"

"Your Highness, don't be hasty," said the Pilgrim. "Let me tell it to you. You are the crown prince of the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom. Five years ago in your land the year was parched with drought, the myriad people suffered, and your emperor together with his ministers prayed with devoted hearts. Just when not a drop of rain had fallen, there came from Zhongnan Mountain a Daoist who could summon wind and rain and turn stone to gold. Your king, too fond of petty gain, swore brotherhood with him. Is there such a matter, or not?"

"There is, there is!" said the prince. "Say on."

"And in the three years since the Perfected One vanished, who is it that styles himself the solitary one?" said the Pilgrim.

"Indeed there was a Perfected One," said the prince. "My father the king swore brotherhood with him; they ate together and slept together. Three years ago, enjoying the scenery in the imperial garden, a gust of divine wind came, and the Perfected One carried off the white jade scepter inlaid with gold from my father's hand, back to Zhongnan Mountain. To this day my father still longs for him; and because he does not see him, he has lost all heart for strolling, and has kept the garden shut fast—it is three years now. If he is not my father the king, who sits upon the throne?"

At these words the Pilgrim snickered without stop. The prince pressed him with questions, but he gave no answer—only snickered.

The prince grew furious: "This fellow, when he should speak, does not speak—what is all this snickering for?"

"There is much more to say!" said the Pilgrim. "But with all these people about, this is no place to say it."

The prince saw there was a reason behind his words, swept back his sleeve, and ordered the soldiers to withdraw. The officers of the escort hurriedly passed on the command, and the three thousand men and horses all moved out and camped beyond the gate. Now there was no one in the hall. The prince sat above, the elder stood before him, and the Pilgrim stood at his left hand.

The monks of the monastery had all withdrawn, and only then did the Pilgrim step forward gravely: "Your Highness, the one who vanished with the wind is your own father who begat you; the one now seated on the throne is that rain-praying Perfected One."

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried the prince. "Since the Perfected One went away, winds and rains have come in season, the state has been at peace and the people secure. By what you say, he is not my father the king. It is only because I am young that I suffer your insolence; were my father the king to hear this talk of yours, he would seize you and hack you into ten thousand pieces!" And with a shout he drove the Pilgrim down.

The Pilgrim said to the Tang monk: "What did I say? I told you he wouldn't believe it—and sure enough, sure enough! Come, let us take that treasure and present it to him, exchange our travel permit, and be off to

the West."

Sanzang handed the red casket to the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim took it, gave his body one shake, and the casket vanished—it was his hair transformed, and he took it back upon his body. Then, holding the white jade scepter in both hands, he offered it up to the prince.

When the prince saw it, he said: "Fine monk! Fine monk! Five years ago you were that very Perfected One, and came swindling away my family's treasure—and now you dress up as a monk and come presenting it back!" He shouted: "Seize him!"

At that one command, the elder was frightened out of his wits, and pointed at the Pilgrim, crying: "You Probationer Horse-Groom! Always blundering into empty trouble, and dragging me down with you!"

The Pilgrim stepped forward and stopped them all: "No clamor! Don't let the wind of it escape! I am not called Lidi Huo—I have a real name besides."

The prince said angrily: "Come up here! Let me ask your real name, and send you to the courts to be sentenced!"

"I am that elder's senior disciple," said the Pilgrim, "named Sun Wukong, the Pilgrim Sun. Because I am escorting my master to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures, last night we came here seeking lodging. My master was reading scripture in the night, and at the third watch he had a dream. In the dream he saw your father the king, who said he had been done to death by that Perfected One—pushed into the eight-cornered glazed well in the imperial garden—while the Perfected One changed himself into your father's likeness. Not one official at court could tell; you, being young, could not know either. He forbade you the palace and shut the garden, chiefly for fear the truth should leak out. Your father the king came tonight especially to ask me to subdue the demon. Fearing it might be no demon, I looked from the sky—and sure enough, it is a monster. I was just about to set hands on him when, unhappily, you came out of the city to hunt. The jade hare your arrow struck was none other than old Sun. Old Sun led you here to the monastery to see my master and pour out this tale—and every word of it is true. Since you recognize the white jade scepter, why do you not remember the kindness of him who raised you, and avenge your own father?"

When the prince heard this, his heart was wrung with grief, and he mourned within himself: "If I do not believe these words, there is yet something three parts true in them; but if I believe—then the one on the throne is my own father no more." Truly: pressed on both sides, the heart questions the mouth; thinking thrice, the mouth asks the heart.

The Pilgrim, seeing him wavering, came forward again: "Your Highness need not doubt. Pray let Your Highness ride back to your own capital, and ask one question of your mother, the queen. Ask her how the love between that royal couple today compares with what it was three years ago. That one question, and you will know the true from the false."

The prince turned it over in his mind: "Right! Let me go ask my mother." He leapt up, tucked the jade scepter away, and would have gone at once.

The Pilgrim caught hold of him: "If all these men and horses go back with you, won't the news leak out, and all my work come to nothing? You must enter the city one man on one horse. Do not make a show of your name. Do not enter the Great South Gate; go in by the rear gate. When you reach the palace and see your mother, do not raise your voice—speak softly and low. That monster's magic is vast, and if the least breath of it escapes, your mother's life and yours may both be forfeit."

The prince obeyed his instructions reverently. Going out the monastery gate, he commanded his officers: "Camp here steadily; do not stir. I have a matter to see to; wait till I return, and we shall enter the city together." Watch him:

With word of command he settles the encamped troops; Mounting his horse like the wind, he gallops back to the city.

What passed between him and the queen when he arrived—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 38

The Child Questions His Mother and Learns False from True; Metal and Wood Probe the Mystery and See Real from Counterfeit

Meeting you, I speak only of the causes of birth, And you become one of the assembly about the Tathagata. In one thought, quietly beholding, the world of dust is Buddha; In all ten quarters, together we watch the majestic power descend. If you would know today's true enlightened sovereign, You must inquire of the mother who bore him long ago. There is yet a sight the world has never seen: At every step he takes, a flower newly blooms.

The story continues: the crown prince of the Black Rooster Kingdom, having taken leave of the Great Sage, soon returned to the city. Indeed he did not hasten to the court gate or dare have his coming announced, but went straight to the Rear Gate, where several eunuchs stood guard. Seeing the prince come, they dared not delay him, and let him in.

What a prince! He squeezed his horse onward, plunged inside, and soon came beneath the Brocade Fragrance Pavilion, where the queen of the principal palace sat. On either side of her several dozen consorts held ceremonial fans, and the queen herself leaned on the carved railing, weeping.

Why was she weeping? Because at the fourth watch she too had had a dream; she remembered half of it, and half was hazy, and she was sunk deep in thought over it.

The prince dismounted, knelt beneath the pavilion, and called: "Mother!"

The queen forced her face into a look of joy and called: "Child, what happiness! What happiness! These two or three years, attending lectures with your father in the front hall, you could not come to see me, and I have missed you sorely. How is it you find leisure today to come look on my face? Truly a joy of ten thousand parts! A joy of ten thousand parts! But child, why is your voice so mournful? Your father the king is aged; one day the dragon will return to the jasper sea and the phoenix to the cinnabar clouds, and you will succeed to the throne—is there anything still to sadden you?"

The prince kowtowed: "Mother, let me ask you: who is it that mounts the throne and sits as sovereign? Who is it that styles himself the solitary one?"

The queen said: "This child has gone mad! The one who reigns as emperor is your father the king—why do you ask?"

The prince kowtowed: "I beg you, Mother, grant your son immunity, and I dare ask; without the grant, I dare not ask."

"What guilt could there be between mother and son?" said the queen. "I grant it, I grant it—speak quickly."

"Mother," said the prince, "let me ask you: the matters of the bedchamber three years ago, and the love of the three years since—were they the same?"

When the queen heard this, her soul scattered and her spirit flew. She hurried down from the pavilion, lifted him up, clasped him tight in her arms, tears dripping from her eyes: "Child! You and I have not seen each other so long—why do you come to the palace today and ask this?"

The prince flared up: "Mother, if you have something to say, say it quickly! If you do not, a great matter will be ruined."

Then the queen dismissed her attendants, and with tear-filled eyes said softly: "This affair, child—if you had not asked, I should never have understood it, not even in the Nine Springs. But since you ask, hear me:

Three years ago, warm and tender still; Three years since, cold as ice. I pressed him with whispered questions by the pillow, And he said: 'I'm old and frail; such things are past.'"

At these words the prince let go, broke free, and swung himself into the saddle.

The queen seized him with one hand: "Child, what business is this, that you leave before your words are done?"

The prince knelt before her: "Mother, I dare not say! This morning at the early audience, by imperial charge I led hawks and hounds out of the city to hunt, and happened to meet a holy scripture-seeking monk sent down from the Eastern Land, whose senior disciple, Sun the Pilgrim, is supremely skilled at subduing monsters. It turns out my father the king died in the eight-cornered glazed well of the imperial garden, and this Perfected One falsely changed into my father's shape and usurped the dragon throne. Tonight at the third watch my father entrusted a dream, asking him to come to the city and catch the monster. I dared not believe it whole, and came especially to ask you, Mother—and now you have spoken these words. It must be a demon indeed."

"Child," said the queen, "these are the words of outsiders. How can you take them for fact?"

"I dared not take them for fact outright," said the prince, "but my father left a token with him." The queen asked what it was, and the prince drew the white jade scepter inlaid with gold from his sleeve and handed it to her.

The queen recognized it as the treasure of the king her lord in bygone days, and her tears gushed forth like a spring. She cried out: "My lord! How is it that dead these three years, you did not come to see me, but went first to the holy monk and only now to me?"

"Mother, what do you mean by that?" asked the prince.

"Child," said the queen, "at the fourth watch I too had a dream. I dreamed your father stood before me, dripping wet, and said with his own lips that he was dead, that his ghost had gone to entreat the Tang monk to subdue the false emperor and deliver his former body. I remembered the words, it seemed, just so—but half of it I could not make clear, and I was still turning it over in doubt. How was I to know that today you would come speaking these very words, and bring out the treasure besides? Let me keep it. Go quickly and invite that holy monk to act, and act speedily. If he can indeed sweep away the demonic miasma and distinguish false from true, then we may repay your father the king for the kindness of his nurturing."

The prince mounted in haste, went out the Rear Gate, slipped away from the city. Truly:

With tears he kowtowed and bade farewell to the mother of the realm; With grief he bowed his head and returned to the Tang monk.

Before long he had left the city and ridden straight to the gate of Baolin Monastery, where he dismounted. The soldiers received the prince; the red wheel of the sun was about to sink. The prince gave orders that the soldiers must not stir, and went alone in through the monastery gate, straightened his cap and robes, and came to beg the Pilgrim.

The Monkey King came swaying and swaggering out from the main hall. The prince fell on both knees: "Master, I have come."

The Pilgrim stepped forward and raised him up: "Pray rise. In the city, whom did you ask?"

"I asked my mother," said the prince, and told him all that had passed.

The Pilgrim smiled faintly: "If he's grown that cold, I suppose he's some icy, frigid thing transformed. No matter! No matter! Wait till old Sun sweeps him away for you. But it is late today—not the time for action.

Go back first, and I'll come tomorrow morning."

The prince knelt and kowtowed: "Master, let me only wait upon you here, and tomorrow I'll go with you."

"No good! No good!" said the Pilgrim. "If I enter the city together with you, that monster will grow suspicious. Instead of saying I chanced upon you, he'll say you invited old Sun—and wouldn't that set him blaming you in turn?"

"If I go back into the city now, he'll blame me anyway," said the prince.

"Blame you how?" asked the Pilgrim.

"This morning at the early audience I was charged to lead a train of men, horses, hawks, and hounds out of the city," said the prince, "and now a whole day has passed without one wild thing taken. How shall I show myself at court? If he charges me with the crime of incompetence and claps me in a prison like Youli—then when you enter the city tomorrow, whom will you lean on? And among all the benches of officials there is not one I can call a friend."

"What does that matter!" said the Pilgrim. "If you'd only spoken sooner, wouldn't I have laid in a stock to wait for you?"

What a Great Sage! Before the prince's very eyes he showed his arts: with one bound he leapt into the clouds, knotted his fingers in a spell, recited the true words "Om ram, purity of the Dharma realm," and summoned the mountain god and the local deity, who saluted him in mid-air: "Great Sage, you have called your little gods—what are your commands?"

"Old Sun is protecting the Tang monk here," said the Pilgrim, "and means to seize a demon. But the prince has hunted all day and taken nothing, and dares not return to court. I ask a favor of you: quickly find some roe deer, elk, hares—running beasts and flying birds, whatever you can—and send him back."

When the mountain god and local deity heard this, how dared they refuse? They only asked how many of each were wanted.

"No matter how many," said the Great Sage. "Just bring some."

The gods ordered their local shade-soldiers, raised a gathering wind of the shades, and caught wild cocks and mountain pheasants, antlered elk and fat roe deer, foxes, badgers, raccoon-dogs and hares, tigers, leopards, wolves, and wild beasts—a hundred and more of every kind—and presented them to the Pilgrim.

"Old Sun wants none of them," said the Pilgrim. "Cramp their sinews, and lay them out along both sides of that forty-li road, so the men there need not loose hawks or hounds, but can carry them back to the city—we'll count it as your merit."

The gods obeyed; they scattered the shade wind, and laid the game out to right and left.

Only then did the Pilgrim press down his cloud and say to the prince: "Your Highness, pray return. There is game along the road—go collect it."

The prince, having seen him work such magic in mid-air, how could he doubt? He could only kowtow, take his leave, go out the monastery gate, and give orders for the soldiers to return to the city. And sure enough, along both sides of the road there was wild game without number. The soldiers did not loose hawk or hound; one by one they seized the beasts with their hands, cheering, all saying it was the boundless fortune of the Young Prince—how could they know it was old Sun's divine power? Listen to them singing songs of triumph as they streamed back to the city in a crowd.

The Pilgrim protected Sanzang, and the monks of the monastery, seeing how intimate they were with the crown prince, how could they fail in reverence? They laid on a vegetarian feast and waited upon the Tang monk, and he lodged as before in the meditation hall.

It was close on the first watch. The Pilgrim, with business on his mind, could not sleep. He rolled over, clambered up, went to the Tang monk's bed, and called: "Master." The elder was not yet asleep, but knowing the Pilgrim's habit of startling people with strange alarms, he feigned sleep and did not answer. The Pilgrim felt his bald head and shook it roughly: "Master, how can you be asleep?"

The Tang monk said angrily: "You impossible scamp! Not asleep at this hour—what are you bawling about?"

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "there's a matter I want to talk over with you."

"What matter?" asked the elder.

"This day I boasted to the prince," said the Pilgrim, "that my skill is higher than mountains and deeper than seas, and that catching that monster would be like fetching a thing out of a bag—reach out the hand and bring it back. But now I can't sleep, and thinking it over, there's some difficulty in it."

"You say it's difficult," said the Tang monk, "then simply don't catch him."

"Catch him I shall," said the Pilgrim, "only the justice of it is not straightforward."

"This monkey talks nonsense!" said the Tang monk. "A demon has usurped a sovereign's throne—how can you say the justice is not straightforward?"

"You, old sir, know only reciting scripture, worshiping Buddha, sitting in meditation and probing Chan," said the Pilgrim. "Did you ever see Xiao He's code of laws? As the common saying goes: to take a thief, take him with the goods. That monster has been emperor three years, and never once shown a cloven hoof nor let a breath of rumor escape. He has slept with the empresses and consorts of the three palaces and made merry with both benches of civil and military officials. Old Sun might have the power to seize him, but there'd be no naming his crime."

"Why could no crime be named?" asked the Tang monk.

"Even if he were a gourd without a mouth, he'd still roll you over a few rounds," said the Pilgrim. "He could well say: 'I am the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom—what crime against Heaven have I committed that you come to seize me?' What warrant would I show to argue him down?"

"Then how will you manage it?" asked the Tang monk.

"Old Sun's plan is already made," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Only it touches on you, old sir—you're a little partial."

"How am I partial?" asked the Tang monk.

"Bajie was born stupid, and you favor him a little," said the Pilgrim.

"How do I favor him?" asked the Tang monk.

"If you don't favor him, then pluck up your courage now, and stay here with the Sha Monk," said the Pilgrim. "Let old Sun take Bajie and slip first into the Black Rooster city while it's still dark. We'll find the imperial garden, break open the glazed well, fish up the emperor's corpse, and wrap it in our bundle. Tomorrow we enter the city, and never mind exchanging travel documents—when we see that monster, I'll pull out my cudgel and strike. If he has anything to say, we'll show him the corpse and say: 'This is the man you murdered!' Then we'll bring the prince up to weep for his father, the queen out to identify her husband, the

civil and military officials to behold their lord, and old Sun with his brothers will set to work. That's what's called a lawsuit with a plaintiff: a case that can be fought."

The Tang monk heard this with secret joy: "I only fear Bajie will not go."

"There, what did I say?" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "I said you favor him—and how is it you already know he won't go? Just do as you did when I called you: don't answer, and in half a watch it will be settled! When I go, with this three-inch tongue of mine that never wears out—never mind Zhu Bajie; were he Zhu Jiujie, Zhu Nine-Prohibitions, I'd have the art to make him follow me."

"Very well," said the Tang monk, "go call him."

The Pilgrim left his master and went straight to Bajie's bed, calling: "Bajie! Bajie!" But that blockhead, weary from the road, had dropped his head and was snoring away—how could he be wakened by calling? The Pilgrim seized his ear, grabbed his bristles, and hauled him up with one pull, crying: "Bajie!" The dolt still struggled in his sleep. The Pilgrim called again, and the blockhead said: "Go to sleep, don't play! We have to walk tomorrow!"

"This isn't play," said the Pilgrim. "There's a little business—you and I should go do it."

"What business?" asked Bajie.

"Did you hear what the prince said?" asked the Pilgrim.

"I never met the man, and never heard him say anything," said Bajie.

"The prince told me," said the Pilgrim, "that the monster has a treasure, and courage beyond the strength of ten thousand men. Tomorrow when we go to court we can't avoid a fight with him; and if that monster grips his treasure and lays us low, wouldn't the whole thing turn to ashes? I figure: rather than be beaten, better strike first. You and I will go steal it from him—wouldn't that be fine?"

"Brother," said Bajie, "you're coaxing me into thieving. This business I could join—but only if I'm truly let in on it, and let's be clear about terms: once we've stolen the treasure and subdued the monster, I won't stand for any pettifogging division of the goods—the treasure shall be mine."

"What would you do with it?" asked the Pilgrim.

"I'm not clever and glib like the rest of you, able to beg a meal before anybody," said Bajie. "Old Pig's body is clumsy and his speech coarse; he can't recite scripture. If we come to some barren stretch where nothing can be begged and no one will give, wouldn't it be fine to trade the treasure for food?"

"Old Sun seeks only fame—what would I want with treasure?" said the Pilgrim. "Let it be yours, and there's an end to it."

When the blockhead heard that it would all be his, his heart brimmed with joy. He rolled up at once, pulled on his clothes, and set off with the Pilgrim.

Truly: clear wine reddens a man's face; yellow gold stirs a cultivator's heart. The two of them quietly opened the door, slipped away from Sanzang, rose on auspicious light, and sped straight toward the city.

Before long they arrived, and bringing their clouds down, they heard from the tower that it was just the second watch.

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "it's the second watch."

"Perfect! Perfect!" said Bajie. "Everybody's in the deep of their first sleep."

The two did not head for the Great South Gate, but went straight to the Rear Gate, where they heard the clappers and bells of the watch.

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "front and back gates are both closely guarded. How shall we get in?"

"Who ever heard of a thief going in by the door?" said Bajie. "Let's just scale the wall and jump over."

The Pilgrim took his advice: with one bound he leapt onto the inner wall, and Bajie leapt up after him. The two slipped inside, found the way, and went straight to look for the imperial garden. As they walked, they came upon a gateway tower of white clusters with triple eaves, on which three great characters glittered in the light of stars and moon: "The Imperial Garden."

The Pilgrim drew near and looked: several seals were pasted upon it, and the lock had rusted the door fast shut. He ordered Bajie to set to work. The blockhead raised his iron rake and struck with all his might, smashing the door to splinters.

The Pilgrim stepped in first—and could not help leaping up with loud cries and laments, frightening Bajie, who hurried forward and caught hold of him: "Brother! You'll be the death of me! Whoever heard of a thief bawling and carrying on like this! Wake the household, let them seize us and hand us to the magistrates—even if it isn't a capital crime, we'd be marched back to our native place and drafted into the army."

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "you don't know why I cried out. Just look at this:

Painted balustrades wretched and broken; jeweled pavilions tilting and awry. The sedge isles and knotweed banks are all buried in dust; Peony and rose-mallow have withered away. Jasmine and rose, their fragrance faint; peony and lily blooming to no one. Hibiscus and hibiscia smothered in weeds; Rare plants and wondrous blossoms choked and ruined. The artful rocks and little peaks have all toppled; The pond is dry, its fishes gone. Green pines and purple bamboo are like dry faggots; The whole path is thick with tangled wormwood and mugwort. The cinnamon's boughs and the peach's limbs are broken; The pomegranate and crabapple lean askew at the root. On bridge-heads and winding paths the moss grows green— A garden fallen cold and desolate!"

"What's the use of sighing over it?" said Bajie. "Quick, let's get on with our business!"

The Pilgrim, moved as he was, kept his wits about him and recalled the Tang monk's dream: it was beneath the plantain tree that the well would be.

Walking on, sure enough they saw a plantain tree, growing lush and flourishing, unlike all the other flowers and trees. Truly:

A numinous seedling, elegant and rare, Born of Heaven with a body and nature empty. From every branch it puts forth sheets of paper; In every leaf it rolls a fragrant cluster. A thousand threads of kingfisher green, so fine; One dot of cinnabar at the crimson heart. Desolate, it sorrows in the night rain; Haggard, it shrinks before the autumn wind. Nurtured by the strength of the primal agent, Reared by the works of the Creator. Fold a letter on it—there is its wondrous use; Dip and dash the brush—there is its strange power. The phoenix plume is scarce like it; The luan-bird's tail alone matches its kind. Heavy dew drips and drips upon it; Light mist veils it thin and pale. Its green shade covers door and window; Its emerald shadow climbs the lattice blind. It will not let the wild goose perch upon it; How could the jade steed be tethered to it? In frosty skies its form grows gaunt and worn; On moonlit nights its color blurs and dims. Fit only to dispel the summer's heat, Fit still to shelter from the burning sun. It shames itself of peach and plum's fair colors, Left cold and lone east of the powdered wall.

"Bajie," said the Pilgrim, "set to! The treasure is buried under the plantain tree."

The blockhead raised his rake in both hands and knocked the plantain flat, then rooted with his snout, rooting down three or four feet, until he came upon a stone slab covering something beneath.

The blockhead rejoiced: "Brother, fortune! There really is treasure—a stone slab covers it! I wonder whether it's in a jar or packed in a chest."

"Lift it up and look," said the Pilgrim. The blockhead gave another thrust of his snout and rooted the slab aside; looking in, they saw a gleam of rosy light and a white glow bright and clear. Bajie laughed: "Fortune! Fortune! The treasure is giving off light!"

But when he drew near and looked closer—ah! It was only the light of stars and moon, shining on the water in the well.

"Brother," said Bajie, "whenever you take on a job, you always leave a snag behind."

"How do I leave a snag?" asked the Pilgrim.

"This is a well. Back at the monastery, if you'd said early on there was a treasure in a well, I'd have brought the two cords we tie our bundles with, and worked out some way to let old Pig down. Now, empty-handed—how am I to get down and up in there?"

"Will you go down?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Down I must—but there are no ropes," said Bajie.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Take off your clothes, and I'll show you a trick."

"What good clothes have I? This gown off, and that's all," said Bajie.

What a Great Sage! He brought out the gold-banded cudgel, pulled at both ends, and cried "Grow!"—and it was a good seven or eight zhang long. "Bajie," said he, "hold on to one end, and I'll let you down into the well."

"Brother," said Bajie, "let me down, let me down—but when I come to the water, stop."

"I understand," said the Pilgrim. The blockhead clasped the iron cudgel, and the Pilgrim lifted him gently and lowered him down. Before long he reached the water. "I'm at the water!" called Bajie. And the moment the Pilgrim heard him say it, he pushed the cudgel down.

With a great splash the blockhead went under, head over heels; he let go of the cudgel and came up spluttering, gurgling and grumbling: "This heaven-slain villain! I said 'water—don't let go,' and he pushes me straight down!"

The Pilgrim drew up the cudgel and laughed: "Well, brother—any treasure?"

"Treasure, my eye! It's nothing but a well full of water!"

"The treasure has sunk to the bottom of the water," said the Pilgrim. "Dive down and feel for it."

The blockhead was indeed a master of the water. He took a deep plunge and ducked down—and ah, how deep the well's bottom was! He ducked down again in earnest, and suddenly, opening his eyes, saw a gateway tower, on which were the characters "Crystal Palace."

Bajie was greatly startled: "Done for! Done for! We've taken the wrong road—plunged right into the sea! Crystal palaces are in the sea—how could there be one in a well?"

For Bajie did not know that this was the Crystal Palace of the Dragon King of the Well.

While Bajie was still staring, a water-patrolling yaksa opened the gate, caught sight of his appearance, hurried back inside, and reported: "Great King, disaster! There's a monk with a long snout and big ears come down from above the well—stark naked, without a stitch of clothes, and still not dead; he's out there flailing and talking."

When the Dragon King of the Well heard this he was greatly alarmed: "This must be Marshal Tianpeng come! Last night the Night-Wandering Spirit, bearing an imperial decree, came to fetch the soul of the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom to pay respects to the Tang monk and ask the Great Sage Equal to Heaven to subdue the demon. I fear this is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven and Marshal Tianpeng—no time to treat them slackly! Quick, go receive him!"

The Dragon King straightened his cap and robes, led his water tribes out the gate, and called out in a loud, respectful voice: "Marshal Tianpeng, pray come in and be seated."

Only then was Bajie pleased: "So it's an old acquaintance." And the blockhead, never mind whether it was proper, walked straight into the Crystal Palace. Knowing no better, stark naked as he was, he sat right down in the seat of honor.

"Marshal," said the Dragon King, "I have heard that lately you gained your life back, took refuge in the Buddhist teaching, and protect the Tang monk on his journey to the Western Heaven for scriptures. How is it you have come to this place?"

"That's just it," said Bajie. "My elder brother Sun Wukong sends abundant respects, and bids me ask you for a certain treasure."

"Alas," said the Dragon King, "how could we come by a treasure here? I'm not like the Dragon Kings of the Yangtze, the Huai, the Ji, and the great rivers, who fly and transform as they please and so have treasures. I have long been pent up here; I cannot even see sun and moon as often as I'd like—where indeed would a treasure come from?"

"Don't make excuses. If you have one, bring it out," said Bajie.

"Have one I do," said the Dragon King, "only it cannot be brought out. Let the Marshal come in person and look at it—what do you say?"

"Fine, fine, fine! I must have a look," said Bajie.

The Dragon King walked ahead, the blockhead following, past the crystal palace halls—and there in the corridor lay stretched out a body six feet long.

The Dragon King pointed with his hand: "Marshal, that yonder is the treasure."

Bajie went up and looked—ah! It was a dead emperor, wearing a crown that rose to heaven, dressed in a rust-yellow robe, shod in carefree shoes, girt with a Lantian belt, lying there straight and stiff.

Bajie laughed: "Hard, hard, hard! This hardly counts as a treasure! When old Pig was a monster in the mountains, I used to make meals of such things—never mind how many I've seen; I've eaten more than I can count. How is this called a treasure!"

"Marshal, you don't know," said the Dragon King. "This is the corpse of the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom. Ever since he came into the well, I have held his form fixed with the face-preserving pearl, so that he has not decayed. If you will carry him out, so that he is seen by the Great Sage Equal to Heaven—and should there truly be a means of raising the dead to life—then never mind treasures: whatever thing you ask for, you shall have."

"Since you put it that way, I'll carry him out for you," said Bajie. "Only tell me: how much burial money do you give me?"

"To be honest, we have no money," said the Dragon King.

"How kind of you—making me work for nothing! If there's truly no money, I won't carry him!"

"If you won't carry him, pray go," said the Dragon King. And Bajie walked off.

The Dragon King sent two strong yaksas, who carried the corpse out, delivered it beyond the Crystal Palace gate, dropped it there, and took away the water-parting pearl—at once there was the sound of water.

Bajie turned his head in alarm: the Crystal Palace gate was gone. Groping, he found himself holding the emperor's corpse. Panic made his legs weak and his sinews numb; he scrambled up out of the water, clutched the well wall, and cried: "Brother! Reach your cudgel down and save me!"

"Any treasure?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Where would there be! Only there's a Well Dragon King at the bottom of the water, who wanted me to carry a dead man up. I wouldn't do it—and he showed me out the door, and the Crystal Palace was gone. I found nothing but that corpse, and it scared me so my hands went soft and my sinews numb—I can't move a limb! Brother, for pity's sake, save me!"

"That corpse is the treasure," said the Pilgrim. "Why didn't you carry him up?"

"Who knows how long he's been dead? What do I want with carrying him?" said Bajie.

"If you won't carry him, I'm going back," said the Pilgrim.

"Going back where?" asked Bajie.

"Back to the monastery, to sleep with my master."

"And me—am I to stay down here?" cried Bajie.

"If you can climb up, I'll take you along; if you can't climb up, then stay there," said the Pilgrim.

Bajie panicked: "How could I ever climb! Think—the city wall was hard enough to get over! This well is big in the belly and small in the mouth, its walls sheer and round, and no one has drawn water from it for years; it's grown all round with slick moss, slippery as slick can be—how am I to climb? Brother, don't let's break the harmony between brothers. Let me carry him up after all."

"That's right! Carry him up quick, and we'll go back together and sleep," said the Pilgrim.

The blockhead took another deep plunge, ducked down, felt for the corpse, dragged it over, slung it on his back, and scrambled up out of the water. Holding the well wall, he called: "Brother, I've got him on my back." The Pilgrim opened his eyes and looked: sure enough, he bore it on his back. Then the Pilgrim reached the gold-banded cudgel down to the well's bottom. The blockhead, thoroughly provoked, opened his mouth, bit down on the iron cudgel, and the Pilgrim lifted him gently out.

Bajie set the corpse down, fished over his clothes, and put them on. The Pilgrim looked: the emperor's face was as of old, not changed by a hair from life.

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "this man has been dead three years. How is his face still unspoiled?"

"You wouldn't know," said Bajie. "The Well Dragon King told me he'd fixed it with the face-preserving pearl, so the corpse never decayed."

"Fortune! Fortune!" said the Pilgrim. "First, his grievance is not yet avenged; second, success is meant for us. Quick, brother, carry him along."

"Carry him where?" asked Bajie.

"Carry him to see Master," said the Pilgrim.

Bajie muttered under his breath: "What a pass! What a pass! A man sleeping soundly, and this macaque, with his honeyed words and clever talk, coaxes me into some 'business'—and now here I am doing this, carrying a dead man! Carrying him, with his filthy, stinking water dripping down on me, fouling my clothes—and no one to wash them for me. There are patches on this gown already; let it get damp in a spell of wet weather, and how am I to wear it?"

"Just carry him along," said the Pilgrim. "At the monastery I'll get you a change of clothes."

"Shame on you! You've nothing of your own to wear—and you'll change mine!"

"With all that lip, then don't carry him!" said the Pilgrim.

"Don't carry him, then!"

"Then stretch out your ankles, and take twenty strokes!"

Bajie panicked: "Brother, that cudgel is heavy. Twenty strokes of it, and I'd be just like this emperor here."

"If you're afraid of a beating, then carry him quick and let's walk!"

And indeed Bajie feared the cudgel. Sulkily he dragged the corpse over, slung it on his back, and trudged out of the garden and away.

What a Great Sage! He knotted his fingers, recited a spell, drew a breath of air from the quarter of the southeast wind, and blew it out—and there rose a gust of wild wind that swept Bajie out of the inner palace, away from the city. When the wind's edge died, the two of them came to ground and walked on at ease. The blockhead nursed a secret grudge and schemed how to pay the Pilgrim back: "This monkey makes a fool of me. At the monastery I'll make a fool of him in turn: I'll put it to the master that he can cure the man alive; and if he can't cure him, I'll have the master recite the Band-tightening Spell and squeeze this monkey's brains out through his eyes—then my heart will be content!"

Walking along, he turned it over and over in his mind: "No good! No good! If it comes to curing a man, that's easy enough for him: he'd just go to King Yama's house and beg the soul back, and the man would live. No—I must say he's forbidden to go to the underworld, and must bring the man to life right here in the world of the living. Only that will serve."

Before the words were out of his mind, they had come to the monastery gate. They went straight in, and Bajie dumped the corpse in front of the meditation hall door, crying: "Master, get up and look what's here!"

The Tang monk, unable to sleep, was just talking with the Sha Monk about how the Pilgrim had coaxed Bajie off and stayed away so long. Suddenly hearing him call, the Tang monk rose quickly: "Disciple, look at what?"

"The Pilgrim's maternal grandfather—old Pig has carried him here," said Bajie.

"You chaff-guzzling blockhead!" cried the Pilgrim. "Since when have I a maternal grandfather?"

"Brother," said Bajie, "if he's not your maternal grandfather, why would old Pig have carried him here? And no small labor it was, either!"

The Tang monk and the Sha Monk opened the door and looked: the emperor's face was unchanged, as though he were still alive.

The elder was suddenly overcome with grief: "Your Majesty—who knows in what lifetime you crossed some enemy, that in this life you met him and lost your life in secret, casting off wife and child, so that the civil officials knew nothing and the court officers understood nothing! Poor wife of yours, sunk in blindness—who ever burned incense or offered tea to you?" His voice broke, and tears fell like rain.

Bajie laughed: "Master, his dying—is that your business? He's not your father or your grandfather. What are you crying for?"

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "for one who has left the world, compassion is the root and mercy the gate. How can your heart be so hard?"

"It's not that my heart is hard," said Bajie. "It's what my brother told me—that he can cure the man alive. If he couldn't cure him, I'd never have carried him here."

Now the elder was a man without a settled mind of his own, and the blockhead's talk shook him. He called at once: "Wukong, if you truly have the means to cure this emperor alive, that is better than saving a life—better than building a seven-story pagoda. It would do us more good than worshiping Buddha on Vulture Peak."

"Master, how can you believe this blockhead's raving!" said the Pilgrim. "When a man dies, after three sevens or five sevens, when the full seven times seven days are done and his punishment in the world of the living is complete, he passes on to be reborn. This man has been dead three years—how could anyone save him?"

Hearing this, Sanzang said: "So that's how it is."

But Bajie, nursing his spite, went on: "Master, don't let him fool you—he's got a touch of wind in the head. Just recite that little spell of yours, and I guarantee he'll hand you back a living man."

And in truth the Tang monk recited the Band-tightening Spell, tightening it till the monkey's eyes swelled and his head pounded.

But as for how the emperor was cured—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 39

One Grain of Golden Elixir Is Won from Heaven; a True King Dead Three Years Is Born Again into the World

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun, his head aching past all bearing, pleaded piteously: "Master, don't recite! Don't recite! Wait till I've cured him!"

"How will you cure him?" asked the elder.

"Only by going down to the underworld, finding out at which King Yama's house his soul is kept, and inviting it back to save him," said the Pilgrim.

"Master, don't believe him," said Bajie. "He said before that he needn't go to the underworld—he'd cure the man alive right here in the world of the living. Only then would his skill show!"

The elder caught the fever of it and recited the Band-tightening Spell again, till the Pilgrim, in a panic, capitulated on every point: "In the world of the living! In the world of the living, then!"

"Don't stop! Keep reciting! Keep reciting!" cried Bajie.

"You wicked, addled beast!" the Pilgrim cursed. "You're egging my master on to spell me!"

Bajie laughed till he staggered: "Brother! Brother! You only knew how to make a fool of me—you didn't know I could make a fool of you in return!"

"Master, don't recite! Don't recite!" cried the Pilgrim. "Let old Sun cure him in the world of the living."

"And how do you cure a man in the world of the living?" asked Sanzang.

"With one somersault cloud I'll storm in through the South Gate of Heaven," said the Pilgrim. "I'll not stop at the Hall of the Dipper and Ox, nor enter the Hall of Divine Mists, but go straight up to the Palace of the Highest Sorrow at the thirty-third heaven, to the Tushita Palace within it, and see Lord Lao Zi. There I'll beg one grain of his nine-cycle elixir of returning souls—and that, I guarantee, will bring the king alive again."

Hearing this, Sanzang was overjoyed: "Then go, and come back quickly."

"It's just past the third watch now," said the Pilgrim. "By the time I return it will be broad day. Only—this man lying here, cold and stark, is hardly a proper sight; someone ought to hold a mourning and watch over him and weep. Then all will be well."

"No need to say more," said Bajie. "This monkey wants me to do the weeping, of course."

"Suppose you wouldn't weep!" said the Pilgrim. "If you don't weep, I can't work my cure!"

"Brother, go your way," said Bajie. "I'll do the weeping."

"There are several kinds of weeping," said the Pilgrim. "A dry bawling with open mouth is called howling; squeezing out a few tears is called wailing. You must weep tears and weep with heart as well—only then does it count as howling and wailing in bitter grief."

"Then let me weep you a sample to look at," said Bajie. From somewhere he got a strip of paper, twisted it into a paper probe, poked it up his nostrils a couple of times, and let off a few sneezes—and watch him: eyes brimming, slobber streaming, he fell to weeping, mumbling and muttering without stop, running down this and running down that, truly like a man bereaved.

He wept to such a piteous pitch that the Tang elder himself dropped tears and his heart grew sour. The Pilgrim laughed: "That's the very style of grief—only don't you dare stop. You blockhead, once you've coaxed me out of the way, you'll quit weeping—I'll still be listening! Weep like that, and well and good. But if you so much as pause for breath, it'll be twenty strokes across the ankles!"

"Go on, go!" said Bajie with a laugh. "Once this weeping of mine gets started, I can keep it up two days."

Seeing him carry on so, the Sha Monk went to find a few sticks of incense to burn as an offering. "Good, good, good!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "The whole household shows some reverence—now old Sun can get to work."

What a Great Sage! It was now the depth of midnight. He took leave of his master and the two others, rose on his somersault cloud, and went straight in through the South Gate of Heaven. Indeed he paid no call at the Hall of Divine Mists, nor climbed to the Palace of the Dipper and Ox, but sped on one stream of cloud-light straight to the Tushita Palace in the Heaven of Highest Sorrow at the thirty-third heaven. As he entered the gate, there sat Lord Lao Zi in the elixir chamber, with his immortal boys waving plantain-leaf fans to fan the fire as he refined the elixir.

When he saw the Pilgrim coming, he at once warned the boys who watched the elixir: "Every one of you be on guard—the elixir thief has come again!"

The Pilgrim saluted him with a smile: "Old sir, what nonsense is this—what do you fear from me? I don't do such things anymore."

"You monkey!" said Lord Lao Zi. "Five hundred years ago you made havoc in Heaven and stole and ate I know not how many of my elixirs. It took the Little Sage Erlang to catch you and bring you up here, and I had you put in my elixir furnace and smelted forty-nine days—who knows how much charcoal I spent on you! Now by luck you've escaped with your life, taken refuge in the fruit of Buddha, and protect the Tang monk on the road to the Western Heaven. Lately, on Flat-Top Mountain, you subdued the demons but played your tricky games and wouldn't give me back my treasures—and now what brings you here again?"

"Of that affair," said the Pilgrim, "old Sun delayed not an instant: I returned all five of your treasures on the spot—and you still bear a grudge and suspect me?"

"If you're not traveling your road, why sneak into my palace?" asked Lord Lao Zi.

"Since we parted," said the Pilgrim, "we have journeyed west and come to a kingdom called the Black Rooster Kingdom. Its king was done to death in secret by a demon who disguised himself as a Daoist, summoned wind and called rain, and then took on the king's own appearance and now sits upon the throne in the Golden Chimes Hall. My master was sitting at night in Baolin Monastery reading scripture when that king's ghost came and paid his respects to my master, and begged old Sun earnestly to subdue the demon and sort out the false from the true. Since old Sun had no proof in hand, I went with my brother Bajie by night into the garden, broke it open, and found the hiding place—an eight-cornered glazed well. We fished up the king's corpse, his face unchanged. When I brought him to my master in the monastery, my master took pity and ordered old Sun to cure him—but he forbade me to go to the underworld to fetch the soul, and told me to work the cure right here in the world of the living. I thought: there is nowhere else to turn for a return to life, so I have come especially to pay my respects. I earnestly hope the Patriarch of the Way will take pity and lend old Sun a thousand grains of the nine-cycle elixir of returning souls, to save this man."

"This monkey talks rubbish!" cried Lord Lao Zi. "What do you mean, a thousand grains, two thousand grains! You'd eat them like rice! Do you think they're dirt pellets pinched off the ground, to come so easily? Bah! Be off! There are none!"

"A hundred or so, then," said the Pilgrim with a smile.

"There aren't," said Lord Lao Zi.

"Ten or so, then," said the Pilgrim.

Lord Lao Zi flared up: "This impudent monkey is a pest! There are none, none! Out with you, out!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "If there truly are none, I'll go beg somewhere else to save him."

"Go! Go! Go!" Lord Lao Zi thundered. And the Great Sage swung round and started to walk away.

Suddenly Lord Lao Zi thought: "This monkey is a sly, lazy rascal—he says go and goes; but I'll wager he'll sneak back in and steal." At once he ordered an immortal boy to call him back. "You monkey," he said, "your hands are never still. I'll give you one grain of the returning-soul elixir."

"Old sir," said the Pilgrim, "since you know old Sun's tricks, then quick, bring out the golden elixir and split it with me, six and four—count yourself lucky. Otherwise I'll give you a rattan sieve and strain you dry."

The old Patriarch took up a gourd, turned it upside down, shook out one grain of golden elixir, and handed it to the Pilgrim: "That's all there is. Take it, take it! This one grain is my gift. Cure the emperor alive with it, and count it your own merit."

The Pilgrim took it and said: "Not so fast—let me taste it first. It might be false; I'd hate to be cheated." And plop! he tossed it into his mouth. The old Patriarch lunged forward in a panic, seized him, grabbed him by the scalp, and clenched his other fist, cursing: "If this scoundrelly monkey swallows it, I'll beat him to death on the spot!"

"Look at you! Such a pettifogging temper!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Who's eating your elixir? What's it worth? More show than substance—and there it is, safe and sound, isn't it?"

Now it happened that the monkey had a pouch beneath his chin, and he had tucked the golden elixir into that pouch. The old Patriarch pinched it out of him: "Off with you! Off with you! Don't come pestering here again!" Only then did the Great Sage thank the old Patriarch and leave the Tushita Palace.

Watch him: a thousand streams of auspicious mist leaving the jasper towers, ten thousand paths of propitious cloud descending to the world's dust. In a moment he had come down through the South Gate of Heaven, returned to the Eastern Prospect—and there, already, was the sun star rising.

He brought his cloud down outside the gate of Baolin Monastery, and could hear Bajie still weeping. He came close and called: "Master."

"Wukong is back," said Sanzang gladly. "Have you the elixir?"

"I have," said the Pilgrim.

"How could he not have?" said Bajie. "If all else failed, he'd go steal somebody's!"

"Brother, step aside—you're not needed now," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Wipe your tears and go do your weeping somewhere else." Then he called: "Sha Monk, fetch me some water." The Sha Monk hurried to the well behind the monastery, where there was a handy bucket, and passed the Pilgrim half a bowl of water.

The Pilgrim took the water, spat the elixir from his mouth, and set it against the emperor's lips; with both hands he pried open the teeth, and with one mouthful of clear water washed the golden elixir down into his belly. Half a watch passed, and they heard a great rumbling and gurgling in the corpse's belly—but the body still could not stir.

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "if even my golden elixir can't revive him, isn't this old Sun being strung along?"

"How could he not live?" said Sanzang. "But a corpse dead so long as this—how could it swallow water? That was the immortal power of the golden elixir. Since the elixir entered his belly, his guts have begun to sound; when the guts sound, the blood and pulse are moving and stirring. Only his breath is cut off and cannot return and stretch. Never mind a man soaked three years in a well—even raw iron would have rusted. His primal breath is utterly spent. What he needs is someone to breathe a breath of life into him, and then all will be well."

Bajie stepped forward ready to breathe into him, but Sanzang caught him with one hand: "Not you! It must be Wukong."

The master knew what he was about. Zhu Bajie, from his youth, had sinned against life and eaten men, and his was a mouthful of turbid breath; but the Pilgrim had cultivated from childhood, chewing pine nuts and cypress seeds, living on peaches and fruits—and his was a breath of pure clarity. The Great Sage came forward, pressed his Thunder-God mouth over the emperor's lips, and with one long breath drew the air down his throat, breathed it down the storied tower of the chest, round the Hall of Light, straight to the Cinnabar Field, and back from the Bubbling Spring to the Muddy Wall Palace of the head.

With a great sound the king's breath gathered and his spirit returned. He rolled over, swung his fists, curled his legs, and cried aloud: "Master!" Then he fell on both knees in the dust: "I remember how my ghost paid respects last night—who could know that this day at dawn my yang-soul would return!"

Sanzang hurriedly raised him up: "Your Majesty, it was none of my doing—you must thank my disciple."

"Master, what kind of talk is that?" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "As the common saying goes, no house has two masters. Take his bow; it costs you nothing."

Sanzang, quite overcome, raised up the emperor, and they went together into the meditation hall, where the king bowed to Bajie, the Pilgrim, and the Sha Monk, and only then did they all take their seats.

Just then the monks of the monastery had got the morning meal in order and were coming in to offer it, when suddenly they caught sight of the soaking-wet emperor—every one of them startled, all of them murmuring in doubt.

Sun the Pilgrim leapt out: "Monks, no need for such alarm and suspicion. This is the king of the Black Rooster Kingdom—your true sovereign. Three years ago a demon took his life; it was old Sun who revived him this night. Now we are going into his city to distinguish the false from the true. If the meal is ready, bring it out, and we'll eat and be on our way."

The monks at once offered basin and water, washed the king's face, and changed his clothes. They took off his rust-yellow robe, and the monastery's monastic official dressed him in two cloth gowns; they untied his Lantian belt and bound it round him with a yellow silk sash; they drew off his carefree shoes and gave him a pair of old monk's shoes to slip on. Then all ate the morning meal and saddled the horses.

The Pilgrim asked: "Bajie, how heavy is the luggage?"

"Brother," said Bajie, "I've been carrying it day after day—how would I know how heavy it is?"

"Divide that load of yours into two," said the Pilgrim. "One load you carry; the other let this emperor carry. We're going into the city early to attend to business."

Bajie rejoiced: "Fortune! Fortune! Carrying him here cost me no telling how much sweat—and now that he's cured alive, he turns out to be my understudy!"

The blockhead played his little trick: he split the luggage, asked the monastery for a carrying pole, took the lighter load himself, and gave the heavier one to the emperor to carry.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Your Majesty—dressed up like that, carrying a load, walking along with us—doesn't it put you out?"

The king hastily knelt: "Master, you are as my parents who gave me life a second time. Never mind carrying a load—I would gladly hold the whip and walk beside your stirrup, waiting upon you venerable lords all the way to the Western Heaven."

"No need for you to come to the Western Heaven—I have my reasons. You need carry only the forty li into the city. Once we've caught the demon, you'll go on being your emperor, and we'll go on fetching our scriptures."

At this Bajie said: "So he carries forty li, and old Pig is a hired man for life!"

"Brother, no nonsense," said the Pilgrim. "Quick now, go ahead and lead the way."

And indeed Bajie led the emperor in front; the Sha Monk helped the master mount; the Pilgrim brought up the rear; and the five hundred monks of the monastery, in neat and solemn ranks, piping and drumming fine music, escorted them all out beyond the gate.

"Monks, no need to see us farther," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "I only fear that if someone at court gets wind of it, my whole plan may leak out, and that would spoil everything. Go back quickly! Go back! Only have the emperor's robes, crown, and girdle cleaned and in order, and tonight or tomorrow morning bring them into the city, and I'll ask for a reward and a feast to thank you."

The monks obeyed and each went back. The Pilgrim stretched his long strides, caught up with his master, and they pressed straight on. Truly:

In the West there is a secret for seeking the true; Metal and wood in harmony refine the spirit. The Mother of the elixir vainly dreams her foggy dreams; The infant forever mourns his worthless wood of the stinking tree. One must seek the true sovereign at the bottom of a well, And still must climb to heaven to bow before Lord Lao Zi. Awake to form and emptiness, return to one's own nature— Truly the Buddha saves those bound to him by fate.

Master and disciples had not been half a day on the road before the city came into view ahead. "Wukong," said Sanzang, "that must be the Black Rooster Kingdom ahead."

"Just so," said the Pilgrim. "Let's hurry into the city and get to business."

When master and disciples entered the city, they found the streets and markets orderly, the scene lively and bustling; and soon they saw phoenix towers and dragon pavilions, magnificent beyond words. There is a poem in witness:

Palace towers overseas rival the superior kingdom; Songs and dances of the human world recall the former Tang. Flowers greet the precious fans, red clouds entwining; Sunlight on fresh robes gleams through emerald mist. Peacock screens unfold, fragrant haze arising; Pearl curtains roll up, colored banners spread. A sight of peace well worth the celebrating— The ranked officials silent, no memorials to read.

Sanzang dismounted: "Disciples, let us go straight to court and exchange our travel permit, and save ourselves the trouble of calling on government offices."

"Well said," said the Pilgrim. "Let all us brothers go in—more voices make better talk."

"All of us will go in," said the Tang monk, "but no boorish talk. First perform the rite of subject to sovereign, and then speak."

"Performing the rite of subject to sovereign means bowing to the ground," said the Pilgrim.

"Exactly—the great rite of five bows and three kowtows," said Sanzang.

"Master, you're no good at this," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "To bow to him would be downright foolish. Let me walk in front first—I have my own arrangements. If he has anything to say, let me answer him. If I bow, you bow; if I squat, you squat."

Watch that trouble-making Monkey King, then, leading them up to the court gate, where he said to the ambassador of the gate: "We are sent from under the canopy of the great Tang of the Eastern Land, going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Now that we are here to exchange our travel permit, we trouble Your Honor to announce us—that our good work may not be hindered."

The yellow-gate officer went in through the main portal, knelt below the vermilion steps, and reported: "Outside the court gate are five monks, who say they are imperial envoys from the Tang empire of the Eastern Land, sent to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Having come here to exchange their travel permit, they dare not enter unbidden and now await your summons outside the gate."

The demon king ordered them summoned in. The Tang monk entered within the court gate, the revived king walking in his train. As they walked, the king could not keep the tears from his cheeks, and thought bitterly: "Pitiful! My kingdom, a bronze-bucket realm, my altars of state hemmed in iron—who could have dreamed he would take them all by stealth!"

"Your Majesty, no grief," said the Pilgrim. "It might leak the news. This cudgel is hopping in my ear. Now, at last, it must show its work—I guarantee we'll beat that demon dead and sweep the evil thing away, and this realm will soon be yours again." The king dared not answer, and could only dab his tears with his sleeve, staking death on life, and walk on till they came below the Golden Chimes Hall. There again were the two benches of civil and military officials, four hundred court officers, every one stern and solemn, imposing and dignified of face.

The Pilgrim led the Tang monk to stand before the white jade steps, upright and unmoving. The officials below the steps were all dismayed: "This monk is a perfect dullard! Seeing our king, why does he not bow, nor even speak a greeting? He hasn't so much as sung one salute. What insolent nerve!"

Before the words were out, they heard the demon king open his mouth and ask: "That monk—from what quarter do you come?"

The Pilgrim answered proudly: "I come from the Tang empire of the Eastern Land in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, an imperial envoy bound for the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the land of India in the Western regions, to worship the living Buddha and seek the true scriptures. Now that we have reached your realm, we dare not pass it idly by, and come especially to exchange our travel permit."

The demon king heard, and anger rose in his heart: "And what of your Eastern Land! I send no tribute to your court; my kingdom holds no dealings with yours. How dare you stand before me on equal terms, refusing to bow!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "My Eastern Land has stood from of old as the Celestial Court, long acclaimed a superior kingdom. Yours is a borderland of the lower earth. From antiquity it has been said: the emperor of a superior kingdom is father and sovereign; the emperor of an inferior kingdom is vassal and son. You never came out to receive us—and you dare dispute my not bowing?"

The demon king, in a fury, shouted to the civil and military officials: "Seize this wild monk!" At the word "seize," watch all the officials surge forward together.

The Pilgrim gave a shout, pointed with one hand, and cried: "Not another step!" With that one point he cast the body-freezing spell, and none of the officials could move. Truly: the officers below the steps stood like

wooden puppets; the generals in the hall stood like clay men.

When the demon king saw his civil and military officials frozen stiff, he leapt in haste from the dragon couch and came himself to seize them.

The Monkey King rejoiced in secret: "Good! Just what old Sun wanted. Coming at me like this—even a head of cast iron, touched by my cudgel, would get a hole knocked in it!"

But as he was moving, unexpectedly a saving star stepped out from the side.

And who was it? None other than the crown prince of the Black Rooster Kingdom. He rushed forward, caught hold of the demon king's court robes, and knelt before him: "Father King, let your anger rest."

"What has the child to say?" asked the demon.

"Let me report to my father the king," said the prince. "Three years ago word reached us of holy monks, imperial envoys from the Tang court of the Eastern Land, traveling to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures—and today, unforeseen, they have at last come to our kingdom. My father's august nature is fierce and fiery; if you have this monk seized and beheaded, I fear only that some day the Great Tang may learn of it, and their wrath will surely kindle. Consider: Li Shimin, having proclaimed himself king and united all the realm under him, was still not satisfied at heart, and raised armies to cross the seas and conquer abroad. If he learns our king has done his sworn brother, the holy monk, to death, he will surely send troops and horses to make war on our king. With our few soldiers and slender generals, by then it would be too late for regret. Let my father follow his son's counsel: first question these four monks closely, establish clearly whence they come, settle first the charge of their not bowing to the royal presence—and only then may the punishment be fixed."

This speech, in truth, was the prince's caution, for fear the Tang monk should come to harm: he meant to hold the demon back by craft—all unaware that the Pilgrim was squaring away to strike.

And indeed the demon king believed him. Standing before the dragon couch, he thundered: "That monk—when did you leave the Eastern Land? And on what business did the Tang king send you to fetch scriptures?"

The Pilgrim answered proudly: "My master is the Tang king's sworn brother, styled Sanzang. Now there was in the Tang court a minister, one Wei Zheng by name, who, obeying a statute of Heaven, beheaded the old dragon of the Jing River in a dream. The great Tang king, after his dream-journey to the underworld and his return to life, held a great Mass of Land and Water to deliver all the wronged ghosts and sinful souls. Because my master expounded the sutras and spread compassion abroad, the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea suddenly appeared and directed him to come west. My master swore a great vow, his heart gladly set on repaying his country with perfect loyalty, and the Tang king bestowed on him a travel permit. It was then the third day before the full moon of the ninth month of the thirteenth year of Zhenguan of the Great Tang. Leaving the Eastern Land, we came first to the Two-Boundary Mountain, where he took me as his senior disciple—my surname Sun, my name Wukong the Pilgrim. Then, at the border of the Wuji kingdom at Gao Family Village, he took a second disciple—surname Zhu, name Wuneng, Bajie. At the borders of the Flowing Sands River he took a third disciple—surname Sha, name Wujing, the Sha Monk. And the other day, at Baolin Monastery built by imperial command, he newly took on a lay brother, a novice, to carry the load."

Hearing this, the demon could find no way to search the Tang monk himself, so he tried his cunning to cross-question the Pilgrim, glaring: "That monk—you set out from the Eastern Land a single man, and have taken on four followers. The three monks might pass; this one Daoist is past bearing. That novice is surely kidnapped. What is his name? Has he an ordination certificate or none? Bring him up and take his

deposition!"

The king trembled in terror: "Master—how am I to give a deposition?"

Sun the Pilgrim pinched him: "Don't be afraid. I'll depose for you."

What a Great Sage! He strode forward, faced the monster, and called out in a loud voice: "Your Majesty, this old Daoist is a mute, and somewhat deaf besides. It is only because in his youth he once traveled to the Western Heaven and knows the road that we took him on. The whole story of his rise and fall I know perfectly. I beg Your Majesty's indulgence—let me depose for him."

"Then make haste and depose truthfully for him," said the demon king, "and save yourself a charge."

The Pilgrim said:

"I depose: a novice, in years grown old, Half-witted, deaf and mute, his fortune wrecked. His ancestral home was in this very land; Five years ago his house met its downfall. No rain from heaven; the people withered dry; King and common folk all fasted and took rites. They burned incense, bathed, and cried to the Lord of Heaven— Ten thousand li, not one cloud veiled the sky. The people starved as if hung upside down, When from Zhongnan there came a Perverted 'Perfected One.' He summoned wind and rain and showed his powers— Then secretly took the king's life away. He pushed him down the garden's water well And stole the dragon throne, past all men's ken. By luck came I: great was the work of merit; I raised the dead to life, free of all let. The king now gladly takes the vows, a novice, To journey with us monks toward the western bounds. The false king is that Daoist; the Daoist's double Is the true king, restored to take his place."

When the demon king, in the Golden Chimes Hall, heard this whole recital, he was frightened out of his wits—his heart pounded like a deer, red clouds rose on his face. He drew back at once and would have fled, but he had no weapon in hand. Turning his head, he saw a hall-guarding general, a precious sword at his waist, frozen stiff and dumb under the Pilgrim's body-freezing spell, standing there straight as a post. He darted over, snatched the precious sword, rose on a cloud, and fled into the sky.

This so enraged the Sha Monk that he boiled over like thunder, and Zhu Bajie bawled aloud, blaming the Pilgrim for being a hasty monkey: "If only you'd gone about it slowly—couldn't you have kept him quiet? Now he's fled on his cloud! Where are we to chase him?"

"Brothers, no bawling," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "First let us bring the prince down to bow to his father, and the queen and consorts out to bow to their husband." Then he recited a spell, undid the body-freezing charm, and said: "Let the officials wake and come back to bow to their sovereign; then they will know he is the true emperor. Let him tell them the story of what happened, and all will be plain; then I'll go find that demon." What a Great Sage! He instructed Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Guard well their sovereign and ministers, father and son, queen and consorts—and my master!" One heard the word "gone"—and he had vanished without a trace.

He had leapt up into the clouds of the ninth heaven, opened his eyes, and searched the four quarters for the demon king. And there indeed was that beast, escaped with his life, fleeing away toward the northeast.

The Pilgrim overtook him and thundered: "Where do you flee, monster! Old Sun is here!"

The demon king whipped round in alarm, drew his precious sword, and shouted: "Sun the Pilgrim, you meddlesome wretch! I came to take another's throne—what is that to you? Why must you champion the wronged and leak my secrets!"

The Pilgrim roared with laughter: "You bold, impudent monster! And was the emperor's seat yours for the taking? Since you knew I was old Sun, you should have fled far away. Yet you dared cross-question my master and demand depositions! Was that deposition just now the truth or not? Don't run! Be a man, and take

this cudgel of old Sun!" The demon swerved aside to dodge, then drew his precious sword and struck back at the Pilgrim's face.

The two closed grips, and what a battle it was! Truly:

The Monkey King fierce, the Demon King strong; Sword greets cudgel, cudgel guards sword—well matched indeed. One whole sky of cloud and mist beclouds the Three Realms— All for the setting of an emperor upon the throne.

They had fought several rounds when the demon, unable to withstand the Monkey King, turned abruptly, leapt back along the old road into the city, burst in among the two benches of civil and military officials before the white jade steps, shook his body, changed, and became the very image of Tang Sanzang, standing hand in hand at the foot of the steps with the other.

The Great Sage caught up, raised his cudgel to strike—but that monster cried: "Disciple, don't strike—it is I!" He whipped round the cudgel to strike the other Tang monk—and again came the cry: "Disciple, don't strike—it is I!" Two identical Tang monks—truly past all telling apart.

"If one blow killed the monster's counterfeit Tang monk, why, the work would be done," thought the Pilgrim. "But if one blow killed my own true master—what then!" He could only stay his hand and call Bajie and the Sha Monk to ask: "Which of these two is the monster, and which is my master? Point him out to me, that I may strike him."

"You two were battling and bawling up in mid-air," said Bajie. "I blinked, and there were two masters—how should I know which is true and which false?"

At this the Pilgrim knotted his fingers, recited a spell, and called upon the Guardian Devas of the Dharma, the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Revealers of the Five Quarters, the Four Duty Officers, the eighteen Guardian Sangharamas of the Chariot, the local deity of the ward, and the mountain god of the region: "Old Sun has come here to subdue a demon, and the demon has changed himself into my master—same breath, same body, past all telling apart. Let those of you who know in the dark show the true master up the hall, that I may seize the demon."

Now the monster was a master of cloud-riding, and hearing the Pilgrim's words, he let go at once, leapt up onto the golden-chimes throne dais. The Pilgrim raised his cudgel and struck at the Tang monk. Pitiful! Had those guardian gods not been summoned, that one blow would have pounded two thousand Tang monks to meat paste!

Happily the gods caught hold of the iron cudgel: "Great Sage—the demon can ride the clouds; he went up onto the dais first!"

The Pilgrim dashed up onto the dais, but the demon leapt down again, seized the Tang monk, and mixed himself once more into the crowd—still impossible to tell apart.

The Pilgrim's heart was heavy, and then he spied Bajie standing by with a cold smile on his face. He flared up: "What are you after, you lout? Now there are two masters—you'll have one to call, one to answer you, one to wait on. Aren't you the delighted one!"

Bajie laughed: "Brother, you call me a blockhead—you're a worse one than I! If the master can't tell his own self, why wear yourself out? Just bear a little pain in your head, have our master recite that little spell of his, and the Sha Monk and I will each take one of them by the arm and listen. The one who can't recite it is bound to be the monster. What's hard about that?"

"Brother, well said!" said the Pilgrim. "True—only three people alive know that spell. It sprouted from the heart of our Lord the Tathagata, who passed it to the Bodhisattva Guanyin, and the Bodhisattva passed it to

my master—no one else in the world knows it. Very well—Master, recite!"

And in truth the Tang monk began to recite. How could the demon king know it? He could only hum and haw at random.

"This hummer is the monster!" cried Bajie. He let go his master's arm, raised his rake, and struck. The demon king leapt up, trod the clouds, and fled. What a Bajie! With a shout he too rose on a cloud in pursuit; the Sha Monk, in a panic, let go of the Tang monk, drew out his precious staff and struck too; and only then did the Tang monk stop the spell. The Great Sage Sun, enduring the ache in his head, clutched his iron cudgel and gave chase into the sky. Ah! What a battle—three fierce monks hemming in one impudent demon monster!

The demon king was hard-pressed on left and right by Bajie's rake and the Sha Monk's staff. "If I close in and strike him face to face," thought the Pilgrim, "he fears me somewhat—there's a chance he'll slip away again. Let old Sun leap up higher and give him the garlic-pounding stroke, and finish him."

The Great Sage rose on auspicious light into the ninth heaven, and was just about to strike his decisive blow, when suddenly from the northeast, from within a many-colored cloud, came a stern voice calling: "Sun Wukong, stay your hand!"

The Pilgrim turned to look—it was the Bodhisattva Manjusri. He hurriedly put up his cudgel, came forward, and saluted: "Bodhisattva, where are you bound?"

"I have come to take in this monster for you," said Manjusri.

"I have put you to trouble," said the Pilgrim, thanking him. The Bodhisattva drew from her sleeve the demon-revealing mirror, and in it pinned the monster's true form. Only then did the Pilgrim call Bajie and the Sha Monk to come and greet the Bodhisattva together.

And looking into the mirror, how fierce the demon king appeared: eyes like glazed lamps, a head like a furnace-caldron, his whole body indigo of deepest summer, his four paws frost of late autumn. Two great ears hanging down, a broom of a tail a full length long. Blue hair bristling fierceness, red eyes shooting golden light. Flat teeth ranged like jade boards, round whiskers stiff as spears. And the true shape in the mirror: the blue-maned lion, Manjusri's own lion-king mount.

"Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim, "this is the green-maned lion that carries you on its back. How came it here to turn spirit? And you never reined it in?"

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "it did not run away. It was sent by the Buddha's command."

"This beast turned spirit and usurped a throne—and by the Buddha's command was sent, was it! If that's how it is, then old Sun, suffering as he does protecting the Tang monk, ought to be handed a few such decrees of his own!"

"You don't know," said the Bodhisattva. "Long ago this king of the Black Rooster Kingdom was a lover of good deeds and a patron of monks, and the Buddha sent me to deliver him to the West and bring him soon to the golden body of an arhat. Since I could not appear before him in my own form, I changed into a common monk and begged alms of him. I crossed him with a few words of argument; he did not know me for a good man, had me bound with a rope, threw me into the palace moat, and soaked me three days and three nights. The Six Jias of the golden body thankfully rescued me and brought me back to the West, where I reported to the Tathagata. And the Tathagata sent this monster here to push him down the well and soak him three years, in payment for my three days of water suffering. Every sip and every peck is fixed by fate beforetime. Now you have all come here, and the work is complete."

"You may have repaid your little grudge of a sip and a peck," said the Pilgrim, "but who knows how many people that monster has harmed?"

"He harmed no one," said the Bodhisattva. "Since he came, these three years, wind and rain have come in season and the state has been at peace and the people secure—what harm was there?"

"That's as may be," said the Pilgrim. "But the queen and the consorts of the three palaces have slept and risen with him. He has defiled her body and wrecked the bonds of propriety right and left—and you call that harming no one?"

"He could not defile her," said the Bodhisattva. "He is a gelded lion."

At this Bajie drew near, felt him over once, and laughed: "So this monster is a red-nosed man who never drinks wine—famed for a vice he never had!"

[Translator's note: a Chinese proverb—"the red nose is taken for a drunkard's nose," borne in vain by an innocent.]

"Well then, since that's how it is, take him away," said the Pilgrim. "But had you not come in person, I'd never have spared his life."

The Bodhisattva recited a spell and commanded: "Beast! Submit to the truth—what do you wait for?" Only then did the demon king show his true form. The Bodhisattva let fall a lotus canopy to hold the monster, sat down upon his back, trod auspicious light, and took leave of the Pilgrim. Ah!

Straight back to the Terrace of the Five Terraces Mountain, Beneath the lotus throne, to hear the sutras expounded.

But as for how the Tang monk and his disciples left the city—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 40

The Infant at Play Throws the Chan Mind into Disorder; Ape and Horse Return with Blades, and the Wood-Mother Stands Empty

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun and his two brothers brought their clouds down and went straight into the court, where sovereign and ministers, heir and empresses, came bowing in ranks to give thanks. The Pilgrim recounted for them all how the Bodhisattva had subdued the demon and taken the monster away, and one and all they worshipped without end.

Just as they were in the midst of their rejoicing, the yellow-gate officer came again to report: "My lord, four more monks have come from outside."

Bajie panicked: "Brother, could it be the demon playing some trick—counterfeiting the Bodhisattva Manjusri to fool us, and now changing into monks to match wits with us?"

"Nonsense!" said the Pilgrim, and ordered them summoned in to be seen.

The civil and military officials passed the command for them to enter. And when the Pilgrim looked, there were the monks of Baolin Monastery, come in bearing the crown that rose to heaven, the jasper belt, the rust-yellow robe, and the carefree shoes.

"Well come! Well come!" said the Pilgrim in high delight.

He bade the Daoist novice step forward: off with the cloth wrapping, on with the crown that rose to heaven; off with the cloth gown, on with the rust-yellow robe; untied the sash, bound on the jasper belt; drew off the monk's shoes, stepped into the carefree shoes. He had the crown prince bring out the white jade scepter and set it in his hand, and soon invited him up to the hall to style himself the solitary one. As the ancient saying goes: "A court cannot be a single day without a sovereign."

But the king would by no means sit. Weeping, he knelt in the middle of the steps: "I have been dead three years. Now, by the masters' grace, I am restored to life—how could I again dare presume to style myself sovereign? Let one of the masters be king. It is enough for me to take my wife and children and live as common folk beyond the walls."

And Sanzang by no means would accept; his one heart was set only on worshiping the Buddha and seeking scriptures. They begged the Pilgrim next. The Pilgrim laughed: "I'll not deceive you gentlemen: if old Sun had wanted to be an emperor, he'd long since have been emperor of every one of the ten thousand kingdoms and nine continents of the world. But we've grown used to being monks and lazy and free. If we were emperors, we'd have to let our hair grow and dress it; we'd not sleep at dusk nor rest at the fifth watch; at every border alarm our hearts would be uneasy; at every famine or flood we'd worry ourselves helpless. How could we ever stand such a life? Go on being your emperor, and old Sun will go on being his monk, cultivating merit on the road." The king pressed him sorely, but in vain; at last he could only mount the precious hall, sit facing south as the sovereign, proclaim a great amnesty through the realm, and bestow titles and gifts on the monks of Baolin Monastery before sending them home. Then the East Pavilion was opened and a banquet spread for the Tang monk, and at the same time a decree went out summoning the painters, who made portraits of the Tang master and his three disciples and set them up for worship in the Golden Chimes Hall.

Master and disciples, having set the kingdom in order, would not linger, but wished to take leave of the king and press west. The king, with the empresses of the three palaces, the prince, and all the ministers, brought forth the treasures of the realm—gold, silver, silks, and satins—and offered them to the master in payment of their debt of gratitude. Sanzang would not take so much as a hair of it; he only exchanged the travel permit

and urged Wukong and the others to saddle up and set out early.

The king, quite overcome, arrayed the full imperial cortege and begged the Tang monk to sit in the chief carriage, with the two benches of civil and military officials going before as guides; and he himself, with the empresses of the three palaces and the prince, one family together, pushed the wheel and supported the shaft, escorting them beyond the city walls before he would descend from the imperial carriage and take his leave.

"Master," said the king, "on the day the scriptures return from the Western Heaven, you must surely come once more within this widowed one's borders."

"Your disciple takes the command," said Sanzang. The emperor, tears brimming, returned to the city with his ministers.

The Tang monk's party of four monks took the ram's-gut highway, their hearts set solely on worshiping at Vulture Peak. It was just the season when autumn wanes and winter begins. See: frost withers the red leaves, thinning wood after wood; rain ripens the yellow millet, filling field after field. The sun warms the ridge, and plum blossoms open in the dawn light; wind sways the mountain bamboo, stirring a chill refrain.

Master and disciples left the Black Rooster Kingdom, lodged by night and traveled by day, for rather more than half a month—when suddenly they saw another high mountain, truly one that scraped the sky and blocked the sun. Sanzang's heart quaked on his horse; he hauled in the reins and called quickly for the Pilgrim.

"What does Master command?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Look ahead—more great mountains and steep ridges. We must be doubly on our guard, lest some evil thing come upon us again."

"Just keep riding, don't fret so," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Old Sun will do the guarding." The elder could only take heart, whip up his horse, and gallop to the crags—and perilous it truly was. See it:

High? Not high—and yet its summit touches the blue empyrean. Deep? Not deep—and yet its ravine is like the underworld. Before the mountain, ever and again, great white clouds boiling up, black mist churning. Red plum and emerald bamboo, green cypress and blue pine. Behind the mountain, a thousand-thousand-zhang Soul-Snatching Terrace; behind the terrace, a Demon-Hiding Cave, ancient and strange; in the cave, a dripping spring plink-plonking; below the spring, a winding, twisting ravine with running water. And see: apes that leap to heaven and stab the earth, offering fruit; antlered deer with branching horns; roe deer staring, spellbound, at the passers-by. At dusk, tigers of the hills seek out their dens; at dawn, dragons churn the waves and come out of the water. The climbing of the cave-mouth resounds with a whoosh; startled birds burst up with a whirr; watch the beasts of the woods go padding softly on their way. At such a crew of birds and beasts, a man's heart pounds with dread. Hall upon cave, cave upon hall, caves and halls tumbling down; the caves would tumble, halls would fall—and yet immortal shapes abide. Blue rock stained like a thousand blocks of jade; green gauze veiling ten thousand heaps of smoke.

Just as master and disciples stood in awe and dread, they saw in the hollow of the mountain a bloom of red cloud soar straight up into the ninth heaven, gathering into a ball of fire.

The Pilgrim, greatly startled, ran forward, seized the Tang monk by the feet, and pushed him down from the horse, calling: "Brothers, don't move—the monster's come!"

In a flurry Bajie whipped out his rake, the Sha Monk spun up his precious staff, and they ringed the Tang monk about in the middle.

Now the story divides. In that red light there truly was a monster.

Years before, he had heard men say: "The Tang monk of the Eastern Land, journeying to the Western Heaven for scriptures, is the reincarnation of the Elder Golden Cicada, a good man ten lifetimes in cultivation. Whoever eats a piece of his flesh will lengthen his years and live as long as Heaven and Earth."

Morning after morning he had waited among these mountains—and now, unforeseen, the moment had come. There in mid-air he was peering down, and he saw the three disciples ringing the Tang monk about on his horse, each ready for anything.

The spirit could not praise them enough: "Fine monks! Just now I saw a white-faced, plump monk riding a horse—surely the holy Tang monk—but how he is guarded by three ugly monks! Every one of them has his fists out and his sleeves rolled, each gripping his weapon, as if ready to fight a man this instant. Hah! One of them, I know not which, has sharp eyes—likely he recognized me. Looking at this, there'll be no hope of tasting the Tang monk's flesh."

He pondered a long while, questioning his own heart and taking counsel with himself: "If I try to seize him by force, I'll never get near; but perhaps I can bewitch him with gentleness—that might come to hand. If I can only coax his mind into a fog, then from within the gentleness I can hatch my plot, and he is as good as taken. Let me go down and play a game with them."

What a monster! He scattered the red light, dropped his cloud, and went down into the hillside, where with a shake of his body he changed into a naughty child of seven, stark naked, without a stitch upon him, his hands and feet bound with hemp cord, strung high on the tip-top of a pine tree, crying over and over, "Help! Help!"

Now the Great Sage Sun happened to look up again, and saw the red cloud quite scattered, the ball of fire wholly gone. He called: "Master, pray mount and let's be off."

"You said the monster had come," said the Tang monk, "so how dare we travel?"

"Just now," said the Pilgrim, "I saw a red cloud rise from the ground and gather into a ball of fire in the sky—no doubt of it, a monster. But now the red cloud has dispersed. I take him for some passing monster, who dares harm no one. Let's be going!"

"Elder Brother's talk gets cleverer and cleverer," said Bajie with a laugh. "What do you mean, a passing monster?"

"What do you know!" said the Pilgrim. "When the demon king of some mountain or cave throws a banquet and invites the spirits of all the mountains and caves to a feast, then spirits come flocking from the four roads, east, south, west, and north. Their hearts are all set on the banquet, with no thought of harming anyone. That is what's called a passing monster."

Hearing this, Sanzang half believed and half doubted, but could only climb into the saddle and press on along the road up the mountain.

As they went, they heard a voice crying "Help!" The elder started with alarm: "Disciples—here in the middle of these mountains, what person is that crying?"

The Pilgrim came forward: "Master, just keep riding. Never mind about people-sedans and mule-litters, open sedans and sleeping sedans. In a place like this, even if there were a sedan, there'd be no one to carry you in it."

"It's not the sedan I mean, but the cry," said the Tang monk. "Someone is calling out."

"I know, I know," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Mind your own business and ride."

Sanzang obeyed, spurred on, and had not gone a full li when again came the cry: "Help!"

"Disciples," said the elder, "that cry is no ghost or demon or evil thing. If it were a ghost or demon, there would be the voice, but never an echo. Listen—he calls once, then calls again. Surely it is some person in distress. We ought to go and save him."

"Master, for today, gather up a little of that compassion of yours and put it away," said the Pilgrim. "Once we're past this mountain, then be compassionate to your heart's content. This place bodes more ill than good. You know the saying about spirits that lean on grass and cling to trees—any thing at all can turn a spirit. Most of them are bearable enough; but there is one kind, the python serpent: when it has cultivated long enough, deep into years, and become a spirit, it has a gift for knowing men's childhood names. If it calls a man once from the grass or from a mountain hollow, and he does not answer, well and good; but if he answers once, it will snatch away his primal spirit, follow him that very night, and take his life without fail. Let's ride! Let's ride! As the ancients said: escape with your life and thank the gods—by no means listen to it."

The elder could only obey him, and whipped his horse onward. The Pilgrim thought to himself: "This impudent monster—wherever he is, calling and calling like this. Let old Sun treat him to a trick of the morning star and the evening star, and see that the two of us never meet."

[Translator's note: the "morning star and evening star" trick—so called because the stars of the mao (dawn) and you (dusk) hours never appear in the sky together—means arranging matters so that two parties pass without ever meeting.]

What a Great Sage! He called the Sha Monk to him: "Hold the horse and walk along slowly—old Sun needs to relieve himself." Watch him let the Tang monk go a few steps ahead, then recite a spell, use the art of shifting mountains and shrinking earth, point his gold-banded cudgel backward, and send his master and brothers over the crest of the peak and on down the far side, leaving the monster clean behind them; then he stretched his strides, caught up with the Tang monk, and they raced on into the mountains.

Presently Sanzang heard the cry of "Help!" again, now from behind the mountain. "Disciples," said the elder, "that poor soul in distress has no luck at all—he never managed to meet with us. We have already passed him by—listen, he's crying behind the mountain."

"He may still be in front of the mountain," said Bajie, "only now the wind has shifted."

"Never mind whether the wind shifts or not—let's ride," said the Pilgrim. So all of them fell silent, longing to stride over this mountain in a single step—and of their talk no more.

Now that monster in the hillside had called three or four times without a soul coming near, and he pondered: "I waited for the Tang monk here, and saw him not three li away—how is it he still has not come after all this while? He must have taken a shortcut around." He gave his body a shake, slipped the ropes, rose again on red light, and mounted into the sky to look once more.

And, without meaning to, the Great Sage Sun glanced back up, knew him for a monster, and again caught the Tang monk by the feet and pushed him down from the horse, crying: "Brothers, careful! Careful! The monster's come again!"

In a panic Bajie and the Sha Monk each gripped his weapon and ringed the Tang monk about once more in the middle.

The spirit saw it, and in mid-air admired without end: "Fine monks! Just now I saw the white-faced monk sitting on his horse—how is it those three have hidden him away again? This time, only face to face will I know. First I must lay low the sharp-eyed one—only then can I seize the Tang monk. Otherwise, all my scheming is labor lost and my pains come to nothing."

Again he dropped his cloud, changed just as before, and hung strung up on a treetop on the mountainside to wait—this time less than half a li away.

Now the Great Sage Sun looked up again, and saw the red cloud once more scattered; again he invited his master to mount and go on.

"You said the monster had come again," said Sanzang. "How is it you now invite me to travel?"

"He's another passing monster," said the Pilgrim, "who dares not meddle with us."

Again the elder's anger rose: "This impudent monkey is making a fool of me past all bounds! Just when there truly are monsters about, he says there's nothing; and in a place as calm and open as this, he frightens me, bawling every little while about monsters! More talk than truth, no sense of weight or measure—grabbing me by the feet and pitching me off my horse—and now he spins me some tale of a passing monster! Suppose he'd hurt me in the fall—would that weigh nothing on his conscience? This is too much! Too much!"

"Master, don't be angry," said the Pilgrim. "If I had hurt your hands or feet, why, they could be healed; but if the monster had fished you away, where would I go to look for you?"

Sanzang flared up in a fury, grunting and gasping, ready to recite the Band-tightening Spell—only the Sha Monk's earnest pleading stayed him, and he could but mount and ride on again.

He had scarcely settled in the saddle when again came the cry: "Master, save me!" The elder raised his head and looked: there, truly, was a little child, stark naked, hanging from a tree. He reined in his horse and cursed the Pilgrim: "What a lazy, wicked wretch this monkey is, without one scrap of kindness in him, his whole heart set on violence and mischief! I told him the voice I heard was a human voice, and he bawled a thousand words about monsters! Look—isn't that a person hanging in that tree?"

When the Great Sage saw his master turning on him, and moreover saw the thing face to face, there was nothing he could do: in the first place, he could not lay hands on it before his master's eyes; and in the second, he dreaded the Band-tightening Spell. He dropped his head and dared not answer, letting the Tang monk ride beneath the tree.

The elder pointed at the child with the tip of his whip and questioned him: "Whose child are you? For what matter are you hung up here? Tell me, that I may save you."

Alas! Plainly he was a spirit transformed into this shape—but the master was a mortal of fleshly eyes and could not know him.

When the demon saw him questioning, he spun his web all the wider, tears brimming in his eyes, and cried: "Master! West of this mountain there is a Withered Pine Ravine, and past the ravine a village—that is my home. My great-grandfather's surname was Hong, 'Red'; and because he heaped up gold and silver until his fortune ran to millions, he went by the nickname Red Million. He grew old and died long ago, and the family estate passed to my father. Of late, with men's ways grown lavish, the fortune dwindled by degrees, and he changed his name to Red Hundred-Thousand. He made it his one business to befriend bold men of all four quarters, lending out gold and silver in hope of the interest. Who knew that men without register or reckoning would swindle it all away—principal and interest, none came back. My father then swore a great oath to lend out not one copper. And the borrowers, poor and desperate, banded into a murderous gang; with torches blazing and staves in hand they stormed our gate in broad daylight, seized our whole wealth and carried it off, killed my father, and—seeing my mother had some looks—dragged her off to be their chieftain's wife. At that hour my mother could not bear to part with me; she clasped me in her arms, weeping piteously, trembling with fear, and followed the robbers—till, coming into these mountains, they would have killed me too. Only my mother's piteous pleading saved me from dying under the blade; instead they strung me up in this tree with ropes, to die of cold and hunger. And those robbers have carried my mother off, I know not

where. I have hung here three days and three nights, and not one soul has passed by. I know not what merit I stored up in what former life, that today I have met with you, venerable master. If you will grant a great compassion and save my life and take me home, then though I pawn myself and sell my life, I will repay your kindness—even with yellow sand covering my face, I shall never forget."

Hearing this, Sanzang took it all for truth, and told Bajie to loose the ropes and bring the child down.

The blockhead, no better at reading people than his master, stepped forward ready to begin—but the Pilgrim, standing by, could hold back no longer and thundered: "You impudent thing! Here's one who knows you! No more of your vaporing and ghost-talk, lying to deceive folk! If your wealth was plundered, your father slain by thieves, your mother carried off—once we save you, to whom shall we hand you? And what will you give us in thanks? Your lie has come apart at the joints!"

Hearing this, the monster's heart went cold with fear, for now he knew the Great Sage was a man of parts; and silently he marked him. Yet he trembled and wept as he spoke: "Master, though my parents are lost and dead and the family wealth all gone, there are still fields and farms untouched, and my kinsfolk all alive."

"What kinsfolk have you?" asked the Pilgrim.

"My grandfather's family lives south of the mountain," said the monster, "and my aunt dwells north of the ridge. At the head of the ravine, Li the Fourth is my uncle by marriage; in the woods, Hong the Third is my clan uncle. I have cousins and hall-brothers besides, all living around the village. Venerable master, if you will save me, when we reach the village and I have seen all my kin, I shall tell them, one by one, of the grace of your deliverance; we will sell some of the land and fields and thank you heavily, heavily."

When Bajie heard this, he rounded on the Pilgrim: "Brother, a little child like that—what are you badgering and cross-examining him for? What he says makes sense. The robbers could only plunder his floating wealth—could they carry off houses and farmland too? If we tell his kinsfolk, why, even with our mighty appetites we couldn't eat our way through the price of ten acres. Bring him down, do!"

The blockhead had only thoughts of food in his head, and cared nothing for true or false: he used his monk's knife to cut the ropes, and let the monster down.

The monster knelt beneath the Tang monk's horse, tears streaming, kowtowing without stop.

The elder's heart was moved, and he called: "Child, come up on the horse, and I will take you with me."

"Master," said the monster, "my hands and feet are numb from the hanging, my hips and waist ache; and besides, I am a country child and not used to riding."

The Tang monk told Bajie to carry him. The monster stole one look at him: "Master, my skin is frozen through—I dare not have this venerable master carry me. His snout is long and his ears are great, and the bristles on the back of his head are stiff—they'd stab me so."

"Then let the Sha Monk carry you," said the Tang monk. The monster stole another look: "Master, when those robbers came to plunder our house, every one of them had painted faces and false beards, waving knives and brandishing staves. They frightened me so! At the sight of this master with his unlucky face, my soul would leave me altogether—I dare not have him carry me either."

Then the Tang monk bade Sun the Pilgrim carry him, and the Pilgrim laughed heartily: "I'll carry him! I'll carry him!" And the monster rejoiced in secret, all sweet compliance, waiting for the Pilgrim to take him on his back.

The Pilgrim pulled him over to the roadside and weighed him with a heave—why, no more than a bit over three and a half pounds.

The Pilgrim laughed: "You impudent little monster—today your death is due! How dare you play your ghost-tricks before old Sun! I know you for one of that sort!"

"Master," said the monster, "I am a son of good honest folk, unfortunate to meet this great calamity. How am I one of any 'sort'?"

"If you're a son of good folk," said the Pilgrim, "how is it your bones are so light?"

"My frame is small," said the monster.

"How old are you this year?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Seven years old," said the monster.

The Pilgrim laughed: "A pound a year—that would make seven pounds. How is it you don't weigh four pounds full?"

"I lost my mother's milk when I was little," said the monster.

"Well and good," said the Pilgrim. "I'll carry you. But if you need to make water or worse, you must tell me."

Then Sanzang with Bajie and the Sha Monk went ahead, and the Pilgrim, the child on his back, followed; and the party pressed steadily west. There is a poem in witness:

The higher the Way's estate, the higher the demon's bar; The mind of Chan is stillness—yet stillness breeds the fiend. When the heart-lord walks upright along the middle path, The Wood-Mother, dull and stubborn, strays with skipping feet. The Mind-Horse, speaking no word, harbors love and desire; The Yellow Dame, saying nothing, frets herself in silence. The stray guest-spirit triumphs—but all in empty joy: In the end it melts away before the place of right.

The Great Sage Sun bore the demon along, his heart grumbling against the Tang monk, who knew nothing of hardship: "To cross a range as savage as this—hard enough with an empty body—and he has old Sun carrying a man on his back! Never mind this fellow being a monster—even were he a good man, his father and mother gone, who would old Sun hand him to? Better by half to smash him on the ground and be done."

But the monster had already read his thoughts. He used a magic: drew in four breaths from the four quarters and blew them upon the Pilgrim's back—and at once the burden seemed to weigh a thousand pounds.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Little son, playing your weighty-body trick to crush your old daddy!"

Hearing this, the monster feared the Great Sage would hurt him; so he quit the corpse, slipped out his primal spirit, and leapt up to stand in the sky of the ninth heaven—and on the Pilgrim's back the corpse grew heavier still. The Monkey King, enraged, snatched it off, and with a swish-flattening smash flung it down on a boulder at the roadside, pounding the corpse flat as a meat patty. Still fearing further insolence from the thing, he tore off its arms and legs, flung them to either side of the road, and left them in pieces.

The creature, watching from mid-air, could not hold down the fire in his heart: "This monkey-monk is an utter wretch! Grant I am a demon monster, out to harm your master—still, I had not yet so much as shown my hand. How could you mangle me so! Lucky for me I had my wits about me and fled in spirit—otherwise you'd have taken a life for nothing. If I don't seize the Tang monk at this moment, and give way once more, I only teach them to linger and grow cunning."

What a monster! In mid-air he whipped up a whirlwind—with one great whoosh, stones flying and sand streaming, fierce beyond words. What a wind!

Surging, raging, it rolls up water-clouds reeking; Black vapors seething shut away the light of day. Ridge trees are torn out root and all together; Wild plum trees, trunks and all, are leveled flat. Yellow sand blinds

the eyes—no man can walk; Strange rocks are smashed and shattered—how can the road run level? Rolling and swirling, the level ground turns dark; Over all the mountain, birds and beasts shriek in panic.

It blew so that Sanzang could not stay on his horse; Bajie dared not look up; the Sha Monk bowed his head and hid his face. The Great Sage Sun knew well it was the monster's wind, and leapt hastily in pursuit—but the monster had already ridden the wind's crest and carried the Tang monk off: not a trace, not a shadow, no telling which way, nowhere to follow.

After a while the wind's voice died down, and the sunlight shone bright again. The Pilgrim came forward and looked: the white dragon horse stood trembling, whinnying in panic; the luggage-load lay dumped by the road; Bajie lay groaning beneath the cliff; the Sha Monk crouched on the slope, calling out. The Pilgrim shouted: "Bajie!" The blockhead knew the Pilgrim's voice, looked up, saw the gale had died, scrambled to his feet, and clutched the Pilgrim: "Brother, what a wind!"

The Sha Monk too came forward: "Brother, it was a whirlwind." Then he asked: "Where is the master?"

"The wind came on so hard," said Bajie, "we all hid our heads and shielded our eyes, each dodging the wind as best he could—the master was crouched low on his horse too."

"And where has he gone now?" asked the Pilgrim.

"He must be made of lampwick," said the Sha Monk, "to be blown off by one gust of wind."

"Brothers," said the Pilgrim, "this is where you and I ought to part company and be done!"

"Right!" said Bajie. "Let's split up early, each find his own road—that would be something. That Western Heaven road goes on without end—when would we ever get there?"

At these words the Sha Monk started as if struck, numb from head to foot: "Elder Brother, what words are these you're speaking? Because of sins in our former lives, we were shown mercy by the Bodhisattva Guanyin, who persuaded us, rubbed our heads and administered the precepts, changed our religious names, and brought us to refuge in the fruit of Buddha; and we vowed of our own will to protect the Tang monk to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures, winning merit to offset our guilt. Today we have come all this way—and now, all at once, to throw it over, and talk of each finding his own road! Would that not betray the Bodhisattva's good work, ruin our own virtue, and invite the world's laughter—men would say we began well and could not carry through!"

"Brother, what you say is true," said the Pilgrim. "The trouble is, the master will not listen. Old Sun, with his fiery eyes and golden pupils, can tell good from bad at a glance. That wind just now was the doing of the child we took down from the tree. I knew him for a monster; you did not know him, and the master did not either—he took him for a good family's son and made me carry him on my back. Old Sun was plotting how to deal with him when he played his weighty-body trick to crush me. I smashed him to bits, and he must have used the art of quitting the corpse, whipped up that whirlwind, and carried my master off. That is why I grumble at the master—he never once heeds what I say. So my heart went slack and cold, and I spoke of splitting up. But since you, good brother, are set on this, old Sun is caught between going on and turning back. Bajie—what would you truly do?"

"I let my mouth run loose and raved a few sentences just now," said Bajie. "Truly, we ought not to split up. Brother, there's nothing else for it—let's follow our brother Sha's words, and go find that monster and save the master."

Then the Pilgrim turned his anger to gladness: "Brothers, let us knot our hearts together once more. Gather up the luggage and the horse, up the mountain to hunt for the monster, and rescue the master!"

The three of them clutched vines and gripped creepers, searching slope and ravine, and traveled some fifty to seventy li—yet not a word or sign of him. On the mountain there was no bird in the air nor beast on the ground; only ancient cypresses and tall pines stood in their old places.

The Great Sage Sun, sorely fretted at heart, leapt up to the most perilous peak of all, shouted "Change!"—and turned three-headed and six-armed, the very image of his days of havoc in Heaven. He flourished the gold-banded cudgel, and it became three gold-banded cudgels; with splitting, popping blows he battered a swath along the east and a swath along the west, striking without pause on either hand.

When Bajie saw this he said: "Sha Monk, this is bad—Elder Brother can't find the master and has worried himself into a fit of madness."

The Pilgrim battered away for a while, and battered out a whole tribe of impoverished gods, clad in a rag here and a rag there, trousers without crotches and leggings without tops, who knelt before the mountain crying: "Great Sage! The mountain gods and local deities come to see you!"

"How come there are so many mountain gods and local deities?" asked the Pilgrim.

The gods kowtowed: "We report to the Great Sage: this mountain is called the six-hundred-li Drill-Head Hao Mountain. We are set one mountain god to every ten li and one local deity to every ten li—thirty mountain gods and thirty local deities in all. Yesterday we already heard the Great Sage was coming, but we could not assemble in time, and so received you late and stirred the Great Sage to anger. We beg a thousand pardons for our crime."

"I'll spare you the charge for now. I ask you: how many monsters are on this mountain?"

"Grandfather!" cried the gods. "There is only the one monster, and he has rubbed our heads bald! He has left us without incense or paper, without so much as an offering of meat; every one of us goes half-clad and half-fed—and you ask how many monsters there are to eat!"

"Does this monster live in front of the mountain or behind it?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Neither in front nor behind," said the gods. "In this mountain there is a ravine called the Withered Pine Ravine; beside the ravine there is a cave called the Fire Cloud Cave; and in that cave there is a demon king of vast magic powers. Time and again he carries us mountain gods and local deities off to build his fires and keep his gate, to ring bells and cry the watches for him in the black of night. His little imps come round demanding 'customary money' besides."

"But you are ghosts of the shades and immortals of the underworld," said the Pilgrim. "What money can you have?"

"Just because we have no money for him," said the gods, "we must catch a few mountain roe deer and wild elk, and mornings and evenings lay them out for the imps. If we send nothing, he comes and tears down our temples and strips off our clothes, and lets us have no peace at all! We earnestly beg the Great Sage to sweep this monster away and save the living souls of the mountain."

"Since you are under his thumb and always beneath his cave," said the Pilgrim, "you must know whence this monster comes and what his name is."

"Speaking of him," said the gods, "perhaps the Great Sage has heard. He is the son of the Bull Demon King, born of Princess Rakshasi. He cultivated three hundred years on the Flaming Mountain and refined there the samadhi true fire, and his magic powers are vast indeed. The Bull Demon King sent him to garrison Hao Mountain. His milk name is the Red Boy, and his title is the Great King Holy Infant."

At these words the Pilgrim's heart brimmed over with joy. He dismissed the local deities and mountain gods, resumed his own form, leapt down from the peak, and said to Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Brothers, set your hearts at rest and worry no more. The master will surely come to no harm—the monster is a kinsman of old Sun's!"

Bajie laughed: "Brother, don't tell lies. You are from the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, and this is the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift—a road of many thousands, with ten thousand rivers and a thousand mountains between, and two oceans besides. How is he your kinsman?"

"Just now this tribe here were the local deities and mountain gods of this region," said the Pilgrim. "I asked them about the monster's origins, and they said he is the son of the Bull Demon King, born of Princess Rakshasi, his name the Red Boy, his title the Great King Holy Infant. Now think: five hundred years ago, when old Sun made havoc in Heaven, he roamed every famous mountain under heaven, seeking out the great heroes of the earth—and the Bull Demon King was one of seven brothers sworn with old Sun. There were five or six demon kings all told, and old Sun alone was born small and neat; and so we called the Bull Demon King our eldest brother. This monster is the Bull Demon King's son. Old Sun knew his father well—count it up, and I am his father's sworn younger brother: his old uncle by the league! How would he dare harm my master? Let's hurry along."

The Sha Monk laughed: "Brother, as the common saying goes: 'Call not at the door for three years together, and kinship itself turns cold.' You and he have been parted five or six hundred years, no cup of wine ever passed between you, no festival gift ever summoned you—how will he recognize any kinship with you?"

"How small you measure men!" said the Pilgrim. "As the saying goes: a duckweed leaf drifts at last into the great sea—where in this world do men not meet! Even if he will not own the kinship, at least he will not harm my master. If he sets no banquet for us, surely he will at least hand back a whole and sound Tang monk."

The three brothers, each with devoted heart, led the white horse, loaded the luggage upon it, and sought the highway, pressing straight on. Without rest by day or night they traveled a hundred and some li, when suddenly they came upon a pine wood. Through the wood ran a winding ravine, and below the ravine, clear green living water flew cascading; at the ravine's head a stone-slab bridge led across to the cave dwelling on the far side.

"Brothers," said the Pilgrim, "look there where the stone cliffs glimmer white—surely that is where the monster lives. Let us take counsel together: who will stay and guard the luggage and horse, and who will go with me across to subdue the demon?"

"Brother," said Bajie, "old Pig has no gift for sitting still. I'll go with you."

"Good! Good!" said the Pilgrim, and instructed the Sha Monk: "Hide the horse and luggage deep in the trees, guard them carefully, and wait while we two go to their gate to look for the master." The Sha Monk obeyed. Bajie went along with the Pilgrim, and the two advanced, weapons in hand. Truly:

The unrefined babe's demonic fire is strong indeed— So Mind-Ape and Wood-Mother must lend each other strength.

But as for what fortune or ill befell them on this expedition—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 41

The Mind-Ape Meets Defeat by Fire; The Wood-Mother Is Captured by the Demon

The ci says:

For a moment good and evil are forgotten; Prosper and wither, he heeds them no more. Dim or bright, now hidden, now shown, he drifts along as it comes, Taking his food and drink as his lot befalls. When the spirit is still, deep and ever serene, Then demons invade but the dark and the dull. The Five Elements stumble, and the Chan grove is broken— When the wind stirs, the cold surely follows.

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun led Bajie away from the Sha Monk, and the two leapt over the Withered Pine Ravine and went straight to the foot of the strange rock cliff, where indeed there stood a cave dwelling of no ordinary splendor. See it:

The old road returning to the cave is secluded and still; Wind and moon attend the black crane's play. White clouds break through and flood the stream with light; Water flows past the bridge in an immortal mood. Apes cry and birds call amid wondrous flowers and trees; Vines and ivy climb stone steps where orchid and iris prevail. Blue haze sways over cliff and ravine, scattering rosy mists; Green stains pine and bamboo, beckoning the painted phoenix. Far off the ranged summits stand like a screen of inlaid towers; Mountains bow before, ravines wind about—a cave of true immortals. From the dragon-vein of Kunlun's earth-line it springs— Only the fated and the destined may enjoy it.

As they drew near the gate, they saw a stone tablet engraved with eight great characters: "Hao Mountain, Withered Pine Ravine, Fire Cloud Cave." On that side a pack of little imps was disporting itself, leaping in midair with spear and sword.

The Great Sage Sun called out in a mighty voice: "You little ones! Be quick and report to the master of this cave. Tell him to hand over my master the Tang monk, and the lives of every spirit in this cave shall be spared! If one word of refusal passes your teeth, I'll overturn your mountain and trample your cave flat!"

At these words the little imps spun round in a flurry, scurried back inside, shut the two stone doors, and came in to report: "Great King, disaster!"

Now ever since that monster had carried Sanzang into his cave, he had stripped off his clothes, trussed him hog-tied, four hooves to the beam, and hung him in the rear courtyard, ordering little imps to fetch clean water and scrub him, meaning to steam him in a basket and eat him. Hearing the cry of disaster, he put the scrubbing off for the moment and came out to the front court to ask: "What disaster?"

"A hairy-faced, thunder-beaked monk," said the imps, "with a long-snouted, great-eared monk beside him, is at the gate demanding their master the Tang monk. If one word of refusal crosses our teeth, they say, they'll overturn the mountain and trample the cave flat."

The demon king gave a cold little laugh. "So it's the Pilgrim Sun and Zhu Bajie—they do know how to hunt a man down. From the halfway point of the mountain where they took their master to this place is a hundred and fifty li—how did they find their way to my very gate?" He ordered: "Little ones, you who tend the carts—wheel the carts out!"

That crew of little imps pushed out five small carts and opened the front gate.

Bajie saw them coming. "Brother," said he, "this demon must be scared of us—he's wheeling out carts to move house somewhere else."

"No," said the Pilgrim. "Wait and see where he sets them." They watched the little imps set the carts down in the order of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth, and post five imps to watch them while five more went in to announce. The demon king asked: "All in order?" "In order," came the answer. "Bring the spear," he commanded.

Then a crew of weapon-keeping imps had two of their number carry out a fire-tipped spear a zhang and eight chi long, and hand it to the demon king.

The demon king shouldered his spear and strode out; he wore no armor, only an embroidered war-skirt bound at his waist, and his feet were bare. The Pilgrim and Bajie looked up and beheld the monster:

Face like powder, three parts white; Lips like vermilion—a fine young talent. Temples coiled in black clouds that shamed the darkest indigo; Brows like new moons, as if cut by a knife. A war-skirt cunningly embroidered with coiling dragon and phoenix; In build more plump than Nezha himself. Both hands gripping his spear, awesome and dread, Bathed in auspicious light he comes out at the gate. His shout rings like spring thunder rolling; His glaring eyes flash like lightning swift. Would you know this demon's true name and line? Renowned a thousand ages: they call him the Red Boy.

The Red Boy monster came out of the gate and shouted: "Who is it that dares bawl at my gate?"

The Pilgrim came forward, laughing. "My worthy nephew, drop your tricks! This very morning, on the mountainside, hung high at the tip of a pine—weren't you that scrawny, sickly-looking child who duped my master? I kindly carried you on my back, and you raised a wind and whisked my master away. And now you put on this shape—do you think I don't know you? Hand my master over at once, and spare us both a loss of face and family feeling. For if your honored father were to hear of it, he'd blame old Sun for bullying his juniors—no way for an elder to behave."

At this the monster's heart filled with rage, and he barked: "You impudent ape! What family is there between you and me? A pack of addle-brained nonsense! Who's your worthy nephew?"

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "you don't know your own history. When I was sworn brothers with your honored father, you were nowhere yet born."

"All the more monkey gabble!" said the monster. "Where are you from, and where am I from? How could you ever have been my father's sworn brother?"

"You don't know," said the Pilgrim. "I am Sun Wukong, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, who five hundred years ago made havoc in the Heavenly Palace. Before ever I did, I roamed the ends of the earth and the corners of the sea, to all Four Great Continents, leaving no region unvisited. In those days I admired nothing but heroes of the day. Your honored father is called the Bull Demon King, styled the Great Sage Who Pacifies Heaven; with old Sun he swore brotherhood—we were seven brothers all told, and I let him be eldest. There was the Dragon Demon King, styled the Great Sage Who Restores the Seas, my second brother; the Roc Demon King, styled the Great Sage Who Mixes Heaven, my third; the Lion-Cub King, styled the Great Sage Who Moves Mountains, my fourth; the Macaque King, styled the Great Sage Who Ventilates the Winds, my fifth; and the Gibbon King, styled the Great Sage Who Drives Away Gods, my sixth. Only old Sun, small of body, was styled the Great Sage Equal to Heaven and ranked seventh. When we old brothers were at our games together, you were not yet born!"

The monster would hear none of it. He raised his fire-tipped spear and thrust.

The Pilgrim, an old hand never hurried, slipped aside with a feint of his body, dodged the spearpoint, swung up his iron cudgel, and cursed: "You little beast, you don't know your betters! Taste my cudgel!"

The demon too played a trick of the body, letting the cudgel pass. "Impudent macaque! You don't know the times! Taste my spear!"

The two of them threw family feeling to the winds; both turned foe, each deployed his magic, and they leapt up into the clouds—a fine battle:

The Pilgrim's fame is vast, the demon king's skill is great. One swings the gold-banded cudgel athwart; one levels the fire-tipped spear straight. Breathing fog, they shroud the Three Worlds; puffing clouds, they darken all four quarters. A day's killing fury roars aloud; sun, moon, and stars give forth no light. No yielding word is spoken; all kindness turns to spite. One's rebellious heart has cast off rite; one's changed face has lost all constant way. The cudgel's parry swells his might; the spear's thrust rages wild. One is the true Great Sage of primal chaos; One the Boy of Wealth, a fruit of the true Way. The two strain, matching strength for strength, All for the Tang monk come to worship the Dharma King.

The demon and the Great Sage Sun fought twenty rounds without victory for either.

Zhu Bajie watched from the side and saw it plainly: the demon, though not yet beaten, did nothing but parry and block—there was no thrust in his attack; and the Pilgrim, though not winning, wielded his cudgel with masterly skill, always above the demon's head, never leaving his right or left.

Bajie thought to himself: "This is bad. The Pilgrim is nimble; one of these moments he'll leave a gap open, lure the demon to plunge in, fell him with a single stroke of the cudgel—and there goes all the credit, none of it mine."

Watch him rouse his spirits, raise his nine-toothed rake, and strike at the demon's head in midair. The monster saw it coming and panicked; he dragged his spear and fled from the field. The Pilgrim shouted to Bajie: "After him! After him!"

The two chased him to the mouth of his cave, and there they saw the demon standing on the middle cart of the five, one hand holding up his fire-tipped spear, the other clenched in a fist—and he bashed himself twice on the nose.

Bajie laughed. "Shameless bluster! What's this—mean to smash your nose and let the blood run, smear your face red, and go somewhere to bring charges against us?"

The demon king, having bashed himself twice, recited a spell, and fire spewed from his mouth; thick smoke burst from his nostrils; he blinked his eyes and flames leapt up on every side. From the five carts firelight welled out. He spewed several more mouthfuls, and then it was a red blaze, a great fire burning the very sky; the whole Fire Cloud Cave was lost in smoke and flame—truly a fire that scorched Heaven and roasted earth.

Bajie panicked: "Brother, this is bad! If we dive into that fire, there's no hope of life—they'll have old Pig roasted done, spiced and seasoned, and served up for his pleasure! Run! Run!"

The word "run" was barely out before he bolted across the ravine, caring nothing for the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim, whose magic was vast, pinched the fire-avoiding spell, plunged into the flames, and hunted for the monster. The monster saw him coming and spewed several more mouthfuls, and the fire burned fiercer than before. What a fire!

Blazing and roaring, it fills the sky and scorches; Glorious and awful, it reddens all the earth. Like wheels of fire whirling up and down; Like sparks of charcoal dancing east and west. This fire is not the fire of Suiren drilling wood, Nor the fire of Lao Zi refining his elixir; Not heavenly fire, nor wildfire, But the true samadhi fire the demon refined to perfection. The five carts compose the Five Elements; The Five Elements beget and transform to breed this flame. Liver-wood engenders heart-fire blazing; Heart-fire sets the spleen-earth in balance. Spleen-earth begets metal, and metal turns to water; Water can beget wood, penetrating to the

numinous. All birth and transformation here are born of fire; Fire fills the endless sky and all things flourish. The demon-fiend, long awakened, commands the samadhi— First and foremost, forever, of all the Western Heaven.

Beaten about by smoke and flame, the Pilgrim could not find the monster, nor see the path before the cave door; he pulled out of the fire and leapt free. The demon saw it clearly from his gate; and when he saw the Pilgrim go, he gathered in his fire apparatus, led his imps back into the cave, and shut the stone doors, counting it a victory. He ordered the little ones to lay a feast and strike up music—of their merriment no more.

The Pilgrim leapt back over the Withered Pine Ravine, brought his cloud down, and heard Bajie and the Sha Monk talking loudly among the pines. He stepped up and bawled at Bajie: "You blockhead, no more feeling than a stone! Afraid of the demon fire, were you? Fleeing for your life, and leaving old Sun behind—lucky for you old Sun has a trick or two!"

Bajie laughed: "Brother, that demon spoke true about you: you truly don't know the times. As the ancients said: he who knows the times is called a hero. That demon owns no kinship with you, yet you insist on claiming kin; and once he'd fought you and let loose that heartless fire, you wouldn't leave—you had to keep on battling him!"

"How does that monster's skill compare with mine?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Far beneath it," said Bajie.

"And his spear work?"

"Also no match. Old Pig saw he couldn't hold out, so I came to help you with a rake-stroke—little thinking he couldn't take a joke, but turned tail, and then, past all reason, let out his fire."

"It was just you who should not have come," said the Pilgrim. "If I'd fought him a few more rounds and snatched a clever stroke at him, wouldn't that have done?"

The two of them went on discussing the monster's skill and the virulence of his fire, while the Sha Monk leaned against a pine root, laughing himself silly.

The Pilgrim saw him. "Brother, what are you laughing at? Have you some skill, then, to seize that demon and break through his fire array? This business would profit all of us. As the common saying goes, a ball is felted from many hairs. If you captured the monster and saved the master, that would be a great deed of merit for you."

"I've no skill," said the Sha Monk, "and I can't subdue demons. I'm laughing because you two have both lost your heads."

"How have I lost my head?" demanded the Pilgrim.

"That demon's skill is no match for yours, and his spear work no match either; he only has the advantage of fire—that's all that keeps you from beating him. If you'll take your brother's advice, overcome him by the mutual begetting and conquest of the Elements—what's hard in that?"

At this the Pilgrim laughed aloud: "Brother, you speak reason. Truly we lost our heads and forgot it. Judging by the doctrine of begetting and conquering, water conquers fire—so where shall we find some water to drown this demon fire and save the master?"

"Just so," said the Sha Monk. "No need to hesitate."

"You two stay right here," said the Pilgrim. "Don't go challenging him. Old Sun will go to the Eastern Ocean to borrow dragon troops, fetch water here, drown the demon fire, and catch that impudent monster."

"Brother, go with an easy mind," said Bajie. "We understand."

What a Great Sage! He rose on his cloud and left the place; in an instant he reached the Eastern Ocean, with no heart to admire the sea sights. He used the water-parting magic and parted the waves. As he went along, a night patrol yaksha of the sea met him face to face; seeing it was the Great Sage Sun, he hastened back to the Crystal Palace to report to the old Dragon King. Ao Guang at once led dragon sons and grandsons, shrimp soldiers and crab warriors, all out together to welcome him, and invited him in to sit. When they were seated and the courtesies done, tea was offered, but the Pilgrim said:

"No need for tea. I've a matter to trouble you with. My master the Tang monk is journeying to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and fetch scriptures, and passing through the Fire Cloud Cave in the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain, he was seized by a demon called the Red Boy, who styles himself the Great King Holy Infant. Old Sun hunted him to his cave and fought him, but he let out his fire. We could not withstand him; and bethinking ourselves that water conquers fire, I've come to ask you for water—to rain a good downpour on the place, drown the demon fire, and save the Tang monk from this ordeal."

The Dragon King said: "Great Sage, you're mistaken. If it's rain you want, you should not come asking me."

"You are the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas," said the Pilgrim, "charged with the dispensing of rain. If I don't ask you, whom should I ask?"

"Though I am charged with rain," said the Dragon King, "I dare not act on my own authority. There must be a decree from the Jade Emperor, instructing what place shall have how many chi and how many cun of rain, and at what hours it shall begin and end; the Officers of the Three Powers must set their brushes to it, and Taiyi must move his documents; only when Thunder Father and Lightning Mother, the Earl of Wind and the Cloud Boys have all been summoned in council may it be. As the common saying goes: without clouds, a dragon goes nowhere."

"I need no wind, cloud, thunder, or lightning," said the Pilgrim. "I only want some water to put out fire."

"Though you need no wind, cloud, thunder, or lightning," said the Dragon King, "I alone cannot help you. What say my younger brothers join in and help the Great Sage win this merit?"

"Where are your brothers?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Ao Qin, Dragon King of the Southern Sea; Ao Run, Dragon King of the Northern Sea; and Ao Shun, Dragon King of the Western Sea."

The Pilgrim laughed: "If I must sail round three more seas, I'd sooner go up to Heaven and ask the Jade Emperor for a decree."

"No need for the Great Sage to go," said the Dragon King. "I need only sound the iron drum and golden bell here, and they will come in an instant."

At his words the Pilgrim said: "Old Dragon King, quick—sound the drum and bell!"

In a moment the Dragon Kings of the three seas arrived in a crowd, asking: "Elder brother, what matter commands us brothers?"

"Ao Guang said: "The Great Sage Sun is here, borrowing rain to help him subdue a demon."

The three brothers were brought in and presented. The Pilgrim told the whole story of borrowing water, and every god gladly consented. At once they mustered:

The shark, valiant and bold, leads the van; The sheatfish, great of mouth, rides as vanguard. Marshal Carp leaps the waves and rolls the billows; Commander Bream puffs fog and blows the wind. Captain Mackerel whistles signals on the east; Major Whitefish hastens the march on the west. Red-eyed Horse-Lad dances in the south; The Black-Scale General charges down from the north. The Yellow Carp commander sounds the call at the center; On every quarter heroes in their ranks. The soft-shelled Adjutant, crafty and versatile, plots the lines; The Tortoise Premier's subtle reckonings divide the plans. Minister Alligator, full of guile; Commander Soft-Shell, manifold in arts. The side-walking Crab Warriors wheel their long swords; The straight-leaping Shrimp Soldiers draw their stiff bows. The Catfish clerk examines the registers and rolls— And the dragon troops are drawn up and leave the waves.

The poem says:

The Dragon Kings of the Four Seas delight to lend their aid; The Great Sage Equal to Heaven has asked, and they comply. Only because the Tang monk met his trial upon the road, They borrow water and come to quench the demon fire.

The Pilgrim led the dragon troops, and before long they came to the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain. The Pilgrim said: "Brothers of the house of Ao, I have troubled you with a long journey. This is the demon's ground; pray halt in midair and keep out of sight. Let old Sun fight him. If I beat him, none of you need lay hands on him; if he beats me, you need not join the battle either. Only when he lets out his fire, then at my call, let all of you spew rain together." The Dragon Kings obeyed his orders to the letter.

The Pilgrim then brought down his cloud, went into the pine wood, and hailed Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Brothers!"

"Brother, that was quick!" said Bajie. "Did you get the Dragon Kings to come?"

"They're all here. You two be careful—there may be heavy rain; don't let the luggage get soaked. Wait while old Sun goes to fight him."

"Brother, go with an easy mind," said the Sha Monk. "We understand."

The Pilgrim leapt across the ravine, came to the gate, and shouted: "Open up!" The little imps ran in again to report: "The Pilgrim Sun has come again!"

The Red Boy lifted his face and laughed: "That monkey must think the fire didn't cook him, and so he's back. This time show him no mercy—roast him crisp outside and tender within before we're done!" He leapt up at once, grasped his long spear, and called: "Little ones, wheel out the fire carts!"

He came out at the gate and said to the Pilgrim: "What are you here for this time?"

"Give me back my master!"

"You ape! You've no sense of give and take. That Tang monk may serve you as a master, but he'll serve me as a relish to my wine—and still you think to want him back! Never! Never!"

At this the Pilgrim's fury blazed; he whipped out his gold-banded cudgel and struck at the monster's head. The demon raised his fire-tipped spear and swiftly parried. This battle was unlike the last—a fine fight:

Rage fills the impudent demon; Wrath burns the Monkey King's general. One labors only to save the sutra-seeking monk; One intends to eat the Tang Sanzang. The heart turned false knows no family bond; Kindness gone, there's no yielding word. One would fain catch his foe and flay him alive; One would gladly seize him and dip him raw in sauce. Truly they are mighty men, mighty and fierce indeed. Cudgel comes, spear parries, wagering victory; Spear goes, cudgel meets, contending for the upper hand. Twenty rounds their hands have wheeled— The skill of both is of one measure.

The demon king fought the Pilgrim twenty rounds, saw that he could not win, flourished his spear in feint, pulled away, clenched his fist, bashed his nose twice more, and spewed out fire.

From the carts before the gate smoke and flame burst up; from mouth and eyes red fire streamed. The Great Sage Sun turned his head and called: "Where are the Dragon Kings?" The dragon brothers led their host of water tribes and spewed rain down into the very light of the demon's fire. What rain! Truly:

Pattering and sprinkling, dense and heavy. Pattering and sprinkling, like stars dropping from the sky's edge; Dense and heavy, like waves rolled back over the estuary's mouth. At first the drops are big as fists; Later on, it's jars poured and basins upturned. The flooded ground runs duck-head green; The high hills are washed to Buddha-head blue. In gully and ravine water flies a thousand zhang of jade; In stream and spring the billows swell in ten thousand threads of silver. The triple-forked crossing brims before your eyes; The nine-turning brook runs level, bit by bit. This is the Tang monk in his hour of trial, aided by the dragon gods— The River of Heaven tipped over and poured straight down.

But great or small, the rain went plashing down and could not quench the demon's fire. For a private rain of the Dragon Kings can only put out common fire; how could it put out the demon's samadhi true fire? It was exactly like pouring oil on flames—the more they poured, the fiercer it burned.

The Great Sage said: "Let me pinch the spell and dive into the fire!"

He wheeled his iron cudgel, hunting the demon to strike him. The demon saw him coming and spewed a mouthful of smoke full in his face. The Pilgrim whipped his head aside—but his eyes smarted and danced with sparks, and he could not hold back his tears, falling like rain. For the Great Sage fears no fire—only smoke.

Long ago, when he made havoc in the Heavenly Palace, Lord Lao Zi had set him in the Eight Trigrams furnace to be smelted; he had the luck to take refuge in the position of Xun, the wind trigram, and was not burned—only the wind churned the smoke about, until it smoked him into his fiery eyes and golden pupils. To this day, then, he fears only smoke. The demon spewed another mouthful; the Pilgrim could not bear it, and rose on his cloud and fled. The demon king gathered his fire apparatus once more and went back into his cave.

The Great Sage, his whole body scorched with fire and smoke, burning and baking past all bearing, plunged straight into the ravine stream to quench the fire. Who could know that the shock of cold water would drive the fire-qi inward upon his heart, until his three souls left their house? Alas—breath blocked in his chest, throat and tongue cold: soul scattered, spirit dispersed, his very life spent!

The Dragon Kings of the Four Seas, alarmed, gathered in their rain in midair and called out at the top of their voices: "Marshal Tianpeng! General of the Curtain! Come out of hiding in the wood and find your elder brother!"

Bajie and the Sha Monk heard their sacred titles called, hastily untied the horse, shouldered the load, and rushed out of the wood; careless of mud and mire, they searched along the ravine—and there, in the upper stream, where waves rolled and tumbled, a body came drifting down on the rushing current. The Sha Monk saw it and plunged into the water in his clothes, and carried him ashore: it was the Great Sage Sun's body. Alas! See him: limbs crumpled and unable to stretch, cold as ice from crown to heel.

The Sha Monk's eyes brimmed with tears. "Elder Brother! Alas for you—ageless guest of a million years—now turned a short-lived man dead halfway on the road!"

Bajie laughed: "Don't cry, brother. This monkey is shamming death to frighten us. Feel him—is there a bit of warmth left at his chest?"

"He's cold all over," said the Sha Monk. "Even if there were one spark of warmth, how would that bring him back?"

"He has seventy-two transformations," said Bajie, "and so seventy-two lives. Hold his feet, and let me work on him." Indeed the Sha Monk held his feet, Bajie cradled his head, they pulled him straight, sat him up, and crossed his knees.

Bajie rubbed his two hands warm, covered the seven apertures of his head, and worked upon him the meditation art of massage.

Now the Pilgrim, shocked by the cold water, had his breath dammed in the Field of Cinnabar and could not cry out; but happily, by Bajie's kneading and rubbing, in a little while the breath passed through the three barriers, turned in the Hall of Light, and burst open the apertures—and he cried out: "Master!"

"Elder Brother," said the Sha Monk, "born for your master, and dying you still have him on your lips. Come back to us—we're here."

The Pilgrim opened his eyes. "Brothers, you're here? Old Sun has taken his lumps!"

Bajie laughed: "You were raving just now. If old Pig hadn't saved you, you'd have settled your account for good—and you still won't thank me!"

The Pilgrim rose, lifted his face, and called: "Brothers of the house of Ao—where are you?"

The Dragon Kings of the Four Seas answered from midair: "We little dragons are here attending you."

"I've wearied you with a long toil and won no merit. Pray return—I shall thank you another day." The Dragon Kings led their tribes of the water and surged away homeward—of them no more.

The Sha Monk supported the Pilgrim, and together they went and sat down beneath the pines. After a while he gathered his spirit and steadied his breath, but the tears would not stop rolling down his cheeks, and again he cried: "Master! I remember when first I left the Tang empire, how before the cliff you saved me from my doom. Three mountains, six rivers, all beset by demons; ten thousand sufferings, a thousand hardships, cut me to the heart. Alms-bowl breakfasts, according as the offering was thick or thin; Chan sleep at dusk, now in the woods, now at a farm. My one heart set its hope upon the fruit of merit—how could I know that today I'd lie in pain and hurt!"

"Elder Brother, grieve no more," said the Sha Monk. "Let us rather take counsel: where shall we go to invite troops and help, and rescue the master?"

"And where should we seek rescue?" asked the Pilgrim.

"When the Bodhisattva first instructed us," said the Sha Monk, "charging us to protect the Tang monk, she promised us: call on Heaven and Heaven shall answer, call on Earth and Earth shall respond. Where should we seek rescue?"

"When old Sun made havoc in the Heavenly Palace," said the Pilgrim, "all those celestial soldiers could not stand against me. This demon's magic is no small thing; only one whose powers are greater than old Sun's can subdue him. The gods of Heaven won't do, nor the spirits of Earth. To catch this monster, we must go and ask the Bodhisattva Guanyin—that would serve. But alas, my flesh is numb and aching, my waist and knees are in pain; I cannot mount the somersault cloud. How am I to go and ask?"

"Whatever must be said, say it," said Bajie, "and let me go ask."

The Pilgrim laughed: "So be it—you can go. But when you see the Bodhisattva, never look up at her; bow low and worship only. When she questions you, tell her the name of the place and the name of the demon,

and then ask about the master's case. If she will come, she will surely catch the monster."

At these words Bajie rose on his cloud and mist and headed south.

Now the demon king in his cave was rejoicing. "Little ones," he said, "the Pilgrim Sun has taken his beating and gone. This round may not have killed him, but at least it must have knocked him into a deep faint. Eh—only fear he'll go and invite rescue. Open the gate quick; let me watch whom he goes to fetch."

The imps opened the gate, the demon leapt into the sky to watch, and he saw Bajie heading south.

The demon reflected: "Southward there is nowhere else to go—it must be the Bodhisattva Guanyin he's off to invite." He dropped his cloud in haste and called: "Little ones, fetch out that leather bag of mine. It's long unused; the mouth-cord may not hold. Change it for a new one, and set the bag inside the second gate. I'll go trick Bajie back and bag him, and steam him to a pulp as a treat for you all."

Now that demon had a wish-fulfilling leather bag. The little imps fetched it out, changed the mouth-cord, and set it just inside the cave gate—of that no more.

The demon king had long lived in these parts; every path was familiar ground. He knew which road to the Southern Sea was shorter and which was longer; he took the shorter way, rose one bound on his cloud, overtook Bajie, seated himself bolt upright on a wall of cliff, and changed himself into the likeness of a "false Guanyin," waiting for Bajie. The blockhead was speeding along on his cloud when he suddenly spied the Bodhisattva—how could he tell true from false? This is what is called: seeing a shape, one makes a Buddha of it.

The blockhead halted his cloud and bowed low. "Bodhisattva, your disciple Zhu Wuneng knocks his head."

"Why are you not protecting the Tang monk on the scripture journey," said the demon, "that you come to see me?"

"Your disciple and my master were traveling along," said Bajie, "when we came to the Fire Cloud Cave in the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain, where a demon called the Red Boy carried off my master. Your disciple and my elder brother hunted him to his gate and fought him—but he knows how to breathe fire. In the first bout we could not win; in the second we asked the Dragon Kings for helping rain, and even that could not quench his fire. My elder brother was burned so badly he cannot move, and sent your disciple to beg the Bodhisattva: look down in mercy and save my master from this ordeal!"

"The master of the Fire Cloud Cave," said the demon, "is no destroyer of life. No doubt it was you who gave him offense."

"I gave him no offense," said Bajie. "It was my elder brother Wukong who offended him. He changed into a little child and hung in a tree to test my master. My master, tender-hearted, bade me take him down and my elder brother carry him a stretch. My elder brother gave him a fling—and then he raised a wind and carried my master off."

"Rise," said the demon, "and follow me into that cave to see its master. I will speak a word of favor for you; you make your apology, and beg your master out."

"Bodhisattva," said Bajie, "if he'll but give me back my master, I'll knock him a kowtow too!"

"Follow me," said the demon king.

The blockhead, no judge of good or ill, followed him straight back along the old road—not toward the Southern Ocean, but toward the gate of Fire Cloud. In an instant they stood before it.

The demon went in and said: "Have no fear—this is an old friend of mine. Come in."

The blockhead could only lift his foot across the threshold. All the imps raised a great shout, threw Bajie down, stuffed him into the bag, cinched tight the mouth-cord, and hung the bag high on the ridgepole.

The demon showed his true form and sat down in the midst. "Zhu Bajie! What powers have you, that you dare protect the Tang monk on his scripture journey, dare invite the Bodhisattva to subdue me? Staring with both great eyes, you still didn't know me—the Great King Holy Infant! Now I've caught you: hang you three days or five, steam you done, and bestow you on my little imps as a relish to go with the wine!"

Hearing this, Bajie cursed from inside the bag: "You impudent monster! Utterly shameless! With all your hundred schemes and thousand tricks you've tricked me into being eaten—mark my words, may every one of you catch the plague and swell up till your heads burst!" The blockhead cursed and cursed, bawled and bawled—of that no more.

Now the Great Sage Sun and the Sha Monk were sitting together when a raw, fishy wind swept past their faces, and the Pilgrim sneezed. "Bad! Bad! A wind like this bodes more ill than good. I fear Bajie has taken the wrong road."

"If he took the wrong road," said the Sha Monk, "couldn't he ask somebody?"

"I fear he's run into the demon."

"If he ran into the demon, couldn't he run back?"

"Not well. You sit here and stand guard; let old Sun go over the ravine and find out."

"Elder Brother, your waist is in pain—what if the monster gets his hands on you too? Let your little brother go."

"You won't do—let me go." What a Pilgrim! Gritting his teeth against the pain, gripping his iron cudgel, he crossed the ravine and came before the Fire Cloud Cave, shouting: "Impudent monster!"

The gate-keeping imps ran in again to report: "The Pilgrim Sun is shouting at the gate again!"

The demon king gave orders to seize him. The crew of imps, clustered round with spear and blade, bawled in unison, flung open the gate, all crying: "Catch him! Catch him!"

The Pilgrim, truly spent, dared not meet them; he slipped to the roadside, recited a spell, cried "Change!"—and turned into a gold-threaded bundle-wrapped parcel.

The imps saw it and reported: "Great King, the Pilgrim Sun is frightened! One shout of 'catch him' and he dropped his bundle and ran."

The demon king laughed: "There's nothing valuable in a bundle like that—nothing but a monk's tattered shirt and old cap. Carry it in and take it apart for washing; it'll do for patches and linings."

One little imp indeed picked up the bundle and carried it in—never knowing it was the Pilgrim transformed.

The Pilgrim thought: "Well done! This gold-threaded parcel—carried in!"

The demon paid it no mind and tossed it inside the gate.

What a Pilgrim—false within the false, empty within the empty! He plucked one hair, blew on it a magic breath, and changed it into another parcel just like the first; his true body then changed into a little fly, and he settled on the doorpost. He heard Bajie grunting and groaning somewhere, his voice thick and muffled, just like a pig with the plague. The Pilgrim zipped off in a buzz to find him—and there he was, hung up in the leather bag.

The Pilgrim clung to the bag and heard him cursing the demon up and down—monster this and monster that: "How dare you change into a false Guanyin to lure me back, hang me up here, and still you talk of eating me! Wait—one day my elder brother will spread his boundless Dharma of Equaling Heaven, and in one sweep he'll seize every monster on this mountain! He'll undo this bag and let me out, and then a thousand rakes on your skull will ease my heart!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim laughed to himself: "The blockhead, suffocating in there, still keeps his flag flying. Old Sun must have this monster—if not, how ever shall I wash this grudge clean?" He was just plotting how to save Bajie out when he heard the demon king call: "Where are my Six Mighty Generals?"

Now there were six little imps, his trusted and familiar spirits, whom he had enfeoffed as Mighty Generals, each with a name: one was called Cloud-in-Mist, one Mist-in-Cloud, one Swift-as-Fire, one Quick-as-Wind, one Rising-Heat, one Heat-Arising.

The Six Mighty Generals came forward and knelt. The demon king said: "Do you know the Old Great King's home?"

"We do," said the six.

"Go this very night, under the stars, and invite the Old Great King here. Tell him I have caught a Tang monk to steam for him to eat, and add a thousand spans to his years."

The six monsters received the order, dragging and hauling one another along, and went straight out the gate. With a buzz the Pilgrim flew down from the bag, followed and fixed his eye upon the six monsters, slipping out of the cave.

But what came of their errand—whom they fetched—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 42

The Great Sage Pays Devout Visit to the Southern Sea; Guanyin, Merciful and Kind, Binds the Red Boy

The story goes that the Six Mighty Generals left the cave gate and headed off southwest, following the road.

The Pilgrim thought to himself: "He means to invite the Old Great King to eat my master. The Old Great King must certainly be the Bull Demon King. In the old days old Sun kept company with him—truly we were of one mind and feeling, the closest of friends. But now old Sun has returned to the true Way, while he is still a fiend of evil. Long as we've been parted, I still remember his looks. Let old Sun change into the Bull Demon King and hoax him a bit, and see what comes of it."

What a Pilgrim! Slipping away from the six little imps, he spread his wings and flew ahead some dozen li or more, then shook his body and changed into the Bull Demon King. He plucked a few hairs, cried "Change!"—and they became several little imps. There in the mountain hollow, with hawk on fist and hounds in leash, crossbow set and bow bent, they played at hunting, waiting for the Six Mighty Generals.

That crew, dragging and hauling one another along, had just caught sight of the Bull Demon King seated in their midst when Rising-Heat and Heat-Arising fell on their knees in a fright: "Old Great King, Grandfather—here you are!"

Cloud-in-Mist, Mist-in-Cloud, Swift-as-Fire, and Quick-as-Wind, all of them mortal flesh and common eyes, could not tell true from false; they too knelt down together and knocked their heads: "Grandfather! We little ones are sent from the Great King Holy Infant of the Fire Cloud Cave, to invite you, Grandfather Old Great King, to come eat Tang monk's flesh and live a thousand spans of years!"

The Pilgrim answered in borrowed words: "Rise, children, and come home with me; I'll change my clothes and go."

The little imps knocked their heads: "We beg you, Grandfather, grant us this favor—no need to return to your palace. The road is long; we fear our Great King's rebuke. Let us set out from here, we beg."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Good obedient children. So be it, so be it. Lead the way ahead, and I'll come along."

The six monsters roused their spirits and shouted the road clear ahead, and the Great Sage followed.

Before long they reached the cave. Quick-as-Wind and Swift-as-Fire dashed inside to report: "Great King, the Old Great King, your grandfather, has come."

The demon king was delighted: "You've proved useful—so quick as all that!"

He at once commanded: "Chiefs of every route, form the ranks, unfurl the banners and beat the drums, to welcome the Old Great King!"

The whole cave's host of imps obeyed the command and marched out in perfect order. The Pilgrim, proud and martial, chest thrust out, gave his body one shake, drew back into himself the hairs that held hawk and hounds, then strode with great paces straight in through the gate and sat down in the center, facing south.

The Red Boy knelt before him, bowing toward him and knocking his head: "Father King, your child salutes you."

"Rise, my child, no ceremony," said the Pilgrim. The demon king made four great obeisances, then stood at the lower hand.

"I sent for you, my child," said the Pilgrim. "What is the matter?"

The demon king bowed and said: "Your child, though lacking in talent, captured a man yesterday—a monk of the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land. I have often heard it said that he is a man who has cultivated the Way through ten lifetimes, and that whoever eats a piece of his flesh will live as long as the ageless immortals of Penglai and Yingzhou. Your foolish son dared not eat him alone, but has especially invited Father King to share the Tang monk's flesh with me, and lengthen your years by a thousand spans."

At this the Pilgrim gave a start of alarm. "My child—which Tang monk?"

"The one journeying to the Western Heaven for scriptures."

"My child—not the Pilgrim Sun's master?"

"The very one."

The Pilgrim waved his hands and shook his head. "Don't meddle with him! Don't meddle with him! Others might be meddled with, but this Pilgrim Sun is another sort altogether. Have you never met him, my worthy son? That monkey's magic is vast, his transformations past counting. He once made havoc in the Heavenly Palace; the Jade Emperor sent a hundred thousand celestial soldiers and spread the nets of Heaven and the snares of Earth, and even so they could not catch him. How dare you eat his master! Send him back quickly, and don't provoke that monkey. If he learns you have eaten his master, he won't even come to fight you. He'll just ram that gold-banded cudgel of his through the mountainside, bore a hole, and scoop up the whole mountain in his two hands. And then, my child, where would you live, and whom would I lean on in my old age?"

The demon king said: "What talk is this, Father King—swelling another's spirit and quenching your own child's majesty! That Pilgrim Sun and his brothers, three in all, were escorting the Tang monk through the middle of my mountain when I played a transformation and carried off their master. He and that Zhu Bajie came hunting to my gate at once, spouting all that talk of kinship and old acquaintance. My wrath blazed to heaven; I fought him a few rounds—he was nothing out of the ordinary, I saw no brilliant strokes. Then that Zhu Bajie came slantwise in to help, and your child spewed out the samadhi true fire and burned them off in one bout. In a panic they went and asked the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas for rain, but it could not quench my samadhi true fire; I smoked one of them into a dead faint, and he hurriedly sent Zhu Bajie to invite the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea. So I changed into a false Guanyin, lured Zhu Bajie here, and he now hangs in my wish-fulfilling bag—I mean to steam him too, for my little ones to eat. This morning that Pilgrim came bawling at my gate again. I gave orders to seize him, and he was so frightened he dropped even his bundle and ran. Only then did I send for Father King, to come look at the Tang monk, alive and whole, before we steam him for you to eat—lengthening your years, immortal and unaging."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Ah, my worthy son! You know only that your samadhi fire can beat him—you don't know he has seventy-two transformations!"

"Let him change as he will," said the demon king, "I'll know him. He'd never dare enter my gate."

"My child," said the Pilgrim, "you may know him—but he won't change into anything big, like a wolf or an elephant; those might not fit through your gate. If he changes into something small, you'll have a hard time knowing him."

"Let him change into any small thing he likes," said the demon king. "At every gate I keep four or five little imps on guard—how could he get in?"

"You don't know," said the Pilgrim. "He can change into a fly, a mosquito, a flea, a bee, a butterfly, a little cicada, and the like; and he can change into my very likeness too—how would you know him then?"

"No matter," said the demon king. "Even with guts of iron and a heart of bronze he'd not dare come near my gate."

"Since you say so," replied the Pilgrim, "my worthy son has real skill of his own, quite able to best him—which is why you've asked me to eat Tang monk's flesh. But alas, today I'm not eating yet."

"Why not eat?" asked the demon king.

"I've grown old of late," said the Pilgrim, "and your mother is forever urging me to do some good deeds. I thought I had no way to do good—so I've taken up fasting."

"Is Father King fasting for life," asked the demon king, "or by the month?"

"Neither for life nor by the month," said the Pilgrim. "It's called the Thunder Fast—only four days in each month."

"Which four days?" asked the demon king.

"The three xin days and every sixth day," said the Pilgrim. "Today is a xin-you day: first, it's a fast day; and second, on a you day I receive no guests. Wait until tomorrow, and I'll come scrub him and steam him myself, and share him with you all."

Hearing this, the demon king thought to himself: "My father has lived on human flesh all his days, and he's past a thousand years old—how is it he's suddenly taken up fasting? Think of all the evil he did in the old days—would three or four days of fasting ever make that good? There's something false in this. Suspicious! Suspicious!"

He slipped out under the second gate, called the Six Mighty Generals, and questioned them: "Where did you invite your Old Great King from?"

"From the middle of the road," said the little imps.

"I said you came back too quick—so you never reached his home?"

"No, we never reached it."

"This is bad! He's put one over on you! That's not the Old Great King!"

The little imps all knelt down together: "Great King—you don't know your own father?"

"His looks and bearing are all right, but his talk isn't. I fear we've been taken in by a fake and he'll do us a mischief. Every one of you, be on your guard: those who can use knives, out of the sheath with them; those who can use spears, brighten the points; those who can use staves, use staves; those who can use ropes, use ropes. Let me go question him again and hear how he speaks. If it truly is the Old Great King, then never mind not eating today, or tomorrow—even a month's delay would be no matter! But if his words don't answer, the moment you hear my shout, all set to work together."

The host of monsters each received his orders.

The demon king turned back inside and bowed once more before the Pilgrim.

"My child," said the Pilgrim, "home is no place for ceremony—no more bowing. Whatever you have to say, say it."

The demon king prostrated himself and said: "Your foolish son has invited you, first, to offer you the Tang monk's flesh; and second, there is a matter on which I would consult you. The other day, strolling idly, I rode an auspicious light straight up into the ninth heaven, and there I suddenly met the patriarch Zhang of the Way of Lengthening Years."

"Do you mean Zhang the Daoist, the Heavenly Preceptor?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The very one," said the demon king.

"What did he have to say?" asked the Pilgrim.

"He saw that your child was well formed in every feature, all three stations equal, and he asked in what year, month, day, and hour I was born. Being young, I can't remember truly. The master is perfect in the art of the Five Planets reckoning, and wished to cast my fortunes. Now that I have invited Father King, it is just this I would ask. If ever I meet him again, I can trouble him to do the casting."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim, sitting up above, laughed inwardly: "What a monster! Since old Sun won the fruit of Buddha and took to protecting the Tang master, I've caught a fair few monsters on this road, but none so grasping as this fellow. Had he asked me about family matters—gossip of the long and the short, no rice, no firewood—I could have bandied any nonsense back. But now he asks the year, month, and day of my birth—how am I to know that?" What a Monkey King—he was cunning past all praise. Towering erect in the central seat, without one flicker of fear, his face all smiles, he laughed: "Rise, worthy son. I am grown old, and these days, with one thing and another weighing on my heart, I have clean forgotten the hour of your birth. Wait till tomorrow, when I go home and ask your mother—then we shall know."

The demon king said: "Father King is forever quoting my eight birth-characters, saying I have a life that will not age with Heaven itself. How could you forget them all at once today? There's no such thing! This must be a fake!"

With one fierce shout, the host of imps closed in with spear and blade and struck at the Pilgrim, head and face together.

The Great Sage caught them all on his gold-banded cudgel, showed his true form, and said to the demon: "Worthy son, this is ungrateful of you. Where else in the world does a son beat his own father?"

The demon king's face burned with shame; he dared not look up. The Pilgrim turned to golden light and walked out of the cave.

The little imps said: "Great King, the Pilgrim Sun has gone."

"Enough, enough, enough! Let him go! I've taken my beating at his hands. Shut the gate, have no words with him—just scrub the Tang monk down and steam him, and there's an end of it."

Now the Pilgrim came back from across the ravine, trailing his iron cudgel and laughing heartily.

The Sha Monk heard him, hurried out of the wood, and met him: "Brother, back at last after half a day! What's all this laughing—have you saved the master?"

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "though I haven't saved the master, old Sun has had the upper hand for once!"

"What upper hand?"

"It turns out Bajie was lured back by that monster in the shape of a false Guanyin, and now hangs in a leather bag. I was just plotting how to rescue him when the monster sent off what he called his Six Mighty Generals, to invite the Old Great King to come eat the master's flesh. Old Sun reasoned that the Old Great King must be the Bull Demon King, so I changed into his likeness and bluffed my way in, and sat down in the middle of the hall. He called me Father King, and I answered him; he knocked his head, and I took it straight—such sport! Truly the upper hand!"

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "you may relish these little advantages, but the master's life may not hold out."

"No fear. Let me go ask the Bodhisattva to come."

"But your waist still pains you."

"It doesn't pain me now. As the ancients said: joy makes the spirit brisk. Watch the luggage and the horse, and wait till I return."

"You've left a feud behind you—fear he'll harm the master. You must go quickly and come quickly."

"I'll be quick—no longer than it takes to eat a bowl of rice, and I'll be back."

What a Great Sage! As he spoke he slipped away from the Sha Monk, mounted the somersault cloud, and made straight for the Southern Sea. In midair, before half a watch had passed, he caught sight of Mount Potaraka's scenery. Presently he brought down his cloud, went straight to the Potaraka cliff, and was walking with grave and proper bearing when the Twenty-Four Protectors of the Four Quarters met him: "Great Sage, where are you bound?"

The Pilgrim returned their courtesy. "I would see the Bodhisattva."

"Wait a moment, while we announce you." Then the Protectors, among them the Mother of Devils, came outside the Tide Sound Cave and reported: "Bodhisattva, Sun Wukong has come to pay his respects."

At the report the Bodhisattva bade him enter. The Great Sage gathered his robe, gave himself to her command, and stepped steadily within; seeing the Bodhisattva, he cast himself down and worshipped.

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "why are you not escorting Golden Cicada westward to seek the scriptures? What brings you here?"

"I report to the Bodhisattva: your disciple was protecting the Tang monk on his way, and we came to a place called the Fire Cloud Cave in the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain. There a demon, the Red Boy, called the Great King Holy Infant, carried off my master. Your disciple and Zhu Wuneng hunted him to his gate and fought him; he let out his samadhi fire, and we could not prevail or save the master. I hastened to the Eastern Ocean, invited the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas to pour down rain, but even that could not conquer the fire—and your disciple was smoked half dead, and nearly lost his life."

"If he has the samadhi fire and magic so vast," said the Bodhisattva, "why did you go asking the Dragon Kings instead of coming to ask me?"

"I meant to come," said the Pilgrim, "but your disciple was smoked and could not ride the cloud, so I sent Zhu Bajie to invite the Bodhisattva."

"Wuneng never came," said the Bodhisattva.

"Just so," said the Pilgrim. "Before he ever reached your blessed mountain, the demon changed into the Bodhisattva's own likeness, lured Zhu Bajie into his cave, and now hangs him in a leather bag—meaning to steam and eat him too."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva's heart blazed with wrath. "That impudent demon—dare he change into my likeness!" With one cry of anger she flung the precious pearl-pure vase in her hand straight down into the heart of the sea. The Pilgrim's hair stood on end; he rose at once and stood in attendance below, thinking: "This Bodhisattva hasn't cooled her fiery temper. It must be my words went wrong and spoiled her virtue—there goes the pure vase flung away! A pity! A pity! Had I known, she might have given it to old Sun—wouldn't that have been a grand favor?" Before he could finish, out in the midst of the sea, waves rolled and leapt, and the vase came boring up out of the water—carried out on the back of a monster.

The Pilgrim looked closely at the monster bearing the vase. What was it like?

Its root and source is called the Bank-Crawler— A turtle, sole in glory bright beneath the waters. Long hidden, it knows the nature of Heaven and Earth; Safely lodged, it fathoms the workings of ghosts and gods. Drawn in, it hides itself, no head nor tail; Stretching forth its feet, it travels swifter than flight. King Wen, painting the trigrams, once used it in divination; It oft attended the court and terrace beside Fuxi.

Cloud-dragons glimmer through it, a thousand graces showing; It stirs the waters, pushing waves and blowing billows. Threads of gold line through to form its shell; Dots and speckles deck it like tinted tortoiseshell. The Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams wrap it as a robe; Scattered scales overlay it in glistering green. Living, it loved valor and won the Dragon King's favor; Dead, it bears the tablet of the Buddha's shrine. Would you know this creature's surname and name? A wicked turtle that rears the winds and waves.

The turtle bore the pure vase, crawled up the cliffside, and nodded twenty-four times to the Bodhisattva—counting for twenty-four obeisances. Seeing this, the Pilgrim laughed to himself: "So this is the vase-keeper. I suppose if the vase goes missing, he's the one they dun for it."

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "what are you muttering down there?"

"Nothing at all," said the Pilgrim.

The Bodhisattva ordered: "Bring up the vase." The Pilgrim went to take it—alas! It would not budge. It was just a dragonfly trying to shake a stone pillar: how could he stir it half a hair's breadth?

The Pilgrim stepped forward and knelt. "Bodhisattva, your disciple cannot lift it."

"You monkey," said the Bodhisattva, "you can only talk big. If you can't even lift the vase, how will you subdue demons and bind monsters?"

"To tell the Bodhisattva truly," said the Pilgrim, "ordinarily I could lift it—it's only today I can't. I must have taken such a beating from the demon that my strength is drained."

"Ordinarily it was an empty vase," said the Bodhisattva. "Now I have flung the pure vase into the sea, and in one brief while it has circled the Three Rivers and Five Lakes, the Eight Seas and Four Streams, all the springs and fountains and pools and caves, and borrowed a whole sea of water inside it. Where would you find the strength to shoulder a sea? That is why you cannot lift it."

The Pilgrim pressed his palms together. "Your disciple did not know." Then the Bodhisattva stepped forward, with her right hand lightly lifted the pure vase, and rested it on her left palm.

The turtle nodded its head and dove back under the water.

"So it's a housekeeping, vase-watching clodhopper!" said the Pilgrim.

The Bodhisattva took her seat. "Wukong, the sweet dew in this vase is not like the Dragon Kings' private rain: it can quench that demon's samadhi fire. I would send it with you—but you cannot carry it. I would send the Dragon Girl of Wealth with you—but yours is not a good heart; you do nothing but swindle folk. You see my Dragon Girl is beautiful, and the pure vase is a treasure—suppose you swindled them away, where would I find the leisure to go hunting you? You must leave something as pledge."

"Poor Bodhisattva—so suspicious!" said the Pilgrim. "Since your disciple took the gate of the Way, I've done nothing of that sort. You tell me to leave a pledge, but what have I to give? This cloth tunic I wear—your own venerable self gave it me. This tiger-skin kilt—what's it worth, a few coppers? This iron cudgel—I need it morning and evening to guard my life. Only this band on my head is gold; but then your venerable self fixed it on me with some trick, and it cannot come off. If you want a pledge, I'll gladly pledge this—recite the Band-Loosening Spell and take it off, and there's your pledge. Else, what have I to give?"

"How easy you make it!" said the Bodhisattva. "I want neither your clothes, nor your cudgel, nor your golden band. Just pull off one of those life-saving hairs behind your skull and give it me as pledge."

"This hair, too, your venerable self gave me," said the Pilgrim. "But pull out one, and the whole company of them may come unraveled—and then they couldn't save my life either."

The Bodhisattva cursed: "You monkey! You won't pull one hair—do you wonder I call you grasping even of wealth?"

The Bodhisattva—she too was over-suspicious," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Still, as they say: if not for the monk's sake, then for the Buddha's—by all means save my master from this one ordeal!"

Then, at ease and well pleased, the Bodhisattva came down from the lotus terrace; with cloudlike steps and wafting fragrance she mounted the stone cliff.

Only because the holy monk had met his bane, She would subdue the monster and bring him back. The Great Sage Sun, brimming with delight, invited Guanyin out of the Tide Sound immortal cave. All the great Protectors ranged themselves on Potaraka Rock.

The Bodhisattva said: "Wukong, cross the sea."

The Pilgrim bowed. "I beg the Bodhisattva to go first."

"You go first," said the Bodhisattva.

The Pilgrim knocked his head. "Your disciple dare not show off before the Bodhisattva. If I rode the somersault cloud, I'd be baring my body—I fear the Bodhisattva would blame me for disrespect."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva bade the Dragon Girl of Wealth go to the lotus pond, break off one petal of a lotus, and set it on the water below the rock; then she told the Pilgrim: "Get on that lotus petal, and I will ferry you across the sea."

The Pilgrim looked at it. "Bodhisattva, that petal is light and thin—how can it bear me up? If it tips over and I tumble in the water, won't it soak my tiger-skin kilt? The saltpeter will wash out—what shall I wear when the cold comes?"

The Bodhisattva commanded: "Get on and see!"

The Pilgrim dared not refuse; he took his life in his hands and leapt on.

It had looked light and little, but once he was aboard it was a good three parts bigger than a sea-going ship. The Pilgrim rejoiced: "Bodhisattva, it bears me!"

"Since it bears you," said the Bodhisattva, "why don't you cross?"

"There's no pole, no oar, no sail, no mast—how am I to cross?"

"You need none." She simply blew it open with one breath, drew it together with another, and then with one solid puff blew it across the bitter sea of the Southern Ocean, till he reached the farther shore.

The Pilgrim planted his feet on solid ground and laughed: "This Bodhisattva loves to show off her magic—bidding old Sun here and haling him there, all without spending a scrap of strength!"

The Bodhisattva instructed the host of Protectors to keep to their blessed isle, and bade the Dragon Girl of Wealth shut the cave door. Then she rose on an auspicious cloud, departed from Potaraka Rock, and on the far side called: "Where is Hui'an?"

Now Hui'an was the second son of Heavenly King Li, the Pagoda-Bearer; his common name was Muzha. He was the Bodhisattva's own initiated disciple, never leaving her side, and was called the Pilgrim Hui'an, Protector of the Dharma. At once he pressed his palms together and waited upon her command.

"Go quickly to the upper world," said the Bodhisattva, "see your father the King, and ask him to lend me the Heavenly Blades."

"How many does Master need?" asked Hui'an.

"The whole set."

Hui'an received the command, rode his cloud straight in through the South Gate of Heaven, came to the Cloud Tower Palace, and bowed to his father. The Heavenly King saw him and asked: "From where come you, my son?"

"Master has been invited by Sun Wukong to subdue a demon," said Muzha, "and sends your son to bow to you, Father King, and beg the loan of the Heavenly Blades."

The Heavenly King at once called Nezha to fetch thirty-six of the blades and hand them to Muzha.

Muzha said to Nezha: "Brother, go home and bow many times to our mother: my business is urgent—when I've delivered the blades I'll come kowtow."

Hurriedly they parted. He brought his auspicious light down and went straight to the Southern Sea, where he presented the blades with both hands to the Bodhisattva. She took them, flung them forth, recited a spell—and the blades turned into a thousand-leaf lotus terrace. The Bodhisattva leapt up and sat upright in its midst.

The Pilgrim, watching from the side, laughed inwardly: "This Bodhisattva is thrifty in her housekeeping. There in the lotus pond she has a five-colored precious lotus terrace, too dear to her heart to bring along—yet she goes borrowing from someone else!"

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "no more talk. Follow me."

Then they all mounted the clouds and left the sea.

The white parrot spread its wings and flew before them; the Great Sage Sun and Hui'an followed.

In a moment a mountain came in sight. "That is Hao Mountain," said the Pilgrim. "From here to the demon's gate is about four hundred li and more."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva commanded the auspicious cloud to halt, and on the mountaintop she recited the spell of the sacred syllable "Om"—and at once, from left and right of the mountain, out came a host of gods and spirits: the local deities and all the gods of the mountain, who came and knocked their heads beneath the Bodhisattva's precious lotus seat.

The Bodhisattva said: "Do not be alarmed. I have come today to seize this demon king. Sweep clean the ground round about—three hundred li in every direction; not one living creature may remain upon the earth. Send the young beasts from their dens and the fledglings from their holes up to the highest peaks, there to be safe."

The gods obeyed and withdrew. In a little while they came back to report. "Since all is clean," said the Bodhisattva, "return each to your shrine."

Then she tipped over the pure vase, and with a great rushing noise the water came pouring out, sounding like thunder. Truly:

It floods across the mountainheads and bursts the rocky walls. Flooding the mountainheads, it moves with the ocean's power; Bursting the rocky walls, it rolls like a boundless main. Black mist swells to the sky, all breath of water; Gray waves shadow the sun, shaking out cold light. Jade billows strike along the whole cliff's face; Golden lotuses grow over all the sea. The Bodhisattva spreads her demon-quelling power, And from her sleeve brings forth the Body-Binding Chan.

It turns into the immortal scenery of Potaraka, Each bit the very image of the Southern Sea. Graceful rushes thrust up, tender as udumbara flowers; Fragrant grasses spread open, fresh as patra leaves. A few stems of purple bamboo where parrots perch; Clusters of green pines where partridges clamor. Ten thousand folds of waves join on to all four wilds; One hears but wind roaring and water drowning the sky.

The Great Sage Sun saw it and praised her in his heart: "Truly a Bodhisattva of great mercy and compassion! If old Sun had magic like this, I'd tip the vase over the mountain and let the whole brood of creatures—bird, beast, serpent, and insect—look out for themselves!"

The Bodhisattva called: "Wukong, hold out your hand." The Pilgrim hastily drew back his sleeve and held out his left hand.

The Bodhisattva pulled up a willow twig, dipped it in the sweet dew, and wrote in his palm the character for "beguile." "Clench your fist," she bade him, "go quickly and challenge that demon to battle. Yield—never win. Flee before him back to me, and by my own magic power I shall take him."

The Pilgrim received the command, wheeled his cloud back, and came straight to the cave mouth—one hand a fist, the other his cudgel—shouting: "Monster! Open up!"

The little imps ran in again to report: "The Pilgrim Sun has come again!"

"Bar the gate tight!" said the demon king. "Pay him no heed!"

"Good son!" the Pilgrim shouted. "Turning your own father out of doors—and still you won't open!"

The imps reported again: "The Pilgrim Sun has worked round to the insults!" The demon king only said: "Ignore him!"

The Pilgrim called twice; the gate stayed shut; his fury blazed. He raised his iron cudgel and smashed a hole clean through the door.

The little imps tumbled over themselves inside in a panic: "The Pilgrim Sun has broken the door!"

Reported to several times, and now hearing the front gate smashed, the demon king leapt out in haste, leveled his long spear, and cursed the Pilgrim: "You monkey—you know neither rise nor fall! I let you take your little advantages, and not content, you come bullying me again! Breaking down my gate—what punishment does that deserve?"

"My son," said the Pilgrim, "driving your own father out the gate—what punishment does that deserve?"

The demon king burned with shame and wrath; he grasped his long spear and thrust at the Pilgrim's chest. The Pilgrim raised his iron cudgel, parrying and returning. Once they had closed, they fought four or five rounds; then the Pilgrim clenched his fist, trailed his cudgel, and broke off in defeat.

The demon king stood before the mountain: "I'm off to scrub the Tang monk!"

"Good son—Heaven is watching you! Come on!"

At this the demon's wrath redoubled; with a shout he charged up and thrust again with his spear. The Pilgrim wheeled his cudgel, fought a few more rounds, and fled once more, beaten.

The monkey," cursed the demon king, "you had the strength for twenty or thirty rounds before—why do you run off in mid-fight now? What's the matter?"

"Worthy son," said the Pilgrim with a laugh, "your father fears your fire."

"No fire this time. Come up, then!"

"If there's no fire, stand off a little. A real man doesn't beat people at his own front door."

The demon, unaware of the trick, truly raised his spear and gave chase again. The Pilgrim trailed his cudgel and let his fist hang open; the demon king, spell-bound, pursued him for very eagerness.

The one fleeing went like a shooting star crossing the sky; the one pursuing like a crossbow bolt off the string.

In a moment they came in sight of the Bodhisattva. "Monster," said the Pilgrim, "I yield—I yield! Spare me! You've chased me all the way to the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea—why don't you turn back?"

The demon king would not believe it; gnashing his teeth, he only pressed the chase. The Pilgrim swayed his body and hid within the halo of the Bodhisattva's radiance.

The demon, finding the Pilgrim gone, drew near, rounded his eyes, and said to the Bodhisattva: "Are you the rescue troops the Pilgrim Sun has invited?"

The Bodhisattva did not answer.

The demon king twirled his long spear and barked: "Ha! Are you the rescue troops the Pilgrim Sun has invited?"

The Bodhisattva still did not answer. The demon aimed his spear at her heart and thrust. The Bodhisattva turned into a beam of golden light and went straight up into the ninth heaven.

The Pilgrim kept close at her side. "Bodhisattva, you do love to bully me! The demon asked you over and over—why did you play deaf and dumb, not daring to answer? One spear-thrust and off you flew, leaving even that lotus terrace behind!"

"Hush," said the Bodhisattva, "and watch what more he will do." By now the Pilgrim and Muzha stood together in the sky, shoulder to shoulder, watching.

They saw the demon laugh coldly: "Impudent monkey—you took me for someone else! Who does he take me, the Holy Infant, to be? He couldn't beat me time after time, so he went and invited some paste-pot of a Bodhisattva—one thrust of my spear, and she's fled without shape or shadow, leaving her precious lotus terrace behind. Well then—let me go up and sit in it a while."

What a demon! He too imitated the Bodhisattva, crossed his hands and crossed his feet, and sat down in the middle.

The Pilgrim, seeing it, cried: "Good! Good! Good! The lotus terrace makes a fine present!"

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "what are you saying now?"

"What am I saying? What am I saying? The lotus terrace has been given away! The monster's sitting on it under his backside—are you never going to want it back?"

"Just so—I want him to sit," said the Bodhisattva.

"His body is small and neat," said the Pilgrim. "He sits steadier than you do."

"Say no more—watch the power of the Dharma." She pointed her willow twig downward and cried: "Withdraw!" And at once the lotus terrace lost all its flowered splendor, its auspicious light all scattered—the demon king was sitting on the points of blades.

She then commanded Muzha: "Take your demon-quelling pestle and beat down the knife-hilts."

Muzha brought down his cloud, and with the demon-subduing pestle, as if tamping a wall, pounded a good thousand strokes and more. The demon—the blades ran clean through both legs and out again, blood flowed in pools, skin and flesh split open. What a monster! Watch him: gritting his teeth against the pain, he flung away the long spear and with both hands tore wildly at the blades.

"Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim, "the monster fears no pain—he's pulling out the knives!"

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva called Muzha up: "Do not harm his life." Then she let down her willow twig, pronounced the spell of "Om," and every one of the Heavenly Blades turned into barb-backed hooks like wolves' teeth, so that not one could be pulled out.

Now at last the demon panicked. Gripping the blade-points, he cried out in bitter pleading: "Bodhisattva! Your disciple has eyes but no pearls—he knew not your vast magic power. A thousand times I beg your mercy—spare my life! Never again shall I presume to do evil; I will enter the gate of the Law and keep the precepts."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva brought her golden light down—with the two pilgrims and the white parrot—to stand before the demon and asked: "Will you receive my precepts and practice?"

The demon king nodded, tears dropping. "If you spare my life, I will receive the precepts."

"Will you enter my gate?"

"If indeed you spare my life, I will enter the gate of the Law."

"Since it is so, I will tonse you and administer the precepts." From her sleeve she took a golden razor, drew near, and with a few strokes tonsured the monster's crown, shaving it into a "Mount Tai pressing on the head," but leaving three tufts of hair, which she tied up into three little horn-knots.

The Pilgrim laughed beside her: "This monster's luck has turned black! Neither man nor woman—who knows what he looks like now!"

"Since you have now received my precepts," said the Bodhisattva, "I shall not slight you. I shall call you the Boy of Wealth. How is that?"

The demon nodded and accepted, hoping only for his life. Then the Bodhisattva pointed her hand and cried: "Withdraw!" With a clatter the Heavenly Blades all dropped away into the dust, and the Boy's body was unharmed. The Bodhisattva called: "Hui'an, carry the blades back up to the Heavenly Palace and return them to your father the King. Do not come back for me—go first to Potaraka Rock and wait with the assembled Protectors." Muzha received the command, delivered the blades to the upper world, and returned to the sea—of that no more.

Now the Boy's wild nature was not yet settled. Finding that where his legs had pained there was no pain, where his seat had been split there was no split, and that his head bore three little knots, he strode off, snatched up his long spear, and cried to the Bodhisattva: "What true magic power of yours has subdued me? It was all a trick of stage-scenery! I'll take no precepts—taste my spear!" And he thrust the spear at her face.

The Pilgrim, seething, wheeled his iron cudgel to strike, but the Bodhisattva only cried: "Strike not! I have my own chastisement."

Again from her sleeve she brought out a golden band. "This treasure was given me by our Buddha the Tathagata, when he sent me to the East to find the scripture-seeker: three bands there were—Gold, Tight, and Stop. The Tightening band has already been put on your head; the Stopping band was used to take in the Great Spirit of the Mountain Guard. Only this Golden band have I never yet had the heart to bestow. But seeing this monster's insolence—let it be his."

What a Bodhisattva! She flourished the band in the wind, cried "Change!"—and it became five bands; she flung them at the Boy and shouted: "Bind!" One clasped his crown, two clasped his left and right hands, two clasped his left and right feet.

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "stand off a little, while I recite the Golden Band Spell."

The Pilgrim panicked: "Bodhisattva! We invited you here to subdue a demon—why do you recite a spell against me?"

"This spell is not the Band-Tightening Spell, for you," said the Bodhisattva. "It is the Golden Band Spell, for the Boy."

Only then was the Pilgrim's mind at ease, and he kept close at her side, listening to her recite. The Bodhisattva pinched the spell-fingers and silently recited it a few times over—and the demon wrung his ears, scrubbed his cheeks, hooved his feet, and rolled over and over. Truly:

One phrase can reach throughout the sands of worlds— Vast, boundless, deep the power of the Dharma.

But how the Boy came to take refuge—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 43

The Black River Demon Seizes the Monk and Bears Him Away; The Western Sea Dragon Prince Captures the Alligator and Brings Him Back

The story goes that the Bodhisattva recited the spell several times over, then ceased. The demon stopped hurting. He sat up and looked about himself: on his neck, his hands, and his feet were golden bands, clasping him so tight they pained him. He tried to pull the bands off, but he could not budge them a hair's breadth—these treasures had taken root in his very flesh; the more he rubbed, the more they hurt.

The Pilgrim laughed: "My dear little darling! The Bodhisattva was afraid you wouldn't grow up big and strong, so she put a neck-ring and bracelets on you."

Hearing this, the Boy's temper flared again. He snatched up his spear and thrust wildly at the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim dodged hastily, stepped behind the Bodhisattva, and called: "Recite the spell! Recite the spell!" The Bodhisattva dipped her willow twig in a drop of sweet dew, sprinkled it, and cried: "Clasp!" At once the Boy dropped his spear and pressed his two palms together before his chest, unable to open them again. To this day the gesture called "the Guanyin clasp" preserves this meaning.

The Boy could not open his hands or take up his spear; at last he knew that the power of the Dharma was deep and subtle. With no other recourse, he bowed his head and knelt.

The Bodhisattva recited the true words, tipped the pure vase, and drew back all that sea of water without leaving so much as a drop. Then she said to the Pilgrim: "Wukong, this demon is subdued, but his wild heart is not yet settled. I shall have him bow with every step, bowing all the way to Mount Potalaka, before I release the spell. Go quickly now to the cave and rescue your master!"

The Pilgrim turned and knocked his head. "I have troubled the Bodhisattva to come so far; your disciple should see you on your way a little."

"You need not see me off," said the Bodhisattva. "I fear it would delay your master's life." The Pilgrim heard this, rejoiced, and bowed his farewell. The demon had already entered the true fruit; his fifty-three obeisances, each bowing to Guanyin—to say no more of the good Bodhisattva taking in the Boy.

Now the Sha Monk had been sitting a long while in the forest, watching for the Pilgrim in vain. He slung the luggage on the horse, took his demon-quelling precious staff in one hand and the reins in the other, and stepped out of the pine wood to look south. There he saw the Pilgrim coming, brimming with joy.

The Sha Monk went to meet him: "Brother, why were you so long in inviting the Bodhisattva? You've worried me to death!"

"You're still dreaming!" said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun has already invited the Bodhisattva and subdued the monster." He then gave a full account of the Bodhisattva's magic power. The Sha Monk was overjoyed: "Let's go save the master!" The two of them leapt across the ravine, burst through the gate, tethered the horse, raised their weapons, and charged into the cave. They wiped out every last imp, untied the leather bag, and let Bajie out.

That idiot thanked the Pilgrim: "Brother, where's the monster? Let me go give him a few rakes and vent my spleen!"

"Let's find the master first," said the Pilgrim.

The three of them went straight to the back, and there was the master, stripped bare and bound in the courtyard, weeping. The Sha Monk hastily untied the ropes while the Pilgrim fetched clothes and dressed

him. The three knelt before him: "Master, you have suffered."

Tang Sanzang thanked them: "Worthy disciples, I am so much in your debt. How did you subdue the demon?" The Pilgrim again gave a full account of inviting the Bodhisattva and taking in the Boy. Sanzang heard it and at once knelt and bowed toward the south.

"No need to thank her," said the Pilgrim. "If anything, we did her a favor—she took in a boy." Now the tale of the Boy bowing to Guanyin, fifty-three obeisances, each obeisance seeing a Buddha—that is this very story.

He told the Sha Monk to gather the treasures in the cave, find rice and grain, and prepare a vegetarian meal to serve the master. That elder owed his life wholly to the Great Sage Sun; the fetching of the true scriptures relied on none other than the Handsome Monkey Spirit.

Master and disciples left the cave, mounted and took the high road, pressing westward with single heart.

After more than a month of travel, they suddenly heard the sound of water thundering in their ears. Sanzang started: "Disciples! Where is that water sound coming from?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You old master, you're too suspicious—you'll never make a monk. The four of us travel together, and you alone hear some water sound. Have you forgotten the Heart Sutra again?"

The Tang monk said: "The Heart Sutra was taught by the Nest Patriarch of the Pagoda on the Wutu Mountain, altogether fifty-four lines and two hundred and seventy characters. I received it by ear and still recite it to this day. Which line do you think I've forgotten?"

The Pilgrim said: "Old master, you've forgotten 'no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind.' We who have left the world—the eye does not see sights, the ear does not hear sounds, the nose does not smell scents, the tongue does not taste flavors, the body knows not cold or heat, the mind harbors no idle thoughts. This is what is called driving away the six thieves. But you, seeking scriptures, cling to every thought; you fear demons and will not risk your body; you crave food and move your tongue; you smell sweet scents and flare your nostrils; you hear a sound and startle your ears; you see a thing and fix your gaze—bringing all these six thieves crowding in. How will you ever reach the Western Heaven to see the Buddha?"

Sanzang heard this and fell silent in thought. Then he said: "Disciple, ever since I left the Sage Lord that year, I've toiled by day and night with tireless diligence. My straw sandals trampled through the mountain mists; my bamboo hat broke through the clouds on the ridges. In the still of night the gibbon's cry is piteous to hear; beneath the bright moon the birds' clamor is unbearable. When shall I fulfill the three-times-three practice and obtain the Tathagata's wondrous scriptures?" The Pilgrim heard this and could not help but clap his hands and laugh: "So the master is just homesick and can't quiet his heart! If you want to fulfill the three-times-three, what's so hard about that? As the saying goes: when the work is done, success comes of itself."

Bajie turned his head: "Brother, if the demons stay this fierce and the ordeals this high, we could walk a thousand years and never succeed!"

The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, you and I are the same—clumsy of mouth and dull of cheek. Don't provoke the Eldest Brother into a temper. Just shoulder the load and bear the burden; in time we'll surely succeed."

Master and disciples talked as they walked, their pace never flagging, the horse's hooves swift. Presently they saw ahead a river of black water surging to the sky, impossible to cross. The four travelers halted on the bank and looked carefully. Just look at it:

Layer upon layer of heavy waves, fold upon fold of murky billows. Layer upon layer of heavy waves rolling up black flood; Fold upon fold of murky billows churning with black oil. Up close, no human reflection shows; Far off, no shape of tree can be found. Rolling, a whole plain of ink; Surging, a thousand li of gray. Water foam floats by like heaps of charcoal; Wave crests fly up like overturning coal.

Cattle and sheep will not drink from it; crows and magpies can scarce fly over it. Cattle and sheep will not drink—they shun the deep black; Crows and magpies can scarce fly over—they fear the vast expanse. Only the reeds and rushes on the bank know the season; The flowers and grass on the strand vie in their green wonder.

Lakes and rivers are found the world over; streams and springs and marshes and caves abound in every land. Yet in every person's life, meetings come and go—who has ever seen such a Black Water River in the West!

The Tang monk dismounted: "Disciples, why is this water so black?"

Bajie said: "Someone's dumped their dye vat."

The Sha Monk said: "Not at all—someone's been washing their inkstone and brushes."

The Pilgrim said: "Enough of your wild guessing. Let's think of a way to get the master across."

Bajie said: "If it were old Pig going across, it would be easy enough—ride a cloud or wade carrying water, and in less time than it takes to eat a bowl of rice, I'd be over."

The Sha Monk said: "If it were old Sand, I'd just leap on a cloud and skim the water, and be over in an instant."

The Pilgrim said: "It's easy enough for us—the master is the problem."

Sanzang said: "Disciples, how wide is this river?"

Bajie said: "About ten li or so."

Sanzang said: "The three of you decide which of you will carry me across."

The Pilgrim said: "Bajie can carry you."

Bajie said: "I can't carry him well. If I carry him on a cloud, I can't get three feet off the ground—as the saying goes, a mortal on the back is heavy as a hill. If I carry him through the water, I'll drag us both under."

Master and disciples were still conferring on the riverbank when, from upstream, a man came rowing a little boat toward them.

The Tang monk rejoiced: "Disciples, a boat is coming. Call him over to ferry us."

The Sha Monk called out in a loud voice: "Boatman! Come ferry us! Come ferry us!"

The man in the boat called back: "This isn't a ferry boat—how can I ferry people?"

The Sha Monk said: "In Heaven and on Earth, convenience is the first virtue. You may not be a ferry boat, but we don't come troubling you often. We are scripture-seeking sons of Buddha, sent by imperial decree from the Eastern Land. Do us a favor—ferry us across, and we'll thank you."

Hearing this, the man rowed the boat close to the bank and rested on his oar: "Master, my boat is small and you are many. How can I ferry you all at once?"

Sanzang came forward and looked. The boat was carved from a single log, with only one hatchway amidships—room enough for two people to sit.

Sanzang said: "What's to be done?"

The Sha Monk said: "In that case, make two trips."

Bajie, scheming to shirk and be clever, said: "Wujing, you and Eldest Brother stay here and watch the luggage and horse. Let me escort the master across first, then come back for the horse. Let Eldest Brother leap across." The Pilgrim nodded: "What you say makes sense."

The idiot helped the Tang monk aboard. The boatman pushed off, raised his oar, and struck out into the current, heading straight across. They had barely reached midstream when a great crash rang out; waves rolled and leapt, blotting out the sky and blinding the eyes. That gale of wind was fearsome indeed! What a wind:

A sheet of cannon-cloud rises in the vault of heaven; A thousand tiers of black waves heave in mid-stream. Flying sand from both banks veils the sun; Trees topple all around, shaking the sky with their roaring. The river churns, the sea boils—dragon and spirit tremble; Earth scattered, dust spread—flowers and trees wither. It howls like the bellow of spring thunder; Gust after gust, fierce as a ravening tiger's roar. Crabs and turtles, fish and shrimp, all bow upstream; Birds and beasts lose nest and burrow. Boatmen of the Five Lakes all meet disaster; Families of the Four Seas lose hold of their lives. The fisherman in the creek cannot hold his hook; The boatman on the river cannot pole his skiff. Tiles ripped off, bricks overturned, houses toppled down— Heaven shaken, earth moved, Mount Tai itself doth rock!

This wind, in truth, was raised by the very boatman—he was a monster of the Black Water River. Before their eyes, the Tang monk and Zhu Bajie, boat and all, plunged into the water, without trace or shadow, carried off to who knows where.

On the bank, the Sha Monk and the Pilgrim were frantic: "What's to be done? The old master meets disaster at every step. He had just escaped the demon's clutches, and after this stretch of safe road, he runs into the Black Water River's calamity!"

The Sha Monk said: "Maybe the boat capsized. Let's go downstream and search."

The Pilgrim said: "It wasn't a capsize. If it had capsized, Bajie can swim—he'd have gotten the master out by now. I noticed that boatman didn't look right—must be the wretch who raised the wind and dragged the master underwater."

The Sha Monk heard this: "Brother, why didn't you say so sooner? You watch the horse and luggage here; let me go down and search."

The Pilgrim said: "The look of that water is wrong—I fear you can't go."

The Sha Monk said: "How does this water compare to my Flowing Sands River? I can go! I can go!"

What a monk! He stripped off his tunic, bound up his hands and feet, gripped his demon-quelling precious staff, and with a splash parted the water and dove in, striding forward through the waves. As he walked, he heard voices. The Sha Monk slipped to one side and stole a look: over there stood a pavilion, and above its gate was a horizontal placard bearing eight large characters: "Hengyang Valley, Black Water River God's Mansion."

He heard the monster sitting up above saying: "It's been hard work for a long while; today at last I've gotten my prize. This monk is a good man who has cultivated through ten lifetimes—if one can but eat a piece of his flesh, one becomes ageless and immortal. I've waited a long time for him; today my hopes are fulfilled."

He ordered: "Little ones! Bring out the iron cage and steam these two monks whole. Prepare an invitation and go ask my second uncle to come—I'll throw him a birthday banquet."

[Translator's note: "warm birthday"—an old custom of holding a celebratory feast on the eve of a birthday.]

The Sha Monk heard this and could no longer contain his fury. He whipped out his precious staff and battered the gate, shouting: "You filthy beast! Bring back my master, the Tang monk, and my brother Bajie—quickly!"

The monster's minions inside were terrified and ran to report: "Disaster!" The old monster asked: "What disaster?" The little demon said: "Outside there's a monk with a sallow, unlucky-looking face, battering the front gate and shouting for someone!"

Hearing this, the monster called for his armor. The little demons brought it out, and the old monster suited up, took up a bamboo-jointed steel whip, and strode out the gate—a truly vicious and poisonous sight. Just look:

Square face and round eyes, bright as sunset clouds; Rolling lip and gaping mouth, red as a blood basin. A few stiff iron-wire whiskers waving; Two temples of cinnabar-red tangled hair flying. Form like the manifested True Tai Sui; Face like the enraged fierce Thunder Duke. Body clad in iron armor blooming with figured flowers; Head crowned with a golden helm thick-set with jewels. Bamboo-jointed steel whip in hand; Where he walks, rolling gusts of wild wind. Born a creature of the waves; Shedding his origin, turned to evil change. Ask his true name and surname? His former self was called the Little Alligator Dragon.

The monster shouted: "Who's beating on my gate?"

The Sha Monk said: "You ignorant beast! You played a trick, turned yourself into a boatman, and used a boat to carry off my master. Hand him back at once, and I'll spare your life!"

The monster laughed: "Ha ha ha! You monk, you don't know life from death! Your master is my prisoner, and I'm about to steam him and invite a guest. You come up here and fight me. If you can stand three rounds, I'll give you back your master. If you can't stand three rounds, I'll steam and eat you too—and you can forget about the Western Heaven!"

The Sha Monk's fury blazed. He swung his precious staff and struck at the monster's head. The monster raised his steel whip and parried. The two of them fought beneath the water—what a battle!

Demon-quelling staff and bamboo whip—the two of them, enraged, each striving to be first. One is a thousand-year monster of the Black Water River; One is the former immortal from before the Lingxiao Hall. That one, greedy, would eat Sanzang's flesh; This one, pitiful, guards the Tang monk's life. Both come to fight beneath the water; Each wants to win, and neither will yield. They fight until the shrimp and fish shake their heads and hide in pairs; Crabs and turtles tuck their heads and dive in twos. You hear the demon host in the water palace beating drums; You hear the rabble of monsters at the gate howling and clamoring. What a true monk, Sha Wujing— Alone, single-handed, he flaunts his might! Leaping waves and churning billows, neither side prevails; Whip meets staff, parry meets thrust, locked in stalemate.

All for the Tang monk's sake, To seek the true scriptures and bow before the Buddha in Heaven.

The two fought thirty rounds with no sign of upper hand. The Sha Monk thought to himself: "This monster is my match—I won't win by force. Let me lure him out and have Eldest Brother beat him." The Sha Monk feinted, trailed his staff, and fled. The monster did not pursue. "Go on," he said. "I'm done fighting you. I've got invitations to write and guests to invite."

The Sha Monk emerged from the water, fuming, and met the Pilgrim: "Brother, that monster is outrageous."

The Pilgrim asked: "You were down a long time before coming up. What sort of monster is it? Did you find the master?"

The Sha Monk said: "Inside there's a pavilion. Above its gate is a placard with eight large characters: 'Hengyang Valley, Black Water River God's Mansion.' I hid to one side and heard him talking inside,

ordering the little ones to scrub the iron cage, meaning to steam the master and Bajie and invite his uncle for a birthday feast. I blazed with fury and went to batter the gate. The monster came out with a bamboo-jointed steel whip, and I fought him for a good while—about thirty rounds, no winner. I used a feint to lure him out, hoping you'd help. But the monster is sly—he didn't chase me; he just wanted to go back and write invitations. So I came up."

The Pilgrim said: "What sort of monster is it?"

The Sha Monk said: "He looks like a giant soft-shell turtle—or else an alligator dragon."

The Pilgrim said: "Who is his uncle, I wonder?"

Hardly had he spoken when from the bend downstream an old man came walking out, knelt at a distance, and called: "Great Sage, the River God of the Black Water River bows his head."

The Pilgrim said: "You wouldn't be that boatman monster, come to trick me again?"

The old man kowtowed, tears dripping: "Great Sage, I am no monster. I am the true god of this river. That demon came from the Western Sea in the fifth month of last year, riding the great spring tide to this place, and fought with me. I am old and frail; I could not match him. He seized my mansion—the Hengyang Valley Black Water River God's Mansion—and made it his dwelling, and he killed many of my water folk. I had no choice but to go to the sea and lodge a complaint. But it turned out that the Dragon King of the Western Sea is his maternal uncle. The King would not accept my suit and told me to let him stay. I wished to appeal to Heaven, but my office is lowly and small; I cannot reach the Jade Emperor. I heard that the Great Sage had come, so I came to pay my respects and seek your protection. I beg the Great Sage to help me avenge my wrongs!"

The Pilgrim heard this and said: "By this account, the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas are all at fault. He's carried off my master and my brother, and boasts he'll steam them and invite his uncle for a birthday feast. I was just about to take him, and here you come with the news. Very well—you stay here with the Sha Monk and keep watch. Let me go to the sea, seize that Dragon King first, and make him catch this monster."

The River God said: "I am deeply grateful for the Great Sage's great kindness!"

The Pilgrim mounted a cloud and went straight to the Western Sea. He stopped his somersault, pinched the water-repelling spell, and parted the waves. As he strode along, he ran into a black fish demon carrying a solid-gold invitation box on a tray, coming up from downstream, darting swift as an arrow or a shuttle. The Pilgrim met him face-to-face, whipped out his iron cudgel, and brought it down on the fish's head—pitiful! The brains burst out, the cheekbones split apart, and with a gurgle the body floated to the surface.

He opened the box and looked: inside was a invitation card reading: "Your foolish nephew Alligator Jie, bowing a hundred obeisances, presents this to the seat of his Second Uncle, the Venerable Ao. Greetings and thanks for your kind favor received aforetime. Today, having acquired two prizes—monks from the Eastern Land, truly rare things in this world—your nephew dares not keep them for himself. Knowing that your uncle's birthday is at hand, your nephew has prepared a humble feast to wish you a thousand years. I earnestly hope your carriage will speedily grace us—this is my request!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "The wretch has handed old Sun his own confession!"

He pocketed the card and went on. A patrolling sea yaksha caught sight of the Pilgrim, turned and darted into the Crystal Palace to report to the King: "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Grandfather Sun, has come!"

The Dragon King Ao Shun led his water folk out of the palace to welcome him: "Great Sage, please enter my humble palace and be seated. Let me serve you tea."

The Pilgrim said: "I haven't yet drunk your tea, but you've already drunk my wine!"

The Dragon King laughed: "Great Sage, you have long since taken refuge with the Buddha and abstain from meat and wine. When did you ever invite me to drink?"

The Pilgrim said: "Maybe you didn't go drinking, but you've landed yourself with the charge of drinking."

Ao Shun was startled: "Why would this little dragon be at fault?"

The Pilgrim drew the invitation card from his sleeve and handed it to the Dragon King. The Dragon King's soul flew from his body and his spirit scattered. He dropped to his knees and kowtowed: "Great Sage, forgive me! That wretch is my sister's ninth son. My sister's husband once erred in his rain and wind—he cut back the prescribed amount of rainfall—and the Heavenly Court issued a decree ordering the Minister Wei Zheng, a human official, to behead him in a dream. My sister had nowhere to live, so this little dragon brought her here and raised the boy to manhood. The year before last, my sister fell ill and died. The boy had nowhere to live, so I sent him to the Black Water River to cultivate his nature and practice the truth. I never expected him to commit such evil. This little dragon will send men at once to seize him."

The Pilgrim said: "How many fine sons does your sister have, and where do they all make trouble?"

The Dragon King said: "My sister has nine sons. The first eight are all good. The first, Little Yellow Dragon, dwells at the Huai River. The second, Little Black Dragon, dwells at the Ji River. The third, Green-Back Dragon, holds the Jiang River. The fourth, Red-Beard Dragon, guards the He River. The fifth, Toil Dragon, serves the Buddha by sounding the bell. The sixth, Steady Beast Dragon, serves the Spirit Officials by guarding the roof-ridge. The seventh, Jing-Zhong Dragon, guards the Heaven-Supporting Huabiao Pillar for the Jade Emperor. The eighth, Clam Dragon, serves at the Great Brother's place, stationed at the Great Mountain. This is the ninth, the Alligator Dragon. Being young and with no office, I only sent him last year to the Black Water River to cultivate his nature. When he proved himself, I would transfer him elsewhere. Who knew he would disobey my command and give offense to the Great Sage?"

The Pilgrim heard this and laughed: "How many brothers-in-law did your sister have?"

Ao Shun said: "She married but one—the Dragon King of the Jing River. He was beheaded years ago. My sister was widowed and lived here; the year before last she fell ill and died."

The Pilgrim said: "One husband, one wife—how did she produce so many mixed breeds?"

Ao Shun said: "This is precisely what is called: the dragon has nine sons, and each is different."

[Translator's note: a well-known Chinese proverb about the dragon's nine offspring, each with a different nature.]

The Pilgrim said: "I was just now in a temper, ready to take this invitation card as evidence and appeal to the Heavenly Court, charging you with colluding with monsters and seizing persons. But by what you say, it's that wretch who disobeyed your teaching. I'll let you off this once: first, for the sake of you brothers; second, the wretch is young and ignorant—you didn't know much about it. Quickly send men to seize him and rescue my master, and we'll settle the rest."

Ao Shun at once summoned Prince Mo'ang: "Quickly muster five hundred stalwart shrimp and fish soldiers, and capture the little alligator for his crimes!" On the other side, he arranged a banquet to make his apology to the Great Sage.

The Pilgrim said: "Dragon King, don't be so suspicious. Since we've talked it out and I've forgiven you, that's that. Why lay on a banquet? I must go back with your son right now: first, the old master is in peril; second, my brother is waiting."

The old dragon could not detain him, and a dragon girl came out bearing tea. The Pilgrim stood and drank one fragrant cup, took leave of the old dragon, and went with Mo'ang and his troops, departing the Western Sea.

They soon reached the Black Water River. The Pilgrim said: "Worthy Prince, catch the monster well—I'm going up on the bank."

Mo'ang said: "Great Sage, rest easy. Your little dragon prince will seize him and bring him before the Great Sage first, punish him for his crimes, and deliver the master up to you, before I dare take him back to the sea to see my father."

The Pilgrim bade him farewell cheerfully, pinched the water-repelling spell, leapt out of the waves, and came straight to the eastern cliff.

The Sha Monk and the River God met him: "Brother, when you left you went by air. How is it you return from within the river?"

The Pilgrim gave a full account of killing the fish demon, getting the invitation card, seeing the Dragon King, and coming back with the Prince and his troops. The Sha Monk was overjoyed. They all stood on the bank, waiting to receive the master—and of that no more.

Now Prince Mo'ang sent his guardsmen first to the monster's water mansion gate, to report to the demon: "The Dragon King of the Western Sea's Prince Mo'ang has come."

The monster was sitting when he heard that Mo'ang had come. His heart was full of doubt: "I sent the black fish demon with an invitation to my Second Uncle, and there's been no reply yet. Why doesn't my uncle come, but my cousin instead?" Even as he spoke, a patrolling little monster came to report: "Great King, there is a body of troops in the river, camped west of the mansion. The banner reads: 'Western Sea Crown Prince Mo'ang, Little Commander.'"

The monster said: "My cousin is a presumptuous one! I suppose my uncle couldn't come and sent him to the feast. But if he's come to feast, why bring troops and weary soldiers? Hm! I fear there's more to it."

He ordered: "Little ones, have my armor and steel whip ready—I may need them in a hurry. Let me go out and meet him and see how it is." The monster minions obeyed, each one rubbing his palms and flexing his muscles in readiness.

The Alligator Dragon came out the gate and saw a body of sea soldiers camped to the right. Just look:

Battle banners flutter with embroidered streamers; Painted halberds gleam like rosy dawn. Precious swords glow with brilliant light; Long spears wear tasseled flowers. Bows bent small as the crescent moon; Arrows planted like wolves' teeth. Great swords gleam and glitter; Short staves are hard and gritty. Whales and giant turtles, clams and oysters; Crabs and soft-shells, fish and shrimp. Great and small, all neatly ranked; Weapons clustered thick as hemp. But for the commander's word, Who would dare so much as chatter!

The Alligator Monster saw them and went straight to the camp gate, calling in a loud voice: "Cousin! Your little brother is here, waiting—come in, I pray."

A conch-shell camp patrol dashed to the command tent: "Report to His Highness the Crown Prince: the Alligator Dragon is outside, asking to see you."

The Prince adjusted the golden helm on his head, tightened the precious belt at his waist, gripped a three-edged mace, strode out of camp, and said: "You wanted to see me—what about?"

The Alligator Dragon bowed and said: "Little brother sent an invitation this morning to my uncle. I suppose my uncle thought too little of me and sent you, Cousin, instead. But if you've come to the feast, why bring the

army and stir up the troops? Why not enter the mansion and rest, but camp here with armor and weapons—what does it mean?"

The Prince said: "What did you invite your uncle for?"

The monster said: "Little brother has long enjoyed my uncle's grace in letting me dwell here. It's been a long while since I saw his venerable face—I've not been able to show my filial piety. Yesterday I captured a monk from the Eastern Land. I hear he is a man who has cultivated through ten lifetimes—if one eats him, one can extend one's years. I wanted to invite my uncle to see him first, then put him in the iron cage and steam him, and throw my uncle a birthday banquet."

The Prince barked: "You blind fool! Do you know who that monk is?"

The monster said: "He's a monk from the Tang empire, going to the Western Heaven for scriptures."

The Prince said: "You know he's the Tang monk, but you don't know how powerful the disciples at his side are!"

The monster said: "He has one long-snouted monk called Zhu Bajie—I've caught him too, and I'll steam him with the Tang monk. There's another disciple called the Sha Monk—a dark fellow with a sallow, unlucky face, wielding a precious staff. Yesterday he came to my gate demanding his master, and I led out the river troops and beat him with my steel whip until he fled in defeat. He didn't seem so fearsome."

The Prince said: "So you don't know! He has a senior disciple, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, a High Immortal of the Great Monad who made havoc in the Heavenly Palace five hundred years ago! He now protects the Tang monk on his way to the Western Heaven to bow before the Buddha and seek the scriptures. The Bodhisattva Guanyin of Potaraka Rock, the Great Merciful and Compassionate One, converted him and gave him the name Sun Wukong the Pilgrim. How could you go and do such a thing, stirring up this disaster? He ran into your messenger in my sea, seized your invitation, and came straight into the Crystal Palace, charging me and my father with colluding with monsters and seizing persons. Quickly hand over the Tang monk and Bajie to the riverbank, return them to the Great Sage Sun, and let me make your apology. Then perhaps you may keep your life. If you say half a word of no—forget about living peacefully in this place!"

The Alligator Monster heard this and his fury flared: "You and I are own cousins, blood kin—yet you side with a stranger? By what you say, I should just hand the Tang monk over. There's no such easy thing under Heaven! You may be afraid of him, but am I? If he has the skill, let him come to my mansion gate and fight me three rounds. If I win, I'll give him his master. If he can't beat me, I'll take him too and steam the lot of them together. No guests, no invitations—just shut the gate, have the little ones sing and dance, and I'll sit up above and eat my fill at my ease!"

The Prince heard this and cursed: "You insolent wretch, truly beyond the pale! Never mind the Great Sage Sun fighting you—can you stand against me?"

The monster said: "If I'd be a man, what do I fear of a fight?" He called: "Bring my armor!" At his shout, the little demons gathered round him, presented his armor, and offered up his steel whip. The two of them changed their tune; each flaunted his valor. The command went out, drums rolled on every side. This battle was very different from the fight with the Sha Monk. Just look:

Banners blazing, halberds flashing light. On this side, the camp disperses its ranks; On that side, the mansion gates swing wide.

Prince Mo'ang wields his golden mace; The Alligator Monster whips his lash to parry. A cannon-crash—the river soldiers fierce; Three gongs—the sea warriors mad. Shrimp fights shrimp; crab battles crab. Whales and turtles swallow crimson carp; Bream and bass rouse yellow catfish. Sharks and mullet drive the anchovy fleet

to flight; Oysters pinching clams, the razor-fish panics. The needle-fish's spine is hard as an iron bar; The stingray's stinger is sharp as a blade. Flounders and soles chase the white eel; Bass and snapper hunt the black pomfret. The water monsters of one river vie for mastery; The dragon troops of two forces strive for victory. They clash at length; the waves roll on; Prince Mo'ang, a match for the Diamond Guardian, Shouts—and his golden mace comes crashing down, Seizing the Alligator Monster, that wicked king!

The Prince feinted with his three-edged mace, opening a gap. The monster, not knowing it was a trick, charged in. The Prince worked a maneuver and brought the mace down on the monster's right arm, staggering him; then darted forward, gave him a kick, and sent him sprawling.

The sea soldiers surged forward, threw him down, bound his hands behind his back with rope, threaded an iron chain through his collarbones, hauled him up on the bank, and brought him before the Pilgrim: "Great Sage, your little dragon prince has captured the alligator monster. We ask the Great Sage to judge him."

The Pilgrim and the Sha Monk saw him and said: "You wretch—you disobeyed your uncle's command! Your uncle placed you here to cultivate your nature and preserve your life, intending to transfer you elsewhere once you'd made a name. How dared you seize the River God's mansion, lord it with violence, scheme against your superiors, play a trick and swindle my master and brother? I'd like to give you one stroke of my cudgel—but old Sun's cudgel is very heavy; even a light tap would finish your life. Where have you put my master?"

The monster kowtowed without ceasing: "Great Sage, little Alligator did not know the Great Sage's great name. I went against my cousin, flaunted my strength and broke all reason, and my cousin captured me. Today I see the Great Sage and am blessed by the Great Sage's mercy in sparing my life—I am grateful beyond words. Your master is still bound in the water mansion. I beg the Great Sage to loose my iron chain and free my hands, so I may go into the river and bring him out."

Mo'ang, standing to one side, said: "Great Sage, this wretch is a rebel monster and deeply cunning. If you let him go, I fear he'll hatch some evil scheme."

The Sha Monk said: "I know the place. Let me go find the master." The two of them dove into the water and went straight to the mansion gate. The gates stood wide open, not a single guard in sight. They walked into the pavilion and found the Tang monk and Bajie, both stripped bare and bound there.

The Sha Monk quickly untied the master, and the River God untied Bajie. Each carried one on his back, up out of the water and to the bank.

Zhu Bajie saw the monster chained and bound on the side, whipped out his rake, and charged forward to strike, cursing: "You evil beast! Not eating me now, are you?"

The Pilgrim held him back: "Brother, let him off the death penalty for now—think of the worthy Ao Shun and his son."

Mo'ang bowed and said: "Great Sage, your little dragon prince dare not tarry. Since your master is rescued, I'll take this wretch to see my father. Though the Great Sage spares his death, my father will not spare his living punishment—there will be a reckoning, and I shall return to thank the Great Sage for his mercy."

The Pilgrim said: "Very well—take him. Give my regards to your father; I shall come thank him in person." The Prince took charge of the alligator monster, marched his sea troops back into the water, and returned to the Western Sea—of that no more.

Now the River God of the Black Water River thanked the Pilgrim: "I am deeply grateful for the Great Sage's grace in restoring my water mansion!"

The Tang monk said: "Disciples, we're still on the east bank. How do we cross this river?"

The River God said: "Do not worry, my lord. Please mount, and this little god will clear the way and guide my lord across." The master mounted the white horse, Bajie took the reins, the Sha Monk shouldered the luggage, and the Pilgrim Sun walked at his side. The River God worked a spell to dam the upstream flow, and in an instant the water below drained dry, opening a broad road. Master and disciples crossed to the west bank, thanked the River God, climbed the cliff, and took the road. Truly:

The meditation monk, delivered, comes to the Western Realm; Floor to the sky, waveless, they cross the Black River.

But how they fared in seeking the Buddha and the scriptures—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 44

The Dharma Body Comes to Chechi and Encounters the Powers; The Righteous Mind Passes the Spine-Ridge Gate of Evil

A poem says:

Seeking scriptures, escaping ordeals, they journey west; Countless famous mountains, and no end of rest. The hare runs, the crow flies, driving night and day; Birds cry, flowers fall, of themselves spring and autumn pass. In a speck of dust before the eye, three thousand worlds; At the tip of the monk's staff, four hundred prefectures. Sleeping by water, dining on wind, they climb the purple roads— Who knows which day they may turn their heads.

The story goes that Tang Sanzang, thanks to the Dragon Prince subduing the demon and the Black Water River God opening the road, had crossed the Black Water River with his disciples and found the high road, pressing ever westward.

Through wind and snow they pressed, beneath the moon and stars they traveled. After walking a good while, the season turned to early spring. The three yangs turned in their course, and all things shone with new life. The three yangs turning—a brightness opened across the sky like a painted scroll; all things shining—fragrant blossoms spread a brocade carpet over the earth.

A few last flakes of snow on the fading plum; A whole river of clouds in the swelling wheat. Ice loosening, mountain springs beginning to flow; All the sprouts emerging, hiding the old burn-marks. This was the season when Tai Hao rides the spring thunder, And Gou Mang, god of trees, takes his turn. Flowers fragrant, the wind warm; Clouds pale, the sunlight new. By the road, the willows open their green eyes; The sweet rain gives life to ten thousand forms of spring.

Master and disciples rode on, admiring the scenery, letting the horse go at an easy pace, when they suddenly heard a great shout—like the sound of tens of thousands of people crying out together. Sanzang's heart clenched with fear. He reined in his horse, unable to go forward, and turned his head in alarm: "Wukong! Where does that thundering sound come from?"

Bajie said: "It sounds like the earth splitting or a mountain collapsing."

The Sha Monk said: "Or like thunder and lightning."

Sanzang said: "It sounds more like men shouting and horses neighing."

The Pilgrim Sun laughed: "You're all guessing wrong. Wait—let old Sun see what it is."

What a Pilgrim! He sprang up and rode the clouds into the sky, opened his eyes and looked. Far off he saw a city. He peered closer: the light was auspicious, with no ominous haze about it.

The Pilgrim mused: "A good-looking place! Why such an ear-splitting noise? There are no banners flashing or weapons gleaming in the city, no cannon-crash—why does it sound like the clamor of men and horses?"

As he debated with himself, he saw that outside the city gate there was a stretch of sandy open ground, and a crowd of monks gathered there, hauling carts. The shouting was them all heaving together, crying "Great Mighty King Bodhisattva!" in unison—that was what had startled the Tang monk.

The Pilgrim gradually lowered his cloud to look. Ha! The carts were loaded with bricks, tiles, timber, and earthen blocks. The slope up the bank was the steepest part, and there was a narrow path over a spine-ridge with two great gates; the road below the gates ran along sheer cliff faces. How could they ever haul those carts up?

Though the weather was warm, the men were dressed in tattered rags, looking utterly wretched.

The Pilgrim wondered: "Maybe they're building a monastery. This land is rich and at peace—they probably can't find hired labor, so the monks are doing the work themselves."

He was still guessing when, from inside the city gate, two young Daoist priests came swaggering out. Just look at them:

Star-crowns on their heads, brocade on their bodies. Star-crowns gleaming bright; Brocade robes trailing rosy clouds. On their feet, cloud-tread shoes; At their waists, spun-silk sashes. Faces like the full moon—clever and handsome; Forms like the guests of the Jasper Heaven—fair and refined.

When the monks saw the Daoists coming, every one of them was seized with terror and redoubled his efforts, hauling frantically at the carts.

The Pilgrim understood at once: "Ha! I suppose these monks are afraid of the Daoists. Otherwise, why would they haul so desperately? I've heard people say that on the Western road there's a place that honors Daoists and oppresses monks—this must be it. I'd go back and tell the master, but the matter isn't clear yet, and I'd only invite his scolding. Surely a clever fellow like me can get to the bottom of it? Let me go down and ask."

Who did he go to ask? The Great Sage brought down his cloud, went to the foot of the city wall, shook his body, and changed into a wandering Daoist priest of the clouds-and-water school. He hung a water-and-fire basket on his left arm, tapped a fish drum, and sang a Daoist ballad. Approaching the gate, he met the two Daoists face-to-face and bowed: "Reverend Masters, this poor priest salutes you."

The Daoists returned the courtesy: "Where does the gentleman come from?"

The Pilgrim said:

"I wander at the edge of the sea, I roam to the end of the sky. Today I come to this place, seeking kindly folk to help me by. I ask you two reverend masters: which street in this city loves the Way? Which alley honors the sage? This poor priest would go beg a meal."

The Daoists laughed: "What a dismal thing to say, sir!"

The Pilgrim said: "What's dismal about it?"

The Daoists said: "You want to go begging for a meal—isn't that dismal?"

The Pilgrim said: "We who have left the world live by begging. If I don't beg for food, where would I get money to buy any?"

The Daoists laughed: "You're from afar and don't know the affairs of our city. In this city, to say nothing of the civil and military officials who love the Way, or the rich folk and elders who honor the sage, or the great and small, men and women, who see us and invite us to receive their offerings—all that's not worth mentioning. The very first and foremost is our sovereign lord the King, who loves the Way and honors the sage."

The Pilgrim said: "This poor priest is young and newly come from afar; I truly don't know. I trouble you two reverend masters to tell me in detail the name of this place and the matter of the King loving the Way and honoring the sage—that would show the spirit of our shared faith."

The Daoists said: "This city is called the Kingdom of Chechi. On the throne in the precious hall, the King is kin to us."

The Pilgrim laughed: "I suppose a Daoist has become the Emperor?"

The Daoist said: "Not so. Twenty years ago, the people suffered a great drought—no rain from Heaven, no grain sprouting from the earth. High and low, from the ruler to the common folk, from the greatest house to the least, every family bathed and burned incense, every household prayed to Heaven for rain. They were at the very point of death when suddenly three deathless immortals descended from the sky and came to save the living."

The Pilgrim asked: "Who were these three immortals?"

The Daoists said: "They are our masters."

The Pilgrim said: "What are your masters' honored names?"

The Daoists said: "Our first master is called the Immortal Tiger Power; the second, the Immortal Deer Power; the third, the Immortal Antelope Power."

The Pilgrim asked: "How much magic do your three honored masters possess?"

The Daoists said: "Our masters can summon wind and call rain at the turn of a hand; turn water into oil, change stone into gold, as easily as turning around. With such powers, they can seize the transformations of Heaven and Earth, alter the subtleties of the stars and constellations. The ruler and ministers all revere them and have made them kin."

The Pilgrim said: "The Emperor is truly blessed. As the saying goes: skill moves the great lords. With such abilities, it's only right that they've been made kin. But I wonder—has this poor priest even the tiniest bit of fate, to meet your honored masters face to face?"

The Daoists laughed: "You want to see our masters? What's hard about that? We two are their closest disciples, and our masters love the Way and honor the sage. The moment they hear the word 'Way,' they come out the great gate to meet you. If we two introduce you, it's as easy as blowing away a speck of dust."

The Pilgrim made a deep bow: "Much obliged for the recommendation. Let us go in at once."

The Daoists said: "Wait just a moment. Have a seat here while we two attend to some business; then we'll go in with you."

The Pilgrim said: "We who have left the world have no ties or bounds, free and easy—what business could you have?"

The Daoist pointed at the monks on the sandy ground: "They're doing our house's work, and we fear they'll shirk. We'll go take a roll-call and come back."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Reverend Masters, you're mistaken! Monks and Daoists are all who have left the world. Why should they do work for us and submit to our roll-call?"

The Daoists said: "You don't know. When the great drought came that year, the monks prayed to Buddha on one side and the Daoists prayed to the Dipper on the other, both living on the court's grain. But those monks were useless—all their empty sutras accomplished nothing. Then our masters came and called the wind and summoned the rain, saving the people from their torment. The court was wroth and declared the monks worthless. The King tore down their temple gates, smashed their Buddha images, confiscated their ordination certificates, and would not let them return home. By imperial decree, they were given to our house as laborers, to be used as menservants. In our house, the one who tends the fire is a monk; the one who sweeps the floor is a monk; the one who props the door shut is a monk. Because there are still dwellings in the rear that haven't been finished, these monks are made to haul bricks and tiles and timber, to build the houses. We fear they'll play and shirk and not haul the carts, so we two were sent to check on them."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he seized the Daoist and wept: "I said I had no fate—truly no fate! I cannot see my honored masters' venerable faces!"

The Daoists said: "Why can't you see them?"

The Pilgrim said: "This poor priest wanders the world, first for his livelihood, and second to seek a kinsman."

The Daoists asked: "What kinsman do you have?"

The Pilgrim said: "I have an uncle who left home in his youth, shaved his head and became a monk. In the famine years, he too went out to beg. He hasn't come home in years. Mindful of my family's debt to him, I've come this way seeking him. I fear he may have been detained in some such place as this, unable to free himself—I don't know. How can I go in with you unless I find him and see his face?"

The Daoists said: "That's easy enough. We two will sit here. Just go to the sandy ground and take a roll for us—count off the five hundred names of the work-crew, that's all. See if your uncle is among them. If he is, we'll let him go, for the sake of our shared faith, and then we'll go into the city with you. How about it?"

The Pilgrim thanked them endlessly, made a long bow, bade them farewell, tapped his fish drum, and went straight to the sandy ground.

Past the two gates and down the spine-ridge path, the monks all knelt and kowtowed: "Grandfather! We haven't been shirking! All five hundred are here, not one missing, all pulling carts!"

The Pilgrim saw this and laughed to himself: "These monks have been beaten so badly by the Daoists that they kneel in terror at the sight of me, a false Daoist. If a real Daoist came, they'd drop dead on the spot." He waved his hand: "Don't kneel! Don't be afraid. I'm not the overseer—I've come to seek a kinsman."

Hearing the word "kinsman," the monks crowded around him, each one craning his neck, coughing and making noise, desperate to be recognized, saying: "Which one of us is his kin, I wonder?"

The Pilgrim looked them over for a while, then burst out laughing.

The monks said: "Grandfather, if you haven't found your kinsman, why are you laughing?"

The Pilgrim said: "Do you know what I'm laughing at? I'm laughing at you monks—you've no sense at all! Your parents bore you, and because your fate was blighted by the Hua Gai star, or because you were inauspicious to your father or mother, or because you were fated to have no siblings, they gave you up to leave the world and become monks. Why don't you honor the Three Jewels, revere the Buddha Dharma, go read the sutras and say the repentances? Instead you work as hired labor for Daoists, to be ordered about like slaves!"

The monks said: "Grandfather, you shame us! You must be from outside—you don't know how things stand here."

The Pilgrim said: "Indeed I'm from afar. I truly don't know what's so terrible here."

The monks said, weeping: "The ruler of this kingdom is biased and unjust. He loves only your sort, and he hates us sons of Buddha."

The Pilgrim said: "Why is that?"

The monks said: "Because three immortals came who could summon the wind and call the rain. They crushed us, beguiled the King, and had our temples torn down, our ordination certificates confiscated. He won't let us return home, nor let us serve in any other capacity—he's given us to the immortals' household as servants. The torment is unbearable! Whenever a wandering Daoist comes through, he's invited to court and given a reward. But if a monk comes, no matter from how near or far, he's seized and made to work for the

immortals' household."

The Pilgrim said: "I suppose those Daoists have some special magic that beguiled the King? Summoning wind and rain is just a minor side-door trick—how could it move the King's heart so?"

The monks said: "They can knead cinnabar and refine mercury, sit in meditation and preserve their spirit, turn water to oil, change stone to gold. Now they've raised a temple to the Three Pure Ones, and there, before Heaven and Earth, they read the scriptures and say repentances day and night, praying that the King may live ten thousand years without aging. That's what has bewitched the King's heart."

The Pilgrim said: "I see. Why don't you all just run away?"

The monks said: "Grandfather, we can't escape! The immortals got the King to issue a decree, and our portraits were painted and posted far and wide, all year round. This Kingdom of Chechi is vast—in every prefecture, county, village, and market town, there's a poster of a monk, inscribed in the King's own brush. Any official who catches a monk is promoted three ranks; any commoner who catches one gets fifty taels of silver. So we can't escape. And it's not just monks—even men with thinning hair or shaved heads have a hard time. The fast-runners are many, the spies are everywhere—no matter what, you can't get away. We have no choice but to suffer here."

The Pilgrim said: "In that case, why don't you just die and be done with it?"

The monks said: "Grandfather, some have died. All told, over two thousand monks have been caught and brought here. Unable to bear the torment, the agony, the cold, and the unfamiliar climate, six or seven hundred died; seven or eight hundred took their own lives. Only we five hundred couldn't die."

The Pilgrim said: "Why couldn't you die?"

The monks said: "The rope for hanging snapped; the knife for cutting wouldn't cut; those who threw themselves into the river bobbed up and wouldn't sink; those who took poison remained unharmed."

The Pilgrim said: "You're a lucky lot—Heaven has granted you long life!"

The monks said: "Grandfather! You're one word short—it's long suffering! We eat three meals a day—thin gruel of brown rice. At night we sleep on the sandy ground, exposed to the dew. The moment we close our eyes, a spirit comes to protect us."

The Pilgrim said: "Maybe you were exhausted and seeing ghosts?"

The monks said: "Not ghosts—the Six Dings and Six Jias and the Protectors of the Faith. They come every night to guard us. Whenever anyone wants to die, they protect him and won't let him."

The Pilgrim said: "These spirits have no sense! They should let you die early and rise to Heaven early—what's the point of protecting you?"

The monks said: "They counsel us in our dreams, telling us not to seek death, but to endure and wait for the holy monk of the Great Tang empire in the Eastern Land, a罗汉 [luóhàn] going west to fetch the scriptures. He has a disciple called the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, whose powers are vast, who upholds a loyal and righteous heart, who rights the wrongs of the world, aids the needy and the imperiled, and cares for the orphaned and the widowed. When he comes and shows his magic, he'll destroy the Daoists and restore honor to your Buddhist teaching."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he laughed inwardly: "Never mind old Sun's powers—the spirits have spread my name already!"

He hurried back, tapping his fish drum, bade farewell to the monks, and went straight to the city gate to find the Daoists.

The Daoists met him: "Sir, which one was your kinsman?"

The Pilgrim said: "All five hundred are my kin."

The two Daoists laughed: "How can you have so many kin?"

The Pilgrim said: "One hundred are my neighbors on the left; one hundred, my neighbors on the right; one hundred, my father's kin; one hundred, my mother's kin; one hundred, my friends. If you'll let all five hundred go, I'll go in with you. If not, I'm not going."

The Daoists said: "You must have some brain-fever, talking such nonsense. Those monks were given by the King himself. If we let even one or two go, we'd have to file a sickness report with our master, then file a death certificate—that's how complicated it is. Let them all go? Impossible! Impossible! Never mind that our house would have no servants—even the court would be angry. The King is always sending officers to inspect, or even coming in person to take the roll. How dare we let them go?"

The Pilgrim said: "You won't let them go?"

The Daoists said: "We won't!"

The Pilgrim asked three times, and his temper flared. He drew the iron cudgel from his ear, blew on it in the wind, and it grew to the thickness of a rice bowl. He gave it a flourish and brought it down on the Daoists' faces. Pitiful! The blow smashed their heads open, blood spattering, bodies falling, skin splitting, necks breaking, brains spilling!

The monks on the sand, seeing from afar that he'd killed the two Daoists, abandoned their carts and ran up: "Disaster! Disaster! He's killed the King's kin!"

The Pilgrim said: "Who is the King's kin?"

The monks ringed him round and said: "Their master doesn't bow to the King when he enters the court, nor take leave when he leaves—the court always calls him 'Royal Brother, the Elder先生 [xiānshēng].' How could you come here and make trouble like this? His disciples came out to supervise the work; it had nothing to do with you—how could you beat them to death? The immortals won't say you killed them; they'll say we, the overseers, killed them. What'll become of us? Come into the city with us and answer for the deaths."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Quiet, all of you! I'm no wandering Daoist—I've come to save you."

The monks said: "You've killed someone and gotten us in trouble, adding to our burden—how is that saving us?"

The Pilgrim said: "I am Sun Wukong the Pilgrim, disciple of the holy monk of the Great Tang empire, and I've come specially to save your lives."

The monks said: "No! No! We know what that Grandfather looks like."

The Pilgrim said: "You've never met him—how do you know him?"

The monks said: "In our dreams we often see an old man who calls himself the Golden Star of the Great White. He always instructs us, saying: 'Don't mistake the Sun Pilgrim's appearance.'"

The Pilgrim said: "What did he tell you about me?"

The monks said: "He said of the Great Sage:

Brow jutting, golden eyes flashing bright, Round head, hairy face, no cheeks to speak of. Buck teeth and pointed snout, a wayward temper, Looks stranger than the Thunder Duke. Wields the gold-banded iron cudgel, Once smashed open the gates of Heaven. Now he's turned righteous and guards the monk, Saving the world from every woe."

The Pilgrim heard this—both vexed and pleased. Pleased, that they'd spread his name! Vexed, that the old scoundrel was so free with his mouth, telling his true form to a pack of mortals!

He blurted out: "Gentlemen, you're right—I'm not the Sun Pilgrim. I'm his disciple, come here to practice making trouble for fun. The Sun Pilgrim isn't here—where is he?"

He pointed east with his hand. The monks all turned to look, and he showed his true form. Only then did the monks recognize him. One by one they bowed to the ground: "Grandfather! We are mortal flesh and mortal eyes; we didn't know it was you in disguise. We beg you to avenge us and lift our curse! Come into the city early and crush the evil and restore the true!"

The Pilgrim said: "Follow me." The monks pressed close behind him.

The Great Sage went to the sandy ground, used his magic to haul the carts over the two gates, through the spine-ridge path, hoisted them up, and smashed them to splinters. He flung the bricks, tiles, and timber down the slope, and shouted to the monks: "Scatter! Don't hang around me. Wait till I see the King tomorrow and destroy those Daoists!"

The monks said: "Grandfather! We dare not go far. If the authorities catch us and haul us back, we'll be punished and made to pay again—more trouble."

The Pilgrim said: "In that case, I'll give you a charm of protection." The Great Sage plucked a handful of hairs, chewed them to fragments, and gave a piece to each monk, instructing them: "Tuck it under the nail of your ring finger. Clench your fist and just walk. If no one tries to seize you, fine. If someone does, clench your fist tight and call out 'Great Sage Equal to Heaven,' and I'll come to protect you."

The monks said: "Grandfather, if we go far away and can't see you, and we call but you don't answer—what then?"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't you worry. Even at ten thousand li, you'll be safe."

Some bolder monks clenched their fists and softly called "Great Sage Equal to Heaven!"—and there stood a Thunder Duke before them, iron cudgel in hand. Even a host of a thousand men or ten thousand horses could not come near. When a hundred or more called at once, a hundred or more Great Sages stood guard. The monks kowtowed: "Grandfather! It really works!"

The Pilgrim further instructed: "When you call 'Hush,' they'll return to me." And truly, when they called "Hush!"—there was nothing but a hair under the fingernail. The monks rejoiced at their deliveral and scattered all at once.

The Pilgrim said: "Don't go too far. Listen for news from the city. When you see a proclamation summoning monks, come into the city and return my hairs."

The five hundred monks went east, west, walking, standing—scattered, and of them no more.

Now the Tang monk, waiting by the roadside for the Pilgrim's report and unable to wait any longer, told Zhu Bajie to lead the horse westward. They encountered some monks running along, and as they neared the city they saw the Pilgrim still there with a dozen or so monks who hadn't yet scattered.

Sanzang reined in his horse: "Wukong, you went to investigate a noise—why so long?"

The Pilgrim brought the dozen monks forward, bowed before the Tang monk's horse, and told the whole story. Sanzang was greatly alarmed: "If that's the case, what are we to do?"

The dozen monks said: "Do not worry, my lord. The Great Sage Grandfather Sun is a deity descended from Heaven, with vast powers—he will surely keep you safe. We are monks of Zhiyuan Monastery, built by imperial decree in this city. Because this monastery was built by the first King, the dynastic founder, and still holds his sacred image, it was not torn down—though every other temple in the city, great and small, was. We invite you to hurry into the city and take shelter at our humble temple. By tomorrow morning's court, the Great Sage will surely have a plan."

The Pilgrim said: "You speak sense. Very well—let's go into the city early." The elder dismounted and walked to the city gate. By now the sun was sinking westward.

They crossed the drawbridge and passed through three gates. In the streets, people seeing the monks of Zhiyuan Monastery leading a horse and carrying bundles all made way. Presently they reached the temple gate, where a great golden plaque hung high: "Zhiyuan Monastery, Built by Imperial Decree."

The monks pushed open the gate, passed through the Guardian Hall, and opened the main hall. Sanzang put on his cassock, bowed to the golden Buddha images, and then entered.

The monks called: "Caretaker!" An old monk came out, saw the Pilgrim, and bowed: "Grandfather! You've come?"

The Pilgrim said: "Which grandfather do you take me for, that you bow and call out like that?"

The old monk said: "I know you are Grandfather Sun, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. We see you in our dreams every night. The Golden Star of the Great White often comes to us in dreams, saying: 'Only when he comes will you keep your lives.' Today at last we see your face, and it's just as in the dream. Grandfather—thank Heaven you've come early! Another day or two, and we'd all be ghosts!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Up, up—there'll be an answer tomorrow." The monks prepared a vegetarian meal, which master and disciples ate, then swept the abbot's quarters clean, and they bedded down for the night.

At the second watch, the Great Sage Sun, with matters on his mind, could not sleep. He heard the sound of wind and percussion instruments somewhere. He quietly slipped up, dressed, and leapt into the sky to look. Directly to the south, lamps and candles blazed. He lowered his cloud to look closer—and there it was: a Daoist temple of the Three Pure Ones, where the priests were performing a star-warding rite. Just look:

A high hall in a numinous realm, a true hall in a blessed land. The high hall in a numinous realm—towering, grand as the isles of Penglai; The true hall in a blessed land—dimly pure as the Palace of Joyful Transformation. On both sides, Daoists played the reed pipe and the sheng; At the center, the high priest held up his jade tablet. They recited the Repentance to Dispel Disaster And lectured on the Dao De Jing. Several times they scattered dust and transmitted talismans; In turn, all prostrated themselves. Spells were spoken, water was sprinkled, writs were dispatched; Candle flames wavered and rose to the upper realm. They trod the Dipper and spread the constellations; Incense smoke pierced the clear sky. On the altar, fresh offerings were laid; On the table, a lavish feast was spread.

Before the hall door hung a couplet of yellow silk brocade, embroidered with twenty-two large characters:

"May rain fall and winds be fair— we pray the Heavenly Honored One's boundless Dharma; May rivers run clear and seas be peaceful— we beg His Majesty ten thousand years and more."

The Pilgrim saw three old Daoists in ceremonial robes—these must be the Immortals Tiger Power, Deer Power, and Antelope Power. Below them stood seven or eight hundred acolytes, beating drums, striking bells, tending incense, making proclamations, all ranged on either side.

The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "I'd like to go down and mix with them, but a single thread makes no string, a single hand makes no sound. Let me go back and get Bajie and the Sha Monk, and we'll all go have some fun."

He brought down his auspicious cloud and went straight to the abbot's quarters, where Bajie and the Sha Monk were sleeping foot to foot.

The Pilgrim first called Wujing. The Sha Monk woke up: "Brother, you haven't slept yet?"

The Pilgrim said: "Get up—I've got something for us to enjoy."

The Sha Monk said: "In the middle of the night, mouth dry and eyes heavy—what's to enjoy?"

The Pilgrim said: "There's a Three Pure Ones temple in this city. The Daoists are holding a rite, and the Three Pure Ones Hall is loaded with offerings: steamed buns the size of a bowl, baked cakes fifty or sixty catties each, platters of rice, fruits fresh and fine. Come and enjoy them with me!"

Zhu Bajie, half asleep, heard "good things to eat" and woke at once: "Brother, you're not taking me along?"

The Pilgrim said: "Brothers, if you want to eat, don't shout and holler and wake the master. Follow me." They threw on their clothes, slipped quietly out the door, mounted the clouds with the Pilgrim, and leapt into the sky.

The idiot saw the lamplight and wanted to dive right in. The Pilgrim held him back: "Not so fast—wait till they disperse, then we go down."

Bajie said: "They're just getting into it—why would they disperse?"

The Pilgrim said: "Let me work a little magic, and they'll scatter."

The Great Sage pinched the spell, muttered the incantation, sucked in a breath from the direction of the southeast, and blew it out—a gale of wind that swept straight into the Three Pure Ones Hall, knocking over the flower vases, candle stands, and the merit plaques on the walls. The lamps flickered out.

The Daoists were terrified. The Immortal Tiger Power said: "Disciples, disperse! This divine wind has blown out the lamps, candles, and incense flowers. Each of you go to bed. Tomorrow morning, rise early and recite a few extra scrolls of scripture to make up the count."

The Daoists all withdrew.

Then the Pilgrim led Bajie and the Sha Monk down from the clouds and into the Three Pure Ones Hall. The idiot, not caring whether things were raw or cooked, grabbed a baked cake and bit into it. The Pilgrim whipped out his cudgel and raised it to strike. Bajie snatched back his hand and dodged: "I haven't even tasted it yet, and you're already hitting!"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't be so coarse. Let's take our seats properly and then enjoy."

Bajie said: "Shameless! Stealing food and still wanting manners! If you'd been invited, what then?"

The Pilgrim said: "Who's the deity sitting up there?"

Bajie laughed: "Can't you even recognize the Three Pure Ones? What deity did you think?"

The Pilgrim said: "Which Three Pure Ones?"

Bajie said: "In the middle is the Celestial Venerable of Primordial Beginning; on the left, the Lord of Spiritual Treasure; on the right, Lord Lao Zi."

The Pilgrim said: "We'd better change into their likenesses, or we won't eat in peace."

The idiot, impatient and ravenous for the fragrant offerings, clambered onto the altar and with one thrust of his snout knocked Lord Lao Zi down: "Old fellow, you've sat long enough—let old Pig take a turn."

Bajie turned into Lord Lao Zi; the Pilgrim turned into the Celestial Venerable of Primordial Beginning; the Sha Monk turned into the Lord of Spiritual Treasure. The original images were all pushed to the floor.

As soon as they were seated, Bajie grabbed a big steamed bun and started eating. The Pilgrim said: "Not so fast!"

Bajie said: "Brother, I've changed into this form—what else am I waiting for?"

The Pilgrim said: "Brother, eating is a small thing, but leaking Heaven's secrets is a big one. Those sacred images are all lying on the floor. If some early-rising Daoist comes to ring the bell or sweep the floor and trips over one, won't the cat be out of the bag? Hide them somewhere."

Bajie said: "I don't know this place—I can't find my way. Where do I hide them?"

The Pilgrim said: "When I came in, there was a small door on the right. A foul stench came from inside—I suppose it's a place of, shall we say, the cycling of the five grains. Take them there."

The idiot, who was nothing if not strong, jumped down, hoisted the three sacred images onto his shoulders, and carried them out.

When he got there, he kicked the door open and saw it was a great privy. He laughed: "That Bimawen [Keeper of the Heavenly Horses]—what a mouth on him! He even gave the crapper a Daoist name: 'The Place of the Cycling of the Five Grains'!"

[Translator's note: "Bimawen" was the Pilgrim's old title in Heaven, which Bajie mockingly uses here.]

The idiot, still carrying them on his shoulders and not yet dropping them, muttered a prayer: "Three Pure Ones, Three Pure Ones, hear me well: I've come from far, an expert at crushing demons. I'd have enjoyed your offerings, but found no peace. Lend me your seats for a little while. You've sat long enough—take a turn in the privy. All your life you've enjoyed boundless blessings as a pure and clean Daoist; today you must sample something foul, and be a Heavenly Venerable of stinks!"

His prayer done, he gave a toss—and splashed up half an apron's worth of foul water. He climbed back to the hall.

The Pilgrim said: "Did you hide them well?"

Bajie said: "Hid them well enough. But I splashed up some water and dirtied my clothes—there's a bit of a stink. Don't be sickened."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Never mind. Come and enjoy. But I wonder if you'll be able to leave with a clean body." The idiot was still wearing the form of Lord Lao Zi.

The three of them sat down and feasted to their hearts' content. First the big steamed buns, then the platters, the side dishes, the pastries, the oven-fresh cakes, the fried fritters, the steamed buns—they ate without regard for hot or cold, stuffing themselves freely. The Pilgrim Sun, who didn't eat much cooked food, only had a few fruits to keep the other two company.

That meal was like a shooting star chasing the moon, a wind rolling away the scattered clouds—they ate everything bare. When there was nothing left, they still didn't leave, but lingered, chatting and joking to help the food settle.

Well! What should happen but this: in the east corridor, a young Daoist who had just fallen asleep suddenly sat up: "I left my hand-bell in the hall. If I lose it, my master will scold me tomorrow." He said to his

bunkmate: "You sleep—I'll go find it." In his hurry he didn't put on his underclothes, but just threw on a robe and went straight to the main hall to search for the bell.

He fumbled here and there, found the bell, and was about to turn back when he heard the sound of breathing. The Daoist was terrified. He stumbled toward the door to flee, but somehow he stepped on a lychee pit, slipped, and fell with a crash—smashing the bell to pieces.

Zhu Bajie couldn't hold back a hearty laugh. The little Daoist's three souls fled and his seven spirits scattered. Stumbling and falling at every step, he crashed back to the abbot's quarters behind the hall, beat on the door, and cried: "Master Grandfather! Disaster! Disaster!"

The three old Daoists hadn't yet gone to sleep. They opened the door: "What disaster?"

He stammered, trembling: "I lost my hand-bell and went to the hall to find it. I heard someone laughing out loud—I was scared half to death!"

The old Daoists at once called: "Bring lights! Let's see what evil thing is there!" The command went out, startling the Daoists in both corridors, great and small, who all scrambled up, lit lamps and torches, and went to the main hall to see.

What happened next—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 45

At the Three Pure Ones Temple, the Great Sage Leaves His Name; In the Kingdom of Chechi, the Monkey King Shows His Power

The story goes that the Great Sage Sun pinched the Sha Monk with his left hand and Zhu Bajie with his right. The two of them caught on at once. They sat up high with wooden faces, not saying a word, letting the Daoists light lamps and torches and search high and low. The three of them sat there as still as clay idols painted with gold.

The Immortal Tiger Power said: "If there's no intruder, how could the offerings all have been eaten?"

The Immortal Deer Power said: "It looks like the work of a human—everything with a skin has been peeled, every pit spat out—but where's the person?"

The Immortal Antelope Power said: "Brothers, don't doubt it. I think it must be that our devotion and reverence, reciting the scriptures day and night, sending up our memorials to Heaven—and with the court's name behind us—have surely moved the Heavenly Venerables. The Three Pure Ones' Grandfathers' chariots have descended, and they have enjoyed these offerings. Now while the immortals haven't yet returned and the crane-chariots are still here, let us pray to the Heavenly Venerables and beg for some holy water and golden elixir, to present to His Majesty. Wouldn't that be agelessness and long life—and show our merit too?"

The Immortal Tiger Power said: "Well said." He ordered: "Disciples, play the music and recite the scriptures! And bring out the ceremonial robes—I'll tread the Dipper and pray." The little Daoists obeyed, and the two rows of them lined up in neat order. The chime rang with a clear note, and they all recited a scroll of the "True Scripture of the Yellow Court and the Dao De."

The Immortal Tiger Power put on his ceremonial robe, took up his jade tablet, danced and scattered dust before the images, and prostrated himself, facing upward to make his petition:

"In sincere awe and trembling, we bow and take refuge. We, your ministers, have raised the teaching, gazing up to the pure void. We crushed the monks, coarse and low, and honored the Dao, bright and glorious. By decree we built the precious hall; by royal command we set the courts. Broadly we display our offerings; high we hang the dragon banners. All night we keep the candles burning; all day the incense breathes its fragrance. With one whole heart we reach above; with every inch of reverence we return. Now you have deigned to descend and not yet returned your chariot. We pray you grant us golden elixir and holy water, to present to the court, That His Majesty's life may equal the Southern Mountain."

Bajie heard this and grew nervous. He muttered to the Pilgrim: "This is our fault. We ate the food and didn't leave, and now they're praying—how do we answer?"

The Pilgrim pinched him again, then suddenly opened his mouth and called: "You junior lesser immortals—stop your praying! We've come from the Peach Banquet and didn't bring any golden elixir or holy water. Wait for another day, and we'll bestow some then."

When the Daoists, great and small, heard a voice come from above, they trembled in their robes: "Grandfathers! Living Heavenly Venerables descended to earth—don't let them go! By any means, beg a method of long life!"

The Immortal Deer Power stepped forward and again prayed: "Scattering dust, we bow our heads, with sincere hearts preparing our devotion. We, your humble ministers, give our lives, bowing to the Three Pure Ones. Since coming to this realm, we've raised the Dao and crushed the monks. The King's heart rejoices,

revering the mystic years. We hold the Great Rite of the Heaven of Luo, reading the scriptures through the night. Fortunate that the Heavenly Venerables did not forsake us, but descended in your chariots to this court. We bow and beg your mercy, gazing up for your grace and glory. You must leave some holy water for your disciples, to extend our years and grant us long life."

The Sha Monk pinched the Pilgrim and muttered: "Brother, they're pressing hard—praying again."

The Pilgrim said: "Give them some, then."

Bajie whispered: "Where is there any to give?"

The Pilgrim said: "Just watch me. When I have some, you'll all have some too."

The Daoists finished their music. The Pilgrim spoke: "You lesser immortals need not keep bowing. I would not leave you any holy water, but I fear it would extinguish your lineage. If I give you some, it would be too easy."

All the Daoists heard and bowed to the ground, kowtowing: "We beg the Heavenly Venerables, by their mercy, to bestow a little. We disciples will proclaim the Dao far and wide, and tell the King to honor the Mystic Gate."

The Pilgrim said: "Very well—bring vessels."

The Daoists all kowtowed and gave thanks. The Immortal Tiger Power, eager to be first, brought out a great vat and set it in the hall. The Immortal Deer Power carried a sand basin and placed it on the offering table. The Immortal Antelope Power plucked the flowers from a vase and moved it to the center.

The Pilgrim said: "All of you go outside the hall and shut the lattice door. Don't let the Heaven's secret leak—I'll leave you some holy water."

The Daoists all knelt in the courtyard below and shut the hall door.

The Pilgrim stood up, lifted his tiger-skin kilt, and relieved himself into the flower vase—filling it to the brim.

Zhu Bajie saw this and rejoiced: "Brother! In all these years as your brother, this is the one thing you haven't done to me. I just ate some things, and now I need to do the same!"

The idiot lifted his clothes, and with a rush like the cataracts of Lu Liang pouring down a hillside, he filled the sand basin to the brim. The Sha Monk filled half the vat. Then they straightened their clothes and sat properly up above, saying: "Little immortals, come receive the holy water."

The Daoists pushed open the lattice, kowtowed and gave thanks, hauled the vat out, gathered the vase and basin together, and said: "Disciple, bring a cup to taste."

A little Daoist brought a teacup and handed it to the old priest. The priest dipped a cup, took a sip, and kept smacking his lips and wiping his mouth.

The Immortal Deer Power said: "Brother, is it good?"

The old priest worked his mouth and said: "Not very good. It has a sour, rancid taste."

The Immortal Antelope Power said: "Let me taste." He drank a mouthful and said: "It has the stink of pig urine."

The Pilgrim, sitting up above, heard this and knew the game was up. He said: "Let me work a little magic and leave my name, at least." He called out:

"Daoist, Daoist, what wild thoughts you think! Which of the Three Pure Ones would descend to this mortal place? I'll tell you my true name: Monks of the Great Tang, sent by decree to the West. A fair night with nothing to do, we came down to your hall, Ate your offerings, sat and played. You bow to us—how should we answer? There is no holy water here! What you drank was all our piss!"

When the Daoists heard this, they blocked the door, and one and all they launched pitchforks, rakes, brooms, tiles, and stones—beating at the hall, head and face, without mercy.

The Pilgrim, with the Sha Monk under his left arm and Bajie under his right, dashed out the door, mounted an auspicious cloud, and flew straight back to the abbot's quarters of Zhiyuan Monastery. Not daring to wake the master, the three of them went back to sleep.

By the fifth watch, the third drum, the King held court. The two ranks of civil and military officials, four hundred courtiers, gathered. Red-gauze lamps blazed bright; precious incense-breath curled like clouds.

Tang Sanzang woke and called: "Disciples! Disciples! Attend me—I must go exchange my travel passport."

The Pilgrim, the Sha Monk, and Bajie rose quickly, dressed, and stood at attendance: "We tell the master: this muddled King trusts those Daoists and has raised the Dao and crushed the monks. I fear that if there's the least slip in our speech, he won't stamp the passport. We'll all go to court and protect the master."

The Tang monk was pleased. He put on his brocade-bordered cassock.

The Pilgrim carried the travel passport, the Sha Monk bore the alms bowl, and Bajie took the monk's staff. They left the luggage and horse in the care of the monks of Zhiyuan Monastery, went straight to the Phoenix Tower, bowed to the Yellow Gate officer, and reported their names: monks from the Great Tang empire, seeking the scriptures, come to exchange their travel passport—please transmit the request.

The gate officer went in, prostrated himself on the golden steps, and reported: "Outside are four monks who say they are scripture-seekers from the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land, come to exchange their travel passport. They now wait before the Phoenix Tower for Your Majesty's command."

The King heard this and said: "These monks have nowhere else to seek death—they come here to seek it! Patrol officers, why haven't you seized them and hauled them here?"

From the side stepped the Grand Preceptor of the Imperial Escort, who reported: "The Eastern Land of the Great Tang lies in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, known as the Great Central Nation. To come here is a journey of ten thousand li, and the road is full of monsters. These monks must have some magic power to dare come west. I beg Your Majesty, for the sake of a far-traveling monk of the Central Nation, to summon them, inspect their passport, and let them pass—so as not to lose the spirit of good affinity."

The King approved. The Tang monk and his disciples were summoned to the Golden Hall. Master and disciples lined up before the steps and presented the passport. The King had just opened it and begun to read when the Yellow Gate officer came again to report: "The three State Preceptors have arrived!"

The King hastily rolled up the passport, descended the dragon throne, ordered the attendants to set out embroidered stools, and bowed to greet them.

Sanzang and his disciples turned to look. They saw the three immortals swaggering in, followed by a pair of top-knotted, disheveled little boys. They walked straight in, and the two ranks of officials bowed their backs and bent their bodies, not daring to look up. The three immortals mounted to the Golden Hall and did not so much as bow to the King.

The King said: "State Preceptors, I did not invite you. What brings you to condescend today?"

The old Daoist said: "We have one matter to report, and so we came. Those four monks—from what land do they come?"

The King said: "They are from the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land, sent to the Western Heaven for scriptures, come here to exchange their passport."

The three Daoists clapped their hands and laughed: "We said he'd run off, but here he still is!"

The King was startled: "What do you mean, State Preceptors? They just reported their names. We were about to have them sent to you for your use, but the Grand Preceptor's words had merit, and for the sake of their long journey and the good affinity of the Central Nation, we summoned them to inspect their passport. We didn't expect you to ask about them. Have they offended your venerable presence in some way?"

The Daoists laughed: "Your Majesty doesn't know. They arrived yesterday. Outside the East Gate they killed two of our disciples, freed five hundred captive monks, smashed the carts, and at night broke into our temple, destroyed the sacred images of the Three Pure Ones, and stole the imperial offerings. We were taken in—we thought the Heavenly Venerables had descended, and we begged for holy water and golden elixir to present to Your Majesty, hoping for long life. But instead they left some urine to fool us. Each of us drank a mouthful, tasted it, and was about to seize them when they fled. And today they're still here—truly, the enemies' road is narrow!"

The King heard this and flew into a rage, meaning to execute the four.

The Great Sage Sun pressed his palms together and spoke in a loud voice: "Your Majesty, stay your thunderous wrath for a moment, and let these monks speak."

The King said: "You have offended the State Preceptors—the Preceptors' words could not be wrong!"

The Pilgrim said: "He says we went outside the city yesterday and killed two of his disciples. Who saw it? Who can testify? Let's say, for the sake of argument, that we did—send two monks to pay with their lives, and let the other two go on to seek the scriptures. He says we smashed the carts and freed the captive monks—again, no witness. At most that's not a capital crime; one monk can answer for it. He says we destroyed the Three Pure Ones and rioted in the temple—that's framing us."

The King said: "How is it framing you?"

The Pilgrim said: "We monks are from the Eastern Land, newly arrived here. We don't even know the streets yet—how would we know the affairs of his temple at night? If someone left urine, they should have been caught at once. Instead, he waits till now to name us. The world is full of people using false names—how does he know it was us? I beg Your Majesty to set aside anger and investigate."

The King, who was muddled to begin with, heard the Pilgrim's account and could not make up his mind.

While he was still doubting, the Yellow Gate officer came again to report: "Your Majesty, outside are many village elders, waiting to be summoned."

The King said: "What do they want?" He ordered them brought in.

They came before the hall—three or four dozen elders, who kowtowed and said: "Ten Thousand Years, there has been no rain this spring. We fear drought in the summer months. We have come to beg whichever State Preceptor Grandfather to pray for a sweet rain, to save the common people."

The King said: "Elders, withdraw. Rain will come." The elders thanked him and withdrew.

The King said: "Monks of the Tang, why do I honor the Dao and crush the monks? Because when we prayed for rain that year, the monks of our court could not get a single drop. It was the Heaven-sent State Preceptors

who saved us from torment. You come from afar and have offended the Preceptors. I should have punished you at once, but I will let it pass for now. Dare you compete with my State Preceptors in a rain-making contest? If you can pray down a sweet rain to save the people, I will pardon your crime, stamp your passport, and let you go west. If you cannot match them and no rain falls, I'll have you taken to the execution ground and beheaded as a warning to all."

The Pilgrim laughed: "This little monk knows a thing or two about praying."

The King ordered the altar ground prepared, and said: "Set out the royal carriage. I will go up to the Phoenix Tower and watch." The officials arranged the carriage, and the King mounted the tower and took his seat. Tang Sanzang stood below with the Pilgrim, the Sha Monk, and Bajie. The three Daoists sat with the King on the tower.

Presently, an officer galloped up on horseback: "The altar is fully prepared. We invite the State Preceptor Grandfather to mount the platform."

The Immortal Tiger Power rose, clasped his hands, took leave of the King, and came down from the tower.

The Pilgrim stepped forward and blocked his way: "Where are you going, sir?"

The immortal said: "To mount the altar and pray for rain."

The Pilgrim said: "You're too full of yourself—not giving way to a monk from afar. Well, as they say: a strong dragon doesn't oppress the local snake. You go first. But we must make the terms clear before the King."

The immortal said: "Make what clear?"

The Pilgrim said: "You and I both go up to pray for rain. When the rain comes, is it yours or mine? How do we know whose merit it is?"

The King, hearing this from above, was secretly pleased: "That little monk speaks with some backbone."

The Sha Monk heard and laughed inwardly: "He doesn't know what backbone this one has—he hasn't even shown it yet!"

The immortal said: "No need to say it—His Majesty will naturally know."

The Pilgrim said: "He may know, but I'm a monk from afar, and we've never met. If we start disputing afterward, each claiming the credit, that won't do. We must make it clear first."

The immortal said: "When I mount the altar, just watch my command tablet. One strike of the tablet—wind comes; two strikes—clouds rise; three strikes—thunder and lightning together; four strikes—rain falls; five strikes—clouds scatter, rain stops."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Excellent! This monk has never seen such a thing. Please! Please!"

The immortal strode forward, with Sanzang and the others following, to the gate of the altar. They looked up: there stood a high platform, about three zhang and more tall. On the left and right were planted the twenty-eight constellation banners. On top was a table bearing an incense burner; from the incense, smoke curled thick. On either side were two candle stands, the candles blazing. Beside the burner leaned a golden tablet, engraved with the names of the Thunder Gods.

Below were five great vats, all filled to the brim with clear water, on which floated willow twigs. On the willow twigs rested an iron tablet, inscribed with the talisman-characters of the Thunder Bureau. On either side were five great stakes, inscribed with the names of the Barbaric Thunder Envoys of the Five Quarters. By each stake stood two Daoists, each holding an iron hammer, ready to strike the stakes. Behind the

platform, many Daoists were writing up memorials and writs.

In the very center was a paper furnace, and there were several papier-mâché figures—the Talisman-Bearing Envoys and the Teaching-Assistant Deities of the Land.

The immortal walked in. Without the least modesty, he mounted the platform and took his stand. A little Daoist beside him brought several yellow-paper talismans and a precious sword, and handed them to the immortal. The immortal took the sword, recited a spell, and burned a talisman over a candle. Below, two or three Daoists took a talisman-bearing papier-mâché figure and a written memorial, and burned them as well.

From above came the crack of the command tablet—and in midair, a gentle wind came drifting in.

Zhu Bajie muttered: "Oh no! Oh no! That Daoist really does have skill! The tablet cracked once, and the wind blew!"

The Pilgrim said: "Brother, keep quiet. Don't any of you speak to me. Just protect the master. Let me go do my work."

The Great Sage plucked a single hair, blew on it with immortal breath, and cried: "Change!" It became a false Pilgrim, standing beside the Tang monk.

His true spirit left his body, darted into midair, and called out: "Who's in charge of the wind?"

The Wind Granny hastily clutched her wind-bag, and the Wind Lord Xun Erlang tied the mouth-rope, and both came forward to bow.

The Pilgrim said: "I am protecting the holy monk of the Great Tang on his way to the Western Heaven for scriptures. We are passing through the Kingdom of Chechi and having a rain-making contest with that Daoist fiend. Why do you help the Daoist instead of old Sun? I'll let you off this time. Gather the wind. If there is the least breath of wind—if even the Daoist's beard stirs—I'll give each of you twenty strokes of the iron rod!"

The Wind Granny said: "We wouldn't dare! We wouldn't dare!" And there was not a breath of wind.

Bajie couldn't hold back: "Hey, mister! Your tablet cracked, and where's the wind? Come down and let us go up!"

The Daoist burned another talisman and writ, and struck the tablet again. The sky filled with clouds and mist. The Great Sage called out from above: "Who's in charge of the clouds?"

The Cloud-Pushing Boy and the Mist-Spreading Gentleman hurried forward and bowed. The Pilgrim told them the same as before, and the Cloud Boy and the Mist Gentleman gathered the clouds and mist away. The sun blazed out, and the whole sky was clear for ten thousand li, without a wisp of cloud.

Bajie laughed: "This fellow is only good for fooling the King and putting off the people. No real skill at all! The tablet cracked twice, and not a cloud in sight!"

The Daoist grew agitated. He gripped the sword, loosened his hair, recited a spell, burned a talisman, and struck the tablet once more. From the South Gate of Heaven, the Heavenly Lord Deng led the Thunder Duke and the Lightning Mother into the sky, and they bowed to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim again told the whole story and said: "How did you come so eagerly? Whose command is this?"

The Heavenly Lord said: "That Daoist's Five-Thunder Magic is genuine. He sent up the memorials, burned the writs, and alarmed the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor issued a decree straight to the hall of the Nine-Heaven Primal Thunder Response. We came by decree to assist with lightning, thunder, and rain."

The Pilgrim said: "In that case, hold everything. Wait for old Sun to act." And indeed, the thunder did not clap, the lightning did not flash.

The Daoist grew ever more frantic. He added incense, burned talismans, recited spells, and struck the tablet again. In midair, the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas arrived in a body. The Pilgrim called out from above: "Ao Guang! Where are you going?"

Ao Guang, Ao Shun, Ao Qin, and Ao Run came forward and bowed. The Pilgrim again told the whole story and said: "I am grateful for your past help, though we didn't succeed then. Today's business—I hope for your assistance."

The Dragon Kings said: "We obey! We obey!"

The Pilgrim also thanked Ao Shun: "The other day I was grateful to your prince for binding the monster and saving my master."

The Dragon King said: "That wretch is still locked up in the sea. I didn't dare dispose of him on my own. I was just about to ask the Great Sage for his ruling."

The Pilgrim said: "Do with him as you see fit. For now, lend me your aid. The Daoist has struck his tablet four times—now it's old Sun's turn to go down and work. But I don't send up memorials or burn writs or strike command tablets. You gentlemen must help me out."

The Heavenly Lord Deng said: "Great Sage, who would dare disobey your command? But we need a signal to act on; otherwise, if thunder and rain come in confusion, it would make the Great Sage look bad."

The Pilgrim said: "I'll use my cudgel as the signal."

The Thunder Duke was startled: "Grandfather! We couldn't survive that cudgel!"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm not going to hit you. But when my cudgel points upward, you bring the wind." The Wind Granny and the Wind Lord agreed with one voice: "We'll send the wind!"

"When the cudgel points a second time, you spread the clouds." The Cloud-Pushing Boy and the Mist-Spreading Gentleman said: "We'll spread the clouds! We'll spread the clouds!"

"When the cudgel points a third time, you thunder and lightning." The Thunder Duke and the Lightning Mother said: "With pleasure! With pleasure!"

"When the cudgel points a fourth time, you rain." The Dragon Kings said: "We obey! We obey!"

"When the cudgel points a fifth time, you clear the sky to bright sun. Don't be late."

His orders given, the Pilgrim brought down his cloud, shook himself, and pulled the hair back into his body. Those mortals with their fleshly eyes—how could they tell?

The Pilgrim called out from the side: "Sir, you've had your four strikes of the tablet, and no wind, cloud, thunder, or rain. It's my turn now."

The Daoist, helpless, dared not linger, and came down from the platform to let him up. He went up to the tower with pursed lips to see the King.

The Pilgrim said: "Let me follow him and hear what he says."

They heard the King ask: "I listened with ready ear. You struck your tablet four times, and no wind or rain. Why?"

The Daoist said: "Today the dragon gods are all away from home."

The Pilgrim called out sharply: "Your Majesty, the dragon gods are all at home. It's only this State Preceptor's magic that doesn't work—he can't summon them. Let the monk summon them, and you'll see."

The King said: "Go mount the altar. I'll wait here for the rain."

The Pilgrim received the command, hurried back to the altar, and pulled the Tang monk forward: "Master, please mount the platform."

The Tang monk said: "Disciple, I don't know how to pray for rain."

Bajie laughed: "He's setting you up! If there's no rain, they'll pile firewood around you and burn you to cinders!"

The Pilgrim said: "You may not know how to pray for rain, but you do know how to recite sutras. Let me help you." The elder then stepped up onto the platform, sat upright, settled his nature and gathered his spirit, and silently recited the Heart Sutra.

As he sat, an officer galloped up on horseback: "You monk, why don't you strike the tablet or burn the writs?"

The Pilgrim called out in a loud voice: "No need! No need! We pray with quiet meditation." The officer went back to report—of that no more.

The Pilgrim heard his old master finish reciting the sutra, then drew the iron cudgel from his ear, gave it a flourish in the wind, and it grew to twelve feet long and bowl-thick. He pointed it at the sky. The Wind Granny saw it and hastily opened her leather bag; the Wind Lord Xun Erlang untied the mouth-rope. A howling wind rose, tearing tiles from the rooftops and hurling sand and stones through every street of the city.

What a wind! Truly different from the common kind. Just look:

It snaps willows, wounds flowers, fells forests, topples trees. In the ninefold palace, walls crack and crumble; On the Phoenix Tower, beams shake and pillars sway. The red sun at the sky's edge loses all its light; Yellow sand on the ground grows wings and flies. At the Drill Hall, the generals start; In the Writing Pavilion, the ministers quake. The ladies of the three palaces let fall their hair; The consorts of the six courts toss their topknots loose. Marquises' golden crowns lose their embroidered tassels; The Prime Minister's black hat spreads its wings and flies. The Imperial Escort would speak but dare not; The Yellow Gate officer holds his memorials with nowhere to present them. Golden fish and jade belts fall out of rank; Jade tablets and silk robes lose all precedence. Painted pavilions and emerald screens are all damaged; Green windows and red doors are battered and torn. Roof tiles fly, bricks scatter from the Golden Hall; The gate of the Brocade Cloud Hall tilts and shatters. This gale is fierce indeed— It blows so hard the King and his sons cannot meet; In every market and street, not a soul in sight; Ten thousand doors and a thousand gates—every one is shut tight!

As the great wind raged, the Pilgrim Sun again showed his power. He twirled his gold-banded cudgel and pointed it a second time at the sky. And there:

The Cloud-Pushing Boy, the Mist-Spreading Gentleman. The Cloud-Pushing Boy flaunts his might; Boulders of cloud boil up and hide the heavens. The Mist-Spreading Gentleman works his magic; Thick banks of mist fly and shroud the earth. The three markets grow dim and hazy; The six streets turn slowly dark. Born of the wind upon the sea, Following the rain from Mount Kunlun. In an instant it fills the sky; In a trice it veils the world of dust. Like chaos come again— You cannot see the Phoenix Tower's gate.

Now the mist hung thick and the clouds pressed heavy. The Pilgrim Sun twirled his gold-banded cudgel a third time and pointed it at the sky. And there:

The Thunder Duke in fury, the Lightning Mother in wrath. The Thunder Duke in fury rides his beast of fire backward down the heavenly gate; The Lightning Mother in wrath whips golden serpents loose from the Dipper's hall. With a crash, the thunderbolt shatters Iron-Fork Mountain; In sizzling flashes, red silk flies from the Eastern Sea. Rumble, rumble—like chariots rolling, unseen; Blaze on blaze—like rice grains scattering, bright. Ten thousand sprouts, ten thousand creatures, change their spirit; How many dormant insects have now awakened! On the tower above, the King and ministers quake; Merchants hear the sound and cower in fright. That deep thunder and flashing lightning, crashing and banging, seemed like the earth splitting and mountains collapsing. It frightened every household in the city into burning incense and paper money.

The Pilgrim Sun called out from below: "Old Deng! Watch carefully! Any officer who takes bribes and perverts the law, any son who is unfilial—strike a few extra dead, as a warning!"

The thunder crashed all the louder. The Pilgrim pointed his cudgel upward a fourth time. And there:

The dragons issue commands; rain floods the universe. Pouring like the Silver River spilling from the heavenly moat; Swift as clouds streaming past the ocean gate. At the tower, the sound of drip upon drip; Outside the window, the patter of rain upon rain. The Milky Way pours from the sky above; White waves roll through the streets below. Gurgling like water caught in a jar; Rolling like a basin poured out. A lonely hamlet is nearly flooded to the roof; The wild banks are almost level with the bridge. Truly, the mulberry fields become a sea; In an instant, the dry land rolls with waves. The dragon gods come to our aid, Lifting the Yangtze and pouring it down.

This rain began at the hour of Chen and fell until the hour of Wu, flooding the streets of Chechi City inside and out, the water covering every road.

The King issued a decree: "Enough rain! Enough! Any more and it will drown the crops—that would be worse."

An officer below the Phoenix Tower rode through the rain to report: "Holy Monk, enough rain."

The Pilgrim heard, and pointed his gold-banded cudgel upward once more. In an instant, the thunder ceased, the wind died, the rain scattered, and the clouds drew off.

The King was overjoyed. The civil and military officials all praised: "What a monk! Truly, there's always a stronger hand among the strong! Even our State Preceptor, when he prays for rain and it comes, if he wants it to clear, there's still a drizzle for half a day. But this monk clears the sky at will—bright sun in an instant, and not a cloud in ten thousand li!"

The King ordered the carriage brought round, to stamp the passport and send the Tang monk on his way. But just as he was applying the royal seal, the three Daoists stepped forward and blocked it: "Your Majesty, this rain was not the monk's doing at all. It was the power of our Daoist school."

The King said: "You just said the dragon gods were away from home and there was no rain. He went up, prayed in quiet meditation, and the rain fell. How can you dispute the credit now? Why?"

The Immortal Tiger Power said: "When I mounted the altar, I sent up the memorials, burned the writs, and struck the command tablet. How could the dragon gods not come? I think that in some other quarter, the five Bureaus of Wind, Cloud, Thunder, and Rain were all away. When they heard my command, they rushed to answer—just as I was coming down and he was going up, our paths crossed, and the rain fell then. Counting from the root, it's still the dragons I summoned who made the rain. How can it be counted as his merit?"

The King, muddled as ever, heard this and was again unsure.

The Pilgrim stepped forward, pressed his palms together, and reported: "Your Majesty, such side-door magic tricks don't count for merit—neither his nor mine. Right now, the four Dragon Kings of the Seas are still in the sky. I, the monk, haven't dismissed them yet, so they don't dare leave. If the State Preceptor can call them out and make them show themselves, then let the credit be his."

The King was overjoyed: "I have been emperor for twenty-three years and have never seen a living dragon. Let both of you show your power—monk or Daoist, whoever can call them out has the merit. Whoever cannot—the crime."

But how could the Daoist have such skill? He called and called, but the dragon gods, seeing the Great Sage present, dared not show their faces.

The Daoists said: "We cannot. You call them."

The Great Sage looked up at the sky and called in a loud voice: "Ao Guang! Where are you? Brothers, all of you—show your true forms and come see!"

The Dragon Kings heard the summons and at once showed their true bodies. Four dragons, in midair, wove through the mist and clouds, flying and dancing toward the Golden Hall. Just look:

Flying, transforming, coiling through mist and cloud. Jade claws curled white as hooks; Silver scales dance bright as mirrors. Beards float like white silk, every strand crisp; Horns rise proud and high, every inch clear. Brow jutting, towering; Round eyes flashing bright. Now seen, now hidden, beyond all guessing; Soaring, flying—beyond all praise. When prayer calls for rain, they bring the rain; When prayer calls for clear sky, the sky clears. These are the true dragon forms, numinous and holy; Auspicious light surrounds the hall.

The King burned incense on the tower. The officials bowed in the courtyard below.

The King said: "We thank your noble forms for descending. Please return. We shall hold a rite of thanks another day."

The Pilgrim said: "All you gods, return to your places. This King will hold a thanksgiving rite another day."

The Dragon Kings returned to the sea. The other gods all went back to Heaven. Truly:

Vast, boundless, the true wondrous Dharma— Perfect and real, it shatters the side-door sects.

But how they were to rid the evil—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 46

Heresy Shows Its Strength to Bullie the True Law; the Mind-Ape Reveals Its Sainthood and Destroys the Demons

The story continues: the king of the Kingdom of Chechi, seeing that Sun the Pilgrim had the power to summon dragons and command the sages, at once affixed his precious seal to the travel permit and was about to hand it to the Tang monk and let them go on their way west.

At this the three Daoists fell to their knees in terror before the throne in the Golden Chimes Hall and presented a memorial. The emperor came down from the dragon throne and raised them up with his own royal hands, saying: "State Preceptors, why do you perform this great ceremony today?"

The Daoists said: "Your Majesty, we came here to uphold the altars of state, to guard the kingdom and protect the people, and we have toiled through twenty bitter years. Today this monk has played his magic powers, snatched the credit away, and ruined our good name. Yet Your Majesty, for the sake of one fall of rain, would pardon the crime of murder—does that not make too little of us? We beg Your Majesty to hold back their travel permit for now, and let us two brothers have one more gamble with him, and see how it goes."

The king was a muddled soul indeed—turn east when the east side spoke, turn west when the west side spoke—and he truly took back the permit, saying: "State Preceptors, how will you gamble with him?"

The Immortal Tiger Power said: "I will gamble with him at sitting in meditation."

"State Preceptor, you are mistaken," said the king. "That monk comes of the school of Chan; he must surely have mastered the secrets of meditation before he dared accept the imperial mandate to fetch scriptures. How can you gamble with him at that?"

"Your Majesty," said the Immortal, "this sitting of mine is not the common sort. It has a special name: 'manifesting sainthood on the cloud ladder.'"

"What is 'manifesting sainthood on the cloud ladder'?" asked the king.

"One hundred tables," said the Immortal. "Fifty tables make one meditation platform, and they are stacked one upon another. No climbing up with hands, no mounting by ladder or stool—each contender rides a cloud up to his platform and sits there, and it is agreed that he must not stir for a certain number of double-hours."

The king saw that this was somewhat difficult, so he passed the word down and asked: "That monk—my State Preceptor wishes to gamble with you at cloud-ladder meditation. Can you do it?"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim pondered and made no answer.

"Brother, why don't you speak?" asked Bajie.

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "I'll not deceive you. If it's kicking up the sky and stirring the wells, churning seas and overturning rivers, carrying mountains and chasing the moon, swapping the Dipper and shifting the stars—all such clever feats I can do. Even hacking off heads, chopping brains, slicing open bellies and cutting out hearts, every kind of contortion—I fear none of it. But say 'sitting in meditation,' and I've lost. Where would I get the sitting nature? You could lock me to an iron post and I'd still be scrambling up and down it—don't imagine I could sit still."

Then Sanzang suddenly spoke up: "I can sit in meditation."

The Pilgrim rejoiced: "Perfect! Perfect! How long can you sit?"

"When I was young," said Sanzang, "I met a wandering Chan monk who expounded the Way to me. In the root of life and nature itself—settling the nature and preserving the spirit, there at the pass of life and death—I have sat two or three years at a stretch."

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "if you're going to sit two or three years, then let's not fetch the scriptures. The most will be two or three double-hours, and then we come down."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "the trouble is, I cannot get up there."

"Step forward and say yes," said the Pilgrim, "and I'll carry you up."

And indeed the elder pressed his palms together before his chest and said: "This poor monk can sit in meditation."

The king ordered the platforms set up. The kingdom had strength to topple mountains: in less than half a double-hour two platforms stood ready, one to the left and one to the right of the Golden Chimes Hall.

The Immortal Tiger Power came down from the hall, stood in the middle of the steps, sprang up, trod a wisp of cloud, and went straight up to sit on the western platform. The Pilgrim plucked one hair, changed it into a counterfeit of himself to stand below with Bajie and the Sha Monk, and then, riding an auspicious cloud of five colors, he lifted the Tang monk up into the air and set him sitting upon the eastern platform.

Then he gathered in the auspicious light, changed himself into a tiny gadfly, and flew to Bajie's ear. "Brother," he said, "keep a careful watch on Master, and don't answer anyone in old Sun's stead again."

The blockhead laughed: "Understood! Understood!"

Now the Immortal Deer Power had been sitting on his embroidered stool watching a long while, and since the two on their high platforms were still locked in a deadlock, he decided to lend his elder brother a hand: he plucked a short hair from the back of his head, twisted it into a pellet, and flicked it up into the air. It flew straight to the Tang monk's head, turned into a great bedbug, and bit fast onto the elder. At first the elder felt an itch, and then a pain.

Now the rule of sitting meditation allowed no moving of the hands—to move was to lose. The pain soon became unbearable, and he hunched up his head and rubbed the itch with the edge of his robe.

"It's bad!" cried Bajie. "Master's epilepsy has come on."

"No," said the Sha Monk. "It's his head-wind."

The Pilgrim heard them. "My master is a gentleman of truest sincerity. If he says he can sit in meditation, then he can sit; if he says he cannot, he cannot. Would a gentleman ever miss the mark? You two hold your tongues—let me go up and look."

What a Pilgrim! With one thin buzz he flew onto the Tang monk's head, and there he saw a bedbug the size of a bean biting his master. He quickly pinched it off and gave his master a soothing scratch here and there. The elder, no longer pained or itchy, sat erect upon the platform.

The Pilgrim thought to himself: "A monk's head is shaven bare—not even a louse could get a footing on it. How come a bedbug? It must be that Daoist playing his tricks to harm my master. Ha! Since neither side has won yet, let old Sun go play a trick on him!"

Off flew the Pilgrim, alighting on the head of one of the guardian beasts on the golden hall, shook himself, and changed into a centipede seven inches long. Straight he went and bit the Daoist in the hollow of his nose. The Daoist could not keep his seat—one somersault and he tumbled off the platform, very nearly losing his life. Luckily a host of officials, great and small, rescued him and carried him up. The king was greatly

alarmed and at once ordered the master of the imperial carriage to lead him off to the Hall of Literary Splendor to wash and compose himself.

The Pilgrim rode his auspicious cloud again and carried his master down before the steps—the elder had won.

The king could only order them let go, but the Immortal Deer Power memorialized again: "Your Majesty, my elder brother has always suffered from a hidden wind-illness. Climbing to such a height, he was exposed to the wind of heaven and his old ailment came upon him—that is why the monk won. Keep them a while longer, I beg, and let me gamble with him at the guessing game through the board."

"And what is this guessing game through the board?" asked the king.

"Poor Daoist though I am," said Deer Power, "I have the art of knowing objects through a board. Let us see whether that monk can match it. If he can outguess me, let him go; if he cannot, then let Your Majesty fix his crime as you see fit, and avenge us brothers, and our twenty years of guarding the kingdom will not have been shamed for nothing."

Truly that king was muddle-headed beyond all reason, and he heeded the slander. He at once gave orders that a vermilion-lacquered chest be carried into the palace and that the queen put some treasure in it.

Presently it was carried out and set down before the white jade steps, and the monks were told: "You two sides will match your powers: guess what treasure lies in the chest."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "how can anyone know what is in the chest?"

The Pilgrim gathered in his auspicious light, changed once more into the little gadfly, and settled on the Tang monk's head. "Master, don't worry—let me go take a look."

What a Great Sage! Gently he flew onto the chest and crawled down to its base, where he found a crack between the boards. He squeezed his way in and saw a red-lacquered tray, and on the tray a set of palace robes: the "Robe of Mountains and Rivers and the Altars of State," and the "Skirt of Heaven and Earth and the Geographies of the World."

He picked them up with his hands, crumpled them into a tangle, bit the tip of his tongue, spat a mouthful of blood upon them, and cried "Change!"—and they turned into a battered, tattered, run-down old cassock. And before leaving he sprinkled on a splash of his monkey piss; then he squeezed back out through the crack and flew to the Tang monk's ear. "Master, just guess it's a battered, tattered, run-down old cassock."

"He asked us to guess a treasure," said Sanzang. "What kind of treasure is a 'run-down old cassock'?"

"Never mind that," said the Pilgrim. "Just guess it, that's all."

The Tang monk stepped forward and was about to guess, when the Immortal Deer Power called out: "I'll guess first. In that chest are the Robe of Mountains and Rivers and the Altars of State, and the Skirt of Heaven and Earth and the Geographies of the World."

"No, no," said Sanzang. "In the chest is a battered, tattered, run-down old cassock."

"Insolent monk!" cried the king. "You dare mock my kingdom for having no treasure—guessing some 'run-down old cassock'! Seize him!" The two files of guards were about to lay hands on him, and the Tang monk, in a fright, pressed his palms together and cried aloud: "Your Majesty, grant this poor monk a moment's grace—let the chest be opened and looked into. If it is truly a treasure, I shall accept my punishment; but if it is not, would you not have wronged this poor monk?"

The king ordered it opened. The officer of the carriage opened it at once, and the tray was lifted out—and there, sure enough, was a battered, tattered, run-down old cassock.

The king flew into a rage: "Who put this thing in there?" From behind the dragon throne stepped the queen of the three palaces: "My lord, it was I myself, your humble consort, who placed the Robe of Mountains and Rivers and the Skirt of Heaven and Earth in the chest—I know not how it turned into this thing."

"Let my queen withdraw," said the king. "I understand now. What the palace uses is satin and silk, gauze and damask—there is no such thing as a 'run-down old cassock' in it. Bring the chest up. I shall hide a treasure in it with my own hands, and we shall try again."

The emperor went into the back palace, plucked from the immortal peach tree in the imperial garden a great peach as big as a bowl, laid it in the chest, and had it carried down for guessing again.

"Disciple," said the Tang monk, "they want us to guess again."

"Never fear," said the Pilgrim. "Let me go have another look."

With another thin buzz off he flew, squeezed in through the crack again, and saw it was a peach—just to his liking. At once he resumed his true form, sat down in the chest, and gnawed that peach clean away, clean down to both hollows of the cheeks, and set the pit neatly in the middle.

Then he turned back into the gadfly, flew out, and settled on the Tang monk's ear. "Master, just guess it's a peach pit."

"Disciple," said the elder, "don't play tricks on me. If I hadn't blurted out the truth just now, I'd have nearly gone to punishment. This time it had better be a treasure—what kind of treasure is a peach pit?"

"Don't be afraid," said the Pilgrim. "Just win, that's all."

Sanzang was about to speak when he heard the Immortal Antelope Power say: "I shall guess first: it is an immortal peach."

"It is not a peach," guessed Sanzang. "It is a bare peach pit."

"Nonsense!" shouted the king. "It was I myself who placed the immortal peach there—how could it be a pit? My Third State Preceptor has guessed right."

"Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "open it and see."

The officer carried it up and opened it, lifted out the tray—and sure enough, there was nothing but a pit, without rind or flesh.

The king saw it and his heart went cold with dread. "State Preceptors, no more gambling with them—let them go. The immortal peach I hid with my own hands is now nothing but a pit. Who ate it? There must be ghosts and spirits secretly helping them."

When Bajie heard this, he and the Sha Monk exchanged a quiet snicker: "And they don't know he's an old hand at eating peaches!"

Just then the Immortal Tiger Power came up to the hall, washed and combed at the Hall of Literary Splendor. "Your Majesty, that monk has the art of transporting and exchanging things. Bring up the chest—I will break his magic and have another guess with him."

"What will you guess now, State Preceptor?" asked the king.

"Magic can only substitute for objects," said Tiger Power, "but not for a living person. Let this Daoist novice be hidden inside—then see whether he can exchange him!"

And indeed the little novice was put into the chest, the lid shut, and it was carried down, with the command: "Guess again, monk. What treasure is it this third time?"

"Here we go again!" said Sanzang.

"Let me go take another look," said the Pilgrim. And with a buzz off he flew, squeezed inside, and saw a little Daoist novice.

What a Great Sage! He had resource indeed—such nimble trickery as his is rare under heaven, such quick wit scarce in all the world! He shook himself and changed into the very image of an old Daoist, went into the chest, and called: "Disciple."

The novice said: "Master, where did you come from?"

"I came by the art of escape," said the Pilgrim.

"And what instruction have you come to give me?" asked the novice.

"That monk saw you go into the chest," said the Pilgrim. "If he guesses 'a Daoist novice,' won't he win again? I have come especially to talk it over with you: let's shave your head, and we'll make them guess 'a monk.'"

"As Master pleases," said the novice, "so long as we win. If we lose to him again, it will not only lower our name—I fear the court will no longer hold us in honor."

"Well said. Come here, my son—win this one, and I'll reward you richly." He turned his gold-banded cudgel into a razor, gathered the boy into his arms, and cooed: "There, there—bear the sting, don't cry out, and let me shave your head."

In a moment the hair was shaved off; he wadded it into a ball and stuffed it into a corner of the chest. He put away the razor, patted the boy's bald head, and said: "My son, the head is monkish enough—only the clothes don't match. Take them off, and I'll change them for you."

The novice wore a crane-feather cloak of scallion-white figured silk with embroidered brocade borders. He took it off, and the Pilgrim blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!"—and it became a yellowish-brown monk's gown, which he put on him.

Then he plucked two more hairs, changed them into a wooden fish clapper, and pressed it into the boy's hand: "Now listen carefully, disciple. If they call 'Daoist novice,' on no account come out. But if they call 'monk,' you push up the lid, beat the wooden fish, and recite a scroll of Buddhist scripture as you crawl out—then the deed will be done."

"I only know the Scripture of the Three Officials, the Scripture of the Northern Dipper, and the Scripture of Dispelling Calamity," said the novice. "I don't know the Buddhist scriptures."

"Can you recite the Buddha's name?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Amituofo—who can't recite that?" said the boy.

"Good enough, good enough," said the Pilgrim. "Just recite the Buddha's name, and spare me teaching you. Remember now. I'm off."

He turned back into the gadfly, squeezed out, and flew to the rim of the Tang monk's ear. "Master, just guess it's a monk."

"This time he'll surely win," said Sanzang.

"How can you be so certain?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The scriptures say," replied Sanzang, "that Buddha, Law, and Monk are the Three Treasures. A monk too is a treasure."

Even as they spoke, the Immortal Tiger Power called out: "Your Majesty, the third time it is a Daoist novice." He called and called, but the boy would not come out.

Sanzang pressed his palms together: "It is a monk."

"It's a monk in the chest!" bawled Bajie at the top of his voice.

At that the novice pushed up the lid, beat the wooden fish, reciting the Buddha's name, and crawled out. The two benches of civil and military officials burst into cheers of delight; the three Daoists stood stricken dumb, unable to utter a word.

"That monk has ghosts and gods to help him!" cried the king. "How is it a Daoist went into the chest and came out a monk? Even if a barber had gone in with him, he could only have shaved the head—how could the clothes have been changed to fit, and the mouth taught to recite the Buddha's name? State Preceptors, let them go!"

"Your Majesty," said the Immortal Tiger Power, "we are, in the end, chess players evenly matched, a general meeting his equal. Let poor Daoist now stake the martial arts I learned as a boy on Mount Zhongnan, and gamble with him once and for all."

"What martial arts?" asked the king.

"We three brothers each have some powers," said Tiger Power. "We can have our heads cut off and put back on; we can be slit open, the heart cut out, and grow whole again; we can bathe in a cauldron of boiling oil."

The king was horrified: "All three of those are roads to death!"

"Only because we have such powers," said the Immortal, "do we dare speak such bold words. We are resolved to gamble with him till it's decided."

The king called out: "Monk of the Eastern Land, my State Preceptor will not let you go—he means to gamble with you at head-cutting and belly-slitting, and bathing in boiling oil!"

The Pilgrim, who had been buzzing to and fro as a gadfly carrying reports, heard this at once, gathered in his hair, resumed his true form, and roared with laughter: "A godsend! A godsend! Business has come to my door!"

"All three of those are ways to lose your life," said Bajie. "What do you mean, business at your door?"

"You still don't know my abilities," said the Pilgrim.

"Brother," said Bajie, "your changes and contortions would already be enough—but you have skills like these too?"

"Me?" said the Pilgrim.

"Cut off my head, I still can speak; Chop off my arms, I still can strike. Skewer my legs, I still can walk; Slit my belly—better yet, a marvel past compare! Like a housewife wrapping dumplings, one pinch and it's whole again. Bathing in an oil cauldron? Easier still— No more than a warm bath to wash off dirt and dust."

At this Bajie and the Sha Monk roared with laughter.

The Pilgrim stepped forward: "Your Majesty, this humble monk knows how to have his head cut off."

"How could you know how to have your head cut off?" asked the king.

"In my years of discipline in the monastery," said the Pilgrim, "I once met a wandering Chan monk who taught me the art of head-cutting. I don't know whether it's any good—let me try it out today and see."

The king laughed: "That monk is young and ignorant. Head-cutting is not something to 'try out'! The head is the chief of the six yang channels—once it's cut off, you die on the spot."

"Your Majesty," said Tiger Power, "that is exactly what we want—only so can we vent our spleen."

The muddled king believed him and at once gave orders to set up the execution ground. One command, and three thousand imperial guards ranked themselves outside the court gate.

The king said: "Monk, go first to be beheaded."

The Pilgrim answered cheerfully: "I'll go first! I'll go first!" With hands clasped he called out loudly: "State Preceptor, forgive my boldness in going ahead of you." Then he swung round his head and strode out.

The Tang monk caught him by the sleeve: "Disciple, be careful—that is no place for play."

"What's to fear?" said the Pilgrim. "Let go, and watch me go and come back."

The Great Sage walked straight into the execution ground, where the executioners seized him, trussed him into a bundle, and pressed him down on the high earthen mound. At the cry of "Strike!"—whish!—the head was struck off, and an executioner gave it a kick, and away it rolled like a watermelon, three or four dozen paces away.

Not a drop of blood came from the Pilgrim's trunk. One only heard a voice inside his belly calling: "Head, come here!"

The Immortal Deer Power, alarmed at such powers, hastily recited a spell and commanded the local deities of the ward: "Hold fast that head! When I have beaten the monk, I will memorialize the king to build your little shrine into a great temple, and your clay image shall be recast in solid gold."

Now those local deities, because he had mastered the Thunder Magic of the Five Thunders, obeyed his summons, and in secret they truly pinned down the Pilgrim's head.

Again the Pilgrim called: "Head, come here!" But the head seemed rooted fast—it would not budge. The Pilgrim grew impatient; he clenched his fists, gave one mighty heave, snapped every rope that bound him, and shouted: "Grow!" And—whish!—a head grew out of his trunk. The executioners were struck dumb with terror, and every one of the imperial guards shook in his boots. The supervising officer rushed into court and memorialized: "Long live the sovereign! The little monk had his head cut off, and he has grown another one!"

Bajie snickered: "Sha Monk, who knew our brother had tricks like that?"

"He has seventy-two transformations," said the Sha Monk, "so he has seventy-two heads."

Hardly were the words out when the Pilgrim came walking up, calling: "Master!"

The Tang monk was overjoyed: "Disciple, was it hard on you?"

"Not hard at all," said the Pilgrim. "Rather good fun."

"Brother," asked Bajie, "do you need any salve for the wound?"

"Just feel and see— is there any scar?" The blockhead reached out and touched, then laughed till his eyes stood staring: "Marvelous! Marvelous! Grown back as good as ever—not so much as a mark of the cut!"

While the brothers were all rejoicing, they heard the king call for the travel permit to be brought: "You are pardoned! Be off! Be off!"

"The permit we have received," said the Pilgrim, "but the State Preceptor must also go to the execution ground and have his head cut—a little trying-out of the new for him as well."

"Great State Preceptor," said the king, "that monk will not let you off either. You gambled with him—don't frighten me now."

Tiger Power had no choice but to go. The executioners threw him down and trussed him too; a flash of the blade, and his head was struck off, given a kick, and sent rolling some thirty paces. From his trunk came no blood either, and he too called out: "Head, come here!"

At once the Pilgrim plucked a hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!"—and it became a yellow dog, which ran into the arena, snatched up the Daoist's head in its jaws, trotted straight to the bank of the imperial river, dropped it in, and away.

Now the Daoist called three times, but the head did not come—and how could he match the Pilgrim's art and grow a new one? From his trunk the red gore spurted and bubbled. Pitiful indeed!

In vain he had the arts of summoning rain and calling the wind— How could they match the true immortal of the fruit of everlasting life?

In a moment he toppled into the dust, and when the crowd looked, there lay a yellow-haired tiger without a head.

The supervising officer came again to memorialize: "Long live the sovereign! The Great State Preceptor's head was cut off and could not grow back; he has died in the dust—and he is a yellow-haired tiger without a head!"

The king, hearing this, turned pale with horror, his eyes fixed unblinking on the two remaining Daoists.

The Immortal Deer Power rose: "My elder brother's fate and stipend had simply run out—but how could he be a yellow tiger! It is that scoundrelly monk playing his deceiving tricks, who has turned my brother into a beast! I will never forgive him now. I am determined to gamble with him at slitting the belly and cutting out the heart!"

At this the king pulled himself together and called again: "That monk! The Second State Preceptor wants another gamble with you."

"This humble monk has long gone without cooked food," said the Pilgrim. "Coming west the other day, I met a layman's household pressing food on me, and I ate a few too many steamed buns. These past days my belly has been aching—perhaps there are worms in it. I was just wishing to borrow Your Majesty's knife, open my belly, take out my innards, and give my spleen and stomach a good washing—then I can go up to the Western Heaven and see the Buddha."

Hearing this, the king gave orders: "Take him to the execution ground." And a great crowd came hauling and dragging him along.

The Pilgrim wrenched his arms free: "No need for anyone to haul me—I'll walk there myself. Only one thing: my hands must not be bound, for I need them to wash my innards."

The king sent down the command: "Do not bind his hands."

Swaying and swaggering, the Pilgrim walked straight into the execution ground, leaned his body against the great post, untied his sash, and bared his belly. The executioners looped one rope around his neck and bound

his legs with another; then, with a short ox-ear knife, one flourish, one slash beneath the belly—a hole was opened.

The Pilgrim spread open his belly with both hands, took out his own innards, and passed a long while sorting them through, one strip at a time; then he set them back inside, coiled them as they had been, pinched the belly together, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Grow!"—and it grew whole again.

The king was appalled. He took the travel permit in both hands and said: "Holy monk, do not delay your journey west—here is your permit; be off."

The Pilgrim laughed: "The permit is a small matter. Shouldn't the Second State Preceptor also have a little slitting and cutting, eh?"

The king turned to Deer Power: "This is none of my doing—you were the one who insisted on crossing him. Go, pray, go."

"Rest easy," said Deer Power. "I am certain I shall not lose to him."

And watch him: just like the Great Sage Sun, swaying and swaggering, he walked into the execution ground. The executioners roped him, and with a swish of the ox-ear knife they slit his belly open; he too took out his liver and innards and fondled them with his hands.

At once the Pilgrim plucked a hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!"—and it became a hungry eagle, which spread its wings and talons, swooped—whish!—and snatched away the whole of his five viscera and his heart and liver, and flew off who knows where to enjoy them. And the Daoist was left a dripping ghost with an empty trunk and a broken belly, a wandering soul without innards or guts. The executioners kicked down the great post and dragged the body over to look—why! It was a white-haired antlered deer!

The supervising officer rushed back in a panic to memorialize: "Long live the sovereign! The Second State Preceptor has met with misfortune. Just as his belly was opened, a hungry eagle snatched away all his viscera, liver, and innards. He is dead there—his true form was a white-haired antlered deer."

The king shook with fear: "How could he be an antlered deer?"

Then the Immortal Antelope Power memorialized: "My elder brother being dead, how could his beast form show itself? It is that monk working his magic arts to destroy us. Let me avenge my brothers!"

"And what power have you to beat him?" asked the king.

"I will gamble with him at bathing in a boiling-oil cauldron," said Antelope Power.

The king ordered a great cauldron brought and filled with fragrant oil, and told the two to gamble.

"Much obliged for the invitation," said the Pilgrim. "This humble monk has not had a bath for some time—these last few days my skin has been dry and itchy. A good hot soak is just what I need."

The officer of the carriage set up the cauldron, stacked the dry firewood beneath, lit a roaring blaze, brought the oil to a rolling boil, and bade the monk go down first.

The Pilgrim pressed his palms together: "A civil bath, or a military one?"

"What is a civil bath? What is a military one?" asked the king.

"In a civil bath, you keep your clothes on. Like this—with arms folded, down you go, one roll over, and up you come; and the clothes must not be stained—if there is so much as a spot of grease, you lose. In a military bath, you bring a clothes-rack and a towel, strip off, leap in, and turn somersaults and stand on your hands to

your heart's content, washing as you play."

The king asked Antelope Power: "Which will you have with him—civil or military?"

"Civil might be dangerous," said Antelope Power, "for his clothes may be treated with drugs that repel the oil. Let it be military."

The Pilgrim stepped forward once more: "Forgive my boldness in going first again."

Watch him: off with his cloth gown, off with his tiger-skin kilt; one spring, and he leapt into the cauldron, splashing and wallowing through the waves like a sporting porpoise.

When Bajie saw this, he bit his finger and said to the Sha Monk: "We did wrong to judge this monkey! All this time we've needled him and teased him for fun—who knew he had such genuine abilities!"

The two of them murmured together, praising him without end.

The Pilgrim caught sight of them and grew suspicious: "That blockhead is laughing at me! It's ever the way—the skillful toil while the clumsy idle. Here's old Sun dancing and plunging, and he takes his ease. Let me fix him up with a good scare."

So, right in the middle of his bath, he flicked a splash of oil, ducked down to the bottom of the cauldron, changed into a date-pit nail, and stayed there, never coming up.

The supervising officer came near and memorialized again: "Long live the sovereign! The little monk has been boiled to death in the oil!"

The king was overjoyed and ordered the bones fished up to be examined. The executioners took an iron strainer and scooped about in the cauldron—but the strainer's mesh was wide, and the Pilgrim had made himself a tiny nail, and to and fro he slipped through the holes and down again. How could they scoop him up?

Again the officer memorialized: "The monk's body was small and his bones tender—they have boiled away to nothing."

The king commanded: "Throw the other three monks into the cauldron!" The guards on either side, seeing that Bajie looked the fiercest, seized and toppled him first and bound his arms behind his back. The Tang monk cried out in alarm: "Your Majesty, grant this poor monk a moment! That disciple of mine, since he turned to the faith, has rendered service at every turn. Today he offended the State Preceptor and died in the cauldron of oil. But the first to die becomes a spirit—how dare I, a poor monk, cling to life? Truly, the officials of all the world govern the people of all the world; if Your Majesty commands his subject to die, how dare the subject not die? I ask only this grace: grant me half a cup of cold rice-water and three sheets of paper money, and let me go to the side of the cauldron and burn this offering for him, to show the single-hearted devotion of master and disciple—then I shall come back and receive my punishment."

Hearing this, the king said: "So be it. Men of the Middle Kingdom have indeed a sense of honor." He ordered rice-water and paper money brought and given to the Tang monk.

When they were brought, the Tang monk asked the Sha Monk to go along. As they walked down below the steps, a few guards had Bajie by the ears, dragging him to the side of the cauldron. Sanzang faced the cauldron and pronounced this prayer:

"Disciple Sun Wukong! From the day you took the precepts in the Chan grove, You guarded me westward, deep in love and kindness. I hoped we both would gain the Great Way at one time— Who could have thought that you today would go down to the shades! In life you thought of nothing but the quest for scriptures; In death, still keep a heart that chants the Buddha's name. Heroic spirit, wait for me across the ten thousand li—

As a ghost in the netherworld, I'll climb with you to the Thunderclap!"

Bajie heard him. "Master, that's no way to pray. Sha Monk, you pour the rice-water for me—let me do the praying." And the blockhead, bound on the ground, gasped out furiously:

"Trouble-making rotten monkey! Ignorant Protector of Horses! Death-deserving rotten monkey! Boiled-in-oil Protector of Horses! The monkey's done for—and the Horse-Protector's line is at an end!"

Sun the Pilgrim, at the bottom of the cauldron, heard the blockhead railing away, and he could not help himself: he resumed his true form, stark and dripping, and stood up at the bottom of the cauldron, shouting: "You lousy, hog-swill guzzler! Who are you cursing?"

The Tang monk saw him and cried: "Disciple, you've frightened me to death!"

"Big Brother is used to playing dead and getting off clean," said the Sha Monk.

The two benches of civil and military officials rushed forward in alarm to memorialize: "Long live the sovereign! The monk is not dead—he has come up out of the oil cauldron again!"

The supervising officer, dreading a charge of deceiving the court, memorialized once more: "Dead he is—but the day was ill-omened, and the little monk's ghost has come back to show itself."

At this the Pilgrim flared up in a fury, leapt out of the cauldron, wiped off the grease, put on his clothes, whipped out his cudgel, seized the supervising officer, and with one blow on the head beat him into a lump of meat. "What ghost has come to show itself!" he roared.

The officials, terrified, hastily untied Bajie and fell to their knees begging: "Spare us! Spare us!" The king came down from his throne.

The Pilgrim mounted the hall and caught hold of him: "Your Majesty need not run. First let your Third State Preceptor take a turn in the oil cauldron too."

The emperor trembled from head to foot: "Third State Preceptor, save my life—get into the cauldron quickly, before that monk beats me!"

Antelope Power came down from the hall, stripped just as the Pilgrim had done, leapt into the cauldron, and splashed and wallowed there in the same style. The Pilgrim let go of the king, went near the cauldron, and called to the fire-tenders to feed the fire; then he reached in a hand to test the oil—and oh! The boiling oil was ice-cold. He thought to himself: "When I bathed, it was boiling hot; when he bathes, it's cold. I understand—some Dragon King must be down there protecting him."

He sprang up into the air, recited the syllable "Om," and summoned the Dragon King of the Northern Sea. "You antlered earthworm! You scaly mudfish! How dare you help the Daoist with a cold dragon to guard the bottom of the cauldron, to let him show his sainthood and beat me!"

The Dragon King quailed and bowed again and again: "Aoshun would never dare lend such help. Great Sage, you do not know: this wicked beast did bitterly cultivate for a lifetime and shed his mortal shell, but only the Thunder Magic of the Five Thunders did he truly receive; all the rest he picked up from heretical byways, and so he could not return to the immortal Way. This cold dragon was an art he learned on Little Maoshan. The other two had their magic broken by you, Great Sage, and showed their true forms; this one's cold dragon is of his own refining—good enough to fool the worldly crowd, but how could it deceive the Great Sage? This little dragon will now take away his cold dragon, and I promise you his bones will crack and his hide will scorch—what powers will he show then?"

"Do it at once," said the Pilgrim, "and spare yourself a beating!"

The Dragon King turned into a whirlwind, swept to the side of the cauldron, seized the cold dragon, and carried it down to the sea.

The Pilgrim came down and stood before the hall with Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, and they watched the Daoist thrashing in the boiling oil, unable to climb out; he slipped and fell, and in an instant his bones came loose, his skin scorched, his flesh boiled to rags.

The supervising officer came once more to memorialize: "Long live the sovereign! The Third State Preceptor has boiled away to nothing."

The king's eyes brimmed with tears. He beat his hands upon the imperial desk and wept aloud:

"A human body is hard to win, and hard indeed— Without the true transmission, refine no elixir! In vain he had spells to summon gods and charm the water, Yet lacked the pill that lengthens life and keeps one whole. Round brightness, merged and murky—how could he reach nirvana? He wore out his cunning, and his life found no repose. Had he known how lightly he would come to grief, Better to have eaten secret simples and lived quiet in the hills!"

And this was truly the truth of it:

What use to gild the lead and quicken mercury? Wind-summoning, rain-calling—all of it is emptiness!

But how master and disciples fared after this—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 47

The Holy Monk Is Stopped at Night by the Heaven-Reaching Waters; Metal and Wood Show Mercy and Save the Little Children

The story continues: the king leaned upon the dragon couch, tears gushing like a spring, and he wept on and on till evening fell without cease.

The Pilgrim stepped forward and called out in a loud voice: "What a muddle-headed wretch you are! There lie the Daoists' carcasses before your eyes—one a tiger, one a deer, and Antelope Power was an antelope. If you don't believe it, have the bones fished up and looked at—since when did a man have a skeleton like that? They were mountain beasts turned spirits, who banded together to come here and destroy you. Seeing that your vital star still burned strong, they did not dare strike. Two more years, and when your vital power waned, they would have taken your life and swallowed your whole kingdom in one gulp. It was our good fortune that we came in time, destroyed the demons, and saved your life. What are you crying for? What are you crying for! Hand over the travel permit quickly and send us on our way."

At this the king finally came to his senses.

The civil and military officials all memorialized: "The dead are indeed a white deer and a yellow tiger, and in the cauldron are truly the bones of an antelope. The holy monk's words must not be disregarded."

"Since it is so," said the king, "our thanks to the holy monk. It is late in the day—let the master of ceremonies escort the holy monks to the Monastery of the Deep of Wisdom. Tomorrow at early court we shall open wide the Eastern Pavilion and have the Court of Imperial Entertainments prepare a pure vegetarian feast in thanks." And indeed he saw them to the monastery to rest.

The next day at the fifth watch the king held court, assembled his officials, and issued a decree: "Post the placard summoning the monks, and hang it at every gate and on every road." Meanwhile a great feast was laid, and the king came in state from the court to the gate of the Monastery of the Deep of Wisdom, invited Sanzang and the others, and went with them into the Eastern Pavilion to the banquet—of this no more need be said.

Now those monks who had escaped with their lives, hearing of the placard summoning monks, came gladly, every one of them, into the city to find the Great Sage Sun, return the hairs, and give thanks. When the elder had left the banquet, the king exchanged the travel permit, and with the queen, the consorts, and the two benches of civil and military officials, escorted them out the court gate.

There were the monks kneeling in worship by the roadside, crying: "Lord Great Sage Equal to Heaven! We are the monks who escaped with our lives from the sand terraces. We have learned how Your Lordship swept away the demons and delivered us, and how our king has posted a placard summoning monks back. We have come especially to return the hairs and bow our thanks for this heavenly grace."

The Pilgrim laughed: "And how many of you have come?"

"Five hundred," said the monks, "not half a one missing."

The Pilgrim shook his body and gathered in the hairs. Then he said to the king, the officials, the monks, and the crowd: "These monks were set free by old Sun; the carts it was old Sun who smashed, working the double pass and boring through the spine; and those two demon Daoists it was old Sun who killed. Today the demons are destroyed—now you know that the gate of Chan has the Way. Never again give way to wild doings and blind faith. I hope you will unite the three teachings in one: honor the monks, honor the Daoists too, and nurture men of talent, and I will guarantee your kingdom everlasting." The king heeded his words

and thanked him without end, and so escorted the Tang monk out of the city.

This journey of theirs was truly:

Only through devotion did they lead Sanzang west, Striving and cultivating to glorify the One Primal. Traveling at dawn, resting at night, Drinking when thirsty, eating when hungry— Unnoticed, spring ended and summer waned, And once again it was the season of autumn light.

One day, as the sky was darkening, the Tang monk reined in his horse and said: "Disciples, where shall we lodge this night?"

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "a man who has left the world should not talk like a man of the household."

"How so for the householder? How so for the monk?" asked Sanzang.

"For the householder," said the Pilgrim, "this is the hour of warm bed and snug quilt, a child in his arms and a wife kicking at his feet, sleeping snug and free from care. But for us who have left the world—no such luck! We must fare by moonlight and lie beneath the stars, feed on the wind and lodge by the waters; while there is road, we walk, and only when there is no road do we stop."

"Brother," said Bajie, "you know only the first of it, not the second. The road these days is steep and perilous, and I'm carrying a heavy load—it's truly hard going. We ought to find some place to sleep a good sleep and mend our spirits, so that tomorrow I can bear the load again; otherwise won't I be carried off my feet?"

"Let's walk another stretch by moonlight," said the Pilgrim, "and stop wherever there are households."

Master and disciples had no choice but to follow the Pilgrim on.

They had gone only a little way when they heard the roar of surging waters.

"It's over!" cried Bajie. "We've come to the end of the road!"

"It's a body of water blocking the way," said the Sha Monk.

"However are we to get across?" asked the Tang monk.

"Let me test it," said Bajie, "and see how deep it is."

"Wuneng, no nonsense," said Sanzang. "How can you test the depth of water?"

"Find a goose-egg stone and throw it in the middle. If it splashes up bubbles, it's shallow; if it sinks with a gulping sound, it's deep."

"Go and try," said the Pilgrim.

The blockhead groped about by the roadside, found a rough stone, and hurled it into the water. They heard it gulp and bubble—fish-weed frothed up—and it sank to the bottom.

"Deep! Deep! Deep!" he said. "We can't cross!"

"You may have tested the depth," said the Tang monk, "but you don't know how wide it is."

"That I don't know," said Bajie. "Truly I don't."

"Let me take a look," said the Pilgrim.

What a Great Sage! He leapt upon his somersault cloud, sprang into the air, and fixed his gaze to look. And this is what he saw:

Vast, its gleaming light steeped in moonlight; Boundless, its shadow bearing up the sky. A numinous stream that swallows Mount Hua, A long flow threading through a hundred rivers. A thousand tiers of surging

waves roll, Ten thousand folds of towering billows toss. No fisher-fire at the river mouth, But egrets sleeping on the sand—

A wild blur, just like the sea, One gaze, and still no farther shore.

Hastily he drew in his cloud and dropped down by the riverside. "Master, it's wide! Wide! We can't cross! With old Sun's fiery eyes and golden pupils I can see a thousand li by day, and tell good luck from bad; even at night I can see three or five hundred li. And now I can't see the far bank at all—how am I to reckon its width?"

Sanzang was appalled; his voice choked and he could not speak. "Disciple," he managed, "what are we to do?"

"Master, don't weep," said the Sha Monk. "Look—what's that standing by the water's edge? Isn't it a person?"

"Some fisherman working his lift-net, I suppose," said the Pilgrim. "Let me go ask him."

Taking his iron cudgel, he ran the two or three steps to the spot and looked—why! It was no person, but a stone tablet. On it were three great characters in seal script, and beneath, two lines of ten smaller characters.

The three great characters were "The Heaven-Reaching River." The ten small characters read: "Eight hundred li across; since antiquity few men have crossed."

"Master," called the Pilgrim, "come and look."

When Sanzang saw it, tears fell. "Disciple," he said, "when I left Chang'an years ago, I thought the Western Heaven an easy road—who knew there would be demons to bar the way, and mountains and rivers so far and long!"

"Master, listen," said Bajie. "Isn't that the sound of drums and cymbals? It must be some household holding a service. Let's go share some food, ask the way to a ferry, and cross tomorrow."

The Tang monk listened from horseback, and indeed there was the sound of drums and cymbals. "Those are no Daoist instruments—they must be our own Buddhist folk performing a service. Let us go."

With the Pilgrim leading the horse in front, the whole company followed the sound. There was no proper road at all; up hill and down dale they crossed the sand flats, until they saw a cluster of dwellings—four or five hundred households or so—and a well-settled place it was:

Homes leaned on hills beside the thoroughfare, Close by the bank, overlooking the stream. Everywhere brushwood doors were shut, Every house its bamboo courtyard closed. On the sand, roosting egrets dreamed clear dreams; Beyond the willows, the crying cuckoo's throat was cold. The short flute was silent, the cold washing-blocks tuneless. Red smartweed branches swayed in the moonlight, Yellow reed leaves wrestled with the wind. At the lane's end, village dogs barked at sparse hedges; At the ferry, an old fisherman slept in his boat. Lamplight sparse, all human stillness still— In mid-sky the bright moon hung like a mirror. Suddenly a breath of white-clover fragrance— The west wind, blowing it across the stream.

The Tang monk dismounted. At the head of the lane stood a household, a banner-pennant raised outside the door, lights and candles glowing within, and rich incense wreathing the air.

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "this place is not like the mountain hollows and riverbanks. Under the eaves of men we can shelter from the cold dew and sleep at ease. Do not any of you come with me—let me first go beg at the door of the patron's house. If they will take us in, I'll call you; if they will not, you must not play the ruffian. With faces as ugly as yours, I fear you'd frighten them and stir up trouble, and then we'd have no lodging at all."

"Well said," said the Pilgrim. "Master, go ahead; we'll wait here."

Only then did the elder remove his bamboo hat, bareheaded, shake out his patchwork robe, and leaning on his ringed staff, walk straight to the door of the house. He saw the door half open, half shut, and Sanzang dared not enter unbidden.

He stood waiting a little while, when out of the house came an old man, a rosary at his neck, mumbling "Amituofo" as he came to shut the door. In a flurry the elder pressed his palms together and called out: "Old patron, this poor monk salutes you."

The old man returned the greeting: "You've come too late, monk."

"What do you mean?" asked Sanzang.

"Too late, and there's nothing left," said the old man. "Had you come earlier, we were feeding monks at our humble house—all you could eat, three sheng of cooked rice, a length of white cloth, ten coppers. Why do you come only now?"

The old man bowed. "Old patron, this poor monk is not chasing free meals."

"If not chasing meals, what brings you here?" asked the old man.

"I am an envoy of the great Tang of the Eastern Land, sent to fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven. Coming to your honored place, I found the sky growing late, and hearing the sound of drums and cymbals at your mansion, I came specially to beg a night's lodging—we leave at dawn."

The old man waved his hand: "Monk, a man of religion should not lie. From the Eastern Land of the great Tang to my house is fifty-four thousand li. How could you come so far alone?"

"What you say is most true, old patron," said Sanzang, "but I have three little disciples, who cut roads through mountains and build bridges over waters to protect this poor monk—only so have we managed to arrive."

"Since you have disciples, why didn't they come too? Pray come in, come in—we have room to lodge at my humble house."

Sanzang turned and called: "Disciples, come here."

Now the Pilgrim was impatient by nature, Bajie had been born coarse, and the Sha Monk was headlong too. At their master's call the three of them, leading the horse and shouldering the load, burst in like a gust of wind, asking neither what nor how.

At the sight of them the old man toppled over in terror, crying: "Demons! Demons!"

Sanzang raised him up: "Patron, don't be afraid. They're not demons—they're my disciples."

"Such a fine handsome master," the old man quavered, "how did you ever pick such ugly disciples!"

"Ugly their faces may be," said Sanzang, "but they can subdue dragons and tame tigers, catch monsters and capture demons."

Half believing, half doubting, the old man leaned on the Tang monk and walked slowly in.

Now those three fierce ruffians had barged into the main hall, tied up the horse, and dropped the luggage.

In the hall a number of monks were chanting scripture. Bajie cupped his long snout and bawled: "You monks! What scripture are you chanting?"

The monks heard the question and looked up suddenly at the newcomers—what a sight:

Long snouts and ears immense, Bodies coarse and shoulders broad, Voices resounding like thunderclaps. The Pilgrim and the Sha Monk were uglier still. In the hall, however many monks, There was not one but was afraid. The acolyte still chanting scripture, The deacon told him to stop. They could not look to chime or bell, The Buddha's image too was left behind. Together they blew out the lights, And the bright hall went dark in an instant. Tumbling, stumbling, crawling, sprawling— Over the threshold, never a glance! Head butting head, like a collapsing gourd-trellis. A clean and solemn service Turned all at once to a roaring farce.

Seeing those people tumble and sprawl, the three brothers clapped their hands and roared with laughter. The monks grew only more terrified; they knocked their heads and scrambled, each looking to his own life, and every one of them ran off clean away. Sanzang supported the old man up into the hall. Not a lamp was lit, and the three were still hooting and giggling.

The Tang monk cursed them: "You wicked creatures, utterly without goodness! Morning after morning I instruct you, day after day I admonish you. The ancients said: to be good without teaching—what is that but a sage? To be good after teaching—what is that but a worthy? To be taught and still not be good—what is that but a fool? Ruffians like you are the lowest of the low, fools of fools! You walk in a door without knowing high from low, frightened the old patron half to death, scattered the chanting monks, and ruined a household's good deed—is that not heaping sin upon me?"

He scolded them till they dared not answer.

Only then did the old man believe they were his disciples. He turned hastily and bowed: "My lord, it's nothing, nothing. We had just closed the lamps and scattered the flowers—the service was nearly done."

"Since it's finished," said Bajie, "lay out the closing feast, and we'll eat and go to sleep."

"Bring a light! Bring a light!" the old man called.

The household folk heard and marveled: "There were plenty of candles and incense for the chanting in the hall—why call for lights?" When several servants came out to look, the hall was pitch dark; they lit torches and lanterns and crowded in. Looking up suddenly and seeing Bajie and the Sha Monk, they dropped their torches in fright, whipped around, shut the inner door, and ran inside bawling: "Demons! Demons!"

The Pilgrim picked up a torch, lit the lamps and candles, dragged over a folding chair, and asked the Tang monk to sit in the place of honor, his brothers on either side, and the old man in front of them.

As they were settling into their seats, they heard a door open within, and out came another old man, leaning on a staff: "What evil demon comes by night to the house of a virtuous family?"

The old man seated in front rose hastily and met him behind the screen-door: "Elder brother, no shouting. It's no demon—it's an arhat fetching scriptures from the Eastern Land of the great Tang. Fierce as his disciples' faces are, it's truly a case of harsh looks and kindly hearts."

Only then did that old man set down his staff and bow to the four of them.

After the greetings, he too sat down facing them and called: "Bring tea! Lay out the food!" He called several times, but the servants, trembling, dared not come near.

Bajie could not hold back: "Old sir, why are your good fellows keeping to the walls?"

"I told them to bring food to wait upon your lordships," said the old man.

"How many will serve?" asked Bajie.

"Eight," said the old man.

"Eight to serve whom?"

"To serve you four."

"Now, that white-faced master there needs only one; the hairy-faced fellow with the Thunder-God beak, two will do; the dismal-faced one, eight; but for me, it'll take twenty men to serve me properly."

"That being so, I suppose your belly is somewhat larger than most," said the old man.

"You could say it passes inspection," said Bajie.

"Men we have, men we have," said the old man. Calling big and little, he summoned out thirty or forty of them.

With the monk and the old man talking, question and answer, the crowd finally lost their fear. They set one table at the head and asked the Tang monk to sit above; three tables on either side for the three disciples; and one table in front, where the two old men sat. First they laid out fruits and vegetables, then noodles and rice, pastries and vermicelli soup, all arrayed in neat order. The Tang elder lifted his chopsticks and first recited a scroll of the Sutra of Opening the Fast.

Now the blockhead was of a hasty swallow to begin with, and hungry besides; there was no waiting for the Tang monk to finish the sutra. He seized a red-lacquered wooden bowl, and with a gulp he dumped a whole bowl of white rice down his throat—done.

A servant boy standing near said: "This lord has no sense at all. Didn't he even tuck the bowl under his robe? He dumped it straight down—what if he stains his clothes?"

Bajie laughed: "Didn't tuck it. Ate it."

"You never lifted it to your mouth—how could you have eaten it?" said the boy.

"You whelps would call me a liar! I ate it, plain as day. If you don't believe me, I'll eat another to show you." The little servants brought another bowl, filled it with rice, and handed it to Bajie. One flourish of the blockhead, and down it went—done.

The servants, watching, cried: "Lord above! Your throat must be paved with polished brick—so smooth and slick indeed!"

Before the Tang monk had finished one scroll of scripture, five or six bowls had passed through him. Only then did they all raise their chopsticks and eat the meal together. The blockhead, rice or noodles, fruits or pastries, just raked it all in, in one greedy jumble, bawling all the while: "More rice! More rice!"—and gradually the dishes stopped coming.

"Good brother," called the Pilgrim, "eat a little less. Better than going hungry in a mountain hollow—make do with half-full and be content."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Bajie. "As the common saying goes: to feed a monk till he's not full is worse than burying him alive!"

"Clear away the dishes," said the Pilgrim, "and pay him no mind."

The two old men bowed and said: "We'll not hide it from your lordships. By day we'd not have worried—even big-bellied elders like this one, we could feed a hundred or more. But it is late; we had put away the leftover feast and steamed only one dan of wheat rice and five dou of rice with a few tables of vegetarian dishes, meaning to ask in some relatives and neighbors and the monks to share the blessings. We never looked for your lordships to arrive, and the monks were frightened off, and we never dared invite the neighbors—so we have set it all before your lordships. If you are not full, we shall steam some more."

"Steam more! Steam more!" cried Bajie.

When the words were done and the dishes and tables cleared, Sanzang bowed in thanks for the meal, then asked: "Old patron, may I ask your honored surname?"

"My surname is Chen," said the old man.

Sanzang pressed his palms together: "Then we are of the same clan, this poor monk and you."

"Your lordship's surname is Chen too?" asked the old man.

"It is. My family name at home was also Chen. And may I ask what service you were just performing?"

"Master, why ask him!" laughed Bajie. "As if we didn't know. It must be a Green Shoots service, or a Peace service, or a Harvest-End service—nothing more."

"No, no," said the old man.

"What was it, then?" asked Sanzang again.

"It was a pre-mortem service for the dead," said the old man.

Bajie laughed himself off his seat: "Grandpa, you've no eye for a lie! We're great kings who tell lies and build bridges to gull people—but you'd gull us with this one! Monks as we are, don't we know services? There is a pre-mortem Depositing service and a pre-mortem Repaying service—but where was there ever a pre-mortem service for the dead? Nobody in your family has died—what service for the dead would you hold?"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim was secretly pleased: "This blockhead has grown a bit shrewd. Old grandpa, you've misspoken—how can there be a pre-mortem service for the dead?"

The two old men rose from their seats: "You who go to fetch scriptures—why do you not walk the main road, but come splashing into my house?"

"We did walk the main road," said the Pilgrim, "but a body of water blocked us and we could not cross. Hearing the sound of drums and cymbals, we came to your honored mansion to beg a night's lodging."

"When you reached the water, did you see anything?" asked the old man.

"Only a stone tablet," said the Pilgrim. "On it, three characters reading 'The Heaven-Reaching River,' and beneath, ten characters: 'Eight hundred li across; since antiquity few men have crossed.' Nothing else."

"Go a little farther up the bank—only a li or so from the tablet—and there is a temple of the Great King Inspiration. Did you not see it?"

"We did not. Pray, grandpa, tell us: what is this 'Inspiration'?"

The two old men together shed tears: "Your lordship! That king:

His powers felt through all the region, temples raised; His dread majesty for a thousand li guards the folk. Year upon year on our manor he rains sweet dew; Season upon season in our village auspicious clouds descend."

"If he sends sweet rains and drops auspicious clouds, that sounds well enough," said the Pilgrim. "Why then are you so grieved and troubled?"

The old men stamped their feet and beat their breasts, groaning: "Your lordship! Though his bounty is great, there's a grudge in it; though he's merciful and kind, he maims. It's all because he demands to eat young boys and girls—he is no bright, upright, honest god!"

"He demands to eat young boys and girls?" said the Pilgrim.

"Just so," said the old man.

"Then I suppose the turn has come round to your house?"

"This year it is exactly our household's turn. Some hundred families live hereabouts. This place belongs to Yuanhui County of the Kingdom of Chechi, and is called the Village of Chen. This Great King holds a sacrifice once a year: he demands a young boy and a young girl, with pigs and sheep and sweet wine offered up. If he eats them in one meal, he guarantees us mild winds and timely rains; if we fail to sacrifice, he comes down and brings calamity and disaster."

"And how many fine sons has your household?" asked the Pilgrim.

The old man beat his breast: "Alas, alas! Speak not of fine sons—it shames us to death! This is my younger brother, named Chen Qing; I, the old fool, am called Chen Cheng. I am sixty-three this year, he fifty-eight, and children have come hard to us both. At fifty I still had no son. My relatives urged me to take a concubine, and there was nothing for it but to get one—and she bore a daughter, just turned eight this year, named Yichengjin—'A Scales-ful of Gold.'"

"A costly name!" said Bajie. "Why 'A Scales-ful of Gold'?"

"Because children came hard to me," said the old man, "I mended bridges and repaired roads, built temples and raised pagodas, gave alms and fed monks—there is a ledger of it all: here three taels, there five taels. By the year this daughter was born, I had spent a full thirty catties of gold. Thirty catties makes one scales-ful—hence she is called Yichengjin."

"And the boy is whose son?" asked the Pilgrim.

"My brother has a son, also born of a side chamber, seven years old this year, named Chen Guanbao."

"Why was he given that name?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Our household worships the Lord Lord Guan. Because this son was prayed for under the altar of Lord Guan, he was named Guanbao—'Guan's Protection.' The two of us brothers, our years adding up to a hundred and twenty, have only these two seedlings. And now, unluckily, the sacrifice has come round by turns to our houses—so we dare not withhold the offering. Hence this father's love that cannot be cut, cannot be let go: we first perform for the children a service of transcendence for the dead—and that is why we called it a pre-mortem service for the dead."

When Sanzang heard this, the tears rolled down his cheeks without check. "Truly as the ancients said: the yellow plums do not fall, but the green plums fall—old Heaven spitefully harms those who have no sons."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Let me ask him more. Old grandpa, what property has your house?"

"A fair amount," said the two old men. "Forty or fifty qing of paddy fields, sixty or seventy qing of dry fields, eighty or ninety pasture meadows, two or three hundred water buffaloes and yellow oxen, thirty-odd donkeys and horses, and pigs, sheep, chickens, and geese beyond counting. At our house there is grain we cannot eat up and clothes we cannot wear out—our family wealth and estate will bear counting."

"With such an estate," said the Pilgrim, "it shows how thrifty you must have been."

"How so, thrifty?" asked the old man.

"With property like this, how could you bear to sacrifice your own flesh and blood? Throw down fifty taels of silver and you can buy a young boy; throw down a hundred taels and you can buy a young girl—expenses all told no more than two hundred taels—and so keep your own children, your own posterity. Wouldn't that be better?"

The two old men wept: "Your lordship, you don't understand. That Great King is truly inspired—he comes walking among our houses."

"When he comes walking, have you seen his face? How tall is he?"

"Never his shape have we seen—only a fragrant wind comes blowing, and we know the Great King's lordship has arrived. At once we fill the measure and burn incense, old and young bowing to the wind. Every matter in our households, down to spoon and bowl, he knows; the years and months of every birth, old and young, he remembers. Only our own true-born children will he accept and enjoy. Never mind that two or three hundred taels could buy no such child—for thousands upon thousands of taels you could nowhere buy children of the very same age and birth-month, exactly alike."

"So that's how it is," said the Pilgrim. "Very well, very well. Bring your fine son out and let me have a look."

Chen Qing hurried inside and carried little Guanbao out into the hall, setting him before the lamp. The little child, knowing nothing of life or death, tucked fruit into both sleeves, hopping and dancing as he ate and played.

When the Pilgrim saw him, he silently recited a spell, shook his body, and changed into the very image of little Guanbao. The two children, hand in hand, danced together before the lamp. The old man, frightened out of his wits, fell on his knees before the Tang monk: "My lord, sin and shame! Sin and shame! This lord was only just speaking—how has he become the very image of my son? Call, and both answer together; walk, and both walk together! It cuts the years from our lives! Pray show your true form! Pray show your true form!"

The Pilgrim wiped his face with one hand and showed his true form. The old man knelt before him: "So your lordship has arts like these!"

"Was I like your son?" asked the Pilgrim with a laugh.

"Like! Like! Like! The very same face, the very same voice, the very same clothes, the very same height!"

"And you haven't looked closely yet," said the Pilgrim. "Fetch the scales and weigh me—am I his very weight?"

"Yes, yes, yes," said the old man, "the very same weight."

"Then will I do for the sacrifice?"

"Excellent, excellent! You'll serve for the sacrifice!"

"This day I'll take this child's place, and keep the incense of your family line burning; I'll go and be sacrificed to that Great King."

Chen Qing fell to his knees and kowtowed: "If your lordship in mercy truly takes his place, I will give a thousand taels of white silver for Lord Tang's traveling expenses to the Western Heaven."

"And no thanks for old Sun?" said the Pilgrim.

"You've taken the boy's place—then you are lost to us."

"How am I lost?"

"The Great King will have eaten you."

"He dares eat me?"

"If he doesn't eat you, he'll surely complain you smell raw."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Let Heaven's will decide. If he eats me, my allotted span was short; if he doesn't, that's my good fortune. I'll go be your sacrifice."

Chen Qing could only kowtow his thanks, and promised another five hundred taels. But Chen Cheng neither kowtowed nor gave thanks—he only leaned against the screen-door and wept. The Pilgrim knew what was in his heart; he went up and took hold of him: "Elder brother—no promise, no thanks from you. Is it that you cannot bear to part with your daughter?"

Then Chen Cheng knelt: "I cannot bear it. If your lordship's great kindness saves my brother's son, that is already more than enough. But this old fool has no son—only this one daughter. When I die, it is she who will weep for me with all her heart. How can I bear to give her up!"

"Then be quick and steam five dou of rice and prepare some good vegetarian dishes for my long-snouted brother to eat, and have him change into your daughter. My brother and I will go together to the sacrifice—let's do a good deed of hidden merit and save both your children's lives. How about it?"

When Bajie heard this, he was greatly alarmed: "Brother, you're showing off your spirit and caring nothing whether I live or die—and now you want to drag me into it!"

"Good brother," said the Pilgrim, "as the saying goes: even a chicken will not eat the food of no merit. Since we entered this door we have been feasted royally—you were bawling only just now that you weren't full! How can you refuse to save them from their troubles?"

"Brother, you may know how to change—but I don't!"

"You have your thirty-six transformations too—how do you not know how?"

The Tang monk said: "Wuneng, your elder brother speaks most sensibly. As the common saying goes, to save one life is better than building a seven-story pagoda. First, to repay their kindness; second, to store up hidden merit. Besides, the night is cool and there's nothing to do—you two brothers go and have your fun."

"Listen to Master!" said Bajie. "I can change into mountains and trees, stones and mangy elephants, water buffaloes and big fat fellows—those I can manage. But to change into a little girl—that's rather hard!"

"Elder brother, don't believe him," said the Pilgrim. "Bring out your honored daughter and let's see."

Chen Cheng hurried within and carried out the little girl Yichengjin into the hall. The whole household, wives and concubines, great and small, old and young, inner and outer, all came out to kowtow and bow, begging only that the child's life be saved. The little girl wore on her head a jeweled fillet of flowers and kingfisher plumage with hanging pearls; on her body a jacket of red-flashed-yellow silk damask, over it a cape of official-green satin with a chessboard collar; round her waist a great red flowered silk skirt; on her feet pale-red slippers with toad-head fronts; on her legs two knee-trousers of gold-threaded gauze—and she too had fruit tucked in her sleeves, munching away.

"Bajie," said the Pilgrim, "there's your little girl. Change quickly into her likeness, and we'll go to the sacrifice."

"Brother! Something so small and neat and pretty—how can I change?"

"Quick now—or taste the stick!"

Bajie panicked: "Brother, don't beat me—let me try." The blockhead recited a spell, shook his head a few times, and cried "Change!"—and truly the head changed, the very face of a little girl; but the belly stayed fat and big, and the frame would not match. The Pilgrim laughed: "Change again!"

"Beat me as you please! I can't change any further—what can I do?"

"Don't tell me we're to have a girl's head on a monk's body!" said the Pilgrim. "Such a neither-male-nor-female business—how will that do? You'd better set out the Big Dipper steps." And he blew on him one breath of immortal air, and in a moment the body changed indeed, the very match of the little girl.

Then he said: "You two elders, take your honored families with your son and daughter inside—don't mix them up. In a little while, my brother and I, playing truant and playing tricks, may walk in there, and then it will be hard to tell who is who. Give the children good fruit to eat, and don't let them cry out, for fear the Great King should get wind of it and the plan leak away. Now we two are off to have our fun!"

What a Great Sage! He instructed the Sha Monk to guard the Tang monk; he himself became Chen Guanbao, and Bajie became Yichengjin.

When the two of them were ready, they asked: "How shall we be offered? Tied up and carried, or bound and carried? Steamed first, or chopped up first?"

"Brother, don't play games with me," said Bajie. "I've no skill for that."

"Heaven forbid! Heaven forbid!" said the old men. "We would only set you upon two red-lacquered trays, set the trays on tables, and have two young fellows carry each table, bearing you up to the temple."

"Good, good, good!" said the Pilgrim. "Bring out the trays and let's try."

The old men brought out the two trays. The Pilgrim and Bajie sat upon them, and four young fellows raised the two tables, walked a turn about the courtyard, and carried them back, setting them down in the hall.

The Pilgrim was delighted: "Bajie, carried about like this for fun—we're monks who've made it onto the serving trays at last!"

"If they carry us off and carry us back, carried to and fro till dawn, I'd not fear it," said Bajie. "But once we're carried into the temple, it's eating time—and that is no fun at all!"

"Just watch me," said the Pilgrim. "When he starts on me, that's when you run."

"And who knows how he eats? If he eats the boy first, I've time to run. But if he eats the girl first—what then?"

"In years past at the sacrifice," said the old man, "some of the bolder sort of our folk would hide behind the temple or under the offering table, and they saw him eat the boy first and the girl after."

"Good fortune! Good fortune!"

While the brothers were still discussing, they heard outside gongs and drums filling the sky, lamps and torches blazing, and the whole village crowd opening the front gate and shouting: "Bring out the boy and the girl!"

The old man wept and sobbed, and the four young fellows carried the two of them out.

Whether they lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 48

A Demon Plays with Cold Winds and Whirling Snow; the Monk, Longing to Worship the Buddha, Treads the Layered Ice

The story continues: the faithful of the Village of Chen, with pigs and sheep and sweet sacrificial wine, amid a great din of drums and shouting, carried the Pilgrim and Bajie straight to the Temple of Inspiration and set them out in order, placing the boy and girl at the head. The Pilgrim looked around and saw on the offering table incense, flowers, and candles, and square in the center a gilded memorial tablet inscribed "The Spirit of the Great King Inspiration"—and no other divine image at all.

When the faithful had arranged everything, they kowtowed together toward the front: "Lord Great King! In this year, this month, this day, and this hour, we, the faithful of the Village of Chen, with Chen Cheng as master of the sacrifice—our years unequal, but strictly following the annual custom—offer up a boy, Chen Guanbao, and a girl, Chen Yichengjin, with pigs, sheep, and sacrificial wine, all as due. We present them for the Great King's enjoyment, and pray him to bless us with mild winds and timely rains and an abundant harvest of the five grains."

When the prayer was done, they burned the paper horses and returned each to his own house.

Seeing the people gone, Bajie said to the Pilgrim: "Let's go home."

"And where is your home?" asked the Pilgrim.

"To old Chen's house, to sleep," said Bajie.

"There you go talking rubbish again, blockhead," said the Pilgrim. "Since we promised them, we must finish this vow of theirs properly."

"You're the blockhead, and you call me one! We were only fooling them for fun—how did it turn into a real sacrifice, in earnest!"

"No nonsense. If you'd help a man, help him to the end. We must wait for the Great King to come and eat, and only then is it finished from first to last. Otherwise he'll send down disasters and harm again, and that would spoil everything."

Even as they spoke, they heard the wind whistling.

"It's bad!" cried Bajie. "That whistling wind means that thing has come!"

"Quiet," said the Pilgrim. "Let me answer."

In a moment there arrived outside the temple gate a demon-monster. And see what he looked like:

Golden armor, golden helmet, gleaming new, A jeweled belt round his waist wound with red clouds. His eyes like evening stars come out, shining bright, His teeth like ranged saw-blades, set row on row. Beneath his feet, mist and haze drift swirling, About his body, fog and vapor steaming warm. Where he walks, chill wind after chill wind blows cold; Where he stands, layer upon layer of baleful air. Just like a curtain-raising captain escorting the emperor's carriage, Or a guardian door-god standing watch at a temple gate.

The monster blocked the temple door and asked: "Which household offers the sacrifice this year?"

The Pilgrim answered with a smiling drawl: "Thanks for asking. The manor-heads are the houses of Chen Cheng and Chen Qing."

Hearing the answer, the monster thought, suspicious: "This boy has a bold nerve and a ready tongue. The ones brought in other years, when I called, made no answer; call again, and their souls left them with fright; reach out and grab, and they were dead men. How is it that today this boy can bandy words so well?" The monster dared not seize him, and asked again: "And what are the boy's and girl's names?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "The boy is Chen Guanbao, the girl Yichengjin."

"This sacrifice is last year's old rule," said the monster. "Now that you are offered up to me, I mean to eat you."

"We dare not resist," said the Pilgrim. "Please help yourself at your ease."

Hearing this, the monster dared not strike either. Blocking the door, he shouted: "Don't answer back! Other years I always ate the boy first; this year I'll eat the girl first!"

The monster gave him no chance to say more: he opened his claws and grabbed for Bajie. The blockhead sprang down with a thump, showed his true form, whipped out his nail-rake, and struck at him with both hands. The monster snatched back his claws and fled out the front—there was a ringing clang!

"Cracked his armor!" cried Bajie.

The Pilgrim too showed his true form and went to look: there on the ground were two fish scales, each the size of an ice-plate. He shouted "After him!" and the two leapt into the air.

The monster, having come to a feast, had brought no weapon. Empty-handed in the clouds, he demanded: "What monks are you, from what quarter, coming here to bully folk, wrecking my incense offerings and ruining my good name?"

"You wretched thing, so you don't know," said the Pilgrim. "We are the disciples of the holy monk Sanzang of the great Tang of the Eastern Land, sent by imperial mandate to fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven. Last night we lodged at the Chen house and heard of an evil demon falsely styling himself 'Inspiration,' demanding a boy and girl for sacrifice year after year. Out of mercy, to save living souls, we have come to catch you, you wretch! Tell the truth, and quickly! Two children a year—you've played king here how many years, and eaten how many boys and girls? Reckon them up to me one by one, and I'll spare you the death penalty!"

At these words the monster turned to flee, and Bajie gave him another blow of the rake—but missed him. The monster turned into a whirlwind and plunged into the Heaven-Reaching River.

"No need to chase him," said the Pilgrim. "This monster must be some creature of the river. Tomorrow we'll devise a way to catch him and get my master across."

Bajie agreed and went straight back to the temple, where he carried the pigs and sheep and sacrificial wine, tables and all, back to the Chen house. By this time the Tang elder and the Sha Monk, together with the Chen brothers, were waiting in the hall for news, when suddenly the two of them came in and dumped the pigs and sheep and offerings in the courtyard.

Sanzang came out to meet them: "Wukong, how went the sacrifice?"

The Pilgrim told the whole story—the naming of names, the chasing of the monster, his plunging into the river. The two old men were overjoyed, and at once had the side rooms swept and beds made ready, and invited master and disciples to sleep—of this no more.

Now the monster escaped with his life and returned to the water, where he sat in his palace, silent and glum. His household, great and small, all asked: "Great King, every year when you enjoy your sacrifice you come home delighted. Why so troubled today?"

"Other years, when the feast was done, I brought back the leavings for you all to enjoy," said the monster. "This year I never got so much as a bite. My luck was low—I ran afoul of a nemesis and nearly lost my life."

"Great King, who was it?" asked the water folk.

"A disciple of a holy monk from the great Tang of the Eastern Land, going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures," said the monster. "He changed himself into the boy and girl and sat there in the temple. He made me show my true form, and I barely escaped with my life. I have long heard it said: the Tang Sanzang is a good man of ten lives of cultivation, and whoever eats a piece of his flesh extends his years and gains long life. Who could have foreseen he'd have disciples like that under his hand? He ruined my name and wrecked my incense offerings. I have a mind to catch the Tang monk—but I fear it may not be managed."

Then from among the water folk there stepped up a variegated mandarin-fish crone, who bobbed and bowed to the monster, smiling: "Great King, what's so hard about catching the Tang monk? Only—once he's caught, will you reward me with a little wine and meat?"

"If you have a plan," said the monster, "we'll join our strength together. Catch the Tang monk, and I'll swear you in as my sister—we'll sit at one table and share him."

The fish crone bowed her thanks and said: "I have long known the Great King's powers of calling wind and summoning rain, your might to churn seas and overturn rivers. But—can you make it snow?"

"I can make it snow," said the monster.

"And since you can snow—can you freeze it cold and make ice?"

"Still better!" said the monster.

The fish crone clapped her hands and laughed: "Then it is the easiest thing in the world! The easiest!"

"Tell me this easy plan of yours, then," said the monster.

"Tonight will bring the third watch," said the crone. "Great King, don't hesitate—work your magic early: raise a cold wind and send down a great snow, and freeze the Heaven-Reaching River through and through. Then let those of us who are good at changing take human shape and stand at the crossings, packs on backs and umbrellas in hands, shouldering loads and pushing carts, walking back and forth on the ice without stop. The Tang monk's heart is hot upon fetching scriptures; when he sees people walking like that, he'll certainly cross on the ice. Your Majesty sits quiet in mid-river, and where his footsteps sound, split the freezing ice asunder—and master and disciples alike will tumble into the water. One drumbeat, and he's yours!"

At these words the monster's heart brimmed with delight: "Excellent! Excellent!" Out he went from the water palace, up into the long sky, raising wind and making snow, freezing cold and congealing ice—of this no more.

Now the Tang elder and his four disciples were resting at the Chen house. Toward dawn, master and disciples lay under cold quilts on cold pillows. Bajie, chattering and shivering, could not sleep, and called: "Brother, it's cold!"

"You blockhead," said the Pilgrim, "you've no gumption at all! A man who has left the world fears neither heat nor cold—why shiver?"

"Disciples, it is cold indeed," said Sanzang. "Look:

Even quilts upon quilts hold no warmth; Hands tucked in sleeves like clutching ice. Now the withered leaves droop with frosty hearts, And hoarfrost bells hang on the gray pines. The ground cracks with the bitter cold;

The pools lie flat, their waters frozen stiff. In the fishing boat, no old angler seen; At the mountain temple, where would one meet a monk? The woodcutter grieves his firewood's scarce; The young lord rejoices, charcoal's on the rise. The marching man's beard turns to iron wire; The poet's brush is stiff as water-chestnut. A sheepskin coat is yet too thin; A sable robe still seems too light. The old monk sits frozen on his rush mat; In papered beds the traveler's startled soul. Though quilt on quilt and mattress upon mattress, The whole frame shivers like a trembling bell."

Master and disciples, unable to sleep, got up and dressed, and opened the door to look—and oh! Outside, all was a white blur: it was snowing!

"No wonder you're cold," said the Pilgrim. "A snow like this!"

The four of them watched together. What snow! And this is what they saw:

Dark clouds massed dense, dreary fogs steeped deep. Dark clouds massed dense—the north wind shrilled and howled through the sky; Dreary fogs steeped deep—great snowflakes flurried down to cover the earth. Truly flowers of six petals, every flake flying jade; A thousand groves of trees, every trunk bearing jade. In a moment, drifts of powder; in an instant, banks of salt. The white parakeet loses its whiteness; The snow-white crane's plumes are one with it all. It swells the thousand rivers of Wu and Chu in one night, And beats down the few plum trees of the southeast.

It was as if three million jade dragons had been beaten back in battle— Truly like broken scales and shattered armor filling the sky.

Where now to find Dongguo's shoes, Yuan'an in his snow-buried sleep, Sunkang reading by the snow's reflected light? No more to be seen Wang Ziyou's boat, Wang Gong's sash, Su Wu gnawing his felt. Only a few village cottages like walls of silver, and ten thousand li of rivers and hills like balls of jade. What snow!

Willow catkins mantle the bridge, Pear blossoms roof the cottages. Willow catkins mantle the bridge—by the bridge, the old fisherman hangs up his straw cape; Pear blossoms roof the cottages—under the eaves, the country elder roasts his gnarled roots. The traveler finds it hard to buy his wine; The gray-headed serving-man trudges to seek his plum branch. Sprinkling, drifting, it snips out butterfly wings; Floating, swaying, it cuts out garments of goose-down. Rounded and rolling, rolling and rounded, it follows the wind's will; Fold on fold and layer on layer, the roads are lost. Gust after gust of cold pierces the little blinds; Whistling, the freezing air seeps through the curtained bed. The lucky omen of a rich year descends from heaven— Worth celebrating, a happy thing for the world of men.

That snow came swirling and scattering down, truly like cut jade and flying floss. Master and disciples gazed and sighed over it a long while. Then the old man of the Chen house sent two servants to sweep the paths, and two more to bring out hot water for washing. Presently they brought steaming tea and fresh milk-cakes, and carried out braziers of coals, all brought to the side rooms, where master and disciples sat talking.

The elder asked: "Old patron, does your honored region divide the seasons into spring, summer, autumn, and winter?"

Old Chen laughed: "Though this is an out-of-the-way corner, and our customs and people differ from the superior kingdom's, yet all our grains and livestock live under the same heaven and the same sun—how could there be no dividing of the four seasons?"

"Since the four seasons are divided, how can there be such snow and cold as this?"

"Though it is still the seventh month," said Old Chen, "yesterday we passed White Dew—it is, so to speak, the eighth month already. Hereabouts, every year, frost and snow come with the eighth month."

"How different from my Eastern Land! There we have them only at the start of winter."

As they were speaking, the servants came to set the tables and invite them to porridge. After the porridge, the snow fell harder than in the morning, and in a little while it lay two feet deep on the level ground.

Sanzang fretted and shed tears. Old Chen said: "Your lordship, set your heart at ease—don't be troubled by the depth of the snow. My humble house has a good few dan of grain; we could keep your lordships fed half a lifetime."

"Old patron, you don't know this poor monk's hardship. Years ago, favored with the sage grace of an imperial mandate, I was escorted out the passes with full imperial ceremony; the Tang king himself held the cup at the farewell feast and asked when I would return. This poor monk knew nothing then of the perils of mountains and rivers, and answered lightly: only three years, and I would fetch the scriptures and come home. Since we parted, seven or eight years have passed, and still I have not seen the Buddha's face. I fear to break the imperial time limit; I fear, too, the fierceness of demons and monsters—hence my anxiety. Today, by happy fate, we lodge in your deep mansion. Last night my foolish disciples rendered a small kindness in repayment, and I truly hoped only to get a boat and cross the river. Unlooked-for, Heaven has sent down this great snow; the roads are lost in whiteness—who knows when I shall ever succeed and return to my native land?"

"Your lordship, rest easy," said Old Chen. "You've come through the many days—what are a few more? Wait till the sky clears and the ice melts; this old fool will empty my whole estate if I must, but I shall surely see your lordship across the river."

Then a servant came to invite them to the morning meal. They ate in the hall, and scarcely had they talked a while before the noon meal followed it in.

Sanzang, seeing the lavish plenty of the dishes, was uneasy again and again: "Since you honor us by keeping us, plain household fare would be quite enough."

"Your lordship," said Old Chen, "for the grace of your taking our children's place at the sacrifice and saving their lives, though we set a banquet every day, we could hardly thank and repay you enough."

After this the great snow stopped, and folk began to walk abroad. Seeing Sanzang out of spirits, Old Chen had the garden swept, fires built in great braziers, and invited them to amuse themselves and dispel their cares in the snow-chamber. Bajie laughed: "That old fellow has no sense at all! Gardens are for the second and third months of spring—with snow like this and cold like this, what is there to see?"

"You know nothing, blockhead!" said the Pilgrim. "A snow scene is naturally quiet and lovely. First, for the viewing; second, to ease Master's heart."

"Exactly, exactly," said Old Chen. So they were invited into the garden, and this is what they saw:

The season at autumn's height, the scenery like deep winter. The gray pines knotted with jade buds, The fading willows hung with silver flowers. Below the steps, jade moss heaped with powder-dust; Before the windows, emerald bamboo puts forth jasper shoots. On the artful rocks of the rockery, In the fish-keeping pool— On the artful rocks, sharp peaks ranked like jade bamboo-shoots; In the fish-keeping pool, living water clear, a plate of ice. Along the bank, the cotton roses' delicate hues grown pale; By the cliff, the hibiscus' tender branches drooping. The autumn begonias utterly bowed down; The winter plum trees just putting out new shoots. The Peony Pavilion, the Pomegranate Pavilion, the Cassia Pavilion— Every pavilion heaped with goose-feather snow; The lounging place, the guest place, the musing place— Everywhere spread with butterfly wings. Two hedges of yellow chrysanthemums, gauze of jade and gold; A few trees of red maples, red interlaced with white. Countless idle courts, the cold can never reach; Come look into the snow-chamber, cold as ice itself. Within, a bronze fire-basin on beast-mask legs, elephant feet below, The charcoal freshly lit, blazing warm; Above and below, folding chairs lacquered and covered with tiger skins, Soft and warm, paper windows fitted everywhere. On the four walls hang several scrolls of old paintings by

famous masters: The Seven Sages Crossing the Pass, Lone Fishing on the Cold River, Peaks on peaks and ranges on ranges rolling with snow; Su Wu gnawing his felt, plucking plum to meet the envoy, Groves of jasper and trees of jade, all writing a scene of cold. Tell it never ending—house by the water, fish cheap to buy; Snow-choked mountain paths, and wine so hard to purchase. Truly a place where one may rest one's knees content— Why go seeking, pray, the isle of Penglai?

All the company gazed and enjoyed themselves a long while, then sat down in the snow-chamber and talked with the neighboring elders about the quest for scriptures, and hot tea was brought and drunk. Old Chen asked: "Will your lordships take a little wine?"

"This poor monk drinks none," said Sanzang, "but my disciples may take a few cups of unfermented wine."

Old Chen was delighted and ordered at once: "Bring fruits and dainties, warm the wine well, and drive the cold from your lordships." The servants carried the tables round the brazier, and they drank a few cups each with the two elder neighbors, then cleared the vessels away.

Unnoticed, the sky drew toward evening, and they were invited again into the hall for the evening meal. Then they heard the people walking in the streets all saying: "What cold weather! The Heaven-Reaching River has frozen solid!"

"Frozen over!" said Sanzang. "Wukong, what are we to do?"

"Sudden cold, sudden freeze," said Old Chen. "It must be frozen only at the shallow water near the bank."

"They've frozen the whole eight hundred li smooth as a mirror," said the passersby, "and people are walking on it at the crossings!"

Hearing that people were walking, Sanzang wanted to go at once and look.

"Your lordship, no hurry," said Old Chen. "It is late today—tomorrow we shall go look."

So they took leave of the elder neighbors, finished the evening meal, and retired again to the side rooms.

When day broke the next morning, Bajie got up and said: "Brother, it was colder still last night—the river must be frozen solid."

Sanzang stood facing the door and bowed to Heaven, praying: "All you great guardian gods of the faith! Your disciple has come ever westward, worshipping the Buddha with a devout heart, enduring the bitter passage of mountains and rivers without one word of complaint. Now that I have come to this place, I am moved that Imperial Heaven has aided me and frozen the river's waters. Your disciple thanks you with empty stomach for the moment; when I have fetched the scriptures and returned, I shall memorialize the Tang emperor and repay you with all devotion." When the bows were done, he told Wujing to lead the horse and cross the river upon the ice.

"No hurry," said Old Chen again. "Wait a few days till the snow melts and the ice breaks; this old fool will provide a boat to carry you over."

"Going at once is no answer, and staying on is no answer either," said the Sha Monk. "Words are no proof—what the ear hears is not as good as what the eye sees. Let me lead the horse, and pray let Master go himself and look."

"Well said," said Old Chen. "Little ones! Quickly fetch our six horses! But do not lead the lord Tang monk's horse." Six servants followed, and the whole party went straight to the riverside to look. And truly:

Snow heaped up like mountains towering; Clouds gathered off, day breaking fair. Cold congealed the thousand peaks of the Chu frontier, gaunt and thin; Ice bound the rivers and lakes, one sheet level and flat.

The north wind biting, the slick freeze ridged and sharp. Pool fish nestle close among the dense weeds; Wild birds cling to withered branches. Beyond the passes, marching men all lose their fingers; At the river head, boatmen chatter teeth in haphazard fear. Snake bellies split, birds' feet snap— Truly a mountain of ice a thousand hundred feet. Ten thousand ravines afloat with silver; One whole river steeped in jade. The East, they say, truly brings forth frozen silkworms; The North, forsooth, has burrows of ice-rats. Wang Xiang lay upon the ice; Guangwu crossed the frozen ford— Overnight the bridges and streams were solid to the bottom. The curving pools freeze in ridged layers; The deep abysses frozen fold on fold. The broad waters of the Heaven-Reaching River, waveless quite, Bright, pure ice spread over all, a road of land.

Sanzang and the party reached the riverside, reined in the horses, and looked—and truly there were people walking at the crossings.

"Patron," asked Sanzang, "where are those people going, out on the ice?"

"Across the river lies the Western Land of Women," said Old Chen. "All that company are traders. What costs a hundred cash on this side is worth ten thousand on that; what costs a hundred on that side is worth ten thousand here. The profit is heavy and the capital light, so folk go regardless of life and death. Other years, five or seven to a boat, or a dozen-odd to a boat, they crossed the waters. Now that the river is frozen, they risk their lives on foot."

"In this world nothing weighs so much as profit and fame," said Sanzang. "Those men, for profit's sake, forget life and death. Your disciple, fulfilling his mandate in perfect loyalty, goes only for fame's sake—how little we differ, they and I! Wukong, quick—back to the patron's house, pack the baggage, saddle the horses! Across this layered ice, let us make all speed for the West!"

The Pilgrim answered with a smiling hum.

"Master," said the Sha Monk, "as the saying goes: a thousand days, a thousand sheng of rice eaten. We've already imposed on the Chen household—let's stay a few days more, wait for clear skies and thawing ice, and cross by boat. Haste may breed error."

"Wujing, what a foolish notion!" said Sanzang. "Were this the first or second month, each day warmer than the last, we could wait for the thaw. But this is the eighth month, each day colder than the last—how can you hope for the ice to break? Would that not delay our journey another half year?"

Bajie jumped down from his horse: "Never mind all this talk—let old Pig try how thick it is."

"Blockhead," said the Pilgrim, "the other night you tested water with a thrown stone—but now the river's frozen deep and solid; how will you test it?"

"You don't know, brother. Let me raise my rake and strike it a blow. If the strike breaks through, the ice is thin and we'd best not go; if the strike doesn't dent it, the ice is thick—why shouldn't we go?"

"Right—well said," said Sanzang.

The blockhead tucked up his robe, strode to the riverside, raised the rake in both hands, and struck with all his might. There was a thud: nine white marks, and his hands stung with the shock. The blockhead laughed: "We can go! We can go! It's frozen solid to the very bottom."

Hearing this, Sanzang was overjoyed, and they all went back together to the Chen house, where he gave the word to pack and be off. The two old men could not hold them by any pleading, and could only prepare some dried provisions, parched grain, and baked cakes and buns to send them off with.

The whole household kowtowed and bowed, and then brought out a platter of scattered gold and silver, and knelt before them: "Deep is the grace of your lordships, who gave our children back their lives. Let this

trifling gift show our respect—one meal for your journey."

Sanzang waved his hands and shook his head, and would take nothing: "This poor monk has left the world—what use have I for treasure? I dare not even carry it on the road. Begging food from day to day is my proper business; the dried provisions are quite enough."

The two old men begged again and again, and at last the Pilgrim pinched off with a fingernail one small piece, four or five qian in weight, and handed it to the Tang monk: "Master, take it as pocket alms—don't let the two old men's kindness go for nothing." Then they faced each other, took leave, and went straight down to the ice on the river. The horse's hooves slipped once, and all but threw Sanzang from the saddle.

"Master, it's hard going," said the Sha Monk.

"Hold on!" said Bajie. "Ask old Master Chen for a bundle of straw for my use."

"What do you want straw for?" asked the Pilgrim.

"What do you know? Wrap the straw round the horses' hooves and they won't slip—saves Master taking a fall."

Old Chen, hearing this from the bank, hurriedly had a bundle of straw fetched from a house, and asked the Tang monk to come ashore and dismount. Bajie wrapped the horses' hooves, and then they set out upon the ice.

They left Old Chen and the riverside behind and had gone some three or four li when Bajie handed the nine-ringed staff to the Tang monk: "Master, carry this crosswise on your horse."

"The blockhead's up to his tricks!" said the Pilgrim. "The staff was yours to carry—why hand it to Master?"

"You've never walked on ice—you don't understand. Wherever there's a freeze, there are ice-holes. Suppose you tread on an ice-hole and slide in: without something carried crosswise, down you gulp into the water, and it's like a great cauldron-lid clapped over you—how would you ever claw your way out? It must be braced crosswise like this—only then it will do."

The Pilgrim snickered to himself: "This blockhead turns out to be an old hand at walking ice!"

Indeed, they all did as he said. The elder carried the ringed staff crosswise, the Pilgrim his iron cudgel, the Sha Monk his demon-quelling precious staff; Bajie shouldered the luggage, the rake across his waist; and master and disciples advanced with easy hearts.

They walked straight on till evening, ate some dried provisions, and dared not linger long. By the light of stars and moon they watched the ice shine glittering and white, and pressed on without pause—truly the horses never checked their hooves, master and disciples never closed their eyes, and they walked all night. At daybreak they ate a little more dried food and pressed on westward again.

As they were walking, there came from beneath the ice a great rending crash that all but frightened the white horse off its feet.

"Disciples! What was that crash?" cried Sanzang in alarm.

"This river's frozen remarkably solid," said Bajie. "That's the ground-ice groaning. Maybe it's frozen clear through to the bottom, middle and all."

Sanzang heard, alarmed and glad at once, and spurred his horse forward, hurrying on their way.

Now that demon-monster, since returning to his water palace, had led his fiends beneath the ice and waited a long while. When he heard the horses' hooves above, he worked a magic power below—and with a shivering

crack the frozen river burst asunder. The Great Sage Sun leapt into the air in a flurry, but the white horse had already fallen into the water, and the three others plunged in after.

The demon seized Sanzang and led his fiendish host straight back to the water palace, calling loudly: "Where is Sister Fish?"

The old mandarin-fish crone met him at the door with a bow: "Great King, I dare not, I dare not!"

"Sister, why say such things!" said the monster. "A word once spoken—even four horses cannot overtake it. I promised to follow your plan, and when the Tang monk was caught, to swear you in as my sister. Today your clever plan has succeeded, the Tang monk is caught—shall I eat my own words?" He ordered: "Little ones! Bring the table, grind the knives sharp! Cut open this monk's belly, cut out his heart, strip his hide and carve his flesh. Strike up the instruments on one side, and I'll share him at table with my sister—we shall extend our years and live forever!"

"Great King, don't eat him yet," said the fish crone. "I fear his disciples will come seeking and raise a tumult. Let us wait patiently a couple of days; when those fellows stop coming to look, then cut him open. Let Your Majesty sit in the place of honor, all your household ranged around, with flutes and strings, song and dance—serve him up to Your Majesty, and enjoy him at your leisure. Wouldn't that be better?"

The monster heeded her, hid the Tang monk behind the palace, and shut him in a stone coffer six feet long—of this no more.

Now Bajie and the Sha Monk fished the luggage out of the water, loaded it on the white horse, parted the waters—surging waves and rolling billows—and bore up out of the flood. The Pilgrim, watching from mid-air, saw them and called: "Where is Master?"

"Master's surname is Chen, and his name is 'Sank-to-the-Bottom,'" said Bajie. "There's nowhere to look for him now—let's get ashore and plan afresh."

[Translator's note: a pun—Chen is the household's surname, and "Chen daodi" means "Chen all the way to the bottom" of the river.]

Now Bajie was in truth the Marshal of the Heavenly Reeds come down to the world, who in his day had commanded the host of eighty thousand water soldiers of the River of Heaven; the Sha Monk was born of the Flowing Sands River; and the white horse was a grandson of the dragon of the Western Sea—hence they knew the ways of the water.

The Great Sage guided them from the air, and in a moment they turned back to the eastern bank, dried and brushed down the horses, wrung out and dried their clothes. The Great Sage brought his cloud down, and together they came to the Village of Chen.

Someone had already reported to the two old men: "Of the four lords fetching scriptures, only three are come."

The brothers hurried out to greet them, and indeed their clothes were still wet. "Your lordships," they said, "we begged you so bitterly to stay, and you would not—you would have it this way and no other. But where is Lord Sanzang?"

"He's not called Sanzang anymore," said Bajie. "He's changed his name to Chen Through-to-the-Bottom."

The two old men shed tears: "Pitiful! Pitiful! I said we should wait for the snow to melt and send you by boat—but you would not be persuaded, and it has cost him his life!"

"Old man, don't grieve for the ancients," said the Pilgrim. "My master, trust me, is one whom death can't claim. Old Sun knows: it must be that Great King Inspiration playing his magic tricks and spiriting him

away. Set your hearts at ease—starch and press our clothes, dry our travel permit in the sun, fetch fodder and feed the white horse, and let my brothers and me find that rascal and rescue our master. We'll mow the grass and dig out the roots for good, and rid your whole village of this menace, so that you may live in peace forever after."

Old Chen heard, and his heart filled with gladness, and he at once ordered a vegetarian meal prepared. The three brothers ate their fill, left the horses and luggage in the Chens' keeping, each took up his weapon, and they went straight to the roadside to seek their master and seize the monster. Truly:

He trod the layered ice in error and wounded his true nature— Once the great elixir leaks away, how shall it be made whole?

But how they managed to rescue the Tang monk—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 49

Sanzang Meets Disaster and Sinks into the Water Mansion; Guanyin Comes to the Rescue and Reveals the Fish Basket

The story goes that the Great Sage Sun, with Bajie and the Sha Monk, took leave of old Chen and came to the riverbank. He said: "Brothers, you two decide which one goes into the water first."

Bajie said: "Brother, the two of us aren't so skilled at this—you'd better go first."

The Pilgrim said: "To tell the truth, brother—if it were a mountain demon, I wouldn't need you to lift a finger. But water is not my domain. Even when I go down to the sea or travel a river, I have to pinch the water-repelling spell, or change into the form of some fish or crab. And if I'm pinching the spell, I can't swing my iron cudgel, can't use my magic, can't fight monsters. I've long known that you two are men of the water—that's why I want you to go down."

The Sha Monk said: "Brother, I can go, but I don't know what it's like down there. Let's all go together. Brother, you change into something, or I'll carry you. We'll part the water, find the demon saint's lair, and you go in first and scout. If the master is unharmed and still there, we'll do our best to fight. But if this isn't the demon's doing—if the master has drowned or been eaten—we needn't labor for nothing. We'd best find another road. What do you say?"

The Pilgrim said: "Brother, you speak sense. Which of you will carry me?"

Bajie was secretly delighted: "This monkey has made a fool of me Heaven knows how many times. Now it turns out he can't swim! Let old Pig carry him and make a fool of him for once!" The idiot said with a grin: "Brother, I'll carry you."

The Pilgrim knew what he was thinking but played along: "Yes, that's fine. You're a bit stronger than Wujing." Bajie hoisted him onto his back.

The Sha Monk parted the water, and the three brothers entered the Heaven-Reaching River. They traveled a hundred li or so beneath the water. The idiot, wanting to play a trick on the Pilgrim, gave a sudden lurch and took the opportunity to fling the Pilgrim forward. He fell flat on his face—but what he'd thrown was a false body, made from a hair, and it drifted away without trace or shadow.

The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, what are you doing? If you can't walk straight and fall in the mud, that's one thing—but where have you thrown Eldest Brother?"

Bajie said: "That monkey can't take a fall—one toss and he's dissolved. Brother, never mind his life or death—let's go find the master."

The Sha Monk said: "No good. We need him. He may not know water, but he's cleverer than we are. If he doesn't come, I won't go with you."

The Pilgrim, from inside Bajie's ear, couldn't help calling out: "Wujing! Old Sun is right here."

The Sha Monk heard and laughed: "So! You idiot, you're dead meat! How could you play a trick on him? Now he's a voice without a body—what are we to do?"

Bajie panicked and knelt in the mud, kowtowing: "Brother, it was my fault! Once we've saved the master and gotten ashore, I'll make my apology. Where are you, that you call out? You scared me to death! Please, show your true self and come out. I'll carry you. I'll never cross you again."

The Pilgrim said: "You'll still be carrying me. I'm not done with you—walk fast! Walk fast!" The idiot mumbled and grumbled, apologizing all the while, picked himself up, and went on with the Sha Monk.

They traveled another hundred li or so and looked up to see a building with a placard: "Mansion of the Water Soft-Shell Turtle."

The Sha Monk said: "This must be the demon's dwelling. We don't know what we're up against—how do we go to the gate and challenge him?"

The Pilgrim said: "Wujing, is there water inside and outside the gate?"

The Sha Monk said: "No water."

The Pilgrim said: "Since there's no water, you hide on one side. Let old Sun go scout." The Great Sage crawled out of Bajie's ear, shook his body, and changed into a long-legged shrimp-wife, hopping two or three times through the gate.

He opened his eyes and looked. The demon sat up above, with water folk of every kind ranged on either side. A speckled-clad mandarin-fish wife sat at his side, and they were all discussing how to eat the Tang monk. The Pilgrim searched carefully on both sides but couldn't find him. Suddenly he saw a big-bellied shrimp-wife walking toward him, heading for the west corridor.

The Pilgrim hopped over and hailed her: "Auntie, the Great King and everyone are talking about eating the Tang monk—where is he?"

The shrimp-wife said: "The Tang monk was frozen in ice by the Great King's snow. Yesterday he was put in a stone chest behind the palace. As soon as his disciples stop making a ruckus tomorrow, they'll play music and enjoy him."

The Pilgrim heard this, worked it out for a moment, and went straight to the rear of the palace. There indeed was a stone chest, like a pig trough in a farmer's shed, or a stone coffin in a human house—about six feet long. He lay on top of it and listened. Sanzang was inside, weeping softly.

The Pilgrim said nothing, but listened closer. The master was gritting his teeth. He groaned and said:

"I lament my life as River-Drifter, fraught with sin; From birth I've been entangled in water's woe. Born from my mother's womb through waves of travail, Bowing to Buddha in the West, I fall into the deep. Before, at the Black Water River, I met with disaster; Now, the ice breaks and my life sinks to the spring. I know not if my disciples can come— Can I yet obtain the true scriptures and return home?"

The Pilgrim couldn't hold back: "Master, don't lament your water woe. The scripture says: Earth is the mother of the five elements, and water is the source of the five elements. Without earth nothing is born; without water nothing grows. Old Sun is here!"

Sanzang heard him: "Disciple! Save me!"

The Pilgrim said: "Keep your heart at ease. Once we've caught the demon, I'll see you delivered." Sanzang said: "Hurry, hurry! Another day in here and I'll suffocate!"

The Pilgrim said: "No worry, no worry! I'm going!" He turned and hopped out, showed his true form outside the gate, and called: "Bajie!"

The idiot and the Sha Monk came near: "Brother, how is it?"

The Pilgrim said: "It's this monster who tricked the master. He's unharmed—the monster has him sealed under a stone chest. You two go challenge him now. Let old Sun get out of the water first. If you can take him, take him; if not, feign defeat and lure him out. I'll be waiting to strike."

The Sha Monk said: "Brother, go ahead with confidence. We'll read his face and act accordingly." The Pilgrim pinched the water-repelling spell, shot out of the waves, and stood on the bank to wait—of that no more.

Now look at Zhu Bajie going to battle. He charged to the gate and called in a fierce voice: "You filthy monster! Bring my master out!"

The little demons inside panicked and ran to report: "Great King, someone outside is demanding the master!" The demon said: "It must be those wretched monks come." He ordered: "Bring my armor and weapon!"

The little demons brought them out at once. The demon suited up, took his weapon in hand, ordered the gates opened, and strode out. Bajie and the Sha Monk stood on either side. Just look at the demon's getup! What a monster!

Golden helm, blazing bright on his head; Golden armor, flashing like a rainbow. At his waist, a precious belt clustered with pearls and jade; On his feet, smoke-yellow boots of curious make. His nose ridge, high and proud as a mountain peak; His brow, broad and vast as a dragon's mien. Eyes flashing, round and fierce; Teeth like steel blades, sharp and even. Short hair flying loose like flames; Long whiskers, proud and free, like golden awls. In his mouth, a sprig of green water-grass; In his hand, a nine-petaled copper hammer. With a creak the gate swings wide— Loud as the spring thunder that wakes the hibernating bugs.

Such a form is rarely seen in the mortal world— Truly worthy of the Great King Inspiration's fearsome majesty.

The demon came out the gate with a hundred-odd little demons, all whirling spears and brandishing swords, forming two ranks. He said to Bajie: "What temple are you a monk of, that you come here shouting?"

Bajie barked: "You undying wretch! The other night you were trading words with me, and today you pretend not to know me? I am a disciple of the holy monk of the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land, on my way to the Western Heaven to bow before the Buddha and seek the scriptures. You played a trick, called yourself the Great King Inspiration, and went to the Village of Chen demanding to eat boys and girls. I was Chen Qing's daughter One Scale of Gold—don't you recognize me?"

The demon said: "You monk, what nonsense! You turned into One Scale of Gold—that's the crime of impersonation. I never ate you, and you even wounded my hand. I let you off—so why do you come beating on my gate again?"

Bajie said: "If you let me off, why did you raise a cold wind, bring a great snow, freeze the river solid, and harm my master? Hand my master back at once, and all will be well. One word of no—look at my rake, and I'll spare you nothing!"

The demon gave a cold laugh: "This monk, wagging that long tongue and boasting so big. Yes, it was I who made the cold and the snow and froze the river and carried off your master. You come shouting at my gate, wanting him back—but I fear this time won't be like the last. That time, I was on my way to a feast and didn't bring my weapon, and you caught me off guard. Now—don't you run away. Fight me three rounds. If you can stand three rounds, I'll give you back your master. If you can't, I'll eat you too."

Bajie said: "Good son! Just so! Watch the rake!"

The demon said: "You're a monk who left the world halfway."

Bajie said: "My son, you really do have some inspiration—how did you know I left the world halfway?"

The demon said: "You can use a rake—you must have been hired in some garden, planting things, and made off with their rake."

Bajie said: "Son, this rake is not for digging ground. Just look:

Great teeth cast like dragon claws, Wrought of beaten gold, shaped like a python. When it meets an enemy, cold winds spray; When it holds the line, flames spring forth. It serves the holy monk to vanquish monsters, It catches demons on the Western road. When whirled, its smoke-clouds hide sun and moon; When swung, its rosy light shines clear and bright. It fells Mount Tai—a thousand tigers quail; It overturns the sea—ten thousand dragons start. Though you have spirit and skill, One stroke and you'll have nine holes!"

The demon wasn't about to listen. He raised his copper hammer and struck at Bajie's head. Bajie raised his rake and parried: "You wretch—so you're a halfway demon too!"

The demon said: "How do you know I'm a halfway demon?"

Bajie said: "You can use a copper hammer—you must have been hired in some silversmith's shop, pumping the bellows, and made off with a hammer when no one was looking."

The demon said: "This is no silversmith's hammer. Just look:

Nine petals gathered into a flower bud, A single hollow staff, evergreen through ten thousand years. Not like any mortal thing— Its origin bears the name of the fairy garden. Green chambers, purple stamens, aged in the Jade Pool; White substance, pure fragrance, born in the jade pond. I hammered and tempered it with skill, Hard as steel, sharp and keen, imbued with spirit. Spear, sword, halberd, and lance cannot match it; Axe, halberd, spear, and pike dare not withstand it. Even if your rake has a razor edge, Touch my hammer, and your teeth will splinter and fly!"

The Sha Monk, seeing the two of them bandying words, couldn't hold back. He stepped forward and shouted: "You monster, enough of your babble! The ancients said: words are no proof—show your deeds and we shall see. Don't run! Take a stroke of my staff!"

The demon parried with his hammer-shaft and said: "You're a halfway monk too."

The Sha Monk said: "How do you know?"

The demon said: "You look like a miller's apprentice."

The Sha Monk said: "How do I look like a miller's apprentice?"

The demon said: "If you're not a miller's apprentice, how come you use a rolling pin?"

[Translator's note: the demon is mocking the shape of the Sha Monk's precious staff, which resembles a baker's rolling pin.]

The Sha Monk cursed: "You wicked creature, you've never seen anything like it! Such a weapon is rare in the mortal world—no wonder you don't know its name, the Precious Staff.

Born in the moon-palace, in the shadowless place, Carved from the immortal wood of the cassia tree. Studded with jewels on the outside, its light aglow; Lined with gold within, its auspicious breath congealed. In former days it graced the imperial banquet; Today it guards the Tang monk on his righteous quest. On the Western road, no one knows its name; In the halls of Heaven, it's widely renowned. It's called the Demon-Quelling True Precious Staff— One stroke will smash your skull to bits!"

The demon wouldn't hear another word. The three of them fell to it—and what a battle beneath the water!

Copper hammer, precious staff, and iron rake; Wuneng and Wujing fight the demon. One is the Marshal Tian Peng come to the mortal world; One is the Great General descended to the edge of the sky. The two of them flank the water monster, flaunting their might; This one alone withstands two divine monks, his power to praise. By fate and destiny they seek the Great Way; In mutual creation, mutual conquest, they uphold the

eternal sands. Earth conquers water; when water dries, the bottom shows. Water begets wood; when wood thrives, flowers bloom. Zen meditation returns all to unity; The elixir refined subdues the three schools. Earth is the mother, sprouting golden buds; Gold breeds the divine water, birthing the infant. Water is the root, nourishing wood's splendor; Wood holds the brilliant fire of the dawn. The five elements gathered, each one different— Hence the three changed faces and strove with all their might. Look at his copper hammer, nine-petaled, bright and fair; The precious staff, thousand-threaded, fine as brocade. The rake divides the Nine Luminaries by yin and yang— Not knowing the moves, all tangle like a skein of hemp.

They gave their lives for the monk's ordeal, Risked death for the sake of Shakyamuni. The copper hammer never rests from its work, Now parrying the staff on the left, now the rake on the right.

The three fought beneath the water for two watches, with no victor. Zhu Bajie, reckoning he couldn't win, gave the Sha Monk a look. The two of them feigned defeat, trailed their weapons, turned, and fled.

The monster called: "Little ones, hold the fort! I'll go catch those wretches and bring them back for you to eat!"

Like wind sweeping fallen leaves, like rain battering faded flowers, he chased the two of them up out of the water.

The Great Sage Sun stood on the east bank, his eyes fixed unblinking on the river. Suddenly the waves surged and boiled, with shouts and howls. Bajie leapt onto the bank first: "Here he comes! Here he comes!" The Sha Monk also reached the bank: "Here he comes! Here he comes!" The demon followed, shouting: "Where are you going?" The moment his head broke the surface, the Pilgrim shouted: "Take this!" and brought his cudgel down. The demon dodged, and raised his copper hammer to parry.

One surged on the riverbank; the other flaunted his might on the shore. They had barely exchanged three blows when the demon couldn't hold. He feinted, dove back into the water, and the wind and waves went still.

The Pilgrim returned to the high cliff: "Brothers, you've worked hard."

The Sha Monk said: "Brother, this demon is weak on the bank but fierce enough under the water. Second Brother and I attacked from both sides, and still only fought to a draw. How do we save the master?"

The Pilgrim said: "No time to hesitate—I fear for the master's life."

Bajie said: "Brother, let me go in and lure him out. You keep quiet, but wait in midair. When his head pops out, give him a garlic-pounding blow—right on the crown of his head, good and solid! Even if it doesn't kill him, he'll be seeing stars. Then old Pig will rush up and give him a rake, and that'll be the end of him!"

The Pilgrim said: "Exactly! Exactly! This is called 'inner and outer joining forces'—that's how we'll get it done." The two of them went back into the water—of that no more.

Now the demon, having fled the battle, returned to his mansion. The water demons welcomed him into the palace. the mandarin-fish wife came forward and asked: "Great King, did you catch those two monks?"

The demon said: "Those monks had another helper. The two of them leapt onto the bank, and the helper swung an iron rod at me. I dodged and fought him. I don't know how many catties that cudgel of his weighs—my copper hammer couldn't begin to parry it. We hadn't fought three rounds before I came back defeated."

The mandarin-fish wife said: "Great King, do you remember what the helper looked like?"

The demon said: "A hairy-faced, Thunder-Duke-snouted monk, with protruding ears, a broken nose-bridge, and fiery golden eyes."

The mandarin-fish wife heard this and gave a shudder: "Great King! Thank Heaven you had the sense to flee with your life! If you'd fought three more rounds, you'd never have come back whole! I know that monk."

The demon said: "Who is he?"

The mandarin-fish wife said: "In years past, in the Eastern Ocean, I heard the old Dragon King speak of his reputation. He is none other than the one who made havoc in the Heavenly Palace five hundred years ago—the High Immortal of the Great Monad of Primal Unity, the Handsome Monkey King, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. He has since taken refuge with the Buddha and guards the Tang monk on his way to the Western Heaven for scriptures. He's been renamed Sun Wukong the Pilgrim. His magic is vast, his transformations beyond counting. Great King, why did you ever provoke him? Never fight him again."

Hardly had she finished when a little demon came to report: "Great King, those two monks are at the gate again, demanding battle!"

The demon said: "Worthy sister, your counsel is sound—I won't go out. Let's see what they do." He issued the order: "Little ones, shut the gates tight! Let him shout all he wants outside—just don't open. Let him wear himself out for two days, and when he's tired and gone, we'll enjoy the Tang monk at our ease."

The little demons all hauled stones and packed mud, sealing the gate shut. Bajie and the Sha Monk shouted and called, but got no answer. The idiot grew impatient and started raking at the gate. But the gates were already barred and locked—no use. He raked the door panels open in seven or eight strokes, only to find a wall of mud and stone, piled a thousand layers thick behind.

The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, this monster is terrified—he's sealed himself in and won't come out. Let's go back to the bank and talk it over with Eldest Brother."

Bajie agreed and headed back to the east bank.

The Pilgrim, half in cloud and half in mist, was waiting with his cudgel raised. Seeing the two of them come up without the demon, he brought down his cloud and met them at the bank: "Brothers, why didn't the fellow come up?"

The Sha Monk said: "The monster has shut his gates tight and won't show his face. Second Brother broke down the door panels, but behind them was a solid wall of mud and stone, piled a thousand layers thick. So we couldn't fight, and came to plan with you, Brother, how to save the master."

The Pilgrim said: "In that case, there's nothing for it. You two stay on the bank and keep watch—don't let him go somewhere else. Let me go."

Bajie said: "Brother, where are you going?"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm going to Mount Potalaka to ask the Bodhisattva. I'll find out where this monster comes from, his name and surname. I'll track down his old home, seize his family, arrest his neighbors, and then come back and catch the demon and save the master."

Bajie laughed: "Brother, that's a lot of trouble. It'll take time."

The Pilgrim said: "Never mind trouble or time for you! I'll go and come back!"

The Great Sage sprang up on his auspicious light, left the river mouth behind, and made for the Southern Sea. In less than half a watch, he sighted Mount Potalaka. He brought down his cloud and landed on the cliff of Potaraka.

The twenty-four orders of the Heavenly Guardians, the Mountain-Guarding Great Spirit, the Pilgrim Muzha, the Boy of Wealth, and the Pearl-Bearing Dragon Girl all came forward and bowed: "Where does the Great

Sage come from?"

The Pilgrim said: "I have business with the Bodhisattva."

The spirits said: "The Bodhisattva left the cave this morning and would let no one follow. She went alone into the bamboo grove to admire the scenery. She knew the Great Sage would come today and told us to wait here and receive you. She said not to let anyone go in to see her just yet. Please sit for a moment by the Emerald Rock. When the Bodhisattva comes out, she will have her reasons."

The Pilgrim agreed. He had barely sat down when the Boy of Wealth came forward and bowed: "Great Sage Sun, I am grateful for your former kindness. The Bodhisattva did not cast me off but took me in. Morning and night I never leave her side, attending at her lotus seat, and I have found great goodness and mercy."

The Pilgrim knew this was the Red Boy. He laughed: "In those days you were lost in the karma of demons. Now that you've attained the true fruit, you know that old Sun is a good man."

The Pilgrim waited a long time but the Bodhisattva didn't come. He grew impatient: "Would someone convey a report for me? If we're late, I fear for my master's life."

The Guardians said: "We dare not report. The Bodhisattva said to wait until she comes out herself."

The Pilgrim, being impatient, could wait no longer. He sprang up and strode right in. Ah! This Handsome Monkey King, impatient and sharp-tongued! The Guardians couldn't stop him. He pushed into the deep grove and opened his eyes to peer. From afar he saw the Suffering-Reliever seated on a mat of torn bamboo leaves:

Idle and loose, she hadn't dressed her hair; Her face, though, was most graceful. A loose tangle of silk-black hair, no jeweled tassels pinned. No blue silk robe—just a close-fitting short jacket. An embroidered skirt wrapped loosely at her waist; Her feet were bare and free. No embroidered sash over her shoulders— Both arms bare to the elbow. In her jade hand she held a steel knife, Stripping bamboo bark.

The Pilgrim saw this and couldn't help calling out: "Bodhisattva, your disciple Sun Wukong bows with sincere heart."

The Bodhisattva said: "Wait outside."

The Pilgrim kowtowed: "Bodhisattva, my master is in peril. I have come to ask about the origins of the demon of the Heaven-Reaching River."

The Bodhisattva said: "Go out. Wait for me."

The Pilgrim dared not insist. He walked out of the grove and said to the assembled Guardians: "The Bodhisattva is doing housework today—no lotus seat, no dress-up, no pleasure. What's she doing in the grove, stripping bamboo?"

The Guardians said: "We don't know. This morning she came out of the cave without dressing, went into the grove, and told us to wait for the Great Sage. It must be something to do with the Great Sage's business."

The Pilgrim had no choice but to wait. Presently the Bodhisattva came out of the grove, carrying a purple bamboo basket. "Wukong," she said, "I'll go save the Tang monk with you."

The Pilgrim hastily knelt: "Your disciple wouldn't presume to rush you. Please, Bodhisattva, dress and take your seat."

The Bodhisattva said: "No need to dress. Let's go." Leaving the Guardians behind, she rose on an auspicious cloud and soared into the sky. The Great Sage Sun had no choice but to follow.

In an instant they reached the Heaven-Reaching River. Bajie and the Sha Monk saw her and said: "Brother is so impatient, we don't know how he carried on at the Southern Sea—he's dragged the Bodhisattva here before she could even dress!"

Before the words were done, they were at the riverbank. The two of them bowed: "Bodhisattva, we have presumed and offended. We are guilty! We are guilty!"

The Bodhisattva untied a silk sash from her waist, fastened it to the basket, held the sash, trod half on a cloud, and tossed the basket into the river. She pulled it upstream, reciting a verse: "The dead depart, the living stay. The dead depart, the living stay." She recited it seven times, then lifted the basket. Inside, a bright golden fish lay flashing its eyes and flexing its scales.

The Bodhisattva called: "Wukong, go down into the water quickly and save your master."

The Pilgrim said: "We haven't caught the demon—how can I save the master?"

The Bodhisattva said: "Isn't he in the basket?"

Bajie and the Sha Monk bowed and asked: "How does this little fish have such power?"

The Bodhisattva said: "He is a goldfish I raised in my lotus pond. Every day he stuck his head above water to listen to the scriptures, and so cultivated his powers. That nine-petaled copper hammer of his was an unopened lotus bud, which he refined into a weapon. On some day or other, the tide surged and he came here. This morning I leaned on the railing to admire the flowers and saw that this wretch didn't come out to pay his respects. I divined with my fingers, traced the signs, and calculated that he was here making trouble and harming your master. That's why I didn't even take time to dress—I wove a bamboo basket with my divine power and came to catch him."

The Pilgrim said: "Bodhisattva, since it is so, let us wait a moment. We'll call the faithful of the Village of Chen to see the Bodhisattva's golden face—first, to leave a blessing, and second, to tell them how the demon was caught, so the common folk will believe and revere."

The Bodhisattva said: "Very well—go call them quickly."

Bajie and the Sha Monk ran to the village and shouted: "Come see the living Guanyin Bodhisattva! Come see the living Guanyin Bodhisattva!" The whole village—old and young, men and women—rushed to the riverbank. They waded into the mud and water without a thought, knelt, and kowtowed. Among them were those skilled at painting, who made an image of her—this is the Fish Basket Guanyin made manifest. Then the Bodhisattva returned to the Southern Sea.

Bajie and the Sha Monk parted the water, went straight to the Mansion of the Water Soft-Shell Turtle, and looked for the master. Inside, the water monsters and fish spirits were all dead and rotting. They went to the rear palace, lifted the stone chest, and carried the Tang monk out of the water, to the bank, where everyone gathered.

Chen Qing and his brother kowtowed and gave thanks: "My lord, you didn't take our advice to stay—and so you suffered so."

The Pilgrim said: "Enough said. From next year, your households need no more sacrifices—the Great King has been rooted out, and there will be no more harm. Old Chen, now I need your help. Quickly find a boat to ferry us across the river."

Chen Qing said: "We have one! We have one!" He ordered planks cut and a boat built. The villagers heard this and all joyfully contributed. One said he'd buy a mast and sail; another said he'd provide poles and oars; one said he'd bring rope; another said he'd hire boatmen.

They were all clamoring on the riverbank when a voice called from mid-river: "Great Sage Sun, don't build a boat and waste people's goods. I'll ferry you and your master across."

Everyone who heard this was startled. The timid went home; the brave stood trembling, watching. In a moment, a creature emerged from the water. What did he look like?

Square head—a divine thing, no common breed. Nine ribs, a numinous mechanism, called the Water Immortal. Dragging his tail, he may live a thousand ages; Hiding his body, he stills in the depths of a hundred rivers. Churning waves, leaping billows, he strikes the riverbank; Facing the sun, greeting the wind, he lies by the sea. Nourishing his breath, holding his spirit—truly one of the Way. A great white-shelled, scab-headed soft-shell turtle of many years.

The old turtle called again: "Great Sage, don't build a boat. I'll ferry you and your master across."

The Pilgrim raised his iron cudgel: "You wretched beast! If you come close, one stroke of this will kill you!"

The old turtle said: "I am grateful for the Great Sage's kindness. I am willing to ferry you and your master with a good heart—why would you strike me?"

The Pilgrim said: "What kindness do I owe you?"

The old turtle said: "Great Sage, you don't know. This Mansion of the Water Soft-Shell Turtle down below has been my home. It has been passed down through generations, from my ancestors to me. I awoke to my original nature, cultivated my spirit, and practiced the Way here. I renovated the old family dwelling and made it into the Mansion of the Water Soft-Shell Turtle. That demon came nine years ago, when the sea surged and the waves overturned—he rode the tide here and, fierce and savage, fought with me. He killed many of my children and seized many of my kin. I couldn't beat him, and he took my home for nothing. Today, by the Great Sage's grace, the Tang master has been saved, the Bodhisattva Guanyin has been invited to sweep the demons clean, the monster has been taken, and my mansion returned to me. Now my family is reunited, and we no longer have to wallow in mud and earth. I have my old home back. This kindness is heavy as mountains, deep as the sea. And it's not only us who've benefited—this whole village is spared the yearly sacrifice, and who knows how many children's lives have been saved. Truly, one act, two blessings! How could I not repay it?"

The Pilgrim heard this and was secretly pleased. He lowered his cudgel: "Is this the truth?"

The old turtle said: "The Great Sage's grace is vast and deep—how dare I lie?"

The Pilgrim said: "If it's the truth, swear an oath to Heaven."

The old turtle opened his red mouth and swore to Heaven: "If I do not truly ferry the Tang monk across this Heaven-Reaching River, may my body turn to blood and water!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Come up! Come up!" The old turtle came near the bank, sprang up, and climbed onto the river cliff.

Everyone came close to look: a great white shell, four zhang around.

The Pilgrim said: "Master, we'll ride on his back and cross."

Sanzang said: "Disciple, that thick ice was trouble enough—and this turtle's back may not be stable."

The old turtle said: "Master, rest easy. Compared to that thick ice, I'm far steadier. I won't tilt—not for anything!"

The Pilgrim said: "Master, any creature that can speak human speech will never tell a lie." He called: "Brothers, bring the horse."

At the riverbank, the old and young of the Village of Chen all came to see them off and bow.

The Pilgrim had the horse led onto the white turtle's shell. He invited the Tang monk to stand at the horse's neck on the left, the Sha Monk on the right, Bajie behind the horse, and the Pilgrim in front. Still fearing the turtle might misbehave, he took off his tiger-sinew sash, threaded it through the old turtle's nose like a rein, set one foot on the shell and one on the turtle's head, gripped the iron cudgel in one hand and held the rein in the other, and called: "Old turtle, walk slowly now! One tilt, and it's a stroke on the head!"

The old turtle said: "I wouldn't dare! I wouldn't dare!"

He spread his four feet and trod the water's surface as though walking on flat ground. The crowd on the bank burned incense and kowtowed, all chanting "Namo Amitabha Buddha." Truly, a living arhat descended to the mortal world, a living Bodhisattva made manifest. The people bowed until they could no longer see the travelers' shapes, and only then returned—of that no more.

Now the master, riding the white turtle, crossed the eight-hundred-li Heaven-Reaching River in less than a day, and stepped ashore high and dry.

Sanzang climbed the cliff, pressed his palms together, and thanked the turtle: "Old turtle, I have troubled you. I have nothing to give you. When I have obtained the scriptures, I will thank you on my return."

The old turtle said: "I need no thanks, Master. I have heard that the Buddha in the Western Heaven is unborn and undying, and can know the past and the future. I have been practicing here for over thirteen hundred years. Though my life is long and my body light, and I can speak human speech, I still cannot shed this shell of mine. I beg you, when you reach the Western Heaven, to ask the Buddha one question for me: when will I be able to shed this shell and take a human body?"

Sanzang promised: "I will ask. I will ask." The old turtle dove into the water and was gone.

The Pilgrim then helped Sanzang mount the horse. Bajie shouldered the luggage, the Sha Monk walked at his side, and master and disciples found the high road and pressed ever westward. Truly:

The holy monk, by decree, goes to bow before Amitabha; Over waters far and mountains distant, many a woe. His will is firm, his heart sincere, fearing not death— A white turtle ferries him across the Heaven-Reaching River.

But what lay beyond on the road ahead, what perils and what fortune—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 50

The Heart Is Disturbed and the Nature Follows, Because of Desire and Lust; The Spirit Grows Dim and the Mind Is Moved, and They Meet the Demon Chief

A ci-poem says:

Sweep the heart's ground again and again; Brush away the dust of passions, thread by thread. Let no pitfall trap the Vairocana. The primal body, ever pure— Only then may one speak of the Origin. The lamp of the mind must be trimmed and tuned; At Cao Xi, let the breathing be natural— Suffer not the monkey and the horse to breathe so loud. By day and night, the breath unbroken flows— That is the proof of mastery.

This poem, to the tune of "Nan Ke Zi," speaks only of how the Tang monk had escaped the disaster of the cold ice at the Heaven-Reaching River and, riding the white turtle, reached the farther shore. The four travelers pressed west, and it was deep winter. Just look:

The forest light, dim through the mist; The mountain bones, stark and clear beyond the water.

Master and disciples were walking when they suddenly came upon a great mountain blocking the way. The road was narrow, the cliffs high, the rocks many, the ridges steep—hard going for man and horse.

Sanzang reined in his horse and called: "Disciples." The Pilgrim Sun, with Bajie and the Sha Monk, came forward and stood at attention: "Master, what is your command?"

Sanzang said: "Look at that high mountain ahead. I fear there may be tigers and wolves making trouble, or demonic beasts harming people. This time, you must be careful!"

The Pilgrim said: "Master, set your heart at ease. We three brothers are of one mind and one will, devoted to the true Way. With our methods of sweeping demons and subduing monsters, what do we fear from tigers, wolves, or demon beasts?"

Sanzang heard this and could only set his worries aside and press on. They reached the mouth of the valley, spurred the horse up the cliff, and looked up. What a mountain!

Towering and soaring, peak after peak cut sheer. Towering and soaring, piercing the vault of heaven; Peak after peak cut sheer, blocking the azure sky. Strange rocks heaped like crouching tigers; Dark pines hanging like flying dragons. On the ridge, birds cry—sweet the melody; By the cliff, plum blossoms breathe a wondrous scent. The stream babbles cold from the ravine; The clouds on the peak come dark and ominous. And see—snowflakes drifting, winds cutting keen; A hungry tiger roars among the hills. The winter crow seeks a tree and finds no roost; The wild deer searches for a den with no fixed track. Alas, the traveler can hardly make his way— Brow furrowed, face gloomy, he pulls his hood down low.

Master and disciples braved the snow and the cold, shivering as they crossed the peaks and ridges. Far off, they spied in a mountain hollow a lofty tower and quiet buildings.

The Tang monk, from his horse, said with pleasure: "Disciples, I am hungry and cold this day. Fortunately, there are towers and houses in that hollow. It must be a farmstead or a monastery. Let's go beg some food, eat, and then go on."

The Pilgrim heard this and opened his eyes to look. He saw faint ominous clouds and evil mist on that side. He turned and said: "Master, that place is not safe."

Sanzang said: "There are towers and pavilions right there—how is it not safe?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, how would you know? On the Western road there are many demons and fiends, skilled in conjuring up houses and estates. Any tower, hall, or pavilion can be pointed into being to fool people. Haven't you heard that the dragon has nine sons, and one of them is called the Clam? When the Clam breathes out its vapor, it forms the image of pavilions and ponds. On a great river, when the fog grows thick and the Clam shows itself, birds and magpies flying past will come to rest their wings—and no matter if they number in their thousands or ten thousands, all are swallowed in one breath. This thing is most deadly to people. The vapor over there is evil—we absolutely cannot go in."

Sanzang said: "If we can't go in, I am truly hungry."

The Pilgrim said: "If the master is truly hungry, please dismount. Sit here on this flat ground, and let me go elsewhere and beg some food for you."

Sanzang agreed and dismounted. Bajie held the reins; the Sha Monk set down the luggage, opened the bundle, took out the alms bowl, and handed it to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim took the bowl and instructed the Sha Monk: "Brother, do not go forward. Guard the master and keep him seated steadily here. When I return with the food, we'll go on west."

The Sha Monk agreed.

The Pilgrim turned to Sanzang: "Master, this place has more bad luck than good. Don't go wandering off. Old Sun is going to beg for food."

The Tang monk said: "No need to say more—just go quickly and come back. I'll wait for you here." The Pilgrim turned to go, then came back: "Master, I know you haven't much patience for sitting. Let me give you a method of keeping safe." He took his gold-banded cudgel, gave it a flourish, and drew a circle on the flat ground around them. He invited the Tang monk to sit in the center, with Bajie and the Sha Monk standing on either side, and the horse and luggage close by. He pressed his palms together and said to Sanzang: "This circle that old Sun has drawn is stronger than walls of copper and iron. No tiger, panther, wolf, insect, demon, or monster will dare come near. Only—you must not step outside the circle. Sit steadily inside, and you'll be safe. But if you step out of the circle, you will fall into evil hands. A thousand times, be careful! I charge you most earnestly!"

Sanzang agreed. Master and disciples sat down properly.

The Pilgrim then rose on a cloud and went to find a village to beg for food. He headed south and saw ancient trees touching the sky—a village of houses. He brought down his cloud and looked carefully. Just look:

Snow oppresssing the fading willow; ice sealing the square pond. Sparse tall bamboo swaying green; Dense tall pines holding their green. A few thatched cottages, half dressed in silver; A little bridge, slanting, plastered with white. By the fence, water-flowers just peeping out; Under the eaves, long icicles hanging down. The soughing cold wind carries a strange fragrance; The snow is so thick you can't see where the plum blossoms open.

The Pilgrim walked along, admiring the village scene, when he heard a creak—a brushwood gate opened, and an old man stepped out. He held a walking stick of wood, wore a sheepskin coat on his head, a patched robe on his body, and straw sandals on his feet. He leaned on his stick and looked up at the sky: "The northwest wind's risen. Tomorrow will be clear."

Before he'd finished, a little pug-dog ran out from behind him, saw the Pilgrim, and began barking furiously.

The old man turned his head and saw the Pilgrim standing with his alms bowl. The Pilgrim bowed and said: "Old benefactor, I am a monk sent by imperial decree from the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven to bow before the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Passing by your precious region, my

master is hungry. I have come to your honored house to beg a meal."

The old man heard this, nodded, and tapped his stick: "Reverend, stop begging for a moment. You've gone the wrong way."

The Pilgrim said: "I haven't."

The old man said: "The great road to the Western Heaven lies due north of here. From here to there is a thousand li. Why don't you go find the main road and travel on it?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "It is due north of here. My master is sitting right now on the main road, waiting for me to bring food."

The old man said: "This monk is talking nonsense. Your master is on the main road waiting for your food—a thousand li away. Even if he could walk, it would take six or seven days, and six or seven days back—wouldn't he starve to death?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "I won't deceive you, old benefactor. I just left my master less than the time it takes to drink a cup of hot tea, and I've already arrived here. Once I've begged the food, I'll be back in time for the noon meal."

The old man was frightened: "This monk is a ghost! A ghost!" He turned to go inside.

The Pilgrim caught hold of him: "Benefactor, where are you going? If you have food, quickly give me some."

The old man said: "Not convenient! Not convenient! Try another house!"

The Pilgrim said: "Benefactor, what a way to do business! You say I'm a thousand li away, and if I try another house, won't that be another thousand li? My master will truly starve to death."

The old man said: "To tell you the truth, my family of six or seven has just washed three sheng of rice and put it in the pot, and it's not cooked yet. You go try somewhere else and come back."

The Pilgrim said: "The ancients said: visiting three houses is worse than sitting at one. I'll wait here, poor monk that I am."

The old man, seeing him so persistent, lost his temper and raised his stick to strike. The Pilgrim stood his ground, not the least afraid. The old man struck him on the shining head seven or eight times—it felt like nothing more than a scratch.

The old man said: "This monk's head is made for butting!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old fellow, hit me as much as you like—just remember to count the strokes clearly. One stroke, one sheng of rice. Measure it out slowly."

Hearing this, the old man threw down his stick, ran inside, shut the door, and shouted: "A ghost! A ghost!" His whole family was terrified, and they locked every door, front and back.

Seeing the door shut, the Pilgrim thought: "That old scoundrel said he'd washed rice and put it in the pot. I don't know if it's true or not. As the saying goes: the Dao converts the worthy, the Buddha converts the foolish. Let old Sun go in and take a look."

The Great Sage pinched the spell, used the art of invisibility, and walked right into the kitchen. Sure enough, the pot was steaming with half a pot of dry rice. He plunged his alms bowl in, scooped it full to the brim, and rode his cloud back—of that no more.

Now the Tang monk sat in the circle, waiting a long time. The Pilgrim didn't return. He leaned forward, gazing anxiously: "Where has that monkey gone to beg for food?"

Bajie, standing beside him, laughed: "Who knows where he's gone to play! Begging for food indeed—and making us sit here in prison!"

Sanzang said: "How is it prison?"

Bajie said: "Master, you don't know. The ancients drew a line on the ground to make a prison. He drew a circle with his cudgel—says it's stronger than copper walls and iron gates. But if a tiger or wolf or demon beast comes, how would it keep them out? We'd just be handed over to them to eat."

Sanzang said: "Wuneng, what do you think we should do?"

Bajie said: "This place has no shelter from the wind, no respite from the cold. If you ask old Pig, we should just follow the road west. When Brother comes back with the food, he can ride his cloud and catch up in no time. If he has food, we eat and then go. We've been sitting here a while, and my feet are freezing!"

Sanzang heard this—and it was the star of ill fortune entering his palace.

[Translator's note: a reference to the astrological belief that when an evil star enters one of the Nine Palaces, misfortune follows.]

He took the idiot's advice, and all of them stepped out of the circle.

The Sha Monk led the horse, Bajie shouldered the load, and the elder walked along the road. Before long they reached the towers and pavilions. It was a house facing south, with a plastered wall at the gate and a gate-tower with an inverted-lotus ornament, painted in five colors. The door was half open, half shut. Bajie tied the horse to the drum-shaped door-stone, the Sha Monk set down his load, and Sanzang, who feared the wind, sat on the threshold.

Bajie said: "Master, this must be the house of some marquis or prime minister. No one's out front—probably all inside warming themselves by the fire. You sit here; let me go in and look."

The Tang monk said: "Be careful! Don't go disturbing anyone."

The idiot said: "I know. Since I joined the Zen gate, I've learned a thing or two about manners. I'm not like some country bumpkin."

The idiot tucked his rake into his belt, straightened his dark brocade robe, and walked in, refined and proper. He saw a three-room hall with the blinds rolled high—silent and empty, no soul in sight, no tables, chairs, or furniture. He went around the screen door and walked further in to a passage hall, and behind it stood a tall tower. The window lattices were half open, and through them he could faintly see a curtain of yellow silk.

The idiot said: "Someone must be afraid of the cold, still sleeping." He went upstairs without ceremony, pulled open the curtain, and had the fright of his life. On the ivory bed, under the curtain, lay a white, gleaming pile of bones. The skull was as big as a bushel basket, the leg bones four or five feet long.

The idiot steadied himself. He couldn't stop the tears from rolling down his cheeks. He nodded at the skull and sighed:

"I know not from what dynasty or age you came, Nor what kingdom or land you served. A marshal's body, perhaps, or a great general's frame. In your day, a hero striving for victory and might; Today, so desolate—nothing but bone and sinew exposed. No wife or child to attend you; No soldier to burn incense before you. Truly, a sight to make one sigh and weep— Alas, for the man who sought to build a kingdom and an empire!"

As Bajie was sighing, he saw a flicker of firelight behind the curtain. "Someone must be tending the incense in the back," he said. He hurried around the curtain to look—but it was only the light coming through the tower window.

On the other side was a lacquered table, with several brocade garments tossed carelessly across it. The idiot picked them up and saw they were three quilted brocade vests. Not caring whether it was right or wrong, he took them downstairs, out through the hall, and to the door. "Master," he said, "there's no one living here. It's a dead man's house. Old Pig went all the way to the top of the tower, and inside the yellow silk curtain there was a pile of bones. By the window were three quilted vests, and I've brought them. It's our luck for this stretch of road. The weather's cold, and they're just the thing. Master, take off your tunic and wear one underneath. It'll keep you warm."

Sanzang said: "No, no! The law says: whether taken openly or stolen, both are theft. If someone finds out and catches us, and we're taken to court, it's a crime of theft. Take them right back and put them where they were! We'll sit here out of the wind and wait for Wukong to come, then be on our way. We who have left the world should not be so fond of petty gains."

Bajie said: "There's no one in sight—even chickens and dogs know nothing of it. Only we know. Who's going to tell? What evidence is there? It's like picking something up off the ground—what does it matter if it was taken openly or stolen?"

Sanzang said: "You're behaving like a fool! Even if people don't know, Heaven covers all! The Dark Emperor left this teaching: 'In a dark room, a guilty heart—the gods' eyes are like lightning.' Hurry up and take them back. Don't covet what is not yours."

The idiot wouldn't listen. He laughed at the Tang monk: "Master, I've worn quite a few vests in my life as a man, but I've never seen quilting like this. You won't wear it? Then let old Pig try it on—test the new, warm up my back. When Brother comes, I'll take it off and we'll return it and be on our way."

The Sha Monk said: "If that's how it is, I'll wear one too."

The two of them stripped off their outer robes and pulled the vests on. They had barely tightened the sashes when, somehow, they couldn't keep their footing—down they went with a crash. Those vests were better than bondage ropes—in an instant, their arms were pinned behind their backs, bound tight against their bodies.

Sanzang stamped his feet in dismay and rushed forward to untie them—but how could he? The three of them raised a great clamor—and that was what roused the demon.

The story goes that the tower and house were indeed conjured up by a demon, who used them day after day to catch people. He was sitting in his cave when he heard the sounds of distress. He hurried out and saw that several people had indeed been bound. The demon called his little demons, went to the spot, dissolved the tower and house, seized the Tang monk, led the white horse, shouldered the luggage, and dragged Bajie and the Sha Monk back to the cave, all together.

The old demon took his seat on the high dais. The little demons pushed the Tang monk to the foot of the dais, and he knelt. The demon asked: "Where are you monks from? How dare you steal my clothes in broad daylight?"

Sanzang, tears dripping, pleaded: "Poor monk that I am, I am sent by imperial decree from the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven for scriptures. I was hungry and sent my senior disciple to beg for food. He hasn't returned. I did not heed his words and mistakenly entered your immortal hall to escape the wind. My two disciples are fond of petty gains and took out the garments. I, poor monk, had no part in it and meant to have them returned. They wouldn't listen to me and wanted to wear them to warm their backs. I never expected to fall into the Great King's trap and be seized. I beg your mercy—spare my life, that

I may seek the true scriptures, and I shall forever remember the Great King's kindness, and proclaim it through the ages in the Eastern Land!"

The demon laughed: "I've often heard it said that whoever eats a piece of the Tang monk's flesh will turn white hair to black and grow new teeth. And today you've come uninvited—and you still hope I'll spare you! What is your senior disciple called, and which way did he go to beg for food?"

Bajie heard this and at once spoke up: "My brother is none other than the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong, who made havoc in the Heavenly Palace five hundred years ago!"

When the demon heard "the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong," he was quite taken aback. He said nothing, but thought to himself: "I've long heard that fellow's magic is vast. Now we meet without expecting it." He ordered: "Little ones, tie up the Tang monk. Untie those two from their precious garments, bind them with rope as well, and haul them to the rear. When I've caught the senior disciple, I'll wash them all together and steam them in one batch."

The little demons obeyed, bound all three, hauled them to the rear, tied the white horse to the trough, and brought the luggage inside. The demons all sharpened their weapons, preparing to capture the Pilgrim—of that no more.

Now the Pilgrim Sun, having snatched a bowl of food from the southern village, rode his cloud back the way he came. He reached the flat ground on the mountainside, brought down his cloud—and the Tang monk was gone. The circle drawn with the cudgel was still there, but the people and the horse were nowhere to be seen. He looked back toward the tower and house—they too were gone, nothing left but strange rocks at the mountain's base.

The Pilgrim's heart sank: "No need to say it—they've fallen into evil hands!" He followed the trail, reading the horse's hoofprints, and headed west in pursuit. After five or six li, still grieving and anxious, he heard voices on the north slope. He looked and saw an old man—felt cloak over his body, warm hat on his head, a pair of half-new half-old oiled boots on his feet, a dragon-head walking stick in his hand, followed by a young page boy carrying a spray of winter plum blossoms, walking and singing from the foot of the slope.

The Pilgrim set down his bowl, went face-to-face with the old man, and bowed: "Venerable sir, this poor monk salutes you."

The old man returned the bow: "Reverend, where do you come from?"

The Pilgrim said: "We come from the Eastern Land, going to the Western Heaven to bow before the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Four of us, master and disciples. My master was hungry, and I went to beg for food, telling the three of them to sit on the flat ground and wait. When I came back, they were gone. I don't know which road they took. I ask you, sir—did you see them?"

The old man heard this and gave a cold laugh: "Your three companions—was one of them a long-snouted, big-eared fellow?"

The Pilgrim said: "Yes, yes, yes!"

"And another with a sallow, unlucky face, leading a white horse and accompanying a white-faced, plump monk?"

The Pilgrim said: "Yes, yes, yes!"

The old man said: "You've gone the wrong way. Don't bother looking for them—each of you had better look to his own life."

The Pilgrim said: "The white-faced one is my master; the strange-looking ones are my brothers. I and they have sworn a devout heart to go to the Western Heaven for scriptures. How can I not seek them?"

The old man said: "I just passed by and saw them take a wrong path—straight into a demon's maw."

The Pilgrim said: "I beg you, sir, to instruct me—what demon is it, and where does he dwell? I'll go to his gate and demand my people back, and we'll go on to the Western Heaven."

The old man said: "This mountain is called Jindou Mountain. In front of it is Jindou Cave, and in the cave lives the Single-Horned Rhinoceros King. His magic is vast and his might is fearsome. Those three have no hope left—you may be sure of it. If you go looking, I fear you'll not be safe either. Better not to go. I won't stop you, and I won't keep you—judge for yourself."

The Pilgrim bowed twice in thanks: "Many thanks for your instruction, sir. How could I not go and look?" He handed the food to the old man, and put away the empty bowl.

The old man set down his stick, took the bowl, handed it to the page boy, and showed his true form. The two of them knelt and kowtowed: "Great Sage, we little spirits dared not hide it from you. We two are the mountain god and the local deity of this place, sent here to receive the Great Sage. We'll keep the food and bowl for the Great Sage, so that he may be light of body and free to use his magic power. When the Tang monk is saved from his peril, the food can be offered to him—this will show the Great Sage's utmost devotion and filial piety."

The Pilgrim barked: "You hairy little spirits, begging for a beating! You knew I was coming—why didn't you welcome me at once? Instead you hid your heads and tails like this—what's the meaning of it?"

The local deity said: "The Great Sage is impatient. We little spirits didn't dare act hastily, fearing to offend your august presence, so we hid our forms and told you this way."

The Pilgrim cooled his temper: "I'll let the beating go for now! Guard the bowl well! I'm going to catch that demon!" The mountain god and the local deity obeyed.

The Great Sage then tightened his tiger-sinew sash, hiked up his tiger-skin kilt, gripped his gold-banded cudgel, and strode to the front of the mountain to find the demon's cave. He rounded the cliff and saw, among the tumbled rocks on the emerald slope, two stone doors. Outside, many little demons were whirling spears and brandishing swords. Truly:

Mist and clouds gathered in auspicious lines; Moss and lichen piled up in green. Jagged strange rocks arrayed; Winding, crooked paths entwined. Apes howl and birds cry—the scenery fair; Phoenixes fly and simurghs dance—as though in Penglai. On the sunny slope, a few plum trees newly bloomed; In the warming air, a thousand stalks of bamboo green. Beneath the sheer cliff, snow heaped white as powder; In the deep ravine, water frozen to ice. Two groves of pine and cypress, lovely through a thousand years; A few clusters of mountain camellia, all the same red.

The Great Sage looked his fill, then strode to the gate and called in a loud voice: "You little demons! Go in and tell your master: I am the disciple of the holy monk of the Tang empire, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong. Tell him to hand my master back at once, or I'll teach every one of you to lose your lives!"

The little demons scurried inside and reported: "Great King, outside there's a hairy-faced, beak-mouthed monk calling himself the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong. He's come for his master."

The demon king heard this and rejoiced: "Just what I wanted! Since I left my palace and came down to the mortal world, I've never had a chance to test my martial skill. Today he comes—he'll be a worthy opponent." He ordered: "Little ones, bring out the weapons!" The demons of the cave, great and small, all buckled up. They brought out a twelve-foot steel-tipped spear and handed it to the old demon.

The old demon gave the command: "Little ones, fall in! Those who press forward will be rewarded; those who fall back will be executed!" The demons fell in, following the old demon, and surged out the gate. He called: "Which one is Sun Wukong?"

The Pilgrim stepped out from the side. He saw the demon king—what a fierce and ugly sight!

One horn, jagged and awry; twin eyes flashing bright. On his crown, thick hide jutting in lumps; At his ear-roots, black hide gleaming slick and smooth. His tongue, long, kept flicking to his nose; His mouth, wide, with slab-like yellow teeth. Hide and hair, blue as indigo; Sinews and muscles, hard as steel. Lesser than a rhino—he can't mirror himself in water; Bigger than an ox—but he's no plowman. He has no gift for gazing at the moon and breathing clouds; He has all the might to shake the earth and bully the sky. Two sinewy, indigo-blue hands; A proud and upright steel-tipped spear. Look well upon this fearsome form— Well worthy of the name: the Rhinoceros King!

The Great Sage Sun stepped forward: "Your Grandfather Sun is right here! Hand back my master at once, and neither side need suffer harm! One word of no, and I'll see you dead without a burial place!"

The demon barked: "You brazen monkey-fiend! What powers do you have, to make such boasts?"

The Pilgrim said: "You wretch, you've never seen old Sun's powers!"

The demon said: "Your master stole my garments, and I caught him. Now I'm about to steam and eat him. What kind of hero are you, to dare come to my gate and demand him back?"

The Pilgrim said: "My master is a loyal, righteous, and honest monk. How could he have stolen any demon's thing?"

The demon said: "I conjured up an immortal manor by the mountain road. Your master sneaked inside and, his heart stirred by desire, stole three of my quilted brocade vests and put them on. I have the evidence in hand—that's why I seized him. If you truly have skill, then fight me. If you can stand three rounds, I'll spare your master's life. If you can't, I'll send you down the road to join the dead!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You wretch! No more talk! You say 'fight'—that's just what old Sun likes. Come up and take my cudgel!"

The monster feared no contest. He leveled his steel spear and thrust at the Pilgrim's face. What a battle! Just look:

Gold-banded cudgel raised; long-shafted spear meets it. The gold-banded cudgel raised, bright as lightning, a golden serpent flashing; The long-shafted spear meets it, gleaming like a dragon rising from the black sea. The little demons at the gate beat drums, forming ranks to add their wind of menace; On this side, the Great Sage puts forth his power, flaunting his prowess with every stroke. Over there, one spear, spirit high and proud; Over here, one cudgel, martial arts strong and great. Truly, a hero meeting a hero; Indeed, a rival meeting a rival. The demon king breathes out purple mist, coiling in smoke; The Great Sage's eyes shoot forth radiance, gathering in brocade clouds. Only because the Tang monk was in peril Did the two strive, ruthless, round on round.

The two fought thirty rounds with no victor. The demon king, seeing Sun Wukong's cudgel-work so precise—every thrust and parry without a single gap—cried out in admiration: "Good monkey! Good monkey! Truly the skill of the one who made havoc in Heaven!"

The Great Sage, for his part, admired the demon's spear-work—not a flaw, covering left and right with true skill—and he too called out: "Good demon! Good demon! Truly a demon who's stolen the elixir!"

The two fought another ten or twenty rounds. The demon pointed his spear-tip at the ground and shouted for the little demons to join in. Those wretches, one and all, took up swords and staves, spears and swords, and ringed the Great Sage Sun in the center.

The Pilgrim, not the least afraid, cried: "Good! Good! Just what I wanted!" He swung his gold-banded cudgel, parrying in front and blocking behind, fending left and fending right. But the mob of demons wouldn't retreat. The Pilgrim lost patience. He tossed the gold-banded cudgel into the air and shouted: "Change!"—and it became a thousand, a hundred iron cudgels, flying through the air like serpents and dragons, raining down everywhere. The demons saw this and scattered in terror, clutching their heads, tucking their necks, every one fleeing back into the cave for his life.

The old demon king laughed coldly: "That monkey—don't be rude! Watch this!" He hastily drew from his sleeve a bright, white, gleaming ring, tossed it into the air, and cried: "Catch!" With a whoosh, the gold-banded cudgel was gathered into a single rod and snatched away—leaving the Great Sage Sun bare-handed. He somersaulted away and fled for his life.

The demon, victorious, returned to his cave. The Pilgrim, dazed, had lost his chief treasure. Truly:

The Way rises a foot, the Demon rises ten; The heart in turmoil, the spirit dim, they mistook the way home. A pity—the Dharma body had no settled seat; The instant the thought goes wrong, disaster follows.

But how this affair turned out in the end—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 51

The Mind-Monkey Spends a Thousand Plans in Vain; Water and Fire Prove Powerless to Smelt the Demon

The story goes that the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, beaten from the field and empty-handed, came and sat down behind Jindou Mountain, tears dripping from his eyes as he cried: "Master! I had hoped that you and I—

Would share the Buddha's grace, in kindly concord, Born together, living together, beyond all measure of heart; Dwelling together, cultivating together, freed together, Of one compassion, of one thought, showing the spirit's power. One karma, one aspect—our hearts truly matched; One seeing, one knowing—the Way turned free and clear. Who could have known that now I'd have no staff to lean on— With naked fists and bare feet, how shall I flourish?"

The Great Sage mourned a long while, then thought to himself: "That demon knew me. I remember him praising me on the battlefield: 'Truly one of the kind that made havoc in Heaven!' If that's so, he's certainly no common monster of the mortal world—he must be some baleful star of Heaven. Perhaps his thoughts turned to the world below and he came down; or perhaps he's some devil-head descended from somewhere else. I'd better go up to the upper regions and make some inquiries."

This done, the Pilgrim questioned his own heart, decided on his own course, and at once sprang up, mounted auspicious clouds, and went straight to the gate of the South Heaven. Lifting his head, he saw Heavenly King Guangmu coming to meet him face to face, who bowed low and said: "Where is the Great Sage bound?"

"I have business with the Jade Emperor," said the Pilgrim. "What are you doing here?"

"Today it's my turn to inspect the South Gate of Heaven."

Hardly were the words out when he saw the four marshals Ma, Zhao, Wen, and Guan saluting him: "Great Sage, forgive us for not coming out to meet you. Please have some tea."

"I have business," said the Pilgrim. So he took leave of Guangmu and the four marshals and went straight in through the South Gate of Heaven, all the way to outside the Hall of Divine Mists. And there indeed were the four Heavenly Masters—Zhang Daoling, the Immortal Elder Ge, Xu Jingyang, and Qiu Hongji—together with the Six Offices of the Southern Dipper and the Seven Essences of the Northern Dipper, all gathered before the hall to greet the Pilgrim. Raising their hands together, they said: "How comes the Great Sage here?" And they asked: "Is the merit of escorting the Tang monk finished?"

"Far from it, far from it!" said the Pilgrim. "The road is long and the demons many—only half the work is done. Right now we're held up at Jindou Cave on Jindou Mountain. There's a rhinoceros monster that has seized my master the Tang monk and holds him in his cave. Old Sun went to his door and fought a round with him, but that fellow's magic powers are vast—he snatched away old Sun's gold-banded cudgel, and that's why the demon king is so hard to bind. I suspect he's some baleful star of the upper regions whose thoughts turned to the world below—or some devil-head descended from somewhere. Old Sun has come to look for the Jade Emperor and ask him why he keeps his household in such poor order."

Xu Jingyang laughed: "This monkey's as ready with his insolence as ever!"

"It's not insolence," said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun's whole life, my mouth has been a tight one—that's how I always find the root of a thing."

"No need for more talk," said Zhang Daoling. "Let us simply announce him."

"Many thanks, many thanks!" said the Pilgrim. Then the four Heavenly Masters reported to the Hall of Divine Mists and led him in for audience with the Jade Emperor.

The Pilgrim sang out a great "Ah-o!" to the throne: "Old worthy, much obliged to you, much obliged! Old Sun is protecting the Tang monk on the journey to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures, and all along the way it's been more peril than good fortune—no need to tell you of that. Now we have come to Jindou Cave on Jindou Mountain, where a rhinoceros monster has seized the Tang monk in his cave, heaven knows whether to steam him, boil him, or dry him in the sun. Old Sun went to his door and did battle with him, and the monster seemed in some ways to know old Sun. Truly his magic powers are vast: he snatched away old Sun's gold-banded cudgel, and so the demon cannot be bound. I suspect he is some baleful star of Heaven whose thoughts turned to the world below, and for this reason old Sun has come especially to memorialize, humbly begging the Celestial Worthy in his mercy to see clearly and deign to issue a decree: let the baleful stars be examined, troops dispatched, and the demon wiped out. Old Sun trembles in awe beyond all words!"

And he bowed again, deeply, saying: "So be it heard."

At the side the Immortal Elder Ge laughed: "Monkey, what's all this haughty-before-and-humble-after?"

"I wouldn't presume, I wouldn't presume!" said the Pilgrim. "It's not being haughty before and humble after. It's just that old Sun these days has no cudgel to play with."

When the Jade Emperor, the Celestial Worthy, heard the memorial, he at once issued a decree to the Bureau of Ke-Han: "As Wukong has memorialized, go and examine all the heavenly stars and the god-kings of the various constellations—whether any of them have let their thoughts turn to the mortal world below. Then report back at once, so that it may be heard."

The True Lord, the Aged Sire of Ke-Han, received the decree and went at once with the Great Sage to make the examination. First they examined the god-kings and officials at the gates of the four heavens; next they examined the great and small host of true ones within the three subtle enclosures; then they examined the officers and generals of the Thunder Ministry—Tao, Zhang, Xin, Deng, Gou, Bi, Pang, and Liu; last of all they examined the thirty-three heavens—every heaven at peace. They examined the twenty-eight constellations: the seven of the east—Jiao, Kang, Di, Fang, Xin, Wei, Ji; the seven of the west—Dou, Niu, Nü, Xu, Wei, Shi, Bi; the seven of the south and the seven of the north—every constellation secure. They examined the sun and the moon, and the seven governors—water, fire, wood, metal, earth; and Luo Hou, Ji Du, Rahu's tail, and Bo, the four remaining stars. Of all the stars that filled the sky, not one had let his thoughts stray to the world below.

"Since that's how it is," said the Pilgrim, "old Sun needn't go up to the Hall of Divine Mists and trouble the Jade Emperor—far too much of an imposition. Go back and make your report yourself. I'll just wait here for your reply."

The True Lord, the Aged Sire of Ke-Han, obeyed.

Sun the Pilgrim waited a good long while, and composed a poem to mark the occasion:

The wind is clear, the clouds have parted—joy in the age of peace; The gods are still, the stars shine bright—auspicious omens shown. The River of Stars at rest, Heaven and Earth in harmony, The five quarters and eight ends have laid away their spears and banners.

The True Lord, the Aged Sire of Ke-Han, having made his examination point by point, reported back to the Jade Emperor: "Of all the stars that fill the sky, not one is missing; the god-generals of every quarter are all present. Not one has let his thoughts turn to the world below."

The Jade Emperor, hearing the report, said: "Let Sun Wukong select a few heavenly generals and go down to seize the demon."

The four Heavenly Masters, bearing the decree, came out of the Hall of Divine Mists and said to the Pilgrim: "Great Sage, the Jade Emperor in his grace declares that no god in the heavenly palace has strayed to the mortal world, and orders you to select a few heavenly generals to go capture the demon."

The Pilgrim lowered his head and thought secretly: "In Heaven the generals inferior to old Sun are many, and those superior to old Sun are few. I recall when I made havoc in Heaven, the Jade Emperor sent a hundred thousand heavenly troops and spread nets of heaven and snares of earth, and never a single general dared cross hands with me. Only later, when they summoned the Little Sage Erlang, did I meet my match. Now this monster's skill is even stronger than old Sun's—how am I ever to win?"

Xu Jingyang said: "That was one moment, this is another—vastly different. As the common saying goes, one thing subdues another. Would you defy the imperial decree? Choose your heavenly generals by your own best judgment, and don't delay and spoil the business."

The Pilgrim said: "Since that's how it is, I'm deeply grateful for the grace above. Truly the decree must not be defied. And besides, old Sun can't very well come this far for nothing. I must trouble you, Jingyang, to memorialize the Jade Emperor again: let only Heavenly King Li, the pagoda-bearer, and Prince Nezha go down—they still have a few demon-subduing weapons—and let them fight one round with that monster, to see how it goes. If they truly can seize him, that's old Sun's good fortune; if not, we'll make other plans then."

The Heavenly Master did indeed memorialize to the Jade Emperor, and the Jade Emperor ordered Heavenly King Li and his son to lead their host of heavenly troops and go reinforce the Pilgrim. The Heavenly King, having received the decree, came to join the Pilgrim, and the Pilgrim said again to the Heavenly Master:

"For the Jade Emperor's dispatching the Heavenly King, thanks beyond all telling. There is one more matter—pray convey it too: let us have two Thunder Officers to use. When the Heavenly King is fighting, let the Thunder Officers loose a thunderbolt from the clouds and blast that demon king on the crown of his head—a very excellent plan."

The Heavenly Master laughed: "Good! Good! Good!" And the Heavenly Master memorialized again to the Jade Emperor, who issued a decree ordering the Ministry of the Ninefold Heaven to appoint Deng Hua and Zhang Fan, the two Thunder Officers, to join the Heavenly King in binding the demon and relieving the distress. So they went down with the Heavenly King and the Great Sage Sun, straight out the South Gate of Heaven.

In an instant they arrived. "This is Jindou Mountain," said the Pilgrim, "and in the middle of it is Jindou Cave. Let all of you gentlemen take counsel—which of us shall go first to challenge him to battle?"

The Heavenly King brought his cloud to a halt and stationed the heavenly troops at the foot of the mountain's southern slope, saying: "Great Sage, you know well that my son Nezha once subdued the demons of ninety-six caves and is a master of transformations, with demon-subduing weapons always about his person. He must be the one to go out first and give battle."

"Since that's so," said the Pilgrim, "let old Sun lead the prince there." That prince roused his heroic might, and with the Great Sage leapt onto the high mountain and went straight to the mouth of the cave. There they saw the cave door shut fast, and not a demon in sight below the cliff.

The Pilgrim stepped forward and shouted: "Vile monster! Open the door! Give me back my master!"

The little demons who kept the gate inside saw him and rushed to report: "Great King, Sun the Pilgrim has brought a little boy to shout for battle at our gate."

"That monkey's iron cudgel was snatched by me," said the demon king. "With bare hands he can't contend—he must have fetched reinforcements. Bring my weapons!" The demon king grasped his spear and went out the door to look. That little boy had been born with a singularly fine face, and was sturdy and vigorous beyond measure. Truly:

A face like jade, fresh and fair as the full moon; Red lips and a square mouth showing teeth of silver. Eyes flashing lightning, the eyeballs prominent; A broad brow aglow like sunset clouds, the hair in tufts bound up. Embroidered ribbons dance in the wind, flying colored flames; A brocade robe gleams in the sun, bursting with golden flowers. The ringed sash gleams, the heart-mirror set upon it; The precious armor shines, setting off his battle boots. Small of body but huge of voice, magnificent and bold— Nezha the fierce, threefold guardian of the Faith.

The demon king laughed: "You are the third son of Heavenly King Li, called Prince Nezha. What brings you to my door shouting and bawling?"

The prince said: "Because you, vile monster, have made havoc and trapped the holy monk of the Eastern Land, I have come especially by golden decree of the Jade Emperor to seize you!"

The demon king flew into a rage: "I suppose Sun Wukong fetched you here. Well, I am that holy monk's devil-head! What arts can a whelp like you have, to dare let loose such wild talk? Don't run! Take a thrust of my spear!" The prince wielded his demon-slicing sword and met him with a parry.

The moment the two of them closed grips and began to contend, the Great Sage swung round the mountainside and called: "Where are the Thunder Officers? Go quickly—hurl a thunderbolt at the demon and help the prince subdue him!"

The two officers, Deng and Zhang, trod the cloud-light and were just about to strike when they saw the prince work his magic: he shook his body, changed, and became three-headed and six-armed, six weapons in his hands, hacking toward the demon. The demon king too changed into three heads and six arms, and with three long spears held him off. Then the prince displayed his demon-subduing magic power once more, hurling the six weapons up into the air. And what were those six weapons? They were the demon-slicing sword, the demon-beheading saber, the demon-binding rope, the demon-quelling pestle, the embroidered ball, and the fire-wheel. With a great shout of "Change!" one became ten, ten became a hundred, a hundred a thousand, a thousand ten thousand—all the same weapons, like pelting rain and hail, dense and numberless, smashing down upon the demon.

The demon king stood entirely unafraid. With one hand he drew out that white, gleaming ring, flung it into the air, and cried "Hit!"—and with a whirring rush it swept all six weapons down. In a panic Prince Nezha fled for his life bare-handed, and the demon king returned in triumph.

The two Thunder Officers, Deng and Zhang, up in mid-air, chuckled in secret: "Lucky for us we watched how the wind lay first and never loosed our thunderbolts. If he'd snatched those away too, how could we ever show our faces again before the Celestial Worthy?"

The two officers brought down their clouds, and with the prince came to the foot of the southern slope, where they told Heavenly King Li: "That demon truly has vast magic powers!"

Wukong laughed at the side: "That fellow's magic is only so-so—it's that ring of his that's the devil. I don't know what treasure it is, but once thrown up it can snare anything."

Nezha said bitterly: "This Great Sage is a poor sort of man! We've lost our weapons and been beaten from the field—we're worried sick, and all on your account. Yet you stand there laughing! What's the joke?"

"You speak of worry," said the Pilgrim. "Do you think old Sun isn't worried? I'm at my wits' end. I can't cry, so all I can do is laugh."

"What's to be the outcome of all this?" asked the Heavenly King.

"Whatever plans you all may make," said the Pilgrim, "only something the ring can't carry off will catch him."

"What the ring can't carry off," said the Heavenly King, "is water and fire—nothing is stronger. As the common saying goes, water and fire know no mercy."

"That's well said!" said the Pilgrim. "Stay seated here in peace while old Sun makes another trip to Heaven."

"What for this time?" asked the two officers, Deng and Zhang.

"This trip of old Sun's," said the Pilgrim, "needn't trouble the Jade Emperor with a memorial. I'll only go inside the South Gate of Heaven, up to the Palace of Crimson Splendor, and ask the Star Lord of Fire, Yinghuo, to come down and set a fire going—to give that monster a good burning. Perhaps we'll burn that ring to ashes along with him and catch the demon. First, we'll recover your weapons and you can return to Heaven; second, my master's ordeal can be relieved."

Hearing this, the prince was delighted. "No need to hesitate," he said. "Great Sage, go early and come back early. We'll wait here with folded hands."

The Pilgrim mounted auspicious light and came again outside the South Gate of Heaven. Guangmu and the four generals came to meet him: "How comes the Great Sage again?"

"Heavenly King Li sent the prince out to battle," said the Pilgrim, "and in a single round that demon king fished away his six weapons. I'm on my way to the Palace of Crimson Splendor to ask the Star Lord of Fire to reinforce us."

The four generals dared not detain him, and let him pass in. Reaching the Palace of Crimson Splendor, he saw the host of gods of the Fire Ministry, who went in at once to report: "Sun Wukong desires an audience with my lord."

The Star Lord of Fire of the South, of the three dais, straightened his robes, came out the door to welcome him in, and said: "Yesterday the Bureau of Ke-Han made its inspection of my humble palace—there was not one whose thoughts had strayed to the world below."

"I know," said the Pilgrim. "But Heavenly King Li and the prince have been beaten from the field and lost their weapons. I've come especially to beg you to come to the rescue."

"That Nezha," said the Star Lord, "is the Great God of the Ocean-Congregation of the Three Altars. When he came into the world he subdued the demons of ninety-six caves, and his magic powers are vast. If even he could not prevail, how dare a minor god like me hope to?"

"Take counsel with Heavenly King Li," said the Pilgrim, "and it's this: the sharpest things between Heaven and Earth are water and fire alone. That monster has a ring that can snare anything whatever—I know not what treasure it is. But since it's said that fire can consume all things, I've come especially to beg the Star Lord to lead the Fire Ministry down to the lower world and burn that demon, and save my master from his ordeal."

Hearing this, the Star Lord of Fire at once mustered the divine troops of his ministry and came with the Pilgrim to the foot of the southern slope of Jindou Mountain, where they met the Heavenly King, the Thunder Officers, and the rest.

The Heavenly King said: "Great Sage Sun, you go call that fellow out again, and I'll give him battle. When he starts swinging that ring about, I'll dodge aside, and we'll have the Star Lord of Fire command his host and burn him."

"Just so," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Let's you and I go." The Star Lord of Fire, with the prince and the two officers Deng and Zhang, stood atop a high peak to watch him give the challenge.

The Great Sage came to the mouth of Jindou Cave and called: "Open the door! Give me back my master at once!" The little demon again rushed to report: "Sun Wukong's come again!" The demon king led his host out of the cave, and seeing the Pilgrim, said:

"You brazen monkey! What soldiers have you fetched this time?"

From this side stepped forth the pagoda-bearing Heavenly King, who shouted: "Vile demon-head! Do you know me?"

The demon king laughed: "Heavenly King Li—I suppose you've come to avenge your son and get his weapons back?"

"First, to avenge my son and recover the weapons," said the Heavenly King, "and second, to seize you and save the Tang monk! Don't run! Take a stroke of my blade!" The monster swerved aside to dodge, leveled his long spear, and returned the stroke as it came.

The two of them fought before the cave—what a battle! Just look:

The Heavenly King's blade hacks, the monster's spear parries. The blade hacks—frost-light spouting fierce fire; The spear parries—keen vapors bursting into gloomy clouds. One is a vicious monster bred by Jindou Mountain; One is a heavenly god dispatched from the Hall of Divine Mists. The one, to bully the Chan nature, displays his might; The other, to save his master from harm, unfolds the great bond of duty. The Heavenly King works his magic, sending sand and stones flying; The demon monster, contending for mastery, stirs up dust and dirt. Stirring dust can darken Heaven and Earth; Flying sand can muddy the seas and rivers. Both sides strain for victory and merit— And all for the Tang monk, who bows to the World-Honored One.

Sun the Great Sage, seeing the two locked in combat, turned at once and leapt onto the high peak, and said to the Star Lord of Fire: "Lord of the Three Dais—on your guard!" Watch now: just as the demon and the Heavenly King fought to the best part, the demon drew out the ring again. The Heavenly King saw it, at once wheeled his auspicious light, and fled from the field. From the high peak the Star Lord of Fire hurriedly passed the command, ordering the host of fire gods to let loose the flames together. And this fire was truly a fearsome thing. What fire!

The Classic says: "The South is the essence of fire." Though a single spark of fire can burn ten thousand acres of field, this was the might of the three dais, able to transform itself into fire of a hundred forms. Now there were fire-lances, fire-sabers, fire-bows, fire-arrows, each division of gods with its own device. See them: across mid-air, fire-crows flying and shrieking; over the whole mountaintop, fire-horses galloping. Red rats two by two, fire-dragons pair by pair—red rats two by two spouting fierce flames, ten thousand miles all red; fire-dragons pair by pair belching thick smoke, a thousand quarters all black. Fire-carts rolled out, fire-gourds burst open. The fire-banners waved, a whole sky of rosy glow; The fire-staves churned, the whole ground ablaze. Never mind Ning Qi whipping his ox—this outdid Zhou Yu's fire at the Red Cliffs. This was heavenly fire, no common blaze, a truly fearsome thing—crackling, roaring, a whirlwind of red flame!

When the demon saw the fire coming, he showed not the least fear. He flung the ring into the air, and with a whirring rush it swept down the fire-dragons and fire-horses, the fire-crows and fire-rats, the fire-lances and fire-sabers, the fire-bows and fire-arrows, all in one snare. Then he turned back to his cave, victorious, and

gathered in his troops.

The Star Lord of Fire, a bare, empty banner in his hand, called back his generals, joined the Heavenly King and the others, and sat down at the foot of the southern slope. "Great Sage," he said to the Pilgrim, "this fierce demon is truly a rare thing! I've lost all my fire gear—what's to be done now?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "No need for complaint. Gentlemen, pray sit at ease a while, and let old Sun go once more."

"And where are you off to this time?" asked the Heavenly King.

"That monster doesn't fear fire," said the Pilgrim, "so surely he fears water. As the common saying goes, water overcomes fire. Let old Sun go inside the North Gate of Heaven and ask the Star Lord of Water to spread out his waters and pour them flooding into that cave, drown the demon king, and get your gear back for you."

"The plan is clever," said the Heavenly King, "but I fear he'll drown your master as well."

"No matter!" said the Pilgrim. "If he drowns my master, old Sun has a way to bring him back to life. Keeping you gentlemen waiting this long—now that's truly unseemly."

"Since that's so," said the Star Lord of Fire, "pray be off, pray be off."

What a Great Sage! He mounted his somersault cloud again and went straight outside the North Gate of Heaven. Lifting his head suddenly, he saw Heavenly King Duowen coming forward to salute him: "Where is the Great Sage Sun bound?"

"I have business in the Palace of Vast Billows with the Star Lord of Water. What are you doing here?"

"Today it's my turn on inspection." Even as they spoke, he saw the four great heavenly generals Pang, Liu, Gou, and Bi come to greet him and invite him to tea.

"No need, no need!" said the Pilgrim. "My business is urgent!"

So he took leave of the gods and went straight to the Palace of Vast Billows, where he had the gods of the Water Ministry announce him at once.

The gods reported: "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong, is here."

Hearing this, the Star Lord of Water at once dismissed the dragon kings he had assembled—the four seas, the five lakes, the eight rivers, the four streams, the three rivers and nine branches, and the dragon kings of every place—straightened his cap, bound his sash, welcomed the Pilgrim out the palace gate and led him in, saying: "Yesterday the Bureau of Ke-Han made its search of my humble palace, fearing some god of my ministry had let his thoughts stray to the world below to make trouble. I was just here taking the muster of the gods of rivers, seas, and streams—not yet finished."

"That demon king is no god of rivers and streams," said the Pilgrim. "He is a spirit of vast powers. First the Jade Emperor in his grace sent Heavenly King Li and his son with two Thunder Officers down to seize him, and the monster used that ring of his and snatched away six divine weapons. Old Sun, helpless, went up to the Palace of Crimson Splendor and asked the Star Lord of Fire to command the host of the Fire Ministry and set a blaze—but the fire-dragons, fire-horses, and all the rest were snatched away by that ring as well. I figure that since the creature doesn't fear fire, he must fear water, and I've come especially to beg the Star Lord to spread out his waters, help me catch that demon, and recover the weapons to return to the heavenly generals. My master's ordeal may be relieved too."

Hearing this, the Star Lord of Water at once ordered the Water Uncle, the divine king of the Yellow River: "Go with the Great Sage and help in the work." The Water Uncle drew from his sleeve a white jade bowl and said: "I have this vessel to hold the water."

"Look at this bowl—how much can it hold?" said the Pilgrim. "How is it going to drown a demon?"

"I'll not deceive the Great Sage," said the Water Uncle. "This one bowl of mine is the water of the Yellow River. Half a bowl is half the river; one bowl is the whole river."

The Pilgrim rejoiced: "Half a bowl is plenty!" So he took leave of the Star Lord of Water, and with the god of the Yellow River hastened away from the heavenly palace.

The Water Uncle dipped the bowl half-full from the Yellow River and followed the Great Sage to Jindou Mountain. At the foot of the southern slope they saw the Heavenly King, the prince, the Thunder Officers, and the Star Lord of Fire, and told the whole story of what had passed. Said the Pilgrim: "No need to tell it all—just let the Water Uncle come with me. When I've called open his door, don't wait for him to come out—pour the water straight through the doorway, drown that whole nest of monsters in one flood, and then old Sun will fish out my master's body and revive him soon enough."

The Water Uncle obeyed, following close behind the Pilgrim. They rounded the mountainside and went straight to the mouth of the cave, and the Pilgrim called: "Demon! Open the door!" The little demon at the gate, hearing the Great Sage Sun's voice, rushed in again to report: "Sun Wukong's come again!"

Hearing this, the demon took his treasure, grasped his spear, and strode out; with a crash he opened the stone door. The Water Uncle tilted the white jade bowl and poured the water in. But the demon, seeing it was water coming, dropped his spear, hurriedly drew out the ring, and propped it against the inner gate. And then watch: that flood of water came gurgling and welling right back out again, and the Great Sage Sun, in a panic, hastily mounted his somersault cloud with the Water Uncle and leapt onto a high peak.

The Heavenly King and all the rest brought their clouds to a stop before the high peak to watch. The water surged and swelled—a truly wild torrent. What water! Truly:

From one ladle it grew, indeed unfathomable. This was the turning of divine power, Which benefits all things and swells the hundred streams.

Hear its murmuring, shaking the valleys; See it surging, overspreading the sky. Its mighty roar like thunder racing; Its furious waves like snow rolling and toppling. Waves a thousand fathoms high flood the roads; Billows in ten thousand tiers churn over the cliffs. Cool and clear as water rinsing jade; Rolling and booming like plucked strings. Striking the rocks, it spouts shattered jade in sparkling spray; Whirling back, the eddies spin in circling hollows. Into every hollow and dip it drifts and spreads, Filling ravines and channels, linking high and low.

The Pilgrim saw it, and his heart misgave him: "This is bad! The water's flooding over the fields and drowning the people's farmland—it never got into his cave. What's the good of it?" He called to the Water Uncle to hurry and gather the water back.

"Your little god only knows how to let the water out," said the Water Uncle. "I don't know how to gather it in. As the common saying goes, spilled water cannot be recovered."

Well! That mountain was high and steep, and the flood could only run toward the low places. In a little while it had scattered away on every side into the ravines and gullies.

Then they saw several little demons leap out of the cave, bawling and shouting outside, stretching their fists and rolling up their sleeves, twirling staves and grasping spears, frolicking and capering as merrily as ever.

"That water never got into the cave after all," said the Heavenly King. "A whole flood wasted!"

The Pilgrim could not hold down the fury in his heart. Clenching both fists, he charged up to the demon's gate and bellowed: "Where do you run! Take that!" The little demons, terrified, dropped their spears and staves and fled inside, trembling as they reported: "Great King, he's come to strike!"

The demon king leveled his long spear and came out to meet him at the door: "You brazen monkey, what a lazy rascal you are! Beaten by me again and again, and water and fire couldn't touch me either—how do you come trooping back to throw your life away?"

"That's talking backwards, sonny!" said the Pilgrim. "We'll see whether it's my life or yours! Step up and take a fist from your old grandpa!"

The demon laughed: "This monkey certainly loves to wrangle! I fight with a spear and he wants to fight with fists. A scrawny fist like that can't be bigger than a walnut—hardly a hammer to boast of! Very well, very well! I'll set my spear aside and walk a round of fisticuffs with you!"

"Well said!" the Pilgrim laughed. "Come on!"

The demon tucked up his robes, stepped forward, struck a stance, and raised both fists—looking for all the world like a pair of iron oil-hammers. The Great Sage planted his feet, shifted his body, and spread his moves; before the cave gate he traded blows with the demon king. What a fight! Ah!

The great four-square stance flung wide, double flying kicks kicked high. Blows to the ribs, chops to the chest, rams and butts; Gouging the heart, plucking the gall—every stroke telling. The Immortal Points the Way; Old Master rides the crane. The Hungry Tiger pounces on its prey—most dangerous of all; The River Dragon sporting in the water—full of fury. The demon king used the Python Turns Over; The Great Sage answered with the Deer Sheds His Horns. Heels kicked up in the Sudden Dragon; wrists twisted in the Pulling the Bellows. The Green Lion opens wide its jaws; The Carp dives and springs off its spine. Blossoms scattered over the crown; The rope coiled round the waist. The fan pasted flat against the wind; The sudden rain hurrying the flowers down. The demon threw out the Guanyin Palm; The Pilgrim answered with the Arhat Kick. Long blows, wide and open, may be loose and easy— How can they match short punches, tight and cutting? The two of them held out through dozens of rounds, One skill against the other, neither stronger, neither weaker.

As the two of them fought before the cave door, watch from the high peak: Heavenly King Li, delighted, cried out his applause at the top of his voice, and the Star Lord of Fire clapped his hands in praise. The two Thunder Officers and Prince Nezha led the host of gods leaping to the front, all eager to go and help; and on the other side the crowd of demons waved banners, beat drums, danced swords and swung sabers to guard their king together.

Sun the Great Sage saw that things were going badly, plucked a handful of his hairs, flung them into the air, and cried "Change!" At once they became thirty or fifty little monkeys, who surged forward in a mass and entangled the demon—hugging his legs, tugging his waist, clawing his eyes, plucking his fur. The monster panicked, and hurriedly brought out the ring. The Great Sage, the Heavenly King, and the rest, seeing him produce his snare, wheeled their clouds around and fled up onto the high peak.

The demon flung the ring up into the air, and with a whirring rush it gathered in the thirty or fifty little monkeys, turning them back into hairs, and swept them into the cave. Victorious, he led his troops inside, shut the door, and went off to celebrate.

The prince said: "The Great Sage Sun is a true hero! That whole round of boxing was like flowers added to brocade—and the body-splitting magic, that's glory indeed before one's fellows."

The Pilgrim laughed: "You gentlemen have been watching from afar—how does that monster's skill compare with old Sun's?"

"His fists were loose and his feet slow," said Heavenly King Li. "Not the match of the Great Sage's swiftness. When he saw us coming, he began to worry; and when he saw you work the body-splitting magic, he panicked—that's why he brought out that snare of his."

"The demon king is easy enough to manage," said the Pilgrim. "It's only the ring that's hard to beat."

"To win," said the Star Lord of Fire and the Water Uncle, "we'd have to get hold of that treasure of his first. Then he could be caught."

"And how is that treasure of his to be gotten?" said the Pilgrim. "Only by stealing it."

The two officers Deng and Zhang laughed: "For thieving, no one in the world matches the Great Sage. Think of the old days, when you made havoc in Heaven—stealing the imperial wine, stealing the peaches, stealing dragon liver and phoenix marrow and Lord Lao Zi's elixir—what arts were those! Today's the very day to put them to use here."

"Well said, well said! Since that's so, you all sit here, and let old Sun go scout the ground." What a Great Sage! He leapt down from the peak, went privately to the mouth of the cave, shook his body, and changed into a green-bottled fly.

Truly a neat little creature! Just look:

Wings thin as bamboo membrane, A body smaller than a flower's heart. Hands and feet thicker than a hair, Little starry eye-sockets, bright and clear. Skilled at sniffing out fragrance, following scents; Swift in flight, riding on the wind. On the scales he'd scarcely tip the beam— Such tiny things, and yet so useful!

Lightly he flew onto the door, crawled to the crack beside it, and squeezed inside. There he saw the host of demons, great and small—some dancing, some singing, ranked along both sides. The old demon king sat high on a dais, before him spread snake meat, dried venison, bear paws, camel humps, mountain vegetables and fruits, with a celadon wine pot, fragrant ewe's-milk and coconut brew, and all were drinking deep from great bowls, hearty and at ease.

The Pilgrim dropped down among the little demons, then changed into a badger-headed imp, and edged slowly nearer the dais. He looked his fill a long while, but nowhere could he see where the treasure was kept. He slipped around to the back of the dais, and there in the rear hall he saw fire-dragons hanging high, moaning and howling, and fire-horses neighing and whinnying.

Suddenly he lifted his head and saw his own gold-banded cudgel leaning against the east wall. Joy tickled his heart past all scratching; forgetting to change his form, he ran forward, seized the iron cudgel, showed his true shape, spread his moves, and fought his way out with a cudgel assault the whole length of the cave. The crowd of demons shook with terror, and the old demon king was caught unprepared; the Pilgrim knocked over three of them and laid out two more, hewed open a road of blood, and went straight out the cave gate. Truly:

The proud demon-head, off his guard, And the master's staff returned to its own master.

But as to whether this boded good or ill—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 52

Wukong Wreaks Havoc in Jindou Cave; The Tathagata Hints at the Master of the Creature

The story goes that Sun the Great Sage, having recovered his gold-banded cudgel, fought his way out the front gate, leapt up onto the high peak, and faced the host of gods, his heart full of joy.

"How went this round?" asked Heavenly King Li.

"Old Sun changed himself and got inside his cave," said the Pilgrim. "That monster has grown more and more careless—singing and dancing and drinking his victory wine. I never did find out where his treasure is kept. I slipped around to the back and heard horses neighing and dragons moaning, and knew they were things of the Fire Ministry. Leaning against the east wall was my gold-banded cudgel; old Sun took it in hand and fought my way out with it."

"Now that your treasure is recovered," said the gods, "when do we get ours?"

"Not hard! Not hard! With this iron cudgel in hand, no matter what it takes, old Sun will beat him down and fetch your treasures back to you."

As they were speaking, they heard gongs and drums thundering from below the mountainside and shouts shaking the earth—it was the Rhinoceros King leading his host of spirits to chase the Pilgrim. Seeing them, the Pilgrim cried: "Good! Good! Good! Just what I wanted! Sit, gentlemen, sit, and let old Sun go take him again."

What a Great Sage! He raised his iron cudgel and met them head-on, shouting: "Where do you run, vile monster! Take my cudgel!"

The monster parried with his spear and cursed: "Thieving monkey! What utter insolence! How dare you rob my house in broad daylight?"

"You death-blind beast, you!" said the Pilgrim. "It was you who used that snare of yours to rob me in broad daylight! Which of that gear was ever yours? Don't run! Take a stroke of your lord's cudgel!" The monster wheeled his spear to block and parry. What a battle this was!

The Great Sage displayed his fierce might; The demon monster showed no meekness. Both sides closed in a contest of valor— Which of them would ever give in?

This one's iron cudgel like a dragon's tail; That one's long spear like a python's head. This one's cudgel came in moves that whistled like the wind; That one's spear warded with a hero's might that flowed like water. See the colored mists grow murky, darkening the hills; The auspicious clouds hang heavy, saddening the woods. Every bird in the sky furls its wings; Wolves and beasts across the wilds all tuck their heads. On the demon side the little imps raise their cries; On this side the Pilgrim rouses all his powers. One iron cudgel no one can withstand— It beat its way across the whole West, wandering ten thousand li.

That long spear made a true antagonist, Long the pride of Jindou's guardian lord. When these two met, no easy parting— No rest till high and low was proved.

The demon king and Sun the Great Sage fought through three double-hours without victory going either way, and already the sky was growing dark.

The demon propped up his long spear and said: "Wukong, hold! It's dusk and dark—no time for a contest. Let each of us rest a while, and tomorrow morning I'll contend with you again."

"Shut your mouth, vile beast!" the Pilgrim cursed. "Old Sun's spirit has just risen—who cares if it's late? We must settle who wins and who loses!"

With a shout the monster flourished his spear in feint, fled for his life, and led his crowd of demons back; they stowed their arms, went into the cave, and shut the door tight.

The Great Sage dragged his cudgel back. The heavenly gods on the cliff-top congratulated him: "Truly one of might and power, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven—boundless, measureless true skill!"

"You flatter me, you flatter me!" the Pilgrim laughed.

Heavenly King Li came near and said: "Those are no flatteries—truly a fine man! This round was no less than the day you slipped through the snares of earth and nets of heaven!"

"Let's not dwell on old tales," said the Pilgrim. "That demon has fought this round with old Sun and must be weary. I can't very well speak of my own toil. Sit easy, all of you, while I go into the cave once more to scout out his ring. I'm determined to steal it, catch the monster, recover your weapons, and return them to you so you can go back to Heaven."

"It's already late," said the prince. "Better sleep one night and go at dawn."

The Pilgrim laughed: "This young fellow knows nothing of the world! When did you ever see a thief ply his trade in broad daylight? Work like this must be done going by night and coming back by night, unnoticed and unseen—that's how the business is done."

The Star Lord of Fire and the Thunder Officers said: "Third Highness, say no more. This is a trade we know nothing of; the Great Sage is an old hand with a practiced routine. Let him seize this very hour—first, because the demon-head is weary, and second, because the black night is off its guard. Quick, be off! Be off!"

What a Great Sage! Chuckling, he hid his iron cudgel, leapt down from the high peak, came again to the mouth of the cave, shook his body, and changed into a cricket. Truly:

Hard mouth, long feelers, black of hide, Bright eyes, legs and claws splayed. In clear wind and bright moon he chirps by the walls, In the still night sounding like human talk. A mournful scene, weeping with dew; A voice broken off and on—well worth the praise. The traveler at the guest window dreads to hear it, There, beneath the empty steps, beside the bed.

He kicked out his great hind legs and made three or five hops, hopped to the door, squeezed in through the crack, crouched at the base of the wall facing the lamplight inside, and looked carefully. There he saw the crowd of demons, great and small, every one of them wolfing and gobbling away at their food.

The Pilgrim chirped a round of chirrups. After a little they cleared away the dishes and all went to lay out their bedding, each settling to rest.

It was about the first watch when the Pilgrim at last made his way to the rear chamber, where he heard the old demon passing orders: "You little ones at every gate—sleep with one eye open! I fear Sun Wukong may change himself into something again and sneak in to steal!"

There were some on duty keeping the night watch, and with the clappers and bells sounding ding-dong, dong-ding, the Great Sage found it all the easier to work. He slipped in through the chamber door and saw a stone bed, with several powder-painted, rouge-smeared mountain imps and tree ghosts ranged left and right, spreading the coverlets and waiting on the old demon—pulling off his stockings, unfastening his clothes. Watch now as the demon king loosened his garments: on his left arm, white and gleaming, was that ring—shaped like a bracelet of strung pearls.

And see—he did not take it off. He pushed it up his arm a couple of pushes and bound it tight upon his arm, and only then lay down to sleep.

When the Pilgrim saw this, he changed again, becoming a yellow-skinned flea, leapt onto the stone bed, burrowed under the coverlet, crawled onto the monster's arm, and gave him one solid bite. The bite made the monster roll over cursing: "You under-flogged slaves! Not shaking out the quilt, not brushing off the bed—what thing is this that's bitten me?"

He pushed the ring up a couple more pushes and lay down again. The Pilgrim climbed onto the ring itself and bit him once more. Unable to sleep, the monster rolled over again: "It itches and stings—it's driving me mad!"

The Pilgrim saw that his guard was close, the treasure on his very body and never taken off, and judged that stealing it was hopeless. He hopped down from the bed, changed back into a cricket, went out the chamber door, and went straight to the rear. There again he heard dragons moaning and horses neighing: that inner gate was locked tight, and the fire-dragons and fire-horses all hung within.

The Pilgrim showed his true form, went up to the door, worked his lock-opening method, recited a spell, and passed his hand over it—with a clack, the lock's double bolts both fell away. He pushed open the door and burst in to look. Inside, the fire-weapons lit everything as bright and gleaming as broad day. Suddenly he saw several weapons leaning aslant on the east and west walls—all the prince's demon-slicing saber and the rest, together with the Star Lord of Fire's fire-bows, fire-arrows, and the like.

By the firelight the Pilgrim looked around the whole place, and then saw behind the door, on a stone table, a woven-bamboo tray holding a handful of hairs.

The Great Sage's heart filled with joy. He picked up the hairs, breathed two warm breaths on them, and cried "Change!" At once they became thirty or fifty little monkeys, and he had them all take up the sabers, swords, pestles, ropes, balls, and wheels, together with bows, arrows, lances, carts, gourds, fire-crows, fire-rats, fire-horses—everything that had been snatched away—mount the fire-dragons, let loose the flames, and burn their way out from within. There arose a roaring, crackling, popping, banging, just like rolling thunder joined with cannon fire.

The demons, great and small, panicked out of their sleep—dazed and befuddled, wrapped in quilts, heads covered, some screaming, some wailing, each with nowhere to turn—and more than half of them were burned to death. The Handsome Monkey King returned in triumph; it was just about the third watch.

Now on the high peak, Heavenly King Li and the rest suddenly saw the firelight blaze up, and they all surged forward to meet him. There was the Pilgrim riding a dragon, whooping and hallooing, marshaling his little monkeys, going straight up to the peak-top and calling out in a loud voice: "Come collect your weapons! Come collect your weapons!"

The Star Lord of Fire and Nezha answered with a shout. The Pilgrim shook his body, and the handful of hairs returned to him. Prince Nezha gathered in his six weapons, the Star Lord of Fire had his fire host collect the fire-dragons and the rest, and all of them, smiling, praised and congratulated the Pilgrim—of this no more.

Now in Jindou Mountain the flames blazed in all directions, and the Rhinoceros King was scared out of his wits. He hurriedly rose, opened his chamber door, took the ring in both hands, and pushed it east—east fire went out; pushed it west—west flames died away. Smoke spurted and fire burst through the whole sky as he ran a round with the treasure in hand, and on every side the smoke and fire were quenched. He hastily tried to rescue his crowd of demons, but more than half had been burned to death—men and women alike, fewer than a hundred-odd souls could be gathered. He went to check the weapon stores: every item was gone.

He went farther back to look, and saw Bajie, the Sha Monk, and the elder still bound and not yet untied, the white dragon horse still in its stall, and the luggage and carrying-pole still in the room.

The demon ground his teeth in hatred: "Some careless little imp let a fire get loose and brought all this about!"

At his side an attendant reported: "Great King, this fire is none of our household's doing. It must have been some thief who raided the camp and fired the stockade—he let loose those things of the Fire Ministry and stole the divine weapons away."

Only then did the old demon understand: "No one else—it was surely that thief Sun Wukong! No wonder I couldn't sleep soundly when I lay down! That thief-monkey must have changed himself and come in, and bitten my arm twice. He surely meant to steal my treasure, but saw I kept it bound tight and couldn't get at it, and so he stole the weapons, loosed the fire-dragons, and worked this vicious scheme, meaning to burn me to death. Thief-monkey! You wore out your cunning for nothing—you don't know my powers! So long as I wear this treasure, I could sink into the great sea and not drown, walk into a fire pit and not burn! This time, if I catch that thief, only lighting him up like a torch will ease my heart!"

He grumbled and fumed a long while, and before he knew it, the cock crowed and the sky grew light.

On the high peak the prince, having recovered his six weapons, said to the Pilgrim: "Great Sage, day has broken—no time to slack. The demon's edge has been blunted; we of the Fire Ministry and the rest will back you up. Let's go fight with all our strength once more—this time, maybe, he can be taken."

"Well said," the Pilgrim laughed. "Let's join hearts and go have our fun!" One and all they roused their martial spirit, gleefully flaunting their weapons, and went straight to the mouth of the cave.

The Pilgrim shouted: "Vile monster, come out! Fight with old Sun!"

Now those two stone doors had been burned to ashes by the fire, and inside the doorway several little imps were sweeping and gathering ashes. Suddenly seeing the host of holy ones arrive, they dropped their brooms, threw down their ash-rakes, and ran inside to report: "Sun Wukong has brought a whole crowd of heavenly gods and is cursing us out for battle at the gate again!"

The rhinoceros monster was greatly alarmed at the report. His steel teeth ground with a grinding crunch; his round eyes glared wide in a rolling stare. He leveled his long spear, took up his treasure, and walked out the gate, cursing wildly: "You camp-burning, fire-setting thief of a monkey! What powers have you got, to dare scorn me so?"

The Pilgrim cursed him back with a smiling face: "Vile monster! You want to know my powers? Step forward, and I'll tell you:

From birth my powers were supreme; My name rang out through all the world. In early youth I woke and sought the immortal Way, And long ago received the ageless recipe. Resolved, I bowed beneath the Square-Inch mountain; With reverence I saw the sages' land. I learned transformations past all counting, And range at will the boundless vault of space. At ease before my hills I tamed the tigers; For sport within the seas I quelled the dragons. My ancient home, the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit— A kingly throne; in the Water Curtain Cave I flaunted strength. Time and again I schemed to reach the heavens; Oftentimes in ignorance I seized the world above. The emperor bestowed the name Great Sage Equal to Heaven, And by decree I was titled Handsome Monkey King. Only because they feasted at the Peach Banquet And sent no invitation to my stubborn temper, I broke into the Jade Pool by night and stole the jade liquor, Slipped through the empty halls and drank the nectar; Dragon liver and phoenix marrow I stole and ate, A hundred flavors of dainties I filched and tasted; The thousand-year peaches I enjoyed at will, Ten-thousand-year elixirs stuffed my gut. The rarities of heaven I took them every one, The wonders of the sacred stores I hid away. The Jade Emperor

heard what powers I had And sent his heavenly troops to spread the battlefield. The Nine Shining baleful stars by me were routed; The fierce constellations of the five quarters I wounded. All the gods and generals of heaven could not withstand me; A hundred thousand stalwart troops dared not oppose. I forced the Jade Emperor to pass his word Till the Little Sage of Guanjiang marshaled his men. We fought through seventy-two transformations, Each side flaunting its spirit, each one strong. Guanyin of the Southern Sea came to the battle, Her pure vase and willow twig lending aid. Lord Lao Zi then used the diamond snare And had me seized and carried up on high. Bound, I faced the Jade Emperor, Great Worthy Zhang; The clerks examined me—the charge stood fast. They sent the Great Power to behead me, But blades on my scalp flashed flame and light. A hundred plans, a thousand schemes could not destroy me, So they sent me under escort to Lord Lao Zi's hall. The Six Dings' god-fire smelted me in the furnace And tempered all my body hard as steel. When seven-times-seven days were done they opened the cauldron— I leapt out fiercer than before. The gods shut fast their doors, no way to stop me; The assembled saints took counsel and begged the Buddha. The Tathagata truly had vast magic power, His wisdom truly boundless past all measure. We wagered somersaults in his very palm, And with a mountain he crushed me—there was no resisting. The Jade Emperor then held the Feast of Heaven's Peace, And in the western regions I was named the place of bliss. The weight of that mountain held old Sun five hundred years, And never a bite of food or sip of tea I tasted. Then the Elder Golden Cicada came into the world, Sent from the Eastern Land to bow before the Buddha, To fetch the true scriptures back to the superior kingdom, That the great Tang's sovereign might save the souls of the dead. Guanyin urged me to repent and turn to goodness, To hold the teaching and refrain from wildness. She freed me from my torment at the mountain's root, And now I journey west to gather scriptures. Vile monster, drop your fox and badger cunning! Give me back my Tang monk to bow before the King of Law!"

At these words the monster pointed at the Pilgrim: "So you're the great thief of Heaven! Don't run! Take a thrust of my spear!"

The Great Sage met him with his cudgel. The two were just locked in struggle when, on this side, Prince Nezha boiled with anger and the Star Lord of Fire flared with fury, and they hurled the six divine weapons and the gear of the Fire Ministry down upon the monster's body, while Sun the Great Sage fought with redoubled vigor. On the other side the Thunder Officers loosed their bolts, the Heavenly King raised his blade, and with no order of front or back they all surged in together.

The demon-head laughed coldly and tall, secretly drew the treasure from his sleeve, flung it loose into the air, and cried "Hit!"—and with a whirring rush it swept in the six divine weapons, the Fire Ministry's gear, the Thunder Officers' bolts, the Heavenly King's blade, and the Pilgrim's cudgel, every last one of them. The gods were once again bare-handed, and Sun the Great Sage was once more empty-fisted.

The demon wheeled back in triumph and called: "Little ones! Haul stone and rebuild the gate, move earth and mend the works—set the halls and corridors in order anew. When all is ready, we'll slaughter the Tang monk and his three followers as a thanksgiving to the earth, and share out the blessings and enjoy them."

The little imps received their orders and set to work—of this no more.

Now Heavenly King Li led his host back up the high peak. The Star Lord of Fire blamed Nezha for his rashness; the Thunder Officers blamed the Heavenly King for his trickery; only the Water Uncle stood by in silence.

The Pilgrim saw that they could not look each other in the face, their hearts full of cares, and there was nothing for it: nursing his grudge but forcing a smile, he laughed to them all: "Gentlemen, no need for sorrow. Since antiquity it's been said: victory and defeat are the common lot of soldiers. Matched with him in martial art, I'm his equal at least. It's only that ring of his that does the mischief, snatching away our weapons yet again. Set your minds at ease, and let old Sun go once more and look into his pedigree."

"When you memorialized the Jade Emperor before," said the prince, "they searched the whole vault of heaven without a trace of him. Where will you search now?"

"It comes to me," said the Pilgrim, "that the Buddha's law is boundless. Let me go to the Western Heaven and ask my Lord the Tathagata to turn his wise eye upon the four great continents of the earth, and see in what quarter this monster was bred, what town and district he hails from, and what sort of treasure that ring may be. Whatever it takes, I'm determined to seize him, vent your spleens for you, and return your weapons so you can go back to Heaven in good cheer."

"Since you have this plan, don't linger," said the gods. "Quick, be off, be off!"

What a Pilgrim! The word "go" was scarcely said before he mounted his somersault cloud and reached the Mountain of the Spirit Vulture. Bringing down the auspicious light, he looked all around him. What a place!

Spirit peaks, rare and scattered; Layered ridges, pure and fine; Immortal summits, crest on crest, rubbing the azure sky. In the West, behold a mighty pillar of the world, Its form and force outpressing all the Middle Land. Primal breath flows through it, heaven and earth are far; Its awesome wind flies over all the terraced flowers. Now and then the long ring of bell and chime; At every turn the sutras, clear and bright.

See too, beneath green pines, laymen expounding the Law, And among kingfisher cypresses, arhats walking. White cranes, with feeling, come to Vulture Peak; Azure phoenixes, minded, perch in the idle pavilions. Black monkeys, pair by pair, hold up immortal fruits; Long-life deer, two by two, offer purple blooms. Secluded birds cry often, as if confiding; Strange flowers blaze in colors past all naming. Winding ranges coil and coil, turning back on themselves; The ancient road bends and bends, yet everywhere runs level. Truly a place of pure and nimble beauty, The solemn, Awakened Buddha's family style.

The Pilgrim was just surveying the mountain scenery when he suddenly heard someone call: "Sun Wukong! Where do you come from, and where are you bound?"

He turned quickly and saw it was the Venerable Bhikkhuni. The Great Sage saluted her: "There is a matter on which I wish to see the Tathagata."

"You naughty creature!" said the Bhikkhuni. "If you wished to see the Tathagata, why didn't you enter the precious temple instead of standing here sightseeing?"

"My first time in your honorable precincts," said the Pilgrim, "so I took the liberty."

"Then follow me quickly." The Pilgrim followed close behind her to the gate of the Thunderclap Monastery, where he saw the Eight Vajra Kings, fierce and martial, blocking the way on either side. The Bhikkhuni said:

"Wukong, wait here a moment while I go in and announce you."

The Pilgrim had to stand waiting outside the gate.

The Bhikkhuni went before the Buddha, pressed her palms together, and said: "Sun Wukong has business and wishes to see the Tathagata."

The Tathagata issued a decree to admit him, and only then did the Vajra Kings step aside and let him pass.

The Pilgrim bowed his head and made his worship complete. The Tathagata asked: "Wukong, I heard before that the Venerable Guanyin freed your body, you took refuge in the teaching of Buddha, and you protect the Tang monk on his journey here for the scriptures. How is it you've come alone? What has happened?"

The Pilgrim knocked his head and said: "I report to my Lord Buddha: since your disciple took the vows, journeying westward with my master of the Tang dynasty, we came to Jindou Cave on Jindou Mountain, where we met a demon-head named the Rhinoceros King of vast magic powers, who carried my master and

my brothers into his cave. Your disciple went to demand them back, and, no goodwill offered, the two sides contended; with a white gleaming ring he snatched away my iron cudgel. Fearing he was some heavenly general whose thoughts had strayed below, I hastened up to the upper regions, but the search turned up nothing. By the Jade Emperor's grace, Heavenly King Li and his son were sent to reinforce me, and the monster snatched away the prince's six divine weapons. Then I begged the Star Lord of Fire to burn him, and the monster snatched his fire gear. I begged the Star Lord of Water to flood him, and not a drop touched him. Your disciple spent considerable spirit and strength to steal back the iron cudgel and the other things, went again to challenge him, and the monster snatched them all away as before. There is no way to subdue him. So I have come especially to tell my Lord Buddha, praying you extend your mercy and look for your disciple: what thing is this monster born of? Then I can go seize his household and neighbors, capture this demon-head, save my master, and with joined reverence bow and seek the true fruit."

Hearing this, the Tathagata turned his wise eye on distant view and knew at once. He said to the Pilgrim: "That monster I do know—but it may not be told to you. You monkey, your mouth is a wide-open gate. The moment word spread that I told you, he would no longer fight with you; he would surely come brawling up the Vulture Mountain, and bring trouble upon me instead. Let me lend you magic power to capture him."

The Pilgrim bowed twice in thanks: "What magic power will you lend me, Tathagata?"

The Tathagata ordered the eighteen venerable arhats to open the treasury of precious things and take out eighteen grains of golden-cinnabar sand to reinforce Wukong.

"What can golden-cinnabar sand do?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Go outside the cave and challenge the demon to a match," said the Tathagata. "Draw him out, then have the arhats release the sand and trap him in it, so that he cannot move his body or pull out his feet—and then you may pummel him at your pleasure."

"Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful!" the Pilgrim laughed. "Let's be off at once!" The arhats dared not delay, took the golden-cinnabar sand, and left; the Pilgrim thanked the Tathagata again.

Checking their number along the way, there were only sixteen arhats. The Pilgrim bawled: "What sort of place is this, selling pardons and letting men go!"

"What pardons?" the arhats demanded. "Who sold any?"

"Eighteen venerable ones were assigned," said the Pilgrim. "How is it there are only sixteen now?"

Before the words were done, out from within came the two venerable ones, the Dragon-Subduer and the Tiger-Subduer, who stepped forward and said: "Wukong, how can you play these tricks? The two of us stayed behind to hear the Tathagata's instructions."

"Such dealers in favor! Such dealers in favor! If I'd bawled a little later, I suppose you'd never have come out at all!"

The arhats laughed heartily and mounted their auspicious clouds.

Before long they reached the borders of Jindou Mountain. Heavenly King Li, seeing them, led his host out to meet them, and told the whole story of what had passed.

"No need for tedious detail," said the arhats. "Go quickly and call him out."

The Great Sage clenched his fists, came to the mouth of the cave, and cursed: "Vile monster! Come out quick and settle high and low with your grandpa Sun!" The little imps flew to report again, and the demon king raged: "That thief-monkey—who has he fetched this time to bluster with?"

"No one at all," said the imps. "Only himself, alone."

"That cudgel of his I already snatched," said the demon king. "How is he here alone again? Is he looking for another round of fisticuffs?" He took his treasure, grasped his spear in hand, ordered the little imps to haul away the stones, leapt out the gate, and cursed: "Thief-monkey! Beaten time and again without profit, you ought to have withdrawn. How dare you come bawling again?"

"You vile monster, not knowing good from bad!" said the Pilgrim. "If you want your grandpa not to come, then submit, make your apologies, and send out my master and my brothers, and I'll spare you!"

"Those three monks of yours I've already washed clean," said the monster. "Before long they go under the knife. You still can't tell top from bottom! Be gone!"

At the words "under the knife," fire flared on the Pilgrim's cheeks. Past all holding down, the fury in his heart broke loose: he dropped his stance, swung his fists, moved aslant with hooked steps, and gave the demon a swinging blow across the face.

The monster spread his long spear and parried with both hands. The Pilgrim skipped left and right, baiting the demon—leading the monster to fall for the ruse and chase him south away from the cave mouth. The Pilgrim then signaled the arhats, and down upon the demon they flung the golden-cinnabar sand all together, displaying their magic powers. What sand!

Like fog, like smoke, first scattering; Dense and drifting, sifting down the horizon. White and vast—everywhere it blinds the eyes; Dark and dim—who flies can scarcely find the way. The woodcutters gathering firewood lose their fellows; The immortal boys gathering herbs cannot find home. Fine and light it floats like wheat flour; Coarse and rolling it tumbles like sesame seed. The world goes hazy; the mountaintops darken; The long sky is smothered; the sun itself is veiled. It is not like the dust that follows galloping steeds, Nor the soft light loam that cushions fragrant carriages. This sand is a thing without feeling: Covering earth, overhanging heaven, it seizes the monster. Only because the demon invaded the true Way Did the arhats, obeying the Law, display this splendor. Had they bright pearls in their very hands, In an instant they would dazzle every eye.

The demon saw the flying sand blinding his eyes. He ducked his head one duck, and already the sand stood three feet and more deep about his feet. In a panic he sprang with all his strength and leapt up to float upon the surface—but before he could stand steady, in a moment it was two feet deeper still.

The monster, desperate, wrenched out his feet, hurriedly took the ring, flung it upward, and cried "Hit!"—and with a whirring rush it snatched away all eighteen grains of golden-cinnabar sand. Dragging back his steps, he went straight home to his cave.

The arhats, every one of them, stood in their clouds empty-handed.

The Pilgrim drew near and asked: "Venerable arhats, why did you stop throwing sand?"

"Just now there was a whir, and the golden-cinnabar sand was gone."

The Pilgrim laughed: "That same old thing has snatched it away again."

"What a difficult one to subdue!" said the Heavenly King and the rest. "How are we ever to catch him? When shall we return to Heaven—and with what face shall we see the Emperor?"

At the side, the two arhats, the Dragon-Subduer and the Tiger-Subduer, said to the Pilgrim: "Wukong, do you know why the two of us were slow coming out?"

"Old Sun only blamed you for dodging the trip," said the Pilgrim. "I didn't know you had any message."

"The Tathagata instructed the two of us," said the arhats, "saying that this demon's magic powers are vast; if the golden-cinnabar sand should fail, then Sun Wukong is to go up to the Palace of Tushita in the Heaven of Highest Sorrow, to Lord Lao Zi, and seek the monster's trail there—then perhaps he can be taken in one stroke."

At this the Pilgrim said: "Vexing! Vexing! The Tathagata certainly made old Sun jump through hoops! He might have told me straight off, and spared you venerable ones the long journey!"

"Since the Tathagata gave this clear direction," said Heavenly King Li, "the Great Sage should set out early."

What a Pilgrim! The word "go" was said, and he mounted a somersault cloud straight in through the South Gate of Heaven. The four great marshals raised their fists and pressed their hands: "How goes the monster-catching?"

"Not yet! Not yet!" the Pilgrim answered as he went. "But now there's a place to look for the root of it." The four generals dared not stop him, but let him through the heaven gate. He did not climb to the Hall of Divine Mists nor enter the Palace of the Dipper and Ox, but went straight beyond the thirty-three heavens, to the front of the Palace of Tushita in the Heaven of Highest Sorrow. Two immortal boys stood on guard there; without giving his name he walked straight in, so flustered were the two boys that they caught hold of him: "Who are you? Where are you going?"

Only then did the Pilgrim say: "I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, come looking for the Old Lord Li."

"How can you be so rude?" said the boys. "Wait a moment and let us announce you."

But before the Pilgrim could be argued with, he gave a shout and strode right in—and suddenly there was Lord Lao Zi himself, coming out from within, and they collided chest to chest.

The Pilgrim bowed and sang out an "Ah-o!": "Old worthy, I've been remiss in my visits."

Lord Lao Zi laughed: "This monkey—why aren't you off fetching scriptures? What brings you to my place?"

"Fetching scriptures, fetching scriptures—no rest by day or night; a bit of obstruction, so I've come to make the rounds."

"The Western road is blocked—what is that to me?"

"The Western Heaven, the Western Heaven—never mind that for now; I've found the trail, and I've come to have it out with you."

"My place is the palace of highest immortality," said Lord Lao Zi. "What trail could there be to find here?"

The Pilgrim went inside, eyes fixed and unblinking, peering east and west. Passing through several tiers of corridors and halls, he suddenly saw by the ox pen a boy fast asleep—and the azure bull was not in the pen.

"Old worthy, your ox has bolted! Your ox has bolted!"

Lord Lao Zi was greatly alarmed: "When did that wicked beast get out?" Even as they clamored, the boy woke and knelt before them: "Grand Master, your disciple was asleep—I don't know when it got out."

Lord Lao Zi cursed: "You wretch, how could you doze off?"

The boy knocked his head: "Your disciple found a pellet of elixir in the elixir chamber, ate it on the spot, and fell asleep right here."

"It must be the Sevenfold Fire Elixir I refined the other day," said Lord Lao Zi. "One pellet dropped, and this wretch picked it up and ate it. One pellet of that elixir means seven days of sleep. Because you slept, the beast had no one watching him, and seized his chance to slip down into the world below. This is the seventh

day." He then ordered a check whether any treasure had been stolen.

"No treasure," said the Pilgrim, "except that I saw he has a ring of extraordinary power."

Lord Lao Zi hurried to check. Everything was there—only the diamond snare was gone. "It's that wicked beast!" cried Lord Lao Zi. "He's stolen my diamond snare!"

"So that's the treasure!" said the Pilgrim. "It was that thing that struck old Sun in the old days! Now it's rampaging in the world below—Heaven only knows how much of our gear it has snatched!"

"Where is that wicked beast?" asked Lord Lao Zi.

"At present dwelling in Jindou Cave on Jindou Mountain. He carried my master the Tang monk inside and snatched my gold-banded cudgel. I begged the heavenly troops for help, and he snatched the prince's divine weapons. I begged the Star Lord of Fire, and he snatched his fire gear. Only the Water Uncle, though he couldn't drown him, never had anything snatched. Then I begged the Tathagata to send the arhats down with sand, and he snatched away the golden-cinnabar sand. An old worthy like you, letting a monster run loose to rob and wound people—what's the penalty for that?"

"That diamond snare of mine," said Lord Lao Zi, "is the instrument I carried when I crossed the Hangu Pass to convert the barbarians, a treasure refined from my youth. Whatever your weapons, water or fire, none can come near it. If he had stolen my plantain-leaf fan as well, even I could have done nothing with him."

Only then was the Great Sage glad at heart, and he followed Lord Lao Zi. Lord Lao Zi took the plantain fan, mounted auspicious clouds, and traveled with him; they left the immortal palace, and outside the South Gate of Heaven brought down the clouds and went straight to the borders of Jindou Mountain, where they met the eighteen arhats, the Thunder Officers, the Water Uncle, the Star Lord of Fire, and Heavenly King Li and his son, and told the whole story once through.

"Sun Wukong," said Lord Lao Zi, "go lure him out once more, that I may take him in."

The Pilgrim leapt down from the peak and again cursed aloud: "Vile beast! Come out at once and take your death!" The little imps again ran to report, and the old demon said: "That thief-monkey—who has he fetched this time?" He hurriedly grasped spear and treasure and came out the gate to meet him.

"You vile monster," the Pilgrim cursed, "this time you're surely dead! Don't run! Take a slap from me!" He sprang forward, leapt chest to chest with him, slapped him one full across the face, turned, and ran.

The monster wheeled his spear and gave chase. Then from the high peak they heard a voice call: "That ox! Won't you come home? What day do you wait for?"

The monster lifted his head and saw Lord Lao Zi—and his heart froze and his gall went cold: "This thief-monkey truly is a ghost of the earth! How did he track down my master?"

Lord Lao Zi recited a spell and fanned once with the fan. The monster flung the ring at him, and Lord Lao Zi caught it in one hand. Another fan, and the monster's strength went soft and his sinews numb, and he showed his true form—it was an azure bull. Lord Lao Zi blew a breath of immortal air upon the diamond snare, threaded it through the monster's nose, untied the sash of his robe, fastened it to the snare, and led the creature in his hand.

To this day there remains the ring for tethering an ox by the nose, called also the binlang—and this is where it came from.

Lord Lao Zi took leave of the gods, bestrode the azure bull's back, mounted iridescent clouds, and went straight back to the Tushita cloister—binding the monster, rising on high to the Heaven of Highest Sorrow. Only then did Sun the Great Sage, with the Heavenly King and all the host, fight their way into the cave,

where they beat to death the hundred-odd little imps, each recovered his weapons, and gave thanks. The Heavenly King and his son returned to Heaven, the Thunder Officers to their ministry, the Star Lord of Fire to his palace, the Water Uncle to his river, the arhats went west—and only then did they free the Tang monk, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, and the Pilgrim took up his iron cudgel. The three of them thanked the Pilgrim, saddled the horse and packed the luggage, and master and disciples left the cave and sought out the highway before going on.

As they walked, they suddenly heard a voice calling from the roadside: "Holy monk of the Tang—stop and eat a vegetarian meal before you go." At this the elder's heart was startled.

What sort of person was calling—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 53

The Chan Master Swallows a Meal and Conceives a Demon Pregnancy; The Yellow Dame Draws Water to Dissolve the Wicked Embryo

Eight hundred virtues must be cultivated, Three thousand works of hidden merit amassed. Only when self and others, kin and foe, are held in even balance Does one fulfill the primal vow of the Western Heaven. Fearless of demons, rhinoceros, and blades of war— Water and fire toiled in vain, yet no offense was done. Lord Lao Zi subdued the beast and turned him back to heaven, Smiling as he led the azure bull away.

The story continues—who was the one calling from the roadside? None other than the mountain god and the local deity of Jindou Mountain, who held up a purple-gold almsbowl and called: "Holy monk! This bowl of rice was begged from a good place by Sun the Great Sage. Because you would not heed good words and fell by mistake into the demon's hands, the Great Sage was put to endless toil, and only today has he delivered you. Come, eat this rice before you take the road—don't fail the Great Sage's wholehearted devotion."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "we are indebted to you past all telling! Thanks will never be enough! Had I known enough not to step outside the circle you drew, I would never have suffered this danger to my life."

"To tell you no lies, Master," said the Pilgrim, "it was only because you wouldn't trust my circle that you got caught in somebody else's circle. What suffering it caused! Alas, alas!"

"How could there be another circle?" asked Bajie.

"It was all you fouled-mouthed lout, with your wicked tongue, that brought this great ordeal on my master!" said the Pilgrim. "You put old Sun to turning heaven and earth upside down, begging heavenly troops, water and fire, and the Buddha's ancestors' cinnabar sand—and every bit of it snatched away by one white-gleaming ring. Only when the Tathagata hinted to the arhats, and told old Sun the demon's origin, could I beg Lord Lao Zi to come take him in—it was an azure bull making mischief."

Hearing this, Sanzang was grateful beyond measure: "Worthy disciple, now that I have come through this, next time I will surely obey your instructions."

Then the four of them shared the rice, which steamed piping hot.

"This rice was cooked long ago," said the Pilgrim. "How can it still be hot?"

The local deity knelt down and said: "Your little god knew the Great Sage's work was done, and only just now warmed it up for your service."

In a moment the rice was finished. They packed the almsbowl, took leave of the local deity and the mountain god, and only then did the master mount into the saddle and cross the high mountains. Truly: cleansing their thoughts and washing their hearts, they turned to the true Awakening; dining on wind and sleeping by water, they journeyed toward the West.

They had traveled a good while when early spring came upon them. Listen: purple swallows twittering, yellow orioles warbling—purple swallows twittering, their fragrant beaks weary; yellow orioles warbling, their artful notes running on. The fallen red petals lay over the ground like spread brocade; the mountains everywhere put forth green like piled cushions. On the ridges, green plums had set their beads; before the cliffs, ancient cypresses held the clouds. The fields moist, the misty light pale; the sands warm, the sun's color hazy. Here and there the gardens' flowers were bursting into bud; spring returned to the earth, and the willow buds were new.

As they were walking, they suddenly came upon a small river, its clear water still, its cold waves deep. The Tang elder reined in his horse to look, and saw far off across the river green shade of willows, faintly showing the roofs of a few thatched cottages. The Pilgrim pointed from afar: "That household must be ferrymen."

"It looks that way to me too," said Sanzang, "but I see no boat, so I dared not speak."

Bajie set down the luggage and bawled at the top of his voice: "Ferryman! Pole the boat over!" After several calls, from within the willow shade there came the creak and squeak of poles, and a little boat pushed out. Before long it drew near the bank. Master and disciples looked the boat over carefully. Truly:

Short oars parting the waves, light sculls riding the swell. The bow painted and gleaming, the planking smooth and tight. At the prow an iron cable coiled in its nest; At the stern the steering-tower bright. Though but a reed of a vessel for the crossing, It was no worse than a boat on lake or sea. It lacked brocade cables and ivory mast, But had pine stakes and cassia oars indeed. True, it was no ten-thousand-li divine ship, Yet it could ferry across the gap of one river. Its comings and goings kept to the two banks; Its entrances and exits never left the old ford.

The boat touched the bank, and a boat-woman called out: "Crossing! This way!"

Sanzang urged his horse near to look. What was the boat-woman like? On her head a kerchief of brocade pile; on her feet shoes of black silk; on her body a quilted cotton jacket of a hundred patches; round her waist a cloth gown sewn with a thousand stitches. Her wrists were rough-skinned, her sinews hard with strength; her eyes bleary, her brows wrinkled, her face grown old. Her voice was soft and fine as an oriole's song—but seen up close, it was an old dame.

The Pilgrim came near the boat: "Are you the ferry?"

"I am," said the woman.

"Where is the ferryman? Why does a ferry-wife pole the boat?" The woman only smiled and did not answer, dragging up the gangplank with her hands. The Sha Monk carried the luggage aboard; the Pilgrim helped his master up the plank and then led the horse around; Bajie led the white horse aboard, and the gangplank was drawn in. The woman pushed off and plied her oar, and in a moment they had crossed the river.

Setting foot on the western bank, the elder told the Sha Monk to open the pack and fetch a few coppers for her. The woman did not so much as haggle over the amount; she tied the cable to a stake by the water and, smiling all over, went straight into the farmhouse. Sanzang saw how clear the water was, and being thirsty for the moment, he told Bajie: "Fetch the almsbowl and scoop me some water to drink."

"I could do with a bit myself," said the blockhead.

He fetched the almsbowl, scooped a bowlful, and handed it to his master. The master drank a small half of it, leaving the greater part, which the blockhead took and drained in one breath; then he waited on Sanzang into the saddle.

Master and disciples sought out the road and traveled west. Before half a double-hour had passed, the elder was groaning on horseback: "My belly aches!"

"My belly aches some too," said Bajie from behind.

"You must have drunk cold water," said the Sha Monk.

Hardly were the words out when the master cried out: "It hurts terribly!" Bajie too cried: "It hurts terribly!" The two of them, past all bearing with the pain, felt their bellies gradually swelling. When they felt with their hands, there seemed to be lumps of flesh and clots of blood, stirring and wriggling without stop.

The Tang elder was growing restless when suddenly he saw by the roadside a village house, from whose treetops hung two straw bundles.

"Master, good news," said the Pilgrim. "That's a house that sells wine. Let's go beg some hot soup for you, and ask whether there's medicine for sale—get a plaster to cure that bellyache of yours."

Hearing this, Sanzang was very pleased, and he whipped the white horse; in no time they reached the gate of the village house and dismounted. Outside the door they saw an old granny seated on a straw stool, twisting hemp.

The Pilgrim stepped forward, made a bow with clasped hands, and said: "Granny, this poor monk comes from the great Tang of the Eastern Land, and my master is the Tang emperor's sworn brother. Because he drank river water crossing the river, he feels a pain in his belly."

The granny chuckled: "You've been drinking water from that river over there?"

"We drank it from the clear-water river east of here," said the Pilgrim.

The granny laughed heartily: "What fun! What fun! Come inside, all of you, and I'll tell you."

The Pilgrim supported the Tang monk, and the Sha Monk supported Bajie; the two of them moaning and groaning, bellies thrust out, their faces yellow and their brows knotted with pain, they went into the thatched cottage and sat down. The Pilgrim kept saying: "Granny, you must boil some hot soup for my master, and we'll thank you."

But instead of boiling the soup, the old woman ran off chuckling to the rear, calling: "Come and look! Come and look!" From inside came the slap-slap, pitter-patter of slippered feet, and out came two or three more women, neither old nor young, who all stood staring at the Tang monk and giggling. The Pilgrim flared up, gave a shout and gnashed his teeth, and the whole household stumbled and staggered backward in fright.

The Pilgrim stepped forward, seized the old woman, and said: "Boil that soup at once, and I'll spare you!"

Trembling, the woman said: "Merciful lord! Even if I boil the soup it will do no good—it can't cure those two bellyaches. Let go of me and let me explain." The Pilgrim released her, and she said: "This is the Western Land of Women. Our whole kingdom is women only, with never a man—which is why they were so delighted at the sight of you. That water your master drank is bad. That river is called the Mother-and-Son River. Outside our king's city there is also the Welcoming-Yang Hostel Station, and outside the station gate a Child-Revealing Spring. In our country, only when a woman reaches the age of twenty may she dare go drink from that river. After drinking the water, she feels a bellyache and is with child. Three days later, she goes to the Child-Revealing water at the Welcoming-Yang Station to be reflected. If the reflection shows a double image, then a child will be born. Your master drank the water of the Mother-and-Son River and so has conceived—before long he'll give birth. How could hot soup cure that?"

Hearing this, Sanzang turned pale with shock: "Disciple! What are we to do?"

Bajie moaned, twisting his waist and sprawling his hips: "Merciful lord! To give birth—we're men! Where would the birth-gate open? How could it ever come out?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "The ancients said: when the melon is ripe it drops of itself. When the time comes, it will surely split a hole in your side and crawl out."

At this the blockhead, trembling and unable to bear the pain, cried: "It's over, it's over! Dead, dead!"

The Sha Monk laughed: "Second Brother, don't squirm, don't squirm! You may only strain the birth-canal and bring on a pre-natal illness."

The blockhead panicked all the more, tears brimming in his eyes, and clutched at the Pilgrim: "Brother! Ask this granny—see if there's a midwife with a light touch somewhere. Go find a few in advance. Every little while now it heaves and churns—this must be the bearing-pains. Quick! Quick!"

The Sha Monk laughed again: "Second Brother, if you know they're bearing-pains, don't writhe about, or you may burst the water-bubble."

The elder groaned: "Granny, is there a physician here? Let my disciple buy a dose of child-aborting medicine, take it, and bring the birth down."

The woman said: "Even if there were medicine, it would do no good. But on our main south street there is a Jieyang Mountain, and in the mountain a Child-Breaking Cave, and in the cave the Child-Aborting Spring. One must drink a mouthful of water from that well to dissolve the conception. But now the water cannot be gotten. Some years ago a Daoist came, calling himself the True Immortal Ruyi. He changed the Child-Breaking Cave into the Assembled Immortals Nunnery, took the Child-Aborting Spring under his guard, and will not grant the water to anyone for free. Whoever wants water must bring gifts of flowers, red silk, and tokens of respect—sheep, wine, and fruit-trays, offered with utmost sincerity—and even then must bow and beg to obtain a single bowl of it. How could wandering monks like you ever buy such things? All you can do is bear it as fate decrees and wait for the birth to come."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim's heart filled with joy: "Granny, how far is it from here to Jieyang Mountain?"

"Thirty li," said the granny.

"Good! Good! Master, set your mind at ease, and let old Sun fetch you some water to drink." What a Great Sage! He instructed the Sha Monk: "Watch over our master carefully. If this household is discourteous and bullies my master, use your old methods—put on the fierceness of a tiger and frighten them—while I go fetch the water."

The Sha Monk obeyed. Then the granny brought out a great earthenware bowl and handed it to the Pilgrim: "Take this bowl, and be sure to fetch plenty—keep the rest for us against our need." The Pilgrim took the bowl, left the thatched cottage, mounted the clouds, and was gone.

The old woman gazed up into the sky and worshiped: "Merciful lord! This monk can ride the clouds!" Then she went in, called out those womenfolk, and they all knocked their heads and bowed to the Tang monk, styling him arhat and Bodhisattva. Meanwhile they boiled soup and prepared rice, waiting on the Tang monk—of this no more.

Now the Great Sage Sun rose on his somersault cloud, and shortly he saw a mountain peak blocking the edge of his cloud. He checked the cloud-light and opened his eyes to look. What a mountain! See:

Secluded flowers spread their brocade; Wild grasses laid their blue. Ravine waters join and tumble down; Valley clouds equally at ease. Valley upon valley, dense with vines and creepers; Far away, peak upon peak, thick with trees. Birds cry, geese pass; deer drink, apes climb. Kingfisher-green like screens and ramparts; Green cliffs like a woman's coiled tresses. Rolling dust and noise can scarcely reach it; The bubbling springs and rocks never tire the eye. Often immortal boys are seen going out to gather herbs; Frequently woodcutters are met returning with firewood on their backs. Truly no worse than the Tiantai scenery, And finer than the three-peaked Mount Hua of the West!

The Great Sage was still gazing his fill at the mountain when, in the shaded side, he spied a manor, and heard the barking of a dog.

The Great Sage came down the mountain and went straight to the manor. It too was quite a place. Look:

A little bridge spans the living water; A thatched cottage leans against the green mountain. Village dogs bark along the fence; Quiet folk come and go at their own pace.

Presently he came to the gate, where an old Daoist sat cross-legged on the green turf. The Great Sage set down the earthenware bowl, came forward, and made a bow. The Daoist rose slightly to return the salute: "From what quarter do you come? What business brings you to this humble nunnery?"

"This poor monk," said the Pilgrim, "is one sent by imperial commission from the great Tang of the Eastern Land to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. Because my master mistakenly drank the water of the Mother-and-Son River, his belly now aches and swells past bearing. When I asked the local folk, they said he has conceived, and there is no remedy. I learned that in the Child-Breaking Cave on Jieyang Mountain there is a Child-Aborting Spring that can dissolve the conception, and so I have come especially to pay my respects to the True Immortal Ruyi and beg some of the spring water to save my master. I must trouble you, old Daoist, to show me the way."

The Daoist laughed: "This is the Child-Breaking Cave—now renamed the Assembled Immortals Nunnery. And I am no one else but the venerable True Immortal Ruyi's eldest disciple. What is your name, that I may announce you?"

"I am the eldest disciple of the Master of the Law Tang Sanzang—my humble name is Sun Wukong."

"Where are your gifts of flowers, wine, and courtesy?" asked the Daoist.

"I'm only a passing wandering monk," said the Pilgrim, "and I brought none."

"You great fool!" the Daoist laughed. "My venerable master guards the mountain spring and never once gave water away for nothing. Go back and prepare your gifts, and then I'll announce you. Otherwise, be off—don't even dream of it!"

"Human kindness is a greater thing than an imperial decree," said the Pilgrim. "Go and speak old Sun's name, and he'll surely do me the kindness—maybe give me the whole well."

At these words the Daoist could only go in and announce him. There he found the True Immortal playing his qin, and waited until the piece was done before saying: "Master, there is a monk outside who calls himself Sun Wukong, eldest disciple of Tang Sanzang, begging for water from the Child-Aborting Spring to save his master."

Had the True Immortal not heard it, well and good; but the moment he heard the name Wukong, fury rose from his heart and malice sprang from his gall. He leapt up at once, left the qin table, doffed his plain robes, put on his Daoist vestments, took up an as-you-will hook, bounded out the nunnery gate, and called: "Where is Sun Wukong?"

The Pilgrim turned his head and saw the True Immortal's getup:

On his head a star-cap, fluttering, bright with color; On his body a vestment of red gold thread. On his feet cloud-shoes heaped with embroidery; Round his waist a jeweled belt wound with cunning work. A pair of padded socks on his wave-treading feet; His skirt half showing, flashing with embroidered down. In his hand the as-you-will golden hook, Its point sharp, its shaft as long as a python-dragon. Phoenix eyes ablaze, brows like seedpods standing up; Steel teeth sharp and pointed, his mouth flashing red. The beard beneath his brow streams like fierce fire; The red hair at his temples short and shaggy. In looks as fierce as Marshal Wen— Only his dress and cap were not the same.

Seeing him, the Pilgrim pressed his palms together and saluted: "This poor monk is Sun Wukong."

The gentleman laughed: "Are you truly Sun Wukong—or someone borrowing the name?"

"Listen to yourself, sir," said the Pilgrim. "As the common saying goes, a gentleman does not change his name walking, nor his surname sitting. I am Wukong indeed—how could there be any borrowing?"

"Do you know me?" asked the gentleman.

"Since I turned to the true gate of Buddha and took up the teaching in sincerity," said the Pilgrim, "I have been climbing mountains and fording streams all this while, and all my friends of the old days have fallen out of touch—I never came to pay my respects, and so I hardly know your honored face. Just now, when I asked the people of the western village by the Mother-and-Son River, they spoke of you as the True Immortal Ruyi—that is how I knew."

"You walk your road," said the gentleman, "and I cultivate my truth. What do you come visiting me for?"

"Because my master mistakenly drank the water of the Mother-and-Son River, conceived, and suffers bellyache," said the Pilgrim, "I have come especially to your immortal abode to bow and beg one bowl of water from the Child-Aborting Spring, to save my master from his ordeal."

The gentleman glared: "Is your master one Tang Sanzang?"

"Indeed he is, indeed he is."

The gentleman ground his teeth in hatred: "Did you ever meet one called the Great King Holy Infant?"

"That was the nickname of the Red Boy demon of Fire-Cloud Cave in Withered Pine Ravine on Mount Hao," said the Pilgrim. "Why does the True Immortal ask?"

"He is my nephew," said the gentleman. "I am the Bull Demon King's brother. Some time ago a letter came from my elder brother's place, saying that Tang Sanzang's eldest disciple Sun Wukong, that lazy rascal, had done him harm. I had nowhere to seek you out for revenge—and here you come seeking me! And you want water on top of it!"

The Pilgrim forced a smile: "You are mistaken, sir. Your esteemed elder brother was once my friend too; in our younger days we even swore seven brothers' fellowship. Only, I did not know where your honored house was, and so failed to pay my respects. And your honored nephew has met with a fine lot: he now follows the Bodhisattva Guanyin and has become the Boy of Goodly Wealth. Even we are not his equals—how can you blame me instead?"

The gentleman shouted: "You brazen macaque! Still working that clever tongue of yours! Was my nephew better off being free and easy as a king, or serving as another's slave? No more of your insolence! Take a stroke of my hook!"

The Great Sage blocked it with his iron cudgel: "Sir, spare us talk of blows—just give me some spring water."

The gentleman cursed: "Brazen macaque! You know not life from death! If you can withstand three rounds against me, I'll give you water. If not, I'll only chop you into meat paste, and that will avenge my nephew."

The Great Sage cursed back: "You senseless fiend, who can't tell up from down! You want a fight—step up and take my cudgel!" The gentleman's as-you-will hook came at him with a parry.

The two of them fought a fine battle at the Assembled Immortals Nunnery:

The holy monk ate by error the conception water; The Pilgrim came seeking the Immortal Ruyi. Who knew the True Immortal was a monster too, Who by force held the Child-Aborting Spring? When they met at last and spoke their grudges, Neither side would yield, and no accord. Word answered word, till wrath was stirred; Evil intent and fierce heart crying for revenge. This one, his master's life at stake, comes seeking

water; That one, for a nephew's death, will grant no spring. The as-you-will hook, deadlier than scorpion venom; The gold-banded cudgel, fiercer than a dragon's crest. Thrusts at the chest, wild and mighty; Hooks at the feet, deft and cunning. The underhand cudgel, flung, strikes grievous wounds; The over-shoulder hook rises like a head-whip. One cudgel locks the waist—the hawk seizes the sparrow; Three hooks press the crown—the mantis snatches the cicada. To and fro they strive for victory; Back and forth, and twice they part and close. Hook grappling, cudgel pounding, neither first nor last— No telling on which side the win will fall.

The gentleman fought the Great Sage a dozen-odd rounds and could not hold against him. The Great Sage grew only fiercer; his one cudgel, like a rolling shooting star, rained blows upon his head. The gentleman's strength failed, and trailing his as-you-will hook behind him, he fled up the mountain.

The Great Sage did not chase him, but went into the nunnery to look for the water. But the Daoist had already shut the nunnery gate.

The Great Sage, carrying his earthenware bowl, hurried to the gate, and with all his strength kicked it in, and burst inside. He found the Daoist crouched at the well-curb; at one shout from the Great Sage, raising his cudgel to strike, the Daoist fled to the rear. Then the Pilgrim hunted out the well-bucket and was just drawing water when the gentleman rushed up from the front and caught the Great Sage's foot with his as-you-will hook, sending him sprawling flat on his face.

The Great Sage scrambled up and struck at him with the iron cudgel, but the fellow dodged aside, holding his hook, and said: "Let's see you take my water away!"

The Great Sage cursed: "Come up here! Come up here, you fiend—I'll beat you to death outright!" The gentleman would not come forward to oppose him; he only kept guard, not letting the Great Sage draw water. Seeing him stand off, the Great Sage wielded the iron cudgel in his left hand and the well-bucket in his right, and was just letting the rope run down rattle-rattle when the fellow came again with his hook. Unable to manage with one hand, the Great Sage was hooked by the foot again and took another stagger, tumbling bucket and well-rope and all down into the well.

"What manners!" said the Great Sage. He scrambled out, wheeled his cudgel in both hands, and hammered at him head and face. The gentleman fled once more, not daring to engage.

The Great Sage wanted again to fetch water, but alas, there was no bucket, and he feared another hooking and dragging. He thought to himself: "Let me go fetch a helper!"

What a Great Sage! He wheeled his cloud around, went straight to the gate of the village house, and called: "Sha Monk!" Inside, Sanzang was groaning with pain and Zhu Bajie's moaning never stopped. Hearing the call, the two of them rejoiced: "Sha Monk—Wukong has come!"

The Sha Monk hurried out the door to meet him: "Elder Brother, have you brought the water?"

The Great Sage came in and told the Tang monk the whole story. Sanzang's tears fell: "Disciple, what are we to do?"

"I've come to ask Brother Sha to go with me," said the Great Sage. "When we reach the nunnery, old Sun will fight it out with that fellow, and the Sha Monk will seize his chance to draw the water and save you."

"If you two sound ones both go," said Sanzang, "leaving us two sick ones behind—who will wait on us?"

The old granny at the side said: "Venerable arhat, set your mind at rest. There's no need for your disciple—my household will naturally look after you and wait on you. When you arrived this morning, we truly felt fond of you; but when we saw this worthy Bodhisattva come and go on cloud and mist, we knew you were arhats and Bodhisattvas. My family would never dare harm you again."

The Pilgrim barked: "You womenfolk—whom could you harm?"

The old woman laughed: "Merciful lord, it's your good fortune you came to my house! Had you come to a second household, you'd not have gotten off whole!"

"What do you mean, 'not whole'?" moaned Bajie.

"My family, four or five souls, are all getting on in years, and we've given up the business of love altogether—that's why we wouldn't harm you. But at a second household there'd be a crowd, old and young, and those young ones—would any of them let you pass? They'd want to couple with you. And if you refused, they'd take your lives and slice the flesh off your bodies to make scent-bags of it!"

"If that's how it is, I'm surely safe," said Bajie. "They're all sweet-smelling, fine for scent-bags. I'm a rank pig—even if they sliced my flesh, it would still be rank—so I can't come to harm."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Stop running off at the mouth and save your strength for the birth."

"No need to hesitate," said the granny. "Quick—go beg the water."

"Have you a well-bucket in the house?" said the Pilgrim. "Lend us one to use." The old woman went to the rear at once and brought out a bucket, plus a coiled rope, and handed them to the Sha Monk.

"Take two ropes," said the Sha Monk. "The well may be deep and we may need it."

The Sha Monk took the bucket and rope and followed the Great Sage out of the village house, and together they mounted the clouds and were gone. It took not half a double-hour before they reached the borders of Jieyang Mountain. Bringing down the clouds, they went straight to the nunnery outside.

The Great Sage instructed the Sha Monk: "Take the bucket and rope and hide off to one side. Old Sun will go to the front and give challenge. When the two of us are locked in battle at the hottest, you seize your moment, get in, draw the water, and run."

The Sha Monk obeyed his orders to the letter.

Sun the Great Sage drew his iron cudgel, came near the gate, and called loudly: "Open up! Open up!" The gatekeeper saw him and rushed inside to report: "Master, that Sun Wukong has come again!"

Fury rose in the gentleman's heart: "This brazen monkey—utterly without manners! I'd long heard he had some skill; today I truly know it—that cudgel of his is really hard to withstand."

"Master," said the Daoist, "though his skill is high, you are no less his match—he is just your equal."

"The two rounds before, he won them," said the gentleman.

"Those two wins were only a burst of fierceness," said the Daoist. "But the two later times, when he came to draw water, you hooked him into two falls—doesn't that make you equals? He went away helpless before; now he has come again—surely because Sanzang's fetus has grown and his body is heavy, and he has grumbled so bitterly that there was nothing for it but to come. He's sure to be careless about his master. Rest assured, Master—victory is yours beyond doubt."

At these words the True Immortal's heart filled with springtime joy; smiling all over, with a burst of martial spirit he leveled his as-you-will hook, walked out the gate, and bellowed: "Brazen macaque! What are you here for this time?"

"I've come only for water," said the Great Sage.

"The spring belongs to my family's well," said the True Immortal. "Be he emperor or prime minister, a man must come with gifts of courtesy, sheep, and wine, and beg—only then does he receive a little. And you are

my enemy besides—how dare you come to take it empty-handed?"

"Truly you won't give it?" said the Great Sage.

"I won't, I won't!"

"Vile fiend! Since you won't give water—take my cudgel!" He dropped into a stance, charged chest to chest, and without more ado rained blows on his head. The True Immortal swerved aside to dodge and clashed his hook against the cudgel in haste. This battle surpassed the ones before. What a fight:

Gold-banded cudgel, as-you-will hook: The two in fury, each nursing hate. Flying sand and rolling stones darken heaven and earth; Scattered dust and rising soil sadden sun and moon. The Great Sage, to save his master, comes for water; The demon immortal, for his nephew, will let no beggar through. Both sides strain with all their might; One spot decides who stands, who rests. Gritting teeth, they struggle for the win; Clenching jaws, they settle hard from soft. Fresh schemes appear, their vigor rising; They spout clouds and breathe out mist—the gods themselves grieve. Clang and clatter, hook and cudgel ring; Their shouting and roaring shake the hills. Wild wind rolls and rolls, driving the forests; Killing vapor streams on streams past Dipper and Ox. The Great Sage, the more he fights, the more his joy; The True Immortal, the longer the battle, the tighter his play. With heart and mind set upon this war, They'll never stop till death or life is settled.

The two of them crossed hands outside the nunnery gate, leaping and dancing, fighting their way down below the mountainside, locked in bitter struggle—of this no more.

Now the Sha Monk, carrying the well-bucket, burst in through the gate. The Daoist blocked him at the well: "Who are you, daring to come draw water!" The Sha Monk set down the bucket, drew out his demon-quelling precious staff, and without a word brought it down on his head. The Daoist could not dodge in time; his left arm was broken, and he fell to the ground struggling for his life.

"I'd like to beat you to death, you fiend," cursed the Sha Monk, "but you're in human form! I'll have pity on you and spare you—let me draw my water!" Wailing to heaven and earth, the Daoist crawled off to the rear.

Then the Sha Monk drew a brimming bucket of water from the well, walked out the nunnery gate, mounted cloud and mist, and called out to the Pilgrim: "Elder Brother! I've gotten the water! Spare him! Spare him!"

Hearing this, the Great Sage at last propped the hook off with his iron cudgel and said: "Now hear old Sun out. I meant to wipe you out entirely, but first, you have broken no law; second, I hold your elder brother the Bull Demon King's friendship in regard. When I came before, you hooked me twice and I got no water. This time I was playing lure-the-tiger-from-the-mountain—tricking you out here to fight—while my brother drew the water. If old Sun had chosen to use his full powers on you, never mind one True Immortal Ruyi—a whole row of you would be dead and gone. But better to spare a life than take one, so I'll let you off to live a few years yet. If anyone comes for water hereafter, see you never squeeze and extort them."

The demon immortal, fool that he was, made one feint and came to hook his foot. The Great Sage dodged the hook's point, rushed forward, and shouted: "Don't run!" Caught unprepared, the demon immortal went down with a thud and could not struggle up.

The Great Sage wrenched the as-you-will hook from his hand, snapped it in two, then held the pieces together and snapped them again into four, and flung them on the ground: "Vile beast! Dare you be insolent again?"

The demon immortal trembled in every limb and, swallowing the shame, said nothing. The Great Sage, laughing heartily, rose on his clouds. There is a poem in witness:

True lead, if you would refine it, needs true water; True water tempers the true mercury dry. True mercury and true lead, without the mother's breath— Spiritual sand and elixir make the immortal drug. The babe in vain had knotted into fetal form; The mother of earth worked her cure without much toil. Push down the side gates, hold to the true teaching— The heart-lord comes back pleased, with smiling face.

The Great Sage rode his auspicious light, caught up with the Sha Monk, and with the true water won, returned joyful and happy to their place. Bringing down the clouds, they went straight to the village house, where they found Zhu Bajie leaning against the doorpost, belly thrust out, moaning.

The Pilgrim stole quietly up to him: "Blockhead—when is the baby due?"

The blockhead panicked: "Brother, stop teasing! Did you get the water?"

The Pilgrim kept teasing him still, till the Sha Monk arrived right behind, laughing: "The water's here! The water's here!"

Enduring his pain, Sanzang rose slightly: "Disciples, you have wearied yourselves for us!"

The granny too rejoiced, and the whole household came out to bow and say: "Bodhisattva, this is precious indeed! Precious indeed!" Hurriedly she fetched a figured porcelain cup, ladled half a cupful, and handed it to Sanzang: "Venerable master, drink it slowly. Just one mouthful will dissolve the conception."

"I'll skip the cup," said Bajie. "Let me drink straight from the bucket."

"Merciful old lord, you'll be the death of us!" cried the old woman. "If you drank this whole bucketful, I daresay it would melt your guts and belly clean away!" Frightened, the blockhead dared not run wild and drank only half a cup as well.

Before the space of a meal had passed, the two of them felt their bellies griping and cramping, and they heard their guts rumble and roll, five or six rounds of it. After the rumbling, the blockhead could hold out no longer—everything came flooding out together; and the Tang monk too could not help seeking a quiet place to relieve himself.

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "whatever you do, don't go out into the wind. It's frightening—a sudden draft, and you'd come down with a post-natal illness."

The granny brought two chamber pots and had the two of them relieve themselves as convenient. After a little while, each had been through it several times, and only then did the pain stop. Gradually the swelling went down, and the lumps of flesh and clots of blood dissolved away.

The granny's household also boiled some white rice gruel to build up their strength. "Granny," said Bajie, "my body is solid enough—no need to build it up. Just boil some water for a bath, and then I can eat my gruel."

"Elder Brother," said the Sha Monk, "you can't take a bath. Women in childbed who touch water and such come down with illness."

"I never gave birth to anything big," said Bajie. "At most it was a miscarriage—what's there to fear? A wash will make me clean." So the old woman truly boiled water, and the two of them washed their hands and feet. The Tang monk had only two small bowls of gruel; Bajie ate a dozen-odd bowls and still kept asking for more.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Blockhead, eat less! Don't go swelling up a sandbag belly—it looks dreadful."

"Never fear, never fear!" said Bajie. "It's not as if I were a sow—what's there to be afraid of?"

The household truly went off again to cook rice. The old granny said to the Tang monk: "Venerable master, won't you bestow this water on me?"

"Blockhead," said the Pilgrim, "no more drinking?"

"My belly doesn't ache anymore," said Bajie. "The conception must have passed off entirely. I feel fine and free—what would I drink water for?"

"Since the two of them are well," said the Pilgrim, "we'll give the water to your household." The granny thanked the Pilgrim, took the leftover water, put it into an earthen jar, and buried it in the ground behind the house, saying to the old and young of the family: "This jar of water will pay for my coffin!" The whole household, old and young, was delighted. They set out a vegetarian meal, spread the tables and benches, and the Tang monk's party ate their fill.

After resting easily through the night, at daybreak next morning master and disciples thanked the granny's household and left the village house. Tang Sanzang mounted into the saddle; the Sha Monk shouldered the luggage; the Great Sage Sun led the way in front; Zhu Bajie gathered up the reins. And this indeed was:

The mouth's sins washed clean, the body clean; The mortal fetus dissolved, the frame at ease.

But as to what awaited them within the kingdom's borders—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 54

Dharma Nature Comes West and Encounters the Women's Kingdom; The Mind-Monkey Lays His Plan to Escape the Painted World

The story continues. Leaving the farmhouse folk, Sanzang and his disciples followed the road west, and within some thirty or forty li they had already reached the borders of the Western Land of Women. From horseback the Tang elder pointed ahead: "Wukong, there is a city before us. From the hubbub of voices in the market it must be the Western Land of Women. You must all be careful and keep to proper behavior. On no account give free rein to your wild ways and disturb the rules and teachings of our religion."

The three of them heard this and humbly obeyed their master's strict command. And even as the words were spoken, they reached the street opening of the eastern quarter of the city.

There all the folk, wearing long skirts and short jackets, with powdered faces and sleeked heads of hair—young and old alike, every one of them women—were busy buying and selling in the streets on either side. When they suddenly saw the four of them arrive, they clapped their hands and laughed aloud all together, composing their faces into happy smiles: "The human seed has come! The human seed has come!"

In a flurry, Sanzang reined in his horse and could barely move; in a moment the streets were choked full, and nothing but laughter was to be heard. Bajie was bawling at random: "I'm a gelded boar! I'm a gelded boar!" The Pilgrim said: "Blockhead, none of your nonsense—just put on your old face." Bajie did indeed shake his head twice, pricked up his pair of palm-leaf fan ears, waggled his lotus-pod snout with its pendulous lips, and let out a bellow that sent the womenfolk tumbling and sprawling over one another in fright. There is a poem in proof:

The holy monk, worshiping the Buddha, came to the Western Land of Women, A realm of pure yin, where the world holds little yang. Farmers, scholars, craftsmen, merchants—all were of the fairer kind; Fisherman, woodcutter, plowman, herdsman—all were in rouge and powder. Fair maids along the roads all cried "the human seed!"; Young wives packed the streets to welcome the painted gallant. Were it not for Wuneng's display of his ugly face, The siege of the painted world had been past all bearing!

And so, one and all afraid, they dared not come near, but each stood clutching her hands and shrinking her shoulders, shaking her head and biting her fingers, trembling and quaking, packed along the street and by the roadside, all gazing at Tang Sanzang. The Great Sage Sun also made an ugly face to clear the way, and the Sha Monk too played the fierce tiger to hold them back, while Bajie held the horse, pouting his snout and wagging his ears.

As they pressed on, they saw the houses of the market town trim and neat, the shop fronts tall and handsome, with salt and rice on sale everywhere, wine shops and teahouses; drum-towers and pavilions where trade flourished, and taverns and hostelries hung with curtains and blinds. As master and disciples wound their way along, suddenly they saw a lady official standing by the roadside, who called out in a loud voice: "Traveling envoys from afar, you may not enter the city gate unbidden. Pray repair to the post station to register your names, and your officer will then carry the list before Her Majesty, examine your papers, and let you pass."

Hearing this, Sanzang dismounted and saw above the yamen gate a tablet inscribed with three characters: Welcoming-Yang Station. "Wukong," said the elder, "what the village folk told us was true enough—there is indeed a Welcoming-Yang Station." The Sha Monk laughed: "Second Brother, go and stand by the Child-Revealing Spring and look into it—see whether you cast a double shadow." "Stop your tricks!" said Bajie. "Since I drank that bowl of water from the Child-Aborting Spring, I've already aborted the fetus. What would I go peering at it for?" Sanzang turned his head and admonished: "Wuneng, mind your tongue! Mind

your tongue!"

Then he stepped forward and bowed to the lady official. The official led the way and invited them all into the station, where they sat down in the main hall and tea was called for. And they saw that all the attendants, too, were of the kind that comb their hair in three tresses and dress in two-piece garments—why, even the one who brought the tea was smiling.

After a while the tea was done, and the lady official inclined her body and asked: "Envoys, from whence do you come?" The Pilgrim said: "We are envoys commissioned by the great Tang emperor of the Eastern Land, journeying to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. My master is the Tang king's sworn brother, styled Tang Sanzang, and I am his eldest disciple, Sun Wukong. These two are my junior brothers, Zhu Wuneng and Sha Wujing—a company of five counting the horse. We carry a travel permit with us, and beg that it be examined and stamped that we may pass on." The lady official took up her brush and wrote it all down, then came down and knocked her head: "Pray forgive your servant, my lords. Your servant is the keeper of the Welcoming-Yang Station, and truly did not know of your honors of the superior realm, else I should have come to meet you from afar." Her obeisance done, she rose and bade the steward prepare food and drink: "Sirs, be pleased to sit at ease a while, and your servant will go into the city to memorialize our queen, exchange the travel permit, make provision for your allowances, and see your honors sent on westward." Sanzang sat down contentedly—of this no more.

Now this keeper of the station, after dressing herself properly in cap and gown, went straight to the front of the Tower of the Five Phoenixes in the city and said to the yellow-gate officer: "I am the keeper of the Welcoming-Yang Station, and I have business with Her Majesty." The yellow-gate officer at once made the report, and an edict summoned her before the palace, where she was asked: "Keeper of the station, what have you come to report?" The keeper said: "Your servant, at the station, has received the sworn brother of the great Tang emperor of the Eastern Land, one Tang Sanzang, who has three disciples named Sun Wukong, Zhu Wuneng, and Sha Wujing—five souls counting the horse—wishing to go to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and fetch the scriptures. Your servant has come especially to memorialize Your Majesty: will you permit them to exchange their travel permit and be sent on?"

At this report the Queen was filled with joy, and said to all her civil and military officers: "Last night I dreamed that a golden screen bloomed with rainbow hues and a jade mirror unfolded its brightness—this is the happy omen of this very day!" The lady officers thronged to worship at the vermilion steps: "Your Majesty, how do you make it the happy omen of this day?" The Queen said: "The man of the Eastern Land is the sworn brother of the Tang court. In our kingdom, since the age when Chaos was first divided and down through all the generations of our sovereigns, never has a man been seen to come here. In this happy chance the Tang king's sworn brother descends upon us—surely a gift from Heaven. With the wealth of my whole realm, I wish to take the sworn brother to husband and set him on the throne, and I will be his queen. Joined with him in yin and yang, we shall bear sons and grandsons and hand down the imperial line forever—is that not the happy omen of this day?" All the lady officers bowed and danced their praises, every one delighted.

The keeper of the station memorialized again: "Your Majesty's counsel is the good of ten thousand generations. But the sworn brother's three disciples are fierce and ugly, no proper sight at all." The Queen said: "What is the sworn brother like to look upon? And in what way are his disciples fierce and ugly?" The keeper said: "The sworn brother is a proper man indeed, handsome of countenance and graceful of bearing—truly a man of the Celestial Court of the superior realm, a figure of the China of the Southern Continent. But those three disciples are of frightful looks and demonic faces." The Queen said: "If that is so, let his disciples be given their allowances, let the travel permit be exchanged, and send them on to the Western Heaven—only keep the sworn brother here. What objection can there be?" All the officials bowed and memorialized: "Your Majesty's words are exactly right; your servants reverently obey. Only, for the making of such a match there must be a matchmaker; as the ancients said, marriage is contracted by the red

leaf, and the Old Man of the Moon binds husband and wife with the crimson cord." The Queen said: "As you counsel, let the Grand Preceptor in waiting act as matchmaker, and the keeper of the Welcoming-Yang Station give away the bride; go first to the station and seek the match with the sworn brother. When he has given his consent, I will set forth my carriage to meet him outside the city." So the Grand Preceptor and the keeper of the station received the decree and left the court.

Meanwhile Sanzang and his disciples were enjoying their vegetarian meal in the station hall when someone reported from outside: "The Grand Preceptor in waiting and our own officer, the old lady, are come." Sanzang said: "What can the Grand Preceptor want?" Bajie said: "Maybe the Queen is inviting us." The Pilgrim said: "It's not an invitation—it's a proposal of marriage." Sanzang said: "Wukong, suppose they will not let us go, but force the marriage upon us—what are we to do?" The Pilgrim said: "Master, just consent to her. Old Sun will find a way."

Before he had done speaking, the two lady officials arrived, and knelt in obeisance to the elder. The elder returned the salutation to each: "I am but a poor monk who has left the world—what virtue or ability have I that you should trouble your honors to bow to me?" The Grand Preceptor, seeing the elder's fine and lofty bearing, secretly rejoiced in her heart: "Our kingdom truly has good fortune; this man could well be our queen's husband." The two officials finished their obeisance and rose, and stood on either side, saying: "Lord sworn brother, a thousand felicitations!" Sanzang said: "I am one who has left the world—what felicity could come to me?" The Grand Preceptor bowed and said: "This is the Western Land of Women, and since time immemorial there has never been a man in this kingdom. In this happy chance the lord sworn brother has descended upon us, and your servant, by command of our queen, has come especially to seek the match." Sanzang said: "Well! Well! This poor monk has come to your honored land alone, without children to follow me, only three unruly disciples—which of them, may I ask, is the match you seek?" The keeper of the station said: "Your servant but now presented the memorial in court, and our queen was overjoyed, saying she had dreamed a lucky dream—a golden screen blooming with rainbow hues, a jade mirror unfolding its brightness—and so knew that the sworn brother was a man of the superior realm of China. With the wealth of her whole kingdom she will take the lord sworn brother to husband, that he may sit facing south and style himself sovereign, while she becomes his empress. She has decreed the Grand Preceptor be matchmaker and your servant give away the bride; and so we have come especially to seek this match."

Hearing this, Sanzang hung his head and was silent. The Grand Preceptor said: "A true man does not miss his moment. Betrothal such as this may be found in the world from time to time, but a kingdom's wealth entrusted to you—that is rare indeed on earth. I beg the sworn brother to consent at once, so that we may make our report." The elder grew only more dumb and mute. Bajie at the side thrust out his mortar-snout and cried: "Grand Preceptor, go back and tell your queen: my master is an arhat of long cultivation who has attained the Way, and he will never love your kingdom's wealth, nor your realm-toppling beauty either. Have the travel permit exchanged at once and send him on his way west—and leave me here to be taken to husband. How about that?" The Grand Preceptor's heart quaked with fear at these words, and she dared not answer. The keeper of the station said: "Though you are of the male sex, your looks are ugly past bearing, and would not suit our queen." Bajie laughed: "You understand nothing! As the saying goes, coarse willow makes a winnowing basket, fine willow a measure—who in this world ever saw a man so ugly he was done for?" The Pilgrim said: "Blockhead, none of your wild talk! Let Master decide as he thinks best—whether to go on or to stop. Don't hold up the matchmaker's business." Sanzang said: "Wukong, whatever you say is best!" The Pilgrim said: "By old Sun's reckoning, you might do well to stay here. As the old saying goes, an affiance from a thousand li is drawn by a single thread—where else would you find such a fitting match?" Sanzang said: "Disciples, if we stay here coveting wealth and rank, who then will go to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures? Would that not betray the hopes of our sovereign of the great Tang?" The Grand Preceptor said: "My lord sworn brother, your servant dares not conceal the truth. Our queen's will is only to take you to husband; your three disciples are to attend the betrothal feast, receive their allowances, exchange

the travel permit, and go on to the Western Heaven for the scriptures." The Pilgrim said: "What the Grand Preceptor says is reasonable. We need make no difficulty of it—we gladly leave our master here as your queen's husband. Have the permit exchanged quickly and send us west; when we have fetched the scriptures and come back, we can come here to acknowledge our father and mother, beg traveling money, and return to the great Tang." At this the Grand Preceptor and the keeper of the station bowed to the Pilgrim: "Many thanks for the teacher's kindness in bringing the match to perfection!" Bajie said: "Grand Preceptor, don't just set out dishes with your mouth [Translator's note: a proverb—don't make empty promises]. Since we've consented, have your queen first lay on a feast and give us a cup of betrothal wine. How about it?" The Grand Preceptor said: "Yes, yes, yes—the banquet shall be spread at once." And the keeper of the station and the Grand Preceptor, beside themselves with joy, went back to report to the female monarch—of this no more.

Now the Tang elder seized hold of the Pilgrim and cursed: "You ape! You'll be the death of me! How could you say such a thing, telling me to stay here and take a wife while you go west to worship the Buddha? I'd never dare such a thing even at the cost of my life." The Pilgrim said: "Set your mind at ease, Master. Do you think old Sun doesn't know your nature? But having come to this place, and met these people, we have no choice but to turn their scheme to our own use." Sanzang said: "What do you mean, turn their scheme to our own use?" The Pilgrim said: "If you hold out in the stiff way and refuse her, she will not exchange the travel permit, nor let us go our way. And if her heart turns cruel, she could order her people to cut the flesh from your body to make scent-bags of it, as the saying goes—and then how would we come off well? We should be forced to use our arts of quelling demons and destroying monsters. You know how heavy our hands are and how fierce our weapons—one gesture from us and the whole kingdom's folk would be beaten to death. Though they are blocking our way, they are not monsters or spirits, but men and women of an honest realm; and you, who have always been compassionate and merciful, and who have carried every soul along the road without a scratch—how could your heart bear it if we beat countless innocent people to death? It would be no good deed at all."

Hearing this, Sanzang said: "Wukong, this counsel is best of all. But I fear the female monarch will take me within and demand the rites of husband and wife—how could I ever be willing to forfeit my primal yang and ruin the virtue of the Buddha's religion, to let slip my true essence and cast down the body of our own teaching?"

The Pilgrim said: "Once you have consented to the match, she will be sure to receive you outside the city with all the rites of an emperor. Do not refuse; sit in her phoenix palanquin and dragon carriage, ascend the jeweled hall, and seat yourself facing south. Ask the Queen to bring out the imperial seal, summon our brothers to court, stamp the travel permit, then ask the Queen to sign her name and set her hand, and hand it over to us. Meanwhile bid her spread the banquet, making it serve at once for the celebration of your union with the Queen and for our send-off. When the feast is done, order the carriage made ready again, on the pretext of seeing us three out of the city and then returning to be joined with the Queen. When their ruler and ministers have been cajoled into high delight, with no thought of blocking us and no mind for cruelty, then, once they have seen us out of the city, you step down from the dragon carriage and phoenix palanquin, have the Sha Monk in attendance to help you mount the white horse, and old Sun will cast an immobilizing spell so that their ruler and ministers and all their folk cannot move a step, and we can go straight west along the great road. After traveling a day and a night, I'll recite the spell and undo the charm, and let their ruler and ministers wake and return to the city. Thus, first, no lives are harmed; and second, your primal spirit is not impaired. This is what is called the plan of a false marriage to escape the net—is it not a fine scheme that serves both ends at once?" At these words Sanzang felt like one awakened from drunkenness, like one roused from a dream; his grief turned to joy, and his thanks knew no end. "I am deeply grateful for your worthy disciple's far-seeing counsel." The four of them were of one mind and heart, and were still laying their plans together—of this no more.

Now the Grand Preceptor and the keeper of the station, not waiting for the summons, went straight to the white-jade steps before the court and memorialized: "Your Majesty's lucky dream was most true—the union of fish and water is at hand." At this report the Queen drew back the pearl curtain, descended from the dragon couch, parted her cherry lips, showed her silver teeth, and asked in a smiling, charming voice: "Worthy ministers, what said the sworn brother?" The Grand Preceptor said: "When your servants reached the station and had paid their respects to the sworn brother, they at once set out the business of the match. The sworn brother made some show of declining, but happily his eldest disciple consented at once, being willing to leave his master to become Your Majesty's husband and sit facing south as sovereign, if only the travel permit be first exchanged and the three of them be sent westward—so that when they have fetched the scriptures and returned, they may come here to acknowledge their father and mother, beg traveling money, and go back to the great Tang." The Queen laughed: "And what more did the sworn brother say?" The Grand Preceptor memorialized: "The sworn brother said nothing, but is willing to be joined with Your Majesty—only his second disciple must first have his cup of betrothal wine."

At this the Queen at once decreed that the Court of Imperial Entertainments lay a banquet, and at the same time make ready the great carriage to go out of the city to welcome her husband. All the lady officials reverently obeyed the royal command, sweeping the palaces and decking the halls and terraces. One band that was to lay the feast bustled and hurried; another that was to make ready the carriage worked with the speed of a shooting star. And though the kingdom of Western Liang was but a realm of women, its royal carriage was no less splendid than China's own. See:

Six dragons spouting rainbow hues, twin phoenixes breathing grace. Six dragons spout their hues to bear the carriage forth; Twin phoenixes breathe their grace to draw the palanquin in. The air is thick with rare fragrance, and auspicious vapors unfold. Golden fishes and jade pendants crowd round the many officers; Jeweled coiffures and cloud-chignons make a file of lovely ladies. Mandarin-duck canopy fans shade the royal carriage; Kingfisher pearl curtains cast their shadow over phoenix hairpins. Sweet are the pipes and songs, harmonious the strings and flutes; One flood of joy surges to the azure sky, Boundless delight pours from the seat of the heart. Three-tiered silk canopies sway beneath the heavens, Five-colored banners reflect upon the imperial steps. Never in this land was there a nuptial cup; The Queen today is matched with a man of worth.

In a little while the great carriage left the city and reached the Welcoming-Yang Station. Suddenly word was brought to Sanzang and his disciples: "The carriage has arrived!" Hearing this, Sanzang and his three disciples straightened their clothes and came out of the hall to receive the royal presence.

The Queen raised the curtain and descended from her palanquin: "Which one is the sworn brother of Tang?" The Grand Preceptor pointed: "The one in the long robe before the incense table outside the station gate is he." The Queen flashed her phoenix eyes and drew her moth brows together, looking at him closely. Truly he was an extraordinary figure. See:

His bearing was heroic and fine, his countenance imposing and grand. Teeth white as silver laid in, lips red, and a square-set mouth. The crown of his head flat, his brow broad, his temples full; His eyes clear, his brows delicate, his chin long and firm. Ears with their rims well formed—a true man of mettle; His whole person out of the common—a gifted gallant. A fine young man of quick wit and free spirit, Worthy to match the graceful maiden of the Western Land!

The Queen, seeing him to the very delight of her heart and eye, could not but let her amorous thoughts well up and her amorous desires run wild. She parted her little cherry mouth and called: "Sworn brother of the great Tang, will you not come and take your phoenix and ride your luan?" Hearing this, Sanzang turned red to his ears and face, and in bashfulness dared not lift his head. Zhu Bajie at the side, pouting his snout and half-closing his eyes, gazed at the Queen. She was charming indeed, truly:

Her brows were like kingfisher feathers, her skin like sheep-fat jade. Her face was set off like a peach petal; her hairpins coiled gold phoenix threads. Her autumn-pool eyes held a seductive grace; Her spring-bamboo fingers, a winsome delicacy. Askew her red silk hung, streaming with bright colors; High-placed her pearls and kingfisher pins shone with radiance. Why speak of Zhaojun's beauty? Truly she surpassed Xi Shi. Her willow waist swayed, her golden pendants tinkling; Her lotus steps lightly moved her jade limbs. The moon's Chang'e could never come here; The immortals of the ninth heaven could not compare. Her palace dress, so finely made, was beyond the common kind— Surely the Queen Mother herself descending from Jasper Pool.

The blockhead, gazing at such beauty, could not restrain his mouth from watering and his heart from thumping; in an instant his bones turned soft and his sinews numb, exactly like a snow lion before a fire—he felt himself melting away without knowing it.

Then the Queen came near, seized Sanzang by the hand, and said in a sweet and charming voice: "Brother sworn brother, pray mount the dragon carriage and come with me to the golden jeweled hall, to be joined as husband and wife." The elder, all a-tremble, could scarcely stand, as if drunk or dazed. The Pilgrim called out at his side: "Master, don't be so bashful. Get up on the palanquin with your lady mother [Translator's note: the disciples jokingly call the Queen "teacher's mother," i.e., their master's wife], and hurry the exchange of the travel permit, so we can go fetch the scriptures." The elder dared not reply, but wiped at the Pilgrim a couple of times, unable to stop his tears. The Pilgrim said: "Master, don't fret so. With such wealth and rank before you, what more would you enjoy?" Sanzang had no help for it but to comply; he wiped away his tears, forced his face into a happy smile, and stepped forward, and with the female monarch—hand in hand they mounted the dragon carriage together. The female monarch was all joy at being joined as husband and wife; the elder was all worry, thinking only of worshiping the Buddha. One would be paired as loving birds with bridal candles in the nuptial chamber; the other would see the World-Honored One on Vulture Peak in the Western Heaven. The female emperor was in earnest; the holy monk was in pretense. The female emperor was in earnest, hoping to live in harmony to old age; the holy monk was in pretense, keeping his feelings tightly locked to nourish his primal spirit. One rejoiced to see a male body, wishing to pillow side by side in broad daylight and be man and wife; the other dreaded to meet a female's beauty, thinking only to escape the net and reach the Thunderclap at once. The two climbed the palanquin together—but who could know that Tang Sanzang's heart was set on other things!

Seeing their monarch mount the phoenix palanquin shoulder to shoulder with the elder, the civil and military officers were all smiles, and turning the procession about, they re-entered the city. Only then did the Great Sage Sun bid the Sha Monk take up the luggage and lead the white horse, following along at the rear of the great procession.

Zhu Bajie ran wildly ahead and reached the front of the Tower of the Five Phoenixes first, shouting: "How comfortable! How ready-made! This won't do! This won't do! One must drink the wedding wine before going in to the marriage!" This so frightened the lady officers guiding the procession that they all came back to the carriage and said: "Your Majesty, that one with the long snout and big ears is standing before the Tower of the Five Phoenixes shouting for wedding wine." On hearing this, the female monarch leaned her fragrant shoulder against the elder, pressed her peach cheeks against his, parted her sandalwood lips, and asked in a quiet voice: "Brother sworn brother, which of your worthy disciples is the one with the long snout and big ears?" Sanzang said: "He is my second disciple. He was born with a mighty appetite and is always coveting good food for his mouth. We must first set out some food and drink for him, and only then can we proceed." The Queen asked hurriedly: "Has the Court of Imperial Entertainments prepared the banquet yet?" A lady official reported: "It is ready, laid in two kinds, meat and vegetable, in the Eastern Pavilion." The Queen asked: "Why two kinds?" The official said: "Your servant feared that the sworn brother of Tang and his worthy disciples are in the habit of eating vegetarian, and so laid out two kinds." The Queen, smiling again and nestling her fragrant cheek against the elder's, said: "Brother sworn brother, do you eat meat or

vegetables?" Sanzang said: "This poor monk eats vegetarian. But I have not yet taken the vow against wine, and my second disciple will need a few cups of vegetarian wine."

Before the words were done, the Grand Preceptor memorialized: "Pray come to the banquet in the Eastern Pavilion. This night is the lucky hour and auspicious moment, and the sworn brother may be joined in marriage this very evening; tomorrow, when Heaven opens its golden way, the lord sworn brother shall ascend the jeweled hall, sit facing south, change the reign title, and take the throne." The Queen was overjoyed, and taking the elder by the hand, they descended the dragon carriage together and entered through the main gate, where was seen:

The wind wafted celestial music down the towers; Midway through the palace gates came the emerald palanquin. The phoenix portals opened wide, their light resplendent; The imperial halls unbarred, their brocades displayed. In the unicorn hall, incense curled from the braziers; By the peacock screens, the shadows of the rooms came back. Pavilions and terraces rose magnificent as in the superior realm; The jade hall and golden horse were marvelous beyond all telling!

When they reached the foot of the Eastern Pavilion, strains of sweet sheng and song were heard, and two rows of rosy beauties were to be seen. In the center of the hall two great feasts were spread: the vegetable feast at the head of the left side, the meat feast at the head of the right, and below them two rows of single seats. The Queen folded her sleeves, and with her ten slender fingertips holding a jade cup, came to seat the guests.

The Pilgrim stepped forward: "My master and we are all vegetarians. Pray seat our master first at the vegetable feast on the left, and then set down the three seats below, one to either side, where my brothers and I may sit." The Grand Preceptor was delighted: "Exactly so, exactly so. Master and disciple are as father and son, and must not sit shoulder to shoulder." The lady officials at once rearranged the seats, and the Queen passed round the cups one by one, seating the three brothers. The Pilgrim also cast a wink at Sanzang, bidding his master return the courtesy. Sanzang came down and, holding the jade cup, seated the Queen in her turn. The civil and military officers bowed to thank the royal grace and took their seats on the two sides according to rank; only then did the music cease and the wine begin.

Bajie, caring nothing for fine or coarse, let out his belly and fell to with a will. Whatever it was—jade-rice steamed buns, cakes, sugar pastries, mushrooms, fragrant fungi, bamboo shoots, wood-ear, day-lily flowers, stone flowers, laver, turnips, taro, radishes, yams, Solomon's-seal—he gobbled it all up in one great gulp, and washed it down with five or seven cups of wine, bawling all the while: "Look to the refills! Bring the great goblets! A few more beakers, and then each man to his own business." The Sha Monk asked: "With such a fine banquet before you and you won't eat—what business is there to do?" The blockhead laughed: "As the ancients said, let him who makes bows make bows, and him who makes arrows make arrows. With us, some are taking a husband, some are giving a bride away, the scripture-fetchers still go fetch scriptures, and the travelers still go their road. Don't linger over your cups and spoil the business—have the travel permit settled soon. As it is said, the general does not dismount; each man hastens to his own future." Hearing this, the Queen ordered great cups to be brought. The waiting officials hurried to fetch parrot cups, cormorant ladles, golden wine bowls, silver engraved beakers, colored-glass cups, crystal basins, Penglai bowls, and amber goblets, filled them to the brim with jade nectar and poured them full of immortal wine; and truly each of the company drank his round.

Sanzang rose slightly from his seat and said to the Queen with palms together: "Your Majesty, we are most grateful for this bounteous entertainment, and the wine has been enough. Pray let us ascend the jeweled hall and exchange the travel permit, and while the day is still early send these three of mine out of the city." The Queen, following his words, took the elder by the hand, dismissed the banquet, and ascended the golden jeweled hall, where she would have had the elder take the throne at once. Sanzang said: "No, no! The Grand

Preceptor said but now that only tomorrow, when Heaven opens its golden way, would this poor monk dare ascend the throne and style himself sovereign. Today let us only stamp the travel permit and send them on." The Queen, yielding, seated herself again on the dragon couch, and had a golden armchair set at the couch's left hand, inviting Sanzang to sit, and bade the disciples bring up the travel permit. The Great Sage bade the Sha Monk open the bundle and take out the permit, and the Great Sage presented it with both hands. The Queen looked it over carefully: at the top were the nine jeweled seals of the great Tang emperor, and below them the seal of the Bao Xiang kingdom, the seal of the Wuji kingdom, and the seal of the Chechi kingdom.

Having read it, the Queen said with a sweet smile: "So the sworn brother's surname is also Chen?" Sanzang said: "My family name is Chen, and my religious name is Xuanzang. Because the Tang king in his grace recognized me as his sworn brother and bestowed the surname Tang upon me." The Queen said: "Why do your worthy disciples' names not appear on the permit?" Sanzang said: "Those three unruly disciples are not men of our Tang." The Queen said: "Since they are not of your Tang, why are they willing to follow you here?" Sanzang said: "My eldest disciple is a native of the country of Aolai in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body; the second is a native of Wusi Village in the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift; the third is a native of the Flowing Sands River. All three, having offended against the laws of Heaven, were freed from their suffering by the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea, and, taking up goodness, sought refuge in the faith, making merit to atone for their crimes, of their own will undertaking to protect me on my way to the Western Heaven for the scriptures. They were all accepted on the road, and so their religious names were never entered on the permit." The Queen said: "Let me add their religious names for you—would that be well?" Sanzang said: "As Your Majesty pleases." The Queen at once ordered brush and inkstone brought; grinding the fragrant ink thick and moistening the fragrant brush, she wrote after the document the names Sun Wukong, Zhu Wuneng, and Sha Wujing, and only then brought out the imperial seal, stamped it squarely in the middle, added her signature in her own hand, and passed it down.

The Great Sage Sun received it and bade the Sha Monk wrap it up properly.

The Queen then bestowed a tray of scattered gold and scattered silver, descending from the dragon couch to hand it to the Pilgrim: "You three may use this as traveling money on the road; go early to the Western Heaven. When you return with the scriptures, I shall have heavier rewards for you." The Pilgrim said: "We are men who have left the world, and we accept no gold or silver; on the road we have our begging." Seeing he would not take it, the Queen brought out ten bolts of brocaded silk: "Your journey is hasty and there is no time for tailoring; take this to make clothes against the cold on the road." The Pilgrim said: "Those who have left the world may not wear brocaded silk; we have our plain cotton garments to cover our bodies." Seeing he would not take this either, the Queen bade: "Fetch three sheng of imperial rice, to serve as a meal on the road." At the word "rice" Bajie took it at once and stowed it in the bundle. The Pilgrim said: "Brother, the luggage is already heavy enough—and yet you have the strength to carry rice?" Bajie laughed: "What do you know? Rice is a fine thing that melts away by day—one meal and it's done with." So he put his palms together and gave thanks for the queen's grace.

Sanzang said: "I would trouble Your Majesty to come with this poor monk to see the three of them out of the city. When I have given them a few words of instruction, bidding them go well to the West, I shall return and enjoy wealth and honor with Your Majesty forever, with nothing to bind or worry me, and only then may we be joined as the phoenix and its mate."

The Queen, not knowing it was a trick, decreed the carriage made ready, and leaning shoulder against shoulder with Sanzang, climbed the phoenix palanquin and went out the western gate. Through the whole city they filled their lamps with pure water and burned true incense on their altars, one part to see the Queen's carriage, another to see the sworn brother who was a man. Young and old alike, all were powdered of face and lovely, with green-black hair and cloud-coiffures.

In a little while the great carriage left the city, and when it reached the western pass, the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, of one mind and heart, in full and tidy array, came straight up to meet the royal palanquin, and called out in loud voices: "Your Majesty need escort us no farther. We take our leave here." The elder slowly descended from the dragon carriage and said to the Queen with folded hands: "Your Majesty, pray return. Let this poor monk go fetch the scriptures." At these words the Queen's face changed and she was greatly alarmed. She caught hold of Sanzang: "Brother sworn brother, I was willing to entrust the wealth of my whole kingdom to you, taking you to husband, and tomorrow you were to ascend the high throne and take your seat as sovereign, with me as your queen. The wedding feast is all drunk up—how can you change your mind now?" At these words Bajie flew into a fury, twisting his snout and shaking his ears wildly, and rushed up before the carriage, shouting: "What husband and wife would we monks make with you painted skeletons! Let my master go his way!" At the sight of such wild and ugly behavior, the Queen's spirit fled and her soul scattered; she tumbled back into her palanquin. The Sha Monk, meanwhile, snatched Sanzang out of the crowd and helped him onto his horse. Then suddenly from the roadside a woman sprang out, shouting: "Sworn brother of Tang, where do you think you're going! Come and sport a while in wind and moon with me!" The Sha Monk cursed: "You ignorant thief!" and drew his precious staff to strike her over the head. The woman raised a whirlwind, and with a whoosh carried Sanzang clean away, without shadow or trace; none knew where he had gone. Ah! Truly:

Escaped from the net of the painted world, Only to meet the demon of wind and moon.

Whether that woman was human or monster, and whether the elder's life was to be saved or lost—hear the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 55

The Demon of Lust Sports Wantonly with Tang Sanzang; Upright Nature in Cultivation Keeps the Body Undefiled

Now the Great Sage Sun and Zhu Bajie were just about to work their magic on those women, when suddenly they heard a gust of wind, and the Sha Monk shouting in alarm. They turned their heads quickly—and Tang Sanzang was gone. "Who was it that snatched Master away?" said the Pilgrim. "It was a woman," said the Sha Monk, "who raised a whirlwind and carried Master off."

At these words the Pilgrim gave a whistle and sprang into the clouds, shading his eyes with his hand as he looked in every direction. He saw only a cloud of dust, with a great wind rolling toward the northwest. He turned his head at once and called: "Brothers! Mount the clouds quickly and come with me to chase after Master!" Bajie and the Sha Monk at once slung the luggage onto the horse, and with a sound they both leapt into mid-air. This threw the ruler and ministers and womenfolk of the Western Land of Women into such a fright that they knelt in the dust, saying: "These are arhats risen into the sky in broad daylight. Your Majesty need not be alarmed or doubtful. The sworn brother of Tang was also a Chan monk of the Way; we had eyes but no pupils, and mistook a man of China, wasting all that thought and care. Pray mount the palanquin and return to court." The Queen felt shame of herself, and all the officers returned with her to the kingdom—of this no more.

Now the Great Sage Sun and his two brothers, riding cloud and mist, followed the whirlwind straight on until they came to a high mountain, where the dust had settled and the wind had died away, and they knew not whither the monster had gone. The brothers brought down their clouds and searched for a path, when suddenly they saw to one side a smooth green rock, bright and shining, shaped like a screen.

The three of them led the horse around the stone screen, and behind it were two stone gates, on which were six great characters: "The Scorpion Cave of Poison-Enemy Mountain."

Bajie, who understood nothing, went up and began battering the gate with his rake. The Pilgrim checked him at once: "Brother, hold on. We followed the whirlwind and chased it here, and searched all this while before we found this gate—and we know nothing of what lies within, whether it's deep or shallow. What if this is not the gate? Wouldn't we provoke its anger for nothing? You two lead the horse and go back before the stone screen to wait a while, while old Sun goes in to scout things out, to see what's there and what's not, so that we can act properly." Hearing this, the Sha Monk was delighted: "Good! Good! Good! Just as they say, there's fineness in roughness, and in a tight spot one finds room." So the two of them turned and led the horse back.

The Great Sage Sun displayed his magic powers: he pinched his fingers, recited a spell, shook himself, and turned into a bee. Truly a nimble little thing! Look at him:

Wings so thin they bend before the wind, A waist so light, a slender speck in the sun. His sweet mouth once sought out the pistils; His sharp tail excels at routing toads. His art of making honey is no slight thing; He enters the hive with humble ceremony. Now he puts his cunning plan to work, And flits and hovers in through the gate's eaves.

The Pilgrim slipped in through a crack in the door, flew past a second gate, and saw, in the very center, seated upright on a flower pavilion, a female demon, with a few maids in embroidered colored dresses, their hair in twin topknots, standing to left and right, all merry and happy, chatting about no one knew what.

The Pilgrim flew up softly and alighted on the lattice of the flower pavilion, cocking an ear to listen. Then he saw two women with tousled hair in childish tufts, bearing two trays of steaming hot buns, who came up the

pavilion and said: "Grandma, one tray is meat buns stuffed with human flesh; the other is vegetable buns stuffed with bean paste."

The female demon laughed: "Little ones, bring out the sworn brother of Tang." Several maids in embroidered colored dresses went to the rear room and helped Tang Sanzang out. The master's face was yellow, his lips white, his eyes red and brimming with tears. The Pilgrim sighed secretly in the shadows: "Master has been poisoned!"

The demon came down from the pavilion, revealing ten slender fingers like spring scallions, and caught hold of the elder: "Sworn brother, set your mind at ease. Though my place is not the palace of the Western Land of Women, with its wealth and splendor, it is in truth quiet and free, just the place to chant the Buddha's name and read the sutras. I'll be your companion on the Way, and we shall live in harmony a hundred years, truly."

Sanzang was silent. The demon said: "Don't fret. I know that at the banquet in the women's kingdom you never got a bite of food or drop of drink. Here are two trays of meat and vegetable buns—pray take some to steady your shock."

Sanzang pondered in silence: "If I refuse to speak and refuse to eat, still this demon is not like the Queen. The Queen was human and acted with propriety; this demon is a spirit of evil, and I fear she may do me harm. What's to be done? My three disciples do not know I am trapped here. If she harms me, wouldn't my life be lost for nothing?" He asked his heart of his heart, and no plan came to him; he could only rouse himself by main force and speak: "What is in the meat ones? And what in the vegetable ones?" The female demon said: "The meat ones are stuffed with human flesh; the vegetable ones with bean paste." Sanzang said: "This poor monk eats vegetarian." The demon laughed: "Maid, bring hot tea, for your master to eat the vegetable buns." A maid indeed brought a cup of fragrant tea and set it before the elder. The demon split a vegetable bun open and handed it to Sanzang. Sanzang handed the whole meat bun to the female demon. The female demon laughed: "Sworn brother, why don't you split it for me?" Sanzang put his palms together: "I am one who has left the world; I dare not break the vegetarian rule." The female demon said: "You, who have left the world and dare not break the vegetarian rule—how is it that the other day at the Mother-and-Son River you drank your fill of the high water, and today you're so fond of bean-paste stuffing?" Sanzang said: "When the water is high the boat goes fast; when the sand sinks the horse walks slow." The Pilgrim, listening from the lattice, heard the two of them trading words, and feared that Master's true nature might be shaken; he could not restrain himself, revealed his real form, drew his iron cudgel, and shouted: "Vile beast, you forget your manners!" At the sight of him the female demon spat out a stream of smoke and light, veiling the flower pavilion, and called: "Little ones, take the sworn brother away!" Then she seized a three-pronged steel fork, leapt out the pavilion gate, and cursed: "You lazy ape! How dare you steal into my house and peek at my beauty! Don't run—take one fork from your old lady!" The Great Sage blocked it with his iron cudgel, fighting as he fell back. The two fought their way out of the cave, where Bajie and the Sha Monk were waiting before the stone screen. Seeing the struggle, Bajie in alarm led the white horse over and said: "Sha Monk, you just mind the luggage and the horse—let old Pig go help a bit."

Good blockhead! Raising his rake with both hands, he ran up shouting: "Senior Brother, stand back—let me hit this shameless wretch!" At the sight of Bajie the demon worked her arts again: with a shout, fire gushed from her nose and smoke from her mouth; she shook her body once, and whirling her three-pronged fork, charged to meet him. No one could tell how many hands the female demon had as she rolled at them head and face. The Pilgrim and Bajie attacked from both sides. The demon said: "Sun Wukong, you don't know when to advance and when to retreat! I know you, though you don't know me. Even the Buddha Tathagata of your Thunderclap Monastery stands in fear of me—what can the likes of you two hairy creatures accomplish? Come on, all of you; watch your heads as I strike!"

Was this not a fine battle! The female demon's prowess grew, the Monkey King's spirit rose. The Marshal Tianpeng fought for his own merit, wildly raising his rake to show his skill. She, with her many hands and tight fork, wreathed in smoke and light; they two, eager and fierce of weapon, steaming with mist. The female demon fought only to win a mate; the monk, how could he spill his primal essence! Yin and yang, ill-matched, gripped each other; each displayed his gifts, hating the bitter struggle. Yin, still and nurturing, stirs and moves; Yang, gathering and guarding, loves only purity. Hence the two sides could not agree—fork, rake, and iron cudgel, betting who should win. This one's staff was strong, that one's rake the more so, and the female demon's steel fork clashed tip for tip. Before Poison-Enemy Mountain neither would yield; outside the Scorpion Cave both were merciless. She rejoiced to have caught Tang Sanzang for her phoenix-mate; they two were sworn to follow the elder for the true scriptures. Heaven-shaking, earth-moving, they joined in battle, and fought until sun and moon lost their light and the stars their order! The three fought a long while, with no victor and no vanquished.

The female demon then sprang up, and using her poison sting that fells a horse, pricked the Great Sage once on the scalp without his noticing. The Pilgrim cried "Ah, misery!" and, unable to bear the pain, fled the field in defeat. Bajie, seeing things had gone wrong, dragged his rake and retreated in full. The demon, having won the victory, put away her steel fork.

The Pilgrim held his head, his brows knit and his face twisted with pain, crying "Terrible! Terrible!" Bajie came up to him and asked: "Brother, why did you leave just as the fight was going well, howling your woes to Heaven?" The Pilgrim, clutching his head, cried only: "It hurts! It hurts! It hurts!" The Sha Monk said: "Perhaps your head-wind has flared up?" The Pilgrim jumped: "No! No!" Bajie said: "Brother, I never saw you wounded—why does your head ache?" Groaning, the Pilgrim said: "It's past bearing! Past bearing! While I was fighting her, she saw me break through her fork-work, and she sprang up—with no one knows what kind of weapon—and pricked me once on the head. The pain is so unbearable that I fled the field." Bajie laughed: "And here you are, always boasting in your quiet moments that your head has been through training. How is it it can't stand even this one poke?"

The Pilgrim said: "Exactly. This head of mine, ever since I finished my cultivation and attained the truth, has eaten stolen peaches of immortality and the Old Lord's cinnabar elixir by stealth. When I made my great havoc in Heaven, the Jade Emperor sent the Ghost King of Great Strength and the Twenty-eight Constellations to haul me to the Dipper and Ox Palace to be executed. Those gods used knives, axes, hammers, swords, thunder, and fire against me, and the Old Lord shut me in his Eight Trigrams furnace and refined me for forty-nine days—and none of it did me the least harm. Yet today, who knows what weapon this woman used, to wound old Sun's head!" The Sha Monk said: "Let go your hands and let me look. I hope it isn't broken!" The Pilgrim said: "It's not broken! Not broken!" Bajie said: "Let me go to the Western Land of Women and beg a plaster for you." The Pilgrim said: "It's neither swollen nor broken—how can a plaster be put on it?" Bajie laughed: "Brother, I never came down with any pre-natal or post-natal illness—but you've gone and gotten yourself a boil on the forehead!" The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, no more teasing. The day is now late, Elder Brother's head is hurt, and Master's fate, dead or alive, is unknown. What are we to do!"

Groaning, the Pilgrim said: "Master's all right. When I went in, I turned into a bee and flew inside, and saw that woman sitting on the flower pavilion. In a little while, two maids brought two trays of buns: one tray of meat buns stuffed with human flesh, the other of vegetable buns stuffed with bean paste. Then she had two maids help Master out to eat one to steady his shock, and she wanted to be his companion on the Way, or some such. At first Master would not answer her, nor eat any bun; but then she set to with her sweet words and honeyed phrases, and before you knew it he had opened his mouth and said he ate vegetarian. That woman split a vegetable bun open and handed it to Master, and Master handed the whole meat bun to her. She said: "Why won't you split it?" Master said: "I have left the world, and dare not break the vegetarian

rule." She said: "If you won't break the rule, how were you able to drink your fill at the Mother-and-Son River the other day, and be so fond of bean-paste stuffing today?" Master, not understanding her meaning, answered her with two lines: "When the water is high the boat goes fast; when the sand sinks the horse walks slow." I heard it from the lattice, and fearing that Master's nature would be shaken, I showed my real body, drew my cudgel, and struck. She worked her magic too, spat out smoke and mist, called to take the sworn brother away, and whirling her steel fork fought old Sun out of the cave."

Hearing this, the Sha Monk bit his finger: "That shameless wretch—she must have followed us all the way from somewhere, to know all that has gone before!" Bajie said: "If that's so, we can't rest easy! Never mind dusk or midnight—let's go to her gate and challenge her, raise a din and keep her from sleeping, so she can't go trifling with our master." The Pilgrim said: "My head aches—I can't go!" The Sha Monk said: "There's no need to challenge her. First, Elder Brother's head aches; second, our master is a true monk and will never let lust and emptiness disturb his nature. Let us just sit out the night here on the hillside, in a place sheltered from the wind, and build up our strength; when day breaks we'll make our plans." So the three brothers tethered the white horse firmly, guarded the luggage, and settled down to rest on the slope—of this no more.

Now that female demon put away her fierce heart and put on again a face of delight. She called: "Little ones, bar the front and back gates tightly." She also set two watchwomen to guard against the Pilgrim, bidding them report the moment they heard a knock at the gate. Then she said: "Maids, put the bedchamber in good order, light the candles and burn incense, and bring the sworn brother of Tang here, that I may share his love." And they helped the elder out from the back.

The female demon put on a full display of charming coquetry, and taking Sanzang by the hand said: "As the saying goes, gold is not the most precious thing; peace and joy are worth more. Come, let us be man and wife for a while, and have some sport." The elder gritted his teeth and would not let out a sound. He wanted to refuse, but feared she would take his life in anger; so, trembling, he followed her into the perfumed chamber. There he stood as if dumb and deaf, never lifting his head or eyes; he did not look to see what bed and curtains the room held, nor whether there were chests and dressing-tables; and the words of clouds and rain, of passion, that the female demon spoke, he heard as if they were nothing. A fine monk indeed, truly:

His eyes looked not upon foul sights, His ears heard not the lewdest sounds. He held this brocaded beauty as dung and filth, Her golden and pearled loveliness as dust. All his life he loved only to meditate, And never left the Buddha's ground by half a step. What cared he for jade and fragrance? He knew but to cultivate the truth and nourish his nature. The female demon, lively and bright, her spring feeling boundless; The elder, dead and still, his Chan-sense firm within. One was as soft jade and warm fragrance, the other as dead ashes and withered wood. She spread the mandarin-duck quilt, her lewd desire running strong; He drew his robe about him, his true heart burning steadfast. She would cling breast to breast and leg entwined, like phoenix and mate; He would paint his wall and retire to the hills, to seek out Bodhidharma. The female demon undid her clothes, showing off her fragrant skin and sleek flesh; Tang Sanzang gathered his lapels tight, hiding his rough skin and coarse hide.

The female demon said: "My pillow is empty and my quilt is idle—why not sleep?" Tang Sanzang said: "My head is shaven and my dress is strange—how could I keep you company?" She said: "I would be the Liu Cuicui of the former dynasty." He said: "This poor monk is no the monk Yue of the moon [Translator's note: an allusion to the love story of the monk Yue and the courtesan Liu Cuicui]. The female demon said: "I am as lovely and graceful as Xi Shi." Tang Sanzang said: "And it was for such as you that the King of Yue long buried his corpse." The female demon said: "Sworn brother, do you remember the saying, better to die beneath the flowers, a ghost yet gallant in love?" Tang Sanzang said: "My true yang is my precious treasure—how could I lightly give it to a painted skeleton like you?" So the two of them traded banter, piece by piece, until the night was deep, and the elder Tang never once stirred in his resolve.

The female demon tugged and pulled and would not let go, but the master only remained steady and would not consent. They kept at it until midnight, when the demon grew angry and called: "Little ones, bring a rope!" And the poor dear object of her love was bound with a rope until he was rolled up like a lion cub, and she had him dragged out under the corridor eaves, then blew out the silver lamp and went each to her own rest.

All night long there was nothing to tell, and before they knew it the cock had crowed three times. On the hillside the Great Sage Sun stretched himself: "My head ached for a while, and now it neither aches nor is numb—it only itches a little." Bajie laughed: "If it itches, let her prick you again—how about that?" The Pilgrim spat: "Cut it out, cut it out, cut it out!" Bajie laughed again: "Cut it out, cut it out, cut it out! And my master—this whole night long he's been carrying on, on, on!" The Sha Monk said: "No more sparring of tongues. It's light now—let's hurry and catch the demon early." The Pilgrim said: "Brother, you stay here and watch the horse—don't move. Bajie comes with me." The blockhead shook himself briskly, tightened his black brocade gown, and followed the Pilgrim, each carrying his weapon, up the cliff and straight to the foot of the stone screen.

The Pilgrim said: "You wait here. I only fear that monster may have harmed Master in the night. Let me first go in and see what's what. If she has fooled him and drained his primal yang, truly ruining his virtue, then we'd all have to break up the company. But if his nature is unshaken and his Chan heart unmoved, then we can fight in earnest, beat the spirit to death, and rescue Master to go west." Bajie said: "How foolish you are! As the saying goes, would you lay a dried fish for a cat's pillow? Even if not, even if not, she'd still have clawed a few handfuls out of it!" The Pilgrim said: "Stop your wild suspicions and nonsense—let me go see."

Good Great Sage! He turned the stone screen, took leave of Bajie, shook himself, and turned again into a bee, flying in through the gate. Inside the gate he saw two maids, pillowed on their wooden clappers and bells, fast asleep. He flew on to the flower pavilion to look: the demon and her crew, having been at their games half the night, were all worn out, and none of them knew it was dawn; they were still sleeping. The Pilgrim flew on to the back, and faintly heard Tang Sanzang groaning. He looked up suddenly and saw, beneath the covered corridor, his master trussed up with all four limbs bound together.

The Pilgrim alighted softly on Sanzang's head and called: "Master." Sanzang recognized the voice: "Wukong, you've come! Save my life, quick!" The Pilgrim said: "And how were the night's delights?" Gritting his teeth, Sanzang said: "I would sooner die than do any such thing!" The Pilgrim said: "Yesterday I saw her with a loving, pitying air toward you—how is it today she treats you so?" Sanzang said: "She pestered me half the night, and I never undid my sash nor so much as touched the bed. When she saw I would not submit, she bound me here. For pity's sake, save me and let us go fetch the scriptures!"

While master and disciple were thus talking, they had already woken the demon. Though she had dealt harshly with him, she still kept a lingering desire for him, and as she turned over in her sleep, catching the words "go fetch the scriptures," she rolled off the bed and cried out in a loud voice: "A fine husband and wife you'd be—what scriptures do you think you're going for!" The Pilgrim took fright, abandoned his master, and spreading his wings flew out in haste, resumed his real form, and called: "Bajie!" The blockhead came round the stone screen: "Did the deed get done?" The Pilgrim laughed: "No! No! The old master wouldn't yield to her coaxing and fondling, and she got angry and tied him up there. He was just telling me what had gone before when the demon woke up—and I fled in a fright." Bajie said: "And what did Master say?" The Pilgrim said: "He said only that he never undid his sash and never touched the bed." Bajie laughed: "Good! Good! Good! A true monk after all! Let's go rescue him!"

The blockhead, crude as ever, would not be argued with: he raised his rake and drove it with all his might at the stone gate, smashing it into several pieces with a great crash. The maids who had been sleeping pillowed on the clappers and bells ran to beyond the second gate, crying: "Open up! The front gate has been smashed

in by those two ugly men from yesterday!"

The female demon was just leaving her room when four or five maids ran in and reported: "Grandma, those two ugly men from yesterday have come again and smashed the front gate!" At this the demon hurriedly called: "Little ones! Heat water quickly—I must wash my face and dress my hair!" and "Carry the sworn brother, rope and all, to the rear room and put him away; I'm going out to fight them!" Good demon that she was, she came out, raising her three-pronged fork, and cursed: "Ape! Wild boar! Utterly brainless! How dare you smash my gate!" Bajie cursed back: "You lewd and shameless bitch! You've trapped my master, and still you talk tough! My master was coaxed here to be your husband—send him out at once and I'll spare you! Say one more word against it, and old Pig will knock down your whole mountain with one rake!" The demon would not be argued with; she shook herself and worked her arts as before, puffing smoke from nose and mouth and spitting fire, and raising her steel fork, thrust at Bajie.

Bajie dodged aside and drove his rake at her, and the Great Sage Sun helped with his iron cudgel. The demon worked her magic again; no one could tell how many hands she had, warding left and right. After three or five rounds of fighting, with no one knew what weapon, she pricked Bajie once on the lips. The blockhead dragged his rake, clutched his mouth, and fled for his life in pain. The Pilgrim, who had some fear of her himself, made one feint with his cudgel and fled the field in defeat.

The demon, having won the victory, returned and had her little ones pile up stones to wall up the front gate—of this no more.

Now the Sha Monk was grazing the horse before the slope when he heard a pig grunting. He looked up and saw Bajie coming, clutching his mouth and groaning. The Sha Monk said: "What's the matter?" The blockhead groaned: "Terrible! Terrible! It hurts, hurts, hurts!" Before he had done, the Pilgrim also came up, laughing: "What a fine blockhead! Yesterday you cursed me with a boil on the forehead—and today you've gone and gotten yourself a swollen-mouth plague!" Bajie groaned: "Unbearable, unbearable! It aches terribly! Terrible, terrible!"

While the three were in their difficulty, they saw an old dame, carrying a green bamboo basket in her left hand, coming along the southern mountain path, picking greens. The Sha Monk said: "Elder Brother, that dame is drawing near; let me ask her some news, and find out what demon this is, and what weapon, that wounds so." The Pilgrim said: "Wait there; let old Sun go ask her." The Pilgrim looked sharply, and saw above her head auspicious clouds canopied over her, and about her body fragrant mists on left and right. The Pilgrim recognized her, and called at once: "Brothers, come knock your heads quickly! That dame is a Bodhisattva come among us!" In a flurry Bajie endured his pain and knelt in worship, the Sha Monk led the horse and bowed low, and the Great Sage Sun put his palms together and knelt, crying: "Hail to the Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Merciful, reliever of suffering and distress, the all-responsive Bodhisattva Guanyin." The Bodhisattva, seeing that they recognized her numinous light, trod her auspicious clouds and rose into mid-air, showing her true form—and it was the fish-basket image.

The Pilgrim rushed into the air and knelt to tell her: "Bodhisattva, forgive your disciple his fault in not coming to meet you! We were straining every nerve to save our master, and knew not that the Bodhisattva had descended. We have met a demon and cannot subdue her; I beg the Bodhisattva, save us, save us!" The Bodhisattva said: "This demon is extremely formidable. Those three-pronged forks of hers are her two natural pincers. What pricks so painfully is a hook on her tail, called the horse-felling poison sting. In herself she is a scorpion spirit. Once, when she was at the Thunderclap Monastery listening to the Buddha preach, the Tathagata saw her, and in an unlucky moment pushed her with his hand; she turned her hook and pricked the Tathagata's left middle finger. The pain was more than even the Tathagata could bear, and he at once ordered the Vajra warriors to seize her—and so she came here. If you would save Tang Sanzang, you must beg help of some other one; even I cannot come near her." The Pilgrim bowed again: "I beg the Bodhisattva

to point the way—which other one should we beg? Your disciple will go fetch him at once." The Bodhisattva said: "Go to the Palace of Brightness inside the Eastern Gate of Heaven and beseech the Star Official Mao; only he can subdue her." With that she turned into a beam of golden light and returned to the Southern Sea.

Only then did the Great Sage Sun bring down his cloud, and said to Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Brothers, set your minds at rest—Master has his rescuer." The Sha Monk said: "Who is this rescuer, and where?" The Pilgrim said: "The Bodhisattva has just told me to go beseech the Star Official Mao—and old Sun is off." Bajie clutched his mouth and groaned: "Brother! Ask the Star Official for some pain-killing medicine while you're at it!" The Pilgrim laughed: "No medicine needed. Just like yesterday—once it aches through the night, it'll be fine." The Sha Monk said: "No more of this—be off, and quickly!" Good Pilgrim! He mounted his somersault cloud in haste and in a moment reached the outside of the Eastern Gate of Heaven.

Suddenly Heavenly King Virudhaka appeared before him and made his salute: "Great Sage, whither bound?" The Pilgrim said: "I am escorting Tang Sanzang west for the scriptures, and on the road we have met a demon affliction. I must go to the Palace of Brightness to see the Star Official Mao." Then he suddenly saw the four great marshals Tao, Zhang, Xin, and Deng, who also asked where he was going. The Pilgrim said: "I go to seek the Star Official Mao, to subdue a demon and save my master." The four marshals said: "The Star Official, by the Jade Emperor's decree, went up to the Star-Gazing Terrace this morning on his rounds." The Pilgrim said: "Is that the truth?" The Heavenly Lord Xin said: "We small officers came down from the Dipper and Ox Palace with him—how would we dare tell a lie?" The Heavenly Lord Tao said: "It has been a good while now; perhaps he is on his way back. Better that the Great Sage go first to the Palace of Brightness; if he has not returned, you may then go to the Star-Gazing Terrace." The Great Sage was delighted, and taking leave of them, went to the gate of the Palace of Brightness. Indeed no one was there, and he was turning to leave when he saw a file of soldiers drawn up on the far side, and behind them the Star Official approaching.

The Star Official was still in the court robes he had worn to audience with the throne, all woven with golden thread. See him:

His cap-pins of the Five Peaks gleam with golden light; In his hand the tablet of the Hills and Streams, jade-white as fine stone. His robe hangs with the Seven Stars amid trailing clouds; His girdle is clasped with the Eight Poles, its jeweled rings shining. His pendants jingle like struck notes; His swift wind-sound is like a swinging bell. His kingfisher-feather fan unfolds—Mao of the Pleiades! The fragrance of Heaven wafts and fills all the gate and court.

The soldiers in front, seeing the Pilgrim standing outside the Palace of Brightness, turned quickly and reported: "My lord, the Great Sage Sun is here." The Star Official gathered his clouds and mists, straightened his court robes, halted his attendants, and dividing them left and right, came forward and made his salute: "Great Sage, why have you come?" The Pilgrim said: "I have come especially to trouble you to save my master from his ordeal." The Star Official said: "What ordeal? In what place?" The Pilgrim said: "At the Scorpion Cave of Poison-Enemy Mountain in the Western Land of Women." The Star Official said: "What demon is in that mountain cave, that you come summoning your little god?" The Pilgrim said: "The Bodhisattva Guanyin just appeared to us, and said it is a scorpion spirit, and that only you, sir, could be recommended to cure it—and so I have come to ask you." The Star Official said: "I had intended to return and report to the Jade Emperor, but since the Great Sage has come, and I am moved by the Bodhisattva's recommendation, and fear delay might spoil the matter, your little god dares not offer tea. Let me go with you to subdue the demon, and I shall come back to report afterward." At these words the Great Sage and he left the Eastern Gate of Heaven together and went straight to the Western Land of Women. Seeing Poison-Enemy Mountain not far off, the Pilgrim pointed: "This is the mountain." The Star Official brought down his cloud and went with the Pilgrim to the hillside below the stone screen.

The Sha Monk, seeing him, said: "Second Brother, get up—Elder Brother has brought the Star Official." The blockhead, still clutching his mouth, said: "Forgive me, forgive me! I have an ailment, and cannot make my bow." The Star Official said: "You are a cultivator of the Way—what ailment can you have?" Bajie said: "This morning when I fought that demon, she pricked me once on the lips, and it aches to this very moment." The Star Official said: "Come here, and I will heal it for you." Only then did the blockhead take away his hand, grumbling and sputtering: "Do heal it, do! When it's well I'll thank you." The Star Official touched his lips with his hand and blew a breath of air—and the pain was gone. The blockhead, overjoyed, knelt and bowed: "Wonderful! Wonderful!" The Pilgrim laughed: "Trouble the Star Official to feel my head too." The Star Official said: "You did not suffer the poison—why have it felt?" The Pilgrim said: "I suffered it yesterday too; only after the night had passed did it stop aching. Even now it is a little numb and itchy, and I fear the damp weather may bring it on—trouble you to cure it as well." The Star Official indeed felt his head, blew a breath, and the lingering poison was dissolved; it was neither numb nor itchy any more.

Bajie cried fiercely: "Brother, let's go beat that shameless wretch!" The Star Official said: "Exactly, exactly. You two call her out, and I'll subdue her." The Pilgrim and Bajie sprang up the hillside and came again behind the stone screen. The blockhead, cursing wildly, his hands like grappling hooks, drove his rake into the piled-up stones outside the cave gate and scraped them away, burst through the first gate, and with another rake smashed the second gate to bits.

In a flurry the little demons inside the gate flew to report: "Grandma! Those two ugly men have smashed the second gate too!" The demon had just ordered Tang Sanzang untied and vegetarian food and tea prepared for him; hearing the second gate smashed, she at once leapt out of the flower pavilion and whirled her fork to thrust at Bajie. Bajie met it with his rake, and the Pilgrim at the side struck with his iron cudgel. The demon rushed at them, meaning to use her deadly art, but the two knew the method now and turned and ran. When the demon chased them past the stone screen, the Pilgrim called: "Where is Mao of the Pleiades?" And the Star Official, standing on the hillside, revealed his true form—it was a great rooster with a double comb, holding up his head some six or seven feet high. He crowed once at the demon, and she at once revealed her true form: a scorpion spirit as big as a pipa lute. He crowed a second time, and the demon's whole body went limp and she lay dead at the foot of the slope. There is a poem in proof:

His flowered comb and embroidered neck are like a gathered tassel, His claws hard, his spurs long, his eyes glaring fierce. He leaps with the majesty that fulfills the Five Virtues, His lofty bearing envied for his triple crowing. How unlike the common bird that cries in the thatched hut— He is a star of Heaven displaying his sainted name. The poison scorpion vainly cultivated the human path; Reverted to her root, she showed her true form.

Bajie went up, set one foot on the demon's chest and back, and said: "Vile beast! You won't be using your horse-felling poison sting this time!" The demon did not move at all, and the blockhead with a bout of raking pounded her into a lump of mashed paste. The Star Official then gathered his golden light again and rode off on his cloud.

The Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk folded their hands and gave thanks to Heaven: "We have put you to great trouble, great trouble! Another day we shall come to your palace to pay our respects." The three finished their thanks, and only then gathered up the luggage and the horse and entered the cave, where the maids, great and small, knelt on both sides and said: "My lords, we are not demons or monsters—we are all women of the Western Land of Women, snatched away here by that demon in days past. Your master is sitting in the perfumed room at the back, weeping." Hearing this, the Pilgrim looked at them carefully and indeed saw no demon aura about them. He went to the back and called: "Master!" Tang Sanzang, seeing them all come in, was greatly pleased: "Worthy disciples, I have put you to trouble! And what of that woman?"

Bajie said: "That creature was a great she-scorpion. Happily the Bodhisattva Guanyin showed us the way, and Elder Brother went to the heavenly palace and fetched the Star Official Mao, who subdued her. Only after old Pig had raked her into mud did we dare come deep in here and see Master's face." Sanzang thanked them endlessly. Then they found some vegetarian rice and flour, prepared a meal, and ate their fill; then they drove the women who had been snatched away down the mountain, pointing them the way home. They lit a fire and burned the rooms of the cave clean away, helped Sanzang onto his horse, and set out seeking the high road west. Truly:

Sundering the ties of the dusty world, he left the realm of forms behind; Draining dry the sea of gold, he awakened to the Chan mind.

But as to how many years would pass before they attained their true fruit—hear the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 56

In Wild Fury He Kills the Bandits; Blind to the Way, He Lets Loose the Mind-Ape

The poem says:

When the Numinous Terrace holds no thing, it is called pure; In utter stillness, not one thought is born. Lock up the ape and horse—let them not run loose; Guard well your spirit—never let it tower. Cast out the six thieves, awaken to the Three Vehicles, And when the myriad ties are done away, all is clear of itself. Lust and evil extinguished forever, you transcend the true realm, And seated at ease, enjoy the city of Western bliss.

The story goes that Tang Sanzang, biting on nails and chewing iron, had by desperate resolve preserved a body unspoiled, and was grateful to the Pilgrim and the others for beating the Scorpion Demon to death and rescuing him from the Pipa Cave. The road was uneventful for a while, and soon it was the season of Vermilion Brightness—summer. Just look at what he saw:

The warm wind wafted the scent of wild orchids from time to time; Fresh from bathing rains, the new bamboo was cool. Mugwort leaves covered the hills, with no one to pick them; Sweet-flag flowers filled the ravines, vying in fragrance. The pomegranates' flaunting blooms delighted the roving bees; By the willow-shaded streams the orioles went wild. On a long road, who could wrap rice dumplings in leaves? The dragon boats should mourn over the Miluo River.

Master and disciples were taking in the scenery of the Double Fifth festival, idling through the midyear season, when suddenly they saw a high mountain blocking the way.

The elder reined in his horse, turned his head, and called: "Wukong, there is a mountain ahead. I fear more demons will spring up—we must be on our guard."

The Pilgrim and the others said: "Master, set your mind at ease. We have surrendered ourselves in all sincerity—what demons need we fear!" Hearing this, the elder was greatly pleased; he whipped on his fine steed and let loose the reins to hurry the dragon-horse along. Presently they climbed the mountain crags and lifted their heads to look. Truly it was a mountain whose summit pines and cypresses touched the blue of the clouds, whose stone walls were hung with brambles and wild vines. Ten thousand fathoms of towering height, a thousand layers of sheer-cut cliff.

Ten thousand fathoms of towering height—peak upon towering peak; A thousand layers of sheer-cut cliff—gorge and precipice deep. Green moss and emerald lichen spread over the shaded rocks; Ancient junipers and tall locust trees wove a great forest. Deep in the woods one heard the hidden birds, Their clever voices rippling—truly fit for song. In the ravines the water ran like pouring jade; By the roadside fallen flowers lay heaped like gold. The mountain's temper was savage, ill for traveling— Ten steps along it, not half a step was level. Foxes and elk crossed the path in pairs; White deer and black gibbons came to meet them two by two. Suddenly a tiger's roar would freeze the traveler's marrow; A crane's cry rang in the ear and pierced the vault of heaven.

Yellow plums and red apricots were fit to eat; Wild grasses and idle flowers bore no names they knew.

The four travelers entered the mountains and walked slowly for a good while, crossed the summit, and went down the western slope onto a stretch of level ground. Zhu Bajie, showing off his spirit, had the Sha Monk carry the load while he raised his rake in both hands and went ahead to drive the horse. But the horse did not fear him in the least; let the blockhead clatter and crack away as he would, it only kept its slow, unhurried pace.

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "why drive him? Just let him walk along slowly."

"The sky's getting late," said Bajie. "We've been in these mountains all day, and my belly's hungry. Let's all move faster and find some household where we can beg a meal of vegetarian food." Hearing this, the Pilgrim said: "If that's how it is, let me make him go fast." He flourished the gold-banded cudgel once and gave a shout—at which the horse bolted like a loose rein, flying swift as an arrow down the level road ahead. You ask: the horse feared not Bajie, but feared only the Pilgrim—why?

Five hundred years before, the Pilgrim had been appointed by the Jade Emperor to tend horses in the Imperial Stables of the Great Pure Heaven, with the official title of Protector of Horses; and so it has been handed down to this day that all horses fear the monkey. The elder could not hold the rein; he could only grip the saddlebow tight and let the horse run free with the bit in its teeth. It was twenty li, until they came to open fields, before it slowed to a walk.

Just as they were going along, they suddenly heard a clash of gongs, and thirty-some men sprang out from both sides of the road, every one with spear, sword, cudgel, or staff, blocking the way and shouting: "Monks! Where do you think you're going!" The Tang monk was terrified out of his wits; he could not sit steady, tumbled off his horse, crouched in the grass beside the road, and could only cry: "Great Kings, spare my life! Great Kings, spare my life!" The two big men at their head said: "We won't beat you—only leave your travel money." Only then did the elder come to his senses and know them for a band of robbers. He raised himself up to look at them: one had a green face and protruding fangs, more terrible than the Tai Sui star; one had bulging eyes and round glaring orbs, a very God of Death.

Red hair floated at their temples like drifting fire; Yellow whiskers bristled below their chins like planted needles. The two of them wore flowered tiger-skin helmets, And girded at their waists sable furs and colored battle skirts. One clutched in his hand a wolf-toothed mace; Across the other's shoulder lay a knotted rattan staff. Truly they lost nothing to the tigers of Mount Ba, And verily resembled dragons risen from the water.

Seeing them so fierce and savage, Sanzang had no choice but to get up, press his palms together before his chest, and say: "Great Kings, this poor monk is one sent by the Tang king of the Eastern Land to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. Since I left Chang'an, so many years and days have passed that even if I had some travel money, it is long since spent. A man who has left the world lives by begging his food—what money or goods could I have?

"I beg you, Great Kings, show a little mercy and let this poor monk pass!"

The two robber chiefs led their band forward and said: "We've set up our tiger hearts here and block this main road precisely because we want money and goods. What mercy is there to show? If you truly have none, then quickly strip off your clothes, leave the white horse, and be on your way!"

Sanzang said: "Amitabha! This robe of mine was begged thread by thread—cloth from one house, thread from another, pieced and patched together bit by bit. If you strip it off me, would you not be the death of me? You may be bold fellows in this life, but in the next you'll turn into beasts!" At these words the robbers flared up in wrath, seized their big staves, and came forward to beat him.

The elder said nothing with his mouth, but thought to himself: "Pitiful! You boast of your staves—you don't yet know my disciple's staff!"

The robbers gave him no chance to argue; they raised their clubs and beat at him head and face.

All his life the elder had never known how to lie, but faced with this desperate strait he had no choice and could only tell a fib: "Two Great Kings, stay your hands a moment. I have a young disciple coming along behind—he'll be here soon. He has a few taels of silver on him; take those instead."

The robbers said: "This monk knows how to look out for his own skin. Bind him up first."

The whole gang of ruffians laid hands on him together, tied him with a rope, and strung him up high in a tree.

Now tell it of the three disaster-breeding spirits who came hurrying along behind.

Bajie roared with laughter: "Master gets along so fast—he must be waiting for us somewhere ahead!"

Then he suddenly saw the elder hanging in a tree, and said: "Look at Master! Waiting's one thing, but he's got such a playful streak—climbed up a tree and taken hold of a vine to swing on a swing for fun!" When the Pilgrim saw it, he said: "Blockhead, no nonsense. Isn't that Master strung up there? You two come along slowly; let me go take a look." What a Great Sage! He hurried up a rise and looked carefully, recognized them for a band of robbers, and rejoiced inwardly: "Luck! Luck! Business has come to my door!" At once he turned, shook himself, and changed into a clean, neat little monk in a black robe, barely sixteen years old, a blue cloth bundle slung over his shoulder. Striding forward, he came up to them and called: "Master, what's the meaning of this? What sort of rascals are these?"

"Disciple!" said Sanzang. "Won't you rescue me? Why all the questions?"

"What business are they in?" asked the Pilgrim.

"This band of road-blockers stopped me and demanded toll money. Since I had nothing on me, they strung me up here, saying they'd wait for you to come and settle matters—otherwise I was to give them the horse."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim laughed: "Master, you're no use at all. There are monks enough in the world, but few as soft-skinned as you. The Tang emperor Taizong sent you to the Western Heaven to see the Buddha—who told you to go giving away dragon-horses?"

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "strung up like this and beaten upon—what am I to do?"

"What did you tell them?" asked the Pilgrim.

"They beat me so hard I had no choice—I gave you away."

"Master, how shabby of you! What did you give me away for?"

"I said you had some travel money on you, so they'd stop beating me—it was a lie to save my skin in the moment."

"Fine! Fine! Fine!" said the Pilgrim. "Much obliged for the compliment—that's just the way to betray me. If you'd only do it seven or eight times a month, old Sun would have all the more business."

Seeing the Pilgrim talking with his master, the robbers spread out and closed around him: "Little monk, your master says you've got money at your waist. Hand it over quick and we'll spare your lives! Say half a 'no,' and we'll send every one of you to your graves!"

The Pilgrim set down his bundle and said: "Good sirs, no shouting. There is some travel money in this bundle—not much. Only twenty-odd ingots of horse-hoof gold, thirty or so ingots of fine white silver, and then the loose odds and ends I haven't counted. If you want it, take the whole bundle—only don't beat my master. The ancient books say: virtue is the root, wealth is the branch; this is a branch matter. We men who have left the world have our own places to beg. When we meet a worthy elder who feeds monks, there is alms-money and there are robes to be had—how much can we use? I only ask you to take my master down, and I'll hand it all over."

Hearing this, the band of robbers were all greatly pleased. "The old monk was a skinflint, but the little one's downright generous," they said, and called: "Let him down." The elder, having gained his life, leapt onto his horse and, with never a thought for the Pilgrim, laid on his whip and galloped straight back the way they had

come.

The Pilgrim hurriedly called after him: "Wrong road!" and, picking up his bundle, made to chase after him.

The robbers blocked his way: "Where do you go? Leave the travel money and spare yourself the torture!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Let's be clear—the travel money must be split three ways."

The robber chief said: "This little monk's too sharp by half—he means to hold some back behind his master's back. Well, then, bring it out and let's see. If there's plenty, we'll cut you in on a share to buy fruit with on the sly."

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "it's not like that. What travel money would I have? I mean, you two rob other people of their gold and silver—now that's money you ought to share with me."

At this the robbers flew into a rage and cursed: "This monk doesn't know his luck! Not only won't you give us any—you demand it of us! Don't run! Take that!" They swung a knotted rattan staff and gave the Pilgrim seven or eight blows on his bald crown.

The Pilgrim pretended not to notice, smiling all over his face: "Brother, if it's going to be like this, you can keep it up till next year past the spring equinox—it won't amount to anything."

The robbers were startled: "This monk's got a hard head!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You flatter me, you flatter me—still, I daresay it'll pass inspection."

The robbers would hear no more; two or three of them laid on together in a flurry of blows. "Good sirs, calm your anger," said the Pilgrim, "and let me bring it out." What a Great Sage! He felt inside his ear, pulled out an embroidery needle, and said: "Gentlemen, your monk truly carried no travel money—only this needle. Take it as a gift."

The robbers said: "What luck! We let a rich monk go and laid hands on this penniless bald ass! What are you, a tailor? What do I want with a needle?"

Hearing that they didn't want it, the Pilgrim took it between two fingers, gave it a flourish, and it turned into a staff as thick as a rice bowl.

The robbers were frightened: "Small as this monk is, he knows some magic tricks!"

The Pilgrim planted the staff in the ground: "If any of you gentlemen can lift it, it's yours." Two robbers came forward to seize it—and pitiful to relate, it was like dragonflies trying to shake a stone pillar: they could not budge it half a hair. This staff was the As-You-Will gold-banded cudgel, weighed on Heaven's scales at thirteen thousand five hundred catties—how could that gang of thieves have known?

The Great Sage stepped forward, lifted it lightly, and threw himself into a "Python Turns Its Body" feinting stance, pointing at the robbers: "Your luck's all out—you've run into old Sun!"

The robbers came up and gave him another fifty or sixty blows.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Your hands must be getting tired. Let old Sun strike one blow—don't take it seriously."

Watch him unfurl the staff, flourish it till it is thick as a well-curb and seven or eight fathoms long, and with one resounding swipe knock one of them flat to the ground, lips pressed in the dirt, never to make a sound again.

The other opened his mouth and cursed: "You bald lout, what outrageous behavior! No travel money to give, and you've done one of my men to death!"

"Pace yourself, pace yourself!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Let me strike them one by one, and finish the job down to the roots!" With another resounding blow he beat down the second one as well, dead. At this the whole gang of ruffians flung away their spears and staves and fled for their lives by every road.

Now the Tang monk was galloping eastward when Bajie and the Sha Monk stopped him: "Where are you going, Master? You've taken the wrong road."

The elder wheeled his horse: "Disciples, go quickly and tell your senior brother to show mercy with that staff of his, and not beat those robbers to death."

Bajie said: "Master, you stay here; I'll go." The blockhead trotted all the way to the front and called out in a loud voice: "Brother! Master says stop beating people!"

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "when did I beat anyone?"

"Where did the robbers go?"

"The others scattered; only the two chiefs are sleeping right here."

Bajie laughed: "You two plague-ridden wretches—must have been up all night, working so hard you'd sleep anywhere rather than some proper place!" The blockhead walked up to them, had a look, and said: "Well, they're one of us now—lying there clean-mouthed asleep, dribbling sticky slaver."

"That's old Sun's staff knocking the tofu out of them," said the Pilgrim.

"Whoever heard of tofu in a man's head?"

"Knocked their brains out!"

Hearing it was brains, Bajie turned and ran back in a hurry and reported to the Tang monk: "The gang's all broken up!"

"Good! Good!" said Sanzang. "Which road did they take?"

"Beaten stiff and straight-legged—where could they go walking?"

"Why do you say the gang's broken up?"

"Beaten to death—if that's not breaking up the gang, what is?"

"What condition are they beaten into?" asked Sanzang.

"Two big holes knocked in their heads."

Sanzang told him: "Open the bundle, take a few coppers of alms-money, go quickly and buy two plasters, and patch those two up."

Bajie laughed: "Master, what nonsense! Plasters are for patching boils and swellings on living men—who ever heard of patching holes in dead ones?"

"They're really dead?" Sanzang grew angry, and began an endless droning and muttering—"that ape" this and "that monkey" that—wheeled his horse around, and with the Sha Monk and Bajie came before the dead men, and saw them lying bloody at the foot of the slope.

The elder could not bear the sight; he ordered Bajie: "Quickly take your rake and dig a pit to bury them in, and I will recite a sutra for the dead over them."

Bajie said: "Master, you've got the wrong man for the job. The Pilgrim did the killing—the burning and burying ought to be his errand. Why make old Pig the gravedigger?"

The Pilgrim, nettled by his master's scolding, snapped at Bajie: "You lazy lout! Go bury them this instant! Any delay, and it's a taste of the staff!"

The blockhead panicked. He dug at the foot of the slope some three feet down, but below was all bedrock and stone roots, gripping his rake's teeth fast. The blockhead threw down the rake and started rooting with his snout; where he rooted to soft ground, one rooting made two and a half feet, two rootings made five feet deep. He buried the two robber corpses and heaped them into a single grave mound.

Sanzang called: "Wukong, fetch incense and candles, that I may pray and then recite the sutra."

The Pilgrim pursed his lips: "How unperceptive! Midway up this mountain—no village ahead, no inn behind—where would one get incense and candles? Even with money, there'd be nowhere to buy them."

Sanzang said resentfully: "Ape! Stand aside! Let me scoop up earth for incense and pray." This was Sanzang dismounting in grief by a wilderness grave, the holy monk breathing kind thoughts over a desolate tomb. He prayed, saying:

"We bow to you, bold men—hear the cause of this prayer. Think on your servants, men of the Tang in the East. Bearing the mandate of the Emperor Taizong, We go to the Western Heaven to seek the scriptures. Just now we came to this place and met you and your fellows— We know not from what prefecture, what department, what county, All of you banded in gangs within these mountains. With kind words I entreated you earnestly. You would not listen; good words turned to wrath, And you met the Pilgrim's staff and lost your lives. Grieving that your corpses lay exposed, I have covered them with earth and raised a mound. I break green bamboo for incense and candles— No radiance there, but a diligent heart; I take coarse stones for offerings of food— No savor there, but a true and honest will. If you go to file suit at the Hall of King Yama, And seek the root by pulling up the tree: He is named Sun, and I am named Chen— Different surnames, different houses. Every wrong has its author, every debt its debtor; By no means bring suit against these scripture-seeking monks."

Bajie laughed: "Master's washed his hands clean enough—but when they were being beaten, it wasn't done without the two of us, either."

Sanzang truly scooped up more earth and prayed: "Bold men, when you file your suit, sue only the Pilgrim; it is no affair of Bajie's or the Sha Monk's."

Hearing this, the Great Sage could not hold back his laughter: "Master, you old man are a fine one for brotherhood! For the sake of your scripture journey I've worn myself out with who knows how much toil and trouble, and now, having beaten these two thieving rascals to death, you tell them to go and sue old Sun! True, it was my hand that struck—but it was all for your sake. If you weren't going to the Western Heaven for scriptures, and I hadn't become your disciple, how would I ever have come here and beaten men to death? Let me finish by saying a prayer over them myself." Clutching his iron staff, he pounded the grave three times and said: "Plague-ridden robbers, you listen! You gave me seven or eight blows from the front and seven or eight from behind—beat me till it neither hurt nor itched—till my temper was roused, and by slip and error I did you to death. Go sue wherever you please: old Sun truly is not afraid. The Jade Emperor knows me; the Heavenly Kings are my cronies; the Twenty-Eight Constellations stand in awe of me; the Nine Luminaries are afraid of me; the city gods of every prefecture and county kneel to me; the Grand Sacred Emperor of the Eastern Peak trembles at me; the Ten Kings of the Dead once served me as pages; the rampant gods of the five roads once ran errands for me as boys. Whether it's the Three Realms and the Five Bureaus, or the ten directions' hosts of officials—every one of them is an old familiar friend of mine. Go sue wherever you like!"

Seeing him speak such wicked words, Sanzang was alarmed again: "Disciple! This prayer of mine was meant to teach you the virtue of cherishing life, to be a good and gentle man—how can you go taking it seriously?"

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "this is no business to trifle with. Let's be off and find lodging early." The elder could only swallow his anger and mount his horse.

The Great Sage Sun now bore a grudge in his heart; Bajie and the Sha Monk harbored jealousy too; master and disciples were all smiles to the face and malice behind the back. They were pressing westward along the main road when they suddenly saw, on the north side of the road, a farmstead.

Sanzang pointed with his whip: "We'll go there and ask for lodging."

"Right," said Bajie. So they went to the farm buildings and dismounted. Looking it over, it was a fine homestead. Just look:

Wild flowers filled the paths; scattered trees shaded the gates. From distant banks flowed water down the mountains; In level plots were planted wheat and mallow. Dew-drenched rushes where the light gulls slept; Willows in a gentle breeze where weary birds roosted. Green cypresses vied with pines in kingfisher blue; Red lotus mirrored knotweed, contending in fragrance. Village dogs barked; evening cocks crowed; Cattle and sheep fed full, the herd boys turned for home. Cooking smoke knotted into mist—the millet was ripe; It was the hour when mountain households sink into dusk.

The elder went forward, and just then out of the farmhouse gate came an old man, whom he greeted with a salutation.

The old man asked: "Where do you come from, monk?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk is one sent by imperial command from the Great Tang of the Eastern Land to seek scriptures in the Western Heaven. Passing just now through your honored region and finding the sky growing late, I have come especially to your honored gate to beg a night's lodging."

The old man laughed: "From your honored country to here the road is long and far—how did you ford the streams and climb the mountains to arrive alone?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk came with three disciples."

"And where are your honorable disciples?"

Sanzang pointed with his hand: "Those standing there by the main road." The old man looked up sharply, saw how ugly and grotesque they were, spun around at once, and would have gone back inside—but Sanzang caught hold of him: "Old Patron, have mercy, I beg you—grant us one night's lodging!"

The old man trembled, his mouth clamped shut, shaking his head and waving his hands: "No, no, no—not human-looking! They're—they're—demons!"

Sanzang said with an apologetic smile: "Patron, don't be afraid. My disciples were just born with these faces—they're not demons!"

The old man said: "Merciful Heaven! One's a yaksha, one's a horse-face, one's the Thunder God!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim called out in a ringing voice: "The Thunder God is my grandson! The yaksha is my great-grandson! The horse-face is my great-great-grandson!"

At these words the old man's soul scattered and his spirit flew; the color left his face, and he wanted only to get inside.

Sanzang held him up and walked with him to the thatched hall, saying soothingly: "Old Patron, don't fear them. They're always this rough—they don't know how to talk."

Just as he was calming him, out from the back came an old woman leading a child of five or six, who said: "Grandfather, why such fright?" Only then did the old man call: "Mother, bring tea."

The old woman truly set the child down, went inside, and brought out two cups of tea.

When the tea was done, Sanzang stepped down and bowed to the old woman: "This poor monk is one sent from the Great Tang of the Eastern Land to fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven. Just arrived in your honored place, I have begged a night's lodging from your honorable house; but because my three disciples are so ugly, the old master here has had a bad fright."

The old woman said: "If ugly faces give him such a fright, what would he do if he saw a tiger or a wolf?"

The old man said: "Mother, ugly faces are one thing—but their talk is more frightening still. I said they looked like yakshas, horse-faces, and the Thunder God, and that one shouted back that the Thunder God was his grandson, the yaksha his great-grandson, the horse-face his great-great-grandson. When I heard that, no wonder I shook!"

Tang monk said: "It's not so, it's not so. The one who looks like the Thunder God is my first disciple, Sun Wukong; the one who looks like a horse-face is my second disciple, Zhu Wuneng; the one who looks like a yaksha is my third disciple, Sha Wujing. Ugly as they are, they have taken refuge in the school of the Buddha and turned toward the fruits of goodness. They are no fiends or venomous monsters—what is there to fear?"

When the old couple heard the names and how they had entered the orthodox fold, only then did their hearts settle and their fright subside, and they called: "Ask them in! Ask them in!" The elder went out the door and called them, then instructed them: "That old gentleman just now was quite put out with you. Going in to meet him now, don't stand on ceremony—each of you show some respect."

"I'm handsome and I'm refined," said Bajie. "I'm not like my senior brother, always acting wild."

The Pilgrim laughed: "If it weren't for the long snout, the big ears, and the ugly face, you'd be a fine figure of a man."

"No arguing," said the Sha Monk. "This is no place for showing off your cleverness. In we go! In we go!"

So they brought the baggage and horses into the thatched hall, all bowed together with a resounding "ha," and sat down. The good woman, kind and sensible, took the little child aside, ordered rice cooked, and laid out a vegetarian meal, which master and disciples ate. As it gradually grew dark, lamps were lit, and they all sat chatting in the hall. At last the elder asked: "Patron, what is your honorable surname?"

"Yang," said the old man.

He asked his age.

"Seventy-four," said the old man.

"And how many worthy sons?"

"Only one. The little one the mother was carrying just now is my grandson."

The elder said: "Please let me meet your worthy son and greet him."

"That scamp's not worth your bow," said the old man. "Old fool that I am, my fate was hard—I couldn't raise him right. He's not at home now."

"Where does he practice his trade?" asked Sanzang.

The old man nodded and sighed: "Pitiful! Pitiful! If only he practiced any trade anywhere—that would be my blessing! That scamp breeds wicked thoughts only; he'll follow no honest calling. He loves nothing but

robbing houses and blocking roads, killing and burning! The friends he keeps are a pack of foxes and curs! He went out five days ago and hasn't come back yet."

Hearing this, Sanzang dared not breathe a word, but thought to himself: "Could it be that these are the ones Wukong beat to death?"

The elder sat ill at ease, then rose and said: "Good! Good! Such worthy parents—how could they beget so wicked and unnatural a son!"

The Pilgrim came near: "Old friend, with a son so bad, so worthless, so thieving, lecherous, and depraved—a curse on his own parents—what use is he? Let me go find him and beat him to death for you!"

The old man said: "I'd gladly be rid of him myself, but I have no other offspring to follow; worthless as he is, someone must stay to throw the last spade of earth over old man Yang when he dies."

The Sha Monk and Bajie laughed: "Brother, don't meddle in other people's affairs—you and I are not the magistrate. If their son is a wastrel, what is it to us? And we beg you, Patron, grant us a bundle of straw; we'll bed down over there and be on the road at first light."

The old man rose at once, had the Sha Monk fetch two straw bundles from the back garden, and put them up for the night in the straw shelter in the garden.

The Pilgrim led the horse; Bajie shouldered the luggage; and together with the elder they settled into the straw shelter. Of that no more need be said.

Now among that gang of robbers there truly was old Yang's son. Early that morning, when the Pilgrim had beaten the two robber chiefs to death in the mountains, they had scattered for their lives; but toward the fourth watch they banded together again and came beating on the gate. Hearing the knocking, the old man threw on his clothes and said: "Mother, that scamp and his crew have come."

"Since they've come, go open the gate and let them in," said the old woman.

When the old man opened the gate, the whole gang of robbers came clamoring: "Hungry! Hungry!" Old Yang's son bustled inside, roused his wife, and had her wash rice and cook.

But there was no firewood in the kitchen. Going to the back garden for firewood and carrying it to the kitchen, he asked his wife: "Where's that white horse in the back garden?"

His wife said: "It belongs to the scripture-seeking monks from the Eastern Land. They came here last night to beg lodging; grandfather and grandmother gave them a supper of vegetarian food and put them up to sleep in the straw shelter."

Hearing this, the scamp walked out of the hall, clapping and slapping his hands in glee: "Brothers! Luck! Luck! Our enemies are in my house!"

The robbers said: "What enemies?"

"The monks who beat our chiefs to death—they've come to my house for lodging, and they're sleeping right now in the straw shelter!"

"Splendid! Splendid!" cried the robbers. "We'll seize these bald asses, chop every one of them into meat paste—first we get their baggage and the white horse, and second we avenge our chiefs!"

The scamp said: "No hurry. Go and sharpen your knives. When my rice is cooked and we've all eaten our fill, we'll set on them together." And truly those robbers sharpened knives and whetted spears.

The old man heard all this, stole quietly to the back garden, roused the Tang monk and his three companions, and said: "That scamp has led the whole gang back. They know you're here and mean to do you harm. But old fool that I am, I remember how far you've come, and I cannot bear to let you be hurt. Quickly gather your things, and I'll let you out through the back gate."

Hearing this, Sanzang trembled as he knocked his head in thanks to the old man, then called Bajie to lead the horse, the Sha Monk to shoulder the load, and the Pilgrim took the nine-ringed priestly staff. The old man opened the back gate, let them out, and quietly returned to bed in front.

Now when those scamps had sharpened their knives and spears and eaten their fill, it was already the hour of the fifth watch. They came in a body to the garden to look—and the monks were gone.

They hurriedly lit lamps and torches and hunted for a long while, but there was no trace anywhere; only the back gate stood open. "They've gone out the back gate! Gone!" they all cried. With one great shout—"After them! Seize them!"—each one of them flew like an arrow, and they chased straight on until the sun rose in the east before they caught sight of the Tang monk.

The elder suddenly heard the clamor behind him, turned to look, and saw thirty or twenty men coming on with a forest of spears and blades. "Disciples!" he cried. "The robber band is upon us—what is to be done?"

"Set your mind at ease! Set your mind at ease!" said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun will see to them!"

The elder reined in his horse: "Wukong, by no means hurt anyone—just frighten them off, that's all."

But the Pilgrim would not heed. He whipped out his staff and turned to meet them: "Where are you bound, gentlemen?"

The robbers cursed: "Bald lout, outrageous! Give us back our chiefs' lives!" The scamps wheeled round in a ring, hemmed the Pilgrim in the middle, and fell to hacking and stabbing with spear and blade.

The Great Sage flourished his gold-banded cudgel till it was thick as a bowl and beat that robber band till they scattered like stars and clouds: those he touched died, those he grazed perished; those he butted got broken bones, those he brushed, torn skin. The sharper-witted ones ran off; the duller ones all went to see King Yama!

Seeing so many beaten down, Sanzang in a panic let his horse gallop west. Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk followed hard on whip and stirrup.

The Pilgrim questioned one of the surviving, wounded robbers: "Which is old Yang's son?"

The robber groaned out: "Your Lordship—the one in yellow!"

The Pilgrim stepped up, wrenched the knife from his hand, sliced off the head of the one in yellow, and, dripping with blood, carried it in his hand. Putting away his iron staff, he strode off on his cloud-walking feet, caught up with the Tang monk's horse, held up the head, and said: "Master, this is old Yang's unnatural son—old Sun has brought back his head!"

At the sight, Sanzang turned white with terror, tumbled off his horse in a panic, and scolded: "You wicked ape—you've frightened the life out of me! Take it away! Take it away!" Bajie stepped forward, kicked the head off into the roadside, and raked some earth over it with his nail rake.

The Sha Monk set down the load and helped the Tang monk up: "Master, please rise." The elder collected himself on the ground and began to recite the Band-Tightening Spell, till the Pilgrim's ears turned red and his face flushed, his eyes swelled and his head reeled, and he rolled on the ground crying only: "Don't recite! Don't recite!" The elder recited a good dozen-odd rounds and still would not stop.

The Pilgrim turned somersaults and stood on his hands, the pain past bearing, crying only: "Master, forgive me this once! If you have something to say, say it! Don't recite! Don't recite!"

Only then did Sanzang stop: "There is nothing to say. I'll have you follow me no more. Go back!"

The Pilgrim endured the pain and knocked his head: "Master, why do you drive me away?"

"You wicked ape! Your cruelty is past all bounds—you are no man for seeking scriptures. Yesterday at the foot of the slope you beat those two robber chiefs to death, and I already blamed you for your want of mercy. Then at evening we came to the old man's house, received his food and lodging, and were let out the back gate by him to escape with our lives. Though his son is a wastrel, it was no affair of ours—you should never have cut off his head! And then to kill so many, destroying so many lives, wounding the harmony of Heaven and Earth past all counting! Time after time I have warned you, and never a scrap of goodness shows in you—what use are you to me? Be gone! Be gone! Or I'll recite the spell again!"

The Pilgrim was frightened, and could only cry: "Don't recite! Don't recite! I'm off!" And at the word "off," one somersault cloud—and he was gone without shadow or trace.

Ah! Truly it was:

The heart still fierce and wild—the elixir is not ripe; The spirit has no fixed abode—the Way is hard to achieve.

But as for where the Great Sage went—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 57

The True Pilgrim Pours Out His Grief on Mount Potalaka; the False Monkey King Copies Out the Travel Permit in the Water Curtain Cave

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun rose into the air, resentful and heartsick. He thought of returning to the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, but feared the little fiends of his old cave would laugh at him, sneering that he went back on his word, no man of consequence. He thought of taking refuge in the Palace of Heaven, but feared they would not let him stay long. He thought of fleeing to the islands of the sea, but was ashamed to face the immortals of the Three Isles. He thought of running to the Dragon Palace, but had no stomach to go begging favors of the Dragon King.

Truly without support or shelter, he brooded bitterly: "Enough! Enough! Enough! I'll go back to my master—there lies my true fruition after all."

So he brought his cloud down and went straight to stand before Sanzang's horse, saying: "Master, forgive your disciple this once! Never again will I do violence. I will accept your every teaching—only take me back to protect you to the Western Heaven!"

At the sight of him, Sanzang would not answer at all; he reined in his horse and at once recited the Band-Tightening Spell, over and over, back to front, another twenty-odd times, until the Great Sage was toppled to the ground, the band sunk an inch deep into his flesh. Only then did he stop: "You won't go away—why come pestering me again?"

The Pilgrim could only cry: "Don't recite! Don't recite! I have somewhere to pass my days. I only fear that without me you'll never reach the Western Heaven."

Sanzang flared up: "You ape, killing and destroying, dragging me into who knows how much trouble—I truly want you no more! Whether I can get there or not is no business of yours! Be gone, be gone! Any delay and I'll recite the spell again—this time I won't stop till I've squeezed your brains out!"

The pain past bearing, and seeing his master utterly unrelenting, the Great Sage had no choice but to mount his somersault cloud and rise into the sky. Suddenly it came to him: "This monk has betrayed my heart. Let me go and tell my troubles to the Bodhisattva Guanyin on Potalaka Cliff."

What a Great Sage! He wheeled his somersault around, and in less than a double hour he reached the Great Southern Ocean, checked his auspicious light, and came straight to Mount Potalaka. Bursting into the purple bamboo grove, he suddenly met Pilgrim Muzha, who saluted him: "Whither, Great Sage?"

"To see the Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim.

Muzha led him to the mouth of the Tide-Sound Cave, where they met Sudhana the Goodwealth Boy, who saluted him: "Whence, Great Sage?"

"I have a matter to lay before the Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim.

At the word "lay," Sudhana laughed: "What a sharp-tongued monkey! Still the same as when I'd caught the Tang monk and you bullied me! My Bodhisattva is a great, compassionate, merciful, vow-fulfilling, Great-Vehicle, suffering-relieving, boundless, measureless holy and saintly Bodhisattva—what fault could you find to lay against her?"

The Pilgrim, his breast already full of stifled vexation, flared into fury at this. With one sharp "Ha!" he made Sudhana stagger backward: "You ungrateful, treacherous little beast—thick as a plank! In those days you ran wild and became a fiend; it was I who asked the Bodhisattva to take you in, and you entered the orthodox

fold and received the precepts. Now you've got this bliss of eternal life, free and unfettered, coeval with Heaven itself—and instead of bowing thanks to old Sun, you give me all this insolence! I've come to lay a matter before the Bodhisattva—why do you twist it into a sharp tongue faulting the Bodhisattva?"

Sudhana said with an apologetic smile: "Still the impatient monkey! I was only having a little fun with you—why fly into a face?"

Just then the white parrot came flying to and fro, and they knew the Bodhisattva was calling. Muzha and Sudhana led the way forward to the Precious Lotus Terrace. Catching sight of the Bodhisattva, the Pilgrim flung himself down in worship, and, unable to hold back, wept like a spring flood and wailed aloud.

The Bodhisattva had Muzha and Sudhana raise him up: "Wukong, what grief is this? Tell me plainly—don't weep, don't weep. I will save you from your suffering and avert the calamity."

The Pilgrim, tears streaming, bowed again: "In the old days, when did your disciple ever take such treatment from anyone? Since the Bodhisattva freed me from Heaven's punishment and I entered the school of the Buddha to protect the Tang monk on his journey to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures in the Western Heaven, your disciple has risked body and life to deliver him from his demonic ordeals—snatching brittle bones from the tiger's mouth, plucking live scales from the flood dragon's back. I hoped only to return to truth and win the true fruition, washing away my karma and casting out evil. Who knew that elder would betray my faith and forget my kindness, straightaway bewitched from a whole field of good karmic bonds, with never a care for the wrong done me, right or wrong!"

"Tell me this matter of right and wrong," said the Bodhisattva.

So the Pilgrim told the whole story from first to last of beating the bandits to death.

The Tang monk, he said, because of those deaths, had nursed a grudge, and with no discrimination of black from white had recited the Band-Tightening Spell and driven him off time after time; with no road to Heaven and no door into the earth, he had come especially to lay it all before the Bodhisattva.

The Bodhisattva said: "Tang Sanzang bears the imperial mandate and presses westward, his whole heart set on goodness and the monk's calling—he would never lightly harm a life. With your boundless magic powers, why kill so many common bandits? Bad as the bandits were, they were still human beings, and ought not to have been killed—they are not like your demon birds and monstrous beasts, ghosts and fiends and imps. Killing those is your merit; killing human bodies remains your want of mercy. You had only to scatter and drive them off—naturally you would have saved your master. By my fair judgment, it was still your unkindness."

The Pilgrim, tears in his eyes, knocked his head: "Even if your disciple was unkind, my merit ought to count against my offense—he should not have driven me off like this. I beg the Bodhisattva, in her great mercy, to recite the Band-Loosening Spell, slip off this golden band, and hand it back to you—let me flee back to the Water Curtain Cave and live out my days!"

The Bodhisattva laughed: "The Band-Tightening Spell was given me by the Tathagata. When he sent me to the Eastern Land to find a scripture pilgrim, he bestowed on me three treasures: the brocade cassock, the nine-ringed priestly staff, and three bands—gold, tight, and forbidding—secretly conferring on me the three spells with them. But there is no such thing as a Band-Loosening Spell."

"Then I'll take leave of you, Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim.

"You leave me for where?" asked the Bodhisattva.

"I'm going to the Western Heaven to lay my complaint before the Tathagata and beg him to recite the Band-Loosening Spell."

"Stay a moment," said the Bodhisattva. "Let me look at your auguries—good or ill."

"No need to look," said the Pilgrim. "Just being this unlucky is quite enough."

"I'm not looking at yours—I'm looking at Tang Sanzang's." What a Bodhisattva! She sat upright upon the lotus throne, sent her mind ranging through the Three Realms, and gazed afar with her eye of wisdom till it compassed the whole universe. In a moment she spoke: "Wukong, within moments your master will meet a calamity that threatens his life, and before long he will come looking for you. Stay here with me, and I will speak with Tang Sanzang and have him take you back to fetch the scriptures and win the true fruition together."

The Great Sage Sun had no choice but to submit; he dared not act rashly, and stood in attendance below the Precious Lotus Terrace. Of him no more for now.

Now the elder Tang, after driving the Pilgrim away, had Bajie lead the horse and the Sha Monk carry the load; the four of them, counting the horse, pressed westward no more than fifty li or so, when Sanzang reined in: "Disciples, we left the farmhouse at the fifth watch, and then that Protector of Horses put me in a temper. Half the day gone, and I'm hungry and thirsty both—who will go beg some food for me?"

Bajie said: "Master, please dismount first, and let me see whether there's a village nearby where I can beg a meal." At these words Sanzang rolled off his horse. The blockhead leapt onto a cloud and peered carefully from mid-air: as far as the eye could see it was all mountain ridges—not a household to be found.

Bajie brought his cloud down and told Sanzang: "There's nowhere to beg. In every direction, not a farmhouse."

Sanzang said: "If there's nowhere to beg food, then at least get me some water to quench my thirst."

"Let me go to the ravine below the south mountain and fetch some water," said Bajie. The Sha Monk brought the alms bowl and handed it to him, and Bajie, holding the bowl, rose on cloud and mist and went. The elder sat by the roadside and waited a long, long while without his return—pitiful, his mouth dry, his tongue parched past bearing. There is a poem in witness. It says:

To guard the spirit and nurture the breath is called essence; Nature and feeling spring from one conferred form. When the mind runs wild and the spirit dims, a hundred sicknesses rise; When form decays and essence fails, the root of the Way gives way. Unformed, the three flowers—all your toil is vain; The four elements desolate—what use the strife? Earth and wood achieve nothing, metal and water run dry— When will the lazy, neglectful Dharmakaya be made?

The Sha Monk, standing by, saw the elder's hunger and thirst past bearing, and Bajie still not back with the water, so he could only steady the luggage and tie the white horse fast: "Master, rest easy while I go hurry the water along."

The elder, tears in his eyes, said nothing—only nodded his answer. The Sha Monk hastened onto cloud-light and made for the south mountain as well.

That master, simmering and stewing alone, his misery past bearing, was in the very midst of his desolation when he suddenly heard a loud report. Startled, the elder rose up to look—and there, kneeling by the roadside, was Sun the Pilgrim, holding out a porcelain cup in both hands: "Master, without old Sun you can't even get water. Here's a cup of nice cool water—drink a mouthful to quench your thirst, and I'll go beg some food."

"I won't drink your water! I'd rather die of thirst where I stand—I accept my fate! I want you no more! Go away!"

"Without me you'll never reach the Western Heaven," said the Pilgrim.

"Reach it or not—no business of yours! Wicked ape! Why keep on pestering me?"

At that the Pilgrim's face changed. Rage and spite boiled up, and he cursed the elder: "You heartless, wicked bald beast—you've insulted me once too often!" He swung his iron staff, flung the cup away, and brought the staff down across the elder's back. The elder fainted to the ground, unable to speak; and the other seized the two green felt bundles in his hands, mounted a somersault cloud, and vanished no one knew where.

Now Bajie, holding the alms bowl, made straight for the southern slope of the mountain—and suddenly saw, in a fold between the hills, a thatched farmhouse. It had been hidden before by the height of the mountain, so that he had missed it; only now, coming close, did he know there was a household there.

The blockhead thought to himself: "If I show up with this ugly mug, they'll certainly be frightened of me—all that scheming for nothing, and no meal to be begged, guaranteed. I must change! I must change!"

What a blockhead! He made the magic sign, recited a spell, shook his body seven or eight times, and turned into a consumptive, sallow, puffy monk, wheezing and coughing as he sidled up to the gate and called: "Patron! There's leftover rice in your kitchen and hungry men on the road. This poor monk is one journeying from the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven for scriptures. My master is hungry and thirsty on the road. If you have any crusts or cold rice in the house, I beg you, share a little to save our mouths."

It turned out the men of that household were away, all off planting rice seedlings, and only two women were home. They had just cooked the noon meal, dished up two basins, and were getting ready to carry it down to the fields; some rice and crusts were still in the pot, not yet dished out.

Seeing his sickly look, and hearing him talk of the Eastern Land and the Western Heaven, the women feared he was raving in his sickness, and feared too that he might collapse and die at their doorstep; so, humoring him with soothing words, they filled his bowl heaping full with leftover rice and crusts. The blockhead carried it back, resumed his own form, and took the old road. Just as he was walking along, he heard someone call "Bajie!"

Bajie looked up—it was the Sha Monk, standing on the cliff, shouting: "Over here! Over here!"

Coming down the cliff to meet him, the Sha Monk said: "There's fine clear water in this ravine—where were you off to?"

Bajie laughed: "I came over here, saw a farmhouse in the fold of the hill, and begged this bowlful of dry rice."

"Rice will serve," said the Sha Monk, "but Master's thirst is desperate—how do we get water?"

"Water's easy enough," said Bajie. "Hold this rice in your lapel, and I'll scoop water with the bowl."

The two of them, happy and pleased, returned to the road—only to find Sanzang face-down in the dust, the white horse broken loose from its reins, whinnying and prancing by the roadside, and the luggage load vanished without a trace.

Bajie stamped his feet and beat his breast, wailing at the top of his voice: "No need to say it! No need to say it! It must be that Sun the Pilgrim's gang, the ones he left behind—come back to beat Master to death and steal the luggage!"

"Tie up the horse first!" cried the Sha Monk, calling all the while: "What's to be done! What's to be done! This is truly what they call quitting halfway, stopping in mid-road!" He cried out: "Master!"—and pearls rolled from his eyes as he wept in heartbreak.

"Brother, stop your crying," said Bajie. "Things have come to this—let's say no more about fetching scriptures. You watch over Master's body; I'll ride the horse to some prefecture or county town, village or market, sell it for a few taels of silver, buy a coffin, bury Master, and then the two of us will each find his own road and split up."

The Sha Monk truly could not bear to give up. He turned the Tang monk's body over, warmed the master's face with his own, and cried: "Master of bitter fate!"—when he saw warm breath issue from the elder's mouth and nose, and his chest was warm. He called at once: "Bajie, come! Master's still alive!" Only then did the blockhead come near and raise him up.

The elder came to, groaned a while, and cursed: "That wicked ape—he nearly killed me!"

"Which ape?" asked the Sha Monk and Bajie.

The elder said nothing, only sighed. He asked for water, drank a few mouthfuls, and then spoke: "Disciples, you had hardly gone when that Wukong came pestering me again. I insisted on taking him back no longer, and he struck me a blow with his staff and made off with the green felt bundles."

Hearing this, Bajie ground his teeth till they rang, and fire flared up from his heart: "That insolent monkey—how dare he be so outrageous!" He told the Sha Monk: "You tend Master; I'm going to his house to demand our bundles back!"

"Stay your anger a moment," said the Sha Monk. "Let's help Master to that farmhouse in the fold of the hill, beg some hot tea, warm up the rice we begged, and look after Master first—then go look for him."

Bajie agreed. They helped the master onto the horse, took the bowl, carried the cold rice in a lapel, and came straight to the gate of that house—where only an old woman was at home now, and at the sudden sight of them she hurried to hide.

The Sha Monk pressed his palms together: "Good mother, we are ones sent from the Tang of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven. Our master has taken ill; we have come especially to your honorable house to beg a mouthful of hot tea, and some to warm his rice."

The old woman said: "A little while ago there was a consumptive monk who said he was sent from the Eastern Land, and he begged food and went; and now what's this about another one from the Eastern Land? There's no one at home—please try elsewhere."

Hearing her, the elder steadied himself on Bajie's arm, dismounted, and bowed: "Old mother, your disciple has three disciples, of one mind and purpose, who protect me as I go to the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the land of India to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Because my first disciple, named Sun Wukong, has been violent and wicked all his life and would not follow the good way, I sent him away. I never thought he would creep back secretly, strike me a blow across the back, and make off with my luggage and robes. Now I must send a disciple to find him and demand them back; and since the open road is no place to sit, I have come to your honorable house, old mother, to rest a little while. As soon as the luggage is recovered we'll be on our way—I would never presume to stay long."

The old woman said: "Just now there was a consumptive, sallow, puffy monk begging food, and he too said he was from the Eastern Land bound for the Western Heaven—how comes there another lot of you?"

Bajie could not hold back his laughter: "That was me! Because I was born with a long snout and big ears, I feared your family would be scared and wouldn't give food, so I changed into that shape. If you don't believe me—isn't that your crust rice in my brother's lapel?"

The old woman saw that it was indeed the rice she had given, so she no longer refused them, asked them to be seated, heated a kettle of tea, and handed it to the Sha Monk to soak the rice in. The Sha Monk soaked the

cold rice and passed it to the master. The master ate a few mouthfuls and sat collecting himself a long time, then said: "Who will go demand the luggage?"

Bajie said: "The year before last, when Master sent him home, I went looking for him once—I know his Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. Let me go! Let me go!"

The elder said: "You may not go. That ape was never on good terms with you, and your talk is rough; if some word or two goes astray, he'll beat you. Let Wujing go."

The Sha Monk agreed: "I'll go, I'll go."

The elder instructed the Sha Monk further: "When you get there, watch how the wind sits. If he's willing to give you the bundles, thank him briefly and bring them; if he's not, on no account quarrel with him—go straight to the Bodhisattva in the Southern Sea, tell her the whole affair, and ask her to demand them from him."

The Sha Monk agreed to every word, then said to Bajie: "I'm off to find him now. Whatever happens, don't you go sour and neglectful—care for Master well. And no playing the wild man in this house, or they may refuse to feed us. I'll come back as soon as I'm done."

Bajie nodded: "I understand. But whether you get the luggage or not, come back first thing tomorrow morning—don't leave us carrying firewood on a pointed pole, dropped at both ends."

The Sha Monk then made the magic sign, rose on cloud-light, and sped straight for the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. Truly:

Body here, spirit flown, the house abandoned— A furnace with no fire: how can the elixir be fired? The Yellow Dame leaves her lord to seek the Old Man of Gold; The Wood Mother sends for her teacher, worn with sickness of face. This going—who knows what day of return? This parting—who can reckon the hour of coming back? The five elements breed and conquer, nothing in accord— All awaits the Mind-Ape's return through the pass.

The Sha Monk through the mid-air traveled three days and nights before he reached the Great Eastern Ocean. Suddenly he heard the sound of waves, looked down, and truly saw black mist swelling to the sky, the breath of darkness heavy; the vast deep holding the sun in its jaws, the light of dawn cold.

He had no heart for sightseeing. He crossed toward the immortal mountains, passed Yingzhou, and pressed eastward straight to the bounds of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. Riding the sea wind, treading the water's swell, after a long while more he saw the high peaks ranked like halberds, the sheer walls hanging like screens. Reaching the summit, he checked his cloud, looked for a path down the mountain, and sought the Water Curtain Cave. As he drew near, he heard a great clamor: the mountain was full of countless monkey spirits, all roaring and brawling in confusion.

The Sha Monk came closer and looked carefully: it was Sun the Pilgrim, sitting high on a stone terrace, holding a sheet of paper in both hands and reading it out in ringing tones: "Li, Emperor of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, issues this permit to his sworn brother the holy monk and Master of the Law Chen Xuanzang, dispatched under imperial mandate to the Great Thunderclap Monastery on Vulture Peak in the land of India in the West, there to worship the Lord Buddha Tathagata and seek scriptures. We, stricken by sudden illness, wandered as a soul through the underworld; by grace our allotted span was extended, and the dark monarchs, moved to pity, sent us back to life. We have held a great convocation of goodness and built a Mass for the deliverance of the dead. The Bodhisattva Guanyin, reliever of suffering and distress, graciously appeared in her golden body and showed us that in the West there are Buddhas and scriptures able to deliver and free the souls of the dead. We have therefore specially commissioned the Master of the Law Xuanzang to journey far through a thousand mountains and seek out the scriptures and gathas. If he passes through the

countries of the West, let them not break this bond of goodness, but honor this permit and give it effect. Given at the imperial court on an auspicious day in autumn of the thirteenth year of Zhenguan of the Great Tang. Since parting from the Great Country, passing through the various states, on the road we have taken as first disciple Sun Wukong the Pilgrim, as second disciple Zhu Wuneng, Bajie, as third disciple the monk Sha Wujing."

He read it through from the beginning and read it again.

Hearing that it was the travel permit, the Sha Monk could not hold back; he stepped forward and called out in a loud voice: "Brother—why are you reading Master's permit?"

At the sound of his voice the Pilgrim looked up sharply, but he did not recognize the Sha Monk, and shouted: "Seize him! Seize him!" The whole crowd of monkeys closed around, dragging and pulling the Sha Monk up before him. "Who are you," the Pilgrim thundered, "that you dare approach my immortal cave?"

Seeing that his face was changed and he would not acknowledge him, the Sha Monk could only bow and say: "I report to you, Brother: before, it was truly Master's hasty temper—he wrongly blamed you, recited the spell over you several times, and drove you home. For one thing, we disciples failed to plead for you; for another, we had gone to find water and beg food because Master was hungry and thirsty. We never thought you would kindly come back, and then take it amiss that Master stood firm and would not keep you, and so knock Master down in a faint and carry off the luggage. We brought Master back to life, and I have come especially to wait upon you, Brother. If you no longer hate Master—if you still remember the old kindness of your deliverance—then come with your little brother, bring the luggage back to see Master, and let us go together to the Western Heaven and win the true fruition. But if your grudge runs too deep to go with us, then by all means grant the bundles to me; you remain here in your deep mountains and enjoy the evening scene of your mulberry and elm—a perfect arrangement for us both."

At these words the Pilgrim gave a cold, cold laugh: "Worthy brother, that plan pleases me not at all. That I beat the Tang monk and took the luggage was not because I would not go to the West, nor because I love living in this place. I have now learned the permit by heart. I shall go to the Western Heaven myself, worship the Buddha, and fetch the scriptures, and carry them back to the Eastern Land myself—I alone will win the glory, and the people of the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa will set me up as their ancestor, my name handed down ten thousand generations!"

The Sha Monk laughed: "Brother, you speak amiss. Since ancient times there has never been any such thing as 'Sun the Pilgrim fetching scriptures.' Our Lord the Tathagata created the true scriptures of the Tripitaka and instructed the Bodhisattva Guanyin to find a scripture pilgrim in the Eastern Land and go seek them, so that we should bitterly trek through a thousand mountains, inquire our way through the kingdoms, and protect that scripture seeker. The Bodhisattva once said: the scripture seeker is the Tathagata's own disciple, called the Elder Golden Cicada; because he would not listen to the Buddha's discourses on the sutras, he was banished from Vulture Peak and reborn in the Eastern Land, there to win his fruition in the West and cultivate the Great Way again. On the road he was destined to meet these demonic ordeals, and we three were freed to serve as his guardians of the Law. Without the Tang monk, which Patriarch Buddha would ever transmit scriptures to you! Would it not be all that scheming for nothing?"

The Pilgrim said: "Worthy brother, you're muddled after all—you know the one thing, but not the other. Say what you like: you have your Tang monk to escort and protect—have I no Tang monk of my own? Here I have chosen another true monk of the Way; old Sun will support him single-handed—what's wrong with that? We set out tomorrow morning. If you don't believe me, let me invite him out for you to see."

He called: "Little ones, quickly invite the old Master out." Sure enough, they ran inside and led out a white horse, and invited out a Tang Sanzang, followed by a Bajie carrying the luggage on a pole, and a Sha Monk

holding the priestly staff.

At the sight, the Sha Monk's fury blazed: "Old Sha here never changed his name on the road nor his surname at home—how comes there to be another Sha Monk! No more of your insolence—take a blow of my staff!"

What a Sha Monk! He raised the demon-quelling staff in both hands and with one blow to the head killed the false Sha Monk on the spot—he was a monkey spirit. At this the Pilgrim was enraged: he swung his gold-banded cudgel and led the whole crowd of monkeys to hem the Sha Monk in.

The Sha Monk charged east and battered west, fought his way out to the road, and fled for his life on cloud and mist, crying: "This insolent ape is past all shame! I'll go tell the Bodhisattva!"

When the Pilgrim saw the Sha Monk had killed a monkey spirit and forced the Sha Monk to flee, he did not give chase. He went back into the cave and had the little ones drag the dead fiend's corpse aside, skin it, cut the flesh and fry it, and with coconut wine and grape wine they all feasted, the whole crowd of monkeys. Then he chose another monkey fiend who knew transformation, had him turn into another Sha Monk, and drilled him afresh, meaning to set out for the West. Of that no more.

The Sha Monk left the Eastern Sea on his cloud, and after a day and a night of travel reached the Southern Sea. As he flew, he soon saw Mount Potalaka not far ahead, and hurried to it, slowing his cloud and mist to look. What a place! Truly:

It holds the innermost of Qian and encompasses the realm of Kun. It gathers a hundred rivers, bathing sun and stars; It receives the myriad streams, begetting wind and rippling moon. At tide's surge, the mighty Kun transforms; In the billows' rolling, the giant sea-turtle swims. Its waters reach the sea of the northwest; Its waves merge with the ocean due east. The four seas all joined by one vein of earth— Each immortal isle and island holds its immortal palace. Say no more of Penglai covering the land— Just look at Potalaka's cloudy caves.

What scenery! On the mountain's brow, rosy light magnifies the primal essence; beneath the crags, auspicious winds ripple the moon's crystal. In the purple bamboo grove, peacocks fly; on the green willow branches, numinous parrots talk. Jade flowers and gem-grasses flourish year upon year; jeweled trees and golden lotus grow age after age. White cranes come time and again to bow at the summit; white luan phoenixes many times visit the mountain pavilion. Even the roaming fish understand the cultivation of true nature, leaping the waves and threading the waters to hear the sutras expounded.

The Sha Monk strolled up Mount Potalaka, enjoying the immortal scenery, when Pilgrim Muzha came to meet him: "Sha Wujing—didn't you protect the Tang monk to fetch the scriptures? What brings you here?"

After the Sha Monk saluted, he said: "There is a matter on which I come especially to pay my respects to the Bodhisattva. I trouble you to announce me."

Muzha guessed well enough that he had come about the Pilgrim, but said nothing of it; he went in first and told the Bodhisattva: "Outside is the Tang monk's youngest disciple, Sha Wujing, come to pay homage."

Sun the Pilgrim, standing below the terrace, heard, and laughed: "This must mean the Tang monk is in trouble, and the Sha Monk has come to beg the Bodhisattva." The Bodhisattva bade Muzha call him in at the door.

The Sha Monk flung himself to the floor in worship. When the bows were done and he lifted his head, about to tell the whole affair, he suddenly caught sight of Sun the Pilgrim standing at one side. Waiting for no words, he whipped out his demon-quelling staff and struck straight at the Pilgrim's face. The Pilgrim did not strike back at all; he swerved aside and let it pass.

The Sha Monk raged aloud: "You wicked ape, guilty of the ten evils and of rebellion! You've come here to deceive the Bodhisattva too!"

The Bodhisattva cried: "Wujing, no violence! Whatever it is, tell me first."

The Sha Monk put away his precious staff, bowed again below the terrace, and said hotly to the Bodhisattva: "This monkey's violence on the road beggars counting. The other day at the foot of the slope he beat to death two road-blocking robbers, and Master blamed him. That very evening we lodged in the robbers' fence's house, and he beat that whole band to death, every man, and then held up a dripping human head for Master to see! Master was so frightened he fell off his horse, scolded him a few words, and sent him home. After we parted, Master's hunger and thirst grew desperate; he sent Bajie to look for water, and when he was long in coming, sent me to look for him. Who could know that Sun the Pilgrim, seeing the two of us gone, would come back, strike Master a blow of his iron staff, and carry off the two green felt bundles? When we returned and brought Master back to his senses, I came especially to his Water Curtain Cave to demand the bundles—never dreaming he would change his face and refuse to know me, reading Master's travel permit over and over. I asked him what he was reading it for, and he said that he would not protect the Tang monk—he would go to the Western Heaven himself to fetch the scriptures, carry them back to the Eastern Land, count it his own merit, and be set up as ancestor, renowned through all eternity. I said: without the Tang monk, who would ever transmit scriptures to you? And he said he had chosen a true monk of the Way. When he invited him out—sure enough, a white horse, a Tang Sanzang, followed by Bajie and a Sha Monk. I said: I am the Sha Monk—where's another Sha Monk from? I rushed up and gave that one a blow of my staff, and he turned out to be a monkey spirit. Then he led the whole crowd against me, and I have come especially to appeal to you, Bodhisattva. Who knew he could ride the somersault cloud and would arrive here before me? And who knows what clever words and honeyed phrases he has used to hoodwink you?"

The Bodhisattva said: "Wujing, don't go wrongly accusing people. Wukong has been here four days now, and I have never once let him leave—how could he have chosen another Tang monk and set off to fetch the scriptures himself?"

The Sha Monk said: "At this very moment there is a Sun the Pilgrim in the Water Curtain Cave—how would I dare lie?"

The Bodhisattva said: "If so, don't rage. I'll have Wukong go with you to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to see. What is true is hard to destroy; what is false is easily swept away. Go there, and all will be plain."

At these words the Great Sage took leave of the Bodhisattva together with the Sha Monk. And this journey—to that place:

Before the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, black is told from white; At the mouth of the Water Curtain Cave, true is sorted from false.

But as for how they sorted them out—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 58

Two Minds Throw the Great Cosmos into Chaos; One Body Cannot Achieve True Extinction

The Pilgrim and the Sha Monk took leave of the Bodhisattva, rose on two streams of auspicious light, and left the Southern Sea. Now the Pilgrim's somersault cloud was swift, while the Sha Monk's immortal cloud was slow, and the Pilgrim would have gone on ahead. But the Sha Monk caught hold of him: "Elder Brother, none of this hiding your head and showing your tail—getting there first to plant your man! Let your little brother go along with you."

The Great Sage's heart was honest; it was the Sha Monk who had his doubts. So the two of them truly rode the clouds together. Before long they saw the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit; they brought their cloud down, and outside the cave the two looked carefully—sure enough, there was a Pilgrim sitting high on the stone terrace, drinking and making merry with a crowd of monkeys. His appearance differed in nothing from the Great Sage: the same yellow hair and golden band, the same golden eyes and fiery orbs; the same brocade-cloth tunic, the same tiger-skin skirt at his waist; in his hand, likewise, an iron cudgel with golden bands, on his feet likewise a pair of deer-hide boots; the same hairy face and Thunder-God beak, the same hollow cheeks and crooked earth-star, the same prominent ears and broad forehead, fangs growing outward.

The Great Sage's fury burst forth. With one fling he cast off the Sha Monk, whipped out his iron staff, strode up, and cursed: "What manner of demon are you, that you dare take on my appearance, dare seize my children and grandchildren, dare occupy my immortal cave and play the tyrant here!"

At the sight of him the other made no answer at all, but raised his own iron staff to meet him. The two Pilgrims together—truly no telling the false from the true. What a fight!

Two staffs, two monkey spirits— This battle of rivals was no light affair. Each would protect the emperor's sworn brother, Each striving for merit and a hero's name. The true monkey truly received the Buddha's teaching; The false fiend falsely claims the Buddha-child's part. Because their magic powers take a thousand forms, Neither true nor false prevails—one level they remain.

One is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, wrought of primal chaos's single breath; the other a long-refined thousand-spirit demon who shrinks the earth. This one bears the As-You-Will gold-banded cudgel; that one the heart-obeying iron staff. Parry and block bring no defeat; brace and hold bring no defeat. First they crossed hands outside the cave; soon the struggle mounted into mid-air. The two of them, each treading cloud-light, leapt battling up into the clouds of the ninefold heaven.

The Sha Monk stood by, not daring to strike. Watching them wage this battle, he truly could not tell true from false; he longed to draw his knife and help, but feared to wound the true one. Long he held back, then leapt down the cliff, swung his precious demon-quelling staff, and fought his way up to the mouth of the Water Curtain Cave, scattering the fiends in terror, overturning the stone benches, smashing every vessel of the feasting and drinking—and searched for his green felt bundles, but in every direction there was nothing to be found.

The truth was that his Water Curtain Cave had originally a waterfall of flying spring water veiling the cave gate; from afar it looked like a white cloth curtain, close up it was a single vein of water—hence the name Water Curtain Cave. Not knowing the way in or its origin, the Sha Monk could not find it. So he rose onto his cloud, caught up with them into the clouds of the ninefold heaven, staff in hand—but again could not well strike.

The Great Sage said: "Sha Monk, since you cannot lend your strength, go back and report to Master—tell him such-and-such has happened, and that old Sun will fight this fiend to the Southern Sea, to Mount

Potalaka before the Bodhisattva, and there we'll tell the true from the false."

No sooner said than the other Pilgrim said the very same. The Sha Monk, seeing the two identical in face and voice without a hair of difference, black and white past all telling, could only obey, turn his cloud around, and go report to the Tang monk. Of that no more.

Watch the two Pilgrims, fighting as they went, brawling straight to the Southern Sea, straight to Mount Potalaka, beating and cursing, their clamor never ceasing.

They soon startled the Dharma-protecting gods, who reported into the Tide-Sound Cave: "Bodhisattva—sure enough, two Sun Wukongs are fighting their way here!"

The Bodhisattva, with Pilgrim Muzha, the Goodwealth Boy, and the Dragon Girl, came down from the lotus throne and out the gate, crying: "Wicked beasts! Where do you flee!" The two seized each other by turns and cried: "Bodhisattva, this fellow is truly the spitting image of your disciple. We fought from the Water Curtain Cave, battling a long time with neither victory nor defeat. Sha Wujing's fleshly eyes are dim and cannot tell us apart; he had strength but could not help, and your disciple sent him back west to report to Master. I have fought this wretch to your precious mountain to borrow the Bodhisattva's eye of wisdom—to tell true from false for your disciple, and sort evil from right." No sooner said than the other Pilgrim said the same.

The assembled gods and the Bodhisattva looked a long while, and not one could tell them apart.

The Bodhisattva said: "Let go of each other, stand on either side, and let me look again."

Truly they let go and stood to either side. This one said: "I am the true one!" That one said: "He is the false one!"

The Bodhisattva called Muzha and Sudhana forward and quietly instructed them: "Each of you hold one of them fast. I will silently recite the Band-Tightening Spell, and see which one feels the pain—that is the true one; the one who feels nothing is false."

The two of them each took hold of one. The Bodhisattva silently recited the spell—and the two cried out in pain together, both clutching their heads, rolling on the ground, both crying: "Don't recite! Don't recite!" When the Bodhisattva stopped, the two seized each other again and brawled as before. The Bodhisattva had no plan that would serve, so she ordered the gods and Muzha forward to help. But the host of spirits, fearing to wound the true one, dared not strike. The Bodhisattva called "Sun Wukong!"—and both answered together.

The Bodhisattva said: "In years past you held office as Protector of Horses, and when you made havoc in Heaven every one of the divine generals knew you. Go up to the Heaven above and have them tell you apart and report back."

The Great Sage gave thanks for the grace, and the other Pilgrim gave thanks too.

The two of them, tugging and hauling, quarreling without cease, went straight to the South Gate of Heaven—where the Broad-Eyed Heavenly King, in alarm, led the four great generals Ma, Zhao, Wen, and Guan, with all the gate-keeping gods great and small, to bar the way with their weapons: "Where are you going! Is this any place for brawling?"

The Great Sage said: "I was protecting the Tang monk to the Western Heaven for scriptures. On the road I beat some robbers to death, and Sanzang sent me home. I went straight to Potalaka Cliff to pour out my troubles to the Bodhisattva Guanyin—and this fiend, who knows when, took my shape, knocked the Tang monk down, and robbed the bundles. When the Sha Monk went to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to demand them, he found this fiend occupying my lair. Later he went to Potalaka Cliff to appeal to the Bodhisattva, and found me standing in attendance below her throne, and wrongly said I had ridden my

somersault cloud and got to the Bodhisattva first to gloss things over. But the Bodhisattva sees all things clear and true; she would not listen to the Sha Monk's words, and ordered me to go with him to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to verify. This fiend is indeed the very image of old Sun; we have fought from the Water Curtain Cave to Mount Potalaka before the Bodhisattva, and even the Bodhisattva could hardly tell us apart. So we have fought our way here, and I trouble the heavenly eyes to tell true from false for me." When he finished, the other Pilgrim said the very same, word for word.

The host of heavenly gods looked a long, long while and could not tell either. The two of them shouted: "Since you cannot tell us apart, clear the road, and let us go see the Jade Emperor!"

The gods could not withstand them; the Gate of Heaven opened, and they went straight to the Hall of Divine Mists, where Marshal Ma and the four Heavenly Masters Zhang, Ge, Xu, and Qiu memorialized: "From the lower world have come two Sun Wukongs, fighting their way in through the Gate of Heaven, crying that they seek audience with the sovereign." Before the words were done, the two came roaring in, and the Jade Emperor, alarmed, descended to stand in his precious hall and demanded: "You two—why do you presume to riot in Heaven and clamor before Our throne, courting death?"

The Great Sage cried: "Ten thousand years! Ten thousand years! Your subject has surrendered himself and entered the school of the Buddha, and would never again deceive his sovereign heart. It is only because this fiend has taken on your subject's appearance—" and he recounted the whole affair, first to last, "—hoping to have true sorted from false for your subject!" The other Pilgrim recited the same.

The Jade Emperor then issued a decree summoning Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li: "Bring the demon-revealing mirror and shine it on these two—who is true, who false? Let the false be destroyed and the true preserved."

The Heavenly King brought the mirror and held it on them, inviting the Jade Emperor and the host of gods to look. In the mirror were the reflections of two Sun Wukongs—bands, robes, not a hair of difference. The Jade Emperor could not tell them apart either, and had them driven from the hall.

The Great Sage gave a cold, cold laugh; the other Pilgrim laughed heartily too. Seizing each other by the head and throttling each other by the neck, they fought their way out of the Gate of Heaven again, tumbling down toward the western road, crying: "Let's go see our master! Let's go see our master!"

Now the Sha Monk, after leaving the two of them at the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, traveled another three days and nights, returned to the farmstead, and told the Tang monk the whole affair.

The Tang monk repented on his own account: "I thought it was Sun Wukong who struck me and stole the bundles—who could know it was a fiend masquerading as the Pilgrim!"

The Sha Monk reported further: "The fiend had also falsely made an elder and a white horse, and another Bajie carrying our bundles, and another changed into me. I could not hold back my fury; one blow of my staff killed him—and he was a monkey spirit. That scattered them in panic, and I went to pour out my troubles to the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva ordered me to go with Elder Brother to identify him, and the fiend was indeed Elder Brother's very image. I could not lend my strength, so I came back first to report to Master."

At these words Sanzang turned pale with shock.

Bajie roared with laughter: "Fine, fine, fine! It's come true—what the old patron's wife said! She asked how many parties of scripture-fetchers there were—isn't this another party?"

The whole household, old and young, came asking the Sha Monk: "Where did you go these days past, begging your travel money?"

The Sha Monk laughed: "I went to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body to find my eldest brother and demand the luggage, then to Mount Potalaka in the Southern Sea to pay my respects to the Bodhisattva Guanyin, then back to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, and only then turned back here."

The old man asked again: "How far is the round trip?"

"Two hundred thousand li and more, more or less," said the Sha Monk.

"Heavens!" cried the old man. "In these few days, to cover so much road—you must have been riding clouds to manage it!"

"If not riding clouds, how would we cross the sea?" said Bajie.

"That's nothing—we hardly count as traveling," said the Sha Monk. "If it were my eldest brother, one day or two would suffice for the whole round trip."

At this, the whole household declared them immortals; and Bajie said: "We may not be immortals—but immortals are our juniors!"

Just as they were talking, they heard a clamor of voices in mid-air, and in a panic all rushed out to look: the two Pilgrims, fighting their way toward them.

At the sight, Bajie could not hold back his itching hands: "Let me go try to tell them apart!" What a blockhead—he leapt up into the air and called out loudly: "Brothers, stop your brawling! Old Pig is here!" The two answered together: "Brother, come beat the fiend! Come beat the fiend!"

The household cried, half in fright, half in delight: "We have cloud-riding, mist-treading arhats resting in our house! Even those who vow to feed monks could never feed such good men as these!" They no longer counted the cost of tea and rice, but redoubled their attendance, saying only: "But if these two Pilgrims fight to a bad end, heaven and earth may turn over—and the ruin will land on us!"

Seeing the old man glad to their faces and worried behind their backs, Sanzang spoke up: "Old Patron, set your mind at rest and grieve no more. When this poor monk has subdued his disciple and brought him back from evil to good, we shall naturally thank you."

The old man answered with all his mouth: "We wouldn't presume! We wouldn't presume!"

"Patron, say no more," said the Sha Monk. "Master, sit here; let me and Second Brother go, each take one of them by the arm and bring them before you; then you recite that little spell of yours, and see which one feels the pain—that is the true one; the one who feels nothing is the false."

"Well said indeed," said Sanzang.

The Sha Monk truly rose into mid-air: "You two, stay your hands! Let me take you before Master to tell the true from the false." The Great Sage let go, and the other Pilgrim let go too.

The Sha Monk took one of them by the arm and called: "Second Brother, you take the other."

Truly they each held one, brought down their cloud, and came straight to the gate of the farmhouse.

At the sight of them, Sanzang recited the Band-Tightening Spell—and the two cried out in bitterness together: "We've fought ourselves half dead, and you spell us too? Don't recite! Don't recite!"

The elder's heart was kindly by nature; he stopped his mouth and recited no more—but still he could not tell the false from the true. The two wriggled free of their holders' hands and fell to fighting again.

The Great Sage said: "Brothers, guard Master well—old Sun will fight this out before King Yama!"

The other Pilgrim said the same; and the two of them, grappling and clutching, were gone in a moment.

"Sha Monk," said Bajie, "since you were at the Water Curtain Cave and saw the false Bajie carrying the luggage, why didn't you snatch it back?"

"When the fiend saw me strike his false Sha Monk with my precious staff," said the Sha Monk, "he swarmed up with his whole crowd to seize me, and I made off with my life. By the time I had appealed to the Bodhisattva and came back to the cave mouth with the Pilgrim, the two of them were fighting in mid-air, and I went and overturned his stone benches and scattered his little fiends—all I saw was a waterfall and flowing spring, and I never knew where the cave gate opened. I couldn't find the luggage, and that's why I returned empty-handed to answer Master's command."

"So you didn't know," said Bajie. "The year before last, when I went to invite him, I first met him outside the cave gate. Later, when my talk had stirred him, he jumped down, went into the cave to change his clothes—and I watched him dive straight into the water. That waterfall is the gate of the cave! No doubt the fiend stowed our bundles inside it."

Sanzang said: "Since you know this gate, go now while neither of them is home, get into his cave, fetch out the bundles, and we'll be off to the Western Heaven. If he comes after us, I'll have no more use for him anyway."

"I'll go," said Bajie.

"Second Brother," said the Sha Monk, "there are a thousand little monkeys before his cave. Alone, you may not get the better of them—and that would be worse than nothing."

Bajie laughed: "Never fear! Never fear!" He hurried out the gate, rose on cloud and mist, and sped straight to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to fetch the luggage. Of that no more.

Now the two Pilgrims brawled their way to the back of the Yin Mountains, frightening every ghost on the mountain into trembling and hiding. Some of the first to flee burst in through the gates of the underworld and reported at the Hall of the Dark Court: "Great Kings—on the Shade Mountain, two Great Sages Equal to Heaven are fighting this way!"

In alarm, King Qinguang of the First Court sent word to King Chujiang of the Second Court, King Songdi of the Third, King Biancheng of the Fourth, King Yama of the Fifth, King Pingdeng of the Sixth, King Taishan of the Seventh, King Dushi of the Eighth, King Wuguan of the Ninth, and King Zhuanlun of the Tenth—from court to court the word ran, until in a moment the Ten Kings were assembled, and they sent someone flying to report to Ksitigarbha as well. All mustered in the Hall of the Dark Court, drafting ranks of shadow soldiers to await the capture of the true and the false.

They heard a fierce wind rolling, grisly fog spreading—and the two Pilgrims came tumbling and rolling, fighting their way beneath the Hall of the Dark Court.

The lords of darkness came forward to bar the way: "Great Sages, what business brings you to riot in our nether world?"

The Great Sage said: "I was protecting the Tang monk to the Western Heaven for scriptures. Passing through the land of the Western Liang, we came to a mountain where robbers waylaid my master, and old Sun beat a few of them to death. Master blamed me and drove me away. I went at once to the Bodhisattva in the Southern Sea to lodge my grievance—and who knows how, but that fiend caught the tone of my words, falsely took on my appearance, waylaid and knocked down Master on the road, and robbed the luggage. My brother-in-Law Sha Wujing went to my own mountain to demand the bundles, and the fiend falsely set up a master's name, meaning to go fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven himself. The Sha Monk fled to the

Southern Sea and saw the Bodhisattva; I was standing beside her, and he told the whole cause of it, and the Bodhisattva ordered me to go with him to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to see—and sure enough, this wretch had occupied my lair. I fought the matter out with him before the Bodhisattva, but in face and voice and everything else we are just alike, and even the Bodhisattva could hardly tell the false from the true. Then we fought our way up to the court of Heaven, and the gods too could truly not tell; we went before my master, my master tested us with the Band-Tightening Spell, and we felt the pain alike. So we have rioted our way to the nether world, hoping the lords of darkness will check the registers of life and death for us, learn the false Pilgrim's origin, and quickly seize his soul, before the two minds can confound the world." The fiend recited the same.

Hearing this, the lords of darkness summoned the registering judges to examine the ledgers from the very beginning—but there was no such name as the false Pilgrim anywhere. They looked again in the registers of the hairy beasts: the monkey's 1,350 names had all been struck out with one stroke of the pen long ago, when the Great Sage Sun attained the Way in his youth and made havoc in the underworld; and from that time on, no monkey of any kind bore a registered name.

The examination done, they reported before the hall, and the lords of darkness, tablets of office in hand, told the Pilgrims: "Great Sage, since no name in the nether world can be found for checking, you had best go back to the world of light and argue it out there."

Just as they spoke, they heard the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha say: "Wait! Wait! Let me have the Truthful Listener listen, and tell the true from the false for you."

Now this Truthful Listener was the name of the beast that crouched beneath the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's desk. When it lay pressed to the ground, in a moment it could survey all the mountains and rivers, lands and altars of grain, caves of heaven and lands of blessing throughout the four great continents—creatures naked and scaled, hairy and feathered and shelled, and the heavenly immortals, earthly immortals, divined immortals, human immortals, and ghost immortals—discerning their good and evil, listening out their wise and foolish.

The beast, obeying Ksitigarbha's decree, crouched flat in the courtyard of the Dark Hall; in a moment it raised its head and said to Ksitigarbha: "The fiend has a name indeed—but it must not be spoken to his face, nor can I lend my strength to seize him."

"And if it were spoken to his face, what then?" asked Ksitigarbha.

"Spoken to his face, I fear the fiend's evil temper would burst forth, he would riot through this precious hall, and the courts of darkness would know no peace."

"And why can you not lend your strength to seize him?"

"The fiend's magic power is not a whit less than the Great Sage Sun's. How much power have the gods of the nether world? That is why he cannot be seized."

"Then how is he to be driven out?"

"The Buddha's Law is boundless," said the Truthful Listener.

Ksitigarbha understood at once, and said to the Pilgrims: "You two are one in appearance, without difference in magic power. If the truth must be told apart, you must go to the Thunderclap Monastery, to the Tathagata Shakyamuni himself—only there will it be made plain."

The two cried out together: "Well said! Well said! Let's go argue it out before the Buddha of the Western Heaven!" The Ten Kings of the dark courts saw them out; they gave thanks to Ksitigarbha, returned to the Azure Cloud Palace, and ordered the ghost officers to shut the passes of the nether world. Of that no more.

Watch the two Pilgrims fly cloud and rush mist, fighting their way up to the Western Heaven. There is a poem in witness. It says:

When a man breeds a second mind, disaster is born; To the ends of the earth and the corners of the sea, suspicion spreads. He longs for the fine steed and the seat among the Three Dukes, And yearns besides for the golden court and the rank of first degree. South he campaigns, north he chastises, without rest or pause; East he blocks, west he sweeps away—still nothing is settled. The gate of Zen must learn the secret of no-mind, Still-nurturing the infant, to knot the sacred embryo.

The two of them through mid-air, tugging and hauling, grappling and clutching, fighting as they went, brawled straight to the outer gates of the Thunderclap Monastery on the immortal Vulture Peak of the Great Western Heaven. There before them stood the four great Bodhisattvas, the eight Vajra Kings, five hundred arhats, three thousand revealers, nuns and monks, laymen and laywomen, the great host of the assembly, all gathered below the seven-jeweled lotus throne listening to the Tathagata expound the Law. The Tathagata was just then discoursing on this:

There is being in non-being; there is nothing in no-nothing. There is form in the formless; there is emptiness in the non-empty. Not-being is taken for being; not-nothing is taken for nothing. Not-form is taken for form; not-emptiness is taken for emptiness. Emptiness is just emptiness; form is just form. Form has no fixed form; form is just emptiness. Emptiness has no fixed emptiness; emptiness is just form. Know that emptiness is not empty; know that form is not form— This is called shining insight; only thus reach the wondrous voice.

The whole assembly had bowed their heads in surrender, receiving and reciting the doctrine, when the Tathagata let fall heavenly flowers scattering in profusion, rose from his precious throne, and said to the assembly: "You are all of you of one mind—now watch: here come two minds, contending in battle."

The assembly lifted their eyes and looked—sure enough, two Pilgrims, shouting heaven and bawling earth, fighting their way to the Thunderclap's blessed realm. In alarm, the eight Vajra Kings stepped forward to bar the way: "Where are you two bound?"

The Great Sage said: "A fiend has taken on my appearance. We would come before the precious lotus throne, and trouble the Tathagata to tell the false from the true for us."

The Vajra Kings could not hold them back; the two brawled straight up before the throne, knelt before the Patriarch Buddha, and pleaded: "Your disciple was protecting the Tang monk, coming to this precious mountain to seek the true scriptures, refining demons and binding monsters on the road—no telling how much spirit was spent. On the way, midway, we met with robbers plundering us; in truth your disciple twice over struck down a few men; Master blamed me, drove me back, and would not let me come worship the Tathagata's golden body. Your disciple had no choice but to flee to the Southern Sea and pour out his grief to Guanyin. Who could know this fiend would falsely take on your disciple's voice and face, knock my master down, and rob the luggage? My brother-in-Law Wujing sought him to my mountain, and the fiend falsely framed clever words, saying there was a true monk to fetch the scriptures. Wujing escaped to the Southern Sea and told the whole in detail. Guanyin, knowing it, ordered your disciple to go with Wujing back to my mountain. Thus the two of us wrestled over true and false, fighting to the Southern Sea, then fighting to the court of Heaven, then fighting before the Tang monk, then before the courts of darkness—and none could tell us apart. So we have presumed to come lightly to this gate, begging a thousand times that you open wide the door of skillful means, cast abroad the thought of mercy, and sort the evil from the right for your disciple—so that I may protect the Tang monk to come worship your golden body in person, carry the scriptures back to the Eastern Land, and spread the great teaching forever." The assembly heard the two mouths speak the same words in the same voice, and still no one could tell—but the Tathagata knew.

Just as he was about to speak it out, suddenly out of the rosy clouds to the south came Guanyin, come to pay homage to the Buddha.

The Buddha pressed his palms together: "Venerable Guanyin—look at these two Pilgrims: which is true, and which false?"

The Bodhisattva said: "The other day in my poor realm, truly I could not tell. They went on to the court of Heaven and the courts of earth, and there too none could recognize them; so I have come to appeal to the Tathagata—by all means, tell them apart, tell them apart."

The Tathagata laughed: "Your powers are vast, but you can only read all the affairs of the circling heavens—you cannot know every creature within the circling heavens, nor meet every kind within the circling heavens."

The Bodhisattva begged to be taught the kinds of the circling heavens, and only then the Tathagata said: "Within the circling heavens there are five kinds of immortals—heavenly, earthly, divine, human, and ghostly; and five kinds of creatures—the naked, the scaled, the hairy, the feathered, and the shelled. But this wretch is neither heavenly, earthly, divine, human, nor ghostly, neither naked, scaled, hairy, feathered, nor shelled. Besides these, there are four monkeys of the world who do not enter into the ten kinds."

The Bodhisattva asked: "May I be told—which four monkeys?"

The Tathagata said: "The first is the Numinous Stone Monkey, who knows transformation, discerns the seasons of Heaven, knows the advantages of Earth, and shifts the stars and swaps the Dipper. The second is the Red-Bottomed Horse Monkey, who understands yin and yang, is versed in human affairs, skilled at coming and going, and avoids death and extends life. The third is the Through-Armed Gibbon, who can seize the sun and moon, shrink a thousand mountains, tell fortune from misfortune, and tumble heaven and earth in his hands. The fourth is the Six-Eared Macaque, who is skilled at hearing sounds, able to fathom reason, knowing what went before and what comes after, and clear about all things. These four monkeys do not enter into the ten kinds, nor bear names in the two realms. As I see it, this false Wukong is the Six-Eared Macaque. Standing in one place, this monkey can know affairs a thousand li away; whatever men say, he can also know it—hence he is skilled at hearing sounds, able to fathom reason, knowing before and after, clear about all things. The one who matches the true Wukong in image and voice alike is the Six-Eared Macaque."

When the macaque heard the Tathagata speak his true form, his courage quaked and his heart pounded; he sprang up at once and made to run.

Seeing him flee, the Tathagata ordered the assembly to lay hands on him—at once the four Bodhisattvas, the eight Vajra Kings, five hundred arhats, three thousand revealers, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, Guanyin and Muzha all closed around him.

The Great Sage Sun would have pressed forward too, but the Tathagata said: "Wukong, stay your hand. Let me seize him for you."

The macaque's hair stood on end and his bones went cold; he saw no way to escape, and hurriedly shook his body and changed into a bee, flying straight upward. The Tathagata tossed up his golden alms bowl, and it came down covering the bee exactly.

The assembly knew nothing of this and supposed the fiend had escaped; but the Tathagata said with a smile: "Assembly, say no more—the fiend has not escaped. He is here beneath my alms bowl."

The whole assembly pressed forward and lifted the bowl—and there in truth was his proper form: a Six-Eared Macaque. The Great Sage Sun could not hold back; he swung up his iron staff and with one blow to the head beat him dead—since then, that breed has been extinct.

The Tathagata could not bear it, and cried: "Alas! Alas!"

"Tathagata, you should not pity him," said the Great Sage. "He wounded my master and robbed my bundles. By the law, indict him for taking goods and hurting men, for robbery in broad daylight—he has earned a beheading!"

"Go you now," said the Tathagata, "and protect the Tang monk here to seek the scriptures."

The Great Sage knocked his head in thanks: "I report to the Tathagata: that master of mine is determined to have me no more. If I go and he will not take me back, will that not be another labor of heart and mind for nothing? I beg the Tathagata to show a little skillful means—recite the Band-Loosening Spell for me, slip off this golden band, hand it back to the Tathagata, and let me return to the world of the ordinary."

"Put away such fancies—no playing the rogue," said the Tathagata. "I will have Guanyin take you back; have no fear that he will not take you. Protect him well, and when the work is done and you return to the bliss supreme, you too shall sit upon a lotus throne."

Hearing this, Guanyin at his side pressed her palms together in thanks for the holy grace, took charge of Wukong, rose on her cloud, and departed—with Pilgrim Muzha and the white parrot following after. Before long they came to the farmhouse on the midroad; the Sha Monk saw them and hurriedly asked Master to come bow at the gate in welcome.

The Bodhisattva said: "Tang monk, the one who struck you the other day was the false Pilgrim, the Six-Eared Macaque. Thanks to the Tathagata's discernment, Wukong has beaten him to death. Now you must take Wukong back: the demonic ordeals on the road are not yet over, and only with his protection will you reach Vulture Peak, see the Buddha, and fetch the scriptures. Cherish resentment no more."

Sanzang knocked his head: "I respectfully obey the teaching." Just as they were bowing their thanks, they heard a wild wind rolling up out of the due east. All eyes turned—and there was Zhu Bajie, two bundles on his back, riding the wind in.

At the sight of the Bodhisattva, the blockhead flung himself down in worship: "Your disciple parted from Master the other day and went to the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to find the bundles—and sure enough, there was a false Tang monk and a false Bajie, both of them beaten to death by your disciple; they were two monkey bodies. Then I went inside and found the bundles. I checked them over at the time—not one thing missing. Riding the wind back here, I knew nothing of what became of the two Pilgrims."

The Bodhisattva told the story of the Tathagata's unmasking of the fiend. The blockhead was overjoyed and gave thanks without end. Master and disciples bowed their thanks, and the Bodhisattva returned to the sea; and all of them, as before of one mind and one purpose, washed clean their grievances and dissolved their angers. They thanked the farmhouse household once more, packed and saddled, and found the main road west. Truly:

Parting in mid-road had thrown the five elements into chaos; The demon subdued, reunion restores the primal light. The spirit returns to the heart's home, and Zen is fixed; The six senses driven out, the elixir completes itself.

But as for when Sanzang would at last behold the Buddha's face and beg the scriptures—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 59

The Tang Monk's Road Is Blocked by the Flaming Mountain; The Pilgrim Sun Borrows the Plantain Fan for the First Time

All natures and dispositions are one at root, Holding as much as the sea takes in. A thousand thoughts, ten thousand cares, end in delusion, And every hue and color melts together at last. One day when merit is complete and conduct full, The perfect, brilliant dharma-nature mounts on high. Do not let distinctions scatter you east and west; Lock fast the cage, hold it tight shut. Gather it all and place it in the elixir furnace, Refine it until it is red as the golden crow— Bright, shining, delicate, and fair, Riding the dragon out or in as you please.

The story continues: Sanzang, obeying the Bodhisattva's instructions, had taken the Pilgrim back into the fold, and together with Bajie and the Sha Monk cut off their twofold minds, curbed the ape and reined the horse, and with one heart and united strength sped toward the Western Heaven. There is no telling all the time that flew like an arrow, the days and months that shuttled past like a weaver's throw. They passed the burning days of summer and came again upon the frosty scene of autumn, when you could see:

Thin clouds cut off, the west wind keen, Cranes cry over distant peaks, the frosty woods like brocade. The scene is bleak and grey, The mountains long, the waters longer. Wild geese come from the northern border, Dark swallows return to the southern lanes. A traveler's heart fears the loneliness, A monk's robe is quick to let in the cold.

As the four of them pressed on, they gradually began to feel a heat that steamed up at them.

Sanzang reined in his horse: "Now it is autumn, so why is there this heat?"

"Wouldn't you know it?" said Bajie. "On the road to the West there is a kingdom called Sihali, where the sun goes down—the common folk call it the End of the Sky. When the hours of Shen and You come round, the king sends men up on the city walls to beat drums and blow horns, to drown out the roaring and boiling of the sea. For the sun is the true fire of the Great Yang, and when it drops into the Western Sea it is like quenching fire in water, and the sound of the boiling rolls and rumbles; were it not for the drums and horns drowning the noise, it would shake the little children of the city to death. This place steams with heat—we must be near the place where the sun goes down."

Hearing this, the Great Sage could not help laughing: "Stop your nonsense, you blockhead! If you're talking about the kingdom of Sihali, that's still a long way off. With Master changing his mind morning and night the way he does, delaying us so, he could go from young to old, from old to young again, and live three lives in between, and still not get there."

"Elder Brother," said Bajie, "if it's not the sun's setting place, then why is it so scorching hot?"

"It must be that the season is out of joint," said the Sha Monk, "and autumn is keeping summer's weather."

While the three of them were arguing, they saw beside the road a farmstead—the house roofed with red tiles, the courtyard walls built of red brick, the doors and gate painted red, the plank couches lacquered red; every bit of it was red.

Sanzang dismounted: "Wukong, go ask at that house for some news, and find out the cause of this heat."

The Great Sage put away his gold-banded cudgel, straightened his robes, and put on his most refined and scholarly air; he stepped off the highway and went straight to the door to look. Presently an old man came out from the gate, and this is what he was like: He wore a robe of coarse cloth, neither yellow nor red; on his head a cool hat of woven bamboo splints, neither black nor blue. In his hand he leaned on a bamboo staff,

gnarled with knots, neither bent nor straight; on his feet he wore a pair of boots, neither new nor old. His face was the color of red bronze, his beard like white silk thread. Two long eyebrows of longevity shaded his dark eyes; a broad smiling mouth showed his golden teeth.

The old man looked up sharply and was startled at the sight of the Pilgrim. Leaning on his bamboo staff, he shouted: "What sort of monster are you, coming from where? What business have you at my gate?"

The Pilgrim returned the greeting: "Good benefactor, don't be afraid of me. I am no monster. I am a humble monk sent from the Great Tang of the East to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures. We are a master and three disciples, and we have just come to your worthy place, where we find the air steaming hot. We don't understand the reason, and we don't know the name of the place, so we have come to pay our respects and ask for a word or two of guidance."

Only then did the old man put his mind at ease. He smiled: "Don't take offense, Reverend Sir. My old eyes are dim, and I didn't recognize your honorable face."

"You flatter me," said the Pilgrim.

The old man asked: "Where is your master on the road?" The Pilgrim said: "There he stands on the big road to the south!" The old man said: "Ask him in, ask him in." Delighted, the Pilgrim beckoned with his hand, and Sanzang, together with Bajie and the Sha Monk, leading the white horse and shouldering the luggage, came up and all made their bows to the old man.

When the old man saw how handsome and distinguished Sanzang was, and what strange and striking faces Bajie and the Sha Monk had, he was both alarmed and pleased, and he could only ask them in and seat them, bidding his servants serve tea, and in the meanwhile prepare a meal.

Hearing this, Sanzang rose and gave thanks: "May I ask, grandfather, since your region is in autumn, why is it so hot?"

"Our poor place is called the Flaming Mountain," said the old man. "It has no spring and no autumn; all four seasons are hot."

"Where is the Flaming Mountain?" asked Sanzang. "Does it block the road west?"

"You can't get to the West," said the old man. "The mountain is about sixty li from here, and it is exactly the road that must be taken to the West. It has eight hundred li of flames, and all around it nothing grows, not a blade of grass. If you tried to cross that mountain, even with a head of bronze and a body of iron, you would be melted into molten metal."

At this Sanzang's face went white with fright, and he dared not ask any more.

Just then a young man came out from the gate, pushing a red cart, which he stopped beside the door, calling: "Cakes for sale!"

The Great Sage plucked a hair from his body, changed it into a copper coin, and went to buy a cake from the man. The man took the money and, without more ado, lifted the cloth covering on his cart; the steam rose hot and thick, and he took out a cake and handed it to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim held it in his hand—it was like a burning coal from a brazier, a red-hot nail from a stove.

Watch him! He tossed it from his left hand to his right, from his right hand back to his left, and kept saying: "Hot, hot, hot! Can't eat it! Can't eat it!"

The young man laughed: "If you're afraid of heat, don't come here. It's just this hot in these parts."

"You fellow is most unreasonable," said the Pilgrim. "As the saying goes, 'If it's not cold and not hot, the five grains won't set seed.' It's so scorching here—where does your cake flour come from?"

"If you want to know where the flour of this cake comes from," said the man, "you must go and ask the Iron-Fan Immortal."

"What about the Iron-Fan Immortal?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The Iron-Fan Immortal has a plantain fan," said the man. "If you go and ask for it, one wave puts out the fire, a second brings the wind, and a third brings the rain. Then we can sow our seeds and harvest in season, and so the five grains feed us. Otherwise, truly not one blade of grass could grow."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim turned and went inside, handed the cake to Sanzang, and said: "Rest easy, Master. Don't go worrying yourself into next year over it. Eat the cake, and I'll tell you all about it."

The elder took the cake and said to the old man of the house: "Grandfather, please have some cake."

"How can I eat your cake when my own tea and rice haven't been offered yet?" said the old man.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old sir, you needn't trouble with tea and rice. Let me ask you: where does the Iron-Fan Immortal live?"

"Why do you ask?" said the old man.

"That cake-seller just said," replied the Pilgrim, "that this Immortal has a plantain fan, and that if you go and ask for it, one wave puts out the fire, a second brings the wind, and a third brings the rain; then your region can sow and reap, and the five grains feed you. I want to go to her and ask for the fan to put out the fire of the Flaming Mountain so that we can cross it, and also so that this region can sow and harvest in season and live in peace."

"There is indeed such a saying," said the old man. "But you have no gifts to offer, and I'm afraid the sage will not come."

"What gifts does she want?" asked Sanzang.

"Folks here," said the old man, "go to make their petition once every ten years. Four pigs, four sheep, flowers and silks, rare incense and fruits of the season, chickens and geese and fine wine—and after bathing with reverence and sincerity, they go to worship at her Immortal Mountain and beg her to come out of her cave and work her miracle here."

"Where is that mountain?" asked the Pilgrim. "What is the name of the place? How many li is it? Let me go and ask her for the fan."

"The mountain is in the southwest," said the old man, "and it is called Cuiyun Mountain. In the mountain there is an immortal cave called the Plantain Cave. The faithful of this region who go to worship at the Immortal Mountain have to walk a full month round trip—altogether some fourteen or fifteen hundred li."

"Never mind that," laughed the Pilgrim. "I'll go and be back at once."

"Wait a moment," said the old man. "Eat some tea and rice first, and make some dry provisions. You must take a companion. There are no houses on that road, and it is full of wolves and tigers. It can't be reached in a single day—don't treat it as a joke."

"No need, no need!" laughed the Pilgrim. "I'm off!" And with that he vanished on the instant.

The old man was thrown into a fluster: "Good heavens! So he is one of those spirits who ride the clouds and mist!"

Leave the family at their house treating Sanzang with redoubled hospitality, and say instead how in a flash the Pilgrim arrived at Cuiyun Mountain. He pressed down his auspicious light and was searching for the cave mouth when he heard a ding-dong sound—a woodcutter in the mountain felling timber. The Pilgrim hurried over to him and heard him singing:

"On the fringe of the clouds I recognize my old woods, The path is hard to find among the wild grass of the broken cliffs. From the western peak I can see the morning rain coming, And where I crossed the southern stream, the ford is deep."

The Pilgrim went up and bowed: "Woodcutter, greetings to you."

The woodcutter put down his ax and returned the salute: "Where is the reverend sir bound?"

"May I ask, woodcutter," said the Pilgrim, "is this Cuiyun Mountain?"

"It is," said the woodcutter.

"There is a Plantain Cave belonging to an Iron-Fan Immortal. Where is it?"

The woodcutter laughed: "The Plantain Cave exists, true enough, but there is no Iron-Fan Immortal in it. There is only the Iron-Fan Princess, also known as the Rakshasi."

"I hear," said the Pilgrim, "that she has a plantain fan that can put out the fire of the Flaming Mountain. Is it she?"

"Right, right," said the woodcutter. "That sage has this treasure, and it is good at putting out fire and protecting the folk of that region, so she is called the Iron-Fan Immortal. We folk here have no use for her—we only know her as the Rakshasi, the wife of the Bull Demon King of Great Strength."

The Pilgrim's face changed color with alarm, and he thought to himself:

"We are enemies again! When I subdued Red Boy that time, I was told he was this fellow's child. Earlier at Po'er Cave on Jieyang Mountain I met his uncle, and he would not even give me water, bent on avenging the boy. Now I run into his parents—how on earth can I borrow this fan?"

The woodcutter saw the Pilgrim sunk in thought, sighing endlessly, and laughed: "Reverend sir, you are a man who has left the world—what worry or doubt do you have? This little path leads east; no more than five or six li and you are at the Plantain Cave. Don't fret your heart."

"To be honest with you, woodcutter," said the Pilgrim, "I am the senior disciple of the Tang monk of the Great Tang in the East, sent to the Western Heaven for scriptures. A few years ago at Fire-Cloud Cave I had some dealings with Red Boy, the Rakshasi's son, and I fear the Rakshasi holds a grudge and won't lend it to me—that is why I am worried."

"A man of mettle reads faces and colors," said the woodcutter. "Just go in the name of borrowing the fan, and don't bring up that stale old business; I warrant she'll lend it."

At this the Pilgrim made a deep bow: "Thank you for your instruction, woodcutter. I'm off."

So he parted from the woodcutter and went straight to the mouth of the Plantain Cave, where he saw the two gates shut fast and barred, while the scenery outside the cave was beautiful and charming. What a fine place it was! Truly:

The mountain makes its bones of rock, And rock is the spirit of the earth. Mist and haze hold the lingering moisture, Moss and lichen feed the fresh green. The soaring crags out-tower the isles of the blessed; In the quiet, the scent of flowers seems a sea-girt fairyland. Several tall pines harbor wild cranes, A few withered willows speak with mountain orioles. Truly a relic of a thousand years, A trace of immortals ten thousand

ages old.

On the green parasol tree sings the phoenix of many colors, In the living waters hides the azure dragon. On the winding path the briars hang and trail, The stone stairs are caught in climbing vines. Monkeys cry on the green cliffs, glad the moon has risen; Birds call in the tall trees, pleased with the clear sky. The shade of the bamboo groves on either side is cool as rain, The flowers on the single path are thick, hiding the embroidery thread. Now and then white clouds come from the distant peaks, Without fixed form, drifting idly on the wind.

The Pilgrim went up and called: "Brother Bull! Open the door! Open the door!"

With a creak the cave door opened, and from inside came a shaggy-haired serving girl, carrying a flower basket in her hand and a hoe on her shoulder. Truly she was all in plain homespun without ornament, her whole face full of spirit, with a heart set on the Way.

The Pilgrim went up to meet her and pressed his palms together: "Girl, do me the trouble of reporting to the Princess. I am a monk fetching scriptures, and on the road to the West I cannot get past the Flaming Mountain, so I have come especially to ask to borrow the plantain fan."

"That monk," said the shaggy girl, "from what monastery are you, and what is your name? I'll announce you properly."

"I come from the East," said the Pilgrim, "and my name is the monk Sun Wukong."

The shaggy girl turned and went back into the cave, knelt before the Rakshasi, and said: "Mistress, outside the cave door there is a monk from the East called Sun Wukong, who wants to see you to ask to borrow the plantain fan for crossing the Flaming Mountain."

At the name Sun Wukong, the Rakshasi felt as if salt had been thrown into fire and oil poured on the flames. The red flushed up over her face; fierce anger blazed in her heart, and she cursed: "That cursed ape! So he has come today!"

She called: "Maids, bring my armor and my weapons!" Then she put on her armor, took up two blue-tempered swords, and came out fully armed. The Pilgrim dodged outside the cave and stole a look at how she was arrayed, and this is what he saw:

Her head bound with a kerchief of clustered flowers, Her body clad in a cloud-patterned brocade robe. Double-knotted at the waist a tiger-sinew sash, Faintly showing her embroidered skirt's trailing edge. Phoenix-beak bow-shoes on her three-inch feet, Dragon-whisker knee-guards worked with gold. Sword in hand she cries aloud in fury, Fierce as the face of the Lady in the Moon.

The Rakshasi came out of the door and called loudly: "Where is Sun Wukong?"

The Pilgrim went up, bowed, and said: "Sister-in-law, old Sun is here, paying his respects."

The Rakshasi snorted: "Who is your sister-in-law? Who wants your respects!"

"Your honored husband, the Bull Demon King," said the Pilgrim, "once formed a sworn brotherhood with old Sun—we were among the seven brothers. Now that I hear the Princess is Brother Bull's good lady, how could I not call you sister-in-law!"

"You cursed ape!" said the Rakshasi. "If you were brothers, why did you destroy my son?"

"What son is that?" asked the Pilgrim, pretending ignorance.

"My son," said the Rakshasi, "was Red Boy, the Saintly Infant King of Fire-Cloud Cave in the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain, and you ruined him! We had nowhere to find you to take revenge, and now you

come to my very door to give up your life—do you think I would spare you?"

The Pilgrim smiled all over his face: "Sister-in-law, you don't see the rights of the matter, and you blame old Sun wrongly. Your son had captured my master and wanted to steam him and boil him; luckily the Bodhisattva Guanyin came to save him and took him away, and rescued my master. He is now with the Bodhisattva as the boy Sudhana, truly attaining the Bodhisattva's right fruit—never born, never dying, neither defiled nor pure, sharing the life of Heaven and Earth, as old as the sun and moon. Instead of thanking old Sun for saving his life, you blame him—what sort of reasoning is that?"

"You smooth-talking cursed ape!" said the Rakshasi. "Even if my boy did not lose his life, how could he ever come back to my side? When will I ever see his face again?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Sister-in-law, what is so hard about seeing your son? Lend me the fan first, so I can put out the fire and see my master across the mountain; then I will go to the Bodhisattva in the Southern Sea and ask her to bring him here to see you, and I will return the fan to you besides. What harm in that? When you see him then, you will see he has not lost a hair! If he has so much as a scratch on him, you would have reason to blame me; but if he is as handsome as ever, you ought to thank me."

"Less of your tongue, cursed ape!" said the Rakshasi. "Stick out your head and let me take a few hacks at it! If you can stand the pain, I will lend you the fan; if you cannot bear it, you will meet King Yama all the sooner!"

The Pilgrim folded his arms and came forward, smiling: "Sister-in-law, say no more. Old Sun will stretch out his shaven head and let you cut at it as much as you please. Only when your strength gives out, mind you lend me the fan."

Without another word the Rakshasi swung both swords and came down on the Pilgrim's head with a clangor and a clatter of a dozen or more blows—and the Pilgrim paid not the slightest attention.

The Rakshasi was frightened, and turned to run back, but the Pilgrim said: "Sister-in-law, where are you going? Lend it to me quick, let me use it!"

"My treasure is not lightly lent," said the Rakshasi.

"If you won't lend it, then take a stroke of your uncle's cudgel!" The good Monkey King—with one hand holding her, with the other he drew his cudgel from his ear and shook it to the thickness of a bowl. The Rakshasi tore herself free and raised her swords to meet him, and the Pilgrim swung his cudgel at once. The two of them fought in front of Cuiyun Mountain, with no thought of kinship now, nothing but their enmity. This was a fine battle! Truly:

The lady in skirts was a demon by her own cultivation, Hating the ape for her son's sake. The Pilgrim, fierce and furious though he was, Because the mountain blocked his master, yielded to the woman. First he spoke of borrowing the plantain fan, Not displaying his valor, keeping his temper soft. The Rakshasi, ignorant, swung her swords and hacked; The Monkey King, intent, pleaded the ties of kin. How should a woman fight with a man? In the end the male's strength prevails over the female. His gold-banded iron cudgel was savage and fierce; Her frosty blue-tempered blades were close and pressing. Blows at the face, strikes at the head, They fought on in bitter fury without ceasing. Parrying left, blocking right, they showed their skill; Meeting in front, fending behind, they used their cunning. They had just fought to the height of passion When, unawares, the sun sank in the west. Hastily the Rakshasi took out her true fan; One wave of it—and demons and gods would grieve!

The Rakshasi fought with the Pilgrim till evening. Seeing how heavy his cudgel was, and how complete his skill, she knew she could not beat him, and so she took out her plantain fan, shook it, and gave one wave of it—an eerie wind that blew the Pilgrim away without trace or shadow, beyond all hope of stopping. And the

Rakshasi returned home victorious.

The Great Sage drifted and tumbled, unable to sink down on the left, unable to find a footing on the right, like a dead leaf spun by a whirlwind, a fallen blossom carried on a stream. He rolled all night long, and only at dawn did he come down at last upon a mountain, where he clasped a crag of rock in both arms. After a long while he steadied himself and looked about, and only then recognized it as Little Mount Sumeru.

The Great Sage gave a long sigh: "What a ferocious woman! How did she ever send old Sun to a place like this? I remember that once I came here to beg the Bodhisattva Lingji to subdue the Yellow Wind Monster and save my master. Yellow Wind Ridge is over three thousand li due south of here; but coming around by this western road into the southeast quarter, it must be tens of thousands of li. Let me go down and ask the Bodhisattva Lingji for some news, and so find my way back."

Just as he was hesitating, he heard the clear sound of a bell, and hurried down the slope straight to the meditation cloister.

The Taoist at the gate recognized the Pilgrim's looks and went in to report: "That hairy-faced Great Sage who came two years ago to ask the Bodhisattva to subdue the Yellow Wind Monster has come again."

The Bodhisattva knew it was Wukong and hastily came down from his jeweled seat to welcome him, and after they had gone inside and bowed, he said: "Congratulations! Have you come for the scriptures?"

"Not yet, not at all!" answered Wukong. "Still far to go!"

"Since you have not yet reached the Great Thunderclap Monastery," said Lingji, "what brings you to look back on this wild mountain?"

The Pilgrim said: "Ever since last year, when you were so kind as to subdue the Yellow Wind Monster, we have suffered no telling how many hardships on the road. Now we have come to the Flaming Mountain and cannot go forward. I asked the natives, and they said there is an Iron-Fan Immortal with a plantain fan who can fan the fire out. Old Sun went especially to find her, and it turned out that this Immortal is the wife of the Bull Demon King and the mother of Red Boy. She said I had made her son a boy-attendant of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, so that she can't see him often, and she holds a grudge against me and would not lend the fan. She fought with me, and when she found my cudgel too heavy to withstand, she gave me one wave of the fan and blew me drifting and tumbling all the way here before I could come to rest. That is why I have come to your quiet cloister to ask the way back. How many li is it from here to the Flaming Mountain?"

Lingji laughed: "That woman is called the Rakshasi, also known as the Iron-Fan Princess. Her plantain fan was originally a spiritual treasure formed by Heaven and Earth behind Kunlun Mountain since the separation of Chaos—a leaf of the very essence of the sun, and so it can quench the power of fire. If it fans a person, he must drift 84,000 li before the eerie wind stops. From my mountain to the Flaming Mountain is only a little over 50,000 li—and even that only because you, Great Sage, have the art of holding clouds, and so came to rest. Were it an ordinary man, he could not stop at all."

"Dreadful, dreadful!" said the Pilgrim. "But then how is my master to get across that region?"

"Set your heart at rest, Great Sage," said Lingji. "Your coming here is also part of the Tang monk's destined affinity—it is fitting that the Great Sage should win success."

"How do you make out success?" asked the Pilgrim.

"When I received the Tathagata's command long ago," said Lingji, "he gave me a wind-fixing pill and a flying-dragon staff. The flying-dragon staff has already subdued the Wind Demon, but the wind-fixing pill has never yet been used. Now I present it to you, Great Sage, and it will see to it that this woman can't fan you a hair's breadth. Then you take her fan, put out the fire—and won't that be a feat accomplished at once?"

The Pilgrim bowed his head in salute, thanking him beyond measure.

Then the Bodhisattva took a brocade pouch from his sleeve, put the wind-fixing pill into the Pilgrim's collar, and sewed it tight with needle and thread. Then he saw the Pilgrim out of the door, saying: "I can't keep you for a proper visit. Go northwest, and you will come to the Rakshasi's mountain ground."

The Pilgrim took leave of Lingji, mounted his somersault cloud, and went straight back to Cuiyun Mountain, where he arrived in an instant. He struck the cave door with his iron cudgel and called: "Open up! Open up! Old Sun has come to borrow the fan!"

The girl inside was frightened and ran to report: "Mistress, the fan-borrower is back!"

The Rakshasi was alarmed and thought: "That cursed ape really has some skill! My treasure blows a person 84,000 li before he can stop—how can he have been blown away and come back already? This time let me give him two or three waves in a row and make him lose all track of the way back!"

She jumped up, put her gear in order, and, swords in both hands, came out of the door: "Sun Wukong! Not afraid of me, so you have come to seek death again!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Sister-in-law, don't be stingy. Do lend it to me, let me use it. Once I have got the Tang monk across the mountain, I will bring it right back to you. I am a gentleman of more than full good faith, not one of those petty fellows who borrow and never return."

The Rakshasi swore at him again: "Cursed gibbon! No sense at all, no understanding at all! The blood-debt of my stolen son is not yet paid—how can your request for the fan be granted? Don't run! Take one sword of your old mother!"

The Great Sage, utterly unafraid, met her head-on with his iron cudgel.

The two of them came and went, and after five or seven rounds the Rakshasi's hands were too weak to lift her swords, while Sun the Pilgrim, strong of body, bested her easily. Seeing that matters had taken a bad turn, she took out her fan and waved it at the Pilgrim once—and the Pilgrim stood as firm as a mountain.

The Pilgrim put away his iron cudgel and said, all smiles: "This time is not like the last! Fan at me as you please—if old Sun moves so much as a step, I'm no man!"

The Rakshasi waved it again, twice. Still he did not move.

The Rakshasi panicked, hastily put away her treasure, turned and ran into the cave, and shut the door fast behind her.

When the Pilgrim saw the door shut, he used his arts: he undid his collar, took the wind-fixing pill into his mouth, shook himself, and changed into a tiny cicada, which slipped through the crack of the door.

Inside, he heard the Rakshasi cry: "Thirsty! Thirsty! Bring tea quickly!"

A serving girl brought a pot of fragrant tea, poured out a bowl with a rustle and a hiss, the foam frothing up. The Pilgrim was delighted; with a whir of his wings he flew down beneath the tea-foam. The Rakshasi, parched, took the bowl and drank it down in two or three gulps.

And the Pilgrim was inside her belly. Resuming his true form, he shouted in a loud voice: "Sister-in-law, lend me the fan, let me use it!"

The Rakshasi's face went white with shock. She called: "Little ones, have you shut the front gate?" They all said: "It's shut." She said: "If the gate is shut, how is Sun Wukong calling from inside the house?"

"It is in your body that he is calling," said the girl.

"Sun Wukong," said the Rakshasi, "where are you working your tricks?"

"Old Sun has never in his life worked tricks," said the Pilgrim. "These are all true methods, real skills. I am already inside your belly, your good sister-in-law's, having a bit of sport, and I have seen your lungs and liver. I know you are hungry and thirsty too, so first I will give you a bowl to sit on and quench your thirst!" And he stamped his foot down.

The pain in the Rakshasi's belly was more than she could bear, and she sat down on the ground, crying out in agony.

"Sister-in-law," said the Pilgrim, "don't be so shy. I'll give you a little snack to fill your stomach!" And he thrust his head up.

The pain in the Rakshasi's heart was unbearable; she only rolled on the ground, her face turned yellow, her lips white, crying over and over: "Uncle Sun, spare my life!"

Only then did the Pilgrim stop his hands and feet: "So you know your uncle now? For the sake of Brother Bull, I will spare your life. Quick, bring the fan and let me use it."

"Uncle," said the Rakshasi, "there is a fan, there is a fan! Come out and take it!"

"Bring the fan for me to see, then I will come out," said the Pilgrim.

The Rakshasi at once told the girl to bring a plantain fan and hold it by her side.

When the Pilgrim, peering up at her throat, saw it, he said: "Sister-in-law, since I am sparing your life, I won't bore a hole through you under your ribs—I'll come out through your mouth. Open your mouth wide, three times."

So the Rakshasi opened her mouth. The Pilgrim turned himself again into a tiny cicada, flew out first, and alighted on the plantain fan. The Rakshasi, not knowing this, opened her mouth three times in succession, calling: "Come out now, Uncle."

The Pilgrim changed back to his own form, took up the fan, and called: "Here I am, see? Thanks for the loan! Thanks for the loan!" And with long strides he went off toward the front. The maids hastily opened the door and let him out of the cave.

This Great Sage turned his cloud around and went straight back toward the east, and in a moment pressed down his cloud and stood beneath the red-brick wall.

Bajie was delighted at the sight of him: "Master, Elder Brother is here! He's here!"

Sanzang and the old man of the farm, with the Sha Monk, came out to meet him, and they all went into the house together. The Pilgrim leaned the plantain fan against the wall: "Old sir, is this the fan?"

"It is! It is!" said the old man.

Delighted, the Tang monk said: "Worthy disciple, you have achieved a great feat, and taken great pains to get this treasure."

"Never mind the pains," said the Pilgrim. "That Iron-Fan Immortal—do you know who she was? That creature was the wife of the Bull Demon King, the mother of Red Boy, named the Rakshasi, also called the Iron-Fan Princess. When I got to the cave and asked for the fan, she started on our old enmity and took a few cuts at me with her swords. I frightened her with my cudgel, and she gave me one wave of her fan, which blew me drifting and tumbling all the way to Little Mount Sumeru. Happily I met the Bodhisattva Lingji, who gave me a wind-fixing pill and pointed out the way back, and so I came again to Cuiyun Mountain. The Rakshasi fanned at me again, but couldn't move me an inch, so she went back into her cave. Old Sun changed

into a tiny cicada and flew in after her. That creature was just asking for tea, so I hid under the tea-foam, got into her belly, and went to work on her. She could not bear the pain and called me uncle over and over, begging for her life, and willingly lent me the fan. So I spared her and brought the fan away—once we are over the Flaming Mountain, I will still take it back to her."

Sanzang gave thanks beyond measure, and master and disciples all bowed and took leave of the old man.

They journeyed west for some forty li, and gradually the scorching heat steamed up at them again. The Sha Monk kept crying: "The soles of my feet are burning!" Bajie also said: "My trotters are scalded sore!" The horse ran faster than usual, for the heat of the ground made it impossible to linger; it was very hard going.

"Master, get down from the horse for now," said the Pilgrim. "Brothers, don't stir. Let me fan the fire out, and when wind and rain have fallen and the ground has cooled a bit, we will cross the mountain."

So the Pilgrim raised the fan, went straight to the edge of the fire, and waved it with all his might. The flames on the mountain rose roaring up. He waved it again, and the fire doubled, trebled, a hundredfold; a third wave, and the flames were fully a thousand feet tall, and slowly they began to singe his own body. The Pilgrim turned hastily back—two patches of his body-hair were already burnt clean away. He ran straight to the Tang monk and cried: "Back! Back! The fire is coming! The fire is coming!"

The master scrambled onto his horse and, with Bajie and the Sha Monk, fled east again for twenty li and more before they stopped. "Wukong," he said, "what is to be done now?"

The Pilgrim threw down the fan: "It's no good! It's no good! That creature fooled me!"

At this the Tang monk's brows drew together in worry, gloom weighed on his heart, and tears streamed down his cheeks in spite of himself. All he could say was: "What is to be done!"

"Elder Brother," said Bajie, "why did you come hurrying back telling us to run?"

"I gave the fan one wave," said the Pilgrim, "and the fire blazed up; at the second wave the fire grew fiercer still; and at the third the flames leapt a thousand feet high. If I had not run fast, all my body-hair would have been burned away!"

"You always said thunder couldn't hurt you and fire couldn't singe you," laughed Bajie. "How is it you're afraid of fire now?"

"You blockhead, you understand nothing!" said the Pilgrim. "When I said that, I was always on my guard, and so I was not hurt. Today, because I was only thinking of fanning out the fire, I never recited the fire-repelling spell, and I used no body-protecting charm—that is why two patches of my hair got burned."

"With the fire so fierce," said the Sha Monk, "there is no road through to the West. What is to be done?"

"Just take a road where there is no fire," said Bajie.

"Which quarter has no fire?" asked the Tang monk.

"East, south, and north have no fire," said Bajie.

"And which quarter has the scriptures?" asked the Tang monk again.

"The West has the scriptures," said Bajie.

"Then I mean to go to the place where the scriptures are!" said the Tang monk.

"Where the scriptures are, there is fire," said the Sha Monk, "and where there is no fire, there are no scriptures. Truly, it is a case of advance and retreat alike being hard!"

As the four of them were talking all this nonsense, they heard a voice call: "Great Sage, don't fret. Come and eat some vegetarian fare, and we will talk it over."

The four looked back and saw an old man, wrapped in a wide-sleeved wind-cloak, a half-moon cap on his head, a dragon-head staff in his hand, iron-shafted boots on his feet. Behind him came a demon with a beak like a carving knife and gill-sacs like a fish's, carrying on his head a copper basin, in which were steamed cakes, gruel and rice, and yellow millet. The old man bowed from the roadside and said: "I am the local deity of the Flaming Mountain. Knowing that the Great Sage is guarding the holy monk and cannot go forward, I have come especially to offer this meal."

"Small matter, the meal," said the Pilgrim. "But when will this fire be put out, so that my master can get across?"

"To put out the fire," said the local deity, "you must ask the Rakshasi to lend you the plantain fan."

The Pilgrim picked up the fan from the roadside: "Isn't this it? The fire only blazes higher with every wave. Why is that?"

The local deity looked at it and laughed: "This is not the true fan. She fooled you."

"How do I get the true one?" asked the Pilgrim.

The local deity bowed again, hunching his back, and said with a faint smile: "If you want to borrow the true plantain fan, you must go and seek out the King of Great Strength."

We do not know what the King of Great Strength had to do with it; listen to the next chapter for the explanation.

Chapter 60

The Bull Demon King Calls Off the Battle to Attend a Grand Feast; The Pilgrim Sun Borrows the Plantain Fan for the Second Time

The local deity said: "The King of Great Strength is none other than the Bull Demon King."

"Was this mountain's fire started by the Bull Demon King," asked the Pilgrim, "that it bears the false name of Flaming Mountain?"

"Not so, not so," said the local deity. "If the Great Sage is willing to pardon the crimes of this little god, only then do I dare speak plainly."

"What crime have you?" asked the Pilgrim. "Speak plainly—no harm."

"This fire was originally started by the Great Sage himself," said the local deity.

The Pilgrim said angrily: "Where was I then? What nonsense you talk! Am I the sort to set fires?"

"No wonder you don't recognize me," said the local deity. "There was no such mountain here originally. Five hundred years ago, when the Great Sage made havoc in Heaven, you were seized by the Sagely and Miraculous Erlang and taken to Lord Lao Zi, who placed you in the Eight Trigrams Furnace. After the tempering, when the furnace was opened, you kicked over the elixir stove, and several bricks fell out of it still bearing the leftover fire; they landed here and turned into the Flaming Mountain. I was originally a Taoist in the Tushita Palace who kept watch over the furnace. Lord Lao Zi blamed me for failing in my watch, and sent me down here, where I became the local deity of the Flaming Mountain."

Hearing this, Zhu Bajie said angrily: "No wonder you dress like that! So you're a local deity turned from a Taoist!"

The Pilgrim, half-believing and half-doubting, said: "Go on, then—why do you tell me to seek the King of Great Strength?"

"The King of Great Strength is the Rakshasi's husband," said the local deity. "But of late he has abandoned the Rakshasi and lives now in Moyun Cave on Jilei Mountain. There was a Fox King of Ten Thousand Years; when that Fox King died, he left behind a daughter, called the Jade-Faced Princess. That princess had a fortune of a million, with no one to manage it; two years ago, having heard of the Bull Demon King's vast magic powers, she was willing to give her whole fortune as dowry and take him in as husband. The Bull King abandoned the Rakshasi and has not looked back for a long time. If the Great Sage finds the Bull King and begs him to come here, only then can he borrow the true fan. For one thing, it will fan out the fire and protect your master's advance; for another, it will rid this land of the fire blight forever and protect its living creatures; and for a third, it will win this little god his pardon, so that he may return to Heaven and discharge Lord Lao Zi's decree."

"Where does Jilei Mountain lie?" asked the Pilgrim. "How far is it from here?"

"It is due south," said the local deity. "From here to there is over three thousand li."

At this the Pilgrim instructed the Sha Monk and Bajie to guard the master well, and told the local deity to stay and keep him company and not to go. Then with a whoosh he vanished without a trace.

In less than half an hour he saw before him a towering mountain thrusting into the Milky Way. He pressed down his cloud and stood on the peak to look. What a fine mountain it was! High—so high that its summit touched the azure heavens; broad—so broad that its roots reached into the Yellow Springs.

Before the mountain the sun is warm, behind the ridge the wind is cold. Before the mountain the sun is warm—even the grass and trees of winter know no cold; Behind the ridge the wind is cold—you can see frost and ice that never melt even in high summer. Dragon pools join the stream waters, ever flowing; Tiger caves lean on the cliffs, their flowers blooming early. The waters run in a thousand streams like flying jade, The flowers open with one heart like spread brocade. On the winding ridges grow winding trees, Beside the jutting rocks stand jutting pines.

Truly: high mountains, steep ridges, sheer cliffs, deep ravines, fragrant flowers, lovely fruit, red vines, purple bamboo, green pines, emerald willows—through all eight seasons and the four changes of the year its face never alters; for a thousand years, for ten thousand ages, its color stays ever fresh. The Great Sage looked his fill, then came down the sharp peak and entered the deep mountain, seeking a path. Just as he had found no word of it, he suddenly saw beneath the shade of a pine a woman, a sprig of fragrant orchid broken off in her hand, coming toward him with a graceful, swaying step.

The Great Sage dodged behind a strange rock and fixed his eyes on her. What was the woman like? Her beauty was dazzling enough to topple kingdoms; she moved with a slow, swaying lotus step. Her face was like Wang Qiang's, her looks like those of the lady of Chu. Like a flower that can speak, like jade that gives off fragrance.

Her high hair-knot piled in dark blue, hanging in glossy locks; Her two eyes dipped in green, like autumn water flowing across. Her Hunan skirt half-revealed tiny bow-shoes; Her emerald sleeves parted to show long, fair wrists. No need to speak of evening rain and morning clouds— Truly she had vermilion lips and pearly teeth. Her glossy brows were fine as the silk of Brocade River, Outshining Zhuo Wenjun and Xue Tao.

The woman gradually drew near the rock. The Great Sage bowed and said slowly: "Where is the Bodhisattva going?"

The woman had not seen him; hearing herself addressed, she looked up, and suddenly catching sight of the Pilgrim's ugly face, was greatly alarmed. She wanted to retreat but could not, wanted to go on but dared not, and could only answer trembling and against her will: "Where do you come from, fellow? Whom do you presume to ask here?"

The Great Sage thought to himself: "If I tell her about fetching scriptures and borrowing the fan, I fear this creature is kin to the Bull King. Better to speak in the name of some false kinship and say I have come to invite the Demon King."

Seeing him silent, the woman changed color and shouted angrily: "Who are you, to dare question me?"

The Great Sage bowed with a smile: "I come from Cuiyun Mountain. It is my first visit to your worthy place, and I do not know the roads. May I ask, Bodhisattva, is this Jilei Mountain?"

"It is," said the woman.

"There is a Moyun Cave. Where does it lie?" said the Great Sage.

"Why do you seek that cave?" asked the woman.

"I was sent by the Iron-Fan Princess of the Plantain Cave on Cuiyun Mountain," said the Great Sage, "to invite the Bull Demon King."

Hearing the words "the Iron-Fan Princess invites the Bull Demon King," the woman flew into a rage; the red flush ran right up to the roots of her ears, and she poured out abuse: "That cheap slave is truly ignorant! Since the Bull King came to my house, not two years ago, no one knows how many pearls and gems, gold and silver, silks and satins he has sent her! Year in, firewood; month in, rice—she enjoys herself at her ease, and

yet she has no shame, and sends again to invite him! Whatever for!"

Hearing this, the Great Sage knew it was the Jade-Faced Princess, and deliberately whipped out his iron cudgel and roared: "You cheap slut! You have bought the Bull King with your family fortune—truly paying to marry a man! You have no shame yourself, yet who do you dare to curse?"

At this the woman was frightened out of her wits. Her lotus feet stumbled in confusion, and she turned and fled trembling, while the Great Sage shouted and hooted as he followed after. It turned out that through the pine shade was the mouth of Moyun Cave; the woman ran inside and banged the door shut. The Great Sage put away his iron cudgel and stopped to look. What a fine place it was! Dense forests of tall trees, sheer and craggy cliffs. The shade of the creepers hung dark and thick; the scent of the orchids was rich and sweet.

A running spring washes the jade pebbles as it threads the tall bamboo; The cunning rocks, knowing their moment, are strewn with fallen petals. Mist and rosy clouds enfold the distant peaks; Sun and moon shine on the cloud-walls. Dragons chant, tigers roar, cranes cry, orioles sing. This tract of quiet beauty is truly lovely— Its fairy flowers and jeweled grass keep the scene forever bright. No whit inferior to the immortal cave of Tiantai, Better than the isles of Peng and Ying upon the sea.

Leave the Pilgrim here taking in the scenery, and say how the woman, her powder-face drenched with sweat, her orchid-heart panting with fright, went straight into the study. The Bull Demon King was just then quietly perusing his alchemy books. The woman flung herself into his arms in a temper, scratching her ears and cheeks, and burst into loud sobs. The Bull King smiled all over his face: "My beauty, don't fret. What has happened?"

The woman stamped and raged, cursing: "You cursed fiend, you will be the death of me!"

The Bull King laughed: "Why do you curse me?"

"I took you in," said the woman, "because my parents left me without support—to protect my body and keep my life. They say of you in all the rivers and lakes that you are a hero, but you turn out to be a spiritless fellow afraid of his wife!"

Hearing this, the Bull King held her close: "My beauty, what have I done wrong? Tell me slowly, and I will make it up to you."

"Just now," said the woman, "I was strolling outside the cave in the shade of the flowers, plucking orchids and gathering iris, when suddenly a monk with a hairy face and a thunder-beak came up and bowed to me, scaring me out of my wits. When I had steadied myself and asked who he was, he said the Iron-Fan Princess had sent him to invite the Bull Demon King. I spoke a couple of words to him, and he cursed me roundly, took a cudgel, and chased me beating at me. If I had not run fast, he would have beaten me to death! Isn't this the trouble I brought on myself by taking you in? You will be the death of me!"

Hearing this, the Bull King smoothed her face for her and made his apologies, and comforted her for a long while before her anger subsided.

Then the Demon King said in a hard voice: "My beauty, I won't hide the truth from you. The Plantain Cave, though secluded, is quiet and easy. My mountain wife has cultivated herself since childhood and is an immortal who has attained the Way. Her household is strictly governed—there is not so much as a foot-high boy within. How could she have sent a thunder-beaked man here? This must be some strange monster from somewhere, perhaps borrowing a name, come to look for me. Let me go out and see."

A fine Demon King indeed! He strode out of the study, went to the great hall for his armor, put it on, and took up an iron rod of mixed metal. Coming out of the door, he called loudly: "Who is it that misbehaves at my place?"

The Pilgrim watched from the side, and saw that his looks were altogether different from five hundred years before. Look at him:

On his head a burnished, gleaming helmet of water-tempered iron; On his body a suit of golden armor sewn through with brocade and plush; On his feet a pair of curled-toe boots of deerskin with powdered soles; Round his waist a three-ply lion-girdle of twisted silk. His two eyes gleamed like bright mirrors, His two brows were brilliant as rainbows. His mouth was like a blood-basin, his teeth set like copper plates. His roar shook the mountain gods with fear; His moving was such majesty that evil ghosts took fright.

Throughout the four seas he was famed as the Subverter of the World; in the West he was titled the Demon King of Great Strength. The Great Sage straightened his clothes, went up, and made a very deep bow: "Elder Brother, do you still recognize your younger brother?"

The Bull King returned the greeting: "Are you Sun Wukong, the Great Sage Equaling Heaven?"

"Exactly, exactly," said the Great Sage. "We have been long parted, and I have not paid my respects. Just now I asked a woman the way and so came to see you. Your bearing is indeed more splendid than ever—truly a cause for congratulations!"

The Bull King shouted: "Save your smooth tongue! I hear you made havoc in Heaven and were pressed down under the Mountain of Five Elements by the Buddha. Lately you escaped your heavenly calamity and are protecting the Tang monk to see the Buddha and seek scriptures in the West. How is it, then, that you destroyed my son Bull Saint-Infant at Fire-Cloud Cave in the Withered Pine Ravine of Hao Mountain? I have been angry at you over this very thing—and now you come looking for me?"

The Great Sage bowed: "Elder Brother, don't wrong your younger brother. At that time your son had captured my master and meant to eat his flesh. Your younger brother could not get near him; luckily the Bodhisattva Guanyin, wanting to save my master, persuaded him to turn to the right. He is now the boy Sudhana, higher than even you, Elder Brother—enjoying the gate and hall of the utmost bliss, receiving the endless life of freedom and ease. What is wrong in that, that you blame me instead?"

The Bull King cursed: "You smooth-tongued gibbon! You have talked away the matter of my son's ruin. But then you bully my darling concubine and come beating at my door—why?"

The Great Sage laughed: "I came to pay my respects to you, Elder Brother, but not finding you, I bowed and asked that woman the way, not knowing she was my second sister-in-law. Because she cursed me a few times, your younger brother was momentarily rough and frightened her. I beg you, Elder Brother, to forgive, forgive me!"

"If that is how it is," said the Bull King, "then for the sake of our old friendship I will let you go."

"Since you are so generous," said the Great Sage, "I cannot thank you enough. But I still have one matter to trouble you with—I earnestly beg your help, your help."

"You gibbon don't know which way the wind blows!" cursed the Bull King. "I spare you and you still won't leave, but come pestering me instead! What help, what help!"

"To be honest with you, Elder Brother," said the Great Sage, "your younger brother is escorting the Tang monk west, but the road is blocked by the Flaming Mountain and we cannot go forward. I asked the natives and learned that my worthy sister-in-law the Rakshasi has a plantain fan, and I wanted to borrow it. Yesterday I went to your old house to pay my respects to my sister-in-law, but she stubbornly refused to lend it; that is why I come especially to you, Elder Brother. I beg you to open your heart as wide as Heaven and Earth and go with me, your younger brother, to see my elder sister-in-law—please, do lend us the fan to put out the flames, and once the Tang monk is across the mountain, I will return it whole at once."

At this the Bull King's heart blazed up like fire, and grinding his steel teeth he cursed: "You say you are not rude, but it turns out it is all for the fan! You must have bullied my mountain wife first; she presumably refused, and so you come looking for me! And besides, you chased my darling concubine! As the saying goes, 'Your friend's wife you must not wrong; your friend's concubine you must not destroy.'

"You have wronged my wife and destroyed my concubine—how great is your rudeness? Come up and take a stroke of my rod!"

"If you want a fight, Elder Brother," said the Great Sage, "your younger brother does not fear you. But my asking for the treasure is my true intent—I beg a thousand times that you lend it to me, let me use it!"

"If you can stand against me for three rounds," said the Bull King, "I will have my mountain wife lend it to you; if you cannot, I will beat you to death to avenge my wrongs!"

"Well said, Elder Brother," said the Great Sage. "Your younger brother has been idle of late, and we have not met. I don't know how your martial arts compare to the old days—let us brothers try a few passes of the cudgel."

The Bull King, without another word, drew his mixed-iron rod and came down on his head. The Great Sage, gold-banded cudgel in hand, met him at once. These two made a fine fight of it!

Gold-banded cudgel, mixed-iron rod— Faces changed, no more talk of friendship. That one said: "I blame you, gibbon, for ruining my son!" This one said: "Your son has attained the Way—don't bear such wrath!" That one said: "Fool, how dare you come to my door?" This one said: "I came specially to ask you a question." One wanted the fan to protect the Tang monk; The other would not lend his plantain fan, too stingy by far. Word for word they lost their old friendship, The whole household estranged and all aflame with anger. The Bull King's rod rose like a dragon in its fury; The Great Sage's cudgel met it, and gods and ghosts took flight. At first they fought before the mountain, Then both rode up on auspicious clouds together.

In mid-air they displayed their magic powers, In the five-colored light they worked their wondrous arts.

The two rods clashed, shaking the very gates of Heaven; Neither lost nor won, they were matched to the last inch.

The Great Sage and the Bull King fought on for a hundred rounds and more without deciding the victory. Just as they were locked in the struggle, they heard a voice call from the mountain peak: "Lord Bull, my king sends his respects and begs that you honor him early with your presence, so that the seats may be arranged."

Hearing this, the Bull King used his mixed-iron rod to hold off the gold-banded cudgel and called: "Gibbon, stop a while. Let me go to a friend's house for a gathering!" With that he pressed down his cloud and went straight back into the cave. To the Jade-Faced Princess he said: "My beauty, that thunder-beaked fellow just now was the gibbon Sun Wukong. I have beaten him off with a bout of my rod—he will never dare come again. Rest easy and amuse yourself. I am going to a friend's place to drink."

He took off his helmet and armor, put on a jacket of raven-black velvet, went out the door, mounted his water-piercing golden-eyed beast, and bidding the servants keep good watch over the gate, went off half in cloud and half in mist, straight toward the northwest.

From the high peak the Great Sage watched and thought to himself: "I wonder what new friend this old bull has made, and where he is off to. Let old Sun follow and see."

The good Pilgrim shook himself, turned into a puff of cool wind, caught up, and went along with him. Before long they came to a mountain, where the Bull King vanished without a trace. The Great Sage resumed his own form and entered the mountain to look around. In the mountain there was a clear, deep pool, and beside the pool stood a stone tablet on which were written six large characters: "The Blue Wave Pool of Jumbled

Rocks Mountain."

The Great Sage thought: "The old bull must have gone down into the water. The spirit at the bottom of the water—if it is not a flood-dragon spirit, it must be a dragon, fish, or turtle spirit, or a soft-shelled turtle or alligator. Let old Sun go down and have a look too."

The good Great Sage made the magic pass with his fingers, recited a spell, shook himself, and changed into a crab—neither too big nor too small, weighing thirty-six catties—and with a splash he jumped into the water and sank straight to the bottom of the pool. Presently he saw an exquisite, translucent archway, and beneath the archway was tied that water-piercing golden-eyed beast. Going in past the archway, there was no water at all.

The Great Sage crawled in and looked carefully. Over there was a burst of music, and what he saw was this:

Vermilion palaces and shell-tower halls, no different from the world of men. Gold for the roof-tiles, white jade for the door-pivots. Screens spread of hawksbill tortoise shell, Balustrades built of coral pearls. Auspicious clouds and blessed vapors glowed about the lotus seats, Above reaching to the three lights, below opening on the eight thoroughfares. It was neither the Heavenly Palace nor the treasure house of the sea— Truly this place outdid the isles of the blessed. In the high hall a feast was laid, guests and host arrayed; Officers great and small wore caps and pearls.

Hurriedly jade maids were called to hold the ivory platters; Immortal beauties were summoned to tune the pipes. The long whale sang, the giant crab danced, The soft-shelled turtle blew the sheng, the alligator beat the drum, And the pearl beneath the black dragon's chin lit the wine cups and dishes. Bird-track writings stood on the emerald screens; Shrimp-whisker curtains hung in the corridors. The eight tones played in turn, mingling with immortal music; The notes of gong and shang rang clear, stopping the clouds overhead. A blue-headed bass-maiden plucked the jasper lute; A red-eyed horse-lad played the jade flute.

A mandarin-fish dame came forward offering roast roe-deer; dragon maidens wore golden phoenix hairpins. What they ate were the eight-treasure delicacies of the celestial kitchens; what they drank was the jade nectar of the purple mansions, mellow and well-brewed. There at the head sat the Bull Demon King; at his left and right were three or four flood-dragon spirits; in front sat an old dragon spirit; and on either side were dragon sons and grandsons, the dragon lady and the dragon maidens.

Just as the wine cups were passing back and forth, Sun the Great Sage went straight up. The old dragon saw him and at once ordered: "Seize that wild crab!"

The dragon sons and grandsons surged forward and caught the Great Sage. The Great Sage suddenly spoke in a human voice, crying: "Spare my life! Spare my life!"

The old dragon said: "You wild crab, where do you come from? How dare you mount the hall and scuttle sideways before the honored guests? Confess at once, and I will spare you the death penalty!"

The good Great Sage, inventing false words, confessed to the company: "Born in the lake, I live by it; beside the cliffs I have made my hole, a poor lodging. Because with time I have grown sleek and long, I hold the office of Scuttling Knight in the shell. I tread the grass and drag through mud, all slovenly; never have I learned the manners of walking. Ignorant of your laws, I have offended your majesty—I humbly beg your grace to forgive my crime!"

At these words all the spirits in their seats bowed to the old dragon and said: "The Crab Knight has just entered the jasper palace and does not know the kingly rites. We beg your lordship to forgive him and let him go."

The old dragon gave his thanks.

The spirits then ordered: "Let the fellow go. Remember his beating, and have him wait outside."

The Great Sage answered and fled for his life, going straight to the archway, where he thought to himself: "This Bull King is here guzzling wine—how can I wait for him to break up the party? And even when it breaks up, he won't lend me the fan. Better to steal his golden-eyed beast, change into the Bull Demon King, go trick the Rakshasi, and swindle her fan out of her to get my master across the mountain."

The good Great Sage at once resumed his own form, untied the golden-eyed beast's halter, leapt into the carved saddle, and rode straight up out of the water.

Coming out of the pool, he changed himself into the Bull King's form, urged on the beast, and rode the clouds. In no time he was at the mouth of the Plantain Cave on Cuiyun Mountain, calling: "Open the door!"

Inside the cave door were two girls, who opened it at the sound of his voice; seeing the Bull Demon King's face, they went in at once to report: "Mistress, the master is home."

Hearing this, the Rakshasi hastily dressed her cloud-like hair, moved her lotus steps quickly, and came out of the door to welcome him. The Great Sage dismounted from the carved saddle and led the golden-eyed beast in; with great boldness he set about deceiving the fair lady. The Rakshasi's mortal eyes could not recognize him, and she took his hand and went in with him. She had the maids set a seat and serve tea, and the whole household, seeing their master, was all respect and deference. In a moment they had exchanged greetings after the long separation.

"Madam," said the "Bull King," "we have been long apart."

The Rakshasi said: "May the great king enjoy ten thousand blessings." Then she said: "The great king has favored his new bride and cast me off, your slave. What wind has blown you here today?"

The Great Sage smiled: "I did not dare cast you off. Only since the Jade-Faced Princess took me in, the household affairs have been manifold, and friends have called on me often, and so I was detained abroad. But I have set up another establishment in good order." He went on: "I have heard recently that that wretch Wukong is escorting the Tang monk and is about to reach the borders of the Flaming Mountain. I fear he will come to you to borrow the fan. I hate that wretch—the revenge for our son's ruin is not yet paid. If he comes, send word to me, and I will take him and cut him into ten thousand pieces to wash away the wrongs of us both."

Hearing this, the Rakshasi shed tears and said: "Great king, as the saying goes, 'A man without a wife has no one to keep his wealth; a woman without a husband has no one to keep her body.' My life very nearly fell to that gibbon's harm!"

Hearing this, the Great Sage pretended to fly into a rage and cursed: "When did that cursed ape pass through here?"

"He has not gone yet," said the Rakshasi. "Yesterday he came here to borrow the fan, and because of the harm he did our child, I put on my armor and swung my swords and went out to hack at that gibbon. He bore the pain and called me sister-in-law, saying the great king had once sworn brotherhood with him."

"So it was," said the Great Sage. "Five hundred years ago we became seven sworn brothers."

The Rakshasi said: "He was so cowed by my curses that he did not dare answer back, and so afraid of my sword that he did not dare raise a hand. At last I gave him one wave of the fan and blew him away. I don't know where he found some wind-fixing art, but this morning he was at the door again calling out. I waved the fan at him again, but could not move him in the least. When I swung my swords at him in a hurry, he no longer gave way to me. Fearing his heavy cudgel, I went back into the cave and shut the door tight. I don't know where he got in from, but he crawled into my belly and very nearly killed me! I called him 'Uncle'

several times, gave him the fan, and he went off."

The Great Sage again beat his breast in pretended grief: "What a pity, what a pity! Madam, you were wrong—how could you give that treasure to that gibbon? It enrages me to death!"

The Rakshasi laughed: "Great king, calm your anger. What I gave him was a false fan, just to fool him away."

The Great Sage asked: "Where is the true fan, then?"

"Rest easy, rest easy!" said the Rakshasi. "I have it safe." She called the maids to prepare wine to welcome him home and celebrate the reunion, then raised a cup and offered it: "Great king, in the joy of your new marriage, never forget your first wife, bound to you by the hair. Do drink a cup of the water of home."

The Great Sage dared not refuse, and could only take the cup with a smile and hold it up: "Madam, you take the first sip. I have been long parted from you, seeking to build up our estate abroad, and day and night you have guarded the household—let this be my small thanks."

The Rakshasi took the cup again, refilled it, and handed it to the great king: "As the old saying goes, 'The wife is the equal of her husband; the husband is the father who sustains the body.' What thanks need be spoken?"

The two of them exchanged courtesies and pleasantries, and only then sat down to pass the wine in turn.

The Great Sage dared not break his vegetarian vow, and ate only a few fruits, chatting with her all the while.

After several rounds of wine the Rakshasi felt half tipsy, and her amorous feelings stirred a little. She pressed close to Sun the Great Sage, rubbing and leaning against him, holding his hand, coaxing with sweet words, shoulder to shoulder, whispering and bending toward him. One cup of wine—a sip from you, a sip from me—and she even fed him fruit from her mouth. The Great Sage, with false affection, kept her company and smiled, and had no choice but to lean and cuddle with her. Truly:

The hook for poems, the broom that sweeps away care— There is nothing that dispels all troubles like wine. The man, standing on his honor, opened his heart wide; The woman, forgetting all restraint, let her smiling mouth run. Faces flushed like peach blossoms in spring, Bodies swaying like tender willow branches. Endless chattering words, teasing and pinching, all the coquetry of love. Now a hand brushed aside her cloud-like hair, now her sharp little fingers moved. Several times she lifted her foot; again and again she tugged at her sleeve. Her powdered neck bent low of itself; her slender waist began to twist. Words of love never left her lips; Her bosom half-showed as the golden button loosened. Drunk at last, truly her jade-mountain frame tilted and fell; With dreamy eyes she groped and fondled, making no small spectacle of herself.

Seeing her in this state of abandon, the Great Sage quietly took note, and with a little baiting said: "Madam, where have you put the true fan? Be careful at all times. I fear that Sun the Pilgrim, with his countless transformations, may come again and swindle it away."

The Rakshasi, giggling, spat it out of her mouth—it was only the size of an apricot leaf—and handed it to the Great Sage: "Isn't this the treasure?"

The Great Sage took it in his hand but did not quite believe it, thinking to himself: "A thing this tiny—how can it fan out a fire? I fear it is another fake." Seeing him staring at the treasure lost in thought, the Rakshasi could not contain herself; she went up and pressed her powder-white face against the Pilgrim's, calling: "Dear, dear, put away the treasure and drink your wine! Why stare into space like that, thinking of what?"

The Great Sage seized the opening and asked: "A thing so small—how can it fan out eight hundred li of flames?"

The Rakshasi, her true nature mellowed by wine, without a care, told him the secret: "Great king, it has been two years since we parted. You must have been so taken with pleasure day and night that the Jade-Faced Princess has worn away your spirits—how else could you forget the very business of your own treasure? Just pinch the seventh red silk thread on the handle with the thumb of your left hand, recite 'tong-xu-he-xi-chui-hu,' and it grows to twelve feet long. This treasure's transformations are without end! Let there be a fire eighty thousand li across—one wave of this, and it is gone."

Hearing this, the Great Sage marked it well in his heart, put the fan into his mouth, wiped his face, resumed his own form, and shouted in a stern voice: "Rakshasi! Look at me—am I your own true husband! You have slobbered over me in all these shameful antics! No shame! No shame!"

The woman, seeing it was Sun the Pilgrim, in her panic knocked over the tables and dishes and tumbled to the ground, utterly shamed and mortified, crying only: "It enrages me to death! It enrages me to death!"

This Great Sage, leaving her dead or alive as she might be, tore his hand free, took long strides, and went straight out of the Plantain Cave. Truly, he had no heart for fair beauty, and in triumph he smiled and turned back. He gave a leap, trod the auspicious cloud, and sprang onto the high mountain; there he spat out the fan and tried the method. Pinching the seventh red silk thread on the handle with the thumb of his left hand, he recited "tong-xu-he-xi-chui-hu," and sure enough it grew to twelve feet in length.

He held it in his hand and examined it closely again and again—it was indeed quite different from the false one of the time before. Auspicious light shimmered and blessed vapors drifted about it; it had thirty-six red silk threads running through its warp and woof, joined within and without. It turned out that the Pilgrim had only learned the art of making it grow, not the spell for shrinking it, so he could not make it any smaller. There was no help for it; he could only carry it on his shoulder and take the old road back. Of him no more for now.

Say now how the Bull Demon King, after the feast with the spirits at the bottom of the Blue Wave Pool had broken up, came out of the door and found the water-piercing golden-eyed beast was gone.

The old Dragon King gathered the spirits and asked: "Who has stolen and let loose Lord Bull's golden-eyed beast?"

The spirits knelt: "No one dared steal it. We were all at the feast, pouring wine and holding dishes, singing and playing music—there was not a soul away from it."

The old dragon said: "My own household musicians would never dare. Could some stranger have come in?"

The dragon sons and grandsons said: "Just as the seats were being arranged, a crab spirit came here—that was the only stranger."

Hearing this, the Bull King suddenly understood: "No more need be said! When my worthy friend sent to invite me this morning, there was a Sun Wukong escorting the Tang monk to fetch scriptures who, finding the Flaming Mountain in his way, had asked me to lend him the plantain fan. I would not give it to him, and he fought a bout with me; when it was undecided, I left him and came straight to this grand feast. That monkey has a thousand wiles and ten thousand schemes—it must be that wretch, changed into a crab, come to spy out the news. He stole my beast and went to my mountain wife to swindle the plantain fan away from her!"

At these words the spirits all trembled with fear and asked: "Was that Sun Wukong who made havoc in Heaven?"

The Bull King said: "It was. My lords, if you should ever have some trouble on the road to the Western Heaven, be sure to keep out of his way."

The old dragon said: "If that is so, what about your lordship's noble steed?"

The Bull King laughed: "No matter, no matter. Let all my lords disperse, and I will go after him." So he parted the water, leapt up from the bottom of the pool, mounted his yellow cloud, and went straight to the Plantain Cave on Cuiyun Mountain, where he heard the Rakshasi stamping her feet and beating her breast, shrieking and shouting. He pushed open the door and saw the water-piercing golden-eyed beast tethered below. The Bull King called loudly: "Madam, where has Sun Wukong gone?"

Seeing the Bull Demon King, the girls all knelt and said: "So the master has come!"

The Rakshasi clutched the Bull King, knocking her head against him, and cursed: "You old heaven-slain brute! How could you be so careless as to let that gibbon steal the golden-eyed beast, turn himself into your likeness, and come here to fool me!"

The Bull King gnashed his teeth: "Where has the gibbon gone?"

The Rakshasi beat her breast and cursed: "That cursed ape swindled my treasure, showed his own form, and ran off! It enrages me to death!"

The Bull King said: "Take care of yourself, madam, and don't fret. Let me catch up with the gibbon, snatch back the treasure, strip off his hide, grind his bones to powder, and lay out his heart and liver to vent your anger!" He called: "Bring my weapons!"

The girls said: "The master's weapons are not here."

The Bull King said: "Then bring your mistress's weapons!" The maidservants brought out the two blue-tempered swords.

The Bull King took off the raven-black velvet jacket he had worn to the feast, tightened the small clothes on his body, gripped a sword in each hand, and went out of the Plantain Cave, speeding straight for the Flaming Mountain. Truly it was:

The ingrate man fooled the infatuated woman; The fiery-tempered demon draws near to Muzha's man.

We do not know what good or ill this pursuit will bring; listen to the next chapter for the explanation.

Chapter 61

Zhu Bajie Lends His Strength and the Demon King Is Defeated; the Pilgrim Sun Borrows the Plantain Fan for the Third Time

The story continues: the Bull Demon King caught up with the Great Sage Sun and saw him coming along, cheerful and beaming, with the plantain fan carried on his shoulder.

The Demon King was greatly alarmed. "So the macaque has managed to wangle the secret of working the thing as well!" he thought. "If I ask him for it to his face, he'll never hand it over. And if he gives me one wave of that fan, it will blow me 108,000 li away—wouldn't that be playing right into his hands? I hear the Tang monk is waiting on the high road. His second disciple is a pig spirit, and his third is a sand-flow spirit; I met them both back in my demon days. Let me turn myself into the pig spirit's likeness and swindle the fan back from him. The macaque will be puffed up with his success—he's bound to be off his guard."

A capable Demon King indeed! He too commanded seventy-two transformations, and his martial skill was every bit the Great Sage's equal; only his body was somewhat bulkier, slower to dodge, less quick and limber. He put away his precious sword, recited a spell, shook himself, and changed at once into the very image of Bajie. Then he took a shortcut and came to meet the Great Sage face on, calling out:

"Elder Brother, here I am!"

And the Great Sage was delighted, just as the ancients said: a cat that has won its fight swaggers like a tiger. Relying on his own prowess, he never paused to study the newcomer's meaning. Seeing what looked like Bajie, he called out: "Brother, where are you bound?"

The Bull Demon King slipped cleverly into his part: "Master saw you gone so long and feared the Bull Demon King's powers were too great—that you couldn't beat him and couldn't get his treasure—so he sent me to meet you."

The Pilgrim laughed: "No need to trouble yourself. I've already got it."

The Bull King asked: "How did you get it?"

The Pilgrim said: "That old bull fought me a good hundred rounds and more, and neither of us won. Then he dropped me and went off to the bottom of the Green-Wave Pool on Boulder Mountain, to drink with a pack of flood-dragon spirits and dragon spirits. I followed him in secret, turned myself into a crab, stole his golden-eyed water-repelling beast, changed into the old bull's likeness, went straight to Plantain Cave, and tricked that Rakshasi. The lady went through a whole sham marriage with old Sun—it was old Sun who coaxed and conned the fan out of her."

The Bull King said: "Then you've had a hard time of it! Elder Brother has wearied himself sorely. Give the fan to me to carry."

The Great Sage Sun, who could not tell true from false and never thought to doubt, handed the fan right over.

Now that Bull King knew the root and secret of the fan's shrinking and growing. The moment he had it in his hand, he made some pinch or other with his fingers, and shrank it to the size of an apricot leaf, showed his true form, and opened with a curse: "Audacious macaque! Do you know me now?"

At the sight of him the Pilgrim repented in his heart: "This time the fault is mine!" He gnashed his teeth, stamped his feet, and cried aloud: "Bah! Year after year old Sun has gone hunting wild geese, and today a gosling has pecked out his eye!"

Furious past all restraint, he roared like thunder, whipped out his iron cudgel, and struck straight at the Demon King's head. The Demon King waved the fan at him once—but remember, when the Great Sage had earlier changed into a tiny cricket and slipped into the Rakshasi's belly, he had held the Wind-Fixing Pill in his mouth, and all unawares he had swallowed it into his stomach. So now his five viscera were all firm and his hide and bones all sound; wave as the Bull King might, he could not budge him an inch. The Bull King panicked, popped the treasure into his own mouth, swung his sword with both hands, and hacked away.

And what a battle the two of them fought there in midair! Truly:

The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun, And the Bull Demon King, that fiend who muddles the world— All for the plantain fan they've met, And each displays his strength to the utmost. The careless Great Sage cheated the other, The bold Bull King swindled the fan away. This one's gold-banded cudgel rises, merciless; That one's two-edged green blade is full of cunning. The Great Sage lords his power, spraying colored mists; The Bull King vents his savagery, vomiting beams of light. Both strain in valor, neither one good, Gnashing teeth, grinding jaws, fury rampant. Dust is flung aloft, earth blots out Heaven and Earth; Sand flies and stones roll, ghosts and gods go hide. This one cries: "How dare you swindle me in return!" That one cries: "My wife was yours to take to bed!" Rustic insults, filthy words, fierce tempers, unyielding pride. That one cries: "You cozened a man's wife—you deserve to die! Sue me at court, and you'll pay for your crimes!" The nimble-witted Sage Equal to Heaven, The savage and stubborn King of Great Strength— Each with one thought only: kill! No parley, no quarter, no delay. Cudgel strikes, sword parries, both straining to win; Whoever slackens a hair goes down to King Yama.

Leave the two of them locked in battle for now, and speak of the Tang monk sitting on the road, steamed by the fiery air and fretting with thirst. He said to the local deity of the Flaming Mountain: "May I presume to ask, honored god—how great is this Bull Demon King's magic power?"

"Great indeed," said the local deity. "His powers are no small thing; his magic is past all measure. He is a match for the Great Sage Sun himself."

"Your brother Wukong is a swift traveler," said Sanzang. "Usually even two thousand li he covers in a flash. How is it he's been gone a whole day now? He must be locked in combat with that Bull King." He called: "Wuneng! Wujing! Which of you will go meet your elder brother? If you run into the enemy, lend him your strength. Get me that fan, end my torment, and let us cross this mountain and be on our way!"

"It's getting late in the day," said Bajie. "I'd been thinking of going to meet him, only I don't know the road to Jilei Mountain."

"This humble god knows it," said the local deity. "Let the Curtain-Raising General stay and keep your master company; I'll go with you."

Sanzang was delighted: "We are indebted to you, honored god. When the work is done, we shall give thanks."

Bajie shook out his spirits, tightened his black brocade tunic, shouldered his rake, and rose on cloud and mist with the local deity, heading straight back eastward. As they went, they suddenly heard the cries of battle rising and wild winds rolling.

Bajie pressed down his cloud and looked—and there, sure enough, was Sun the Pilgrim locked in combat with the Bull King.

"Why doesn't the Marshal of the Heavenly Reeds charge in?" asked the local deity.

The blockhead whipped out his nail-rake and bawled: "Elder Brother, here I am!"

"You lout!" snarled the Pilgrim. "You've ruined old Sun's grand affair!"

"Master sent me to meet you," said Bajie. "Since I didn't know the road, we talked it over a good while, and the local deity agreed to guide me—that's why I'm late. How have I ruined anything?"

"It's not your lateness I blame. That fiendish bull is outrageous past all bounds! Old Sun had won the fan from the Rakshasi, but this wretch turned himself into your likeness, claimed he'd come to meet me, and I, fool that I was, went and put the fan into his hand. Then he showed his true form, and now he's been matching powers with old Sun here—that's how the whole thing was ruined!"

At this Bajie boiled with rage. He raised his rake and cursed to the Bull King's face: "You blood-bloated plague! How dare you turn yourself into your own grandfather's likeness to swindle my elder brother and set brother against brother!" And watch him: rake flying wildly, blows raining down with never a pause at head or face.

Now the Bull King had fought the Pilgrim a whole day, and his strength was spent and his spirit weary; and then too Bajie's rake came on so furiously that he could not ward it off. He broke off the fight and fled—and there, dead ahead, the local deity of the Flaming Mountain commanding his spirit soldiers blocked his way, shouting: "King of Great Strength, hold your hand! Tang Sanzang is on his way to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures; there is no god that does not protect him, no power of Heaven that does not bless him. The Three Realms all know of him, the Ten Quarters all stand guard for him. Bring out the plantain fan at once, fan down these flames, let him pass this mountain without calamity or hindrance. If you refuse, Heaven will call you to account, and you are doomed to die."

"You local deity," said the Bull King, "have you no sense at all? That fiendish monkey stole my son, insulted my concubine, and cheated my wife—outrage upon outrage, without a shred of law or reason. I could swallow him whole and pass him out as dung to feed the dogs! How should I ever lend him my treasure?"

Even as he spoke, Bajie came charging up, roaring: "You festering lump of gland-rot! Bring out the fan, and I'll spare your life!" The Bull King had no choice but to turn back and fight Bajie with his precious sword, while the Great Sage Sun raised his cudgel to help. And what a battle that was! Truly:

A pig become a spirit, a bull become a fiend, Plus a monkey who stole his way to the Way. The Chan nature, trained through battle, holds; Earth must be called on to compound the source. The nine-tined rake, sharp and keen; The double-edged precious sword, swift and supple. The iron cudgel, rolling out and in, the chief of weapons; The local god lends force to knot the elixir crown. Three powers clash and conquer, each contending, Each unfolding valiant arts, each scheming mastery. Seize the bull to plow the field, and metal-money grows; Call the pig back to the furnace, and the wood-breath gathers. If the mind runs wild, what Way is there to make? The spirit must keep its house—the monkey must be tethered. Wild yelling, bitter struggling, three weapons whistling shrill. Rake strikes and sword wounds know no kindness; The rise of the gold-banded cudgel has its reasons. They fought till the stars gave no light and the moon no luster, One whole sky of cold fog, black and louring!

The Demon King fought furiously, giving ground as he battled, on through the whole night without a decision—till morning came.

Ahead lay the gate of his Moyun Cave on Jilei Mountain, and the three of them and the local deity's spirit soldiers were making such an ear-splitting din that they startled the Jade-Faced Princess, who called her maids to see who was making the row.

The little demon guarding the gate came in to report: "It's our own master, fighting that thunder-beaked fellow from yesterday, and a big-eared long-snouted monk, and the local deity of the Flaming Mountain and his crowd!"

Hearing this, the Jade-Faced Princess at once ordered the outside-guard chieftains to take up spears and blades and go to the rescue.

They mustered a hundred and more of all sizes and descriptions, and every one of them swaggering with valor, spear in hand and cudgel at the ready, they all announced: "Great King, we have come under the Princess's inner command to lend you our strength!"

"Well come! Well come!" cried the delighted Bull King, and the demon host surged forward, hacking on every side. Caught off guard, Bajie dragged his rake behind him and fled in defeat; the Great Sage leapt clear of the encirclement on his somersault cloud, and the spirit soldiers scattered in all four directions. The old bull, victorious, gathered his demons and went back into his cave, shutting the door fast. Of him no more for now.

"What a fighter this wretch is!" said the Pilgrim. "From about the hour of Shen yesterday he's fought old Sun without pause, right up to this night, and still no winner. Then you two arrived to relieve me. Half a day and a whole night of this bitter fighting, and he shows no weariness at all. And that pack of little demons just now—sturdy ruffians every one. Now he's shut his gate and won't come out. What are we to do?"

"Elder Brother," said Bajie, "you left Master yesterday at the hour of Si—how is it you only started fighting the Bull King at the hour of Shen? Where were those two or three watches of yours?"

"After I left you," said the Pilgrim, "I reached this mountain in a moment. I met a young woman exchanging greetings—she turned out to be his beloved concubine, the Jade-Faced Princess. I gave her one scare with my iron cudgel and she ran into the cave and called out the Bull King. He came out and bandied words with old Sun, we bawled at each other a while, then crossed hands and fought a full watch or so. Right in the middle of it, someone came and invited him off to a banquet. So I followed him down to the bottom of the Green-Wave Pool on Boulder Mountain, turned myself into a crab, gathered my information, stole his golden-eyed water-repelling beast, changed into the Bull King's likeness, went back to Plantain Cave on Cuiyun Mountain, and tricked the Rakshasi—coaxed the fan right out of her. Once outside I tried the working of it: the fan grew all right, only I didn't know how to shrink it back. And just as I was striding along with it on my shoulder, he turned himself into your face and swindled it back—there's my two or three watches lost."

"That's just what the proverb says," said Bajie. "A tofu ship capsized in the ocean—what came in the soup goes out in the sea. Now the fan's beyond our reach—how are we to get Master over this mountain? Let's go back and find some other road, the devil with it!"

"Great Sage, don't despair," said the local deity, "and Marshal, don't slacken. As for finding another road—that's the outer path, not the way of one who cultivates. As the ancients said, the walker walks not by the byways; how can you turn aside? Your master sits waiting on the true road, gazing and gazing for you to succeed."

"Just so! Just so!" snapped the Pilgrim. "Blockhead, none of your nonsense! The local deity speaks sense. We'll match him, stake all on winning or losing, ply our arts, and let old Sun perform the transformations of the Dharma:

Since I came westward I've had no match— The Bull King is but the Mind-Ape transformed. This bout is just the meeting of source and stream: Hold out to the end, and the precious fan is won. Seize on the coolness, still the flames, Smash the stubborn void, behold the Buddha's face. When the work is done, ascend to the Heaven of Joy; All together we shall feast at the Dragon Flower banquet!"

And Bajie, hearing this, bestirred himself and sang back with a will:

"Yes, yes, yes! Go, go, go! Never mind Bull King's arts or none: Wood born in Hai is matched to the pig; Twist round the ox, and back to earth it goes. Shen below brings forth metal—born the monkey: No clash, no conquest—all in harmony. Use the plantain, for it means water; When flames die out, the Water-over-Fire is won. Day and night, never leave your labors; When the work is done, hasten to the Feast of Ghosts' Deliverance!"

The two of them, leading the local deity and his spirit soldiers, charged forward—rake swinging, cudgel wheeling, ping-pang-pong—until they had battered the front gate of Moyun Cave to splinters.

The terrified outside-guard chieftains stumbled in to report: "Great King! Sun Wukong has led a host and smashed in the front gate!"

The Bull King was just then recounting the whole affair to the Jade-Faced Princess and seething with hatred of Sun the Pilgrim. At the news his rage blazed up. He hastily donned his armor, took up an iron rod, and came storming out cursing: "Audacious macaque! What a nobody you are, to come brazenly to my gate and smash my doors!"

Bajie advanced, cursing back with gusto: "You flayed old hide! What sort of creature are you, to measure yourself against anybody? Stand fast! Taste my rake!"

The Bull King shouted: "You slop-guzzling lout, you're nothing to see! Call that monkey out here!"

"You grass-grazing beast, past all sense of favor!" cried the Pilgrim. "Only yesterday we still spoke as brothers—today we are enemies! Look sharp, and take this cudgel of mine!"

The Bull King flung himself into the fray.

This battle surpassed the last. Three heroes tangled together in one mellay. Truly:

Rake and iron cudgel flaunt divine power, Leading spirit soldiers against the old beast. The beast alone unfolds his savage strength, His magic filling all the sky it shares with them. Rake digs in, cudgel pounds, The cudgel's hero rises with new wonders. Three weapons ring and clatter— Who yields in parry, who gives way? Each claims to be the champion, each claims the crown. The soldier gods bear witness: none can part them; Wood and earth contend, and rise and fall together. These two cry: "Why will you not lend the plantain fan!" That one cries: "How dare you trick my wife! You drove out my concubine, destroyed my son— The vengeance is unpaid, and now you storm my gates!" This one cries: "Look to yourself before the As-You-Will cudgel: So much as graze you, and your hide comes off!" That one cries: "Mind well the rake's nine tines: One wound, nine holes, blood streaming down!" The Bull King, nothing daunted, flaunts his might, His iron rod held high, alert to every chance. He tumbles clouds and overturns the rain, back and forth; He spews out fog and sprays the wind, free to unfold his power. Bitterly, desperately, this bout is fought to death, Each nursing malice, each delighting in the struggle. Guards dropped, high and low conceded, Front pressed and rear defended, never a loss. The two brothers strive with all their might; One single rod, alone, works its will.

From the hour of Mao they fought past the hour of Chen, and when the battle ended the Bull King withdrew helpless. The three had fought utterly reckless of life, another hundred rounds and more. Then Bajie fell into one of his stubborn rages; backed by the Pilgrim's magic, he charged with rake flailing. Unable to hold out, the Bull King turned in defeat and made for his cave gate—but the local deity's spirit soldiers blocked the entrance, shouting:

"King of Great Strength, where do you run? We are here!"

Barred from his cave, the old bull jerked back—and there were Bajie and the Pilgrim closing in. In desperation he stripped off his armor, flung away the iron rod, shook himself, turned into a wild swan, and

flew off into the sky.

The Pilgrim saw it and laughed: "Bajie! The old bull's gone!"

The blockhead stared around blankly, and the local deity was none the wiser either; one and all they peered east and squinted west, hunting up and down about Jilei Mountain.

The Pilgrim pointed: "Isn't that what's flying up there?"

"That's a wild swan," said Bajie.

"That's the old bull transformed," said the Pilgrim.

"Since that's so," said the local deity, "what are we to do?"

"You two smash in this gate," said the Pilgrim, "wipe out that demon pack to the last one, tear down his den, and cut off his road home. Old Sun is going to wager transformations with him."

Bajie and the local deity fell to storming the gate, and of them no more for now.

The Great Sage put away his gold-banded cudgel, pinched his fingers, recited a spell, shook himself, and changed into a white gyrfalcon of the eastern sea. Whirr—with one beat of its wings it shot up into the eye of the clouds, then dropped headlong, landed on the swan's back, clamped its neck, and pecked at its eyes. The Bull King knew it must be Sun the Pilgrim transformed; in haste he shook his plumes and turned into a yellow eagle, wheeling to strike back at the gyrfalcon. The Pilgrim changed again, into a black phoenix, bent on nothing but running down the eagle.

The Bull King knew that too; he changed into a white crane, gave one long cry, and flew away south. The Pilgrim stood fast, shook out his plumes, changed into a scarlet phoenix, and gave one shrill ringing cry. Now when the crane beholds the phoenix, the king of birds, no fowl dares stir; with one flick of its wings it plunged down the cliff face, changed as it fell into a musk deer, and stood there dazed and stupid, nibbling grass before the crags.

The Pilgrim knew it. Down he fluttered and changed into a hungry tiger, tail lashing, hoofs flying, bent on running down the deer for its dinner. The Demon King, losing his footing in panic, turned into a great spotted leopard, gold-coined and brindled, ready to savage the hungry tiger. At this the Pilgrim faced the wind, gave his head one shake, changed into a golden-eyed lion-beast, its voice like thunderclaps, forehead of iron and head of bronze, wheeled round, and made to devour the leopard.

Hard pressed, the Bull King turned into a man-ape, flung wide his strides, and came to seize the lion-beast. The Pilgrim rolled over once and turned into a ragged-tusked elephant, trunk like a long snake, tusks like bamboo shoots, unwound that trunk, and made to coil up the man-ape. At that the Bull King chuckled, and bared his own true body: a monstrous great white bull, head like a mountain ridge, eyes like twin lightning flashes, two horns like two iron pagodas, teeth ranked like keen blades. Head to tail he measured a thousand-odd zhang; hoof to back, eight hundred zhang high. He bellowed at the Pilgrim: "Audacious macaque! What can you do to me now?"

Then the Pilgrim too bared his own true body. He whipped out his gold-banded cudgel, bowed his back, and shouted: "Grow!" And he grew to ten thousand zhang tall, head like Mount Tai, eyes like sun and moon, mouth like a pool of blood, teeth like door leaves, and swinging his iron cudgel he brought it down on the bull's head. The Bull King lowered his head and thrust with his horns. What a battle that was—truly shaking the ridges and rocking the mountains, startling Heaven and startling Earth!

There is a poem in witness:

The Way rises a foot, the demon a thousand fathoms; By cunning arts the Mind-Ape strives and prevails. If the fire mountain is to lose its raging flames, The precious fan must surely hold the cooling dew. The Yellow Dame keeps faith and props the Elder; The Mother of Wood shows mercy, sweeps the demons away. When the Five Elements are one in peace, the true fruit ripens: Smelt the demon, scour the filth, and rise into the West.

The two of them unfolded their powers to the utmost, wagering battle there on the mountainside, until every god who passed through the empty air, with the gold-headed Revealers, the Six Jias and Six Dings, and the eighteen Guardian Sangharamas, came and ringed the Demon King in. Unflinching he met them: watch him butting east and butting west, his two iron horns thrusting stiff and gleaming; charging south and charging north, his bristling, sinew-knotted stiff tail swinging and hammering left and right.

The Great Sage Sun met him head on, and the host of gods battered him from all four sides. At his wits' end, the Bull King rolled over on the ground, resumed his own form, and made a bolt for Plantain Cave. The Pilgrim put away his magic semblance and gave chase with the host of gods hard behind. The Demon King burst into his cave and shut the door; the whole host sealed Cuiyun Mountain watertight.

As they were all storming the gate, suddenly they heard Bajie and the local deity's spirit soldiers come clamoring up.

The Pilgrim hailed them: "How went it at Moyun Cave?"

Bajie laughed: "The old bull's lady—I killed her with one stroke of my rake, and when I ripped her clothes to look, she was a jade-faced civet spirit! And that demon pack—donkeys, mules, calves, bulls, badgers, foxes, raccoon-dogs, deer, sheep, tigers, elk and such—every one of them wiped out. Then I set fire to their halls and corridors and burned the den down. But the local deity says the old bull keeps another household here on this mountain, so I've come to sweep this one out too."

"Well done, worthy brother!" said the Pilgrim. "A joy! A joy! Old Sun wagered transformations with the old bull and won no victory. He turned into a white bull huge past all hugeness, and old Sun grew a body vast as Heaven and earth, matching his thrusts and buttings; then, happily, the gods descended and penned him in a good long while—till he took his own form again and bolted into the cave."

"Would that be Plantain Cave?" asked Bajie.

"It is! It is!" said the Pilgrim. "The Rakshasi lives there right now."

Bajie cried with fury: "Then why in the world don't we smash in and wipe the wretch out, and make him hand over the fan—instead of leaving him lurking there to grow wise, the pair of them billing and cooing!"

What a blockhead! Shaking out his prowess, he raised his rake and brought it down on the gate—crash!—and felled half the stone cliff-face along with the door.

The terrified maid ran in to report: "Master! Someone's smashed the front gate all to pieces!"

The Bull King had barely rushed inside, still gasping and panting as he told the Rakshasi of the battle over the fan with Sun the Pilgrim. At the report his fury blazed; he spat the fan from his mouth and handed it to the Rakshasi.

She took the fan in her hands, tears streaming from her eyes. "Great King," she said, "give the fan to that macaque and make him withdraw his troops."

"Lady," said the Bull King, "the thing is small, but the grudge runs deep. Sit fast—let me go out and have another bout with him." The demon donned his armor anew, chose another pair of precious swords, and strode out the gate—straight into Bajie, still battering the door with his rake. Without a word the old bull

whipped out a sword and hacked at his face. Bajie raised his rake to meet it, gave ground a few steps, and backed outside—where already the Great Sage wheeled his cudgel overhead.

The Bull Demon King leapt from his cave on a roaring wind, and there on Cuiyun Mountain they closed again. The host of gods ringed him round on all four sides; the local deity's soldiers attacked from left and right. And what a battle this was too! Truly:

Clouds bewilder the world, fog shrouds the cosmos. Soughing, sighing, the dark wind rolls sand and stones; Towering rage swells the very sea to mud. Two swords ground anew, full armor hung again. A grudge deep as the sea; hatred breeding hatred fresh. Look at the Great Sage Equal to Heaven: for merit's sake He heeds no whit their old comradeship. Bajie displays his might, all for the fan; The host of gods guards the Faith to seize the bull. The Bull King's two hands never rest a moment, Warding left and right, plying all his spirit. They fought till the passing birds dropped their wings and could not fly, The roaming fish sank their fins and would not leap; Ghosts wept and gods howled, Heaven and Earth went dark, Dragons grieved and tigers cowered, the sunlight dimmed!

Fighting with total abandon, reckless of his life, the Bull King held out some fifty rounds more; then, unable to endure, he broke the battle and fled north.

There already the Vajra of Awesome Magic Power from Secret Magic Cliff on Mount Wutai blocked his way: "Bull Demon, where are you running? We are sent by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, who has spread a net of Heaven and earth to seize you here!"

Even as they spoke, the Great Sage, Bajie, and the host of gods came surging up behind.

The Demon King wheeled in panic and fled south—and ran full into the Vajra of Boundless Magic Power from the Cool Refreshing Cave on Mount Emei, who barred the way and thundered: "By the Buddha's command I stand here, and I am going to take you!"

Heart pounding and legs gone soft, the Bull King jerked loose and fled east—straight into the Vajra of Great Strength from Ear-Rubbing Cliff on Mount Sumeru, who closed with him: "Where now, old bull? By the Tathagata's secret command I have come to capture you!"

The Bull King shrank back and fled west—and met the Vajra of Eternal Abiding, the Unbreakable Honored King, from Golden Haze Ridge on Mount Kunlun, who barred his way: "And where does this wretch think he's going? By the personal word of the Buddha of the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the Western Heaven I hold this pass—who lets you through?"

The old bull's heart shuddered and his gall trembled; regret came too late. On every side, all four quarters, there were Buddha's soldiers and Heaven's generals—a net truly spread high, and no way out. And in the midst of his panic he heard the Pilgrim leading his host in pursuit; so he mounted his cloud and flew straight upward.

And there, just in place, stood Heavenly King Li with the Pagoda and Prince Nezha, leading the fish-belly yakshas and the Giant Spirit God, canopying the empty sky, who called out: "Not so fast! Not so fast! By decree of the Jade Emperor we are come to wipe you out!"

Desperate, the Bull King did as before: he shook himself and turned again into the monstrous great white bull, thrusting his two iron horns at the Heavenly King, who slashed at him with his sword. Then Sun the Pilgrim came up, and Prince Nezha cried in a great voice: "Great Sage, I am in armor and cannot make my courtesy. Yesterday my father and I saw the Lord Buddha, who memorialized the Jade Emperor that the Tang monk's road was blocked by the Flaming Mountain and the Great Sage Sun could not subdue the Bull Demon King. The Jade Emperor issued his decree and sent my father specially to lead us to your aid."

"This wretch's powers are no small thing!" said the Pilgrim. "He's turned himself into that monstrous body again—what's to be done?"

"Have no fear, Great Sage," said the Prince with a smile. "Watch me take him." The Prince shouted "Change!"—and grew three heads and six arms, sprang through the air onto the Bull King's back, swung the demon-slaying sword at his neck, and with one stroke the bull's head fell. The Heavenly King put up his sword and only then exchanged greetings with the Pilgrim. But from the Bull King's trunk another head thrust out, belching black vapor, its eyes shooting golden light. Nezha struck again, and where the head fell, another thrust out. A dozen strokes of the sword he dealt, and a dozen heads grew anew. Then Nezha took out his fire-wheels, hung them on the old bull's horns, and blew true fire upon them—blazing, roaring, until the Bull King bellowed madly, shaking his head and lashing his tail.

Just as he would have changed his shape and slipped free, the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King caught his true form in the Demon-Revealing Mirror, so that he could not budge or save himself by any art. He could only cry: "Spare my life! I submit—I submit to the house of Buddha!"

"Since you prize your life," said Nezha, "then hand over the fan, and quickly!"

"The fan is in my wife's keeping," said the Bull King.

At that Nezha uncoiled the demon-binding rope, cast it about the bull's neck, seized him by the nose, threaded the rope through his nostrils, and led him along by hand. Then Sun the Pilgrim gathered the four Vajra warriors, the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Guardian Sangharamas, Heavenly King Li with the Pagoda, the Giant Spirit God, and Bajie with the local deity and his spirit soldiers, and all in a throng around the white bull they came back to the gate of Plantain Cave.

The old bull called out: "My lady! Bring out the fan and save my life!"

Hearing his call, the Rakshasi hastily pulled off her hairpins and rings, shed her colored dress, knotted her black tresses like a Daoist nun, and put on plain white like a bhikkhuni. With both hands she bore the plantain fan, a zhang and two chi long, and came out the gate. And when she saw the host of Vajra warriors and sages and the Heavenly King and his son, she fell to her knees and knocked her head in worship: "I beg the Bodhisattvas to spare my husband's life and mine! I gladly present this fan, that Uncle Sun may accomplish his work!"

The Pilgrim stepped forward and took the fan, and all together they mounted auspicious clouds and returned by the eastern road.

Now tell it of Sanzang and the Sha Monk, who stood a while and sat a while, longing for the Pilgrim's return—so long delayed! What anxiety was theirs! Suddenly the whole sky filled with auspicious clouds, the whole earth with propitious light, floating and streaming, as the host of gods drew near. The elder quailed: "Wujing! What troops of gods are those approaching?"

The Sha Monk knew them: "Master, those are the four Vajra warriors, the gold-headed Revealers, the Six Jias and Six Dings, the Guardian Sangharamas, and all the passing gods. The one leading the bull is the Third Prince Nezha; the one with the mirror is Heavenly King Li. Big Brother bears the plantain fan; Second Brother and the local deity follow behind; the rest are all guardian god-soldiers."

Hearing this, Sanzang changed into his Vairocana hat and donned his cassock, and with Wujing went to bow and welcome the host of sages, thanking them: "What merit or power has your disciple, that he dares trouble all you honored sages to descend into the world!"

"Holy monk, rejoice!" said the four Vajra warriors. "Your work of merit is nearly complete! We were sent by the Buddha's command to aid you. Strive now with all your strength to cultivate, and never slacken for an

instant." Sanzang chattered his teeth and knocked his head, receiving the teaching on his body and his destiny.

The Great Sage Sun bore the fan down to the mountain's edge, and summoning all his strength gave one mighty wave. The Flaming Mountain's flames sank utterly still, its light died wholly away. In high delight the Pilgrim waved it again—and felt the gentle breeze rise, soft and soughing; a third wave, and the whole sky filled with clouds, and fine rain came drifting down. There is a poem in witness:

The Flaming Mountain stretches eight hundred li; Its firelight blazed a name across the earth. Fire seethed the Five Leakings—no elixir ripened; Fire scorched the Triple Pass—the Way ran foul. In season came the plantain fan to spread rain and dew; Happily Heaven's generals lent their magic power. The bull led home to Buddha, cease his wild capering: When water and water are joined, the nature finds its peace.

Then Sanzang's fret and fever left him, his heart cleared and his mind was at rest. The four travelers took refuge and gave thanks to the Vajras, who returned each to his precious mountain. The Six Dings and Six Jias rose into the sky to keep guard; the passing gods scattered to the four quarters; the Heavenly King and his Prince led the bull straight back to the Buddha's realm to hand him over. Only the local deity of the mountain stood by in attendance, holding the Rakshasi in charge.

"Rakshasi," said the Pilgrim, "why are you not on your way, still standing there waiting for something?"

The Rakshasi knelt: "I beg the Great Sage's mercy a thousand times over—give me back the fan."

"You shameless hussy, past all sense of what's what!" bawled Bajie. "Sparing your life is already more than enough—and you'd beg for the fan besides? We'll carry it over the mountain with us; can't we sell it for a few cakes? After all this sweat and spirit we've spent, and you'd have it back! It's drizzling—aren't you gone home yet?"

The Rakshasi bowed again and again: "The Great Sage promised from the first: when the fire was fanned out, he would return it. As for this whole affair, I repent too late. It was my own churlishness that stirred up armies and troubled the host. We too had cultivated to human birth, but never yet attained the true fruit. Now that his true form has been shown and has gone west, I dare never again do evil. I beg you grant me my own fan; from this day I shall turn over a new leaf, cultivate my person and nourish my life."

"Great Sage," said the local deity, "since this woman knows so well the way to quench the fire, let her cut off the fire's very root; give her back the fan. This humble god dwells here in a poor corner; save the living folk of this region and grant them their blood-offerings—that would be a true kindness and convenience."

"But I asked the local people at the time," said the Pilgrim, "and they said that once the fire on this mountain is fanned out, it brings only one year of grain, and then the fire breaks out again! How is the root to be destroyed?"

"To destroy the fire's root forever," said the Rakshasi, "needs only forty-nine waves of the fan, one after another—then it will never blaze again."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim gripped the fan and put forth all his strength, waving it forty-nine times at the mountain's crest. Down came the rain in torrents on the heights—and it was a treasure indeed: where there had been fire, rain fell; where there had been none, the sky shone clear. Master and disciples stood on the fireless ground, untouched by the rain.

They sat through the night, and only next morning did they pack horse and luggage. The Pilgrim returned the fan to the Rakshasi, saying: "Were old Sun not to give it back, folk would say I have no word to keep. Take your fan and go back to your mountain—stir up no more trouble. Seeing you have won a human body, I spare you. Be off!"

The Rakshasi took the fan, recited a spell, pinched it into an apricot leaf, and held it in her mouth. She bowed her thanks to the host of sages, hid her name and went away to cultivate; in time she too attained the true fruit, her name remembered down all the ages in the storehouse of the sutras. Rakshasi and local deity both, grateful, gave thanks and escorted them on their way. Then the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, guarding Sanzang, pressed forward on the road—bodies cool and cleansed at last, feet treading moist and fertile ground. Truly it is said:

When Water and Fire have both done their work, the primal unity joins; When water and fire stand even, the Great Way is achieved.

But as for how many years it would be before they returned to the Eastern Land—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 62

Grime Is Scoured and the Heart Washed Clean by Sweeping the Pagoda; the Demon Is Bound and Turned to the Right—There Lies Self-Cultivation

Through the twelve hours of day it must not be forgot; In all the hundred watches, gather in the work. Five years, ten myriads, eight thousand rounds— Let not the sacred water run dry, Give no rein to the sorrow of the fire's glare. When water and fire are tempered, no place suffers harm; The Five Elements link together like hooks. When yin and yang in harmony mount the tower of clouds, Riding the luan, ascend the purple mansions; Straddling the crane, haste to Yingzhou.

This set of verses is to the tune "The Immortal at the River." It tells only of how Tang Sanzang and his four followers, water and fire both brought to accomplishment, their true nature cool and clear, had borrowed the purely yin precious fan, fanned the raging fire out, and crossed the mountain. In less than a day they had covered the eight hundred li of the way, traveling on westward at ease and leisure; and it was just the turn from late autumn to early winter, and they beheld such sights as these:

Wild chrysanthemums' last petals falling; New plum trees' tender buds unfolding. In every village the harvest is gathered in; In every household they savor fragrant broth.

In the level woods the leaves are down, the far hills stand bare; In winding ravines the frost lies thick, the hidden valleys clear. The breath of the Zhong pitch moves; the burrowing creatures fold their nests; Pure yin, pure yin—the Moon Lord reigns in dark profound, The virtue of water at its full; the sun of Shun takes pity on clear skies.

The breath of earth sinks downward; the breath of Heaven rises up. The rainbow hides, its shadow seen no more; Ponds and marshes slowly breed their ice. On the sheer cliffs the hanging vines' flowers wither; Pines and bamboo congeal with cold, their color all the greener.

The four travelers had gone a good long while when they saw another city drawing near. The Tang monk reined in his horse and called to his disciple: "Wukong, look at those towers and lofty pavilions yonder—what sort of place can that be?"

The Pilgrim raised his head and looked: it was a walled city. And truly:

A dragon coiling, a tiger crouching in a wall of gold. On all four sides the canopy of state hangs near; Through a hundred turns the purple market-squares lie level. Jade and stone bridge-rails rank their cunning beasts; On golden daises sit the wise and worthy. Truly the metropolis of a divine land, A jade capital, a seat of Heaven. Ten thousand li of royal domain made fast; A thousand years of imperial fortunes flourishing. The barbarians bow and yield—the sovereign's grace runs far; Seas and mountains pay their court—the sacred assembly brims. The palace steps are clean, the carriage road serene. In wine-shops the songs grow loud; In flower towers joy springs up. Before the Weiyang Palace, trees forever green— Fit for the phoenix of morning sun to sing upon.

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "that walled city is the seat of some realm's king."

Bajie laughed: "Every prefecture in the world has a prefecture city, every county a county seat—how do you make it out to be a king's seat?"

"You don't understand," said the Pilgrim. "A king's residence is different from a prefecture's or county's. Look: on all four sides it has a dozen-odd gates; the circuit of its walls runs a hundred-odd li; towers rise tall, clouds and mists wreath them in many colors. If it were not an imperial capital, how could it be so magnificent?"

"Sharp eyes, Brother," said the Sha Monk. "You know it's a king's seat—but what's its name?"

"There's neither tablet nor banner," said the Pilgrim. "How could I know? We must go into the city and ask—then we'll find out."

The elder rode on, and presently they came to the gates. He dismounted, crossed the bridge, and went in to look about: six avenues and three markets, trade and wealth flowing, dress and caps splendid, people gay and prosperous.

As they walked along, they suddenly came upon a dozen-odd Buddhist monks, every one wearing cangue and chains, begging from door to door, ragged and wretched past bearing.

Sanzang sighed: "When the hare dies the fox grieves—each creature sorrows for its kind." He called: "Wukong, go up and ask them why they suffer such punishment."

The Pilgrim did as he was told, calling out: "Monks! What monastery are you from? Why do you wear cangue and chains?"

The monks fell to their knees: "My lords, we are the wronged monks of the Golden Light Monastery."

"Where does the Golden Light Monastery stand?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Round the corner, just there," said the monks.

The Pilgrim brought them before the Tang monk and asked: "How are you wronged? Tell me, and I'll listen."

"My lords," said the monks, "we don't know where you've come from, but you seem somehow familiar to us. This is no place to tell it—come to our humble temple, and we'll recount our misery there."

"So be it," said the elder. "Let us go to their monastery and inquire into the matter carefully."

Together they came to the monastery gate, across which was written in seven characters of gold: "The Golden Light Monastery for the Protection of the Realm, Built by Imperial Command."

Master and disciples entered and looked about:

In the ancient hall, incense lamps burn cold; Through empty corridors, wind sweeps the leaves. A thousand-foot tower climbs the clouds; A few pine trees nurse their nature. Fallen flowers cover the ground—no guests pass by; Before the eaves the spiderwebs hang free for aught to snare. Idly the drum is mounted; vainly the bell is hung; On painted walls the dust lies thick, the sacred images dim. The lecture seat stands silent—the monks are gone; The Chan hall, still and lone, where birds are often met. Desolate—enough to draw a sigh; Forlorn and bitter, past all bounds of grief. Though incense burners stand before the Buddha, The ash is cold, the flowers withered—every rite is void.

Sanzang's heart ached, and he could not hold back his tears. The monks, cangue and all, pushed open the main hall and invited the elder up to worship the Buddha. The elder entered, offered the incense of his heart, and chattered his teeth three times in homage. Then he passed to the rear, and there, chained to the pillars of the abbot's porch, were six or seven more young monks. Sanzang could hardly bear the sight.

When they reached the abbot's quarters, all the monks came and knocked their heads, asking: "Honored lords of varied aspect—can it be you come from the Great Tang of the Eastern Land?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "What arts of prophecy do you monks have? We do indeed. How did you know us?"

"My lords," said the monks, "we have no arts of prophecy. It's only that we suffer under a wrong past all telling, with nowhere to plead it, and day after day we've cried to Heaven and cried to earth. Perhaps we stirred the gods: last night, every one of us had the same dream—that a holy monk come from the Great Tang

of the Eastern Land would save our lives, and this grievance might at last be cleared. And today, sure enough, we see your honors' wondrous aspect. That is how we knew."

Sanzang heard this with great joy. "What place is this?" he asked. "What is your grievance?"

The monks knelt and told him: "My lord, this city is called the Kingdom of Jisai, a great center of the Western lands. In former years the four barbarian realms paid it tribute: the Yuetuo Kingdom of the south, the Gaochang Kingdom of the north, the Xiliang Kingdom of the east, and the Benbo Kingdom of the west—year after year they sent fine jade, bright pearls, lovely consorts, and swift horses. We raised neither spear nor shield here, marched out on no campaigns, and yet they of themselves revered this as the superior realm."

"If they revered it as the superior realm," said Sanzang, "I suppose your king walks in the Way, and his civil and military ministers are worthy men."

"My lord, neither civil nor worthy, neither martial nor able—and the king is no follower of the Way either. It was all because of our Golden Light Monastery: from of old, the precious pagoda here was wreathed in auspicious clouds and propitious mists rising high; at night it shed its radiance, seen from ten thousand li away; by day it breathed colored vapors, beheld in all four kingdoms alike. Therefore it was accounted a divine capital, a seat of Heaven, and the four barbarians paid it tribute. But three years ago, on the first day of the first autumn month, at the midnight hour of Zi, there fell a rain of blood. When day broke, every household was terrified, every family in mourning. The ministers memorialized the king, not knowing how Heaven had been offended; Daoists were summoned to perform the rites and monks to read sutras, in thanks to Heaven and earth. Who could know that the golden pagoda of our monastery had been defiled? These two years past the foreign lands have sent no tribute. Our king would have marched to war, but his ministers remonstrated: 'The monks of our monastery stole the treasure from the pagoda; that is why there are no auspicious clouds or propitious mists, and the foreign lands no longer pay court.' The muddled king looked no deeper into the matter; his thieving officials seized our brotherhood and tortured them a thousand ways, squeezed them by every art. Of the three generations of monks in this place, the first two died under tortures past all bearing; and now they have taken our generation, clapped us in cangue and chains, and put us on trial. Your honors above—we would never steal the treasure in that pagoda, never so wrong our own hearts! We beg your mercy: like draws to like, and kind to kind. Bestow your great compassion, spread abroad your magic power, and save our lives!"

Hearing this, Sanzang nodded and sighed: "A dark business, and hard to see through. It is partly the court's misgovernment, and partly your own calamity. Since Heaven sent down a rain of blood and defiled the pagoda, why did you not memorialize the king at the time, instead of letting yourselves suffer so?"

"My lord," said the monks, "we are common clay—how could we know the mind of Heaven? Our elders before us could not clear it; what could we do?"

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "what hour is it?"

"About the hour of Shen," said the Pilgrim.

"I would go before the king to exchange our travel permit," said Sanzang, "but this affair of the monks is still obscure; I could hardly speak of it to the king. When I left Chang'an, I made a vow in the Famen Monastery: going westward, whatever temple I meet, I will burn incense; whatever monastery, worship the Buddha; whatever pagoda, sweep the pagoda. Today I have come here and found wronged monks, all on account of that pagoda. Get me a new broom; let me bathe, go up, and sweep it. Then we shall see how the defilement stands, and why it gives no light; when we've learned the truth, it will be time to face the king, speak out, and deliver these men from their misery."

At this the monks in cangue and chains hurried to the kitchen and fetched a kitchen knife, which they handed to Bajie: "My lord, take this knife and break the iron locks on the little monks chained to the pillars—let them go prepare the meal and the scented bath-water, to serve your honors at table and at the bath. We'll go into the streets and beg a new broom or two for your honor to sweep the pagoda."

Bajie laughed: "What's hard about opening locks? No need of knife or axe—just get our hairy-faced lord there; he's an old hand at opening locks."

And indeed the Pilgrim stepped up, worked the lock-opening charm, passed his hand once over them, and the locks fell off every chain. The young monks scampered to the kitchen, scrubbed pots and stove clean, and laid out tea and rice. When Sanzang and his disciples had eaten, the sky slowly darkened, and the chained monks came back with two new brooms. Sanzang was well pleased.

As they talked, a young monk came in with a lamp to invite the elder to his bath. By now the whole sky was bright with stars and moon, and the watch-drums sounded together from the watchtower. It was truly that hour when:

On all four walls the cold wind rises; In ten thousand homes the lamps shine clear. The six avenues shut doors and windows; The three markets close their gates. The fishing boats retreat to deep trees; The plows put by their short traces. The woodman's axe is still; The schoolboy reads his book aloud.

When Sanzang had bathed, he put on a narrow-sleeved robe, bound his sash, changed into a pair of soft slippers, and took a new broom in his hand. "Go and rest," he said to the monks. "I am going to sweep the pagoda."

"Since the pagoda was defiled by that rain of blood," said the Pilgrim, "and has so long been without light, I fear some evil creatures may have bred there. The night is still and the wind cold, and you'd have no companion—something might go amiss. What if old Sun goes up with you?"

"Very good! Very good!" said Sanzang.

Each taking a broom, they went first to the great hall, lit the colored-glass lamp, burned incense, and bowed before the Buddha: "Your disciple Chen Xuanzang, sent by the Great Tang of the Eastern Land to Vulture Peak, to behold my Lord the Tathagata and fetch the scriptures, has now come to the Golden Light Monastery in the Kingdom of Jisai, where the monks report the precious pagoda defiled; the king suspects the monks of stealing the treasure, and they bear the charge in misery, with none above or below to clear them. Your disciple sweeps this pagoda with all his heart. May the awesome spirit of my Buddha soon show the cause of the pagoda's defilement, and suffer no wrong to common men."

When he had prayed, he and the Pilgrim opened the pagoda door and swept upward from the lowest story.

And what a pagoda it was—towering against the Milky Way, sheer into the empty sky. Truly it was:

A five-colored colored-glass pagoda, A thousand-gold peak of sarira relics. The winding stair like threading through a cave; Each opened door like leaving some closed cage. The sacred vase casts back the moon at heaven's rim; The golden bells send forth the wind from off the sea. Look at its deep eaves and architraves, its crown holding the clouds— Deep eaves and architraves, made a phoenix threading cunning flowers in stone; Its crown holding clouds, made a pagoda-writhing dragon in the mists. Gaze far from it, and a thousand li lie open to the eye; Climb high on it, and one seems standing in the ninefold heavens.

On every story's door a colored-glass lamp, Dusty and unlit; step after step, white jade rails Furred with grime and winged vermin. In the pagoda's heart, Before the Buddha's seat, the incense smoke has died; Outside the lattice, before the gods, the spiderwebs hang veiled. The censer brims with mouse droppings; The lamp-cups want for melted oil. Only because the treasure in its heart was lost in secret Do bitter monks

see all their lives come void— Now Tang the monk has vowed to sweep the pagoda, And it shall don its countenance of former days.

The Tang monk swept one story with his broom, then climbed to another. Thus sweeping, he reached the seventh story, and it was already the second watch.

The elder began to tire. "If you're weary," said the Pilgrim, "sit and rest, and let old Sun sweep in your stead."

"How many stories does this pagoda have?" asked Sanzang.

"No fewer than thirteen, I should think."

Weariness and all, the elder pressed on: "It must be swept, to fulfill my vow." He swept three stories more, till his back ached and his legs pained, and sat down on the tenth: "Wukong, sweep those last three stories down for me."

The Pilgrim shook out his spirits, mounted to the eleventh story, and in a moment was up at the twelfth. As he swept, he heard voices at the very top of the pagoda. "Strange! Strange!" said the Pilgrim. "It's close on the third watch—how should there be anyone talking at the top? It must be some evil creature! Let's go see."

What a Monkey King! Tucking his broom gently under his arm, he hitched up his clothes, slipped out the front door, trod a cloud-head, and looked. There on the thirteenth story, in the pagoda's heart, sat two demons, with a plate of food before them, a bowl and a jug, playing finger-guessing games over their wine.

The Pilgrim worked a magic: he dropped the broom, whipped out his gold-banded cudgel, barred the pagoda door, and shouted: "Fine monsters! So it's you who stole the pagoda's treasure!"

The two monsters panicked, jumped up, and hurled jug and bowl about wildly; but the Pilgrim barred the way with his iron cudgel: "If I beat you to death, there'll be no one to make a confession." He only pressed in upon them with the cudgel.

Pinned flat against the wall, past all struggling, the creatures could only cry: "Spare us! Spare us! It's none of our doing! The ones who stole the treasure are somewhere else!"

The Pilgrim worked the seizing charm, grabbed one in each hand, and bore them straight down to the tenth story.

"Master," he announced, "I've caught the thieves who stole the treasure!"

Sanzang, just dozing, woke with a start at once both frightened and glad: "Where did you catch them?"

The Pilgrim dragged the monsters up and forced them to their knees: "They were up at the top of the pagoda, playing drinking games and making merry. Old Sun heard the racket, sprang on a cloud to the top, and barred the way, without ever striking a blow—afraid that one stroke of the cudgel would kill them and leave no one to confess. So I brought them down alive. Master, take their statements; find out what demons they are and where the stolen treasure lies."

Trembling and quaking, the monsters cried "Spare us!" and then confessed the whole truth: "We two were sent by the Dragon King of Ten Thousand Saints of the Green-Wave Pool on Boulder Mountain to patrol the pagoda. He is called Benbo'erba, and I am called Babo'erben. He is a catfish monster, and I am a black-fish spirit. Our old dragon of Ten Thousand Saints had a daughter, called the Princess of Ten Thousand Saints—a girl with the face of a flower and the moon, beauty twenty parts perfect. She took a son-in-law called the nine-headed prince, whose magic powers are vast. Two years ago he came here with the Dragon King, displayed his great magic power, sent down a rain of blood, defiled the precious pagoda, and stole the sarira relic, the Buddha-treasure, from it. Then the princess went up to the Great loftiest Heaven, before the Hall of Divine Mists, and stole the Queen Mother's nine-leafed lingzhi herb, and keeps it at the bottom of the Pool,

shining with golden light and rosy radiance, bright day and night. Of late we heard that one Sun Wukong is going to the Western Heaven for scriptures—men say his powers are vast, and all along the road he does nothing but hunt out other people's wrongs. So all this while they have kept sending us here to patrol and watch; if this Sun Wukong should come, we were to give warning."

The Pilgrim heard this and gave a cold, sneering laugh: "What impudence from these wicked beasts! No wonder they invited the Bull Demon King to a feast there the other day! So they consort with this pack of fiendish demons and do nothing but evil!"

Hard was this said when Bajie and two or three young monks came up the pagoda stairs, carrying a couple of lanterns: "Master, you've finished sweeping—why not go sleep? What are you talking about here?"

"You've come at just the right moment, Brother," said the Pilgrim. "The treasure on the pagoda was stolen by the old Dragon King of Ten Thousand Saints. He sent these two little demons to patrol the tower and spy out the news of our coming—and just now I caught them."

"What are their names? What sort of demons?" asked Bajie.

"They've just confessed," said the Pilgrim. "One is called Benbo'erba, the other Babo'erben; one is a catfish monster, the other a black-fish spirit."

Bajie whipped out his rake to smash them: "If they're demons, and we've got their confession, why let them live?"

"You don't understand," said the Pilgrim. "Keep them alive to speak before the king—and to serve as our eyes in hunting down the thieves and recovering the treasure."

What a blockhead! He actually put away his rake, took one demon under one arm, and helped bring both down the pagoda.

The monsters could only cry "Spare us!" Said Bajie: "Just right—we'll make fresh soup of catfish and black fish for those wronged monks to eat!" The two or three young monks, delighted, held up their lanterns and guided the elder down the pagoda.

One ran ahead to announce to the monks: "Saved! Saved! We've seen the blue sky at last! The demons who stole the treasure—the honored lords have caught them and brought them here!"

The Pilgrim instructed: "Bring iron chains, thread them through their collarbones, and lock them here. Guard them well; we're going to sleep, and tomorrow we'll see to the rest." The monks all stood close guard, and let Sanzang and the others rest.

Unnoticed, day dawned. "Wukong and I will go to court," said the elder, "to exchange our travel permit." He put on his brocade-edged cassock, set his Vairocana hat on his head, made his dignified array complete, and strode forward. The Pilgrim too tightened his tiger-skin kilt, straightened his cotton tunic, and took the travel permit to go along.

"Why not bring these two demon thieves?" asked Bajie.

"Once we've memorialized the king," said the Pilgrim, "a warrant will come of itself, with men to fetch them."

So they came to the outer gate of the court—past all that vermilion-bird and yellow-dragon splendor, those pure precincts and crimson towers there was no end of seeing.

At the East Flourishing Gate Sanzang made courtesy to the ambassador of the gate: "I trouble Your Honor to announce us. This humble monk is sent by the Great Tang of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven for

scriptures, and would look upon the king to exchange our travel permit."

The yellow-gate officer made the report indeed, coming before the steps to announce: "Outside are two monks of strange appearance and foreign dress, who say they are sent by the Tang court of the Eastern Land, in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, to worship the Buddha in the West and seek scriptures. They would look upon Your Majesty and exchange their travel permit."

Hearing this, the king gave command to summon them, and the elder led the Pilgrim into the court. When the civil and military officials saw the Pilgrim, there was none but started in fear: some called him the monkey monk, some the thunder-beaked monk; every one of them shuddered and dared not gaze long.

The elder performed the full bows and mountain-shout of homage before the steps, while the Great Sage stood at the side with arms folded, one shoulder cocked, not stirring an inch.

The elder made his memorial: "Your subject-monk was sent by the Great Tang empire of the Eastern Land in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa to worship the Buddha at the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the land of India of the West and seek the true scriptures. Passing through your precious realm, we dared not go by unannounced. We carry our travel permit with us, and beg that it be examined and stamped before we proceed."

At this the king was delighted, and gave command to invite the holy monks of Tang up into the Golden Chimes Hall, with embroidered stools granted for their seats. The elder went up alone, first presenting the travel permit, then giving thanks for the grace before he dared sit.

The king read the permit through, joyful at heart: "To think that your Great Tang king, though ailing, could choose so high a monk, who shuns not roads so far, to worship our Buddha and seek the scriptures—while the monks of my realm think of nothing but thieving, ruining the state and overturning the sovereign!"

At this Sanzang put his palms together: "How have they ruined the state and overturned the sovereign?"

"My realm," said the king, "is a superior kingdom of the Western regions, and the four barbarian lands paid it tribute—all because within our borders there is the Golden Light Monastery, and in the monastery a golden pagoda, and from the pagoda radiance once shot to the sky. Of late, thieving monks of that very monastery have secretly stolen the treasure within it, and for three years there has been no radiance; these two years the foreign lands have sent no tribute. My heart is bitter with hatred over it."

Sanzang put his palms together and smiled: "Your Majesty—a hair's breadth astray, and one is a thousand li off. Last evening this humble monk reached your celestial city, and at the very gate I saw a dozen-odd monks in cangue and chains. I asked their offense, and they said they were wronged men of the Golden Light Monastery. I went to the monastery and examined the matter closely: it is no doing of the monastery's monks at all. Last night this humble monk swept the pagoda, and has already caught the demon thieves who stole the treasure."

"Where are the demon thieves?" cried the king, overjoyed.

"They are locked, at this moment, in the Golden Light Monastery by my disciple."

The king at once cast down the gold tablet of command: "Let the Brocade Guards go swiftly to the Golden Light Monastery and fetch the demon thieves; I will judge them myself."

Again Sanzang memorialized: "Your Majesty—though there are the Brocade Guards, my disciple must go as well, or it cannot be done."

"Where is this eminent disciple of yours?" asked the king.

Sanzang pointed with his finger: "The one standing beside the jade steps."

The king looked, and started in alarm: "Holy monk, with so fine a presence as yours, how comes your disciple to look like that?"

The Great Sage Sun heard, and cried out in a great voice: "Your Majesty—men are not judged by their faces, nor the sea measured with a bucket. If you love a fine presence only, how will you ever catch demon thieves?"

At this the king turned fright to delight: "The holy monk speaks sense. In my realm we shall look for no comely figure; to capture the thieves and return the treasure to the pagoda—that is the first thing." Again he ordered the officer of attendance to see to carriage and canopy, and bade the Brocade Guards wait upon the holy monk and bring the demon thieves.

That officer at once prepared a great sedan chair and one yellow umbrella; the Brocade Guards mustered their captains, and the Pilgrim was borne in an eight-man chair with eight bearers at the shafts, the road cleared with loud cries at every stage, straight to the Golden Light Monastery.

This stirred the whole city: there was nowhere, not one place, where the folk did not come out to behold the holy monk and the demon thieves.

Bajie and the Sha Monk heard the street-cries and, supposing it the king's officers, hurried out to receive them—and there was the Pilgrim sitting in the sedan. The blockhead grinned in his face: "Brother, you've come into your own at last!"

The Pilgrim got down from the chair and steadied Bajie by the arm: "How have I come into my own?"

"You ride under a yellow umbrella in an eight-man sedan—isn't that a Monkey King's proper office? That's why I say you've come into your own."

"None of your jokes now," said the Pilgrim. Then they untied the two demons and escorted them to the king.

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "take your little brother along too—take him along!"

"You stay here," said the Pilgrim, "and guard the luggage and horses."

Said the monks in cangue and chains: "You honored lords all go and receive the king's grace; leave us here to stand guard."

"Since that's so," said the Pilgrim, "let me memorialize the king first, then come back and free you."

Bajie gripped one demon thief, the Sha Monk gripped the other, and the Great Sage Sun sat in his sedan as before; with banners borne before them, they escorted the two monsters to the court.

In a moment they reached the white jade steps. "The demon thieves are fetched," they announced to the king.

The king came down from the dragon couch, and with the Tang monk and his civil and military officers looked upon them together. The one monster had gill-sacs thrust out, shell-black and mailed, a pointed beak and keen teeth; the other had slippery hide and a huge belly, a giant mouth and long whiskers. They had legs and could walk, true—but by and large they were made into the semblance of men.

The king demanded: "What land are you thieves from, what place you demons? How many years have you invaded our soil? What year did you steal our treasure? How many thieves in the whole pack, and what are all their names? Confess the truth, one item at a time!"

The two monsters knelt facing upward, the flesh of their necks still dripping blood and feeling no pain, and confessed: "More than three years ago, on the first day of the seventh month, there was a Dragon King of Ten Thousand Saints, who led a host of his kin and dwells southeast of this realm, a hundred-odd li from here—the pool is called Green-Wave, the mountain Boulder. He had a daughter, dainty and delicate, a beauty

alluring and fair, and took in a son-in-law, the nine-headed prince, whose magic has no rival. He knew of the marvels on Your Majesty's pagoda, plotted with the Dragon King to turn thief, first sent down a rain of blood, then made off with the sarira. It shines now in the dragon palace: even blackest night is bright as day. The princess, plying her powers, secretly and silently stole the Queen Mother's lingzhi as well, and warms and nurtures the treasures in the pool. We two are not the thief-chiefs; we are petty soldiers sent by the Dragon King. Taken captive this night, this confession is the truth."

"You've confessed," said the king, "why not confess your own names?"

Said the monsters: "I am called Benbo'erba, and he is called Babo'erben. Benbo'erba is a catfish monster, and Babo'erben a black-fish spirit."

The king ordered the Brocade Guards to lock them up securely, and issued his command: "Loose the cangue and chains of the monks of the Golden Light Monastery! Quick, let the Court of Imperial Entertainments lay a banquet, in the Hall of the Qilin, to honor the holy monks for catching the thieves—and let us ask the holy monks to plan the capture of the thief-chiefs!"

The Court of Imperial Entertainments at once prepared two banquets, one of meat and one of vegetarian fare. The king invited the Tang monk and his disciples up into the Hall of the Qilin to be seated, and asked: "Holy monk, your honored style?"

"This humble monk's family name at home was Chen," said the Tang monk, palms together, "my religious name Xuanzang. The sovereign of Tang bestowed on me his own surname, and my lowly style is Sanzang."

"And your eminent disciples' styles?" asked the king.

"My disciples have no styles," said Sanzang. "The first is named Sun Wukong, the second Zhu Wuneng, the third Sha Wujing—names given them by the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea. Because they took me as their master, I call Wukong the Pilgrim, Wuneng Bajie, and Wujing the Monk."

When the king had heard all, he seated Sanzang in the place of honor, Sun the Pilgrim at the left side-seat, and Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk at the right side-seat—all with vegetarian fruits, vegetables, tea, and rice.

At the head, one meat banquet was spread where the king sat; below, a hundred-odd meat tables for the civil and military officials. The ministers gave thanks for the sovereign's grace, the disciples begged their master's pardon for faults, and all sat down. The king lifted the cup; Sanzang dared not drink wine, but his three each accepted the settling wine. Below, pipes and strings struck up together—the Conservatory of Music playing. And watch Bajie: throat wide open, swallowing like a tiger, bolting like a wolf, he ate a whole table of fruits and vegetables down to nothing.

Presently more soup and rice were brought and changed in, and that too he left not a crumb of; when the wine came round the table, he never refused a cup. The banquet went merrily on till past noon before it broke up.

Sanzang gave thanks for the feast, but the king pressed them to stay: "This banquet was but a small token of the holy monks' merit in catching the monsters." He ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments: "Move the feast to the Jianzhang Palace, and there let us ask the holy monks to settle the plan for capturing the thief-chiefs and returning the treasure to the pagoda."

"If it's thieves to capture and treasure to recover," said Sanzang, "no need of another banquet. Let us take leave of Your Majesty now and go seize the monsters."

The king would have it no other way, but must invite them into the Jianzhang Palace, where they ate one more banquet.

The king raised his cup: "Which holy monk will lead the host to war, subdue the demons, and capture the thieves?"

"Let my senior disciple Sun Wukong go," said Sanzang.

The Great Sage bowed and accepted. "Since Elder Sun is going," said the king, "how many men and horses will you need? At what hour will you leave the city?"

Bajie could hold back no longer, and bawled aloud: "What need of men and horses! And what's all this about hours! Now, while we're drunk with wine and stuffed with rice, I'll go with my elder brother—it'll be catch them with hands as easy as reach!"

"How diligent Bajie has grown of late!" said Sanzang, greatly pleased.

"Since that's how it is," said the Pilgrim, "let Brother Sha guard the master, and we two will go."

"If the two elders need no men and horses," said the king, "will you need weapons?"

Bajie laughed: "Your household weapons we couldn't use. We brothers carry our own."

Hearing this, the king at once took up the great goblet to speed the two elders on their way.

"No more wine," said the Great Sage Sun. "Only have the Brocade Guards bring out the two little demons—we'll take them along for eyes and guides."

The king gave command, and they were brought out at once. The two of them tucked a little demon apiece under their arms, mounted the wind, worked the snatching charm, and made straight away to the southeast. Ah!

Sovereign and ministers, seeing them ride the wind and fog, Knew at last that master and disciples were holy monks.

But as for how they went and made their capture—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 63

The Two Monks Rouse the Monsters and Storm the Dragon Palace; A Host of Sages Destroy the Fiend and Recover the Treasure

Say now how the king of Jisai, with his ministers great and small, watched Sun the Great Sage and Bajie riding the clouds and mist with the two little demons in hand, drifting away into the distance, and how one and all they worshiped toward Heaven, saying: "The saying was no empty report! Only today do we know there are such living Buddhas and immortals among men!"

And when they saw him vanish without trace into the distance, they turned and bowed to Sanzang and the Sha Monk: "Your subject has mortal eyes and a mortal body. I knew only that your worthy disciples had strength enough to capture the demon thieves—how was I to know they were supreme immortals who ride the clouds and mist?"

"This poor monk has no magic powers at all," said Sanzang. "On the road I have owed everything to these three humble disciples."

"To tell Your Majesty the truth," said the Sha Monk, "my senior brother is none other than the Great Sage Equaling Heaven who has turned to the faith. He once made havoc in Heaven, wielding a gold-banded cudgel, and among the hundred thousand heavenly troops there was not one his match; he made the Most Exalted Lord Lao Zi afraid and set the Jade Emperor's heart quaking. My second brother is Marshal Tian Peng, who has attained the true fruit; he too once commanded eighty thousand watery hosts in the Milky Way. Only I, your disciple, have no magic powers—I am the Great General Who Rolls Up the Screen, come to the precepts. We brothers, your humble disciples, are good for little else; but as for seizing monsters and binding fiends, catching thieves and capturing fugitives, subduing tigers and taming dragons, kicking the sky and toying with wells, even to churning up seas and overturning rivers—of such arts we know a thing or two. This riding the clouds and mist, calling rain and summoning wind, shifting the stars and changing the constellations, carrying mountains and chasing the moon—these are mere side matters, hardly worth the speaking!"

Hearing this, the king's respect grew tenfold; he begged the Tang monk to take the seat of honor, calling him the Old Buddha with every breath, and addressed the Sha Monk and the others as Bodhisattvas. The civil and military officers of the whole court were delighted, and the common people of the whole kingdom bowed in reverence. Of them no more for now.

Say now how Sun the Great Sage and Bajie, riding on a fierce wind, swept the two little demons to the Blue Wave Pool of Jumbled Rocks Mountain. They steadied their cloud, and the Great Sage blew a breath of immortal air on his gold-banded cudgel, crying "Change!" and it changed into a knife of the monastic precepts. With it he cut off the ear of the black-fish monster and the lower lip of the catfish demon, and threw them into the water, shouting: "Go quickly and tell the Dragon King of Ten Thousand Saints that I, Sun the Great Sage Equaling Heaven, am here, and that he must send out at once the treasure of the pagoda of the Golden Light Monastery in Jisai, if he would spare the lives of his whole family! If a single 'no' escapes him, I will stir up this pool until not a drop remains, and see his whole household, old and young, put to death!"

The two little demons, their lives spared, fled in pain, dragging their chains and fetters, and plunged into the water. Startled, the alligators and soft-shelled turtles, the tortoises and terrapins, the shrimp and crab and fish spirits, all crowded round to ask: "Why are you two dragging ropes and chains?" One held his ear, shaking his head and wagging his tail; the other covered his mouth, stamping his feet and beating his breast.

All in an uproar they went straight up to the Dragon King's palace to report: "Great King, disaster!" The Dragon King of Ten Thousand Saints was just then drinking with the Nine-Headed Prince Consort. Seeing

the two of them come, he set down his cup at once and asked what the disaster was.

The two at once reported: "Last night, on patrol, we were captured by the Tang monk and Sun the Pilgrim while they were sweeping the pagoda, and bound with iron chains. This morning, when we were taken before the king, the Pilgrim and Zhu Bajie seized us again; they cut off one of our ears and the other's lip, threw us into the water, and sent us to report—they demand the treasure from the top of the pagoda."

And they told the whole affair from beginning to end in detail.

Hearing that it was Sun the Pilgrim, the Great Sage Equaling Heaven, the old dragon was so frightened that his soul left his body and his spirit scattered to the ninth heaven. Trembling, he said to the prince consort: "Worthy son-in-law, if anyone else had come, we could have dealt with him; but if it is really he, that bodes no good!"

The prince consort laughed: "Set your mind at rest, honored father-in-law. Your son-in-law learned some martial arts in his youth, and in all the four seas has met a few heroes. What is there to fear in him! Let me go out and fight him for three rounds—I warrant that fellow will shrink his head and surrender, not daring to look up."

A capable monster indeed! He sprang up at once, put on his armor, took a weapon called the crescent-shaped spade, strode out of the palace, parted the water-way, and called out from the surface of the water: "What Great Sage Equaling Heaven is that! Come up quickly and give up your life!"

The Pilgrim and Bajie stood on the bank and looked at how the monster was arrayed. He wore a helmet of bright silver, its gleam outshining white snow; a cuirass of mail, its brilliance rivaling autumn frost. Over it a brocade battle-robe—truly colored clouds wrapping a jewel; round his waist a girdle of rhino-horn pattern—like a flowery python wrapped in gold. In his hand he held the crescent-shaped spade, flashing like the glow of dawn and the lightning's dart; on his feet he wore pigskin boots, parting the waters and cleaving the waves. Seen from afar, one head and one face; seen up close, faces all around on every side.

Eyes in front, eyes behind—he could see through all eight directions; Mouths on the left, mouths on the right—nine mouths to speak with. One shout of his shook the long sky, Like a crane's cry piercing the ninefold heavens.

Seeing no one answer, he called again: "Which one of you is the Great Sage Equaling Heaven?"

The Pilgrim pressed his golden fillet and straightened his iron cudgel: "Old Sun here is he."

The monster said: "Where is your home? What is your origin? How did you come to Jisai, guarding the pagoda for the king? How dare you seize my officers, and then commit violence and come up to my precious mountain to demand battle?"

The Pilgrim cursed: "You thieving monster, so you don't know your Grandfather Sun! Come forward and hear me out:

Old Sun's ancestors lived on Flower-Fruit Mountain, In the Water-Curtain Cave between the seas. From youth I cultivated an indestructible body; The Jade Emperor made me the Great Sage Equaling Heaven. Because I made havoc in the Dipper and Bull Palace, The gods of Heaven could not win against me. At last the Tathagata was invited to display his wondrous height, His boundless wisdom beyond the common. To gamble in magic with me over the somersault, He turned his hand into a mountain and pressed me down, heavy upon me. It was fully five hundred years Before Guanyin pleaded for me and I escaped with my life. Then Sanzang of the Great Tang, bound for the Western Heaven, Journeyed far to the Spirit Mountain to beg the Buddha's scriptures. He freed my body, and I protect him, Refining away demons and cleansing monsters as he follows the Way. On the road we met the western city of Jisai, Where the innocent monks were

wronged for three generations' lives. We, in compassion, asked into the old matter, And found it was because the pagoda had lost its light. My master swept the pagoda to search out the truth; At the third watch of the night, when all sounds were still, He caught the fish spirits and got their true confession— They said it was you who stole the treasure. The whole gang of thieves has a dragon king for its head, And the princess bears the name Ten Thousand Saints. With a rain of blood you washed away the pagoda's light And stole its treasure for your use. The confession before the throne was in no way false, And I, obeying my king's word, have sped to this land. That is why I come to seek you out for battle— No need to ask Grandfather Sun's name again. Quick, give back the treasure And spare your whole family, old and young! If in your ignorance you flaunt your strength, I will make your waters dry up and your mountains crumble, to your utter ruin!"

Hearing this, the prince consort smiled a faint, cold smile: "So you are a scripture-fetching monk, meddling in what is none of your business, making up charges! I steal his treasure, you fetch the Buddha's scriptures—what has that to do with you, that you come fighting?"

"This thieving monster is utterly unreasonable!" said the Pilgrim. "True, I have received no favors from the king, eaten none of his grain or water, and owe him no service. But you stole his treasure and defiled his pagoda, and year after year wronged and tormented the monks of the Golden Light Monastery. They are of one breath with me, followers of the same faith—how could I not do them service and right their wrongs?"

"If that is how it is," said the prince consort, "you must mean to wager in battle. As the saying goes, 'In arms there is no courtesy.' I fear only that when the blows begin, no quarter will be given, and in a moment I may take your life and put an end to your scripture-fetching!"

The Pilgrim flew into a rage and cursed: "You lewd thieving monster! What mighty powers have you, to open your mouth so wide! Come up and take a stroke of your grandfather's cudgel!"

The prince consort, not at all flustered, caught the iron cudgel with his crescent-shaped spade, and there at the head of Jumbled Rocks Mountain a truly fine battle began.

The demon fiend stole the treasure, leaving the pagoda without light; The Pilgrim seized the fiends to report to the king. The little monsters fled for their lives back into the water; The old dragon, his courage shattered, consulted all his kin. The Nine-Headed Prince Consort displayed his might, Coming in his armor to show his native strength. Furiously the Great Sage Equaling Heaven, Sun, raised his gold-banded cudgel, tenfold fierce. That monster, with nine heads and eighteen eyes, Shot rays of light before and behind; This Pilgrim, with a pair of iron arms of a thousand-pound strength, Put forth auspicious power, thick and manifold. The spade was like the moon at its first crescent; The cudgel like frost flying over ten thousand li.

He said: "Mindless meddler, quit avenging the wrongs of others!" I said: "Treasure-thief by design, truly a scoundrel!" You lewd thief, less of your insolence— Give back the treasure and find your peace! Cudgel met spade, each vied for mastery; No winner or loser yet upon the field of war.

The two of them came and went, fighting through thirty-odd rounds without a decision. Zhu Bajie, standing before the mountain, saw them at the height of the battle, raised his nine-toothed rake, and brought it down on the monster's back. But that monster had nine heads, and every one of them was eyes; he saw it clearly, and when he saw Bajie coming from behind, he used the butt of his spade to fend off the rake, while the blade of the spade held the iron cudgel.

He held out for another five or seven rounds, but could not withstand the rake and cudgel wielded together front and back. So he turned a somersault, leapt into the air, and showed his true form—it was a Nine-Headed Insect. His appearance was utterly hideous; the very sight of his shape was enough to scare a man to death! He was born with feathers laid like brocade, his body balled up and tufted. He was a full twelve feet around, and in length shaped like a soft-shelled turtle or an alligator. His two feet were sharp and hooked; his nine heads bunched together in a ring. When he spread his wings he could fly supremely

well—even the great roc had no more strength than he; when he raised his voice it resounded to the ends of the earth, and he could cry shriller than the immortal crane. His many eyes flashed and glittered with golden light, and his proud air was nothing like that of common birds.

Bajie was alarmed at the sight: "Elder Brother! In all my life as a man I have never seen such a terrible creature! What blood and breath could have given birth to this bird-beast?"

"Truly rare! Truly rare!" said the Pilgrim. "Let me catch up and strike at it!"

The good Great Sage at once sprang on his auspicious cloud, leapt into the air, and brought his iron cudgel down at the monster's head. The monster displayed his body to the full, spread his wings and flew aslant, and with a swish wheeled round and skimmed to the front of the mountain. From the middle of his body he stretched out another head, opened a mouth like a blood-basin, and caught Bajie in his teeth by the bristles of his neck. Half-dragging and half-pulling, he carried him down into the water of the Blue Wave Pool and away.

When he reached outside the dragon palace he changed back into his former shape, threw Bajie down on the ground, and called: "Where are my little ones?" The fish spirits within—the dace, bream, carp, and mandarin fish—and the shelled monsters, the tortoises and terrapins, the alligators and soft-shelled turtles, all surged forward, answering "Here!" The prince consort said: "Bind this monk there, to avenge my patrol officer!" As the spirits pushed and shoved Bajie along to carry him in, the old Dragon King came out rejoicing to meet them: "Worthy son-in-law, you have won merit! How did you catch him?" The prince consort told the whole story, and the old dragon at once ordered wine laid on to celebrate the feat. Of him no more for now.

Say now how Sun the Pilgrim, seeing the monster capture Bajie, was alarmed and thought: "This fellow is fierce indeed! If I go back to court to see my master, I fear the king will laugh at me. If I cry out a challenge, I am alone, and moreover I am not used to fighting under water. Let me change myself and go in to see how the monster disposes of the blockhead; and if I get the chance, I'll steal him out and then get on with the business."

The good Great Sage made the magic pass with his fingers, shook himself, and changed again into a crab, plunged into the water, and went straight to the front of the archway.

This road he knew well from the time before, when he had come to attack the Bull Demon King and steal the golden-eyed beast. He crawled sideways right up to the foot of the palaces, and saw again the old Dragon King and the Nine-Headed Insect with his whole family drinking merrily. Not daring to go near, the Pilgrim crawled past beneath the eastern corridor, where he saw several shrimp and crab spirits playing and disporting themselves.

After listening to their talk for a while, the Pilgrim mimicked their speech and asked: "That long-snouted monk brought in by the lord consort—is he dead yet?"

"He is not dead," said the spirits. "Isn't that him groaning, tied up under the western corridor?"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim crawled softly across to the western corridor, and sure enough there was the blockhead tied to a pillar, groaning.

The Pilgrim came near: "Bajie, do you know me?"

Hearing his voice, Bajie knew it was the Pilgrim: "Elder Brother, what has happened! I have been caught by this fellow after all!"

The Pilgrim looked around and saw no one, bit through the ropes with his pincers, and told him to go. The blockhead, freed, said: "Elder Brother, my weapon—he has taken it. What am I to do?"

The Pilgrim asked: "Do you know where he put it?"

Bajie said: "The monster carried it up to the palace."

The Pilgrim said: "Go first to the archway and wait for me."

Bajie, escaping with his life, slipped quietly out.

The Pilgrim turned and climbed back up to the palace, and looking to the left saw a dazzling gleam of light—it was Bajie's nine-toothed rake giving off rays. He used his art of invisibility, stole out the rake, and came to the archway, calling: "Bajie! Catch your weapon!"

The blockhead got his rake and said: "Elder Brother, you go on ahead. Let old Pig storm the palace. If I win, I'll take his whole household; if I can't win, I'll come out beaten, and you'll be there on the bank of the pool to rescue me."

The Pilgrim was delighted and only told him to be careful. Bajie said: "No fear of him! I know a little something of the arts under water." The Pilgrim left him and carried himself up out of the water. Of him no more for now.

This Bajie tightened his black monk's robe, gripped his rake with both hands, and with a shout charged in. The water creatures great and small, in panic and confusion, ran up to the palace crying: "Disaster! The long-snouted monk has broken his ropes and come charging back in!"

The old dragon, the Nine-Headed Insect, and the whole family were caught unprepared; they jumped up and dodged and hid. This blockhead, reckless of life and death, burst into the palace, and all the way his rake smashed through doors and broke up tables and chairs, shattering the wine-service and everything else. There is a poem in witness:

The Wood Mother fell and was captured by the water fiend; The Mind Ape would not give him up and searched on through hardship. In secret he laid his clever plan and stole away the locks, Then displayed his mighty power, his fury and his wrath deep.

The prince consort hastily took the princess and hid; the Dragon King trembled and lost his voice. The water palace's crimson towers lost their doors and windows; the dragon sons and grandsons all lost their souls. In this bout Bajie smashed the hawksbill screen to pieces and knocked the coral trees into ruin.

The Nine-Headed Insect hid the princess away inside, hastily took his crescent-shaped spade, and rushed to the front palace, shouting: "You lewd, clodhopping pig! How dare you bully and frighten my family!"

Bajie cursed: "You thieving monster! How dare you capture me! This battle is none of my doing—you invited me to your house to fight! Bring out the treasure at once and return it to me, so I can go back and see the king and settle the matter! Otherwise I will never spare a single life in your family!"

The monster would not relent; he gritted his teeth and crossed weapons with Bajie. By then the old dragon had steadied his wits, and led the dragon sons and grandsons, each with spear or sword, to attack all together.

Seeing matters turn bad, Bajie made a feint with his rake and turned to run, and the old dragon led the host in pursuit. In a moment they burst out of the water and tumbled about on the surface of the pool. Now Sun the Pilgrim had been standing on the bank of the pool waiting; suddenly he saw them chasing Bajie out of the water. He stepped halfway onto the cloud and mist, whipped out his iron cudgel, and shouted: "Don't run!" One blow—and the old dragon's head was smashed to a pulp.

Pitiful sight! His blood spattered into the pool, dyeing the water red; his corpse drifted on the waves, its broken scales floating. The dragon sons and grandsons fled for their lives, while the Nine-Headed Prince Consort gathered up the dragon's corpse and turned back to the palace.

The Pilgrim and Bajie did not pursue, but returned to the bank and told each other all that had happened.

"His spirit is broken," said Bajie. "When I charged in with my rake, I beat them into scattered flowers and streaming water, their souls scattered and their spirits flown! Just as I was fighting the prince consort, the old Dragon King came after me—lucky you killed him. Those fellows have gone back, and they are sure to be holding the funeral and wearing mourning. They will never come out again. And now it is getting late. What's to be done?"

"What do I care if it is late!" said the Pilgrim. "Take this chance—you go down and fight again. Only when the treasure is brought out can we return to court."

The blockhead, listless and reluctant, made excuses, and the Pilgrim pressed him: "Brother, don't be so hesitant. Just lure him out as you did just now, and let me strike him."

As the two of them were conferring, they heard a rolling gale and a gloom of dismal mist, suddenly coming from the east and heading south. The Pilgrim looked carefully, and it was Erlang the Sagely and Miraculous, leading his six brothers of Plum Mountain. They flew their hawks and led their hounds, carried foxes and hares on poles, and bore roe-deer and deer on their shoulders; each with a curved bow at his waist and a sharp blade in his hand, they came leaping along on wind and mist.

"Bajie," said the Pilgrim, "those are my sworn brothers of the Seven Sages. Better to stay them and ask their help in battle. If we succeed, it will be a great stroke of fortune."

"If they are brothers," said Bajie, "by all means stay and invite them."

The Pilgrim said: "But among them is my elder brother the Sagely and Miraculous One, by whom I was once subdued, and I am ashamed to face him. You go stop his cloud and call out: 'True Lord, stay a while. The Great Sage Equaling Heaven is here to pay his respects.' If he hears it is I, he will surely stop. Once he has settled down, then I can come and see him."

The blockhead at once sprang up on his cloud, stopped them on the mountain, and called in a loud voice: "True Lord, hold your procession a while—the Great Sage Equaling Heaven asks to see you."

Hearing this, that lord at once ordered the six brothers to halt, and after exchanging greetings with Bajie, asked: "Where is the Great Sage Equaling Heaven?"

Bajie said: "He is below the mountain, awaiting your summons."

Erlang said: "Brothers, go quickly and ask him up."

The six brothers—Kang, Zhang, Yao, Li, Guo, and Zhi—each came out of the ranks calling: "Elder Brother Sun Wukong, our eldest brother invites you."

The Pilgrim came forward, bowed to them all, and they went up the mountain together.

The lord Erlang came to meet him, and taking him by the hand, they greeted each other: "Great Sage, you have escaped your great calamity and taken the vows of a monk of the sandy gate. In no long time your work will be complete and you will ascend the lotus throne—congratulations, congratulations!"

"Not so," said the Pilgrim. "Long ago I received from you a favor beyond measure, and have never shown the least return. Though I have escaped my calamity and journey west, I do not know yet how my merit will turn out. Now, coming by way of the kingdom of Jisai, I am rescuing the monks from their misfortune, and I am here seizing fiends and demanding back the treasure. Happening to see my elder brother's procession, I boldly asked you to stay and lend a hand. May I ask where my elder brother comes from, and whether he will grant me this kindness?"

Erlang laughed: "I had nothing to do, so I went hunting with my brothers and am on my way back. Happily the Great Sage has not scorned me but asked me to stay—this shows the old friendship well enough. If you command me to lend my strength against the fiends, how should I not obey! But I don't know what monsters and thieves are in this place."

The six sages said: "Elder Brother, have you forgotten? This is Jumbled Rocks Mountain; below it is the Blue Wave Pool, the dragon palace of the Ten Thousand Saints."

Erlang exclaimed in surprise: "The old dragon of Ten Thousand Saints never made trouble before. How dare he steal the pagoda treasure?"

The Pilgrim said: "He recently took in a prince consort, who is the Nine-Headed Insect in spirit form. The two of them, son-in-law and father-in-law, turned thieves, brought a rain of blood upon the kingdom of Jisai, and stole the sarira Buddha-treasure from the top of the pagoda of the Golden Light Monastery. The king did not understand the matter and cruelly had the monks tortured. My master, out of compassion, swept the pagoda by night, and on the pagoda I caught two little demons, who had been sent by the dragon to patrol and spy out the news. This morning, taken to court, they confessed everything truly. The king then asked my master to subdue the demons, and my master ordered us here. In the first battle, the Nine-Headed Insect stretched out a head from his waist and carried Bajie off in his mouth; I changed myself and went down into the water and freed Bajie. We just had a great battle, and I killed the old dragon; those fellows gathered up his corpse and went off to wear mourning. The two of us were just deliberating how to renew the battle when we saw my elder brother's procession arrive—that is why I have presumed upon you."

"Since the old dragon is wounded," said Erlang, "this is the very time to attack, so that those fellows cannot collect their wits. Why not wipe out the whole nest together?"

"If that is so," said Bajie, "but what of the lateness of the day?"

Erlang said: "As the military masters say, 'A campaign waits for no season.' Why fear the lateness of the day?"

Kang, Yao, Guo, and Zhi said: "Elder Brother, don't be hasty. Their families are here, and there is nowhere they can flee. Second Brother Sun is an honored guest, and Pig Ganglie has returned to the true fruit. In our camp we have wine and dishes brought along with us. Let the men make a fire, and we'll lay out a spread right here: one, to congratulate you two, and two, to renew our friendship. Let us make merry this one night; will it be too late to demand battle when day breaks?"

Erlang was delighted: "Worthy brothers, well said indeed." He ordered the men to make the arrangements. The Pilgrim said: "For your great kindness, gentlemen, I dare not refuse. But since I became a monk, I keep the vegetarian fast, and I fear meat and vegetables may not agree."

Erlang said: "There are vegetarian fruits, and the wine is vegetarian too."

So the brothers, before the starlight and moonlight, with the sky for a canopy and the ground for a mat, raised their cups and spoke of old times. Truly, in loneliness the night is long, in merriment the night is short—before they knew it, the east was white with dawn.

Bajie, made lively by a few cups of wine, said: "Day is about to break. Let old Pig go down into the water to demand battle."

Erlang said: "Be careful, Marshal. Just lure him out, so that we brothers can strike."

Bajie laughed: "I know, I know!" And watch him: he tucked in his robe, gripped his rake, used his art of parting the waters, jumped down, went straight to the archway, raised a shout, and charged into the palace. At this moment the dragon son, in hempen mourning, was weeping over the dragon's corpse, while the

dragon grandson and the prince consort were behind, making the coffin. This Bajie cursed as he came up, and his rake struck home—one blow through the dragon son's head, brains and all, made nine holes in it. In terror the dragon lady and all the others ran about inside, weeping: "The long-snouted monk has killed my son too!"

Hearing this, the prince consort seized his crescent-shaped spade and, with the dragon grandson, came charging out. Bajie raised his rake to meet them, fighting as he retreated, and leapt out of the water. On the bank, the Great Sage Equaling Heaven and the seven brothers surged forward together, stabbing wildly with spear and sword, and chopped the dragon grandson into several pieces of meat-cake. Seeing that matters were not going well, the prince consort turned a somersault before the mountain, resumed his true form, spread his wings, and soared wheeling in flight.

Erlang at once took his golden bow, fitted a silver pellet, drew the bow to the full, and shot upward. The monster quickly folded his wings and skimmed close, meaning to bite Erlang; but as he was just stretching out a head from the middle of his body, the fine hound bounded up and, with a single "wough!" bit the head off, dripping blood. Wounded and in pain, the monster fled for his life, going straight off toward the Northern Sea.

Bajie wanted to give chase, but the Pilgrim stopped him: "Don't chase him—as the saying goes, 'Pursue not the cornered bandit.' With his head bitten off by the fine hound, he is sure to die rather than live. Let me change into his likeness; you part the waters and chase me in, so I can find the princess and wheedle the treasure out of her."

Erlang and the six sages said: "Not chasing him is all very well, but to leave this breed alive in the world must prove a scourge to later generations." To this day there is a nine-headed creature that drips blood—that is the seed he left behind.

Bajie did as he was told and parted the waters, while the Pilgrim, changed into the monster's form, went ahead, with Bajie shouting and hallooing in pursuit behind. Gradually they chased their way to the dragon palace, where the Princess of Ten Thousand Saints said: "Prince consort, why are you in such a fluster?"

The Pilgrim said: "Bajie has won the day and driven me in here. I feel I cannot withstand him. Quick—hide the treasure carefully!"

The princess, in her haste, could not tell true from false, and at once went to the rear hall and brought out a box of pure gold, handing it to the Pilgrim: "This is the Buddha-treasure." Then she brought out a box of white jade, also handing it to the Pilgrim: "This is the nine-leaf glossy ganoderma. Take these treasures and hide them away; let me fight two or three rounds with Zhu Bajie to hold him off. When you have the treasures safely put away, come out again and join the battle."

The Pilgrim put both boxes away at his side, wiped his face, resumed his own form, and said: "Princess, do you see—am I the prince consort?"

The princess panicked and made to snatch back the boxes, but Bajie ran up and struck her down from behind with his rake.

There was also an old dragon lady who turned and ran, but Bajie caught hold of her and raised his rake to strike. The Pilgrim said: "Hold! Don't kill her. Keep her alive, so we can go back to the kingdom and show our merit."

So they carried the dragon lady up out of the water.

The Pilgrim came up onto the bank after, bearing the two boxes, and said to Erlang: "Thanks to my elder brother's might, we have recovered the treasure and swept the demon thieves clean."

"It is first because the king's vast fortune reaches to Heaven," said Erlang, "and second because you worthy brothers' magic powers are measureless. What merit is mine!"

The brothers all said: "Since Second Brother Sun's work is accomplished, we will take our leave here." The Pilgrim thanked them beyond measure and wanted to keep them to see the king, but they would not, and so they led their host back to Guankou.

The Pilgrim bore the boxes, Bajie dragged the dragon lady, and half in cloud and half in mist they were in the kingdom in an instant. It happened that the monks of the Golden Light Monastery, now delivered, were all waiting to welcome them outside the city; when the two of them settled their clouds and mist, the monks came up, kowtowed and bowed, and escorted them into the city.

The king and the Tang monk were just then discussing matters in the hall, and one of the monks who had gone ahead, summoning up his courage, entered the court gate to report: "Long live the king—the two lords Sun and Pig have captured the thieves and recovered the treasure, and are on their way!"

Hearing this, the king hastily came down from the hall and, with the Tang monk and the Sha Monk, went to meet them, thanking them for their divine service beyond measure, and at once ordered a feast laid to show his gratitude.

"Wait to offer us drink," said Sanzang. "Let my disciple first restore the treasure to the pagoda, and only then may we feast."

Sanzang asked the Pilgrim: "You left the kingdom yesterday—how is it you only come today?"

The Pilgrim told in detail all about the battle with the prince consort, the striking down of the Dragon King, the meeting with the True Lord, the defeating of the monster, and the business of changing his form to trick away the treasure. Sanzang, the king, and all the civil and military officers, great and small, were delighted beyond measure.

The king asked again: "Can this dragon lady speak human speech?"

"She is the Dragon King's wife," said Bajie, "and has borne many dragon sons and grandsons. How could she not know human speech?"

The king said: "If she knows human speech, let her quickly confess the whole business of thievery from beginning to end."

The dragon lady said: "Of the stealing of the Buddha-treasure I knew nothing at all. It was all my husband, that dragon fiend, and the prince consort, the Nine-Headed Insect, who knew that the light on your pagoda was the Buddha's sarira, and so three years ago they brought down the rain of blood and took the chance to steal it away."

The king asked again: "And how was the glossy ganoderma stolen?"

"My little daughter, the Princess of Ten Thousand Saints," said the dragon lady, "secretly entered the Hall of Divine Mists in the Great Heaven and stole the Queen Mother's nine-leaf glossy ganoderma. Nurtured by the immortal breath of that herb, the sarira is imperishable for a thousand years and gives light for ten thousand ages; set in the earth or in a field, one sweep of it and it sends out ten thousand rays of colored light and a thousand strands of blessed vapor. Now you have taken it from us and brought it about that my husband is dead, my son cut off, my son-in-law lost, and my daughter ruined—I beg you a thousand times over to spare my life!"

"It is precisely you I won't spare!" said Bajie.

"Where a household is guilty, not all need pay," said the Pilgrim. "I will spare you, only you must serve me as keeper of the pagoda forever."

"Better an evil life than a good death," said the dragon lady. "Only leave me my life, and I will do whatever you bid."

The Pilgrim called for an iron chain, and the officer on duty at once brought one; they passed it through the dragon lady's collarbones, and the Pilgrim told the Sha Monk: "Ask the king to come watch us restore the pagoda." The king hastily prepared his procession, and holding the Tang monk by the hand, left the court together with all the civil and military officers, and they all followed to the Golden Light Monastery and up the pagoda.

They placed the sarira in the jeweled vase on the top of the thirteen-story pagoda, and locked the dragon lady to the central pillar of the pagoda. Reciting the true spell, the Pilgrim summoned the local deity of the kingdom, the city god, and the temple guardians of this monastery, and ordered them to bring the dragon lady a meal every three days to keep her alive; at the least error, she was to be executed. The spirits all silently assented. Then the Pilgrim took the glossy ganoderma and swept it story by story through all thirteen floors of the pagoda, then placed it in the vase to nourish the sarira with warmth.

This was truly a case of repairing the old to make it new: ten thousand rays of colored light, a thousand strands of blessed vapor, once more seen by all eight directions and gazed upon by the four neighboring kingdoms.

Coming down from the pagoda, the king gave thanks: "Had not the Old Buddha and the three Bodhisattvas come here, how could this matter ever have been cleared up!"

"Your Majesty," said the Pilgrim, "the name Golden Light is not a good one; it is not a thing to last long. Gold is a substance that flows, and light is a vapor that blazes and is gone. This poor monk has toiled so hard for you in this affair—let me change the monastery's name to Dragon-Subduing, so that it may endure forever."

The king at once ordered the name changed and a new tablet hung, reading: "The Dragon-Subduing Monastery for the Protection of the Realm, Built by Imperial Command." On one side they arranged the imperial banquet, and on the other summoned painters to draw the true likenesses of the four travelers, and registered their names at the Tower of Five Phoenixes.

The king set out his imperial procession to escort the Tang monk and his disciples on their way, and offered gold and jade in requital, but master and disciples firmly declined, not accepting a single strand. Truly:

The evil fiends wiped out, all realms are still; The jeweled pagoda's light returned, and the great earth is bright.

We do not know what lies ahead on the road from here; listen to the next chapter for the explanation.

Chapter 64

On Bramble Ridge Wuneng Exerts His Strength; At the Muxian Hermitage Sanzang Discusses Poetry

The story tells how the king of the Kingdom of Jisai thanked Tang Sanzang and his disciples for recovering the treasure and capturing the monster. Though the king offered them gold and jade, they would not accept a single coin. Instead he ordered the officers of his carriage to have two sets of clothes made for each of the four in the style they usually wore, two pairs of shoes and socks for each, and two sashes with rings for each, and besides this, dried and roasted provisions were prepared, their travel documents were renewed, and a grand imperial procession was laid on. Together with the civil and military officials, the people of the whole city, and the monks of the Temple of the Crouching Dragon, with drums and trumpets sounding loudly, he escorted the four pilgrims out of the city.

After some twenty li they first took leave of the king. The rest escorted them another twenty li and then took their leave in turn. But the monks of the Temple of the Crouching Dragon escorted them fifty or sixty li and would not turn back; some wanted to go with them all the way to the Western Heaven, and some wanted to cultivate their conduct and wait on them. Seeing that none of them was willing to go home, the Pilgrim resorted to a trick: he pulled out thirty or forty of his hairs, blew on them a breath of immortal air, and cried, "Change!" They all turned into spotted, ferocious tigers that barred the road ahead, snarling and leaping about.

Only then did the monks take fright and dare not press forward, and the Great Sage led his master, who spurred on the horse, away.

In a little while they had gone far. The monks burst into loud weeping, all crying: "Gracious and righteous masters! We have no affinity with you—you will not carry us across to salvation!"

No more of the monks' weeping. Let us speak of the master and his three disciples, who took the main road and, once the hairs had been gathered back, headed straight west. Truly, the seasons turn and shift quickly; winter was already waning and spring returning, neither warm nor cold—just right for traveling at one's ease. Suddenly they saw a long ridge stretching across the road, with the way running along its top. Sanzang reined in his horse to look. The ridge was bristling with forked and tangled brambles, overgrown with clinging creepers. Though traces of a road could be seen, on left and right there were nothing but thorns and spines.

"Disciple," called Tang Sanzang, "how is this road to be walked?"

"How can it not be walked?" said the Pilgrim.

Again the master said: "Disciple, the traces of the road are beneath, and the brambles on top. Only snakes and creeping insects crawling flat along the ground could get through. If you try to walk here, you can hardly straighten your back—so how am I to ride my horse?"

"It's nothing," said Bajie. "Let me put my raking hand to work and part the brambles with my rake. Never mind riding a horse—I'll guarantee you get across even in a sedan chair."

"You may be strong," said Sanzang, "but it's a long way to hold out. We don't know how far it is—how could you spend so much of your energy!"

"No need to discuss it," said the Pilgrim. "Let me go and take a look."

With one spring he leapt up into the air and looked down—as far as the eye could see, there was no end to it. Truly:

From the earth to the distant sky, Through gathered mist and veiled rain they lie. Along the road the soft turf runs wild; Over the mountain green canopies are spread. Thick upon thick the young leaves put forth; Tangle on tangle the blossoms breathe their scent. Look afar, and you cannot tell where they end; Draw near, and they seem a vast drift of green cloud. Lush and misty, deep and dark— The wind sighs through them with a rustling sound, The sunlight plays upon them with a glittering sheen. Among them grow pine and cypress and bamboo, Much plum and willow, and more mulberry still. Creepers twine about the ancient trees; Vines and kudzu wind round the drooping willows. Coiled and knotted, they rise like trellises; Linked and laced, they spread like beds. In some places the flowers open in woven brocade; In others the blossoms burst and waft their fragrance far. What man can walk the world and never meet a thorn? But who has ever seen such brambles as the West has grown!

The Pilgrim looked for a long while, then brought his cloud down. "Master, this place is far away indeed!"

"How far?" asked Sanzang.

"To the very horizon," said the Pilgrim. "It seems a thousand li and more."

Sanzang was greatly alarmed. "What is to be done then?"

The Sha Monk laughed: "Master, do not fret. Let us do as the field-burners do—set a fire and burn the brambles clean away, and then pass over."

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Bajie. "Field-burning is done in the tenth or eleventh month, when the grass is withered and the trees dry, so the fire will catch. Now is the height of their growing season—how could you burn them!"

"And even if you could burn them," said the Pilgrim, "it would still be a fearful thing."

"How are we to get across, then?" asked Sanzang.

"If you want to cross," said Bajie, laughing, "you must do as I say." A fine blockhead! He made a magic sign, recited a spell, bent his back, and cried, "Grow!" He grew to a stature of twenty fathoms tall. He flourished his rake and cried, "Change!" And the handle grew to thirty fathoms long. Striding forward, he wielded the rake with both hands and raked the brambles apart left and right. "Master, follow me!" he called. Sanzang was delighted to see it, and urged his horse on close behind.

Behind them the Sha Monk shouldered the luggage, and the Pilgrim, too, thrust the brambles apart with his iron cudgel. All that day they did not pause. When they had traveled more than a hundred li and evening was coming on, they saw a stretch of open ground, and in the middle of the road a stone tablet, on which were carved three large characters: "Bramble Ridge." Below them were two lines of fourteen small characters: "Brambles spread and tangle eight hundred li; of old there has been a road, but few have walked it."

Bajie saw it and laughed: "Let old Hog add a couple of lines to that: From now on Bajie can cleave it through; Straight through to the West the road runs level!"

Sanzang dismounted gladly and said: "Disciple, I have worn you out! Let us put up here for the night and start again at first light tomorrow."

"Master, don't stop!" said Bajie. "While the sky is clear and we have the spirit, let us rake a way through the night, and be done with it!"

The elder had no choice but to go along with him.

Bajie pressed on with all his might, and the master and disciples, hands never resting, the horse never pausing, traveled another day and night until evening fell again. Before them the brambles grew thick and tangled, and they could hear the wind striking the bamboo like chimes and the soughing of the pines. There

happened to be another stretch of open ground, and in the middle of it stood an ancient temple. Beyond the temple gate, pines and cypresses congealed their green, and peach and plum vied in their beauty.

Sanzang dismounted and looked at it together with his three disciples. What they saw was this:

An ancient temple before the crag pillows on the cold stream; The setting sun and desolate mist hold the ruined hill in thrall. Deep are the years among the flocks of white cranes; Beneath the terrace of green grass, springs and autumns wheel and turn. The bamboo sways its green pendants as if one heard it speak; The birds trill their lingering notes as if telling of their grief. No cock crows, no dog barks, and few are the footprints of men; Wild flowers and trailing creepers wind about the top of the wall.

Looking at it, the Pilgrim said: "This is a place with more bane than blessing about it—not one to sit down in for long."

The Sha Monk said: "Elder brother, you suspect too much. In a place so wild and lonely as this, with no monstrous beast or demon bird about—what is there to fear?"

Before the words were out of his mouth, a gust of cold wind arose, and from behind the temple gate there turned out an old man. He wore a cornered cap of cloth, plain clothing, and straw sandals, and leaned on a walking staff. Behind him followed a ghostly messenger with a green face and bared fangs, red beard, and bare body, carrying on his head a plate of flat cakes. Kneeling, the old man said: "Great Sage, I am the local deity of Bramble Ridge. Knowing that the Great Sage had come here, and having nothing with which to receive you, I have specially prepared this plate of steamed cakes and present it to the venerable master, that each of you may take a meal. For eight hundred li hereabouts there is not a single household—pray eat a little to stay your hunger."

Bajie was delighted. He stepped forward, stretched out his hand, and made to take a cake.

But the Pilgrim had been studying the old man for some time. He shouted: "Hold on! This fellow is up to no good! Show a little respect! What sort of local deity are you, to try to hoodwink old Sun? Take this!" And he swung his cudgel.

When the old man saw him striking, he whirled about, changed into a gust of cold wind, and with a whoosh carried off the venerable elder, wafting him up and away, no one knew where. The Great Sage was so alarmed he had no idea where to look; Bajie and the Sha Monk stared at each other, their faces turning pale; even the white horse shied and neighed in fright. The three brothers, with the horse making four, in a daze, gazing far and wide, could find not a single trace of him. They searched before and behind, but of that no more.

Meanwhile the old man and the ghostly messenger carried the elder before a stone house wreathed in mist and rosy light, set him down gently, and took him by the hand to help him along. "Holy monk, be not afraid," they said. "We are no wicked men. I am the Eighteenth Duke of Bramble Ridge. Because this night is clear and the moon bright, I have specially invited you here to meet friends and discuss poetry, to while away the heart's fancies."

The elder composed himself at last, opened his eyes, and looked carefully about him. Truly:

Misty clouds drift off into the distance, A clear and pure abode of the immortal kind. Fit for cleansing the body and refining the self, Fit for planting bamboo and nurturing flowers. Ever the cranes come to the emerald cliffs; Ever the frogs croak by the green ponds. It rivals the cinnabar stove of the Terrace of Heaven, And matches the bright clouds of the Flower Mountain. Why speak of plowing clouds or angling for the moon? This life of seclusion is worthy of all praise. Sit here long, and the quiet heart is deep as the sea; Dimly the moonlight climbs the gauze of the window.

Sanzang was still surveying the scene, gradually aware of the bright moon and shining stars, when he heard voices in talk, all saying: "The Eighteenth Duke has invited the holy monk here."

The elder looked up and saw three old men. The first had a frosty mien and a noble bearing; the second had green temples, shaggy and flowing; the third had a hollow heart and a dark green hue. Their faces and their clothes were all different, and they all came forward to bow to Sanzang.

The elder returned their bows. "What virtue does your disciple possess, that I should presume upon the affection of you immortal elders?"

The Eighteenth Duke laughed: "We have long heard that the holy monk possesses the Way, and have been waiting for some time. What good fortune to meet you now. If you would not begrudge us the pearls and jade of your speech, sit at ease and unbosom your heart—that would show us the true lineage of Chan."

Sanzang bowed and said: "May I presume to ask the honored names of the immortal elders?"

"The one with the frosty mien," said the Eighteenth Duke, "is called Duke Guzhi; the one with the green temples, Master Lingkong; the one with the hollow heart, the Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds. As for this unworthy old man, my name is Firm Joint."

[Translator's note: The tree-spirits have taken names that play on their natures—"Eighteenth Duke" spells out the character for pine in Chinese calligraphy, while "Duke Guzhi" ("Lone and Upright"), "Master Lingkong" ("Soaring Through the Void"), and "the Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds" all echo the look and character of the cypress, juniper, and bamboo.]

"How old, then, are the four elders?" asked Sanzang.

Duke Guzhi said:

"My years have seen a thousand ancient ones go by; My leaves thrust at the sky, a spring that knows no end. Fragrant boughs, thick and lush, in dragon-serpent shapes; Shadow upon broken shadow, a body of frost and snow. From my youth I was hard and firm, fit to endure old age; From now on, upright and true, I rejoice in cultivating the Way. Crows roost and phoenixes lodge in me—no common company; Towering, dense and lofty, I stand far from the world's dust."

Master Lingkong laughed:

"My thousand years have braved the wind and frost; My tall trunk and numinous boughs are strong of themselves. In the still of night I murmur like falling rain; On clear autumn days my shadow spreads like gathered clouds. My coiled roots have gained the secret of long life; My appointed lot suits well the art of never aging. I keep the cranes and change to dragons—no vulgar stock; Vast and brisk, I draw close to the land of the immortals."

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds laughed:

"A thousand autumns have passed me in the cold of the year, And my old age is free and easy, clear and more secluded still. Never mixing with the world's clamor, I keep my cool aloofness; Sated with frost and snow, I possess my own elegance. The Seven Worthies were my mates in discoursing on the Way; The Six Idlers were my friends in answering song with song. Chinking like jade, striking like gold—no petty stuff—A nature born of Heaven, roaming with the immortals."

The Firm-Jointed Eighteenth Duke laughed:

"More than a thousand years are mine, Darkly chaste and lovely, at ease with all that is. The power of rain and dew is to be pitied and prized, Borrowed from the crafting secret of Heaven and Earth. Through ten thousand ravines of wind and mist I alone flourish; Through all four seasons, scattered and free, I let my

needles thin. I spread my emerald canopy to shelter immortal guests, And play at chess and pluck the zither, discoursing on the Dao."

Sanzang gave his thanks and said: "You four immortal elders all enjoy great age, and the Firm Joint Elder has passed a thousand years and more besides. Attaining the Way in such old age, with such a clear and singular bearing—could you be the Four Greybeards of the Han dynasty?"

The four elders said: "You flatter us! You flatter us! We are not the Four Greybeards, but the four Men of Firm Integrity of the deep mountains. May we presume to ask the holy monk his years?"

Sanzang pressed his palms together and bowed:

"Forty years ago I left my mother's womb, But before my birth my fate was already marked by calamity. Fleeing for life, I fell into the water and drifted on the waves; By good fortune at Gold Mountain I cast off my mortal frame. I nourished my nature and read the scriptures without ever slacking; With a sincere heart I worshipped the Buddha—dare I linger or delay? Now by the command of the emperor I journey west, And on the road I am honored by the immortal elders' gracious regard."

All four elders praised him: "The holy monk has followed the Buddhist faith from the very moment he left his mother's womb. Truly he is one who has cultivated the Way from childhood, a monk of the true and upright school. We are fortunate to meet you face to face, and would presume to beg your great instruction. If you would favor us with a little of your Chan teaching, it would console us for a lifetime."

Hearing this, the elder was moved and showed no fear. Facing them all, he said:

"Chan means stillness, and the Dharma means deliverance. Deliverance within stillness can only be achieved through awakening. Awakening is washing the mind and cleansing the thoughts, casting off the vulgar and leaving the dusty world behind. The human body is hard to obtain, to be born in the Central Land is hard, and the true Dharma is hard to encounter: to have all three complete is fortune beyond measure. With the highest virtue and the wondrous Way, vague and mysterious, the six roots and the six consciousnesses may then be swept away. Bodhi is neither death nor birth, neither surplus nor lack, embracing both emptiness and form, dismissing both sage and commoner. Seek the truth of the hammer and tongs of the Primal Origin; awaken to the reality of the Tathagata's means. Unfold the formless and trample Nirvana to pieces. You must awaken within awakening and perceive within perception, guarding well the single spark of numinous light. Release the blazing flame to shine upon the Saha world, and stride freely through the Dharma realm, revealed alone. At the deepest subtlety, hold fast—who can be ferried across the Dark Pass by word of mouth alone? I have long cultivated the Chan of the Great Awakening; only with affinity and resolve can one remember and awaken."

The four elders bent their ears to this, delighted beyond measure, and each bowed in homage, prostrating themselves and giving thanks. "The holy monk is the very root of awakening in the Chan mystery!" they said.

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds said: "Chan may be stillness and the Dharma may be deliverance, but still one must settle the nature and make sincere the heart. Even one who becomes a great awakened immortal must in the end sit in the Way of the unborn. Our own mystery is vastly different."

Sanzang said: "The Way is not an ordinary thing; substance and function are one. How are you different?"

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds laughed:

"We are all born firm and solid, and our substance and function differ from yours. We feel Heaven and Earth to give us life, and receive dew and rain to nourish our beauty. We laugh in pride at wind and frost, and while away the sun and moon. Not a single leaf of us withers; a thousand branches keep their integrity. Your words

do not knock at the gate of the Void; you cling to the Sanskrit teachings. The Dao was originally at rest in the Central Land, yet you go to seek enlightenment in the West. You waste your straw sandals—what is it you think you are searching for? The stone lion has had its heart and liver gouged out, and the wild fox's spittle has soaked through to your very marrow. Forgetting your root to meditate on Chan, vainly seeking the fruit of Buddhahood—all this is but the riddle-talk of the creepers of Bramble Ridge, the tangled speech of the vines. How could such gentlemen be guided across? By such measures, how could the seal be conferred? You must examine the face before your eyes; within stillness there is a livelihood of its own. Draw water with a bottomless bamboo basket; let the rootless iron tree burst into flower. Plant your feet firmly on the peak of Numinous Treasure, and come back to the elegant assembly of the Dragon Flower."

At these words Sanzang knocked his head on the ground in thanks. The Eighteenth Duke reached out a hand to support him, and Duke Guzhi pulled him to his feet. Master Lingkong burst into a great laugh: "The words of the Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds have plainly let too much slip. Holy monk, please rise—do not believe everything he says. We have taken advantage of this bright moon not to discourse on cultivation, but to chant poetry and be at ease, to let our feelings range free."

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds smiled and pointed at the stone house: "If you wish to chant, come into my little hermitage for a cup of tea—how would that be?"

The elder did indeed draw himself up and look at the stone house. On the door were carved three large characters: "Muxian Hermitage." So they went in together, and when the seats were settled, the bare-bodied ghostly messenger appeared, bearing a tray of poria cakes, and presented five cups of fragrant broth. The four elders invited Tang Sanzang to eat first, but Sanzang was startled and suspicious, and dared not touch them. Only after the four elders had all partaken did Sanzang eat two pieces and drink a cup of the fragrant broth, and the tray was taken away.

Sanzang looked about him warily. Everything in the place was exquisite and luminous, as if seen by moonlight:

Water flows out by the rocks; Fragrance wafts in from the flowers. The whole hall is pure and elegant, Without a single speck of dust.

Seeing such an immortal scene, the elder was greatly pleased. His heart opened with delight, and unable to restrain himself he intoned a line:

"Chan mind is like the moon—remote, without a speck of dust."

The Firm Joint Elder laughed and capped it:

"Poetic inspiration like the sky—freshly blue, ever renewed."

Duke Guzhi said: "Fine lines cut idly, woven into brocade."

Master Lingkong said: "A perfect text, unwritten, spits out rare gems."

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds said: "The Six Dynasties' splendor washed away entire; The Four Beginnings recarved, Elegance and Panegyric set apart."

Sanzang said: "Your disciple blurted out a few careless words—truly a case of wielding an axe before Lu Ban, the master carpenter. But I have just heard you immortals' words, fresh and free and ethereal. You are true poets indeed."

The Firm Joint Elder said: "The holy monk need not stand on ceremony. A man of religion must finish what he begins. Since you have made the opening line, why is there no closing one? I pray you complete it."

"Your disciple cannot," said Sanzang. "I must trouble the Eighteenth Duke to round it off into a finished piece—that would be best."

"What a heartless man you are!" said Firm Joint. "You set the line going—why refuse to bring it to fruit? To hoard your pearls and gems is no way to behave."

Sanzang had no choice but to add the final two lines:

"Pillowed half among the pine winds before the tea is brewed, My chanting heart free and easy, my breast all full of spring."

"A fine line!" said the Eighteenth Duke. "'My chanting heart free and easy, my breast all full of spring'!"

Duke Guzhi said: "Firm Joint, you have a deep taste for the flavor of poetry, and so you keep chewing it over. Why not begin another piece?"

The Eighteenth Duke did not decline. "Then I shall begin with a link-stitch line:

Spring brings no blooming, winter no withering; Clouds come and mists go, as if all were nothing."

Master Lingkong said: "I too will follow the same chain-link device with two lines:

Without wind, my dancing shadow sways; With guests, a picture of fortune and long life to admire."

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds capped it in turn:

"A picture like the Old Man of Firm Joints of the western hills, As pure as the heartless fellow of the southern land."

Duke Guzhi also capped it:

"The fellow, for his side-leaves, is called a beam and ridgepole; The terrace, for its cross-boughs, is made the censor's crow."

The elder listened and praised him without end: "Truly 'Spring Snow'—the loftiest music, its spirit piercing the sky! Your disciple, unworthy as he is, dares to set another couplet going."

Duke Guzhi said: "The holy monk is a man of the Way, a man of great nurture. There is no need for more linked lines. Pray favor us with a whole poem, so that we may strive to answer it as best we can."

Sanzang could not refuse. Laughing, he intoned a full regulated verse:

"Staff in hand I come from the east to worship the Dharma King, Wishing to seek the wondrous canon and spread it far. The gold zhi, thrice blooming, is the poetry altar's auspice; The precious tree of a thousand flowers holds the lotus scent. At the top of the hundred-foot pole one must still press forward; In all the ten directions one establishes deed and trace. Cultivate a body solemn as the jade elephant, And before the gate of Paradise lies your field of enlightenment."

When the four elders had heard it out, they all praised him to the skies. The Eighteenth Duke said: "This unworthy old man, though he has no talent, will presume upon your good nature and strain to answer with one of his own." And he said:

"Firm-jointed, lone and proud, I laugh at the king of trees; The sacred cedar cannot match my renown. On the empty mountain my dragon-serpent shadow spreads a hundred fathoms; From the spring wells the fragrance of a thousand-year amber. I know how to lend the world its spirit and its mettle, And joyfully, through wind and rain, shift my going and my hiding. Old and worn, I am ashamed to lack an immortal's bones; Only poria paste knits together my field of long life."

Duke Guzhi said: "The opening of this poem is bold and grand, and the linked lines are strong, but the closing is too self-deprecating by far. Admirable! Admirable! This unworthy old man will answer with one of his own." And he said:

"My frosty form is glad to give the king of birds a roost; Before the Hall of the Four Wonders my great timber is displayed. Heavy dew like a fringe of pearls veils my emerald canopy; A light wind, and the stone teeth shatter the cold fragrance. In the long corridor, still at night, my chanting note sounds faint; In the old hall's autumn shade my pale shadow lies hidden. On the first day of the year, welcoming spring, I once offered long life; In my old age I lodge my pride upon this mountain plot."

Master Lingkong laughed and said: "Fine poems! Fine poems! Truly they touch the heart of the moon and the mind of Heaven. What can this unworthy old man answer with? Yet I must not let the moment pass in silence, and must drag out a few lines for talk's sake." And he said:

"Timber for beam and ridgepole, I draw near to emperors and kings; Beyond the palace of Grand Purity my fame is raised. In the bright pavilion it seems a green vapor comes to greet me; Along the dark walls ever drifts my emerald fragrance. My sturdy joints stand awe-inspiring, lovely through a thousand ages; My deep roots are knotted firm, hidden in the nine springs. My cloud-scaling might canopies my dancing shadow, And has no share in the gaudy courts of common flowers."

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds said: "The poems of you three elders are lofty and elegant, clear and pure—truly the brocade-sack flung wide open. This body of mine has no strength, and this belly of mine no talent; but having received your three elders' instruction, my benighted mind has been opened at last. I have no choice but to smear out a few doggerel lines—I pray you do not laugh at me." His poem said:

"In the garden of Qi'ao I rejoice with the sage-kings; Along the Wei River a thousand acres spread at my will. My emerald culms are unstained by the tears of the Xiang maidens; My mottled sheaths could hand down the fragrance of the Han histories. Frosted leaves, from of old, never change their hue; Misty tips—from now on, what color can they hide? Since Ziyou departed, my connoisseurs are few; Yet my name endures through the ages in the realm of ink and brush."

[Translator's note: Ziyou, or Wang Huizhi of the Jin dynasty, was famous for his devotion to bamboo.]

Sanzang said: "The poems of you immortal elders are verily the spitting of phoenixes and the spraying of pearls—even Zixia and Zigong could add nothing to them. I am deeply moved by your great affection and noble feeling. But the night is already deep, and I do not know where my three little disciples may be waiting for me. I fear your disciple cannot stay long, and would presume to take my leave to go search for them. Your boundless kindness will always be with me. I beg the immortal elders to show me the way back."

The four elders laughed: "Holy monk, be not concerned. This is a rare meeting across a thousand years, and besides, the sky is clear and fine—though the night is deep, the moon shines bright as day. Sit a while longer; when dawn comes we shall escort you far across the ridge, and you may be sure your worthy disciples will be met again."

Just as they were speaking, two maids in blue appeared outside the stone house, carrying between them a pair of crimson gauze lanterns, and behind them came a fairy maiden. The maiden held a sprig of apricot blossom in her hand and, smiling, entered to greet them.

What did the fairy maiden look like? She was:

Dressed in jade-green of the finest kind, Her rosy face outshone the very rouge. Star-bright eyes with light agleam, Moth-wing brows both pretty and even. Below, a light red skirt of five-hued plum; Above, a short jacket of smoke-through-fire gauze. Her arched shoes curved like phoenix beaks, Her silk stockings stitched with brocade flowers. Bewitching, pretty as the fairies of Mount Tiantai, A match for the famous charms of

Daji of old.

The four elders rose and asked: "Whence comes the Apricot Fairy?"

The girl made a deep bow to them all and said: "Knowing that a fine guest was here exchanging verses, I have come especially to visit and presume to beg a sight of him."

The Eighteenth Duke pointed at Tang Sanzang and said: "The fine guest is here—no need to ask for a sight of him!"

Sanzang bowed, but dared not speak.

The girl called: "Serve tea at once." Two maids in yellow brought a red-lacquered tray, on which stood six fine porcelain tea cups. In the cups were laid several rare fruits, with spoons resting across them, and they carried a white teapot inlaid with brass, from which a fragrant tea steamed. When the tea was poured, the girl slightly revealed fingers like spring scallions, took up a porcelain cup and offered it first to Sanzang, then to the four elders, and then took a cup for herself to keep them company.

"Why does the Apricot Fairy not sit?" asked Master Lingkong. Only then did the girl take a seat.

When the tea was done, she rose and said: "The immortal elders are making great merry tonight. Would you not favor me with some of your fine verses?"

The Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds said: "All our words are the talk of boors. Only the holy monk's are true High-Tang compositions, worthy of all praise and admiration."

"If you would not begrudge your instruction," said the girl, "pray let me see them." The four elders then recited Sanzang's earlier and later poems and his discourse on the Chan doctrine, one after another.

The girl, beaming with spring, said to them all: "Your humble maid is without talent and should not make a fool of herself before you. But having heard such fine lines, I feel the occasion should not pass empty. Might I presume to strain an answering poem to the latter piece?" And she intoned aloud:

"Above, the canopy keeps the name of Emperor Wu of Han; In the age of Zhou, Confucius set up his altar-ground. Immortal Dong loved me, and my groves grew thick; Sun Chu once cherished my fragrance at the Cold Food feast. Rain moistens my rosy form, delicate and tender; Mist steams my emerald hue, now revealed, now hid. I know myself too ripe, with a little sourness about me; Where I fall, year after year, I keep company with the threshing floor."

Hearing the poem, the four elders all congratulated her, saying: "Clear and elegant, free of all dust—and the lines hold the very breath of spring. A fine couplet, 'Rain moistens my rosy form, delicate and tender'!"

The girl laughed softly: "I am all shame! All shame! Just now I heard the holy monk's verse, and truly it is a brocade heart and an embroidered mouth. If you would not begrudge your pearls and jade, pray favor me with a piece as well." Tang Sanzang dared not answer.

The girl, gradually warming to a fondness for him, edged and sidled closer until she sat near his side, and in a low voice said to him: "Good guest, don't be so reserved. With such a lovely night before us, if we do not play a while, what are we to do? The light of a man's life—how much of it is there, after all?"

The Eighteenth Duke said: "The Apricot Fairy has altogether a high regard for you. How can the holy monk refuse to bend down toward her? If you do not take pity on her, you show yourself lacking in understanding."

Duke Guzhi said: "The holy monk is a man of the Way and of name, and would never do anything lightly. This very proceeding, however, is a fault we are taking upon ourselves—to sully a man's name and ruin a man's virtue is not the way of one who sees far. If the Apricot Fairy is truly willing, let the Old Man Who

Brushes the Clouds and the Eighteenth Duke be the go-betweens, and Master Lingkong and I the sponsors of the match. Would it not be a lovely thing to bring about this union?"

At these words Sanzang's face changed color. He sprang to his feet and cried aloud: "You are all a pack of evil things, tempting me so! It was all very well to talk of tempering the mind, to discourse on mysteries and the Way—but now you would use a beauty-trap to deceive and harm a poor monk! What is the meaning of this!"

When the four elders saw Sanzang enraged, they bit their fingers in fright, one and all, and said not another word.

But the bare-bodied ghostly messenger raged like thunder: "You monk, you don't know a good thing when you see it! What is wrong with my sister here? Her looks are handsome and refined, her jade-like form is delicate and lovely—and setting aside her skill with needle and thread, this very gift for poetry of hers is enough to match you. How can you refuse her like this! Do not let the chance slip! What Duke Guzhi said is quite right. If you will not have her by the rules of ceremony, then I shall be the one to officiate at your wedding!"

Sanzang went pale with fright, and whatever nonsense they talked, he would not consent. The ghostly messenger said again: "You monk! We speak to you in all good words and fair speech, and you will not listen. If we rouse our rustic tempers, we shall carry you off altogether and make it so you can neither be a monk nor take a wife—would that not be a life thrown away in vain?"

The elder's heart was as firm as metal and stone, and he would not yield. He thought to himself: "My disciples are somewhere looking for me, I know not where!" At the thought, he could not hold back the tears that fell from his eyes.

The girl, smiling, sidled up to his side, drew from her emerald sleeve a honey-colored silk handkerchief, and wiped his tears for him. "Good guest, do not be troubled. Come, let me lean against you and warm myself in your fragrance—let us go and play a while."

The elder gave a shout of rebuke, sprang to his feet, and made to leave, but the others grabbed him and pulled him this way and that, and so they wrangled until daybreak.

Suddenly they heard a voice calling: "Master! Master! Where are you talking over there?"

It was the Great Sage Sun, with Bajie and the Sha Monk. Leading the horse and shouldering the luggage, they had not stopped all night, threading through thorns and crossing brambles, searching east and west, until, riding half in cloud and half in mist, they had crossed to the west of the eight-hundred-li Bramble Ridge. There they heard the Tang monk's shout, and so they raised their voices.

The elder struggled out through the door, calling: "Wukong, I am here! Come quickly and save me! Come quickly and save me!"

The four elders, the ghostly messenger, the girl, and the maids—with a flicker, they all vanished.

In a moment Bajie and the Sha Monk were at his side. "Master, how did you come to be here?"

Sanzang clung to the Pilgrim and said: "Disciple, you have had great trouble on my account! That old man we saw last evening, who said he was the local deity bringing offerings—when you shouted and struck at him, he carried me off to this place. He took me by the hand and led me inside, and there were three other old men come to meet me. They all addressed me as the holy monk, and spoke with such elegant conversation and chanted poetry so well that I matched verses with them, until about midnight a beautiful girl appeared, holding a lantern, and came to meet me too. She chanted a poem and called me her fine guest, and because she fancied my looks she sought to take me as her husband. Only then did I see what they were about, and I

refused; but they went on, some playing the go-between, some sponsoring the match, some officiating at the wedding. I swore I would never consent, and was struggling to get away and arguing with them when, as luck would have it, you arrived. For one thing, dawn had come; for another, they were afraid of you—they were still tugging and dragging at me when, all at once, they vanished."

"Since you chatted and exchanged verses with them," said the Pilgrim, "didn't you ask their names?"

"I asked their names," said Sanzang. "That old man is called the Eighteenth Duke, and his name is Firm Joint; the second is Duke Guzhi; the third, Master Lingkong; the fourth, the Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds. And the girl is known as the Apricot Fairy."

"Where are these creatures, then?" asked Bajie. "Which way did they go?"

"I do not know where they went," said Sanzang, "but the place where they discussed poetry is not far from here."

The three of them went with their master to look, and there they saw a stone cliff, and on the cliff the characters "Muxian Hermitage."

"This is the very place," said Sanzang.

The Pilgrim examined it closely, and saw that they were a great juniper tree, an old cypress, an old pine, and an old bamboo, with a red maple behind the bamboo. Looking further across the cliff, there were also an old apricot, two wintersweet shrubs, and two osmanthus trees.

"Did you see any demon?" asked the Pilgrim.

"No," said Bajie.

"What you don't know," said the Pilgrim, "is that it was these very trees that have turned into spirits here."

"Elder brother, how do you know the spirits are trees?" asked Bajie.

"The Eighteenth Duke is the pine," said the Pilgrim, "Duke Guzhi the cypress, Master Lingkong the juniper, the Old Man Who Brushes the Clouds the bamboo, the bare-bodied ghost the maple, the Apricot Fairy the apricot tree, and the maids the osmanthus and the wintersweet."

Hearing this, Bajie, without stopping to ask whether they were good or bad, fell to with his rake—a flurry of blows and a few long thrusts of his snout, digging and hacking—until he had leveled the two wintersweet shrubs, the osmanthus, the old apricot, and the maple, all thrown to the ground; and sure enough, fresh blood streamed from beneath their roots.

Sanzang came up and caught hold of him. "Wuneng, you must not hurt them! Though they had achieved their powers, they never harmed me. Let us find our road and be on our way."

"Master, do not spare them," said the Pilgrim. "I fear that if they are left to become great demons in days to come, they will do no small harm to people."

That blockhead, in for a penny, fell to with a good flurry of his rake and knocked down the pine, the cypress, the juniper, and the bamboo all at once. Only then did he invite the master to mount his horse, and following the main road, they all continued west.

But what lay before them we do not know—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 65

The Demon Counterfeits the Lesser Thunderclap Monastery; All Four of the Party Meet with a Great Calamity

This chapter's karmic tale Bids men do good— Beware of doing evil! At the first stirring of a thought, The gods above look down and mark it plain; Let each man do as he will. The dull and the cunning, the crafty and the clever—how should you learn from them? Both alike are but the medicine of the mindless. While life is before you and the Way awaits, right it is to cultivate— Do not drift with the waves. Know your root and origin; cast off your mortal shell. Seek long life; you must seize and hold it fast. See clearly hour by hour, and savor the ambrosia of the Dharma. Pierce through the Three Passes and fill up the Black Sea, And be assured that the good shall ride the cranes and the luan. There, mindful of old ties, they grow yet more compassionate, And climb at last to Paradise.

The story tells how Tang Sanzang, with a single sincere thought—and let us not speak of the protection of the gods of heaven—was seen off by these very spirits of grass and trees after an elegant night of company, and escaped the thorns and spines of the brambles, with no more vines to cling and tangle about him. The four pilgrims pressed on west. When they had traveled a good while, winter was waning again and the days of the third month of spring had come:

All things flourish in their turn; the Dipper's handle points back to the Tiger hour. Grass shoots spread their green over all the ground; Willow buds line the whole bank in green. One ridge of peach blossoms red as woven brocade; Half a stream of misty water bright as blue gauze. So much of wind and rain along the way, And the heart's feelings without end.

The sun warms the flower-hearts to brightness; The swallows bear moss-tips lightly away. The mountain hues, like a painting by Wang Wei, now deep, now pale; The birds' songs, like the eloquence of Su Qin, range wide and free. The fragrant blossoms spread their brocade with none to admire them; Yet the dancing butterflies and the humming bees have their own affection.

The master and disciples, too, wandered among the flowers and trod the green, pacing slowly after the horse. As they traveled, they suddenly saw a lofty mountain that, seen from afar, seemed to join the sky itself.

Sanzang pointed with his whip and said: "Wukong, that mountain—I wonder how many miles high it is. It seems to touch the blue heavens, to pierce through to the azure vault."

"The old poem says," replied the Pilgrim, "'Above is only the sky; no mountain can match it in height.' It simply means that the mountain is so high that nothing can compare with it—how could it truly touch the sky!"

"If it doesn't touch the sky," said Bajie, "how is it that Mount Kunlun is called the Pillar of Heaven?"

"You don't understand," said the Pilgrim. "Since ancient times, Heaven has been incomplete in the northwest. Mount Kunlun stands in the northwest, in the qian position, and so it has the look of propping up the sky and stopping up the void—that is why it is called the Pillar of Heaven."

The Sha Monk laughed: "Elder brother, don't feed him such fine talk. Once he hears it, he'll only pass it off on other people. Let's get on the road; when we've climbed that mountain, we'll know how high it is."

That blockhead chased after the Sha Monk, roughhousing and tussling with him, while the master's horse flew along as fast as the wind. In a moment they came to the foot of the mountain crags and made their way upward step by step. What a mountain it was:

In the woods the wind sighs; In the ravines the water murmurs. Crows and sparrows cannot fly across; Even the immortals call it hard. A thousand cliffs, ten thousand ravines, A hundred million bends and turns. Dust rolls and swirls—no man comes here; Grotesque rocks stand dense, never wearying to look upon. In some places the clouds drift like shimmering water; Everywhere trees stand, and the birds' songs throng. Deer carry zhi fungus away; apes pick peaches and come back. Foxes and badgers leap to and fro upon the cliffs; Milu and musk deer romp and play about the ridge-tops. Suddenly a tiger's roar frightens the boldest heart, And spotted leopards and gray wolves bar the way.

Tang Sanzang's heart trembled at the sight. But Sun Wukong was mighty in his powers. See him—one roar with his gold-banded cudgel frightened off the wolves, insects, tigers, and leopards; he cut open a way and led his master straight up the high mountain. When they had crossed the ridge-top and come down to the level ground in the west, they suddenly saw auspicious light in gentle waves and colored mist drifting all around, and there was a cluster of towers, terraces, halls, and pavilions, with the faint, lingering music of bells and chimes.

"Disciples," said Sanzang, "see what sort of place that is."

The Pilgrim raised his head, shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked carefully. What a fine place it was! Truly:

Jeweled towers and precious thrones, a famous place of the highest rank. In the empty valleys the sounds of earth abound; in the still realm the heavenly incense spreads. Green pines veiled in rain screen the lofty pavilions; Emerald bamboo holding the clouds guards the lecture hall. Radiant mist, faint and far, reveals the dragon palace; Rich colors floating and drifting stretch the Buddha-land. Cinnabar balustrades and jade doors, painted beams and carved rafters. Discoursing on the sutras, fragrance fills the seats; Speaking of talismans, the moon shines upon the window. Birds cry within the red trees; cranes drink beside the stone springs. All around the flowers bloom—the garden of Qiyuan is fair; On three sides the gates stand open—the light of Shravasti gleams. Towers and terraces rise abrupt; the gate faces the peaks; Bells and chimes linger slow, their notes drawn long. The windows open to a fine wind; the curtains roll in the misty gloom. Monks here are free and easy in their feelings; no worldly ways, but harmony and peace. The dust of the world never reaches this true immortal scene; In this quiet land, this monastery, is a fine field of the Way.

Having looked his fill, the Pilgrim reported: "Master, that place is indeed a monastery, but I cannot tell why there is some baleful air amid its Chan light and auspicious vapor. The look of it resembles the Thunderclap, yet the road is somewhat different. When we reach it, we must on no account go in rashly, lest we fall into some deadly hand."

"Since it has the look of the Thunderclap," said Tang Sanzang, "might it not be Numinous Mountain itself? Don't be mistaking my sincerity and delaying the purpose of my coming."

"No, no!" said the Pilgrim. "I have walked the road to Numinous Mountain several times—this is not that road!"

"Even if it isn't," said Bajie, "there must be some good person dwelling there."

"No need for so much suspicion," said the Sha Monk. "This road must pass by that gate anyway. Whether it is or not, we shall know at a glance."

"Wujing speaks sense," said the Pilgrim.

The elder spurred his horse to a gallop and reached the mountain gate, where he saw three large characters: "Thunderclap Monastery." In a flurry he rolled off the horse and threw himself on the ground, crying in fury: "Wicked macaque! You have done me to death! This plainly says Thunderclap Monastery, and still you try to deceive me!"

The Pilgrim smiled appeasingly: "Master, do not be angry. Look again. There are four characters on the mountain gate—how is it you read out only three, and then blame me?"

The elder scrambled to his feet, trembling, and looked again. It was indeed four characters: "Lesser Thunderclap Monastery."

"Even if it is the Lesser Thunderclap Monastery," said Sanzang, "there must still be some Buddha within. The scriptures say there are three thousand Buddhas, and I suppose they do not all dwell in one place: Guanyin is on the Southern Sea, Samantabhadra on Mount Emei, and Manjusri on Mount Wutai. I wonder which Buddha's field this may be. The ancients said: where there is a Buddha, there are scriptures; where there is a land, there are treasures. Let us go in."

"Do not go in," said the Pilgrim. "This place holds more bane than blessing. If some calamity befalls, you must not blame me."

"Even if there is no Buddha," said Sanzang, "there must be an image of Buddha. Your disciple has made a vow: when I meet a Buddha, I worship a Buddha. How could I blame you?" He at once ordered Bajie to bring out the cassock, changed into his monk's cap, and, properly robed and capped, stepped forward.

Then they heard a voice call from within the mountain gate: "Tang Sanzang, you come from the Eastern Land to worship our Buddha—how can you be so remiss in your manners?"

At these words Sanzang at once prostrated himself; Bajie knocked his head on the ground; the Sha Monk knelt down. Only the Great Sage stayed behind, holding the horse and looking after the luggage. When they had entered within the second gate, they saw the great hall of the Tathagata. Outside the hall, below the jeweled dais, were ranged five hundred arhats, three thousand Revealers, four vajra guardians, eight Bodhisattvas, bhikkhunis, upasakas, and countless holy monks and adepts—truly, flowers and incense in their beauty, auspicious vapor drifting in profusion.

The elder, with Bajie and the Sha Monk, in a flurry bowed at every step as they made their way up to the altar; the Pilgrim would not bow at all.

Again they heard a harsh voice call from the lotus throne: "Sun Wukong, why do you not bow when you see the Tathagata?"

But the Pilgrim had been looking closely all the while, and saw that it was all false. He cast aside the horse and the luggage, snatched up his cudgel, and shouted: "You herd of evil beasts! How dare you! How dare you borrow the name of Buddha and corrupt the pure virtue of the Tathagata! Don't run!" Wielding the cudgel in both hands, he sprang forward to strike. There came a ringing crash from midair—a pair of golden cymbals dropped down and clapped over the Pilgrim, head and feet together, sealing him within.

Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk, in their alarm, hastily plied rake and staff, but the arhats and Revealers, the holy monks and adepts, surged forward and surrounded them. The two of them, caught off guard, were all seized; Sanzang too was taken; and all of them were bound with cords and ropes, tightly trussed and secured.

It turned out that the one who wore the appearance of the Buddha on the lotus throne was a demon king, and the host of arhats were all little fiends. They cast off the Buddha's image and showed once more their demon forms. The three were carried off to be stored in the rear, while the Pilgrim was shut inside the golden cymbals, never to be opened again, and set upon the jeweled dais, to be melted into pus and blood within three days and three nights. When he was melted, they would steam the other three in an iron cage and make a meal of them. Truly:

The green-eyed ape knew the false from the true; Seeing the image, the Chan mind would bow to the golden body. The Yellow Matron, blind of both eyes, joined in the worship; The Wood Mother, simple-hearted, took

part in the talk. The evil fiend, grown strong, oppressed the true nature; The demon chief, nursing malice, deceived gods and men. Truly the Way was small and the demon great; Wrongly entering the by-path, they wasted their bodies in vain.

Then the host of fiends stored the three away in the rear, tied up the horse behind, and packed his cassock and monk's cap into the luggage bundle, which they too stored away. Then they kept strict watch on all sides. Of that no more.

Now the Pilgrim, shut inside the golden cymbals in pitchy blackness, was burning with heat, his whole body streaming with sweat. He rammed left and bumped right, but could not get out. In desperation he struck wildly with his iron cudgel, but could not move the cymbals a hair's breadth. With no plan left to him, he strained his body outward, meaning to burst the cymbals open; he made a magic sign and grew to a height of a thousand fathoms and more—but the cymbals grew with him, without the slightest seam or chink of light.

Then he made another sign and shrank his body down, smaller even than a mustard seed—but the cymbals shrank along with him, without a single hole or opening. He blew a breath of immortal air on his iron cudgel and cried, "Change!" and it changed into a banner pole, bracing the cymbals apart. Then he plucked out two of the longest hairs from the back of his head and cried, "Change!" They turned into five-petaled plum-blossom drills, which he set to work at the foot of the pole. He drilled a thousand and more times, but only a dull grinding sound resulted, and not a particle would shift.

The Pilgrim grew frantic. He made a magic sign and recited a spell—"Om! Lan! Still the Dharma realm! Qian's primal power, all things prosper!"—and summoned the Guardians of the Five Quarters, the Six Dings and Six Jias, and the eighteen Protectors of the Faith, who all stood outside the golden cymbals and said: "Great Sage, we are all of us guarding the master and keeping the demon from harming him—why have you summoned us here?"

"My master refused to listen to my advice," said the Pilgrim, "and even if you were to let him be killed, it would serve him right! But why don't you work your magic quickly and pry these cymbals open to let me out? We can deal with things afterward. There is no light in here, and my whole body is burning and stifling—am I to be smothered to death?"

The gods did indeed try to pry the cymbals open, but it was as if they had grown together into one piece; they could not lift them a hair's breadth.

"Great Sage," said the Gold-Headed Revealer, "I know not what treasure these cymbals may be, but top and bottom have grown into a single block. This little god's strength is slight—I cannot move them."

"Inside here," said the Pilgrim, "I have used no end of magic power, and still they will not budge."

Hearing this, the Revealer bade the six Ding gods guard Tang Sanzang, the six Jia gods watch over the golden cymbals, and all the Protectors keep watch before and behind. He himself rose on his auspicious light, and in a moment burst in through the South Gate of Heaven. Without waiting for a summons, he went straight beneath the Hall of Miraculous Mist, saw the Jade Emperor, prostrated himself, and memorialized: "Your Majesty, your servant is the envoy of the Guardians of the Five Quarters. The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, escorting the Tang monk to fetch the scriptures, has met on the road with a mountain where there is a Lesser Thunderclap Monastery. The Tang monk mistook it for Numinous Mountain and went in to worship, but it was all a falsehood set up by a demon, who has trapped and confined the master and disciples. He has clapped the Great Sage inside a pair of golden cymbals, with no way in or out, and he is near death. I have come especially to memorialize Your Majesty."

The Jade Emperor at once gave a decree: "Send the twenty-eight constellations, and go quickly to dispel the calamity and subdue the demon."

The constellations dared not delay in the least. Following the Revealer, they left the Heavenly Gate and came within the mountain gate. It was about the second watch. Because the demon had captured the Tang monk, the old demon had rewarded the big and little fiends, and they had gone to sleep, each to his own place.

The constellations made no disturbance at all, but went up to the outside of the cymbals and announced: "Great Sage, we are the twenty-eight constellations sent by the Jade Emperor to rescue you."

The Pilgrim was overjoyed to hear it. "Strike with your weapons and break it open—old Sun will come out!"

"We dare not strike it," said the constellations. "This thing is a treasure of solid gold; if we strike it, it will ring out, and the ringing will startle the demons—and then it will be hard indeed to rescue you. Let us pry at it with our weapons; when you see any glint of light inside, come out."

"Just so," said the Pilgrim. See them—those with spears use spears, those with swords use swords, those with sabers use sabers, those with axes use axes. Some shouldered it, some lifted it, some pried, some wrenched—they labored away until the third watch, and still it would not stir in the least, as if it had been cast in one single piece. Inside, the Pilgrim peered this way and that, crawled over and rolled over, but could not see a trace of light.

The Golden Dragon of the Horn mansion said: "Great Sage, do not fret. This treasure must be an As-You-Will thing, and certainly it can change its size. Inside there, feel about with your hand along the joining seam; let me push my horn-tip in, and you can transform yourself and slip out through the loosened place."

The Pilgrim did as he was told, groping about inside. The constellation shrank his body, and his horn-tip, fine as a needle's point, was worked in along the seam of the cymbals. It took the poor fellow every ounce of his strength—a thousand jun of it—before he could thrust it through to the inside. Then he worked his magic on his body and his horn and cried, "Grow! Grow! Grow!" and the horn grew until it was as thick as a rice bowl.

The rim of the cymbal did not seem to be of cast gold at all, but as if grown of flesh and skin, and it gripped tightly about the Golden Dragon's horn, without the slightest gap anywhere around. The Pilgrim felt his horn and called out: "It's no good! There is not a hair's breadth of looseness above or below! There is nothing for it—bear the pain a little and carry me out."

A fine Great Sage! He changed his gold-banded cudgel into a steel drill, bored a hole through the tip of the dragon's horn, shrank his body to the size of a mustard seed, crouched inside the drill-hole, and called: "Pull your horn out! Pull your horn out!" The constellation again spent no end of effort before he could pull it out, and when he did, his strength was spent and his sinews slack, and he collapsed to the ground.

The Pilgrim then slipped out through the drill-hole in the horn-tip, showed his true form, snatched up his iron cudgel, and brought it down upon the cymbals with a thunderous crash—like a bronze mountain collapsing—splitting the golden cymbals open. Alas, that holy vessel of the Buddhist faith was smashed into a thousand and more scattered bits of gold! The twenty-eight constellations were startled out of their wits, the hair of the Guardians of the Five Quarters stood on end, and the host of big and little fiends all woke from their dreams. The old demon king, starting up in alarm from his sleep, flung on his clothes, beat the drum, and mustered the host of fiends, each grasping his weapon.

It was nearly dawn by then. They surged up to the foot of the jeweled dais and saw Sun Wukong and the ranked constellations standing round the shattered cymbals. The demon king turned pale with fright and at once commanded: "Little ones! Bolt the front gate tight—do not let a single soul out!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim at once took the constellation host with him, mounted the clouds, and leapt away into the ninth heaven. The demon king gathered up the broken gold, drew up his demon troops, and arrayed them outside the mountain gate.

Nursing his grievance, the demon king armed himself, took up his short, supple wolf-toothed club, and came out before his ranks, shouting: "Sun Wukong! If you are a real man, you won't take yourself off to the far skies! Come forward quickly and fight three rounds with me!"

The Pilgrim could not contain himself. He led the constellations down, brought his cloud to rest, and looked at the demon to see what manner of creature he was. This was his appearance:

His hair was disheveled, bound with a flat, thin gold band; His eyes blazed, and two yellow brows bristled vertically above them. His nose hung like a gall bladder, with wide-flaring nostrils; His mouth was square, with sharp and pointed teeth. He wore a suit of riveted chain-mail armor, Girt with a sash of raw silk with clustered tassels. On his feet a pair of black leather boots; In his hand a single wolf-toothed club. His form was beast-like, yet no beast; His face was human, yet no man.

The Pilgrim thrust forward his iron cudgel and shouted: "What sort of monster are you, that dare pass yourself off as the Buddha, seize a mountain, and set up a false Lesser Thunderclap Monastery!"

"This ape," said the demon king, "does not know my name, and so he comes to affront my immortal mountain. This place is called the Lesser Western Heaven. Because I cultivated the Way and won the true fruition, Heaven bestowed on me these jeweled towers and precious halls. My name is the Old Buddha of the Yellow Brows; the folk hereabouts do not know it, and only call me the Yellow-Browed Demon, or Grandfather Yellow-Brow. I have long known that you were traveling west and had some skill, and so I set up this image to display my powers, to lure your master in, and to make a wager with you. If you can outfight me, I will spare your master and disciples and let you all win the true fruition; if you cannot, I will beat you all to death, and go myself to see the Tathagata and fetch the scriptures, and become the true fruit of the Central Land."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Demon, no more tall talk! If you want a wager, come up quickly and take this cudgel!"

The demon king, grinning with delight, parried with his wolf-toothed club. A fine battle it was:

Two cudgels, not alike— Tell of them, and each has its own shape: One short and supple, a weapon of the Buddhist faith; One hard and strong, hidden away in the ocean treasury. Both have the art of changing at their master's will; This time they meet to contend in strength. The short, supple wolf-toothed club, decked in mixed brocade; The hard gold-banded cudgel, in dragon-serpent form. Thick or thin, both worthy of praise; Long or short, both handy to wield. Ape and demon fight together— This battle is no sham at all. The tamed ape, upholding the faith, plays the Heart-Ape; The wicked fiend, cheating Heaven, puts on false semblances. Anger and hatred—neither shows any mercy; Fierce and fell, each has his own style. One strikes at the head, hand up, with never a slackening; The other parries and thrusts full in the face, with no yielding. Spitting clouds, they darken the shining sun; Belching mist, they blot out the peaks and ridges. Cudgel meets cudgel as the two clash— Forgetting life and death, all for Sanzang's sake.

Watch the two of them fight through fifty rounds without victory or defeat.

At the mountain gate, gongs clashed and drums rolled as the host of fiends shouted and waved their banners. On this side, the twenty-eight constellations, the heavenly soldiers, together with the Guardians of the Five Quarters and the host of sages, each shouldering his weapon, raised a great shout and surrounded the demon chief in their midst. The fiends outside the mountain gate were so frightened that they could hardly beat their drums, and their hands trembled so that they could not strike the gongs.

But the old demon was utterly unafraid. With one hand he wielded his wolf-toothed club against the host, and with the other he undid an old white cloth bag from his waist. He tossed it up into the air; with a swish it swept up the Great Sage Sun, the twenty-eight constellations, and the Guardians of the Five Quarters—all of them, in a single toss of the bag. He swung it over his shoulder and stalked back the way he had come, while

the little fiends, every one of them, returned rejoicing in victory.

The old demon ordered the little ones to fetch thirty or forty hempen cords. When the bag was untied, they took one and bound one, until all were bound fast, their bones soft and their sinews numb, their skin wrinkled and shrunken. Bound tight, they were carried to the rear and, good or bad, thrown to the ground. The demon king again ordered a feast and drank his fill, from morning till evening, before they scattered to their quarters. Of that no more.

Then the Great Sage Sun and all the gods lay bound until midnight, when suddenly they heard the sound of bitter weeping. Listening closely, they found it was Sanzang's voice, weeping:

"I hate myself for not heeding you then, Which has brought this disaster upon me now. Within the golden cymbals you were hurt— But who knows that I lie bound in hempen cords? The four of us have met with bitter fate; Three thousand deeds of merit all cast down. How can this strait and difficult pass be solved, That we may go free and return to the Western land!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim felt pity for him and thought: "Although the master would not listen to me and has now met this cruelty, still, in the midst of his calamity, he has thoughts of old Sun. While the night is still and the demons sleep, with no one on guard, let me go and loose them all, that they may escape with their lives." A fine Great Sage! He used the art of evasion, shrank his body, slipped out of his bonds, came up to Tang Sanzang's side, and called softly, "Master."

The elder recognized his voice and said: "Why have you come here?" The Pilgrim quietly told him the whole story. The elder, greatly delighted, said: "Disciple! Save me at once! From now on, all matters shall be as you decide—I will never be obstinate again!"

Only then did the Pilgrim set to work. First he untied the master, then released Bajie and the Sha Monk, then loosed the twenty-eight constellations and the Guardians of the Five Quarters one by one, and led the horse over, telling them to hurry out ahead. But once he was out the door, he did not know where the luggage was, and went back to look for it.

"Great Sage, you put things above people!" said the Golden Dragon of the Horn mansion. "Since you have rescued your master, that should be enough—what are you looking for luggage for?"

"People are certainly important," said the Pilgrim, "but the robe and the bowl are even more so. In that bundle are the travel documents, the brocade cassock, and the purple-gold alms bowl—all of them supreme treasures of the Buddhist faith. How could I not want them!"

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "you go and look for it. We'll go on ahead and wait for you on the road." See the constellation host clustering round Tang Sanzang, working their magic and divine arts together, whisking them all out of the walls on a gust of wind, to the main road and down the mountain slope, where they halted on level ground to wait.

About the third watch, the Great Sage Sun, moving softly and stepping slowly, went back inside. The doors and gates were fast, layer upon layer. He climbed up to the high tower to look, but the windows were all shut. He wanted to go down again, but feared the lattice would creak and dared not push it. Making a magic sign, he shook himself and changed into a spirit mouse—commonly called a bat. Do you know what he looked like?

Pointed head, just like a rat's; Eyes bright, just like a rat's too. With wings it comes out at dusk; In the darkness of day it hides. It hides its body in the crevices of the tiles, And hunts its food by snapping up mosquitoes. It loves best the clear bright moon, And flies out when the time is right.

Slipping in through the unsealed gap beneath the eaves-tiles, he crept on, crossing doors and passing thresholds, until he came to the middle of the place and saw, beneath the window of the third tower, a brilliant beam of tiny light—not the light of lamp or candle, not the light of incense-fire, nor the light of flying clouds, nor of flashing lightning. Half flying, half hopping, he drew near to the light and saw that it was the luggage bundle giving off light.

The demon had taken off Tang Sanzang's cassock and, without folding it, had stuffed it carelessly into the bundle. The cassock was after all a treasure of the Buddha, set with As-You-Will pearls, mani pearls, red agate, purple coral, relics, and night-shining pearls—that was why its radiance shone through.

At the sight of the robe and bowl, his heart was glad. He showed his true form, took up the bundle, and without troubling whether the carrying ropes were straight or crooked, swung it onto his shoulder and made off downstairs. But one end slipped loose, and with a thud it fell to the floorboards with a loud clatter.

Ah! Just think of it: the old demon, as luck would have it, was sleeping downstairs. The noise startled him awake; he leapt up and shouted wildly: "Someone's here! Someone's here!"

The big and little fiends all rose, lit lamps and kindled torches, and shouted together as they searched before and behind. Some came to report: "Tang Sanzang has escaped!" Others came to report: "The Pilgrim and all the rest have escaped!"

The old demon at once sent the order: "Seize them! Be watchful at every gate!" Hearing this, the Pilgrim feared he would fall into the demon's net again; he could not carry the bundle, so he somersaulted out through the tower window and fled.

The demon searched before and behind but could not find Tang Sanzang and the rest. Seeing that dawn was about to break, he took up his club and led his host in pursuit, until he saw the twenty-eight constellations, the Guardians of the Five Quarters, and the other gods, in surging clouds and mists, halted below on the mountain slope.

The demon king gave a shout: "Where do you think you're going! Here I come!"

The Wood Flood-Dragon of the Horn mansion called out urgently: "Brothers! The monster is coming!" Then the Golden Dragon of the Horn mansion, the Earth Bat of the Woman mansion, the Sun Hare of the Room mansion, the Moon Fox of the Heart mansion, the Fire Tiger of the Tail mansion, the Water Leopard of the Winnowing Basket mansion, the Wood Xiezhi of the Dipper mansion, the Golden Ox of the Ox mansion, the Earth Raccoon of the Root mansion, the Sun Rat of the Emptiness mansion, the Moon Swallow of the Rooftop mansion, the Fire Boar of the House mansion, the Water Beast of the Wall mansion, the Wood Wolf of the Straddler mansion, the Golden Dog of the Bond mansion, the Earth Swine of the Stomach mansion, the Sun Cock of the Pleiades mansion, the Moon Crow of the Net mansion, the Fire Monkey of the Beak mansion, the Water Ape of the Triad mansion, the Wood Hound of the Well mansion, the Golden Ram of the Ghost mansion, the Earth Deer of the Willow mansion, the Sun Horse of the Star mansion, the Moon Deer of the Extended Net mansion, the Fire Serpent of the Wings mansion, and the Water Earthworm of the Chariot mansion—leading the Gold-Headed Revealer, the Silver-Headed Revealer, the six Jias and six Dings and the other gods, and the Protectors of the Faith, together with Bajie and the Sha Monk—but not Tang Sanzang, and having left behind the white dragon horse—each grasping his weapon, they surged forward together.

The demon king saw them and laughed a cold laugh. He gave a whistle, and four or five thousand big and little fiends, each mighty in strength and prowess, joined in a confused battle on the western slope. A fine fight:

The demon chief, fierce and evil, oppressed the true nature; The true nature, gentle and soft—how could it withstand the demon? A hundred schemes were tried, yet hard to escape the suffering; A thousand clever

arts, yet none could bring accord. The gods of heaven came to protect; The host of sages lent their arms to the fray. For sparing him, the Wood Mother suffered loss; For firmness of purpose, one must thank the Yellow Matron. The confused battle shook Heaven and Earth; The fierce contest spread nets and set snares. Over there they wave banners and shout; Over here they beat drums and clash gongs. Spears and sabers dense, cold light flickering; Halberds and swords in droves, much murderous air. The demon troops were fierce and bold— How could the heavenly soldiers hold them off! Sad clouds veiled the sun and moon; Gloomy mists covered the hills and rivers. Bitterly struggling and tugging, they fought on— All because Sanzang bowed to Amitabha.

The demon grew all the more fierce and bold, leading his host forward in a sweeping attack. Just at the moment when neither side could claim victory, they heard the Pilgrim shout aloud: "Old Sun is here!"

Bajie met him and asked: "What about the luggage?"

"Old Sun's life was almost more than he could save," said the Pilgrim, "and you talk of luggage!"

The Sha Monk, gripping his precious staff, said: "No more talk! Hurry up and fight the demon!"

The constellations, the Revealers, the Dings and Jias, and the other gods were surrounded by the host of fiends in the thick of the fight, and the old demon came with his club to strike at the three of them. The Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk cast aside cudgel and staff, and plied cudgel and rake to hold him off. Truly the sky grew dark and the earth dim; they could not win the day, and they fought on until the sun star sank in the west at the root of the mountains and the moon star rose in the east over the sea-cliffs.

Seeing that evening had come, the demon gave a whistle, told the host of fiends to be on their guard, and brought out his treasure. Sun Wukong saw it plainly: the monster untied the cloth bag and took it in his hand.

"Oh no! Run!" cried the Pilgrim. Heedless of Bajie, the Sha Monk, and the host of gods, he somersaulted away up into the ninth heaven. The gods, Bajie, and the Sha Monk did not understand what was happening, and the bag was flung up again and took them all in—only the Pilgrim got away.

The demon king withdrew his troops to the monastery, ordered ropes fetched, and had them bound as before. Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk were hung high from the beams, the white horse was tethered in the rear, and the gods were all bound and carried into a cellar, whose cover was sealed and locked. The host of fiends obeyed, and stowed them all away. Of that no more.

The Pilgrim, having leapt into the ninth heaven and saved his life, saw the demon troops turn back without unfurling their banners, and knew that all the others had been captured. He pressed down his auspicious light and landed on the summit of the eastern mountain. Gnashing his teeth at the monster, shedding tears for Tang Sanzang, gazing up at the sky, he suddenly burst into lamentation: "Master! In what former life did you build up this pass of calamity, that in this life you should meet a demon at every step? With such bitter suffering that cannot be escaped, what is to be done!"

Alone, he sighed for a long time, then composed his spirit and thought, asking his heart of his heart: "This demon—what sort of bag can it be, that it can hold so many things? Now it has taken in the heavenly gods and generals, so many of them. I would ask Heaven for help, but I fear the Jade Emperor will take offense. I remember there is a True Warrior of the North, titled the Demon-Quelling Celestial Venerable, who now dwells on Mount Wudang in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. Let me go and invite him to rescue my master from this calamity." Truly:

The immortal Way not yet achieved, ape and horse are scattered; Heart and spirit without a master, the Five Elements run dry.

But what came of this journey we do not know—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 66

The Gods Suffer the Demon's Venomous Hand; Maitreya Binds the Monster

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun, with no plan left to him, rose on a cloud of auspicious light, mounted his somersault cloud, and headed straight back for the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa, to worship at Mount Wudang and entreat the Demon-Quelling Celestial Venerable, that he might deliver Sanzang, Bajie, the Sha Monk, and the host of heavenly soldiers from their calamity. He never paused in midair, and in less than a day he already caught sight of the Patriarch's immortal land. Gently he brought down his cloud and looked carefully round him. What a place!

A mighty bastion of the southeast, a divine peak at midheaven. Lotus Bud Peak rises sharp and splendid; Purple Canopy Ridge towers grand. The waters of nine rivers find their end here—Jing and Yang lie far away; The hills of a hundred Yue lands join here, and constellations Wing and Axle are many. Above are precious grottoes of the Great Void, the numinous terrace of Zhu and Lu. Thirty-six palaces ring with golden chimes; Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims come up to burn incense. Shun made his progress here; Yu prayed here—with jade tallies and golden books. Blue birds fly among the towers and pavilions; banners stream their crimson hems. Earth set this famous mountain here to awe the universe; Heaven opened an immortal land that pierces the very void. A few trees of langgan plum are just now in bloom; Over all the mountain the jade grasses unfold their colors. Dragons lurk at the bottoms of the ravines; tigers crouch within the cliffs. Secluded valleys murmur as if whispering; tame deer draw near to walk with men. White cranes roost with the clouds in ancient junipers; Blue luan and red phoenixes sing facing the sun. This is the true immortal land of the Master-Minister of Jade Emptiness, The merciful, world-governing gate of the Golden Portal.

This Patriarch, the Lord of the High God, was born of the King of Pure Joy and Queen Shansheng, the Queen of Victorious Goodness. The queen dreamed she swallowed a beam of sunlight, and upon waking found herself with child. She carried the babe fourteen months, and at the hour of Wu on the first day of the third month, in the jia-chen year, the first year of the era Kaihuang, he was born in the royal palace. That worthy—as a child he was brave and daring; grown, he was divine and numinous. He would not take up the throne, but devoted himself wholly to cultivation. His parents could not hold him back: he abandoned the royal palace, plunged into the mysteries, entered into deep meditation here in this mountain. When his work was done and his merit complete, he ascended to heaven in broad daylight. The Jade Emperor bestowed upon him by decree the name Zhenwu—the True Warrior.

Mysterious Void, answering on high; tortoise and serpent joined in one form. Through the whole zodiac and the six directions, all acclaim him Lord of Myriad Numinous Powers. No darkness escapes his inspection; nothing manifest but he brings it to perfection. At every kalpa's end and every kalpa's beginning, he mows down the demon sprites.

The Great Sage Sun, feasting his eyes upon the immortal scenery, soon came to the First, the Second, and the Third Gates of Heaven, and so to the outside of the Palace of Supreme Harmony, where suddenly, amid auspicious light and propicious vapor, he saw five hundred Divine Constables thronging together. One of the constables came forward to meet him: "Who is this that comes?"

"I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong," said the Great Sage, "and I would see the Master-Minister."

The constables, hearing this, went in at once to report. The Patriarch descended from the hall at once and received him into the Palace of Supreme Harmony.

The Pilgrim made his bow: "There is a matter in which I must presume upon you."

"What matter?" asked the Patriarch.

"I am escorting the Tang monk to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven," said the Pilgrim, "and on the road we have met with peril and disaster. In the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift there is a mountain called the Lesser Western Heaven, and in it the Lesser Thunderclap Monastery, where there dwells a demon. When my master passed within the mountain gate and saw arhats and Revealors, bhikkhus and holy monks ranked in rows, he took them for true Buddhas; but just as he cast himself down to worship, he was seized and bound. Then I, careless in my guard, had a pair of golden cymbals flung over me—a covering without a hair's breadth of seam, closing on me like a vise. It was a great mercy that the Gold-Headed Revealer memorialized the Jade Emperor, who dispatched the twenty-eight constellations down to earth that very night; but they could not pry the cymbals open. Happily the Golden Dragon of the Horn mansion thrust his horn into the cymbal and delivered me out. I smashed the golden cymbals, which startled the monster from his sleep. In the fighting that followed, he flung out a white cloth carrying-bag, and with it bagged me together with the twenty-eight constellations and the Revealors of the Five Quarters, every one of us, and had us bound with cords. That night I escaped, and delivered the constellations and the rest, together with my master and his party. Later, when I went back to search for my robe and bowl, I startled the demon awake again, and there was more battle with the heavenly soldiers. The monster brought out that bag once more, and while he was fiddling and fidgeting with it, I, knowing the trick from before, slipped away—but the others were bagged again, just as before. I have no plan left to me. I have come especially to worship the Master-Minister and beg a helping hand."

The Patriarch said: "In years past I awed the North and held the rank of the True Warrior, mowing down all the demons and monsters of the world—that was by decree of the Jade Emperor. Later, with hair unbound and feet bare, bestrode by the Serpent and the divine Tortoise, I led the five thunder generals, the giant horned dragons and lions, fierce beasts and venomous dragons, and subdued the black demonic miasma of the northeast—that was by summons and talisman of the Celestial Worthy of the Primal Origin. Today I quietly enjoy Mount Wudang and take my ease in the Hall of Supreme Harmony; seas and mountains have long been at peace, and heaven and earth calm and serene. In the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa and the Northern Continent of Kuru alike, the demons have been mowed down and the evil ghosts have hidden their tracks. Now that the Great Sage has descended to visit me, I cannot but act; yet, as there is no decree from the upper world, I dare not stir up arms on my own authority. Were I to dispatch the gods by my own law, I fear the Jade Emperor would call me to account; but to refuse you flatly, Great Sage, would be for me to slight the claims of friendship. I reckon that whatever demons may be on your western road, they are no great plague after all. I will now send the two generals, Tortoise and Snake, together with the five great divine dragons, to strengthen your arm—depend upon it, the demon shall be seized and your master delivered from his trouble."

The Pilgrim bowed his thanks to the Patriarch, and then, together with the Tortoise and Snake generals and the dragon gods, each leading picked and veteran troops, returned to the borders of the Western Continent.

In less than a day they reached the Lesser Thunderclap Monastery, brought down their clouds, and went straight up to the outside of the mountain gate to challenge battle.

Now the story tells how the Yellow-Browed Demon had gathered his host of monsters beneath the precious tower and was saying: "The Pilgrim Sun has not come these two days—he must have gone off somewhere again to borrow troops."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when the little fiends at the front gate came rushing in to report: "The Pilgrim has brought several dragon, snake, and tortoise sorts, and they are challenging battle outside the gate!"

"How did that monkey come by dragon, snake, and tortoise followers?" said the demon. "Where in the world do such creatures hail from?" He armed himself at once, marched out through the mountain gate, and shouted

on high: "What manner of dragon gods are you, that dare come affront my immortal domain?"

The five dragons and the two generals, fearsome of aspect and brimming with spirit, roared back: "You filthy monster! We are the five dragon gods and the Tortoise and Snake generals who stand before the Hunyuan Patriarch, the Demon-Quelling Celestial Venerable of the Palace of Supreme Harmony on Mount Wudang. Invited hither by the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, and summoned by the talisman of our Celestial Venerable, we have come to seize you, demon! Quickly hand out the Tang monk and the constellations and all the rest, and you shall be spared your death! If not, every monster on this mountain shall have his corpse chopped to splinters, and every hall in this place burned to ashes!"

At these words the monster's heart filled with fury: "What magic power have you beasts, to mouth such boasts! Stand not off! Taste my cudgel!" Then the five dragons rolled up clouds and made rain, and the two generals scattered earth and flung sand; each gripping spear, saber, sword, or halberd, they surged in to attack together, and the Great Sage Sun followed behind, plying his iron cudgel.

What a battle this was! The fierce demon displayed his arms; the Pilgrim had gone begging troops. The fierce demon displayed his arms, usurping the precious tower to counterfeit the Buddha's likeness; the Pilgrim had gone begging troops, journeying far to the precious realm to borrow the dragon gods. Tortoise and Snake beget water and fire; the demon monsters wield their blades. Five dragons come to the western road under heaven's charge; the Pilgrim follows after, all for his master's sake. Sword-light and halberd-gleam sway like lightning in colors; spear-shine and saber-flash glitter like rainbows. This one's wolf-toothed club is tough, short, and supple; that one's gold-banded cudgel follows his fancy like his own heart.

One hears the thudding crashes like firecrackers popping, and the ringing clashes like struck gold. Water and fire come together to punish the monster; blades and weapons swarm and crowd about the demon sprite. Their battle-cries startle the wolves and tigers; the clamor shakes the ghosts and gods. The melee at its very height, still no victor shown—when the demon once more fetches out his treasure and his jewel.

The Pilgrim, commanding the five dragons and two generals, fought the demon through half a double-hour, when the demon untied the carrying-bag and took it in hand.

The Pilgrim saw it, and his heart lurched: "Gentlemen, be careful!" But the dragon gods, the Tortoise, and the Snake did not know what there was to be careful about; one and all they halted their weapons and closed in to shield him. With a whirring whoosh the demon flung the carrying-bag up into the air. The Great Sage Sun could not look after the five dragons and two generals; he mounted his somersault cloud and leapt away into the ninth heaven to escape. And the dragon gods and the Tortoise and Snake were bagged once more—one fling of the bag took them all.

The demon returned to the monastery in triumph, had them bound with cords as well, carried them into the cellar, and covered it over. Of this no more.

Now watch the Great Sage bring down his cloud and slump aslant upon the mountain crest, listless and dull, groaning in bitterness: "This monster is formidable past all bearing!"

Unknowing, he closed his eyes, as if asleep, when suddenly he heard someone call: "Great Sage, don't pretend to sleep! Bestir yourself, and quickly seek rescue! Your master's life hangs upon a moment!"

The Pilgrim's eyes flew open and he leapt up to look: it was the Duty Officer of the Day.

"You shaggy god!" the Pilgrim bawled at him. "Where have you been all this while, gorging yourself on blood offerings, never once showing up for the roll call—and now you come here to startle me! Stretch that ankle of yours over here, and let old Sun give you a couple of cudgel-blows to cheer his gloom!"

The Duty Officer hurriedly made his bow: "Great Sage, you are the Happy Immortal of the world of men—what gloom can you possibly have! We have long been under the Bodhisattva's command to guard the Tang monk in secret, together with the local deities and the other gods, never daring to leave his side for a moment; that is why we could not come constantly to pay our respects. How can you instead lay the blame on us?"

"If you are guarding him," said the Pilgrim, "then where are the constellations, the Revealors, the Guardian Sangharamas, and my master's party now confined by the demon? What torments do they suffer?"

"Your master and your brothers hang bound beneath the corridor of the precious hall," said the Duty Officer, "and the constellations and all the rest are stowed away in the cellar, suffering. These two days we heard no news of the Great Sage; but just now we saw the demon seize the dragon gods, the Tortoise, and the Snake, and carry them too into the cellar, and so I knew they were troops invited by the Great Sage. Your little god has come especially to find you. Great Sage, do not shrink from weariness—by all means hasten once more, urgently, to seek rescue."

At these words the Pilgrim could not hold back, and tears dripped down before the Duty Officer: "Now I am ashamed to climb again to the Palace of Heaven, and shamed to visit the ocean treasury! I dread the Bodhisattva's asking me my reasons; I cannot bear to face the Tathagata's jade image! Those just carried off were the Tortoise, the Snake, and the five dragon saints of the Master-Minister, the True Warrior. If you tell me there is nowhere left to turn for rescue—then what am I to do?"

The Duty Officer laughed: "Great Sage, take heart. Your little god has thought of a band of crack troops: invite them here, and they can surely bring him down. Just now you went to Mount Wudang—that is in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. This troop is also in the Southern Continent, at Mount Xuyi and the city of Bin—that is today's Sizhou. There dwells a Great Sage, the National Preceptor King Bodhisattva, whose magic powers are vast. Under him he has a disciple called Little Prince Zhang, and there are also the four great divine generals; in years past they subdued the Water Mother Goddess. If you go now and invite him, and he comes to lend his gracious aid, he can be counted on to seize the monster and save your master."

The Pilgrim's heart lifted: "Go you and guard my master; see that no harm touches him, while old Sun goes to do the inviting."

The Pilgrim mounted his somersault cloud, slipped away from the demon's haunts, and sped straight for Mount Xuyi. In less than a day he arrived, and looked closely. What a fine place! South, it nears the fords of the Great River; north, it overlooks the waters of the Huai. East, it opens upon the ocean's capes; west, it joins with Fengfu. On the mountaintop, towers and abbeys rise craggy and grand; in the mountain hollows, ravine springs surge and well. Grotesque rocks tower and topple; tall pines spread their graceful strength. A hundred fruits hang fresh in their season; a thousand flowering boughs open toward the sun. People thronging to and fro like columns of ants; boats spreading home-bound wide like lines of wild geese.

Above are the Abbey of Auspicious Rock, the Palace of the Eastern Peak, the Shrine of the Five Manifestations, and the Tortoise Mountain Temple, their chime-tones and incense smoke piercing the azure vault; there are also the Glass Spring, the Five-Pagoda Ravine, the Terrace of the Eight Immortals, and the Apricot Garden, their mountain light and tree colors mirrored in the city of Bin. White clouds stretch across and pass not over; secluded birds, weary, still sing on. Why speak of the beauty of Tai, Song, Heng, and Hua? The immortal scenery of this place is very Penglai and Yingzhou.

The Great Sage could not see the half of it. He crossed the Huai River, entered within the city of Bin, and came to the outside of the mountain gate of the Great Sage Chan Monastery, where he saw halls lofty and imposing, long corridors splendid with color, and one precious pagoda towering high. Truly:

A thousand zhang it stands, thrust through the clouds and leaning on the Milky Way; Look up, and its golden vase shines through the azure sky. Above and below, its radiance congeals the very universe; East and west, its shadowless brightness lights the curtained lattices. Wind blows its precious bells—one hears the music of Heaven; Sunlight on its icy dragon faces the Buddhist palace. The numinous birds that fly and roost there pour out their speech from time to time; Gaze far toward the Huai River—boundless, without end.

Looking as he walked, the Pilgrim came at last to the second gate. The National Preceptor King Bodhisattva had known of his coming long before, and came out at once with Little Prince Zhang to welcome him. When they had met and exchanged courtesies, the Pilgrim said: "I am escorting the Tang monk to the Western Heaven for the scriptures. On the road there is a Lesser Thunderclap Monastery, and in it a Yellow-Browed Monster who counterfeits the Lord Buddha. My master, unable to tell the true from the false, bowed down to him and was seized. Then the monster clapped the golden cymbals over me; happily the constellations came down from Heaven and got me out. I smashed the golden cymbals and did battle with him, and then with a cloth carrying-bag he bagged the heavenly gods, the Revealors, the Guardian Sangharamas, together with my master and my brothers, every last one. I went before to Mount Wudang to beg rescue from the Emperor of the Dark Heavens, and he dispatched the five dragons and the Tortoise and Snake to take the monster—but they too were bagged by one fling of that bag. Your disciple has nothing left to lean upon; therefore I come to worship and entreat the Bodhisattva to unfold his mighty power, and with the same divine might that took in the Water Mother, the wondrous art that delivers the living, to go with your disciple and save my master from this calamity! When the scriptures are fetched back, they shall be handed down forever in the Middle Kingdom, spreading abroad the wisdom of our Buddha and advancing the paramitas of prajna."

The National Preceptor King said: "This business of yours today is truly for the flourishing of our Buddhist teaching, and by rights I ought to go myself. But the season is early summer, the very time when the Huai waters rise in flood, and I have but newly taken in the Water Ape Great Sage. That rascal stirs himself up whenever he meets water; I fear that once I am gone, he will seize the empty chance to play his wicked tricks, and there would be no god to check him. I shall send my little disciple at the head of the four generals to add their strength to yours, to refine the demon out and take him captive."

The Pilgrim gave his thanks, and together with the four generals and Little Prince Zhang mounted the clouds once more and returned to the Lesser Western Heaven, going straight to the Lesser Thunderclap Monastery. Little Prince Zhang wielded a white paper-mulberry spear; the four great generals swung four Kunwu swords; and with the Great Sage Sun they advanced to hurl curses and challenge battle.

The little fiends ran again to report, and the demon king once more led his host of monsters out with drumming and shouting: "Macaque! Whom have you fetched for yourself this time?"

Scarcely were the words out when Little Prince Zhang directed the four generals forward, and they bawled: "Filthy demon! There's no flesh on your face—no wonder you never knew we were here!"

"What quarter's little general is this," said the demon king, "that dares come lend him a hand?"

"I am the disciple of the Great Sage, the National Preceptor King Bodhisattva of Sizhou," said the prince, "commanding the four great divine generals, under orders to seize you!"

The demon king laughed: "What martial skill has a child like you, that you dare come here and fling your impudence about?"

"You wish to know my martial skill?" said the prince. "Hear me tell it:

My ancestral home was in the west, the kingdom of Drifting Sands; My father was in truth the king of that sand realm. From childhood my body was plagued with sickness and pain, My fate crossed by the Canopy, that baleful star. Because I yearned toward my master for the secret of long life, By destiny we met, and he

bestowed on me the prescription. Half a grain of cinnabar drove my sickness away; I chose to follow cultivation, and not to be a king. What I have learned knows no aging; my span is one with Heaven's; My face forever keeps a young man's look. I have hastened to the Dragon-flower Assembly; I have ridden the clouds into the halls of Buddha. I have seized fog and caught the wind, and gathered in the water monsters; I have trapped dragons and tamed tigers, and awed the mountain wilds. Pitying the people, I raised the Buddhist pagoda high; Still on the sea, I deeply understood the light of the relics. My white paper-mulberry spear-point can bind a monster fast; My pale black sleeves bring demons low. Now dwelling quiet and glad within the city of Bin, Through all the great earth spreads the name—Little Zhang!"

Hearing this, the demon king gave a cold little laugh: "Prince! You gave up your kingdom to follow that National Preceptor King Bodhisattva—and what art of ageless immortality did you cultivate? Art good enough for capturing water monsters of the Huai River! Yet how could you swallow the lying nonsense of the Pilgrim Sun, and cross a thousand mountains and ten thousand rivers to come here and deliver up your life! We shall see whether you are immortal and ageless or not!"

Little Prince Zhang heard, and his heart blazed with fury. He coiled his spear and stabbed straight at the demon's face; the four great generals surged in to attack together; and the Great Sage Sun came forward plying his iron cudgel. What a demon! He stood his ground without a flicker of fear: swinging his short, supple wolf-toothed club, he parried left and warded right, thrust straight and charged crosswise. What a battle!

The little prince, with his white paper-mulberry spear; Four Kunwu swords, and stronger still. Wukong plies his gold-banded cudgel once more; With one heart they close around to slay the demon king. The demon king's magic power is truly vast: Not a shade of fear as he wards and parries every blow. The wolf-toothed club is a treasure of the Buddhas— Sword-hacks and spear-swings cannot wound it at all. One hears the wild wind howl and roar; One sees the baleful miasma roll and spread. That one, his heart set on his foolish game, displays his skills; This one, his whole mind on Buddha and the fetching of the scriptures. Time after time they charge; again and again they rage. They spew forth clouds and mist and blot the three lights, Each in fury and wrath, neither one better than the other. Long since the three vehicles, the unexcelled Law, Have brought a hundred arts to this bitter contest.

The whole company fought a long while, with neither victory nor defeat, when the demon untied his carrying-bag once again.

The Pilgrim shouted again: "Gentlemen, be careful!" But the prince and all the rest did not grasp what "careful" meant. With a swish the monster flung the bag, and the four great generals and the prince were bagged, all in one fling. Only the Pilgrim, forewarned, had slipped away and escaped. The demon king returned to the monastery in triumph, had them bound with cords, sent them into the cellar, and sealed and locked it fast. Of this no more.

This Pilgrim mounted his somersault cloud and rose into the air; only when he saw the monster march his troops back and shut his gates did he press down his auspicious light and stand upon the western slope, gazing in despair and weeping aloud:

"Master! Ever since I embraced the teaching and entered the Chan grove, I have owed the Bodhisattva a deep debt of deliverance. Guarding you westward to seek the Great Way, I hoped as your fellow to escort you up to the Thunderclap. I thought the sheep-track path would run but smooth and plain— Who could have dreamed these towering heights held monsters in wait? With a hundred plans and a thousand shifts I cannot save you; Begging east and pleading west is all labor spent in vain!"

Just at the depth of the Great Sage's desolation, he suddenly saw a many-colored cloud in the southwest sink down to earth, and a rich rain came drifting over the whole mountaintop, and someone called: "Wukong, do

you know me?"

The Pilgrim hurried forward to look, and this was the person:

Great ears spread across his cheeks, a face both square and full; Shoulders thrown wide, belly rounded, a body plump and fat. One whole breast brimming with the joy of spring; Two eyes like autumn ripples, swaying full of light. Open sleeves float free—an air of easy blessing; Straw sandals, loose and jaunty—a spirit hale and strong. Foremost of all the worthies in the Land of Bliss: Homage to Maitreya, the Laughing Monk!

When the Pilgrim saw him, he hastened to kneel and worship: "Buddha come from the East, whither are you bound? Your disciple failed to withdraw from your path—ten thousand crimes! Ten thousand crimes!"

"I have come this time," said the Buddha, "for the sake of this monster of the Lesser Thunderclap."

"Much am I bound to your Lordship's abundant virtue and great kindness," said the Pilgrim. "May I be bold to ask—this demon, of what quarter is he? A sprite of what place? And what treasure can that carrying-bag of his be? I must trouble your Lordship to enlighten me."

"He is a yellow-browed boy who tends the chimes before me," said the Buddha. "On the third day of the third month, because I had gone to the assembly of the Primal Origin, I left him behind to watch the palace. He made off with these few treasures of mine, set himself up as a false Buddha, and turned demon. That carrying-bag is my Posterior-Heaven bag, commonly called the human-race bag. And that wolf-toothed club is a mallet for striking the chimes."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he lifted his voice and cried: "What a Laughing Monk! You let the boy run off, let him pass himself off as the Lord Buddha and entrap old Sun—surely there is a fault here, a want of strictness in the household discipline!"

"For one thing, it is true I was careless and lost one of my household," said Maitreya. "For another, the demon-ordeals of you master and disciples are not yet finished; thus the hundred numinous spirits have come down into the world, and you were bound to suffer your tribulation. I have come now to take him in for you."

"This demon's magic powers are vast," said the Pilgrim, "and you, sir, have not a single weapon about you. How will you take him?"

Maitreya laughed: "Below on this hillside I have set up a thatched hut and planted a field of melons. Go you and challenge him to battle. When you join the fight, you may lose but may not win; lure him into my melon field. All my other melons are green, but you shall change yourself into one great ripe melon. When he comes and must have a melon to eat, I shall give him you to eat. Once you are down inside his belly, do whatever you please to him in there; and then, when I have taken his carrying-bag from him, we shall bag him up and carry him back."

"The plan is clever enough," said the Pilgrim, "but how will you know the changed ripe melon? And why should he be willing to follow me here?"

Maitreya laughed: "I am the Honored One who governs the world; my wisdom-eye is high and clear—how could I fail to know you! Whatever you may change into, I know it. My only fear is that the monster will not follow. So I shall teach you a spell."

"He is dead certain to try to bag me with that carrying-bag," said the Pilgrim. "Why should he follow! What spell could make him come?"

Maitreya laughed: "Hold out your hand." The Pilgrim stretched out his left hand and passed it over, and Maitreya dipped the forefinger of his right hand in divine water from his mouth, wrote on the Pilgrim's palm

the character "Forbid," and told him to clench his fist: when he stood face to face with the demon, he was to let the fist fly open, and the demon would follow.

The Pilgrim clenched his fist, happily accepting the instruction, and with one hand swinging his iron cudgel went straight to the outside of the mountain gate, calling at the top of his voice: "Demon! Your Grandpa Sun is here again! Come out quickly, and let us see which of us is master!"

The little fiends again ran helter-skelter to report. "How many troops has he brought to challenge this time?" asked the demon king.

"No troops at all," said the fiends. "Only him, alone."

The demon king laughed: "That monkey has run out of tricks and spent his strength; there is nowhere left for him to turn. Beyond all doubt he has come to deliver up his life." So once more he armed himself smartly, took his treasure, raised that light and supple wolf-toothed club, marched out, and stood shouting: "Sun Wukong! This time there is no wriggling free for you!"

"Filthy monster!" the Pilgrim cursed. "Why should I not wriggle free?"

"I have watched you," said the demon king, "run out of tricks and spend your strength, with nowhere to turn for help, forcing yourself to hold on all alone. Now that you are taken, there will never be another squad of divine soldiers to rescue you—that is why I say you cannot wriggle free this time."

"This monster doesn't know death when it grins at him!" said the Pilgrim. "Save your chatter! Taste my cudgel!"

When the demon king saw him swinging his cudgel with one hand only, he could not help laughing: "Look at that monkey, showing off his cleverness! How does he expect to manage, wielding a cudgel with a single hand?"

"Sonny!" said the Pilgrim. "You couldn't stand up to two hands of mine! If you'll keep that carrying-bag out of it, you could bring on three or five more like yourself, and old Sun's one hand would still be too much for the lot of you!"

At this the demon king said: "So be it! So be it! I'll use no treasure now; we shall fight it out honestly, hand to hand, and see which of us is cock and which is hen." And he raised his wolf-toothed club and came forward to fight.

The Pilgrim Sun met him face to face, let fly open his fist, and swung his cudgel with both hands. Under the spell of "Forbid," the demon could not bring himself to fall back; and sure enough, he did not reach for the carrying-bag, but pressed on with his club alone, chasing hard. The Pilgrim feinted once, broke off as though beaten, and ran; and the demon chased him headlong all the way down to the foot of the western slope.

The Pilgrim saw the melon field, gave a roll, burrowed in among the vines, and changed at once into one great ripe melon, ripe and sweet. The demon halted and looked all round, not knowing which way the Pilgrim had gone, and chased his way to the side of the hut, calling: "Who planted these melons?"

Maitreya had changed himself into an old melon farmer; he came out of the thatched hut and answered: "Great King, the melons are my humble planting."

"Have you any that are ripe?" asked the demon king.

"There are ripe ones," said Maitreya.

"Pick me a ripe one," called the demon king. "I am parched."

Maitreya at once took the melon that was the Pilgrim changed, and handed it to the demon king with both hands. The demon king, suspecting nothing at all, took it in hand and bit straight in.

The Pilgrim seized his chance: with one swallow he slid down beneath the demon's gullet, and without waiting for better or worse he fell to working his hands and feet—clawing the guts, scratching the belly, turning somersaults, standing on his hands—working his will inside him however he pleased. The demon rolled and writhed with the pain, gnashing his teeth and twisting his mouth, eyes brimming with tears, until he had threshed that whole melon patch like a grain-flailing floor, crying out all the while: "Enough! Enough! Will no one save me!"

Then Maitreya showed forth his true form and called out with a chuckle: "Wicked beast! Do you know me?"

The demon lifted his head and saw him, and in terror he dropped to his knees, kneading his belly with both hands, knocking his head and beating his brow, crying only: "Master! Spare my life! Spare my life! Never again! Never again!"

Maitreya stepped forward, seized him with one grip, untied the Posterior-Heaven bag from him, and wrested away his chime-striking mallet, calling: "Sun Wukong, for my sake, spare his life."

The Pilgrim's hatred and bitterness were past allaying: he went on hammering and punching away inside, left fist and right foot, punching and pummeling at random, until the monster, unable to endure the agony, collapsed upon the ground.

Maitreya said again: "Wukong, he has had enough of it; spare him now."

Only then did the Pilgrim call out: "Open your mouth wide, and let old Sun come out." Though the demon's belly was wrung with cramps, the hurt had not yet reached his heart. As the proverb says: until the heart is wounded, no man dies; when flowers wither and leaves fall, it is the root gone dry. Hearing the call to open his mouth, he bore the pain and stretched his jaws wide.

The Pilgrim at last leapt out, showed his true form, and was just snatching up his cudgel to strike again when the Buddha packed the demon into the bag, slung it aslant across his waist, took the chime-mallet in hand, and scolded: "Wicked beast! Where have you smuggled the golden cymbals off to?"

The demon, wanting only to be spared, whined and blubbered from inside the Posterior-Heaven bag: "The golden cymbals were smashed by Sun Wukong."

"If the cymbals are smashed, then give me back my gold," said the Buddha.

"The broken gold is heaped upon the lotus throne in the hall," said the demon.

The Buddha took up the bag and the chime-mallet and called out with a chuckle: "Wukong, come with me to seek out my gold and repay me." Seeing such magic power, how could the Pilgrim dare disobey or delay? He could only lead the Buddha up the mountain and back into the monastery, to gather up the gold fragments. The mountain gate stood shut fast; the Buddha pointed once with the mallet, the gates flew open, and as they went in and looked about, all the little fiends—having learned that their old master was taken—were each and all gathering up the bottoms of their bundles, meaning to flee and scatter for their lives.

But the Pilgrim, sighting one, struck one dead; sighting two, struck two dead; until five or six hundred little fiends were beaten to death, every single one, and each showed forth his original form: they were all mountain sprites and tree monsters, beast fiends and bird demons.

The Buddha gathered the gold together into one heap, blew upon it a breath of immortal air, recited a word of spell, and at once it returned to its root and restored its source: a whole pair of golden cymbals was made good again. Then he took leave of the Pilgrim, mounted his auspicious cloud, and returned straightaway to

the World of Bliss.

Only then did the Great Sage loose and bring down Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk. That blockhead, hung up for days on end and famished with hunger, did not even stop to thank the Great Sage: he simply doubled over like a shrimp and scurried off to the kitchen to hunt for food. As it happened, the monster had just now laid out the midday meal, and because of the Pilgrim's challenges had not yet gotten to eat it. When the blockhead saw it, he ate half a pot on the spot, then ladled out two full basins and bade his master and brothers eat two bowls each, and only after that did he give the Pilgrim his thanks.

When they asked about the whole story of the demon, the Pilgrim gave a full account: how he had first begged the Tortoise and the Snake from the Patriarch, then borrowed the prince from the Great Sage Bodhisattva, and how Maitreya had come at last to take the monster captive.

Hearing this, Sanzang gave thanks beyond all measure, bowed in highest worship to all the heavens, and said: "Disciple, where are those divine worthies confined?"

"Yesterday the Duty Officer of the Day told old Sun," said the Pilgrim, "that they are all in the cellar." Then he called: "Bajie, come with me to set them loose."

The blockhead, strong now that he had eaten, gathered up his spirit, found his rake, and went with the Great Sage around to the rear. They broke open the cellar, untied the cords from the whole company, and brought them out beneath the precious tower. Sanzang threw his cassock over his shoulders and, facing them, bowed his thanks one by one. Then the Great Sage escorted the five dragons and two generals back to Wudang, saw Little Prince Zhang and the four generals back to the city of Bin, and afterward saw the twenty-eight constellations home to the heavenly palace, and dismissed the Revealors and Guardian Sangharamas each to his own domain.

Master and disciples then rested at their ease half a day, fed the white horse its fill, and packed the luggage; the next morning early they set out upon the road. As they departed, they set a fire and burned every precious tower and jeweled dais, every high pavilion and lecture hall, utterly to ashes. And only then:

Free of every tie, they fled from their troubles away; Their plagues and obstacles dissolved, they journeyed on their way.

But how long it would be before they reached the Great Thunderclap—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 67

The Deliverance of Tuoluo Steadies the Chan Nature; Emerging from the Filth, the Mind of the Way Is Cleared

The story tells how Sanzang and his party, having slipped away from the Lesser Western Heaven, set out on their way rejoicing. After a journey of a whole month, in the very season when spring was deep and the flowers were opening, they saw that every garden and grove they passed had gone dark with green, and after a bout of wind and rain, evening fell once more.

Sanzang reined in his horse: "Disciples, it is growing late. Which road shall we take to beg lodging?"

"Don't worry, Master," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "Even if there is no place to stay, the three of us have our skills. Let Bajie cut the grass, the Sha Monk fell the pines, and old Sun do the carpentry, and we can build a thatched hut right here on the road—we could live in it for a year or more. What are you in such a hurry about!"

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "what sort of place is this to stay in! The whole mountain is full of tigers, leopards, wolves, and serpents, and the ground everywhere is crawling with demons and sprites. It is hard enough to travel by day—how dare we sleep here by night?"

"Blockhead!" said the Pilgrim. "You are getting worse and worse! It's not old Sun boasting, but with this cudgel of mine in my hand, even if the sky came crashing down, I could hold it up!"

As the master and disciples were discussing the matter, they suddenly saw a country hamlet not far off.

"Good!" said the Pilgrim. "There's a place to stay!"

"Where?" asked the elder.

"Isn't that a homestead among the trees?" said the Pilgrim, pointing. "Let's go and beg a night's lodging, and start on the road tomorrow morning."

The elder was delighted. He urged his horse on to the gate of the farmstead and dismounted. The wicket-gate of brushwood was shut fast. The elder knocked: "Open up! Open up!" From within came an old man, dragging a staff of chenopodium, wearing rush sandals, a black cap, and plain white clothes. He opened the door and asked: "Who is it that shouts so loudly here?"

Sanzang pressed his palms together before his breast and bowed: "Old benefactor, I am a poor monk sent from the Eastern Land to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. I have just arrived in your honored district, and as evening has fallen I have come specially to your noble house to beg a night's lodging. I earnestly hope you will make it convenient."

"Monk," said the old man, "you want to go west, but you cannot get through. This place is the Lesser Western Heaven; the Great Western Heaven is still very far away. And do not even speak of the difficulties ahead—even this very spot is already hard to pass."

"How is it hard to pass?" asked Sanzang.

The old man pointed and said: "More than thirty li west of this village there is a Rotten Persimmon Lane, on a mountain called Qijue."

"Why is it called Qijue?" asked Sanzang.

"This mountain," said the old man, "stretches for eight hundred li, and the whole of it is covered with persimmon trees. As the ancients said, the persimmon tree has seven excellences: first, it prolongs life;

second, it gives abundant shade; third, no birds nest in it; fourth, no insects infest it; fifth, its frost-touched leaves are a delight to the eye; sixth, it bears fine fruit; seventh, its branches and leaves grow large and lush—and so it is called Qijue, 'Seven Excellences' Mountain. My humble district here is broad and thinly peopled, and no one has set foot into the deep mountain since the beginning of time. Every year the ripe persimmons rot and fall upon the road, filling up a narrow lane hemmed in by rock until it is quite choked; then, soaked by rain and dew, snow and frost, and turned mouldy through the summer, they become a road of filth. The folk of these parts call it vulgarly the Shit Lane. Whenever a west wind blows, a stench comes off it that would shame even a freshly emptied privy. Now that spring is deep and the southeast wind blows strong, that is why you do not smell it yet."

Sanzang was sick at heart and said nothing.

But the Pilgrim could not contain himself. "Old man, you make no sense at all! We have come from afar to beg lodging, and you start spinning all these tales to frighten us! Even if your house is too cramped for us to sleep in, we could squat under a tree and pass the night. Why all this endless chattering?"

The old man, seeing his ugly looks, pressed his lips together and stood aghast. Screwing up his courage, he gave a shout and, pointing with his staff, said: "You wretch! With that bony face, that knobbed forehead, that flat nose, those sunken cheeks, those hairy eyes, you consumptive ghost, you don't know your place! Sticking that pointed mouth out to pick a quarrel with an old man!"

The Pilgrim smiled appeasingly: "Old gentleman, so you have eyes but no pupils, and cannot recognize this consumptive ghost of mine! The art of physiognomy says: 'In strange and outlandish forms, fine jade lies hidden within the stone.' If you judge men by their words and looks alone, you will be quite mistaken. I am ugly, to be sure, but I have some skill nonetheless."

"What place are you from?" asked the old man. "What is your name? And what skill do you have?"

The Pilgrim laughed:

"I dwelled of old on the great continent of the East, By the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit I cultivated from my youth. I bowed to the Patriarch of the Numinous Terrace and Square Inch, And learned my martial arts, complete in every part. I can churn the sea and subdue the Dragon Mother, And am skilled at shouldering mountains and racing the sun; In binding monsters and seizing demons I am called the first; I shift the stars and turn the Dipper till ghosts and gods despair. My fame for stealing Heaven and turning Earth is great— I am the Handsome Stone Monkey of infinite transformations!"

Hearing this, the old man turned his anger to delight, bowed, and bade them: "Pray come into my humble house and settle yourselves." And so the four pilgrims, leading the horse and shouldering the loads, all went in. They saw thornbushes and brambles laid out on both sides; the second gate was a wall of brick and stone, thatched over with brambles; and only within was a tile-roofed house of three rooms. The old man drew up chairs, seated them, and served tea, and ordered a meal to be prepared. In a little while the table was brought in, spread with wheat gluten, bean curd, taro shoots, radishes, hot mustard, turnips, fragrant rice, and a soup of sunflower stewed in vinegar, and the master and disciples ate their fill.

When the meal was done, Bajie drew the Pilgrim aside and said: "Elder brother, this old man would not lodge us at first, yet now he spreads such a feast for us. Why?"

"How much can this be worth?" said the Pilgrim. "Tomorrow he'll be seeing us off with ten fruits and ten dishes!"

"No shame at all!" said Bajie. "You've tricked him out of a meal with your tall talk, and tomorrow we'll be running on our way—how is he going to see us off?"

"Don't be in such a hurry," said the Pilgrim. "I have my own way of handling it."

Before long dusk fell gradually, and the old man called for lamps to be lit.

The Pilgrim bowed and asked: "What is your honored surname, grandfather?"

"My surname is Li," said the old man.

"I suppose this is Li Family Village?" asked the Pilgrim.

"No," said the old man. "This place is called Tuoluo Village. There are more than five hundred households living here. There are many other surnames; only I am named Li."

"Benefactor Li," said the Pilgrim, "what good intention does your household have, to bestow such a fine meal upon us?"

The old man rose and said: "Just now I heard you say you can catch demons. There is a demon here, and I would trouble you to catch it for us. There will surely be a handsome reward."

The Pilgrim made a deep bow with clasped hands: "Thank you for your patronage!"

"Look at him asking for trouble!" said Bajie. "When he hears talk of catching a demon, he is friendlier than he would be to his own grandfather—he bows in advance!"

"Worthy brother," said the Pilgrim, "you don't understand. My bow is the deposit money; now he will not go hiring anyone else."

Hearing this, Sanzang said: "This ape always acts on his own authority. What if that demon's powers are vast and you cannot catch it? Would that not make us men of religion utterers of false words?"

"Master, don't blame me," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "Let me ask a few more questions."

"What more is there to ask?" said the old man.

"This honored district of yours," said the Pilgrim, "is level and well populated, and no out-of-the-way place at all. What demon would dare come up to your great gates?"

"To tell you the truth," said the old man, "this place has long been peaceful and well. But in the sixth month, three years ago, a wind suddenly rose. At that time the folk were very busy—the wheat-threshers in the yard, the rice-planters in the fields—and they were all thrown into a panic, thinking the weather had turned. But who would have thought that when the wind had passed, there was a demon that had eaten up the cattle and horses people had put out to pasture, eaten the pigs and the sheep, swallowed chickens and geese whole, and taken men and women alive in a single gulp. Since that time, these two years, it comes constantly to do harm. Elder, if you have the skill to catch it and sweep this land clean, we will surely reward you heavily and never treat you lightly."

"Ah, but this one is hard to catch," said the Pilgrim.

"Truly hard, hard to catch!" said Bajie. "We are traveling monks who begged a night's lodging; tomorrow we will be on the road. What demon would we catch!"

"So you are monks who trick people out of meals after all!" said the old man. "At first you boasted and bragged, saying you could shift the Dipper and move the stars, subdue demons and bind monsters—and now that it comes to the point, you make excuses and say it is hard to catch!"

"Old man," said the Pilgrim, "the demon is easy to catch. It is only because the folk of this region are not of one mind that it is hard."

"How do you make out that the people are not of one mind?" asked the old man.

"The demon has harried you for three years," said the Pilgrim, "and Heaven knows how many living creatures it has destroyed. I think that if each household gave a single tael of silver, five hundred households could raise five hundred taels; then you could find a magician anywhere to catch the demon. How could you quietly endure three years of its torments?"

"As for spending money," said the old man, "it is enough to make a man die of shame! Is there a single household among us that has not laid out three or five taels of silver! The year before last we heard of a monk south of the mountain, and invited him here to catch the demon, but he did not win the day."

"How did that monk go about catching it?" asked the Pilgrim.

"That monk," said the old man, "wrapped himself in his cassock. First he expounded the Peacock Sutra, then he chanted the Lotus Sutra. Incense was burned in the burner, and a bell taken up in his hand. But as he chanted, he roused the demon. Wind rose and clouds gathered, and it came straight to the village. Monk and demon fought—truly worth the telling: blow for blow he struck, grab for grab he clawed. The monk gave as good as he got, but what he got was a scalped head. In a moment the demon won and went straight back to its misty lair, leaving the poor fellow to dry his scars. When we came near to look, his shaven pate was beaten like a squashed watermelon!"

"So it was he who came off worse, then," said the Pilgrim, laughing.

"He lost only his own life," said the old man. "It was we who suffered. We bought his coffin and buried him, and gave some silver to his disciple besides. That disciple's heart is still not appeased; to this day he wants to bring suit against us, and the matter will not be settled!"

"Have you invited anyone else to catch it since?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Last year," said the old man, "we invited a Daoist."

"How did that Daoist go about it?" asked the Pilgrim.

"That Daoist," said the old man, "wore a golden cap and a robe of the law. He struck his talisman-board, worked with charmed water, drove gods and marshaled generals, and summoned the demon sprite. A wild wind rolled, black mists thickened. Then it faced the Daoist, and the two stood to it. They fought until evening, when the monster went back to its clouds and rainbows. All was clear and bright again, and we gathered together. We went out to look for the Daoist, and found him drowned in the mountain stream. When we fished him out for all to see, he looked like a drowned rooster!"

"So it was he who came off worse too," said the Pilgrim, laughing.

"He too lost only his own life," said the old man, "while we spent a good deal of money into the bargain."

"Never mind, never mind," said the Pilgrim. "Let me catch it for you."

"If you truly have the skill to catch it," said the old man, "I will invite a few elders of the village to write you a contract. If you win, you may ask whatever amount of silver you like, and not half a cent less will you be given; but if you come to grief, you must not come back to us making trouble—each must abide by Heaven's will."

"This old man has been frightened out of his wits by someone's bad faith," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "We are not that sort of people. Go quickly and invite the elders."

The old man, overjoyed, ordered his servant to invite a few of the neighbors, cousins, in-laws, and friends—eight or nine elders in all—who all came to meet them. When they had met the Tang monk and

spoken of catching the demon, they were all delighted.

"Which of the worthy disciples is to go and catch it?" asked the elders.

"Your humble little monk, me," said the Pilgrim, folding his hands.

"No good! No good!" said the elders, in consternation. "That demon's powers are vast and its body is huge and unwieldy. This elder of yours, thin and small as he is, would not be enough to fill the cracks between its teeth!"

"Old gentlemen," said the Pilgrim, laughing, "you do not know how to judge a man. Small as I am, I am solid—I have drunk the knife-grinder's water, and all my fine qualities are on the inside!"

At this the elders had to give way. "Elder," they said, "if you catch the demon, how much reward do you want?"

"Why talk of rewards at all!" said the Pilgrim. "As the proverb says, gold dazzles the eye, silver is foolishly white, and copper coins stink! We are monks who store up merit, and we will take no money at all."

"If you say so," said the elders, "you are all high monks who keep the precepts. Since you will take no money, it would never do for you to labor for nothing! Each household among us makes its living from fish and fields. If you truly subdue the demon and cleanse the district, each household will give you two mu of good fields—a thousand mu altogether, all in one place—and there your master and disciples may build a monastery and sit in meditation, far better than wandering cloud-like through the world."

"Worse and worse!" laughed the Pilgrim. "If we took the fields, we would have to keep horses and do corvée, pay grain tax and supply fodder; we could not sleep at dusk or rest at the fifth watch. It would be the very death of us!"

"If you want none of these," said the elders, "how are we to thank you?"

"We are men of religion," said the Pilgrim. "A cup of tea and a bowl of rice are thanks enough."

"That is easy enough," said the elders, delighted. "But we do not know how you will catch it."

"Let it but come," said the Pilgrim, "and I shall catch it."

"That monster is enormous!" said the elders. "It props up the sky above and the earth below; it comes with the wind and goes with the mist. How could you ever get near it?"

"As for a demon that can summon the wind and ride the mist," said the Pilgrim, laughing, "I treat it as no more than a grandson. And as for its huge body—I have the skill to beat it!"

Just as they were speaking, they heard the wind blowing with a roar, and the eight or nine elders trembled in fright: "This monk has a salt-and-sauce mouth! He spoke of the demon, and here it comes!"

Old Li opened the side door and called to all his relatives, and Tang Sanzang too: "Come in! Come in! The monster is coming!" Bajie was all for going in too, and so was the Sha Monk.

The Pilgrim held the two of them back with both hands: "You are quite unreasonable! As men of religion, how can you not tell inside from outside! Stand where you are! Don't run! Come with me into the courtyard and see what sort of demon it is."

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "they have all been through this before; when the wind roars, that means the demon is coming. They all run to hide. We are no kin of theirs, we don't know them, and we are not old friends. Why should we go look at it?"

But the Pilgrim, strong as he was, would hear no argument; he dragged them out and made them stand in the courtyard. The wind grew wilder still. A fine wind indeed:

It uproots trees and wrecks the woods, to the wolves' and tigers' dread; It rolls the rivers and churns the seas, to the grief of ghosts and gods. It overturns the three-peak crags of Mount Hua, And lifts up the four continents of the whole world. Village cottages all bar their doors; The children of the whole village hide their heads. Black clouds in gloom veil the Milky Way; Lamps lose their light, and all the land is dark.

Bajie was so frightened he trembled in every limb, threw himself on the ground, rooted open the earth with his snout, and buried his head in it, as if he were a nail driven in. The Sha Monk covered his head and face and could hardly open his eyes.

The Pilgrim knew the demon by the wind. When the gust had passed, he saw two lamps dimly coming through the sky, and at once bent his head and called: "Brothers! The wind has passed. Get up and look!"

That blockhead pulled his snout out of the earth, shook off the dust, and looked up at the sky. Seeing the two lamp-lights, he burst out laughing: "Fine sport! Fine sport! So it's a demon of good breeding after all! I should make friends with it!"

"On such a dark night," said the Sha Monk, "and never having met it face to face, how do you know good from bad?"

"The ancients said," replied Bajie, "'When traveling by night, use a torch; without a torch, stop.' Look—it carries a pair of lanterns to light its way. It must be a good one."

"You're looking wrong," said the Sha Monk. "Those aren't a pair of lanterns—they're the demon's two shining eyes."

That frightened three inches off the blockhead's height. "Grandpa!" he cried. "If its eyes are as big as that, who knows how big its mouth must be!"

"Worthy brother, don't be afraid," said the Pilgrim. "You two guard the master while old Sun goes up to test its mettle and see what sort of demon it is."

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "don't give us away."

A fine Pilgrim! He sprang up with a whistle, leapt into the air, gripped his iron cudgel, and shouted in a stern voice: "Slow down! Slow down! I am here!"

The monster saw him, stopped its body, and whirled a long spear wildly about.

The Pilgrim held his cudgel at the ready and asked: "What demon are you, from what region? What sprite, from what place?" The monster would not answer, and only whirled its spear. The Pilgrim asked again; again there was no answer, only the whirling spear.

The Pilgrim laughed to himself: "So it is deaf and dumb! Don't run! Take this!" The monster, utterly unafraid, whirled its spear in defense. Up in the air, back and forth, up and down, they fought until the third watch without victory or defeat.

From the Li family's courtyard, Bajie and the Sha Monk saw it clearly: the monster only whirled its spear to parry, without a trace of attack, while the Pilgrim's cudgel never left the monster's head.

"Sha Monk," said Bajie, laughing, "you stay here and guard the master. Let old Hog go help in the fight—don't let that ape take all the credit and claim the first cup of wine."

A fine blockhead! He sprang up on his cloud, caught up, and struck; the monster produced another spear and held him off. The two spears flashed like flying serpents and darting lightning.

"This demon has fine spear-work!" Bajie praised. "It's not the behind-the-hill spear, nor the silk-winding spear, nor the family-of-Ma spear—it's what they call the soft-handled spear!"

"Blockhead, don't talk nonsense!" said the Pilgrim. "What soft-handled spear is there?"

"Look," said Bajie. "It holds us off with the spear-point, but there's no sign of the spear-handle. Who knows where it keeps it!"

"Perhaps it is a soft-handled spear after all," said the Pilgrim. "But this monster cannot speak, which suggests it has not yet entered the way of humanity, and its yin breath is still heavy. I fear that when dawn comes and the yang breath prevails, it will surely flee. When it does, we must catch up with it and not let it go."

"Just so! Just so!" said Bajie.

They fought on for a long while, until, before they knew it, the east turned pale. The monster dared not prolong the fight; it turned and fled. The Pilgrim and Bajie gave chase together, when suddenly a reeking stench assailed them—it was the Rotten Persimmon Lane of Qijue Mountain.

"Whose privy is being emptied around here!" said Bajie. "Phew! What a stench!"

The Pilgrim, pinching his nose, called out: "Hurry, catch the demon! Hurry, catch the demon!"

The monster shot across the mountain and showed its true form: a great python with red scales. See it:

Its eyes shoot forth the morning stars; its nostrils spout the dawn mist. Close-set teeth arrayed like steel swords; curved claws hooked like golden talons. On its head a single fleshy horn, as if pieced together of a thousand bits of agate; Over its body a coat of red scales, as if built up of ten thousand slips of rouge. Coiled on the ground, one would take it for a brocade quilt; Flying in the air, one might mistake it for a rainbow. Where it rests, a stench rises to the sky; where it moves, red clouds veil its body. Big?—so big that men on either side cannot see each other. Long?—so long that it spans a whole mountain from north to south.

"So it's a long snake like this!" said Bajie. "If it wanted to eat people, it would take five hundred at one meal and still not be full!"

"That soft-handled spear of yours," said the Pilgrim, "is nothing but its two forked tongues. We've worn it out chasing it—let's beat it out from behind!"

Bajie sprang forward, caught up, and struck with his rake. The monster dived head-first into a hole in the rock, leaving seven or eight feet of tail sticking out. Bajie set down his rake, grabbed hold with both hands, and cried: "Got it! Got it!" He pulled with all his might, but could not drag it out a hair's breadth.

"Blockhead!" said the Pilgrim, laughing. "Let it go in. I have my own way of dealing with it. Don't go pulling the snake backwards like that."

Bajie truly let go, and the monster shrank back inside. Bajie grumbled: "If I hadn't let go just now, we'd already have half of it! Now that it's shrunk back like this, how are we to get it out? Isn't this what they call having no snake to play with?"

"That brute's body is huge and unwieldy," said the Pilgrim, "while the hole is narrow. It certainly cannot turn around in there. It must have gone straight through, and there must be a back door for it to come out. You hurry around and block the back entrance, while I beat it from the front."

That blockhead, true enough, sped like smoke round the mountain, and sure enough found a hole there, and planted his feet. Before he could stand firm, the Pilgrim, at the front entrance, thrust his cudgel into the hole; the monster, guarding its pain, burst straight out the back. Bajie, caught unprepared, was knocked flat by a sweep of its tail, and lay on the ground bearing the pain, unable to scramble up.

The Pilgrim, seeing nothing left in the hole, took up his cudgel, went through, and shouted to give chase. Bajie, hearing the call and ashamed of himself, bore the pain, scrambled up, and flailed wildly with his rake.

The Pilgrim laughed at the sight: "The demon is gone—what are you flailing at?"

"Old Hog is beating the grass to startle the snake!" said Bajie.

"What a blockhead!" said the Pilgrim. "Catch up quickly!"

The two chased across the ravine and saw the monster coiled in a ball, raising its head and opening its great mouth to swallow Bajie. Bajie, in a flurry, fell back. The Pilgrim, on the contrary, rushed forward and was swallowed in one gulp.

Bajie beat his breast and stamped his feet, crying: "Elder brother! You're done for!"

Inside the demon's belly, the Pilgrim propped himself up with his iron cudgel and said: "Bajie, don't worry. I'll make it arch a bridge for you to see!" The monster arched its back, like a rainbow spanning the eastern road.

"It looks like a bridge," said Bajie, "but no one would dare walk on it."

"Then I'll make it turn into a boat for you to see!" said the Pilgrim. Inside its belly, he braced his iron cudgel against its belly-skin. The monster's belly flattened to the ground and it cocked up its head, like a little boat.

"It looks like a boat," said Bajie, "but it has no mast or sail, and can't make use of the wind."

"Get out of the way," said the Pilgrim, "and I'll make it sail on the wind for you to see." Again, inside, he thrust his iron cudgel with all his strength out through its spine—fifty or seventy feet of it—like a mast. That brute, bearing the pain and struggling for life, shot forward faster than any sail before the wind, back along the old road and down the mountain for over twenty li, until at last it toppled in the dust, unable to stir, and died with a groan.

Bajie came up behind and again raised his rake and struck wildly.

The Pilgrim bored a great hole through the creature and crawled out, saying: "Blockhead! It is dead and gone—why are you still striking at it?"

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "don't you know that old Hog has loved all his life to beat dead snakes?" So saying, he put away his weapon, grabbed the tail, and dragged it back.

Meanwhile, Old Li and the rest in Tuoluo Village said to Tang Sanzang: "Your two disciples have not come back all night. They must certainly have lost their lives."

"It can't be that," said Sanzang. "Let us go out and look."

In a moment they saw the Pilgrim and Bajie dragging a great python along, shouting and calling, and only then were the people pleased. Old and young, men and women from the whole village came to kneel and worship: "Grandfathers! This is exactly the demon that has been hurting people here! Now, thanks to your might and your magic, you have slain the monster and swept away the evil, and we may all live in peace at last!"

All the households were full of gratitude, inviting them east and west, each offering thanks. The master and disciples were kept there five or seven days, and only after they had pleaded to leave, and there was no help for it, did the villagers let them go. And because the Pilgrim would take neither money nor goods, each household prepared dried provisions and fruit, and they came riding on mules and horses, with flowers and colored banners, all to see them off. Of the five hundred households here, seven or eight hundred people came to escort them.

All along the road they were full of joy, and before long they reached the mouth of the Rotten Persimmon Lane of Qijue Mountain. Sanzang, smelling that foul stench and seeing the road all choked up, said: "Wukong, how are we to cross this?"

"This is hard, indeed," said the Pilgrim, pinching his nose. When Sanzang saw the Pilgrim say it was hard, tears fell from his eyes.

Old Li and the others came forward and said: "My lord, do not fret. We have escorted you here with a purpose already agreed upon. Your worthy disciple subdued the demon for us and removed the scourge of the whole village, so each of us has made a devout resolve: we shall open a new and proper road to carry you across, my lord."

"You old fellows," said the Pilgrim, laughing, "your words are quite wide of the mark. You said yourself that the mountain path stretches for eight hundred li. You are not the divine host of the Great Yu—how could you open a road through the mountain! If my master is to get across, it must be by our efforts; none of you could manage it."

Sanzang dismounted and said: "Wukong, how are we to exert ourselves then?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "As things stand, crossing the mountain at once is hard, and opening a new road is harder still. We must go through the old lane after all—my only fear is that no one will provide our meals."

"Elder, what talk is that!" said Old Li. "However long you four may tarry, we can support you all. How can you say no one will provide your meals!"

"In that case," said the Pilgrim, "go and prepare dry rations of two dan of rice, and make some steamed cakes and buns as well. When my long-snouted monk there has eaten his fill, he'll change into a great pig and root open the old road; my master will ride on the horse, and we'll steady him along. I guarantee we'll get across."

Hearing this, Bajie said: "Elder brother, you all want to come out of it clean—how is it that old Hog alone is made to do the stinking work?"

"Wuneng," said Sanzang, "if you truly have the skill to root open the lane and lead me across the mountain, I'll set this down as your first merit."

"Master above," said Bajie, laughing, "and you benefactors all here—do not laugh at me. Old Hog here is endowed with thirty-six transformations. When it comes to changing into light, dainty, soaring things, I truly cannot. But as for changing into a mountain, a tree, a boulder, a mound of earth, a scabby elephant, a boar, a water buffalo, a camel—all those I really can do. Only, when the body grows large, the belly and guts grow larger still, and I must be well fed before I can set to work."

"There's food! There's food!" said the people. "We have all brought dried provisions, fruit, flatcakes, and dumplings with us, meant for opening the mountain to see you across. Let's bring it all out for you to enjoy. And once you've changed and set to work, we'll send men back to cook and bring more."

Bajie was overjoyed. He took off his black robe, set aside his nine-toothed rake, and said to all: "Don't laugh at me. Watch old Hog do this stinking job."

A fine blockhead! He made a magic sign, shook himself, and changed—sure enough—into a great pig. Truly:

Long of snout, short of bristle, half fat and sleek, From his youth in the mountains he ate the magic herbs. His black face and round eyes shone like sun and moon; His round head and great ears spread like banana leaves. He had cultivated firm bones coeval with Heaven, And refined a thick hide tougher than iron. His snuffling nose gave snorts and grunts; His rumbling throat sent out belches and roars. Four white trotters stood a

thousand feet high; A hundred fathoms of sword-bristled body and more. Men have seen fat pigs before in the world, But never such an old pig sprite as today! Tang Sanzang and the others praised him together, Admiring Marshal Tianpeng's mighty magic.

When Sun Wukong saw Bajie transformed like this, he ordered the escorts to push all the dried provisions and such into one pile for Bajie to enjoy. That blockhead, cooked or raw, swept it all up in one great wolfing, and then went forward to root the road open.

The Pilgrim told the Sha Monk to take off his shoes and carry the load with care, begged the master to sit firm in the carved saddle, and took off his own boots and shoes. Then he told the people to go back: "If you have any feeling for us, send some food quickly for my younger brother to renew his strength."

Of the seven or eight hundred people escorting them, more than half had mules and horses and sped back to the village like shooting stars to cook. Another three hundred on foot stood at the foot of the mountain, gazing after them from afar. From the village to the mountain was more than thirty li, and the round trip for fetching food another thirty li and more—some hundred li all told—by which time the master and disciples had already gone far.

The people could not bear to part with them. Urging their mules and horses into the lane, they hurried after them through the night and only caught up the next day, calling: "Scripture-seeking lords, slow down! Slow down! We have brought you your meals!"

Hearing this, the elder thanked them without end: "Truly good and faithful folk!" He bade Bajie stop and eat some more to strengthen his spirit. The blockhead, after rooting for two days, was famished. Those people had brought no less than seven or eight dan of food; whether rice or noodles, he gathered it all up and wolfed it down in one great meal, then went forward again to root the road.

Sanzang, the Pilgrim, and the Sha Monk thanked the people, and the two parties parted. Truly:

The guests of Tuoluo Village turn for home, As Bajie opens the mountain and passes through with the rest. Sanzang, sincere of heart, is borne by divine power; Wukong's arts displayed, the monsters' might decays. A thousand years of rotten persimmons are swept clean today; The Qijue lane is opened wide this day. The six desires and the passions of the dust are all cut away, And without hindrance they may worship at the lotus throne.

On this journey we do not know how far remains, or what demons they will meet—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 68

In the Kingdom of Zhuzi, Tang Sanzang Discourses on a Former Life; The Pilgrim Sun Displays the Skill of a Thrice-Tried Physician

To the tune of "Song of the Southern Country":

Goodness and rightness gather in the ten thousand bonds of fate, And fame is carried far across the four continents. With wisdom and bright discernment one reaches the farther shore— Swish, swish, Clouds in vast masses rise at the edge of the sky. All the Buddhas answer in turn, Dwelling forever on the Jasper Terrace through ten thousand autumns. Break through the butterfly dream of the mortal world [Translator's note: an allusion to Zhuangzi's dream of the butterfly, here likening the illusory entanglements of life to a bewildering dream], Rest, rest— Scour the dust and clamor clean away, and no care will touch you.

The story tells how Sanzang and his disciples, having washed the filth of the foul lane from their bodies, set out once more along the road of ease. Time flew by, and the hot season came round again. It was just as the verse says:

The pomegranate boughs unfurl their scarlet brocade balls; The lotus leaves spread wide their emerald plates. Green willows on either side give shelter to the young swallows, While wayfarers, fleeing the heat, fan themselves as they go.

As they pressed on, they suddenly saw a city wall drawing near.

Sanzang reined in his horse and called, "Disciples, what place is that over there?"

"Master, so you really don't know your characters!" said the Pilgrim. "However did you manage to lead the Tang emperor's commission out of the court!"

"How dare you speak so!" said Sanzang. "I have been a monk since childhood and know every scripture and classic. What do you mean, I don't know my characters?"

"If you know your characters," said the Pilgrim, "then how is it that when that apricot-yellow banner on the city wall plainly proclaims three large characters, you still can't read them, and must ask what place it is?"

"Don't talk nonsense, you brazen ape!" scolded Sanzang. "That banner is flapping madly in the wind—even if there were characters on it, no one could make them out!"

"How is it that old Monkey can see them, then?" said the Pilgrim.

"Master," said Bajie and the Sha Monk, "don't listen to the elder brother's devilry. At this distance we can't even make out the city wall clearly—how could anyone see what writing is on it?"

"Isn't it the three characters Kingdom of Zhuzi?" said the Pilgrim.

"The Kingdom of Zhuzi must be a royal state of the west," said Sanzang, "and we shall have to exchange our travel documents here."

"Say no more about it," said the Pilgrim.

Before long they reached the city gate, dismounted, crossed the bridge, and passed through the three sets of gates. What a truly magnificent imperial capital it was!

You could see: the gate towers rose high on every side, with battlements ranged in even ranks. Living water flowed all around the walls, and high hills faced each other north and south. The six streets and three markets were piled with goods, and ten thousand households plied a thriving trade. This was indeed a city where the

Son of Heaven held court, a great metropolis of the land of heaven. From farthest regions ships and carts came over sea and mountains; from remote domains gifts of jade and silk poured in. The strategic grandeur stretched to the distant hills, and the palace walls rose clear against the heavens. The three gates were locked as tight as bolts, and ten thousand ages of peace and plenty followed.

As master and disciples walked along the great avenues, they saw that the people were stalwart of bearing, trim in dress, and clear of speech—indeed no whit inferior to the world of the Great Tang. When the traders on either side of the street caught sight of Zhu Bajie's ugly looks, the Sha Monk's dark face and towering height, and Sun Wukong's hairy face and broad brow, they abandoned their buying and selling and came crowding round to stare. Sanzang could only cry, "Don't stir up trouble! Keep your heads down and walk on!"

Bajie obeyed, tucking his lotus-seed-pod snout into his bosom; the Sha Monk did not dare so much as lift his eyes; only the Pilgrim peered this way and that as he kept close beside the elder. Among the crowd, some sensible folk took one look and went home. But the loafers and street urchins followed along, laughing and shouting, throwing bits of tile and brick at Bajie to make sport of him. Tang Sanzang broke into a cold sweat and could only keep urging, "Don't make trouble!" The blockhead did not dare to raise his head.

Before long, as they turned a corner, they suddenly came upon a gateway bearing the inscription Hostel for Tribute Envoys [Translator's note: in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the government hostel where envoys of tributary states were lodged]. "Disciples," said Tang Sanzang, "let us go into this government office."

"Why go in?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The Hostel for Tribute Envoys is the place where the whole world gathers and meets together," said Sanzang. "We may impose on it as well. Let us rest inside for a while. When I have had audience with the king and exchanged our travel documents, we will hurry out of the city and be on our way."

When Bajie heard this, he pulled his snout out of his bosom—which startled a dozen or more of the onlookers so badly they fell over—and stepped forward. "What the master says is right," he said. "Let us go inside and lie low for a while, so we can be rid of this pack of chattering fools." So they went into the hostel, and only then did the crowd slowly disperse.

Now in that hostel there were two superintendents, one principal and one deputy, who happened to be in the main hall checking over their porters before going out to receive some official, when suddenly they saw Tang Sanzang approaching. They were all taken aback. "Who are you? Who are you?" they cried. "Where are you going?"

Sanzang put his palms together. "This humble monk is a subject of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land," he said, "sent to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures. Arriving at your honored state, I dared not pass through without permission. I have travel documents that I wish to have examined and exchanged, and so I presume to borrow this august office for a brief rest."

Hearing this, the two superintendents dismissed their attendants, straightened their caps and girdles, and came down from the hall to greet him. They at once ordered that a guest room be swept out for him to rest in, and that vegetarian fare be prepared. Sanzang thanked them, and the two officials took their men and left the hall.

His underlings then invited the reverend gentleman to rest in the guest room, and Sanzang was about to go when the Pilgrim complained angrily, "What a shabby pair! Why won't they let old Monkey stay in the main hall?"

"This state is not under the rule of our Great Tang," said Sanzang, "nor is it even adjacent to our land. Besides, officials of higher rank are constantly passing through, so it would not be proper to keep us here with great ceremony."

"In that case," said the Pilgrim, "I insist that they wait on me properly!"

While he was speaking, a steward brought in their provisions: a tray of white rice, a tray of white flour, two bunches of green vegetables, four slabs of bean curd, two pieces of gluten, a tray of dried bamboo shoots, and a tray of wood ears.

Sanzang told his disciples to put them away, and thanked the steward. "There is a clean stove and a pot in the west wing," said the steward, "and firewood is handy. Please cook your own meals."

"I would ask you one thing," said Sanzang. "Is the king on his throne in the palace at present?"

"My lord the king has not held court for a long time," replied the steward. "Today, however, happens to be an auspicious day, and he is just now deliberating with his civil and military officers over posting the imperial placard. If you want your travel documents exchanged, hurry over now and you may just catch him. By tomorrow it will be too late—there is no telling how long you would have to wait."

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "make ready our meal here while I hurry off to have the passport examined and exchanged, and then come back to eat before we take the road." Bajie quickly brought out the cassock and the travel documents. Sanzang made himself tidy and entered the court, but only after charging his disciples most strictly never to go out and stir up trouble.

In no time at all he stood before the Five Phoenix Tower, and it would be hard indeed to do justice to the towering halls and magnificent pavilions. He went as far as the Duan Gate, where he begged the official in charge of memorials to transmit his wish to the heavenly court that his travel documents be examined and exchanged.

The Yellow Gate official did indeed go to the jade steps and memorialize: "Before the court gates stands a monk sent as an envoy of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, who wishes to go to the Thunder Monastery in the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. He requests that his passport be exchanged, and awaits Your Majesty's command."

The king was delighted. "I have been ill for many a day," he said, "and have not held audience on the throne. No sooner do I come to court to post a placard seeking physicians than a lofty monk arrives in my kingdom!" He at once commanded that the monk be summoned to the foot of the steps, and Sanzang knelt and bowed low. The king then summoned him up to the golden hall and bade him be seated, ordering the Court of Imperial Feasts to prepare a meal. Sanzang gave thanks for the favor and presented his travel documents.

When the king had examined them, he was greatly pleased. "Your Reverence, in your Great Tang," he asked, "how many sovereigns have ruled in just succession, and how many ministers have proved their worth? And how was it that the Tang emperor fell ill, recovered, and sent you across mountain and stream to seek the scriptures?"

At this question the elder rose slightly in his seat, put his palms together, and replied:

"In my country the Three Sovereigns first ruled the world, and the Five Emperors set each thing in its place. Yao and Shun sat on the throne in their turn, and Yu and Tang brought peace to the people. The many sons of Zhou each set up a kingdom of his own; the strong bullied the weak, and the land was split into separate lords. Eighteen lords divided the marches and border dust, and later twelve were left, and the world grew still again.

But because there were no war chariots and no rule, they fell to devouring one another. Seven mighty states contended, and six of them went to Qin. Then Heaven brought forth the men of Lu and Pei, each harboring unkind designs; the empire fell to Han, and its three-article law was reverently obeyed. Han passed to the house of Sima, and under Jin confusion spread anew; north and south were split into twelve, then came Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen. The founding ancestors followed one after another, till the great Sui restored the true succession. But the last Sui emperor loved only his flower shows and misgoverned, and countless of his people were cast into the mire. Then my sovereign of the house of Li arose and took the name of Tang.

When Emperor Gaozu passed away [Translator's note: a euphemism for a ruler's death], the present monarch, Li Shimin—the very name means 'the world made peaceful'—came to the throne. The rivers ran clear and the seas were calm, and he ruled with great virtue and wide benevolence. It happened that north of the city of Chang'an there lived a strange dragon god of the water who cut short the sweet rain that was his due and so deserved to lose his life. One night he appeared in a dream to the king and begged him to rescue him from calamity. The king consented and pardoned him, and early the next morning summoned his wise minister, detained him in the palace, and slowly played a game of chess with him. And at noon that very day, the wise minister cut off the dragon's head—in a dream."

When the king heard this, he suddenly gave a groan. "Your Reverence," he asked, "from what state did that wise minister come?"

"He was the prime minister at my sovereign's side, one Wei Zheng by name," said Sanzang. "He understood astronomy and geography, and could distinguish the workings of yin and yang—truly a great chancellor for the ordering of the state. Because he cut off the head of the Dragon King of the Jing River in his dream, that dragon king lodged a complaint in the underworld, saying that my sovereign had promised to spare him and then had him slain. For this my sovereign fell into a wasting illness, and soon his life hung in the balance. Wei Zheng then wrote a letter and asked my sovereign to carry it down to the underworld, addressed to the judge Cui Jue of the city of Fengdu. In a short while the Tang emperor died; three days later he came back to life. Thanks to Wei Zheng, Judge Cui altered the registers and added twenty years to the king's span. Now the king intends to hold a great mass for land and water, and for this cause he has sent this humble monk across the long road to visit all the kingdoms, to worship the Buddha, and to fetch the three baskets of the Great Vehicle scriptures, so that the guilty and the suffering may be redeemed and borne up to heaven."

The king groaned and sighed again. "Yours is truly a great court of heaven, with a right sovereign and worthy ministers!" he said. "But for myself, I have lain ill for many years, and not one minister has come to my rescue."

Hearing this, the elder stole a glance at the king and saw that the emperor was sallow and gaunt, his body wasted and his spirit faint. He was just about to question him when an officer of the Court of Imperial Feasts came to announce that a meal was prepared for the Tang monk.

The king commanded, "Lay it out in the Hall of Penetrating Fragrance, together with my own table, so that I may share it with His Reverence."

Sanzang thanked him for the favor and went in to dine with the king. Of this no more for the moment.

Now let us speak of the Pilgrim, who in the Hostel for Tribute Envoys had set the Sha Monk to preparing tea and rice and laying out vegetarian dishes. "Tea and rice are easy enough to cook," said the Sha Monk, "but the vegetables are not so easy to arrange."

"Why not?" asked the Pilgrim.

"There is no oil, no salt, no vinegar, no soy sauce," said the Sha Monk.

"I have a few coppers of alms here," said the Pilgrim. "Let Bajie go to the market and buy some."

But the blockhead was lazy and answered, "I don't dare go. My face is too ugly for the company, and I'm afraid it would get us into trouble, and then the master would blame me."

"If you buy and sell fairly," said the Pilgrim, "you are neither begging nor robbing. What trouble could there be?"

"Didn't you see what happened just now?" said Bajie. "When I pulled out my snout in front of the door, I startled a dozen or so people senseless! If I went into the middle of the busy market, who knows how many I'd frighten to death!"

"You know all about the busy market," said the Pilgrim, "but did you get a look at what goods are being sold there?"

"The master only told me to keep my head down and not make trouble," said Bajie. "To tell the truth, I didn't see a thing."

"There are wine shops, rice shops, flour mills, and stores of silks and knickknacks, to say nothing of the tea houses and noodle shops," said the Pilgrim, "with great baked cakes and great steamed buns, and eating houses serving first-rate soups and rice, fine spices and fine vegetables, and all kinds of rare sugar cakes, steamed puddings, sweetmeats, rolls, fried dainties, and honeyed morsels—an endless array of good things. How would it be if I went and bought some to treat you?"

At these words the blockhead's mouth began to water and he swallowed and gulped. He jumped to his feet. "Elder brother! This time you treat me, and next time I have saved up some money, I'll invite you to a return feast!"

The Pilgrim laughed to himself. "Sha Monk," he called, "mind you cook the rice properly. We're going out to buy the seasonings." The Sha Monk, knowing well that the Pilgrim was only fooling the blockhead, could do nothing but play along. "Go on, then," he said, "but be sure to buy a good deal, and eat your fill before you come back."

The blockhead grabbed a bowl and a dish and followed the Pilgrim out the door. Two government servants asked, "Where are you reverend gentlemen going?" "To buy seasonings," said the Pilgrim. "Go west along this street," said the man, "turn the corner at the drum tower, and there is the Zheng family's general store. Buy as much as you like there—they have oil, salt, vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, pepper, and tea leaves, everything."

The two of them went off hand in hand toward the west of the street. The Pilgrim passed several tea houses and several eating houses, buying nothing when he should have bought, and eating nothing when he should have eaten.

"Elder brother," Bajie called out, "let's just buy a little here and be done with it."

But the Pilgrim had been teasing him all along, and would buy nothing. "Good younger brother," he said, "you're no businessman! Walk a little further and we'll pick out something big to eat." As the two of them chatted on, they drew a great crowd of followers who jostled along to stare. Before long they came to the drum tower, where there was a vast throng of people shouting and milling about, crowding the streets and blocking the way.

When Bajie saw this he said, "Elder brother, I'm not going any further. The crowd there is making such a din, I think they must be seizing monks. And since we're strangers and look suspicious to boot, if they grabbed us, what would become of us?"

"Nonsense!" said the Pilgrim. "Monks are not lawbreakers. Why would they seize us? Let's just walk over to the Zheng family store and buy our seasonings."

"No, no, no!" said Bajie. "I'm not going to make trouble. If I squeeze into that crowd and my ears get trodden on, they'll scatter helter-skelter and I'll be the death of a few of them—and then I'll have to answer for it with my life!"

"Very well, then," said the Pilgrim. "You plant yourself at the foot of this wall and wait. I'll go over, buy the things, and come back—and I'll get you some vegetarian noodles and baked cakes to eat." The blockhead handed the bowl and dish to the Pilgrim, propped his snout against the wall, turned his back on everything, and would not stir for love or money.

The Pilgrim walked over to the tower and found the place indeed crammed tight. He squeezed his way into the middle of the crowd to listen, and discovered that the royal placard had been posted beneath the tower, which was why so many people were jostling to look at it.

The Pilgrim pushed his way close, blinked his fiery golden eyes, and read carefully. The placard said:

"On behalf of the King of the Kingdom of Zhuzi, in the Continent of Cattle-Tribute of the West: Since my accession to the throne, the four quarters have been pacified and my people have lived in peace and quiet. But of late, through an ill turn in the affairs of the state, a deep sickness has laid me low upon my pillow, and with each passing day it grows harder to cure. The physicians of my Imperial College of Medicine have repeatedly chosen good prescriptions, yet none has brought relief. This placard is therefore posted to summon the worthy healers of all the world. Let none hesitate—whether they come from north or east, from China or from foreign lands—if any is skilled in medicine, let him ascend to the jeweled throne and treat the person of your sovereign. If he brings about my recovery, I am willing to share my realm and divide the kingdom with him. This promise shall not be made in vain. Therefore this placard is issued and posted for all to see."

When the Pilgrim had finished reading, he was overjoyed. "As the old saying goes," he said to himself, "'Three parts of wealth come to him who stirs himself.' If I had only sat idle in the hostel, I'd have missed this! Never mind buying seasonings—let me put the scripture quest aside for a day and let old Monkey practice a little medicine for fun!"

Truly a Great Sage! He bent down, put the bowl and dish aside, picked up a pinch of earth, sprinkled it upward, recited a spell, and worked the art of invisibility. Then he stepped lightly forward, tore down the placard, and, facing the quarter of the wind [Translator's note: the xun quarter of the compass, where the wind is born], breathed a mouthful of immortal air and blew. A whirlwind arose, and in the midst of it he turned and made straight back to the place where Bajie stood—to find the blockhead, with his snout propped against the wall, sleeping like a log.

The Pilgrim did not disturb him. He folded the placard, slipped it gently into Bajie's bosom, and went back to the Hostel for Tribute Envoys, where we leave him.

Now the crowd beneath the tower, when the wind rose, had all covered their heads and shut their eyes. When the gust had passed, lo and behold, the royal placard was gone. Everyone was terrified.

The placard had been guarded by twelve eunuchs and twelve guards of the Embroidered-Uniform Guard, who had brought it out from the morning court. It had not been hanging for three full hours before the wind carried it off. Trembling with fright, they searched this way and that, until they suddenly caught sight of a corner of paper sticking out of Zhu Bajie's bosom. The men came up to him. "So you tore down the placard!" they said.

The blockhead suddenly raised his head and thrust out his snout, and the sight sent those several guards stumbling and sprawling to the ground. He turned to go, but was seized by some of the bolder men in front of him. "You've torn down the imperial placard seeking physicians!" they cried. "Why don't you go to court and

cure our Ten Thousand Years, instead of standing here? Where do you think you're going?"

Flustered and frightened, the blockhead said, "It's your son who tore down the placard! It's your grandson who can cure anybody!"

"Then what is that paper you've got stuffed in your bosom?" demanded the guards.

Only then did the blockhead look down, and sure enough, there was a written sheet. He unfolded it and looked at it, then ground his teeth and cursed, "That ape has done me to death!" With a furious oath he moved to tear it up, but the crowd seized his arms. "You're a dead man!" they cried. "This is the placard of the reigning king! Who would dare tear it to pieces? Since you've stuck it in your bosom, you must surely have the hand of a royal physician. Come along with us at once!"

"You people don't understand!" roared Bajie. "This placard wasn't torn down by me—it was my elder brother Sun Wukong who did it. He slipped it secretly into my bosom and went off and left me here. If you want to get to the bottom of this, I'll go and find him with you."

"What are you talking about?" said the crowd. "Why strike a bell that's being cast when there's one right in front of you? You're the one who tore down the placard, and you tell us to go find somebody! Don't argue—drag him off to see the sovereign!" And without waiting to hear reason, that crowd shoved and pulled the blockhead along.

But the blockhead planted his feet as if they had grown roots, and ten-odd men could not budge him. "You don't know what you're up against!" said Bajie. "Pull me a while longer and you'll rouse my blockhead temper—and then don't blame me!"

Before long the hubbub had drawn a crowd of street folk, who ringed him round. Two aged eunuchs among them said, "Your looks are most peculiar and your voice is foreign. Where do you come from, to be so boorish and obstinate?"

"We are sent from the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures," said Bajie. "My master is the Dharma Preceptor, sworn brother of the Tang king, and he has just gone into court to exchange the travel documents. My elder brother and I came out to buy seasonings. I saw how great the crowd beneath the tower was and did not dare go near it, so my elder brother told me to wait here. As it turns out, he caught sight of the placard, raised a whirlwind, tore it down, and hid it in my bosom before going off on his own."

"That white-faced, plump monk I saw dashing toward the court gate a while ago—was that your master?" asked the eunuch.

"That's right, that's right," said Bajie.

"And where has your elder brother gone?" asked the eunuch.

"We are a party of four," said Bajie. "Our master has gone to exchange the documents, and the other three of us, with our baggage and the horse, are resting at the Hostel for Tribute Envoys. My elder brother made a fool of me and has gone back to the hostel ahead of us."

"Guards," said the eunuch, "don't pull him about. Let us all go to the hostel, and we shall soon learn the truth of it."

"These two grannies know what they're about!" said Bajie.

"What a fool this monk is!" said the guards. "Why does he call these gentlemen 'grannies'?"

"No shame at all!" laughed Bajie. "You've got it all arse-over-tip! These two old ladies—why don't you call them 'granny' or 'grandmother' instead of 'sir'?"

"None of your lip!" said the crowd. "Hurry up and find your elder brother." And a great mob from the streets, no fewer than three or five hundred, jostled and shouted and carried him along to the gate of the hostel.

"Hold on, everyone," said Bajie. "My elder brother is not like me—he won't stand for your games. He is a fierce, thoroughgoing fellow. When you see him, you must make a great show of ceremony and call him 'Master Sun'; then he'll consent. Otherwise he'll turn ugly on you, and this business will never be done."

"If your elder brother really has the skill to cure the king," said all the eunuchs and guards, "he'll deserve half the kingdom, and it will be our place to kowtow to him."

While the rabble of idlers made a din outside the gate, Bajie led the file of eunuchs and guards straight into the hostel, where he found the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk in the guest room laughing and chattering over just this matter of the torn-down placard.

Bajie went up and seized the Pilgrim, shouting, "A fine fellow you are! You lured me into going with you to buy vegetarian noodles, baked cakes, and steamed buns to eat—and it was all empty talk! And then you raised a whirlwind and tore down some imperial placard, hid it in my bosom, and used me as a stuffed dummy! Is this the way a brother treats a brother?"

"Blockhead," laughed the Pilgrim, "you must have taken the wrong road and wandered off somewhere. I crossed by the drum tower, bought the seasonings, and hurried back—but you were nowhere to be found, so I came on ahead. What imperial placard did I tear down?"

"The officials who were guarding the placard are here!" said Bajie.

And indeed, before he had finished speaking, the eunuchs and guards came forward and made their bows. "Master Sun," they said, "today our king is blessed with the affinity of Heaven, which has sent down this reverend lord. We beg you only to display your great skill—to make a slight exercise of the art of one who has thrice broken his arm [Translator's note: from the saying "He who has thrice broken his own arm makes a good physician," i.e., an experienced healer]—and cure our king's sickness. If he recovers, there is a share of the realm and half the kingdom for you."

At these words the Pilgrim composed his countenance, took the placard from Bajie, and said to the company, "So you are the officials who were guarding the placard?"

The eunuchs kowtowed. "We are inner-court servants of the Directorate of Ceremonies," they said, "and these are guards of the Embroidered-Uniform Guard."

"It was indeed I who tore down the placard seeking physicians," said the Pilgrim, "and I sent my junior brother to bring me before you. Since your sovereign is ill—and as the saying goes, 'drugs are not peddled and illness is not begged to be treated'—go and tell the king to come and invite me in person. I can cure his disease the moment my hand touches him."

When the eunuchs heard this they were all astonished. "A man who talks big must have the capacity to back it up," said the guards. "Let half of us stay here and keep watch on him, and the other half go into court and memorialize." They divided the party: four eunuchs and six guards, without waiting to be summoned, went straight into court, knelt at the foot of the steps, and announced, "Our sovereign lord! A thousand congratulations!"

The king had just finished his meal and was chatting with Sanzang when this memorial came in. "Congratulations for what?" he asked.

"We brought the royal placard seeking physicians out from the morning court," said the eunuchs, "and posted it beneath the drum tower. A holy monk of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, one Master Sun, who has come from afar to seek the scriptures, has torn it down. He is now at the Hostel for Tribute Envoys, and he

demands that Your Majesty go in person to invite him, for he has the power to cure any disease the moment his hand touches the patient. For this cause we have come to memorialize."

The king was overjoyed. "Dharma Preceptor," he asked Tang Sanzang, "how many worthy disciples have you?"

"This humble monk has three unruly disciples," replied Sanzang, putting his palms together.

"Which of those worthy disciples is skilled in medicine?" asked the king.

"To be frank with Your Majesty," said Sanzang, "my unruly disciples are all uncouth fellows of the mountains and wilds. They are fit only to carry the luggage, lead the horse, cross the gullies and ford the streams, and bear this humble monk over mountains and ridges; or, where the ways grow perilous, they can subdue demons, capture monsters, seize tigers, and bring dragons low. But not one of them knows anything of the properties of medicines."

"Your Reverence is too modest," said the king. "That I should hold court today and chance to meet Your Reverence is indeed the gift of Heaven. If your disciples know nothing of medicine, why would he tear down my placard and have me come to invite him in person? He must surely possess the ability to heal a kingdom! Let my civil and military ministers take heed: I am too weak and spent to ride in a palanquin. Do you go in my stead, all of you, beyond the court gates, and earnestly invite Master Sun to examine my illness. When you see him, you must by no means slight him: address him as the Holy Monk Master Sun, and meet him with the ceremony due to a sovereign's own person."

Receiving this command, all the ministers, together with the eunuchs and guards who had watched the placard, went straight to the Hostel for Tribute Envoys and ranged themselves in order to pay their respects.

The sight frightened Bajie so badly that he hid himself in a side room, and the Sha Monk slipped out of sight behind the wall. As for the Great Sage, he sat squarely in the middle and never stirred.

"What a killjoy this ape is!" Bajie grumbled under his breath. "Here are all these officials bowing to him, and he doesn't return the courtesy, or even get to his feet!"

When the bows were done, the ministers divided into their ranks and memorialized: "We inform the Holy Monk Master Sun: we are all ministers of the King of Zhuzi, and in obedience to our sovereign's command we have come with clean hearts and proper ceremony to invite the Holy Monk to enter court and examine his illness."

Only then did the Pilgrim rise to his feet. "Why hasn't your king come himself?" he asked them.

"Our king's body is too weak and his strength too spent to ride in a palanquin," replied the ministers, "and so he has commanded us, his ministers, to perform the rites on the sovereign's behalf and to invite the Holy Monk with due reverence."

"In that case," said the Pilgrim, "let all of you go on ahead, and I shall follow." So the ministers fell into ranks according to their grades and set off in file.

The Pilgrim adjusted his clothes and rose to go, but Bajie said, "Elder brother, whatever you do, don't drag us into this."

"I won't drag you in," said the Pilgrim. "I only want you two to collect the medicines for me."

"What medicines?" asked the Sha Monk.

"Whatever medicines people bring me," said the Pilgrim, "take them all in as they come, and I'll use them when I return." The two of them accepted the charge, and of this no more for the moment.

The Pilgrim went off with the host of officials and arrived in a trice. The ministers went in first and memorialized to the king, who drew up his pearl curtain and rolled his dragon eyes and phoenix pupils. Opening his golden mouth he asked, "Which of you is the Holy Monk Master Sun?"

The Pilgrim stepped forward one pace and said in a booming voice, "Old Sun here!"

The king, startled by the fierce voice and the outlandish looks, trembled and fell back onto his dragon couch. In a panic his ladies and eunuchs carried him into the inner palace. "He's frightened me to death!" he cried.

The officials all turned on the Pilgrim. "How can this monk be so boorish and rough?" they complained. "How dare you tear down the placard so presumptuously!"

"Good people," laughed the Pilgrim at these words, "you're blaming me wrongly. If one goes about it as slackly as all this, then your king's illness will never get better—not in a thousand years."

"What man lives a thousand years?" said the ministers. "What good is 'not better in a thousand years'?"

"He's a sick king now," said the Pilgrim. "When he dies he'll be a sick ghost, and in his next incarnation he'll be a sick man again. Doesn't that come to 'never better in a thousand years'?"

The ministers were furious. "You monk, you know nothing of propriety! How dare you spout such arrant nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense at all," laughed the Pilgrim. "Just listen to me:

The art of medicine is subtle and profound; Above all, the heart must know how to turn about. Inspection, auscultation, inquiry, pulse-taking— Miss but one of the four, and the skill is incomplete. First inspect his spirit, looks, and color, Whether he is withered or sleek, fat or thin, up or sleeping. Second listen to his voice, whether clear or hoarse, Attend to his sober talk and to his ravings. Third ask how many days the malady has run, How he eats and drinks, and how he passes water and stool. Fourth take the pulse and so make clear the channels, Whether the tide runs deep or shallow, outer or inner. Without my inspection, auscultation, inquiry, and pulse-taking, He need never hope, this side of the grave, to be hale again."

Now among the civil and military officials stood physicians of the Imperial College, and when they heard this they spoke up in praise: "This monk talks sense! Even a divine healer must proceed by inspection, auscultation, inquiry, and pulse-taking—it accords exactly with the sacred art of the gods."

Following their advice, the officials sent a close attendant in to memorialize: "The elder requires the methods of inspection, auscultation, inquiry, and pulse-taking before he can identify the disease and prescribe the medicine."

The king, lying on his dragon couch, called out over and over, "Send him away! Send him away! I cannot bear to see the face of a stranger!"

The close attendant came out of the palace and said, "You monk! Our king commands you to be gone. He cannot bear to see the face of a stranger."

"If he can't bear to see a stranger's face," said the Pilgrim, "then I'll make a diagnosis by thread."

The officials were secretly delighted. "A diagnosis by thread!" they said. "We have heard of it, but never seen it with our own eyes. Let us memorialize again." So the close attendant went back into the palace and reported: "Sovereign lord, Master Sun says that if he cannot see your face, he can make a diagnosis by thread."

The king thought to himself, "I have been ill these three years and have never tried such a thing. Summon him in." The close attendant hurried out with the word: "Our sovereign has consented to the diagnosis by

thread. Summon Master Sun into the palace without delay to make the examination."

The Pilgrim then went up onto the jeweled hall, where Tang Sanzang met him and scolded him, "You brazen ape, you've ruined me!"

"What a master!" laughed the Pilgrim. "I'm going to win you great renown, and you say I've ruined you!"

"You have been with me all these years," said Sanzang sternly, "and when have I ever seen you cure a single person? You know nothing of the properties of drugs, and you've never opened a book of medicine. How dare you rush headlong into this calamity!"

"Master," laughed the Pilgrim, "you don't understand. I have a few peasant prescriptions that can cure the great diseases, and I warrant I can make him well. And even if he died, the worst I'd be charged with is killing him through my ignorance—that's not a capital offense. What are you afraid of? It's no matter, no matter. Sit down and watch how I do my pulse-taking."

"Have you ever read the Plain Questions, the Classic of Difficulties, the Materia Medica, or the Pulse Classic?" said the elder. "What do you know of their chapters and verses, or of their annotations, that you dare talk such nonsense and claim you can make a diagnosis by thread!"

"I have a golden thread upon me," laughed the Pilgrim, "which you have never seen."

He reached a hand behind him, plucked three hairs from his tail, twisted them together, and cried, "Change!" They turned at once into three silken threads, each two zhang and four feet long, to match the twenty-four periods of the year. Holding them in his hand, he said to Sanzang, "Isn't this my golden thread?"

"Hold your boasting for a while, elder," said the eunuch attendant at his side. "Enter the palace and make the diagnosis." So the Pilgrim took leave of Sanzang and followed the attendant into the inner palace to examine the illness. Truly it was:

The heart holds secret recipes to order a state; Within it lie hidden arts to prolong one's life.

For now, we do not know what illness he would discover there, or what drugs he would use. If you would learn the truth of it, you must listen to what is explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 69

By Night the Mind-Master Compounds the Medicines; At the Banquet the Monarch Relates the Tale of the Demon

The story tells how the Great Sage Sun, following the eunuch attendant, entered the inner courts of the imperial palace and came to a halt outside the doors of the bedchamber. He handed the three golden threads to the eunuch to take inside, with instructions: "Have one of the ladies of the palace, or one of the attendant eunuchs, first tie them about His Majesty's left wrist, on the three pulse positions of the inch, the bar, and the cubit; then pass the loose ends of the threads out to me through a crack in the window lattice."

The eunuch did exactly as he was told. He seated the king on his dragon couch, tied one end of the golden threads over the three pulse positions, and ran the other ends out the window. The Pilgrim took the threads, and first, using the thumb of his right hand to steady his index finger, he felt the inch pulse; then he pressed his middle finger over his thumb and felt the bar pulse; then he held his thumb against his ring finger and felt the cubit pulse. He regulated his own breathing, and distinguished the four humors and five stagnations, the seven superficial and eight deep conditions, and the nine positions, weighing the floating against the sinking and the sinking against the floating, until he had made clear the true and the false. Then he had the threads untied from the left wrist and fastened in the same way to the right.

The Pilgrim pressed his left hand to the threads and examined them one by one from beginning to end. Then he gave himself a shake, gathered the golden threads back into himself, and called out in a loud voice: "Your Majesty's left-inch pulse is strong and tight, the bar pulse rough and slow, the cubit pulse hollow and deep; the right-inch pulse is floating and slippery, the bar pulse slow and knotted, and the cubit pulse rapid and firm. A strong and tight left-inch pulse means a vacuous heart and pain in the chest; a rough and slow bar pulse means sweating and numbness of the flesh; a hollow and deep cubit pulse means dark urine and blood in the stool. A floating and slippery right-inch pulse means internal congestion and stoppage of the menses; a slow and knotted bar pulse means food and drink that remain lodged; a rapid and firm cubit pulse means vexation, fullness, and the struggle of chill and vacuity together. By this examination, this honored ailment of yours is one brought on by fright, anxiety, worry, and longing—a case that I call 'the pair of birds parted from their flock.'"

When the king within heard this he was overjoyed, and rousing his spirits he answered in a loud voice: "Clear at the fingertips! Clear at the fingertips! That is exactly my illness! Pray go out and prepare the medicine!" Only then did the Great Sage stroll out of the palace. The eunuchs who had overheard at the side had already hurried ahead to report the matter to the crowd.

In a little while the Pilgrim emerged, and Tang Sanzang at once asked how it had gone. "I have taken the pulse," said the Pilgrim, "and now I must compound the medicine to fit the ailment."

The officials came up and said, "Holy Monk Master Sun, just now you spoke of 'the pair of birds parted from their flock.' What does that mean?"

"Suppose there are two birds, a male and a female," laughed the Pilgrim, "that used to fly together. All at once a violent wind and a drenching rain startle them apart; the female cannot see the male, and the male cannot see the female. The female longs for the male, and the male longs for the female—isn't that 'a pair of birds parted from their flock'?"

When the officials heard this, they all shouted in admiration: "A true holy monk! A true divine physician!" and praised him without end. Among them a physician of the Imperial College asked, "The nature of the illness has now been made out, but may we know what drugs are to be used to cure it?"

"There's no need to fix on any prescription," said the Pilgrim. "Just let me see whatever drugs there are, and I'll take them."

"According to the classics," said the medical officer, "there are eight hundred and eight flavors of drugs and four hundred and four ailments of mankind. One ailment does not reside in a single body, and how could any one prescription make use of every drug? Why must you see them all before taking them?"

"As the ancients said," replied the Pilgrim, "'Drugs are not bound to any fixed prescription; use whatever fits the case.' For this reason I want to survey the full range of drugs, that I may add and subtract as need arises."

The medical officer said no more, but went out through the court gate and ordered the officers on duty of his own college to make known throughout the whole city to all the drug shops, both the crude and the prepared, that every drug was to be supplied in three catties apiece and delivered to the Pilgrim.

"This is not the place for preparing medicines," said the Pilgrim. "Have all the drugs, together with every vessel and implement for compounding, carried to the Hostel for Tribute Envoys and delivered into the keeping of my two junior brothers."

The medical officer obeyed, and sent the eight hundred and eight flavors at three catties apiece, with drug-mills, drug-grinders, drug-sieves, drug-mortars, and their pestles, all to the hostel, where everything was received and put away in due order.

The Pilgrim then went back to the hall to invite his master to come to the hostel with him to compound the medicines. But as the elder was rising to his feet, a decree came out of the inner palace commanding that the Dharma Preceptor be detained and lodged overnight in the Hall of Literary Culture, and that after the medicine had been taken on the morrow and the illness cured, thanks should be rendered, the documents exchanged, and the party sent on its way.

Greatly alarmed, Sanzang said, "Disciples, this is a plot to keep me as a hostage! If the medicine works, he'll be pleased and send us off; but if it fails, my life is as good as lost. You must be very careful and conscientious, and make the medicine with perfect devotion!"

"Master, rest easy here and enjoy yourself," laughed the Pilgrim. "Old Sun has in his own hand the skill to heal a kingdom."

The Great Sage took leave of Sanzang and of all the ministers, and went straight back to the hostel. Bajie met him with a grin. "Elder brother, I've got your number," he said.

"Got my number how?" asked the Pilgrim.

"I know," said Bajie. "Your scripture quest was never going to come to anything, and you had no capital to set up in business, so now that you've seen how rich this place is, you're scheming to open a drug store!"

"Stop your nonsense!" scolded the Pilgrim. "When I've cured the king, I'll take my leave of court in triumph and be on my way. What would I want with a drug store!"

"Well then," said Bajie, "here are eight hundred and eight flavors at three catties apiece, two thousand four hundred and twenty-four catties in all, and all to cure a single man. How much can he possibly use? At this rate he wouldn't eat through the lot in heaven knows how many ages!"

"What need for so much?" said the Pilgrim. "Those medical officers of his are a pack of blind fools. I had them bring all these drugs so that they wouldn't know where to turn, not knowing which few I would actually use—and could never guess my wondrous prescription."

Just then the two superintendents of the hostel came and knelt before him. "We invite the Holy Monk Master Sun to take his evening meal," they said.

"This morning you treated me shabbily," said the Pilgrim, "and now you kneel to invite me. Why the change?"

The superintendents kowtowed. "When the reverend lord arrived, we petty officials had eyes but could not see, and knew not your honored countenance. But now we have heard how the reverend lord will exercise the art of one who has thrice broken his arm to cure the sovereign of our whole state. If His Majesty recovers, the reverend lord will have a share of the realm, and we shall be his liegemen. It is fitting that we should kneel and invite you."

At these words the Pilgrim, well pleased, went up and seated himself at the head of the table, while Bajie and the Sha Monk took their seats to right and left, and the meal was set out.

"Elder brother," asked the Sha Monk, "where is the master?"

"The master is being kept by the king as a hostage," laughed the Pilgrim. "It's only when the illness is cured that he will give thanks and send us off."

"And is he being well treated?" asked the Sha Monk.

"How could the king's guest be badly treated?" said the Pilgrim. "When I left, he already had three grand councilors waiting on him, and they were leading him into the Hall of Literary Culture."

"In that case," said Bajie, "the master's doing better than we are. He has grand councilors to wait on him, while we have to make do with two hostel superintendents. But never mind them—let old Pig eat his fill!" And the brothers set to and enjoyed themselves as they pleased.

When evening came, the Pilgrim called to the superintendents, "Clear away the table, and provide us with plenty of oil and candles, for we can only prepare the medicine when the night is quiet." The superintendents indeed sent over a good supply of oil and candles, and then dismissed all the staff. At midnight the streets of the capital were still, and not a sound was to be heard on any side.

"Elder brother," said Bajie, "what medicine are we to make? Get on with it. I'm sleepy."

"Fetch me an ounce of rhubarb," said the Pilgrim, "and grind it to a fine powder."

"But rhubarb is bitter to the taste," put in the Sha Monk, "cold in nature and without poison. Its action sinks and does not float; it moves and does not stay. It sweeps away all obstructions without blockage, and quells disorders to bring about peace—for which reason it is called the General. But this is a purgative drug, and since His Majesty has been weak from a long illness, I fear it cannot be used."

"Little brother, you don't understand," laughed the Pilgrim. "This drug loosens phlegm and smooths the vital breath, and flushes out the congealed chills and heats lodged in the stomach. Don't worry yourself about me. Go and get an ounce of croton seeds, shell them, strip off the skins, pound out the oil and poison, and grind them to a fine powder."

"Croton seeds are pungent," said Bajie, "hot in nature, and poisonous. They carve through hard accumulations, scour out the deep chills of the viscera, open what is blocked, and ease the passage of water and grain—the general who breaks the gates and storms the barriers. They cannot be used lightly!"

"Little brother, you don't understand either," said the Pilgrim. "This drug breaks up congestions and opens the bowels, and can put to rights the swelling of the heart and the puffing of the belly. Make it ready quickly, for I have still other adjuvants and guides to pair with it."

The two of them at once ground both drugs fine and asked, "Elder brother, how many dozens of the other flavors do you want?"

"None of them," said the Pilgrim.

"Eight hundred and eight flavors at three catties apiece, and we use only these two ounces!" said Bajie. "You're certainly having your fun with a body."

The Pilgrim took a flowered porcelain cup and said, "Say no more, junior brother. Take this cup and scrape me half a cup of the soot from the bottom of the cooking pot."

"What do you want that for?" asked Bajie.

"The medicine needs it," said the Pilgrim.

"I've never heard of using pot soot in a medicine," said the Sha Monk.

"Pot soot is called 'the frost of a hundred grasses,'" said the Pilgrim, "and it can harmonize all the hundred ailments. You wouldn't know that."

The blockhead truly scraped half a cup of it and ground it fine. Then the Pilgrim handed him the cup again. "Go," he said, "and fetch me half a cup of our horse's urine."

"What do you want that for?" asked Bajie.

"To roll the pills," said the Pilgrim.

"Elder brother," laughed the Sha Monk, "this is no joking matter. Horse urine is fishy and rank—how can it go into a medicine? I've seen pills rolled with vinegar paste, with old rice paste, with boiled honey, or simply with clear water, but never in my life have I seen pills rolled with horse urine! That stuff is stinking and foul; a man with a weak spleen would retch at one whiff. And if he then takes croton and rhubarb on top of it, you'd have him puking above and shitting below. Is that any way to go on?"

"You don't know the secret of it," said the Pilgrim. "That horse of ours is no common horse. He was originally a dragon of the Western Sea. If he can be persuaded to urinate, then whatever illness a man may have, a dose of it will cure him—but the trouble is, you can't get it in a hurry."

Hearing this, Bajie went off to the horse. The horse was lying slantwise on the ground, asleep. The blockhead kicked him to his feet, then crouched under his belly and waited a long while, but not a drop of urine came.

He ran back and said to the Pilgrim, "Brother, never mind curing the emperor—hurry up and cure the horse instead! That dead creature has dried himself up completely; don't expect a single drop to come out of him!"

"I'll go with you," laughed the Pilgrim.

"I'll come and have a look too," said the Sha Monk.

The three of them went to the horse together, and the horse jumped to his feet and spoke in human tongue. "Elder brother," he cried in a loud voice, "don't you know? I was originally the Flying Dragon of the Western Sea. Because I violated the laws of Heaven, the Bodhisattva Guanyin saved me, sawed off my horns, stripped away my scales, and turned me into a horse to carry the master to the Western Heaven in quest of the scriptures, that I might atone for my crimes with merit. If I passed water in a river, the fish that drank of it would turn into dragons; if I passed water on a mountain, the grass that tasted of it would change into magic fungus, which the immortal boys would pluck to lengthen their years. How could I be willing to cast it away lightly in this dusty, common place?"

"Say no more of that, brother," said the Pilgrim. "This is the capital of a king of the Western Regions, no dusty, common place, and no light matter either. As the proverb says, 'many fleeces make a coat.' We must cure the king of this country. If we can make him well, we'll all come off in glory; if not, I fear we may not get safely away from here."

Only then did the horse cry, "Wait, then!" See him: he lunged forward once, squatted back once, gnashed his teeth until they grated and rang, and with great straining squeezed out a few drops, then straightened himself up.

"This dead creature!" said Bajie. "Even if it's liquid gold, you could spare a little more!"

But the Pilgrim saw there was nearly half a cupful. "Enough! Enough!" he said. "Take it away!" Only then was the Sha Monk satisfied.

The three of them went back to the hall, stirred all the drugs together, and kneaded them into three great pills.

"Junior brothers," said the Pilgrim, "they're too big."

"They're no bigger than walnuts," said Bajie. "And if it were a matter of me eating them, one wouldn't be enough to fill my mouth!" So they put the pills away in a small box, and the brothers lay down to sleep in their clothes. That night passed without event.

At dawn, the king, though still languishing from his illness, held court and received Tang Sanzang, and at once commanded the officials to hurry to the Hostel for Tribute Envoys to pay their respects to the Holy Monk Master Sun and fetch the medicine.

The host of officials followed one another to the hostel, prostrated themselves before the Pilgrim, and said, "Our sovereign has specially commanded us, his ministers, to come and receive the wondrous remedy."

The Pilgrim told Bajie to fetch the box, opened the lid, and handed it to the officials.

The officials asked, "What is the name of this medicine, that we may answer the king's questions?"

"It is called the Black-Gold Pill," said the Pilgrim.

Bajie and the Sha Monk laughed up their sleeves. "Rolled in pot soot, and they call it 'black gold'!" they whispered.

"And what are the ingredients for taking it?" asked the officials.

"Two kinds of adjuvants may be used," said the Pilgrim. "One of them is easy to obtain: brew the following six things into a soup to wash the pills down."

"What are the six things?" asked the officials.

"The fart of a crow flying in mid-heaven," said the Pilgrim, "the urine of a carp swimming against the current, the face powder of Queen Mother of the West, the ashes of the cinnabar in Lord Lao Zi's furnace, three strips from the battered head-cloth of the Jade Emperor, and five lengths of the beard of a dragon in distress.

Brew the six things into a soup for the pills, And your king's long illness will be cured in an hour.

"That list of ingredients does not exist in the world!" said the officials. "And what is the other kind of adjuvant?"

"Take the pills with rootless water," said the Pilgrim.

"That's easy to get!" laughed the officials.

"How do you make that out?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The common saying in our parts," said the officials, "is that to use rootless water you take a bowl, go to the well or down to the river, dip up the water, and turn straight around—letting it touch no ground and looking back at nothing—and carry it home for the patient to drink."

"But water from wells and rivers has roots," said the Pilgrim. "That's not what I mean by rootless water. The water I mean is that which falls from heaven—water that is drunk without ever touching the ground. Only that may be called rootless water."

"That's easy enough too," said the officials. "We'll just wait for a cloudy day and a rainstorm, and have the king take the pills then." And with bows of thanks to the Pilgrim, they carried the medicine back and presented it.

The king was overjoyed and at once ordered his close attendants to receive it. Looking at the pills he asked, "What sort of pellets are these?"

"The Holy Monk calls them the Black-Gold Pill," said the officials, "to be taken with rootless water."

The king bade the palace ladies fetch rootless water, but the officials said, "The Holy Monk says rootless water is not from wells or rivers, but water that falls from heaven and touches no ground." So the king summoned the officer in charge of the imperial equipage and commanded that a decree be issued for the Daoist masters to pray for rain.

The officials obeyed and posted the announcement, of which we say no more.

Now the Pilgrim, in the hall of the Hostel for Tribute Envoys, called out to Zhu Bajie, "Just now I promised him rain from heaven before the medicine could be taken. But where are we to get rain in such a hurry? I think this king is after all a sovereign of great worth and virtue, so how would it be if we helped him out with a little rain for his medicine?"

"How can you help?" asked Bajie.

"You stand at my left," said the Pilgrim, "and act as my supporting star." Then he called to the Sha Monk, "And you stand at my right as my assistant constellation, while old Sun helps him with a little rootless water."

Truly a Great Sage! He paced out the Dipper pattern, recited the spell, and soon there appeared due east a black cloud that drifted gradually until it hung directly over their heads. A voice cried, "Great Sage, Ao Guang, the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea, has come to see you."

"I wouldn't presume to trouble you for nothing," said the Pilgrim. "I have asked you here to help the king with a little rootless water for his medicine."

"When the Great Sage summoned me," said the Dragon King, "no mention was made of water, and so your little dragon has come in person, without his rain-making instruments, and without wind or cloud, thunder or lightning. How am I to bring rain?"

"We have no need of wind, cloud, thunder, or lightning at the moment," said the Pilgrim, "nor do we want much rain—only a little water to serve as an ingredient for the medicine."

"In that case," said the Dragon King, "let me sneeze a couple of times and spit out some spittle and phlegm for him to take with his medicine."

"Splendid! Splendid!" cried the Pilgrim, delighted. "Don't hesitate, but set to work at once." The old dragon, aloft in the air, lowered his black cloud gradually until it hung directly above the imperial palace, then hid his form and his presence, and spurted out a mouthful of spittle and saliva, which turned into a sweet rain.

All the officials in court shouted in unison, "A thousand congratulations to our sovereign lord! Heaven has sent down sweet rain!"

The king at once decreed: "Fetch vessels to catch it! Let everyone, inside the palace and out, high official and low, fill vessels and jars with this immortal water to save your sovereign." See those civil and military officials, and the ladies of the three palaces and six courts, with their three thousand painted girls and eight hundred slender beauties, each lifting cups and holding bowls, raising platters and gripping dishes to catch the sweet rain. The old dragon, wheeling about in mid-air, churned up his spittle and phlegm, keeping close over the palace fore and aft, for nearly two hours, until he took his leave of the Great Sage and returned to the sea.

The officials gathered in their cups and bowls and platters. Some had caught a drop or two, some three or four, and some not a single drop at all; but when all was gathered together there was about three cups full, and it was presented in its entirety upon the imperial table. Truly the rare fragrance filled the Golden Phoenix Hall, and a fine savor drifted through the Son of Heaven's court!

The king took leave of the Dharma Preceptor and carried the Black-Gold Pills and the sweet rain into the palace. First he swallowed one pill and drank a cup of the sweet rain; then he swallowed another pill and drank another cup of the rain; and the third time he swallowed all three pills and washed them down with all three cups of rain. Before long his belly began to rumble with a noise like a water-wheel, without pause. He called for the close-stool and emptied himself three or four times running, then drank some rice gruel and lay back limply on his dragon couch.

Two of his consorts examined the close-stool—the filth and phlegm that came from him is past all telling, and in the midst of it there was a clump of sticky rice.

The consorts came to the side of the dragon couch to report: "The root of the illness has all come down!"

The king was delighted at this news and took another bowl of rice. In a short while his chest felt wide and at ease, his breath and blood moved in harmony, and his spirits revived with new strength in his limbs. He rose from the dragon couch, put on his court robes, went up onto the jeweled hall, and saw Tang Sanzang, before whom he prostrated himself at once. The elder hurriedly returned the courtesy.

When the kowtows were done, the king supported him with his imperial hand and commanded his grand councilors, "Make ready quickly an invitation card. On it write that I bow twice and knock my head in reverence, and dispatch an officer to invite in due form the three worthy disciples of the Dharma Preceptor. And on the other side, open wide the eastern pavilion and have the Court of Imperial Feasts lay out a banquet of thanks."

The officials received the command; some made ready the card, some prepared the banquet, and since the power of a state can move mountains, all was accomplished in a moment.

When Bajie saw the officer arriving with the invitation, he was beside himself with joy. "Brother," he said, "this is indeed a wondrous medicine! Now they're coming to thank us, and the credit is all yours, elder brother."

"Now, second brother," said the Sha Monk, "what are you saying! As the saying goes, 'when one man is blessed, the whole house is lifted along.' We all had a hand in compounding the medicine here, and we are all meritorious persons. Just go and enjoy yourself, and don't say another word about it." Ho! See the brothers, all joy and smiles, going straight into court. The officials received them and led them up into the eastern pavilion, where they saw that Tang Sanzang, the king, and the grand councilors were all already there with the feast laid out.

The Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk made an obeisance to their master, and then all the officials came in. There on the upper dais were four vegetarian tables, each set with dishes to be looked at as well as eaten at a ratio of ten to one; before them was one table of meat, likewise spread with rare delicacies in the ratio of ten

to one. Around the sides were set four or five hundred single tables, and truly everything was ranged in perfect order. As the ancients said: "a hundred rare flavors and a thousand goblets of good wine." There were dainties of curds and creams, and crimson meats braided in fine strips. Precious ornaments flashed with the colors of flowers, and fruits were sweet and full of fragrance. Sugar sculptures of dragons coiled around lions and immortals; molded pastries and baked cakes were arrayed in pairs of phoenixes. For meat there were pigs and sheep, chickens, geese, fish, and ducks—every kind of flesh; for the vegetarian board, greens and shoots, bamboo tips, wood ears, and mushrooms. There were several kinds of fragrant soup and noodles, and sundry dishes of crisp toffee. Soft and smooth was the yellow-millet rice, fresh and clear the barley-milk porridge. Every soup was savory and hot and pungent, and every course that was brought round was fine and sweet. The sovereign and his ministers raised their cups and took their seats; rank by rank, in proper order, the wine jugs made their rounds.

The king, holding up a cup with his own imperial hand, first pressed it upon Tang Sanzang. "This humble monk does not drink wine," said Sanzang.

"This is vegetarian wine," said the king. "Drink this one cup, Your Reverence, and how would that be?"

"Wine is the very first prohibition of the monk," said Sanzang.

The king was at a loss. "If Your Reverence abstains from wine," he said, "with what shall we do honor to you?"

"Let my three unruly disciples drink it for me," said Sanzang.

Only then was the king pleased. He turned the golden goblet and handed it to the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim took the wine, made the proper courtesies to the company, and drank it down. The king, seeing how readily he drank, offered him another cup. The Pilgrim did not refuse, but drank again.

"Drink a 'three-treasures' cup!" laughed the king. The Pilgrim did not refuse, but drank once more. The king ordered more wine poured. "Drink a 'four-seasons' cup!" he said. Bajie, standing by and watching the wine pass him by, swallowed and gulped with all his might; and when he saw how persistently the king pressed the Pilgrim, he could hold out no longer and called out, "Your Majesty, there was some of my credit in that medicine too! There was horse—" But the Pilgrim, fearing the blockhead would let the secret slip, thrust the cup of wine that was in his hand into Bajie's.

Bajie took it and drank it down at once, and said no more.

"Sage Monk," said the king, "you said just now that the medicine contained some 'horse.' What horse was that?"

The Pilgrim took up the word: "My brother has a loose tongue," he said. "Whenever he comes upon a proven prescription, he must tell it to the whole world. In the medicine Your Majesty took this morning there was aristolochia [Translator's note: literally 'horse bell vine'—the pun on 'horse' is Bajie's slip about the dragon horse's urine]."

The king asked his ministers, "What sort of drug is aristolochia? What ailment does it cure?"

One of the physicians of the Imperial College, who happened to be at hand, replied: "Sovereign lord, aristolochia is bitter and cold and without poison. It stops wheezing and dissolves phlegm with great effect; it frees the breath and most of all removes the worms of the blood; it repairs weakness and quiets coughs and opens the chest."

"Used rightly! Used rightly!" laughed the king. "Elder Bajie, drink another cup." The blockhead said not a word, but he too drank a "three-treasures" cup.

The king then handed wine to the Sha Monk, who also drank three cups, and then all sat down in due order.

After they had feasted for a good while, the king again raised a great goblet and offered it to the Pilgrim.

"Your Majesty, pray be seated," said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun will drink his round with the rest, and would never dream of refusing."

"The Holy Monk's favor to me is as weighty as a mountain," said the king, "and I can never repay it fully. Do me the grace to drink this great goblet, and I have somewhat to say to you."

"If you have anything to say," said the Pilgrim, "say it, and then old Sun will drink."

"I have had a sickness of worry and doubt for several years," said the king, "and one dose of the Holy Monk's magic elixir has broken it open, and so I am well again."

"Yesterday, when old Sun examined Your Majesty," laughed the Pilgrim, "I knew at once it was an illness of worry and doubt; but I did not know what it was that caused you such anxiety."

"The ancients said, 'A family's shame must not be told abroad,'" said the king. "But since the Holy Monk is my benefactor and master, I will tell you—only pray do not laugh at me."

"How should I dare laugh?" said the Pilgrim. "Say on, and never mind."

"Holy Monk, coming from the east," said the king, "through how many states have you passed?"

"Some five or six," said the Pilgrim.

"And the queens of those states," asked the king, "how are they styled?"

"The queens of kings," said the Pilgrim, "are all styled the Principal Queen of the Main Palace, the Queen of the East Palace, or the Queen of the West Palace."

"That is not how I style mine," said the king. "My principal queen is called the Golden Sage Consort, my queen of the east palace the Jade Sage Consort, and my queen of the west palace the Silver Sage Consort. At present only the Silver and the Jade are in the palace."

"Why is the Golden Sage Consort not in the palace?" asked the Pilgrim.

Tears rolled down the king's cheeks. "She has not been here for three years," he said.

"Where did she go?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Three years ago, at the season of the Dragon Boat Festival," said the king, "I was with my consorts and ladies in the imperial gardens, at the pomegranate pavilion, untying the rice dumplings, hanging up the mugwort, drinking calamus and realgar wine, and watching the dragon boats race. All at once a gust of wind arose, and a demon appeared in mid-air. He called himself Sai Taishui, and said he dwelt in the Xiezhi Cave on the Unicorn Mountain, and that his cave lacked a wife. He had heard that my Golden Sage Consort was beautiful of face and lovely of form, and he wanted her for his wife, and bade me send her out without delay. If she were not delivered up at the third call, he would first devour me, then all my ministers, and then swallow up the whole populace of the city till not one was left. At that moment, with my heart torn between the state and my people, I could do nothing but thrust the Golden Sage Consort out beyond the pomegranate pavilion, and the demon bore her away with a roar. For this cause I took fright; the rice dumplings I had eaten congealed and lodged within me, and since I went on worrying and longing without cease day and night, this bitter sickness of three years' standing came upon me. But now, after the Holy Monk's elixir, I have purged myself several times, and it was all those things that had accumulated three years ago. And so at this very hour my body is light and my spirit whole, and my strength is as it was before. My life today is the gift of the Holy Monk—how shall I measure it, that weighs more than Mount Tai itself!"

When the Pilgrim heard this he was full of joy, and swallowed the great goblet of wine in two gulps. "So this was the nature of Your Majesty's alarm!" he said with a smile. "Now that you have met old Sun, you have had the fortune to recover. But may I ask whether you would like the Golden Sage Consort brought home again?"

The king wept. "I think of her with aching longing, day and night without ceasing," he said, "but there is not a single man who can capture that demon. How could I not wish to have her back!"

"Old Sun will go and vanquish that demon for you," said the Pilgrim. "What say you to that?"

The king knelt down. "If you can rescue my consort," he said, "I am willing to lead my three palaces and nine consorts out of the city to live as common folk, and to hand over the whole realm to the Holy Monk, that you may reign as emperor."

Bajie, seeing these words and this gesture, could not hold back his roaring laughter. "This emperor has lost all his dignity!" he said. "Fancy giving up his kingdom for a wife, and kneeling to a monk!"

The Pilgrim hurried forward and raised the king to his feet. "Your Majesty," he asked, "since that demon carried off the Golden Sage Consort, has he come again at all?"

"He carried her off at the Dragon Boat Festival the year before last," said the king. "In the tenth month he came again to demand two palace maids, saying they were to wait upon the lady; I delivered two to him. Last year, in the third month, he came again for two maids; in the seventh month he took two more; and in the second month of this year he took two again. There is no telling when he will come next."

"With him coming so often," said the Pilgrim, "are you not afraid of him?"

"When he comes so many times," said the king, "I am afraid on the one hand, and on the other I fear he may do us harm. So in the fourth month of last year I had my workmen raise a Demon-Avoiding Tower. At the first sound of wind I know it is he, and I go into hiding in it with my two consorts and nine ladies."

"Since Your Majesty does not despise me," said the Pilgrim, "do me the favor of taking old Sun to have a look at this Demon-Avoiding Tower."

The king at once took the Pilgrim by the left hand and left the feast, and all the officials rose to their feet as well.

"Elder brother," said Zhu Bajie, "you don't understand the proprieties! Here is this imperial wine going to waste, and you break up the feast and walk out—what is there to go and look at?"

The king, hearing this, knew well that Bajie's heart was set on food, and so he commanded the officers of the imperial equipage to carry two vegetarian tables with wine out to the Demon-Avoiding Tower, to await the blockhead there. Only then did the blockhead stop his shouting, and he went off laughing with the master and the Sha Monk. "Off to a new feast!" he said.

The file of civil and military officials led the way, and the king and the Pilgrim, arm in arm, passed through the imperial palace until they reached the back of the imperial gardens—but still no towers or pavilions were to be seen. "Where is the Demon-Avoiding Tower?" asked the Pilgrim.

Before the words were out of his mouth, two eunuchs came with two red-lacquered carrying poles and, going to a stretch of open ground, pried up a square stone slab.

"This is it," said the king. "Below this is a hall of nine bays, some ten yards deep, with four great vats inside, filled to the brim with clear oil, with lamps burning day and night without cease. Whenever I hear the sound of wind, I come here to hide, and the men outside cover the opening with the stone slab."

"That demon has never meant you any real harm," laughed the Pilgrim. "If he meant to harm you, how could you hide from him here?" And even as he spoke, from the south came a roaring wind, blowing up dust and earth. The frightened officials cried out in unison, "This monk has a mouth of salt and pepper! The moment he speaks of a demon, a demon comes!"

In a panic the king dropped the Pilgrim's hand and dove into the pit, with Tang Sanzang close behind, and the officials all hid themselves away as fast as they could.

Bajie and the Sha Monk were for hiding too, but the Pilgrim seized them both by the hands, one on each side. "Brothers," he said, "don't be afraid. Let us take a look at him together and see what sort of demon he is."

"What a business!" said Bajie. "Why go and look at him? The officials have hidden, the master has gone to earth, and the king has taken to his heels. We might as well be off—who is there to show off to?" The blockhead struggled left and struggled right, but he could not get his hands free, and the Pilgrim held him fast for a long while. Then, all at once, a demon flashed into sight in mid-air. Look at him, if you please:

Nine feet of fierce and evil bulk, With a pair of round eyes that glitter like golden lamps. His two great ears spread out like fans, Four steel fangs stood like driven nails. Red hair twined about his temples, eyebrows bristling like flames, His nose hung down with nostrils wide agape, And wisps of beard like threads of cinnabar; His cheekbones jutted high, his face all livid blue. Red sinews corded his arms, his hands were indigo, And ten hooked claws clutched a spear. A leopard-skin kirtle was girt about his loins, Barefoot, with tangled hair, he had the look of a ghost.

When the Pilgrim saw him he asked, "Sha Monk, do you know him?"

"How should I know him?" said the Sha Monk. "I have never been introduced to him!"

Then he asked, "Bajie, do you know him?"

"I've never shared tea or wine with him," said Bajie, "and he's no friend or neighbor of mine. How should I know him?"

"He looks like the painted-faced, golden-eyed ghost who guards the gate of the Equal of Heaven of the Eastern Peak," said the Pilgrim.

"No, no!" said Bajie.

"How do you know he isn't?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Don't I know?" said Bajie. "A ghost is a shade of the underworld. It comes forth only in the evening, when the hours of the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog, and the Boar arrive. It is only the hour of the Snake now, and what ghost would dare come out by daylight? And even if it were a ghost, it would have no power to ride the clouds. At best it could raise a mere whirlwind—but what sort of whirlwind is this great gale? Perhaps he is Sai Taishui himself."

"What a fine blockhead!" laughed the Pilgrim. "There's some sense in that after all! Since you say so, you two guard this spot, and let old Sun go up and ask his name and titles, so that we may rescue the Golden Sage Consort and bring her back to court."

"Go on, then," said Bajie. "But mind you don't give us away." The Pilgrim answered not a word, but with a majestic air he leaped upon his auspicious cloud and soared up into the air. Truly:

To order a state, one must first drive out the king's disease; To hold the Way, one must rid the heart of love and hate.

For now we do not know how this expedition into the air would end, in victory or defeat, or how the demon was to be captured and the Golden Sage Consort rescued. If you would learn the truth of it, you must listen to what is explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 70

The Demon's Treasure Spews Smoke, Sand, and Fire; Wukong Schemes to Steal the Purple-Gold Bells

The story continues: the Pilgrim Sun shook out his divine might, gripped his iron cudgel, rose into the air on auspicious light, and hailed the monster head-on: "What evil demon are you, and where do you mean to run riot?"

The monster shouted back in a harsh voice: "We are none other than the vanguard under Grand King Sai Taishui of the Xiezhi Cave on the Unicorn Mountain. By the great king's command I have come to this kingdom for two palace maids, to wait upon Lady Golden Sage. Who are you, that dare question me?"

[Translator's note: the xiezhi is a mythical one-horned beast of justice.]

"I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong," said the Pilgrim. "I am escorting the Tang monk of the East to worship the Buddha in the Western Heaven, and passing through this kingdom I learned that you pack of demons bullies its lord. So I have come to display my powers, put the state in order, and sweep the wicked away. I was just wondering where to find you—and here you come delivering up your own life!"

The creature, too ignorant to know what was good for him, leveled his long spear and stabbed at the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim raised his iron cudgel and met him face to face. What a battle this was, there in midair! The cudgel is the dragon palace's sea-subduing treasure; the spear is but common iron, thrice-smelted among men. How can a mortal weapon rival an immortal one? One brush against it and its spirit drains away. The Great Sage is an immortal of the Great Monad; the demon is the spawn of evil mischief. How can a goblin approach a righteous man? The moment rectitude appears, evil itself goes out. That one churns wind and sprays earth to frighten the royal lord; this one treads mist and mounts clouds, veiling sun and moon.

They open their stances and wager victory and defeat—whoever lacks the skill would never dare boast himself a hero! Still it is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven who proves the stronger: with a crack! one blow of the cudgel snaps the spear in two. The demon, whose spear the Pilgrim had shattered with a single stroke of his iron cudgel, panicked for his life, swung the wind around, and fled westward in defeat.

The Pilgrim did not chase him. He brought down his cloud and came to the mouth of the underground chamber beneath the Demon-Repelling Tower, calling: "Master, come out with His Majesty—the monster has been driven off."

Only then did Tang Sanzang, supporting the king by the arm, come up out of the chamber with him; they saw the whole sky clear and bright, without a breath of demonic vapor.

The king went straight to the banquet table, took up ewer and cup with his own hands, filled a golden goblet to the brim, and presented it to the Pilgrim, saying: "Divine monk, accept this poor thanks! Accept this poor thanks!"

The Pilgrim had the goblet in his hand and had not yet made reply when officers came rushing in from outside the court gate to report: "Fire has broken out at the West Gate!"

At the news the Pilgrim flung the golden goblet, wine and all, up into the sky; with a ringing clang the goblet came down to earth.

The king was flustered. He bowed low with clasped hands and said: "Divine monk, forgive me! Forgive me! The fault is mine! By rights I should have invited you up to the hall to render thanks, but because this informal wine was at hand, I offered it on the spot. And now you have thrown the cup away—surely that is

not a sign you take offense?"

"With no such meaning! With no such meaning!" the Pilgrim said, laughing. Presently more officers came to report: "What rain! The fire that broke out at the West Gate has just been put out by a great downpour—and the water running all down the streets reeks of wine!" The Pilgrim laughed again:

"Your Majesty saw me throw the cup and thought I was offended—far from it. That demon fled westward in defeat, and because I did not chase him, he loosed his fires. This cup of wine is what I used to quench his demon fire and save the households inside and outside the West City. What other meaning could there be?"

The king's delight and reverence grew tenfold. He invited Sanzang and his whole party up to the treasure hall, and was even minded to yield his throne and abdicate the kingdom to them.

"Your Majesty," said the Pilgrim with a laugh, "that demon just now gave himself out as the vanguard under Sai Taishui, sent to fetch palace maids. Now that he has been beaten and gone back, he is sure to report it to that rascal, and that rascal is sure to come and contend with me. I fear that if he musters his host all at once, the common people will once more be frightened and hurt, and Your Majesty terrified too. I mean to go out and meet him, seize him right there in midair, and bring back your holy queen. Only I do not know which way to go—from here to his mountain cave, how far is the road?"

"I once sent scouts and horsemen there to spy out his movements," said the king. "The round trip takes more than fifty days of travel. It lies to the south, some three thousand li and more from here."

At this the Pilgrim called out: "Bajie, Sha Monk, guard the master here—old Sun is off!" The king caught hold of him and said: "Divine monk, take a day's ease at least! Let me have some dry provisions and toasted grain made ready, give you some silver for the road, and choose you a fast horse—then you may go."

"Your Majesty speaks the talk of men who cross mountains and turn ridges afoot," said the Pilgrim, laughing. "I'll not deceive you: for a road of three thousand li like this, old Sun could pour wine into the cup, and before the wine went cold, make the round trip."

"Divine monk," said the king, "don't take offense at my frankness. That face of yours looks for all the world like an ape's—how can you have magic enough to travel so?"

"Though this body of mine is numbered among the apes," said the Pilgrim, "from boyhood I broke open the road of life and death. I visited every quarter for an enlightened master till one handed down the Way to me, and before the mountain I cultivated dawn and dusk without pause. Heaven for a canopy and Earth for a furnace, I rolled the two medicines, Crow and Hare, round as one. Gathering yin and yang, I made water and fire intermingle; in a moment I broke clean through the Mystic Pass. Wholly I leaned on the Plough's conveying power, and trusted to the Dipper's handle to shift my steps. Retiring to the furnace and advancing the fire, always precisely in season; drawing out the lead and adding mercury, the one attending the other. I gathered the Five Elements till Creation quickened, and harmonized the Four Images at their allotted times. The two breaths returned into the span of the Yellow Way; the three families met upon the road of the golden elixir. When I had grasped the Law it filled my every limb, and my native somersaults seem divinely aided. One leap clears the Taihang range; one bound crosses the Cloud-Riding Ford. What care I for sheer ridges by the thousand, or the Long River's hundred and more? Only because my transformations nothing can bar—one bound covers 108,000 li!"

Hearing this, the king was startled and delighted at once. Smiling broadly, he held out a cup of royal wine to the Pilgrim and said: "Divine monk, you have far to go and will toil; take this cup as a token of my regard."

But the Great Sage's whole heart was set on subduing the demon—where had he a heart for wine? He only said: "Set it down, set it down. When I come back from this errand, then I'll drink." What a Pilgrim! The word "go" was scarcely out of his mouth when, with a whistle of wind, he vanished without a trace.

The king and all his court were struck dumb with amazement—but no more of that.

The story continues: the Pilgrim sprang aloft, and soon a high mountain loomed up, blocking the misty horizon. He brought down his cloud and stood upon the very summit, looking carefully round him. What a mountain!

It pierces the sky and sprawls across the land; it hinders the sun and breeds the clouds. Where it pierces the sky, sharp peaks stand crowding; where it sprawls across the land, far ranges stretch unending. What hinders the sun are the dense pines on the ridge; what breeds the clouds are the jagged rocks beneath the cliffs. The dense pines are green through the four seasons and eight terms; the jagged rocks are unchanged through a thousand years and ten thousand ages. In the woods one hears night apes cry at whiles; in the ravines demon pythons pass as a common thing. The mountain birds call with choking notes; the mountain beasts roar and howl. River-deer and elk go scurrying in pairs and troops; mountain crows and magpies fly thick in flocks and squadrons. Mountain grasses and flowers past all seeing; mountain peaches and mountain fruits fresh in their season. Though its perilous steeps are past walking, it is the hermitage where demon immortals hide away.

The Great Sage could never gaze his fill of it. He was just about to search out the cave mouth when, from a hollow of the mountain, firelight came blazing forth. In an instant red flames leapt against the sky, and out of the red flames rose a stream of foul smoke, viler than the fire itself. What smoke! Just look:

Sparks of fire burst forth like ten thousand golden lamps; Tongues of flame fly like a thousand red rainbows.

That smoke was no chimney smoke, no smoke of grass and wood: it came in five colors—blue, red, white, black, and yellow. It would sear the pillars outside the South Gate of Heaven; it would scorch the roof-beams of the Hall of Divine Mists. It could roast the beasts in their lairs, hide and all, and singe every feather from the birds of the woods. Seeing smoke so vicious as this, how was one to enter the deep mountains and subdue the monster king?

The Great Sage was still quailing when a wall of sand burst forth from the mountain. What sand! It truly veiled the heavens and blotted out the sun. Just look:

Drifting and massing, it spreads to the sky's far edge; Darkling and murky, it blankets the whole great earth. Fine dust everywhere blinds the gazer's eyes; Coarse ash rolls through every valley like sesame seed. Herb-gathering immortal boys lose sight of their companions; The woodcutting fellows cannot find their way home. Though a bright pearl shone in your very hand, The blast would soon dazzle your eyes with flowers.

The Pilgrim was so busy gazing and marveling that sand and ash drifted into his nostrils; they tickled so that he sneezed twice. At once he turned, reached beneath the rocks, felt out two goose-egg pebbles, and plugged his nose with them; then he shook himself and changed into a sparrowhawk that darts through fire. Flying into the midst of the smoke and flame, he made several darting passes—and the sand and ash were gone, and the smoke and fire were quenched. Hastily he showed his true form and came down.

Looking about again, he heard the ding-dong ringing of a bronze gong, and said to himself: "I have gone astray! This is no place where demons dwell. That gong sounds like a courier's gong—this must be the great high road across the kingdom, with a courier going down to deliver dispatches. Wait till old Sun goes and asks him."

As he went along, he suddenly spied a little fiend, carrying a yellow flag, a dispatch bag on his back, beating a gong and hurrying along fast as flight. The Pilgrim laughed: "So it is this rascal clanging the gong. I don't know what letter he carries—let old Sun go and have a listen."

What a Great Sage! He shook himself and changed into a tiny gadfly, and alighted as lightly as could be on the fiend's dispatch bag. There he heard the little demon beating his gong and droning and muttering to

himself:

"Our great king is too cruel-hearted by half. Three years ago he carried off the queen, Lady Golden Sage, from the Kingdom of Zhuzi by force, but he has never had the luck to lay a finger on her, and the only ones to suffer are the palace maids sent to take the blame. Two came, and he used them to death; four came, and he used them to death too. The year before last he demanded maids, last year he demanded them again, this year he demands them—and this year he has run into an adversary. That vanguard sent to fetch the palace maids has been beaten by some Pilgrim Sun or other, and no maids are to be had. Our great king is in a fury over it and means to make war on their kingdom, and he has sent me to deliver some challenge to battle. Once this is done, that king had best not fight; fight, and he is sure to lose. Our great king will loose smoke, fire, and flying sand, and not one of that king's ministers or people can hope to live. Then we shall seize his city: the great king will style himself emperor, and we shall all be his ministers. There'll be posts big and small for every one of us—only, as sure as anything, Heaven's justice will never allow it!"

The Pilgrim heard him out and rejoiced in secret: "So there are demons with a conscience! Those last two lines about Heaven's justice never allowing it—isn't that the mark of a good one? But 'the queen has never had the luck to be touched'—that I do not understand. Let me go ask him about it."

With a chirr of his wings he flew off the fiend, turned up the road ahead, and after ten-odd li shook himself and changed once more—this time into a little Daoist novice:

His hair gathered into two knotted tufts, His body wrapped in a hundred-patched robe. In his hands he taps the fish-drum and clappers; From his mouth pours a ballad of the Way.

Rounding the mountainside, he met the little fiend face to face, raised his hands in salute, and said: "Sir, where are you bound? What dispatch are you carrying?"

The little fiend, as if he had known him all his life, stopped his gong-mallet and returned the greeting with a grin:

"My great king has sent me to the Kingdom of Zhuzi with a challenge to battle."

The Pilgrim took up his words and asked: "And that lady of Zhuzi—has she ever paired with your great king?"

"Ever since she was carried off, the year before last," said the fiend, "an immortal appeared on the spot and presented a five-colored immortal robe, for the lady of the Golden Sage Palace to wear as her bridal gown. From the moment she put it on, needles and prickles grew all over her body, and our great king dare not so much as lay a finger on her. If he touches her ever so lightly, the palm of his hand is stabbed with pain. Why, we do not know; but from first to last he has never come near her. This morning he sent the vanguard to demand palace maids to serve her, and the vanguard was beaten by some Pilgrim Sun or other. The great king is raging over it, so he sent me down with the challenge; tomorrow he joins battle with them."

"Why is the great king so vexed?" asked the Pilgrim. "Vexed! He is at it right now," said the fiend. "You might go sing him a ballad of the Way and ease his gloom a little."

The Pilgrim clasped his hands, slipped away, and left him; the fiend went on beating his gong as before. Then the Pilgrim turned murderous: he whipped out his cudgel, swung round, and brought it down once on the back of the fiend's head. Alas! The head was smashed to pulp, blood and brains spurted out, the skin split and the neck snapped—and his life was gone!

He put away his cudgel, then repented: "Too hasty by half! I never asked the wretch's name. Oh well!"

He took the letter of challenge from the body and hid it in his sleeve, and stowed the yellow flag and bronze gong in the grass beside the road. As he handled the corpse, with a clink something showed at its waist: a

gold-inlaid identity tablet. On the tablet were written words that read: "One trusted underling, Come-and-Go by name. Short of figure, pockmarked face, no beard. To be worn at all times; without the tablet, he is a counterfeit."

The Pilgrim laughed: "So the rascal's name is Come-and-Go—and with this one stroke of the cudgel, Come-and-Go has gone for good!"

He untied the identity tablet and buckled it round his own waist. He would have flung the corpse down, but then bethought himself of the virulence of that smoke and fire, and dared not yet go look for the cave. So he raised his cudgel, thrust it once into the little fiend's chest, hoisted the body into the air, and headed straight back for the kingdom—this would serve to report a first victory.

Watch him, communing with himself the while; then with a whistle of wind he was at the border of the kingdom.

Bajie was before the Golden Chimes Hall, guarding the master, when he happened to look back and see the Pilgrim in midair carrying a demon skewered on his cudgel. He grumbled: "Hai! Nothing to it, this trade! If old Zhu had known, I'd have gone and fetched him myself—wouldn't that have counted me in for a share of the credit?"

Before he had finished, the Pilgrim brought down his cloud and flung the demon at the foot of the steps.

Bajie ran up and gave the corpse one rake: "This is old Zhu's doing!" "What deed of yours?" asked the Pilgrim. "Don't you try to cheat me—I have witnesses!" said Bajie. "Can't you see my rake has punched nine holes in him?" "Look again," said the Pilgrim, "and see whether he has a head or not." Bajie looked, and laughed: "So he's been headless all along! No wonder he never budged however I raked him."

"Where is my master?" asked the Pilgrim. "In the hall, chatting with the king," said Bajie. "Go and ask him out here." Bajie hurried up into the hall and gave a nod; Sanzang rose at once, came down from the hall, and met the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim tucked the letter of challenge into Sanzang's sleeve and said: "Keep this, Master, and don't let the king see it yet."

Hardly were the words out when the king too came down from the hall to meet the Pilgrim, saying: "Divine monk, Venerable Sun, you are back! How went the demon-taking?" The Pilgrim pointed with his finger: "Is that not the demon at the foot of the steps? Old Sun has done him to death." The king looked and said: "A demon corpse it is, beyond doubt—but it is not Sai Taishui. I have seen Sai Taishui twice with my own eyes: eighteen feet tall, shoulders five spans broad, a face like golden light and a voice like a thunderclap—he is nothing like this wretched runt."

"Your Majesty knows him at a glance—indeed it is not he," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "This is a little message-bearing fiend who ran into old Sun; I did him in first and carried him back on my cudgel, to claim the first honors."

The king was overjoyed: "Good! Good! Good! That deserves first credit! From this court I have often sent men to spy him out, and never once gotten a certain answer. One expedition of the divine monk, and you bring a demon home—what true magic power!" He called: "Warm wine! Let us toast the Venerable One's victory!"

"Wine is a small matter," said the Pilgrim. "Let me ask Your Majesty this: when Lady Golden Sage parted from you, did she leave behind any keepsake? Give me a little of it."

At the words "keepsake" the king felt as if knives and swords were gouging his heart; he could not hold back, but cried out aloud and wept, saying:

"Of old, upon the festival that kept the height of glowing summer, The dread fiend of the year raised high his savage cry. He seized my queen to be the bride of his mountain stronghold; I gave her up to save my people's lives. No word of meeting and no word of parting passed between us— No long pavilion on that road, no short one either! Her keepsake, her fragrant purse, has left no shadow; To this day she is torn from me, and I stand desolate and alone!"

"Your Majesty—she is within reach; why give way to grief?" said the Pilgrim. "Since the lady left no keepsake, was there anything in the palace she held dear? Give me a piece of that."

"What would you do with it?" asked the king. "That demon king has real magic power," said the Pilgrim. "I have seen him loose smoke, fire, and sand—he is truly hard to take. And even if I took him, I fear the lady would find my face a stranger's and would not follow me home. I must have one thing she loved in her daily life; then she will trust me, and I can bring her back with me. That is why I must take it along."

"In the Zhaoyang Palace, up on the dressing tower," said the king, "there is a pair of golden bracelets. They were worn on Lady Golden Sage's own wrists; but because that Dragon-Boat day she was to bind on the five-colored threads, she slipped them off and never put them on again. They are among her dearest things, and they lie now in her dressing case. Since she met with this parting I cannot bear the sight of them: one glimpse is like a glimpse of her jade face, and my sickness grows the heavier for it."

"Never mind all that," said the Pilgrim. "Just have the golden bracelets fetched. If you can bear to part with them, give me both; if not, let me take one only." The king then bade the Lady of the Jade Palace fetch them; she brought them out and handed them to the king.

At the sight of them the king cried out several times, "O my lady, who knew my pains, who warmed to my warmth!"—and then passed them to the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim took them and slipped them over his arm.

What a Great Sage—not even waiting to drink the victory wine! He mounted his somersault cloud, and with a whistle of wind was once more upon the Unicorn Mountain. He had no heart for scenery, but went straight to seek out the cave. As he went along he heard the hubbub of many voices, and halted, fixing his eyes to look: it was the gatekeepers of the Xiezhi Cave, captains great and small, some five hundred of them, standing there:

In bristling ranks they are arrayed, close shoulder to shoulder. In bristling ranks they grip shield and spear, glittering in the sunlight; close shoulder to shoulder they spread their banners, fluttering and flashing in the wind. Tiger generals and bear masters, adept at transformations; leopard-heads and tiger-cub chieftains, strutting their spirit. The gray wolves are fierce and charging; the otter-elephants are gallant and bold. Cunning hares and crafty deer twirl sword and halberd; long serpents and great pythons carry saber and bow. The orangutans can understand the speech of men, and marshal the lines and pitch the camps, reading every shift of the wind.

The Pilgrim saw them and dared not go forward; he slipped away and turned back along the old road. Why did he turn back, do you ask? Not that he feared them. He went to the place where he had killed the little fiend, dug out the yellow flag and the bronze gong, faced the wind, knotted his fingers in the magic signs, summoned the shape before his mind's eye—and shook himself into the very likeness of Come-and-Go. Banging away at his gong, he strode forward with great steps, straight up to the Xiezhi Cave. Just as he was about to take in the prospect of the cave, he heard an orangutan call out: "Come-and-Go, you're back?"

The Pilgrim could only answer: "Back I am." "Quick, then!" said the orangutan. "The great king is waiting in the Skinning Pavilion for your report."

At these words the Pilgrim stretched his legs and, gong a-clatter, marched straight in through the front gate. Looking about as he went, he saw stone chambers and empty halls set against sheer cliffs and sliced walls,

with jade flowers and fairy grasses to left and right, and ancient cypresses and towering pines before and behind.

Before he knew it he was within the second gate. Suddenly he lifted his head and saw a pavilion bright with eight latticed windows, and in the middle of the pavilion a folding chair inlaid with gold; on the chair sat bolt upright a demon king, of truly evil aspect. Just look at him:

Blazing rosy light streams from his crown; A towering aura of slaughter bursts from his breast. The fangs outside his mouth rank like keen blades; The scorched hair at his temples emits red smoke. The bristles on his muzzle stand out like planted arrows; The hair over all his body piles like layered felt. His eyes start out like bronze bells, out-blazing the demon star; The iron mace in his hand seems to scrape the very sky.

The Pilgrim, seeing him, put on all his arrogance toward the demon: he offered not the least show of courtesy, but turned his face toward the outside and simply went on beating his gong.

"You're back?" asked the demon king. The Pilgrim did not answer. He asked again: "Come-and-Go, you're back?" Still no reply. The demon king stepped forward and seized him by the arm: "How is it you go on clashing that gong when you are home at last? I ask and you don't answer—what's the meaning of this?"

The Pilgrim flung the gong down on the ground: "What's the meaning! What's the meaning! I told you I wouldn't go, and you made me go all the same. When I got there, what should I see but countless men and horses drawn up in battle array, and the moment they clapped eyes on me they all shouted 'Seize the demon! Seize the demon!' They grabbed me and hauled me, tugged me and dragged me, and hauled me into the city before the king, and the king ordered me beheaded. Luckily the two benches of counselors said that when two houses contend, the messenger is never beheaded, and so they spared me. They took the letter of challenge, marched me back outside the city, gave me thirty strokes on the legs before the army, and let me come back with the answer. Their host will be along soon enough, to give battle to you here."

"So you suffered for it," said the demon king. "No wonder you said never a word when I asked."

"Just so," said the Pilgrim. "I was minding my bruises—that's why I couldn't answer." "How many men and horses did they have?" asked the demon king. "I was scared out of my wits, and beaten half-dead into the bargain—how was I to count their troops! All I saw was weapons ranked in bristling rows:

Bows, arrows, sabers, spears, armor and jerkins; shields, swords, halberds, and streamered banners. Throwing-spears and moon-spades, helmets and mail; great axes, round shields, and iron caltrops. Long staves and short cudgels; steel forks, matchlocks, and helmets to crown them. Shod and booted, head-armed and padded in quilted coats; bamboo whips, sleeve-crossbows, and bronze hammers."

The king heard it and laughed: "Nothing to fear! Nothing to fear! Weapons such as those, one blast of fire turns them all to nothing. Go you now and report it to Lady Golden Sage, and bid her not to grieve. This morning, when she heard me swearing to go out and fight, she wept and would have none of it. Go tell her now that the men and horses there are doughty and must surely beat me—it will ease her heart for a while."

At this the Pilgrim was overjoyed: "That hits old Sun's meaning exactly!" Watch him—it was as if he knew the way by long habit: round the corner gate, through hall after hall. Within, all was lofty chambers and towering mansions, quite unlike the front of the cave, until he came to the palace at the rear, where from afar he saw a splendid many-colored gate: the dwelling of Lady Golden Sage.

Going straight in, he saw two ranks of fox and deer spirits, every one of them made up in the form of a beautiful woman, standing in attendance to left and right; and in the very center sat the lady, chin resting on her hand, tears dropping from her eyes. Truly she had a tender jade face, lovely and alluring:

Too listless to dress her hair, her raven chignon hangs loose; Too heartsick for adornment, she wears neither pin nor ring. No powder on her face—the rouge lies cold and dull; No oil on her hair—the cloudlike tresses all a-frizzle. She pouts her cherry lips, biting hard on her silver teeth; She knits her moth-eyebrows, tears drowning her starry eyes. Her one whole heart remembers only the king of Zhuzi; For one moment she could hate that she cannot slip the net of Heaven, the snare of Earth. Truly it is: from of old the fair have mostly been ill-starred; Languid and wordless, she faces the east wind!

The Pilgrim stepped forward, made a monastic salutation, and said: "Your humble servant's respects." The lady said: "What a loutish, unmannerly beast! When I dwelt in the Kingdom of Zhuzi, sharing glory and splendor with my king, the grand tutors and prime ministers, at the mere sight of me, cast themselves flat in the dust and dared not look up. How dare this wild monster call out his 'respects' to me? Where ever did such a boor come from?"

The waiting maids came forward: "Be not angry, Madam. He is one of the great king's trusted underlings, Come-and-Go by name. It was he who was sent with the challenge this morning." Hearing this, the lady mastered her anger and asked: "You carried the challenge—did you reach the borders of Zhuzi?" "I bore the letter straight into the city," said the Pilgrim, "up into the Golden Chimes Hall, into the very presence of the king, and I have brought back his answer."

"What said the king, when he saw you face to face?" asked the lady. "The king's talk of war and resistance, his dispositions of troops and battle arrays, I have just now reported to the great king," said the Pilgrim. "Only, the king showed that he yearns for your ladyship, and there is one word near his heart that I have come especially to deliver. But with all these attendants about, this is no place to speak of it."

At this the lady dismissed the two ranks of fox and deer spirits.

The Pilgrim shut the palace door, gave his face one wipe, showed his true form, and said to the lady: "Do not fear me. I am a monk of the great Tang empire of the East, sent to the Thunderclap Monastery in the land of India of the great Western Heaven, to see the Buddha and beg for the scriptures. My master is the Tang emperor's sworn brother Tang Sanzang, and I am his eldest disciple, Sun Wukong. Passing through your kingdom to have our travel rescripts stamped, I saw your sovereign and his court post a notice seeking a physician, and it was I who brought my thrice-broken arm to bear and cured his sickness of longing. At the banquet they spread to thank me, as we drank, he told how you had been carried off by the demon; and since I can subdue dragons and tame tigers, they begged me to come catch the monster and deliver you home. The one who beat the vanguard was I; the one who killed the little fiend was I too. Seeing how fierce things were outside their gates, I changed myself into the likeness of Come-and-Go and risked my body to come here and bring you word."

Hearing this, the lady sank into thought and said nothing.

The Pilgrim took out the golden bracelets and offered them up with both hands: "If you do not believe me, look—where did these come from?"

At the sight of them the lady's tears fell; she came down from her seat and bowed her thanks: "Venerable One, if you can indeed deliver me back to court, I shall never forget this great kindness to the end of my days!"

"Let me ask you first," said the Pilgrim: "that thing of his which looses fire, smoke, and sand—what treasure is it?" "What treasure indeed!" said the lady. "They are three golden bells. When he waves the first, there are three hundred zhang of flame to burn men; wave the second, and there are three hundred zhang of smoke to choke them; wave the third, and there are three hundred zhang of yellow sand to blind them. Smoke and fire are not so bad—it is the yellow sand that is deadliest: if it creeps into a person's nostrils, his life is forfeit."

"Formidable! Formidable!" said the Pilgrim. "I have tasted it—two sneezes it cost me. But where does he keep the bells?" "He would never put them down," said the lady. "He keeps them at his waist; walking, standing, sitting, lying, they never leave his body."

"If your heart is still with the Kingdom of Zhuzi, and you would meet your king again," said the Pilgrim, "then lay aside your sorrow and care for a while, put on a face of charm and gladness, and play the loving wife with him; get him to hand the bells over to you for safekeeping. When I find my chance I will steal them and subdue this monster—and then I can take you home, phoenix to phoenix with your true mate, to share peace together once more." The lady agreed to his plan.

The Pilgrim changed back into the trusted underling, opened the palace gate, and called in the waiting maids.

The lady called: "Come-and-Go, run quickly to the front pavilion and invite your great king here; I would speak with him."

What a Pilgrim! He answered with a cry, went straight to the Skinning Pavilion, and said to the demon: "Great King, the Palace Lady invites you." The demon king was delighted: "The lady does nothing but scold me as a rule—why this summons today?" "The lady asked me about the king of Zhuzi," said the Pilgrim, "and I told her he wants you no more, and that his kingdom has set up another queen. When she heard that, she gave up all her hoping—that is why she bade me invite you." The demon king was greatly pleased: "You are a useful one. When I have wiped out his kingdom, I shall make you a grand preceptor in constant attendance at court." The Pilgrim returned casual thanks and hurried with the demon king to the gate of the rear palace.

The lady welcomed him with a smiling face and reached out her hand to take his arm; but the demon king backed away, crying "I dare not! I dare not! Much as I treasure your ladyship's condescension, I fear the pain in my hands—I dare not come near."

"Be seated, Great King," said the lady, "and I will have a word with you." "Say whatever you have to say," said the demon king.

"I have been favored with your love, Great King, these three years," said the lady, "yet never once have we shared pillow or quilt. It must be a bond from some former life that joined us in this marriage—but who could have known that Your Majesty keeps me at arm's length, and will not treat me as a wife at all! When I was queen in Zhuzi, whenever some foreign state sent tribute of treasure, once the king had looked it over he always handed it to me for safekeeping. Here you have no treasures at all: you wear sable furs and eat bloody food—when did one ever see silk brocade, gold, or pearls? Nothing but hides to lie on and rugs to cover you. And even if you do have some treasure, because you keep me at a distance you let me neither see it nor keep it for you. For instance, I hear you have three bells—which must surely be a treasure—and yet you wear them walking and wear them sitting. Why not hand them to me for safekeeping, and take them out when you have need of them? Nothing wrong in that. We are husband and wife, after all; there ought to be some entrusting of heart to heart between us. If you will not trust me even so, what is this but keeping me outside?"

The demon king roared with laughter and made his apologies: "Your ladyship is right to reproach me—quite right! The treasure is here; today I hand it over to you to keep." And at once he lifted his garments to take it out.

The Pilgrim stood by, his eyes fixed and unblinking, watching the demon lift aside two or three layers of clothing: bound close against his body were the three bells.

He untied them, stuffed the mouths with cotton, wrapped them in a piece of leopard skin by way of a bundle, and handed them to the lady, saying: "A humble thing, but it must be kept with care—above all, never let it be shaken."

The lady took them in her hands: "I understand. They shall rest here upon my dressing table, where no one will shake them." She called: "Little ones, bring wine! The Great King and I will make merry together and drink a few cups." At this the waiting maids laid out fruits and dishes, set on the flesh of river-deer, elk, and hare, and poured out coconut wine to offer them. The lady put on all her most alluring airs, bewitching the sprite.

The Pilgrim Sun, meanwhile, worked his business on the side: he edged and sidled his way toward the dressing table, gently lifted away the three golden bells, moved off step by step, slipped out of the palace gate, and left the cave altogether. Coming to a lonely spot before the Skinning Pavilion, he unfolded the leopard skin to look: the middle bell was the size of a teacup, and the two at the ends the size of fists.

Not knowing their power, he pulled out the cotton stuffing—and at once, with a great clang, smoke, fire, and yellow sand came gushing out beyond all stopping, and the whole pavilion was blazing. The gatekeeping fiends, terrified, burst in a crowd into the rear palace and roused the demon king, who hastily shouted: "Go put out the fire! Put out the fire!" Coming out to look, he found it was Come-and-Go playing with the golden bells!

The demon king rushed up and bawled: "Thieving slave! So you steal my golden bells, my treasure, and fool about with them here!" He shouted: "Seize him! Seize him!"

Then the tiger generals, bear masters, leopard heads, tiger-cub chieftains, otter-elephants, gray wolves, crafty deer, cunning hares, long serpents, great pythons, and orangutans of the gate led all the fiends swarming in from every side. The Pilgrim lost his composure: he flung down the golden bells, showed his true form, whipped out the gold-banded As-You-Will cudgel, and spread his strokes, hacking wildly all about him as he pressed forward.

The demon king gathered up his treasure, passed the word of command—"Bar the front gate!"—and the fiends, hearing it, barred the gates who barred and fought who fought. The Pilgrim, hard put to it to escape, put away his cudgel, shook himself, and turned into a dazed housefly, stuck fast to a stone wall where there was no fire.

The fiends could find him nowhere, and ran to report: "Great King, the thief has escaped! The thief has escaped!"

"Did he go out through the gates?" asked the demon king. The fiends all said: "The front gates are locked and barred fast; he has not gone out." The demon king only said: "Search carefully!"

Some fetched water and splashed the fire; others searched with the closest care—but there was no trace of him.

The demon king raged: "What thief is this, with such audacity—changing into the likeness of Come-and-Go, coming in to make his report to my face, then keeping at my very side and stealing my treasure at the first chance! It is well he never carried it out of doors! If he had taken it out over the mountain and it met the wind of Heaven, what would become of us?"

The tiger general stepped forward: "Your vast fortune, Great King, is level with Heaven's, and our allotted span is not yet spent—that is how we came to detect him." The bear master stepped forward: "Great King, this thief is none other than that Sun Wukong who beat our vanguard. Doubtless he met Come-and-Go on the road, did him to death, took his yellow flag, gong, and identity tablet, changed into his likeness, and came here to cozen Your Majesty." "Just so! Just so!" said the demon king. "That stands to reason!" He called: "Little ones, search carefully and keep watch; on no account open the gates and let him slip away!" And this indeed was a case of:

Cleverness overreached and turned to clumsiness; What was done in play turned out in deadly earnest.

But how the Pilgrim Sun was to escape the demon's gates—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 71

The Pilgrim under a Borrowed Name Subdues the Monstrous Hou; Guanyin Reveals Her Form and Tames the Demon King

A verse to open the chapter:

Form is emptiness, and so it has been from of old; To say that emptiness is form is likewise so. If a man can wake to the very bottom of the Chan of form and emptiness, What need has he of refining cinnabar and sands? Cultivate virtue and conduct to the full, never slackening; Apply your effort through the bitterest boiling and stewing. When your works at last are done, then go to court at Heaven, And keep forever, unchanged, the immortal face.

The story continues: Sai Taishui had barred front and rear gates fast and hunted for the Pilgrim, shouting and rummaging until dusk fell, but found no trace of him. So he sat in the Skinning Pavilion, mustered his host of fiends, and issued his orders: at every gate they were to ring the bells and cry the watch, beat the drums and knock the clappers; every fiend was to have his bow strung and his blade out of its sheath, standing guard and sitting out the night.

Now the Great Sage Sun had turned into a dazed housefly and was stuck beside the gate. Seeing how tight the watch was kept up front, he spread his wings and flew to the gate of the rear palace. Looking in, he saw Lady Golden Sage slumped over the royal desk, silently dripping tears, faintly sobbing.

The Pilgrim flew in through the door and alighted softly on her loosened crow-black chignon, to hear what she wept about. Presently the lady burst out despite herself: "My lord and husband! You and I—

In some life before this one we burned the broken-stick incense, And in this life we met this reckless monster king. Three years the phoenix pair has been sundered—what day shall we meet? Lovebirds parted between two places, and the heart is wrung with sorrow. The Venerable One you sent has only now brought word, And the fair match is startled asunder—one life toward death. Only because the golden bells could not be told apart, Lovesickness now rages worse than it did of old."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim moved to the root of her ear and called softly: "Palace Lady, do not fear. I am still the divine monk Venerable Sun sent from your kingdom—my life is not lost. It was only my own impatience: I stole the golden bells from the dressing table, and while you and the demon king were drinking, I slipped out of the front pavilion; then I could not resist opening them to have a look. I never thought that as I pulled the cotton stuffing from their mouths the bells would ring out once, and smoke, fire, and yellow sand come gushing forth. I lost my composure, flung down the golden bells, showed my true form, and plied my iron cudgel; but I could not fight my way out, and fearing the cruel stroke, I changed into a housefly, stuck myself on the door hinge, and hid until now. The demon king has doubled his watch and will not open the gates. Go to him once more and play the loving wife; coax him in to bed, so that I may slip away and go about my business, and find some other means to save you."

At these words the lady shook and trembled, her hair as if plucked at by spirits, her heart faint and pounding as under a pestle; her eyes brimming, she said: "Are you man or ghost now?"

"I am neither man nor ghost," said the Pilgrim. "I am changed into a housefly, here at this moment. Do not fear—go quickly and invite that demon king." The lady would not believe it; through her tears she whispered: "You are not bewitching me, are you?" The Pilgrim said: "How would I dare bewitch you? If you don't believe me, open your hand, and let me jump down into it so you can see me."

The lady truly spread her left hand open, and the Pilgrim flew gently down and alighted in her jade palm—just like:

A black bean stuck on the stamen of a lotus bud; A roving bee resting on a peony bloom; A grape dropped in the heart of the hydrangea; A deep black dot beside the stem of a lily.

The Lady of the Golden Sage Palace held up her jade palm on high and called out, "Divine monk!" and the Pilgrim answered with a chirr: "It is the divine monk, changed." Only then did the lady believe, and she said softly: "When I go invite that demon king, how will you go about your business?"

The Pilgrim said: "The ancients said, 'It is wine alone that cuts short a man's life.' And they said again, 'Nothing breaks through all affairs like wine.' Wine has many uses, but drinking is the best of them. Call in one of your personal waiting maids and point her out to me; I will change into her likeness and wait upon you at the side—then I can conveniently go to work."

The lady did as he said, calling: "Where is Chunjiao?" From behind the screen came a jade-faced fox, who knelt and said: "What does Madam wish of Chunjiao?" The lady said: "Go call the others to light the gauze lanterns and burn the musk and brain incense, and help me to the front court, to invite the Great King to his rest." Chunjiao went round to the front at once and called seven or eight deer and fox fiends, who took up two pairs of dragon lanterns and a pair of censers, and ranged themselves left and right.

The lady rose and clasped her hands in salute—and the Great Sage had already flown off. What a Pilgrim! Spreading his wings, he flew straight to the jade-faced fox's head, plucked out one hair, blew on it a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!"—and it became a sleep-insect, which he laid gently on her face. Now when a sleep-insect gets onto a person's face, it crawls toward the nostrils, and once it crawls inside, the person sleeps.

Chunjiao indeed grew drowsier and drowsier, swaying on her feet, nodding and dozing; she hurried to her old sleeping place, dropped down headlong, and fell to sleeping with all her heart. The Pilgrim hopped down, shook himself, and changed into the very likeness of Chunjiao; round the screen he went, and stood in line with the rest—but no more of that.

The story continues: as the Lady of the Golden Sage Palace walked forward, little fiends saw her and reported to Sai Taishui: "Great King, the lady is coming."

The demon king hurried out of the Skinning Pavilion to welcome her. The lady said: "Great King, the fire is quenched and the thief has left no trace. In the deep of night I have come especially to invite the Great King to his rest." The demon king, his heart full of joy, said: "Take care of yourself, my lady! That thief just now was Sun Wukong. He defeated my vanguard, killed my underling, changed himself, and came in to cozen us; and though we searched as we did, he has vanished without a trace—that is why my heart is uneasy." The lady said: "The rascal must have slipped away. Set your mind at rest, Great King, and let us go to bed." The demon, seeing the lady standing in attendance and inviting him so, dared not refuse flatly; he could only instruct the host of fiends to watch the lamps and fires closely and guard against thieves, and then went with the lady straight to the rear palace.

The false Chunjiao was led in among the two ranks of waiting maids.

The lady called: "Bring wine, to ease the Great King's weariness."

The demon king laughed: "Just so! Just so! Bring the wine quickly; the lady and I will steady our nerves together." The false Chunjiao and the other fiends laid out fruits and prepared rank meats, setting the tables and chairs. The lady raised her cup, and the demon king offered one up in return; the two of them exchanged cups.

The false Chunjiao, holding the wine ewer at the side, said: "Great King and Madam, tonight you first exchange the nuptial cups—pray drink each to the bottom, and drink a double-happiness cup!" And truly they poured fresh cups again, and drank them dry again.

The false Chunjiao said once more: "This is the happy meeting of Great King and Madam! Let those of the waiting maids who can sing give their songs, and those who can dance rise and dance!"

Before the words were done, a chorus of song rose everywhere, all attuned to one measure: some sang and some danced. The two of them drank a great deal more, and then the lady called a halt to the singing and dancing. The maids divided into ranks and ranged themselves outside the screen; only the false Chunjiao held the ewer, pouring above and below. The lady and the demon king spoke only the talk of husband and wife. See how the lady spread out clouds of tenderness and rains of love, beguiling the demon king till his bones went soft and his sinews numb—only he had not the luck to touch her. Pitiful!

Truly it was a cat biting a pig's bladder—delight for nothing!

They talked a while and laughed a while, and then the lady asked: "Great King, has the treasure come to any harm?" The demon king said: "This treasure was kneaded and cast before Heaven itself—how could it be harmed! Only that thief pulled out the stuffing of the mouths, and the leopard-skin bundle got scorched." The lady said: "And how have you put it in order?" The demon king said: "No need to put it in order; I wear it at my waist."

The false Chunjiao, hearing these words, plucked a whole handful of hairs, chewed them to bits, edged gently up to the demon king, scattered the hairs upon his body, blew three breaths of immortal air, and softly cried "Change!" The hairs became three kinds of loathsome things—lice, fleas, and bedbugs—which invaded the demon king's body, biting at his skin wherever it touched.

The demon king, burning and itching past endurance, thrust a hand into his bosom, rummaging and scratching, and with his fingers pinched out a few lice, which he held near the lamp to look at.

The lady saw them and said with studied care: "Great King, it must be that your underclothes have gone so long without washing that these creatures have bred."

The demon king said in shame: "All my life I have never bred such things—and of all nights, tonight I must cut this figure!" The lady laughed: "What figure has the Great King cut? As the common saying has it, even on the emperor's own body there are three imperial lice. Take off your clothes and let me pick them off for you." And the demon king truly undid his belt and stripped off his clothes. The false Chunjiao, at the side, watched with close attention: in every layer of the demon king's clothing the fleas went leaping, and on every garment great bedbugs stood ranged in rows; mother lice and son lice, dense and thick as ants swarming from their nest. Before he knew it he lifted aside the third layer, to where the flesh showed—and there on the golden bells they clustered and swarmed past all counting.

The false Chunjiao said: "Great King, hand me the bells, and let me pick the lice off them for you too."

The demon king, one part shame and two parts flurry, and quite unable to tell the true from the false, passed the three bells to the false Chunjiao. She took them in hand and made a long show of them; then, seeing the demon king with head bowed, shaking out his clothes, she hid the golden bells away, plucked out one hair, changed it into three bells exactly like the others in every particular, and held them up to the lamp, turning them over and examining them. Then, wriggling and twisting her body, she gave herself one shake, gathered the lice, bedbugs, and fleas back onto her own body, and handed the false golden bells to the monster.

The monster took them in hand, more muddled than ever, with no notion how to tell true from false; holding up the bells in both hands, he passed them to the lady and said: "Now you keep them safe. Be careful, be careful—do not be like the last time."

The lady took them over, gently opened her clothes chest, laid the false bells inside, and locked it with a golden lock; then she drank a few more cups with the demon king, and told the maids: "Sweep clean the ivory bed and spread out the brocade quilt; I shall sleep tonight with the Great King." The demon king

answered "No luck! No luck!" again and again: "I dare not presume to attend you—I shall take a palace maid and go sleep in the west palace. Let the lady settle to her rest alone." And so each went to their own lodging—but no more of that.

The story continues: the false Chunjiao, having gotten her prize, tied the treasure at her waist, showed her true form, gave one shake of her body to gather up the sleep-insect, and strode straight for the front. She heard clappers and bells sounding together: they were briskly beating the third watch. What a Pilgrim! Knotting the magic signs and reciting the true words, he worked the spell of invisibility and went straight to the gate.

There he saw bolts and locks thick upon it; so he took out the gold-banded cudgel, pointed it once at the gate, and used the lock-opening spell—and the gate swung gently open. Hastily he slipped his steps through the gate and stood without, then cried at the top of his voice: "Sai Taishui! Give me back my Lady Golden Sage!"

He called two or three times over, rousing the fiends great and small, who hurried to look: the front gate stood open! They lit lamps at once to look for the lock, locked the gate up again, and sent a few running in to report: "Great King! Someone outside the great gate is calling Your Majesty's honored title, demanding Lady Golden Sage!"

The maids within came out of the palace gate and passed the word along softly: "Don't shout so—the Great King has only just fallen asleep."

The Pilgrim called loudly at the gate again, and the little fiends still dared not wake him. So it went, three or four times over, and not one of them dared carry word. The Great Sage bawled and brawled outside till the sky grew light, and then could hold in no longer: swinging his iron cudgel, he went up and battered the gate. The fiends great and small panicked—those bracing the gate braced, and those carrying reports ran.

The demon king, just waking from his sleep, heard the confusion, rose, dressed, came out beyond the gauze curtains and asked: "What is all this clamor?" The maids knelt and said: "Lord, we know not who it is—someone has been cursing and railing outside the cave half the night, and now he is battering the gate." The demon king walked out of the palace gate, and the little fiends who carried the reports kowtowed in a flutter: "Someone outside is calling names, demanding the lady of the Golden Sage Palace! If we answer with half a 'no,' he lets loose such floods of wild talk—most unseemly to the ear. When day broke and the Great King did not come out, he took to battering the gate!" The demon said: "Do not open the gate yet. Go ask him where he comes from and what his name is, and come back quickly to report." The little fiend hurried out and called through the gate: "Who is it battering the gate?" The Pilgrim said: "I am the Grandpa invited with bows from the Kingdom of Zhuzi, come to take the Palace Lady back to her own country!"

[Translator's note: the Pilgrim styles himself waigong, "maternal grandfather." The demon, hunting for the stranger's surname, pounces on the character wai, "outside."]

The little fiend heard, and carried back these words.

The demon then went to the rear palace to look into this pedigree. The lady had just risen, not yet washed and dressed, when maids came in to report: "The lord is here." The lady hurriedly set her garments in order, loosely knotted her black cloud of hair, and came out of the palace to welcome him.

They had scarcely sat down, before there was time to ask nothing, when another little fiend came to report: "That Grandpa who came has smashed the gate to pieces!"

The demon laughed: "Madam, how many generals and commanders are there at your court?" The lady said: "At court there are the horse and foot of the forty-eight guards, a thousand able generals, and on every frontier marshals and chief commanders past all counting." The demon king said: "Is there one of them

surnamed Wai?" The lady said: "In the palace I knew only the inner work of assisting the sovereign and instructing the consorts morning and evening; the affairs outside are boundless—how could I remember names!" The demon king said: "This comer calls himself Grandpa. I have thought it over: in the Hundred Family Surnames there is no surname Wai. Your ladyship is gifted with a clever nature and noble birth; dwelling within the royal palace, you must have read many books. In what book do you remember seeing such a surname?" The lady said: "Only in the Thousand Character Classic there is the line 'Without, he receives his tutor's instruction'—that must be it."

The demon king was delighted: "It must be! It must be!" He rose at once, took leave of the lady, went to the Skinning Pavilion, armed and arrayed himself smartly, drew out his demon troops, opened the gate, and marched out. Wielding a great battle-axe, he cried in a stern voice: "Which is the Grandpa from the Kingdom of Zhuzi?" The Pilgrim gripped the gold-banded cudgel in his right hand, pointed at him with his left, and said: "Worthy nephew, what do you want with me?"

The demon king looked at him, and his heart filled with fury: "You wretch—

Your looks are like a monkey's, your mug is like a macaque's; Seven parts a very ghost, yet bold enough to flout men!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You reckless monster, lying to your betters and cheating your king—so you have no eyes! When old Sun rioted through the Heavens five hundred years ago, the divine generals of the ninefold skies, at the sight of me, dared not so much as add one word of 'old' to my name; and you call me Grandpa—where is the loss to you in that?"

The demon king bawled: "Out with it quick—your name, and what martial arts you have, to dare come rampaging to my gates!"

"If you had not asked my name, well and good," said the Pilgrim. "But if I must tell you my name, I fear you will have no place left to stand! Come up here, stand fast, and listen:

My father and mother that begat this body were Heaven and Earth; The essence of sun and moon knit the holy embryo. In the immortal stone's embrace I knew no count of years; The numinous root conceived me—wondrous it was! In that year I was born, the three yangs stood in their prime; Today, returned to truth, ten thousand meetings are in tune. Once I gathered the host of demons and was hailed their chief; I could subdue the crowd of monsters till they bowed at the cinnabar cliff. The Jade Emperor issued his summons and decree, And Taibai Jinxing bore the edict hither, Inviting me up to Heaven to take an office— Yet the post of Protector of Horses gave me no joy. My first heart rebelled; I schemed within my mountain cave; Boldly I raised my troops and rioted before the royal steps. The Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King, together with the Prince— One bout of arms, and they were all in sorry plight. The Planet Venus memorialized the Dark Vault Emperor again, And once more an edict of amnesty came down: I was invested as the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven— Then at last I counted as timber for the beams. Then, because I wrecked the banquet of the Peaches, And, bold with wine, stole the elixir, I brought down calamity. Lord Lao Zi memorialized the throne in person; The Queen Mother of the Western Pool bowed upon her jade terrace. Knowing well that I had flouted the King's law, They marshaled the heavenly hosts and sent out the fire tallies. A hundred thousand baleful stars and evil luminaries, With shield and sword and halberd ranked in serried rows; Heaven's net and Earth's snare spread over all the mountains, Blades and weapons raised in one great ring of war. A savage battle, fought with neither loss nor win— Till Guanyin recommended Erlang, and he came. The two of us contending, matched for high and low, He had the brothers of Meishan for his fellows. Each played the hero and displayed his transformations, Till at the Gate of Heaven the Three Sages parted the clouds. Lord Lao Zi flung down the Diamond Snare, And the host of gods seized me at the golden stairs. No need to write out any long confession— My crime deserved the death of the sliced and dismembered. Axe-chop and hammer-blow could not injure my life; Saber-swing and sword-cut, how could they wound

me! Fire and lightning, thunder and blows—all came to nothing; No means could crush this long-lived embryo. I was haled to the Tushita court of the Great Clarity, And all was made ready to smelt me in the furnace. When the fullness of the date was reached, they opened the cauldron— And out from the very midst of it I leapt! This As-You-Will cudgel borne high in my fist, I turned and fought my way up the Jade Dragon Terrace; Every star and every image skulked into hiding— I rioted through the Heavenly Palace, aslant and asquare. The Patrolling Officer hurried to summon the Buddha, And Sakyamuni matched his genius against mine. Within the palm of his hand I turned my somersaults, Roamed the whole round of Heaven, went and came again. The Buddha used a craft I never foresaw, And pinned me fast beneath the cliff of sky. Five hundred years and more have passed since then; Freed of that humble body, I play my tricks anew. Now I escort the Tang monk to the western regions— Wukong the Pilgrim, clear in every way! Along the western road I subdue the monsters— What demon or what evil sprite does not fear me!"

Hearing him say "Wukong the Pilgrim," the demon king said: "So you are that rascal who rioted through the Heavenly Palace! Since you escaped with your life to escort the Tang monk west, why not walk your own road and have done? What business of yours is this meddling? To make yourself a lackey for the Kingdom of Zhuzi, and come here looking for your death!"

The Pilgrim bawled: "Thieving, reckless monster! What ignorance you talk! I have received the courtesies of invitation from the Kingdom of Zhuzi, and their kindness of entertainment and address besides. Old Sun stands a thousand times higher than any royal seat: they honor me as father and mother, they serve me as a god and a bright spirit—how dare you let the word 'lackey' out of your mouth! You monster who cheats your betters and imposes upon kings—don't you run! Take a cudgel from your Grandpa!"

The demon panicked; he dodged aside, and swung his battle-axe to meet the cudgel face to face. What a battle this was!

Look: the gold-banded As-You-Will cudgel; the wind-edged battle-axe. One gnashes his teeth and pours out his ferocity; the other grinds his teeth and displays his might. This one is the Great Sage Equal to Heaven descended among mortals; that one is the demon king, making his mischief, come down upon the earth. The two of them spew clouds and breathe mist that light up the heavenly palace; truly they kick up stones and cast sand that veils the Dipper's mansion. To and again, their strokes past counting; over and over, golden light comes flashing out. Both display their arts; each wagers his magic power. This one would fetch the lady back to the royal capital; that one rejoices to keep his queen in the mountain hollow. This fight, in truth, had no rhyme or reason: risking death, forgetting life, all for the sake of a sovereign.

The two of them fought through fifty rounds, and neither prevailed.

The demon king, seeing how high the Pilgrim's skill, judged that he could not win; he caught the cudgel on his axe and said: "Pilgrim Sun, hold a while! I have not yet broken my fast this morning. Let me eat, and then come back to settle which of us is cock and which is hen."

The Pilgrim knew full well he meant to fetch the bells. He drew back his iron cudgel and said: "A stout fellow doesn't chase a worn-out rabbit—go along, go along! Eat your fill, and come back the better to take your death!"

The demon hurriedly turned and rushed inside, saying to the lady: "Quick—bring the treasure!" The lady said: "What do you want the treasure for?" The demon king said: "The one who called us out to battle this morning is a disciple of the scripture-seeking monk—called Sun Wukong the Pilgrim—styling himself Grandpa. I fought him to this hour, and neither of us has won. Wait till I take the treasure out, loose a little smoke and fire, and roast that monkey's head!"

Hearing this, the lady's heart thumped with dread: if she did not bring out the bells, she feared he would grow suspicious; and if she did bring them out, she feared for the Pilgrim's life. While she hesitated, unable to

decide, the demon king pressed again: "Bring them out, quick!" There was nothing for it: the lady unlocked the chest and passed the three bells to the demon king. He took them and went out of the cave. The lady sat in her palace, her tears falling like rain, wondering whether the Pilgrim could ever escape with his life. And neither of the two knew the bells were false.

The demon went out the gate, took the wind's advantage, and called: "Pilgrim Sun, don't run! Watch me shake my bells!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You have bells—have I none? You can shake yours; can't I shake mine?" The demon king said: "What bells have you? Bring them out and let me see!" The Pilgrim squeezed the iron cudgel down into an embroidery needle, hid it away in his ear, untied from his waist the three true treasures, and said to the demon king: "Are these not my purple-gold bells?"

The demon king saw them, and his heart lurched: "Strange! Strange! How can his bells be exactly like mine! Even if they were cast in the one mold, you would think the polishing would fall short somewhere—one blemish more, one knob less—yet how can they be alike to the very hair?" He asked again: "Where did your bells come from?" The Pilgrim said: "Worthy nephew, where did yours come from?" The demon king, honest soul, told him then and there: "My bells came thus:

The immortal lord of the Great Clarity—deep is the source of his Way; Long was the gold a-smelting in the Eight-Trigram furnace. Knit into bells, they are honored as a supreme treasure; Lord Lao Zi left them behind, and they have lasted till today."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old Sun's bells came from that very time." The demon king said: "What was their provenance?" The Pilgrim said: "My bells came thus:

The Patriarch of the Way burned elixir in the Tushita palace; The golden bells were kneaded and smelted within the furnace. Two threes make six—the treasure of the cycling wheel: Mine are the female, and yours are the male."

The demon king said: "The bells are a treasure of the golden elixir, not bird or beast—how do you tell the female from the male? Whoever shakes the treasure out, his is the better!" The Pilgrim said: "Talk is no proof; do the deed, and it will show. You shake first."

The demon king truly waved the first bell three times—and no fire came out; the second three times—and no smoke came out; the third three times—and not a grain of sand came out.

The demon king lost his footing in consternation: "Strange! Strange! The ways of the world must have changed! These bells of mine must be henpecked: the male has clapped eyes on the female, and so he will not come out!"

The Pilgrim said: "Worthy nephew, stay your hand, and let me shake mine for you to see." What a monkey! He seized all three bells in one grip and shook them together. Watch: red fire, blue smoke, and yellow sand all rolled out at once, gushing and roaring, setting the trees ablaze and burning the mountain! The Great Sage recited another spell in his mouth, faced the quarter of the wind, and called: "Wind, come!" And truly the wind drove the fire onward, the fire rode upon the wind's might: red flames and black murk, smoke and fire filling the whole sky, yellow sand covering the whole earth!

Sai Taishui was scared out of his wits and his soul flew scattering—no road left him to flee. In the very midst of that fire, how was he to save his life?

Just then a loud voice came ringing from midair: "Sun Wukong! I am come!"

The Pilgrim turned quickly and looked up: it was the Bodhisattva Guanyin, the pure vase cradled in her left hand, the willow sprig in her right, sprinkling sweet dew to quench the fire. In a flurry the Pilgrim hid the

bells at his waist, pressed his palms together, and cast himself down in worship. The Bodhisattva flicked her willow branch and sprinkled several drops of sweet dew; in an instant smoke and fire were wholly gone, and the yellow sand left not a trace.

The Pilgrim knocked his head and said: "I knew not that your great compassion would descend among men; forgive me for failing to withdraw from your path. May I be bold to ask—where is the Bodhisattva bound?"

"I have come on purpose," said the Bodhisattva, "to take up this monster."

"What is this monster's origin," said the Pilgrim, "that it is worth the descent of your golden person to take him in?"

"He is the golden-haired hou I ride," said the Bodhisattva. "His herd-boy dozed and failed in his watch, and that wicked beast bit through his iron chain and ran away. He has come to work off calamity for the king of Zhuzi."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim rose hastily on one knee: "Bodhisattva, you have it backwards! Here he has cheated the king and deceived the queen, corrupted custom and wounded decency, and bred disaster for that king—and you call it working off calamity. How is that?"

"You do not know the rights of it," said the Bodhisattva. "When the former king of Zhuzi was on the throne, this present king was still crown prince in the Eastern Palace, not yet crowned. In his boyhood he was wild for hunting. Once he led out his riders with hawks loosed and hounds running before them, and came to the slope of the Fallen Phoenix. There the two children of the Buddha Mother, the Peacock Bodhisattva of Great Radiance—a male peacock chick and a female—had folded their wings at the foot of the slope. This king drew his bow, and shot the male peacock; and the female too took an arrow and returned to the West. The Buddha Mother repented thereafter, and ordained that the prince should have the phoenix sundered for three years and suffer a sickness of mourning. At that time I was riding this hou, and we heard those words together—and that wicked beast, all unawares, took them to heart. Hence he came and beguiled the queen away, to work the king's calamity off for him. Now the three years are past and the debt of guilt is paid in full; happily you have come to cure the king's affliction, and I have come on purpose to take this fiend away."

"Bodhisattva," said the Pilgrim, "granting the story is so—yet he has defiled the queen, corrupted custom and decency, subverted the bonds and broken the law. His is the death penalty. Now that your Bodhisattva has come in person, the death penalty may be spared him—but not the penalty of the beating. Let me give him twenty strokes of the cudgel, and you may take him away with you."

"Wukong," said the Bodhisattva, "since you know I have descended to the world, then for my sake pardon him all of it—count it, too, as one feat in your demon-subduing. If the cudgel so much as touches him, that beast is dead."

The Pilgrim dared not go against her word; he could only bow and say: "Since the Bodhisattva takes him back to the sea, let him never again be allowed to slip down among men—the harm would be past all sounding!"

Then the Bodhisattva gave one shout: "Wicked beast! If not now, when will you return to your true form!" At that the monster rolled over, showed forth his original body, and gave his fur a shake, and the Bodhisattva mounted him. She glanced once at his neck: the three golden bells were nowhere to be seen.

The Bodhisattva said: "Wukong, give me back my bells."

"Old Sun knows nothing of them," said the Pilgrim. The Bodhisattva bawled: "You thieving monkey! If you had not stolen those bells, never mind one Wukong—ten Wukongs would not have dared come near him! Bring them out, quick!" The Pilgrim laughed: "Truly I never saw them." The Bodhisattva said: "If you never

saw them, then let me recite the Band-Tightening Spell." The Pilgrim panicked, crying: "Don't recite it! Don't recite it! The bells are here!"

And this was truly:

The golden bells upon the hou's neck—who is there can loose them? To loose the bell, one must still ask the one who tied it on.

The Bodhisattva slipped the bells around the hou's neck, rose high into the air, and sat her seat. Watch her: lotus blossoms flaming from his four hooves, golden filaments gleaming from all his body—and thus the Great Compassionate One returned to the Southern Sea—but of that no more.

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun straightened his skirt and his sash, swung his iron cudgel, and fought his way into the Xiezhi Cave. The fiends and monsters he killed utterly, every one, sweeping them out clean. Then he went straight to the palace and invited the Palace Lady to return to her kingdom; the lady bowed in worship that knew no end.

The Pilgrim told her the whole of it—how the Bodhisattva had subdued the demon, and the original cause of the sundered phoenix; then he gathered some soft grass and twisted a straw dragon, saying: "Madam, mount here, shut your eyes, and fear nothing. I will carry you back to court to see your lord."

The lady obeyed his instructions to the letter. The Pilgrim worked his divine powers, and she heard only the wind whistling in her ears. In half a double-hour he brought her within the city, brought down his cloud, and called: "Madam, open your eyes!" The queen opened her eyes and looked: she knew the phoenix towers and the dragon halls, and her heart filled with joy. She cast the straw dragon aside and climbed the treasure hall with the Pilgrim.

The king, seeing her, hurried down from the dragon couch to catch his lady's jade hand and pour out the sorrows of their parting—when suddenly he toppled over on the floor, crying: "My hand! My hand!" Bajie burst out laughing: "What a sight! No luck to enjoy her—one clasp of the hand, and it's death!"

"Fool," said the Pilgrim, "would you dare take her hand?" "And suppose I did take her hand—what then?" said Bajie. The Pilgrim said: "The lady's body has bred poisoned spines; in her hands there is a venom that stings like fire. Ever since she came to the Unicorn Mountain and passed three years with that Sai Taishui, the demon never once touched her body: touch her body, and the body is racked with pain; touch her hand, and the hand is racked with pain."

The officials heard and said: "If it is so, what can be done?" Now without, the officials were sunk in doubt and dread; within, the consorts shivered in fear; and at the side the two palace ladies, the Jade Sage and the Silver Sage, raised the king up.

In the very midst of this confusion, they suddenly heard someone call from midair: "Great Sage, I am come." The Pilgrim lifted his head to look, and this was the one:

A solemn crane-cry pierces the heavens; drifting, he comes straight to the court. Winding auspicious light, streak upon streak; swirling propitious vapors, fluttering. A palm-fiber robe on his body breathes forth cloud and mist; On his feet, straw sandals—a sight seldom seen. In his hand, a dragon-whisker fly-whisk; A silken sash wound about his waist. Everywhere through the universe he has knotted his ties with men; Over the whole great earth he has wandered free. This is the Purple Cloud Immortal of the Heaven of the Great Canopy, Come down to the world today to undo the spell.

The Pilgrim stepped forward to meet him: "Whither bound, Zhang Ziyang?" The True Man came straight up before the hall and bowed with clasped hands: "Great Sage, your humble immortal Zhang Boduan salutes you." The Pilgrim returned the courtesy: "From where do you come?" The True Man said: "Three years ago

your humble immortal was on his way to a Buddhist assembly, and as I passed through this place I saw that the king of Zhuzi bore the sorrow of the sundered phoenix. I feared the demon would defile the queen and wreck the bonds of humanity, making it hard for her ever to be rejoined to the king. So I changed an old palm-fiber coat into a new rainbow raiment, glowing with five colors, and presented it to the demon king, to be the queen's bridal dress. The moment that queen put it on, her whole body broke out in poisoned spines—and those poisoned spines were the palm fibers. Now, knowing the Great Sage has brought the matter to its end, I have come especially to undo the spell."

The Pilgrim said: "Since it is so, I am sorry to have troubled you to come so far—undo it quickly." The True Man stepped forward, pointed once at the lady with his hand, and the palm-fiber coat slipped off her that instant; the lady's whole body was as it had been before.

The True Man shook out the coat, cast it over his own shoulders, and said to the Pilgrim: "Great Sage, do not take it amiss; your humble immortal takes his leave." "Stay a moment," said the Pilgrim, "and let the king give you his thanks." The True Man laughed: "No need, no need." With one long bow he rose into the empty sky and was gone—and the emperor, the queen, and all the ministers great and small, in a flurry, bowed in worship toward the heavens.

When the worship was done, the king commanded the eastern pavilion thrown wide open, to feast and thank the four monks. The sovereign led his court in kneeling bows; husband and wife were at last reunited in harmony. In the very midst of the merry feast, the Pilgrim called: "Master, bring out that letter of challenge." The elder took it from his sleeve and handed it to the Pilgrim, and the Pilgrim passed it to the king, saying: "This letter was sent by that monster's underling. The underling I had already killed and brought back to claim the first credit. Later I went again into the mountains, changed myself into the underling, and entered the cave to make my report; thus I came to see the lady, and stole out the golden bells, all but being caught. Then by further transformations I stole them out again and fought him to a standstill—until, by good fortune, the Bodhisattva Guanyin came and took him away, and told me the cause of the sundered phoenix." From first to last he told it all in detail; and in that whole kingdom, within the court and without, there was not one who did not give thanks and sound his praises.

Tang Sanzang said: "First, it was the fortune of a worthy king; and second, the merit of my humble disciple. Now that we have been honored with this great feast, it is enough—enough! Let us here take our leave, and do not delay this poor monk upon his road to the west."

The king could not prevail upon them to stay. He had the travel rescripts exchanged, ordered out the grand royal equipage, and begged the Tang monk to sit firm in the dragon chariot; and king, queen, and consorts together held the hub and pushed the wheels, escorting them on their way as they parted. Truly:

By destiny the sickness of sorrow and doubt is washed clean away; Cut off from craving, free of thought, the heart is at peace of itself.

But what things of good or ill might yet await them farther on the road—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 72

At the Coiled Silk Cave, Seven Passions Beguile the Original Nature; At the Spring of Washing Away Stain, Bajie Forgets Himself

The story tells how Sanzang took leave of the king of Zhuzi, had the saddle and horse made ready, and pressed on westward. Past how many hills and plains they traveled, through endless reaches of water, until, before they knew it, autumn was gone and winter worn away, and the light of spring shone bright once more. Master and disciples were strolling along the road, enjoying the spring verdure and the scenery, when suddenly they saw a grove with a cottage in it. Sanzang rolled from the saddle and stood at the side of the great road.

The Pilgrim asked: "Master, this road is smooth and free of harm—why do you not ride on?"

Bajie said: "Brother, what a way you have with you! Master has sat himself saddle-sore—let him get down and take in the view, I say." Sanzang said: "It is not to take in the view. I see what looks like a household over there, and I mean to go myself and beg a little food." The Pilgrim laughed: "Listen to what Master says! If you want food, I'll go beg it myself. As the common saying goes, 'a teacher for a day is a father for life'—how could there be a rule that the disciple sits on high while the master goes out to beg?"

Sanzang said: "That is not how to take it. Ordinarily the country stretches boundless on every side, and you have to go far or near to beg food; but today a household is close at hand, near enough to call to—if I go myself, food or no food, we can be back on the road at once."

Bajie said: "Master has no fixed intention. As the common saying goes, 'when three men travel abroad, the youngest suffers most'—and besides, you are of the father's generation, and we are all disciples. The old books say, 'when there is work to do, the disciple takes the toil of it.' Let old Zhu go."

Sanzang said: "Disciples, today the weather is clear and bright—quite unlike the days of wind and rain. In those times you would of necessity have to go far afield; but this household—let me go. With food or without, we can be back on the road directly."

The Sha Monk at the side said with a smile: "Brothers, no more talk. Such is Master's disposition; there is no crossing him. If you put him out of temper, even if you begged food and brought it back, he would not eat it."

Bajie gave in. He took out the alms bowl, and Sanzang changed into his finer hat and gown; then the elder stretched his stride and walked straight up before the farmstead to look. A fine dwelling it was. Just see:

A stone bridge rising high, ancient trees dense and even. A stone bridge rising high: plashing waters join the long stream; ancient trees dense and even: chattering hidden birds sing toward the distant hills. Beyond the bridge, a few rafters of thatched cottage, clean and elegant as an immortal's hermitage; and there a lattice window, white and bright, that would shame a Daoist abbey.

At the window four fair women suddenly came into view, all of them embroidering phoenixes and tracing luan-birds with their needles. The elder saw that the household had not a single man in it, only four women, and dared not go in; he stood fast and slipped into the shadow of the tall trees, and watched. Each of those women:

A maiden's heart firm as stone; an orchid nature glad as spring. A tender face set off with rosy clouds; crimson lips even-toned with rouge. Moth eyebrows like little crescent moons; cicada tresses like clouds newly folded. Were they to go and stand among the flowers, the roving bees would take them for blooms.

He stood there a good half double-hour, and it was utterly still—not so much as a cock-crow or a dog's bark. He communed with himself: "If I have not the skill to beg one meal of food, my disciples will laugh at me

too: they'll say, if the master cannot beg a meal, how can the disciples ever go and worship the Buddha?"

The elder, having no way out of it, and feeling more than a little to blame, trotted up onto the bridge and walked a few steps further. There behind the thatched cottage he saw a pavilion of climbing roses, and beneath the pavilion three more women kicking an inflated ball. Look at those three women: they were made differently from the other four. Just see them:

Fluttering kingfisher sleeves; swaying silk skirts. Fluttering kingfisher sleeves hang low, veiling hands slender as bamboo shoots; swaying silk skirts shift aside, half showing golden lilies narrow and small.

In form and carriage they are complete in every part; in motion and in stillness their heels play a thousand steps. Heading the ball, they pass it high and low; lofted low or skipping, they send it true and clean. Turning, they kick the "flower over the wall"; stepping back, they turn it into "crossing the great sea." Lightly they catch a ball like a ball of clay; with a single spear-thrust they answer the hooked leg. A bright pearl set upon the Buddha's head—firmly caught upon a pointed boot. The narrow brick they somehow manage to tread; in the "sleeping fish" they trip a foot. Waist level, knees bent, they crouch; twisting their crowns, they cock their heels on high. Vaulting the bench, they shout and flourish; cast over the shoulder, it is done most gracefully. Cross-legged they weave to and fro; "locking the neck," they sway and swing. They kick till the Yellow River's waters run backward, and goldfish are bought upon the sands. That one misjudges it for a header; this one turns about and plays the hooked kick. Steadily they raise it upon the shin; properly pointed, they let it splash down. Heels lifted high, they splash in their straw sandals; reversed, they hook it back to carry off the prize. Stepping back, they feint along the shoulder; the hook is one wicked move. Out of the basket it comes spinning long; they slam it home for the "seizing of the gate." When a kick has pleased them to the heart's core, the fair ones all cry out their praise.

One and all, the sweat streamed through their silken dresses, pasting the powdered skin; and only when their zest grew lazy and their mood slackened did they cry enough.

Words cannot tell it all; there is a poem in witness:

Ball-playing there upon the field, beneath the third-month sky, As though immortal winds had blown fair sprites of white down to the earth. Sweat on their powdered faces—flowers holding dew; Dust on their moth-eyebrows—willow branches wreathed in mist. Kingfisher sleeves hang low, veiling hands like shoots of jade; Silk skirts trail aslant, baring golden lilies narrow. Rounds of kicking done, they are tender and devoid of strength; Their cloudlike hair disheveled, jeweled chignons hanging aslant.

Sanzang had watched a long while; at last he could only walk up to the bridgehead and call out in answer to the scene: "Bodhisattvas, will you not bestow a little food upon this poor monk, according to your inclination?"

The women heard him, and one and all, delighted, tossed aside their needlework and left off their ball, and came out laughing and singing to receive him: "Venerable One, forgive our failure to meet you! Now that you have come to our humble farmstead, we would never think of blocking a monk's way at our gate—pray come inside and sit."

Sanzang heard this, and thought secretly: "Excellent! Excellent! Truly the West is the land of Buddha! Even the womenfolk are set upon feeding monks—how much more devoutly must the men turn their hearts toward the Buddha!" The elder stepped forward and made his greeting, then followed the women into the thatched cottage. Past the rose pavilion he looked—ah!

There were no proper halls or galleries within at all. Only:

Scarps rising high, the earth-vein stretching far. Scarps rising high, they touch the clouds and mist; the earth-vein stretching far, it runs through to seas and mountains. The gate stands near the stone bridge, where

nine turns and nine windings of water glance by; the garden is planted with peach and plum, a thousand trees, a thousand blooms contending in their glory. Vines and creepers hang from three or five trees; the scent of orchid and iris drifts through a myriad flowers. Seen from afar, the grotto-mansion outdoes the isle of Penglai; viewed close at hand, the wooded hills outweigh Mount Tai or Mount Hua. It is just the hidden retreat the demon immortals seek: no neighbor anywhere—a household complete in itself.

A woman came forward, pushed the two leaves of the stone gate open, and asked the Tang monk to sit inside. The elder could only enter; suddenly he lifted his head and looked—all the furnishings were stone tables and stone stools, and a cold air hung dank and dark.

The elder's heart lurched, and he thought within himself: "This place has little luck and much peril; it is assuredly not good."

The women all said, smiling and laughing: "Venerable One, pray be seated." The elder had no choice; he sat. Presently he gave one shiver of cold.

The women asked: "From what precious mountain is the Venerable One? What cause brings you to beg? Is it to build bridges and mend roads, to found temples and worship at pagodas, or to make Buddha-images and print the scriptures? Pray bring out your subscription book, that we may look it over."

The elder said: "I am no subscription-begging monk." The women said: "If you beg no subscriptions, what brings you here?" The elder said: "I am one sent from the great Tang empire of the East to seek the scriptures at the Great Thunderclap in the Western Heaven. Passing your precious region just now, my belly grew hungry, and I have come especially to your worthy house to beg a single meal of food; then this poor monk will go on his way." The women said: "Good! Good! Good! As the common saying goes, 'the monk from far away best reads the scriptures.' Sisters! We must not be remiss—quick, prepare the food!"

Now three of the women stayed to bear him company, trading word for word, talking over causes and conditions. The other four went into the kitchen, tucked up their skirts and rolled back their sleeves, lit the fire and scoured the pots. And what do you suppose they were preparing? It was human oil, fried and refined, and human flesh, boiled and stewed: the black paste they had cooked down stood in for wheat gluten, and the carved human brains were fried into slices of tofu.

Two platters were carried out and set down upon the stone table, and they said to the elder: "Our respects! At short notice we could not prepare good vegetarian food; make shift with this to fill your belly—there are more courses to come."

The elder sniffed at it, smelled the rankness, and dared not open his mouth. He rose slightly, pressed his palms together, and said: "Bodhisattvas, this poor monk has been a vegetarian from the womb." The women laughed: "Venerable One, this is vegetarian." The elder said: "Amitabha! If this is what vegetarian means, then if I, a monk, ate of it, I could never hope to look upon the World-Honored One, never win the scriptural scrolls." The women said: "Venerable One, you who have left the world must not pick and choose among your donors." The elder said: "How dare I, how dare I! This monk bears the mandate of Great Tang; all the way west I have not harmed the smallest living thing: I have rescued suffering wherever I saw it, picked up with my fingers each grain of rice that entered my mouth, joined and stitched every thread and strand that covered my body. How dare I pick and choose my donors!" The women laughed: "Though the Venerable One does not pick his donors, he is somewhat particular once he is at their door. Do not scorn our humble fare—eat a little of it!" The elder said: "Truly I dare not eat, for fear of breaking my vow. Bodhisattvas, I have heard it said that to nourish life is not so good as to spare it: let this monk go free, I beg you."

The elder struggled to be gone; the women barred the door—how would they let him go? They all said: "Trade that comes to one's very door—and not do it! It's like letting a fart and then covering it with your hand: where do you think you're going?" Every one of them knew some martial art, and their hands and feet

were nimble. They seized hold of the elder, and leading him off like a sheep by the tether, flung him flat upon the ground.

The crowd pinned him down, bound him with cords, and slung him high up under the beam. This hanging had a name to it: it was called "the Immortal Points the Way." One hand was stretched forward, and from it he was strung up by the silk; the other arm was bound round his waist, and rope run over the beam; his two feet were drawn back and a rope run to them too. Three ropes slung the elder beneath the beam, back upward, belly downward.

The elder bore the pain, holding back the tears, hating bitterly in his heart: "What a bitter lot is this monk's! I thought only to beg a meal from a good household—who could have known I would fall into a fiery pit! Disciples! Come quickly and save me, and we may yet meet face to face; but delay two double-hours, and my life is done!"

Though the elder suffered, he still kept a careful eye upon those women.

The women, having hung him properly, began to strip off their clothes. The elder's heart jumped, and he thought within himself: "Now that they are stripping off their clothes, this must mean they intend to thrash me—or perhaps to eat me half-raw, there's no telling!" But the women only loosened the silken jackets of their upper bodies, bared their bellies, and each displayed her powers: from the holes of their waists silk cords burst forth, as thick as duck eggs, gushing like scattering jade and flying silver—and in a moment they had canopied the gate of the farmstead. Of this no more.

The story turns: the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk were at the side of the great road. Those two were minding the horse and watching the luggage; but the Pilgrim, restless wretch that he was, went leaping through the trees, clutching at branches, plucking leaves, hunting fruits. Suddenly he looked back and saw a sheet of glittering light. In a flurry he dropped from his tree and shouted: "Bad! Bad! Master's luck has run low!"

The Pilgrim pointed with his hand: "Look at that farmstead—what do you see?" Bajie and the Sha Monk looked together: that whole stretch was white as snow and bright as snow, like silver and shining like silver.

Bajie said: "Done for, done for! Master has met with demons! Quick—let's go save him!"

The Pilgrim said: "Quiet, brothers! You haven't seen it plain yet. Wait for old Sun to go and come." The Sha Monk said: "Brother, be careful." The Pilgrim said: "I know what I'm about."

What a Great Sage! He cinched up his tiger-skin skirt, whipped out the gold-banded cudgel, stretched his legs, and in two or three strides was at the front. He saw the silk cords wound layer upon layer, thousands and hundreds of them thick, crossing and recrossing like warp and weft. He pressed down on them with his hand: they were sticky, soft, and clinging.

The Pilgrim had no notion what the stuff might be. He raised his cudgel: "With this one stroke, never mind a few thousand layers—were there tens of thousands of layers, I would break them through!"

But just as he was about to strike, he stopped his hand: "If they were hard, I could smash through; but these are soft—nothing to do but flatten them. And if I startled them and they wound old Sun about, that would be worse by far. Let me ask somebody first, then strike."

Whom do you suppose he asked? He knotted a spell-sign, recited a charm, and summoned the old local deity, who spun round and round in his temple like a millstone turning.

The local deity's old wife said: "Old man, what are you spinning for? Surely the falling sickness has come upon you!"

The local deity said: "You don't know! You don't know! The Great Sage Equal to Heaven has come, and I never went out to receive him—and now he is summoning me!"

The old wife said: "Then go and see him—what's the use of standing here turning circles?"

The local deity said: "If I go to see him—that cudgel of his is none too light, I tell you! Never mind right or wrong, he just beats you!"

The old wife said: "Seeing how old you've grown, why should he beat you?"

The local deity said: "All his life he has loved drinking wine without paying for it, and he has a particular fancy for beating old men."

The old couple talked it over a while; there was nothing for it. The local deity had to walk out and kneel, trembling, at the roadside, crying: "Great Sage, the local deity of this place bows his head."

The Pilgrim said: "Get up, get up. None of your false hurry. For now I'll not beat you—I'll put it on account. Let me ask you: what place is this?"

The local deity said: "From which quarter has the Great Sage come?" The Pilgrim said: "I come from the east, bound for the west." The local deity said: "Coming from the east, was the Great Sage upon that ridge?" The Pilgrim said: "Just so, upon the ridge—our luggage and horse are resting there now, are they not?"

The local deity said: "That ridge is called Coiled Silk Ridge. Beneath the ridge there is a cave called the Coiled Silk Cave. In the cave are seven demons."

The Pilgrim said: "Male demons or female?"

"Female demons," said the local deity.

The Pilgrim said: "How great are their powers?"

The local deity said: "Your little god's strength is thin and his authority short—I cannot tell how great their arts may be. I know only that due south of here, some three li away, there is the Spring of Washing Away Stain, a hot spring born of nature herself. It was formerly the bathing pool of the seven immortal maidens from on high. Since the demons came to dwell here, they have seized their Spring of Washing Away Stain, and the immortal maidens never once contended with them—gave it up to them outright, for no reason at all. When I see heavenly fairies refusing to quarrel with demon monsters, I know the sprites must have great powers indeed."

The Pilgrim said: "What do they do with the spring?"

The local deity said: "The monsters took the bathing pool, and three times a day they come out to bathe. The hour of Si is already past now; the hour of Wu is coming on."

The Pilgrim heard him out: "Local deity, go back for now. Wait till old Sun takes them himself."

The old local deity knocked his head once and went trembling back to his own temple.

The Great Sage went to work alone. He shook himself and changed into a little gray fly, and stuck fast on a grass-blade at the roadside to wait. In a moment he heard a hissing, sucking sound, like silkworms eating leaves, like the sea engendering a tide. It lasted barely half a cup of tea's time, and the silk cords were gone altogether; the village and farmstead showed forth again, looking just as at the first. Then he heard a creak—the wooden gate swung, and from within, amid laughing and chattering, out came the seven women.

The Pilgrim watched them closely from his hiding place, and saw them come hand in hand and arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder and sleeve to sleeve, talking and laughing as they crossed the bridge. Pretty they were

indeed. Just see:

Than fragrant jade they are more sweet; than flowers their speech more true. Willow eyebrows stretch toward the distant hills; sandalwood mouths part in cherry lips. Kingfisher plumes perch aslope upon the hairpin-tips; golden lilies flash beneath the crimson skirts. They are like Chang'e come down upon the world below, Or immortal nymphs fallen into the dust of men.

The Pilgrim laughed to himself: "No wonder Master wanted to come here and beg! So this is the style of the place. With seven beauties like these—were they to keep my master, there would not be enough of him for one meal; were they to put him to use, not enough for two days' work; and were they to set upon him and take their turns, he would simply die of it. Wait till I listen and hear what they are plotting."

What a Great Sage! With a chirr of his wings he flew over and stuck fast upon the cloud-coil of the woman walking in front.

Just as they crossed the bridge, the ones behind called up to those ahead: "Sisters, when we've had our bath, let's steam that fat monk and eat him!"

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "These monsters have no head for planning! Boiling would save firewood—why go to the trouble of steaming!" The women gathered flowers and plucked grasses as they came south, and before long they reached the bathing pool. There stood a gate and wall, very splendid: wild flowers fragrant and bright over all the ground, orchids and irises thick and dark on every side. A woman walked to the front, and with a whistle pushed open the two leaves of the gate—and within, sure enough, lay a pool of hot water.

Now as for this water: since the world was first parted, the sun-star had originally numbered ten; but the good archer Yi drew his bow and shot down nine crows, which fell to earth, leaving only the one star, the Golden Crow—the true fire of the sun. Heaven and Earth have nine hot springs, and all of them were transformed from those nine crows. Those nine springs of the nine yangs are: the Fragrant Cold Spring, the Mountain-Companion Spring, the Warm Spring, the Eastern Confluence Spring, the All-Mountain Spring, the Filial Peace Spring, the Broad Fen Spring, and the Hot Spring—and this one is the Spring of Washing Away Stain.

There is a poem in witness:

One breath, with neither winter nor summer; through three autumns it forever pours its spring. Its burning waves seethe as in a cauldron; its hot surge seems fresh-drawn from the kettle. Divided, its rills water the standing crops; held still, it washes the worldly dust away. Pearly tears well up, trickle after trickle; jade masses roll and tumble in the flow. Its sleekness was never brewed or vinted; its clear calm is warm of itself. Its auspiciousness is the country's native beauty; Creation's work is very innocence. Where the fair ones bathe, icy skin grows sleek and smooth; Washed clean of worldly care, the jade body is made new.

The pool was about five zhang across and ten-odd zhang long, with a depth of four feet, and the water was clear to the very bottom. From below, the water came welling up like rolling pearls and floating jade, gurgle and gush; on its four sides six or seven openings let the flow pass through. It ran off two or three li, and even streaming into the fields it was still warm. Above the pool stood a pavilion of three bays; near the back wall of the pavilion was a bench with eight legs; at the two gable-ends stood two garment racks, gilded and painted in colors. The Pilgrim chirred softly in his hiding place, flew over with a beat of his wings, and perched on the head of one of the garment racks.

The women, finding the water clear and hot, wanted their bath; they stripped off their clothes together and hung them on the racks, and plunged in together—and the Pilgrim saw it all:

Buttons undone, the silken knots loosened. Creamy breasts white as silver; jade bodies smooth as snow. Arms and elbows fair as congealed rouge; fragrant shoulders as though molded of powder. Bellies soft and yielding; backs gleaming and clean. Knees and wrists half-rounded; golden lilies narrow as three inches. Between them, one stretch of alluring charm, baring the bower of their gallantry.

The women all leapt into the water, one and another sporting through the waves, diving and frolicking.

The Pilgrim said: "If I meant to strike them, one stir of this cudgel in the pool would do it—like scalding water poured on rats: the whole nest dead in one go. Poor things! Poor things! I could beat them to death, to be sure—but it would cheapen old Sun's name. As the common saying goes, 'a man does not fight with women.' A grown man like me killing these girls would be truly shabby. No, I'll not beat them. I'll just play them a trick that leaves them heirless: I'll see to it they cannot stir a step nor leave the water—now wouldn't that be something?"

What a Great Sage! He knotted the spell-signs, recited a charm, shook himself, and changed into a hungry old eagle:

His feathers are frost and snow; his eyes like shining stars. Where the demon fox sees him, its soul is lost; when the cunning hare meets him, its gall dissolves in fear. Steel talons swift and sharp of edge; a stalwart form, a fierce and overbearing air. With old fists he serves his belly's needs, and shrinks not from pursuing on the wing. Through ten thousand li of cold sky he ranges, up and down at will; Threading the clouds he picks his prey wherever he pleases.

With a whir of wings he flew forward, wheeling his sharp talons, snatched all seven sets of clothes from off the racks, and headed straight back for the ridge. There he showed his true form and came before Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Look at these." The blockhead met him and said to the Sha Monk with a grin: "So Master was taken to the pawnshop!" The Sha Monk said: "How do you make that out?" Bajie said: "Don't you see Brother has seized all their clothes and carried them back here?"

The Pilgrim set them down: "These are the clothes the demons wear." Bajie said: "However did he come by so many?"

"Seven sets," said the Pilgrim. Bajie said: "How were they stripped so easily, and stripped so clean?"

The Pilgrim said: "Stripped! Nobody stripped anything. It seems this place is called Coiled Silk Ridge, and that farmstead is the Coiled Silk Cave. In the cave are seven female demons; they had seized my master and hung him up inside, and they had all gone off to the Spring of Washing Away Stain to bathe. That spring is a pool of hot water formed by Heaven and Earth. They had it all reckoned out: bathe first, then steam my master and eat him. I followed them there, and when they had stripped and gone into the water, I thought of striking them—but I feared to foul the cudgel, and feared to cheapen my name; so I never lifted it. I only changed into a hungry eagle and snatched their clothes away. And now they are squatting in the water, swallowing their shame, not daring to show their heads. Come—quick! Let's untie Master and be on our road."

Bajie laughed: "Brother, whatever you set your hand to, you always leave the root behind! Now that you've seen the demons, why not kill them first, and only then go free Master? They may hide their shame for now and not come out, but by evening they are bound to. They'll have old clothes at home; they'll put on a set and come chasing after us. And even if they don't chase—they've lived here a long while, and when we've fetched the scriptures we must come back down this very road. As the common saying goes, 'better to lack money by the roadside than to lack fists by the roadside.' If they stop us then and raise a row, won't they be enemies of ours for good?"

The Pilgrim said: "What's your plan, then?"

Bajie said: "Do it my way: first kill the demons, then go free Master. That's the plan of cutting the grass and digging out the roots."

The Pilgrim said: "I'm not going to beat them. If you want them beaten, go and beat them yourself."

Bajie roused his spirits, overjoyed, raised his rake, stretched his stride, and ran straight there. He shoved the gate open with a push and looked: the seven women were squatting in the water, cursing the eagle with one voice: "That flat-feathered beast! That cat-chewing wretch of a dead devil! He's snatched away every stitch of our clothes—how are we ever to stir a hand!"

Bajie could not hold back his laughter: "Bodhisattvas, so you're taking your bath—won't you take this poor monk in and give him a wash too?"

The demons saw him and answered in a rage: "You monk—what outrageous manners! We are womenfolk at home in the world, and you are a man who has left the world. The old books say, 'for seven years, male and female may not share a mat'—and you presume to bathe in the same pool with us?"

Bajie said: "The weather's hot; there's no help for it—just make room and let me have a little wash. Never mind your books and benches—same mat or no same mat!"

The blockhead would hear no more argument: he dropped his rake, stripped off his black brocade tunic, and with a plunge leapt into the water. The demons, their hearts aflame with vexation, all pressed forward to beat him—but little did they know that Bajie was a very master of the water. In the pool he shook himself and changed into a catfish spirit. The demons all went groping after the fish, but could not lay hands on him: they felt to the east, and he had flicked away west; they felt to the west, and he had flicked away east; slippery as could be, he went wriggling through their very legs. The water was chest-deep; he coiled about on the surface a while, then coiled along the bottom, until he had tangled every one of them, gasping and puffing, their spirits worn to rags.

Only then did Bajie leap up out of the water, show his true form, pull on his tunic, seize his rake, and shout: "Who am I? You took me for a catfish spirit!"

The demons saw him, and their hearts pounded and their gall quaked: "You came first as a monk; in the water you turned into a catfish; and when we could not catch you, you came out tricked out like this. Where in truth do you come from? You must leave your name!"

Bajie said: "So these brazen monsters truly do not know me! I am a disciple of the Venerable Tang of the great Tang empire of the East, come west for the scriptures—Marshall Tianpeng, Wuneng, Bajie in person! You strung my master up in your cave, plotting to steam him for your delectation! And do you suppose my master is good for steaming? Stretch your heads over here, the lot of you, and take a rake apiece—I'll put an end to your line!"

The demons heard, and their souls flew and scattered; they knelt in the water and pleaded: "We pray you, lord, show us what ease you can! We had eyes and saw no pearl—we took your master by mistake. Though he hangs there, we never dared add torment or torture. In your mercy, spare our lives! We will gladly put up the traveling money and see your master on his way to the Western Heaven!"

Bajie shook his head: "Say no more of that! The proverb has it well: 'Once burned by the sugar-seller's honeyed words, never again trust a sweet mouth.' Take your rake, one apiece, and let each go his way!" The blockhead, coarse and crude to the bone and out to show his prowess—what heart had he for cherishing the fair or pitying the fragile? He raised his rake and, telling good from bad not at all, charged in hacking wildly.

The demons lost their footing—what shame could count for anything now, with life itself at stake? They covered their shame with their hands, leapt out of the water, ran and stood within the pavilion, and worked

their magic upon it: from the holes of their navels silk cords came gushing out, canopied the sky with a great silk awning, and shrouded Bajie within it. The blockhead looked up suddenly—neither sun nor sky to be seen. He pulled in his arms and started for the edge—and could not lift a foot! They had laid tripping cords: the ground was covered with silk ropes. He stirred a foot, and down he went: to the left, a face full of earth; to the right, a head-over-heels sprawl; a hurried turn, and another mouthful of mud; scrambling up, a headstand on his palms. Who knows how many falls he took in all? The blockhead was beaten till his body was numb and his legs like water, his head swimming and his eyes blurred; he could not so much as crawl, but lay on the ground groaning.

The monsters had him well and truly trapped; yet they neither beat him nor harmed him. One after another they hopped out the gate, the silk awning shutting off the light of day, and each made her way back to her own cave. On the stone bridge they stood still, recited their true words, and in an instant drew in the awning; then, stark naked, they ran into the cave, and covering their privates with their hands went scurrying, giggling, right past Tang Sanzang.

They went into the stone chamber, put on a few old garments, and came straight to the back gate, where they stood and called: "Children, where are you?" Now each of these demons had a son—but not sons they had borne: they were sworn sons, adopted by covenant. Their names were Bee, Wasp, Mud-wasp, Gadfly, Horsefly, Moth, and Dragonfly: Bee was a honeybee; Wasp a wasp; Mud-wasp the mud-nesting wasp; Gadfly the spotted gadfly; Horsefly the ox-gadfly; Moth the wax-moth; Dragonfly the dragonfly.

Now when the demons had first spread their nets across the sky and snared these seven kinds of insects, they had meant to eat them. But as the ancients said, "birds have their bird language, and beasts their beast speech"; the insects pleaded for their lives, offering to worship them as mothers. And so it was that in spring they gathered the hundred flowers to feed the monsters, and in summer they sought out every herb, dutiful to the sprites.

Suddenly hearing themselves called, they all came before them and asked: "Mothers, what is your command?" The monsters said: "Children, this morning we stirred up trouble by mistake with the monks come from Tang; and just now we were trapped in the pool by his disciple—we were shamed past all counting, and all but lost our lives! Rouse yourselves, go out the front, and beat them back for us. If you win the day, come to your uncle's house and meet us there." The monsters, thus escaping with their lives, went off to their fellow disciple's place, to breed fresh mischief with their wicked tongues—but of that no more. Watch these insects, one and all rubbing fists and palms, come out to face the foe.

The story turns to Bajie, beaten till his head rang and his brains swam. He looked up suddenly and saw that the silk awning and cords were gone; step by step, feeling his way, he clambered up, bore his pains, and groped his way back along the old road. Seeing the Pilgrim, he clutched at him with his hand: "Brother—my head isn't swollen, is it? My face isn't black-and-blue, is it?"

The Pilgrim said: "What has happened to you?"

Bajie said: "That pack of rascals shrouded me under silk cords and laid tripping-ropes—who knows how many falls I took! They fell me till my back drags and my spine feels broke, and I could not move an inch. Just now the awning and the cords all cleared away, and only then did I get my life back and come home."

The Sha Monk saw him and said: "Done for, done for! You have brought a plague down on us! The demons are sure to go back to the cave and harm Master—quick, let's go save him!" Hearing this, the Pilgrim strode off at once; Bajie led the horse, and they hurried to the front of the farmstead. But on the stone bridge seven little fiends barred the way, crying: "Halt, halt! We are here!"

The Pilgrim looked and said: "Laughable! Not a grown one in the lot! The tallest is barely two feet five or six inches—under three feet; the heaviest no more than eight or nine catties—under ten." He shouted: "Who are

you?"

The little fiends said: "We are the sons of the seven immortal maidens! You have insulted our mothers, and still you dare, in your blind arrogance, to fight your way to our gate! Don't run! Beware!"

What little monsters! One and all, hands a-dance and feet a-prance, they came thrashing forward.

Bajie, seeing them, grew angry: he was in an ill temper from his falls already, and seeing that pack of small fry, he raged, raised his rake, and fell to swinging.

The little fiends saw how fierce the blockhead was, and one after another showed their true forms, flew up into the air, and cried "Change!" In a moment one had become ten, ten a hundred, a hundred a thousand, a thousand ten thousand—every one multiplying beyond all count. Just see:

Moths fill the whole sky with their flying; dragonflies dance over all the earth. Bees and wasps pursue their heads and foreheads; mud-wasps stab at their eyes. Gadflies bite them before and behind; horseflies sting them above and below. It beats upon their faces, black and swarming; the whirring would frighten gods and ghosts.

Bajie panicked: "Brother! They told us the scriptures would be easy to fetch—here on the western road, even the bugs bully a man!"

The Pilgrim said: "Brother, don't be afraid—forward, and fight!"

Bajie said: "They're swarming my head and face, layered a dozen deep all over my body—how am I supposed to fight?"

The Pilgrim said: "Nothing to it! Nothing to it! Old Sun has the means!" The Sha Monk said: "Brother, whatever the means, bring it out quick—in a moment our bald heads will be stung swollen!"

What a Great Sage! He plucked a handful of hairs, chewed them to pieces, and sprayed them out; they changed at once into yellow hawks, brown hawks, crested hawks, and white hawks, sea-eagles, ospreys, and sparrowhawks.

Bajie said: "Brother, what market slang are you speaking now—'yellow' and 'brown' and all the rest?"

The Pilgrim said: "You don't know. Yellow is the yellow hawk, brown the brown hawk, crested the crested hawk, white the white hawk, sea-eagle the sea-eagle, osprey the osprey, sparrowhawk the sparrowhawk. The demons' sons are seven kinds of insects; my hairs are seven kinds of hawks."

Hawks are the very masters of insects: one beak, one insect—talons striking, wings beating. In a moment they had beaten the swarm to the last one: the sky empty without a trace, and the ground piled a foot deep.

Only then did the three brothers cross the bridge and go straight into the cave. There they saw their venerable master hanging and moaning and weeping.

Bajie came up close: "Master, if you wanted to come here and hang yourself for fun, you might have let me in on it—I don't know how many falls it has cost me!"

The Sha Monk said: "Cut Master down first; talk afterwards." The Pilgrim picked the cords apart with his cudgel and let Tang Sanzang down; all of them asked: "Where have the demons gone?" Tang Sanzang said: "Those seven monsters, stark naked, ran out the back calling for their sons." The Pilgrim said: "Brothers, follow me—we'll search them out." The three took up their weapons and searched the rear garden—but no trace of them. They searched the peach and plum trees through and through—still nothing. Bajie said: "Gone, gone!" The Sha Monk said: "No need to hunt them; help me walk Master out." The brothers came round to the front again and helped the Tang monk onto the horse: "Master, next time there's food to beg, let us do the

begging."

The Tang monk said: "Disciples—hereafter, though I starve to death, I will never again go my own way."

Bajie said: "You two help Master along; let old Zhu fell this house of theirs with a rake or two, so when they come back there'll be nowhere for them to nest." The Pilgrim laughed: "Felling is wasted labor—better gather some brush and make an end of the root." What a blockhead! He gathered some rotten pine and broken bamboo, dry willow and withered vines, set a torch to them—and in a roaring blaze the whole place burned clean.

Only then did master and disciples set out with easy minds.

Hah! But as for how the demons fared thereafter, in fortune or in peril—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 73

Old Grudges Beget a Poisonous Bane; The Mind-Master Meets the Demon, but Happily the Light Is Shattered

The story continues: the Great Sage Sun supported the Tang monk, and together with Bajie and the Sha Monk hurried out onto the great road, heading due west. They had gone barely half a morning when they suddenly came upon a place of storied towers and pavilions, palaces rising grand and high.

The Tang monk reined in his horse: "Disciples, look—what sort of place is that?"

The Pilgrim raised his head to look, and this is what he saw: hills ringed with towers, streams winding among terraces. Before the gate, mixed trees stood dense and dark; outside the walls, wild flowers shone fragrant and bright. White egrets perched among the willows, spotless as flawless jade in the mist; golden orioles warbled in the peach trees, like gold with color glowing in fire. Wild deer, pair upon pair, roamed carefree upon the green sward; mountain birds, couple after couple, chattered and sang on high in the red-tipped trees. It was truly like the Tiantai grotto of Liu and Ruan, no whit inferior to the immortal gardens of Langyuan.

[Translator's note: Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao, men of the Han who lost their way in the Tiantai mountains and dwelt among immortal maidens.]

The Pilgrim reported: "Master, that place is no mansion of prince or marquis, no house of the rich and great—it looks like a monastery or abbey. We shall know for certain when we get there."

Hearing this, Sanzang whipped his horse onward. Master and disciples came up to the gate and looked: a stone tablet was set into the gateway, bearing three characters—"Yellow Flower Temple."

Sanzang dismounted. Bajie said: "The Yellow Flower Temple is the house of a Daoist. Let's go in and meet him—it will do well enough. Though his cap and gown differ from ours, the practice of the Way is one and the same."

The Sha Monk said: "Well said. For one thing, we can go in and see the grounds; for another, it will serve to rest the horse and beast. And if it's convenient, we can get some food arranged for Master."

The elder agreed, and the four of them went in together. On the second gate hung a pair of spring couplets: "Yellow Sprout and White Snow, the mansion of the immortals; jade grass and wonder-flowers, the home of the feathered men." The Pilgrim laughed: "This will be one of those sulfur-burning, drug-refining, furnace-fussing, pot-lugging Daoists." Sanzang pinched him: "Speak softly! Speak softly! We're not acquainted with him, nor related; we're only passing an hour or two in his company—what does it matter what he is?" Before the words were done, they passed the second gate, and there was the main hall shut fast; beneath the east colonnade sat a Daoist, rolling pills of medicine.

Just look at how he was dressed: on his head a glaring-red crown inlaid with gold; on his body a robe of darkest black; on his feet a pair of green cloud-toed shoes; round his waist a yellow sash of the Lord Lü pattern. A face like wrought iron; eyes like the bright stars. A nose high and large as a Hui man's; lips upturned and spread like a Tartar's. Within his Daoist heart, a hidden thunderclap—a very feathered man who subdues tigers and tames dragons.

When Sanzang saw him, he called out in a loud voice: "Old Immortal, this poor monk greets you." The Daoist looked up with a start, and at the very sight his heart jumped; he dropped the pills from his hands, straightened his hairpin, set his clothes in order, and came down the steps to receive them: "Venerable Father, forgive my failure to welcome you! Pray come inside and sit."

The elder went happily up into the hall, pushed the door open, and saw the sacred images of the Three Pure Ones; on the altar table stood a censer with incense. He took up incense and set it in the censer, bowed three full rounds of worship, and only then exchanged courtesies with the Daoist. They went to the guests' seats, and he sat down together with his disciples.

The Daoist hastily called an immortal boy to serve tea. Two little boys went at once within, hunting up the tea tray, washing the teacups, wiping the tea spoons, laying out the tea fruits—running about busily, and early disturbing those several old enemies.

Now the seven female demons of the Coiled Silk Cave had studied their arts in the same hall with this Daoist; and once dressed in their old clothes and having called out their sons, they had come straight to this place. They were in the back, cutting and sewing clothes, when they saw the boys preparing tea, and asked: "Lads, what guests have come, to make such a bustle?"

"Four monks have just come in," said the immortal boys, "and Master told us to serve tea."

The female demons said: "Is there a plump white monk among them?"

"There is."

"And is there one with a long snout and big ears?"

"There is."

The female demons said: "Go quickly, serve your tea, and give your master a wink of the eye—have him come in here. We have weighty matters to discuss."

Sure enough, the immortal boys carried out the five cups of tea. The Daoist gathered his robe, took up one cup with both hands, and presented it to Sanzang; then he served Bajie, the Sha Monk, and the Pilgrim.

When the tea was drunk and the cups cleared, the little boys gave their wink, and the Daoist rose from his seat: "Honored guests, pray be seated." He told the boys: "Put up the tea tray and bear them company; I must step away, but I shall return at once." Then the elder and his disciples, with one little boy, went out of the hall to look about—but of that no more.

The story turns: the Daoist walked into the abbot's quarters, and the seven women all knelt down together, crying: "Brother! Brother! Hear your little sisters one moment!"

The Daoist raised them up with his hand: "When you came this morning, you wanted to speak with me; but of all days I was rolling medicine today, and this batch must not be seen by women, so I did not answer you. And now there are guests outside—say what you have to say slowly."

The demons said: "We must tell you, brother—this business could only be spoken of because the guests have come; once the guests are gone, all the telling in the world would be useless."

The Daoist laughed: "Listen to your talk, dear sisters! What could only be said because guests have come? Aren't you deranged? Never mind that I am a quiet cultivator of immortality—even were I a common man of the world, with wife and children and household affairs, I would still wait until the guests were gone to settle things. What bad management is this—putting a fool's mask on me! Let me go out."

The demons all clutched at him together: "Brother, calm your anger. We ask you: these guests in the front—from what quarter do they come?" The Daoist turned his face away and would not answer. The demons said: "Just now the little boys came in for the tea things, and we heard them say: four monks." The Daoist said in anger: "Monks, so what?" The demons said: "Four monks—and one of them is white-faced and plump, one long-snouted and big-eared. Did you ask them, brother, where they come from?" The Daoist said: "There are those two among them, now that you say it. How do you know? Have you seen them

somewhere?" The women said: "Brother, you do not know the ins and outs of this. That monk is one sent by the Tang court to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures. This morning he came to our cave to beg food, and truly, sisters, having heard the name of the Tang monk, we seized him."

The Daoist said: "What did you seize him for?"

The women said: "We had long heard it said that the Tang monk is the true body of ten lifetimes' cultivation, and that whoever eats a piece of his flesh gains long life. So we took him. But then that long-snouted, big-eared monk trapped us in the Spring of Washing Away Stain: first he snatched our clothes, and then, flaunting his powers, he forced his way in to bathe with us, and we could not stop him. He leapt into the water, changed into a catfish, and went wriggling in and out between our legs, meaning to have his will of us—of all the lazy, shameless wretches! Then he leapt out of the water, showed his true form, and when he saw we would not submit, he took up a nine-toothed rake and threatened our very lives. Had we not had some presence of mind, we had well-nigh fallen into his cruel hands. So we fled trembling for our lives, and sent your poor nephews out to fight him—we do not know if they live or die. We have come especially to throw ourselves upon our brother, and we pray you, brother, for the sake of our old days as classmates in the same hall, be the one to avenge us!"

At these words the Daoist's anger kindled, and his voice and face changed: "So this monk is a brute like that! A lazy, shameless wretch! Set your minds at ease, all of you—leave him to me to dispose of!" The women thanked him: "Brother, if you mean to act, let us all come and help you beat him."

The Daoist said: "No need to beat him! No need to beat him! As the common saying goes, 'one blow, and you're three parts the lower.' Come along with me, all of you."

The women followed at his right and left. He went into his chamber, fetched a ladder, passed behind the bed, climbed to the roof-beam, and took down a little leather chest. The chest stood some eight inches high, a foot long, and four inches wide, secured with a small bronze lock. From his sleeve he drew a square goose-yellow silk handkerchief, and knotted to the handkerchief's corner was a tiny key.

He opened the lock and took out a packet of medicine. And this medicine was:

The droppings of a hundred birds of the mountains, Swept and gathered, a thousand catties' weight. Boiled in a cauldron of copper, Simmered slow with fire evenly timed. A thousand catties stewed down to a single ladle; A single ladle refined to three parts. The three parts roasted yet again, Forged once more and smoked once more. Thus is this poison compounded, More precious than treasure or pearl. Taste but the least savor of it— At the mouth's first touch you see King Yama!

The Daoist said to the seven women: "Sisters, this treasure of mine—if a common mortal eats it, one li is quite enough: into the belly, and he dies. If an immortal eats it, three li will finish him. These monks may well have some cultivation in them—three li apiece it must be. Quick, fetch the little scale."

[Translator's note: the li is the smallest of apothecaries' weights; ten li make one fen.]

One of the women hastily brought a tiny scale. "Weigh out one fen and two li," said the Daoist, "and divide it into four shares." Then she took twelve red jujubes, pinched each one slightly open, tucked in a li of the poison, and set them in four tea cups; two black jujubes went into a single cup, and this she placed on a tray. She said to the women: "Wait till I go and ask him. If they are not from Tang, well and good; but if they are come from Tang, I'll call for the tea to be changed—and you are to have this tray carried out by the boys. Once they have drunk it, every one of them dies, and your revenge is accomplished and your troubles at an end."

The seven women were gratitude itself.

The Daoist changed his robe and came walking out with a show of courtesy and respect, inviting the Tang monk and the rest back into the guest seats: "Venerable Father, forgive me! Just now I went to the back to instruct my young disciples to pick some green vegetables and radishes and lay on a vegetarian meal in your honor—that is why I left you."

Sanzang said: "This poor monk came to pay his respects empty-handed—how dare I trouble you for a meal?" The Daoist laughed: "You and I are both men who have left the world; whoever presents himself at the mountain gate is owed his three pints of allowance rice—what is this talk of empty hands? May I ask the Venerable Father, from what precious mountain, and on what errand?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk is one sent from the great Tang empire of the East to fetch scriptures at the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the Western Heaven. Just now I passed your immortal palace, and came in with all devotion to pay my respects."

Hearing this, the Daoist's whole face bloomed with spring: "The Venerable Father is a loyal and greatly virtuous Buddha! This poor Daoist knew it not, and failed to wait upon you at a distance—forgive me! Forgive me!" He called: "Boys! Go quickly and change the tea, and at the same time hasten with the meal!" The little boys went in—and the women beckoned to them: "Here is good tea, ready made—carry it out." And sure enough, the boys carried out the five cups.

The Daoist hastily took up, with both hands, the cup with its red jujubes and presented it to the Tang monk. Seeing Bajie's bulk, he took him for the eldest disciple, and the Sha Monk for the second; seeing the Pilgrim's small stature, he took him for the third—and so it was the fourth cup he presented to the Pilgrim.

But the Pilgrim's eyes were sharp. Taking his cup, he had already marked that the cup on the tray held two black jujubes. He said: "Sir, let you and I trade cups."

The Daoist laughed: "I'll not deceive the Venerable One. A poor Daoist of the wild hills—tea fruits are not always to hand. Just now I went in person to hunt up fruits in the back, and found only these twelve red jujubes, which I made into four cups to offer you. I could not sit by empty-handed, so I took two inferior dark jujubes for my own cup—this is merely my poor token of respect."

The Pilgrim laughed: "What talk is that? As the ancients said, 'At home no man is poor; on the road, poverty kills.' You are a man with a home—how can you call yourself poor? It's we traveling monks who are the truly poor. Let's trade, let's trade." Sanzang heard this and said: "Wukong, this holy master is only showing his regard for his guests. Drink it up—why trade?" The Pilgrim had no choice; he took the cup in his left hand and covered it with his right, watching the others.

Now Bajie—hungry, and thirsty too, with that great bread-basket of his—saw the three red jujubes in his cup, lifted it, and gulgged them all down into his belly. The master drank, and the Sha Monk drank. In an instant, watch: Bajie's face changed color, the Sha Monk's eyes brimmed with running tears, and the Tang monk frothed at the mouth; none of them could keep their seats, but swooned and fell to the floor.

The Great Sage knew at once it was poison. He raised the tea cup in his hand and flung it, cup and all, full into the Daoist's face; the Daoist fended it off with his sleeve, and with a clang the cup smashed to pieces on the floor.

The Daoist said in fury: "You monk—what boorish rudeness! Why did you smash my cup?"

The Pilgrim cursed: "You beast! Look what you have done to my three men! What quarrel had I with you, that you drug my people with poisoned tea?"

The Daoist said: "You clodhopping beast—you have brought this trouble down on yourself. Do you not know it?"

The Pilgrim said: "We had just entered your gate, had barely taken our seats and spoken of our home places, never one high word—what trouble could we have brought down?"

The Daoist said: "Did you, or did you not, beg food at the Coiled Silk Cave? Did you, or did you not, bathe at the Spring of Washing Away Stain?"

The Pilgrim said: "The Spring of Washing Away Stain belongs to seven female demons. Since you say this, you must be in league with them—you must be a demon yourself! Don't run! Take my cudgel!"

What a Great Sage! From his ear he drew out the gold-banded cudgel, flourished it to the thickness of a rice bowl, and brought it crashing down at the Daoist's face. The Daoist spun aside to dodge it, took up a precious sword, and came on to meet him. The two of them cursed and fought, and the noise soon roused the female demons within.

All seven came surging out, crying: "Brother, don't trouble yourself—let your little sisters take him!"

The Pilgrim saw them, and his wrath redoubled; with the iron cudgel wheeling in both hands he spread his strokes and rolled in among them, hacking wildly. At that, the seven bared their bosoms, thrust out their snow-white bellies, and worked their magic from the navel-holes: silk cords came gushing out in tangles, and reared up a canopy of silk that covered the Pilgrim beneath it.

The Pilgrim saw that things were going badly; he vaulted over, recited a spell-word, turned a somersault, and with a crash burst through the silk canopy and escaped. Mastering his temper, he hung sulking in midair and looked: the demons' silk cords gleamed and glistened, crossing and recrossing like the shuttle-work of warp and weft, and in a moment they had veiled every tower and terrace, hall and pavilion of the Yellow Flower Temple, till not a shadow or shape of it remained.

The Pilgrim said: "Formidable! Formidable! It is well I never fell into their hands! No wonder Zhu Bajie took all those falls! But what is to be done now? My master and my brother-disciples have swallowed the poison, and this pack of demons is of one mind and one will—and I don't know what their provenance may be. Let me go ask the local deity once more."

What a Great Sage! He brought down his cloud, knotted the spell-signs, recited the true word "Om," and summoned the old local deity once again. The deity came trembling and knelt by the roadside, knocking his head: "Great Sage—you went to save your master; why have you come back?"

The Pilgrim said: "This morning I saved my master, and we had gone no great way when we came upon a Yellow Flower Temple. My master and the rest of us went in to look around, and the abbot received us. Just as we were exchanging words, he drugged my master and the others with poisoned tea. I alone had not drunk, and I struck at him with my cudgel; but he spoke of the begging at the Coiled Silk Cave and the bathing at the Spring of Washing Away Stain—and then I knew the rascal for a demon. I had scarcely raised my hand against him when out ran the seven women, spewing out their silk cords; only my presence of mind saved old Sun. I reckon that since you are a god in these parts, you must know their provenance. What demons are they? Speak the truth, and spare yourself a beating!"

The local deity knocked his head and said: "The demons have not dwelt here above ten years. Since your little god's inspection three years ago, I have seen their true forms: they are seven spider spirits. Those cords they spew are spider silk."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim was greatly pleased: "By what you say, they are small fry. If that is how it is, go back—I shall work a spell and subdue them myself." The local deity knocked his head and departed.

The Pilgrim then went outside the Yellow Flower Temple, plucked seventy hairs from his tail, blew on them a breath of immortal air, cried "Change!"—and they became seventy little Pilgrims. He blew another breath

of immortal air on the gold-banded cudgel, cried "Change!"—and it became seventy double-horned fork-staves, one for each little Pilgrim. One he wielded himself, standing outside, and all together they stirred up the silk cords with their forks, heaving in unison with a great work-cry, till they had tangled every cord asunder; each had wound off ten-odd catties of it. Out from within they dragged seven spiders, bodies as big as bushel baskets, every one with limbs huddled and head roped, crying: "Spare us! Spare us!" The seventy little Pilgrims pinned the seven spiders down—how would they let them go?

The Pilgrim said: "Don't beat them yet. Only tell them: give me back my master and my brother-disciples!"

The demons cried out at the top of their voices: "Brother! Give him back his Tang monk—save our lives!" The Daoist came running out from within: "Sisters, I mean to eat the Tang monk—I cannot save you!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim blazed with fury: "You will not give me back my master? Then watch what your sisters look like!" What a Great Sage! He flourished the fork-staves back into one iron cudgel, raised it in both hands, and beat the seven spider spirits to a pulp—seven bags of mangled flesh, dripping with gore. Then he gave his tail two shakes, gathered up his hairs, and single-handed, cudgel in hand, charged in after the Daoist to beat him.

The Daoist, seeing his sisters-in-art beaten to death, could not bear it in his heart; he hardened himself, raised his sword, and came on to meet him. And this battle, with wrath in every breast and each displaying his powers to the utmost, was a fine one indeed:

The demon wheels his precious sword; the Great Sage raises his gold-banded band. All for the sake of the Tang dynasty's Sanzang, first he sent the seven women to their doom. Now each unfolds his master-hand, flaunting power, plying arts, playing the martial lord. The Great Sage's divine radiance grand; the demon immortal's courage coarse. Their whole bodies' skill like flowered brocade; their two hands' swift evasion like a well-sweep. Ping-pang, the sword and cudgel ring; bleak and wan, the wild clouds drift. Cutting words and cunning schemes; back and forth like a painted scroll. They fight till the wind cries and the sand flies and wolf and tiger are afraid; Sky dark, earth dim, not a Dipper star left in the heavens.

The Daoist fought the Great Sage through fifty or sixty rounds, and gradually felt his hands grow soft; in a moment his sinews loosened, and he untied his sash—with a sudden rip he stripped off his black robe.

The Pilgrim laughed: "My son! Beaten, and stripping for it—stripping won't save you!"

Now when the Daoist had stripped off his robe he raised both arms together—and behold, beneath his two ribs were a thousand eyes, and from the eyes burst forth golden light, most formidable:

Dense yellow fog; brilliant golden light. Dense yellow fog: from the two flanks it billows like spouting clouds; brilliant golden light: from the thousand eyes it pours like racing fire. Left and right, it is like a golden barrel; east and west, like a bronze bell. This is the demon immortal plying his magic power, the Daoist displaying his arts: it dazzles the eyes and bewilders the sky, veils sun and moon, and wraps a man in a feverish, smothering haze—and thus the Great Sage Sun, Equal to Heaven, is trapped within the golden light and yellow fog.

The Pilgrim lost his footing in consternation, and could only turn round and round within that glow of golden light: forward he could not lift a step, backward he could not move a foot—just like a man turning inside a barrel. And there was no enduring the stifling heat of it. Desperate, he gave one tremendous leap upward—and burst through the golden light, falling head over heels with a crash. He felt his head ache from the blow, stretched up a hand to feel it, and found the crown of his skull knocked soft. He fumed to himself: "Ill luck! Ill luck! This head of mine is good for nothing today! Swords have hacked it and axes chopped it and never scratched it—how can the golden light have knocked the skin soft? It will surely fester with pus; and even if it heals, it will be lockjaw."

For a while he could hardly bear the smart of it; then he reckoned it out for himself: "Forward I cannot go; backward I cannot go; left is no good, right is no good; upward I dare not leap again—what's to be done? Then let me go downward, plague take it!"

What a Great Sage! He recited a spell-word, shook himself, and changed into a pangolin—called in the common tongue the scaly carp. And truly:

Four iron claws, that bore through mountains and crush stone like pounded powder; Scales over all his body, that break ridges and pierce rock like slicing scallions. Two eyes bright, just like a pair of shining stars; One mouth sharp, better than any steel drill or golden awl. In the pharmacopoeia his nature is written "mountain-borer" pangolin; The common folk call him the scaly carp.

Watch him, head down, bore into the earth—he bored a good twenty-odd li before he dared poke his head out. For the golden light had covered only a dozen-odd li.

He came out, showed his true form—his strength gone limp, his sinews numb, his whole body aching, and the tears he could not hold back. Suddenly he cried out despite himself: "Master!

In those years I took the teaching and came out of the mountains, And together we toiled westward through our pains. The great sea's towering waves I never feared— Yet in a roadside gutter I have met the wind!"

The Handsome Monkey King was at the very depth of his sorrow when he suddenly heard someone weeping behind the mountain. He rose on one knee, wiped his tears, and turned to look. He saw a woman dressed in deep mourning, bearing in her left hand a bowl of cold rice-gruel, in her right several sheets of paper money, coming along step by step, a cry at every step.

The Pilgrim nodded and sighed: "Truly, a weeping eye meets a weeping eye; a heartbroken man meets a heartbroken man! What this woman is weeping for, I do not know—let me go and ask her."

Before long the woman came up onto the road, walking straight toward the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim bowed and asked: "Bodhisattva, for whom do you weep?"

The woman answered through her tears: "My husband fell out with the abbot of the Yellow Flower Temple over the price of a bamboo pole, and the Daoist killed him with poisoned tea. I am burning this sheet of paper money to repay the bond of husband and wife."

Hearing this, the tears started from the Pilgrim's eyes.

The woman saw it, and said in anger: "How ignorant you are! I grieve and sorrow for my husband—and you with your tearful eyes and rueful brows, do you mock me with a false heart?"

The Pilgrim bowed: "Bodhisattva, calm your anger. I am Sun Wukong the Pilgrim, eldest disciple of Tang Sanzang, the sworn brother of the Tang emperor and the Venerable One sent by the great Tang empire of the East. Journeying to the Western Heaven, we halted our horses at the Yellow Flower Temple. The Daoist of that temple—what demon he is, I do not know—has sworn brotherhood and sisterhood with seven spider spirits. Those spider spirits, at the Coiled Silk Cave, would have harmed my master; it was I, with my brother-disciples Bajie and the Sha Monk, who saved and freed him. The spider spirits fled to this place, and bore false tales against us, saying we had meant them treachery. The Daoist then drugged my master and my two brother-disciples—three men, four souls counting the horse—with poisoned tea, and they lie sunk in his temple. I alone did not drink his tea; I smashed the cup, and he fought with me. Just as we were at it, out ran the seven spider spirits, spewing out silk cords to bind me, and only by my magic powers did I escape. I questioned the local deity, who told me their true forms; then I worked my body-dividing spell, tangled their silk cords to pieces, dragged the demons out, and beat them to death with my cudgel. The Daoist, to avenge them, raised his precious sword and fought with me. After sixty rounds he lost the field, stripped off his robe,

and from beneath his ribs unleashed a thousand eyes and ten thousand rays of golden light, which pinned me fast. So, unable to advance or retreat, I changed into a scaly carp and bored my way out under the earth. I was deep in this sorrow when suddenly I heard you weeping, and therefore asked. Seeing you with paper money to repay your husband, while my master has lost his life with never a thing to offer him in return, I fell to blaming myself and grieving—how would I dare make sport of you!"

The woman set down the rice-gruel and paper money, and made her apologies to the Pilgrim: "Forgive me—forgive me! I did not know you were the one in trouble. From what you say, you do not know that Daoist. He is in truth the Hundred-Eyed Demon, called also the Many-Eyed Monster. Since you have transformations enough to escape the golden light and fought him all this while, you must have great magic power—but still you cannot come near that rascal. I will direct you to a holy worthy who can break the golden light and subdue the Daoist."

The Pilgrim hastened to raise his hands in thanks: "Bodhisattva, you know the provenance—pray instruct me! If it is truly that holy worthy, I will go and entreat him, to save my master from this peril and avenge your husband besides."

The woman said: "I will tell you outright: go and beg him, and if he subdues the Daoist, you may have your revenge—but I fear he cannot save your master."

The Pilgrim said: "How can he not save him?"

The woman said: "That rascal's poison is the cruelest: once it has felled a man, within three days his very marrow rots. Your going and returning will be too slow, I fear—therefore he cannot save him."

The Pilgrim said: "I know how to travel: were it ten thousand li, a thousand li is but half a day to me."

The woman said: "Since you know how to travel, hear me: from here to that place is a thousand li and more. There is a mountain there called Purple Cloud Mountain, and in the mountain a cave called the Thousand Flower Cave. In the cave dwells a holy worthy called Pilan. She can subdue this monster."

The Pilgrim said: "Where does that mountain stand? Which way must I go?"

The woman pointed with her hand: "Due south, straight before you."

The Pilgrim turned to look back—and the woman had already vanished. He hastened to bow in worship: "Which Bodhisattva was that? Your disciple was dazed with boring through the earth and could not know you—I beg you, leave your name, that I may give thanks!" And from midair came a voice: "Great Sage, it is I." The Pilgrim looked up quickly—it was the Old Mother of Mount Li. He hurried up into the sky to thank her: "Old Mother, from where have you come to instruct me?"

The Old Mother said: "I have just come back from the Dragon-flower Assembly. Seeing your master in peril, I played the mourning wife, borrowing the name of a husband's funeral to save your life. Go quickly and entreat her—but you must not say it was I who instructed you. That holy worthy is somewhat given to finding fault with people."

The Pilgrim gave his thanks and took his leave. With one bound of the somersault cloud he was at once upon Purple Cloud Mountain; he brought his cloud to rest, and there before him was the Thousand Flower Cave. Outside the cave:

Green pines shade the blessed retreat; kingfisher cypresses ring the immortal dwelling. Green willows line the mountain way; wondrous flowers fill the ravine streams. Fragrant orchids fence the house of stone; sweet grasses mirror the mountain's bending folds. Flowing waters join the brooks in jade; cloud seals the ancient trees in emptiness. Wild fowl clamor; quiet deer walk slowly, slowly. Tall bamboo, every branch refined; red plum, every leaf at ease. Winter crows roost in the ancient trees; spring birds sing in the tall ailanthus.

Summer wheat fills the broad fields; autumn grain spreads over all the land. Through the four seasons no leaf falls; through the eight terms flowers bloom the same. Ever the auspicious haze rises to join the Milky Way; Ever the propitious clouds reach to the Great Void.

The Great Sage walked in, glad at heart, mile after mile, his eyes never tired of the prospects at the sky's edge. Straight into the innermost depths he went—and not a soul was to be seen: all hushed and still, without so much as the crow of a cock or bark of a dog. He thought to himself: "This holy worthy must be from home."

He walked several li further in, and saw a female Daoist nun sitting upon a couch. Just look at her:

On her head, a brocade cap of five gathered flowers; On her body, a gown of woven gold. On her feet, cloud-point phoenix-head slippers; Round her waist, a twin-tasseled sash of plaited silk. Her face is like autumn's face, aged after the frost; Her voice is like a spring swallow's, sweet before the equinox. Long has she known the Law of the Three Vehicles in her belly; Constantly she cultivates the Four Truths, rich and full. Awakening out of the emptiness of emptiness, she has won the true fruit; Refining clear upon clear, she is free and at her ease. This is the Buddha of the Thousand Flower Cave: Bodhisattva Pilan, high and wide her name.

The Pilgrim could not hold back his feet; he came near and called: "Bodhisattva Pilan, this monk salutes you!"

The Bodhisattva came down from her couch at once, pressed her palms together, and returned the greeting: "Great Sage, forgive my failure to welcome you. From where have you come?"

"How did you know me for the Great Sage?" asked the Pilgrim.

"When you rioted through the Heavenly Palace all those years ago," said Pilan, "your likeness was circulated everywhere. Who does not know it? Who does not know you?"

"Just so—good deeds never leave the gate, but evil travels a thousand li," said the Pilgrim. "Now that I have turned to the Buddha's gate, you hear nothing of it!"

"When did you turn to the truth? My congratulations! My congratulations!"

"Of late I escaped with my life, and now escort my master, the Tang monk, to the Western Heaven for the scriptures. My master met the Daoist of the Yellow Flower Temple, and was drugged with poisoned tea. I fought it out with the rascal, and he let out his golden light and pinned me under it; but I worked my magic and escaped. I heard that the Bodhisattva can quench his golden light, and have come especially to entreat you."

"Who told you this?" said the Bodhisattva. "Since I attended the Ullambana assembly, three hundred years and more ago, I have never gone abroad. I have hidden my name and buried my surname, and not one soul knows of me—how did you come to know?"

"I am a regular lurking ghost," said the Pilgrim. "Wherever it may be, I can sniff it out for myself."

"So be it—so be it," said Pilan. "I ought not to go; yet since the Great Sage has condescended to descend upon me, I must not extinguish the good work of the scripture-seeking. Let us go."

The Pilgrim gave his thanks, then said: "I was over-hasty and ignorant, thrusting myself upon you—but have you brought any weapon?"

"I have an embroidery needle," said the Bodhisattva, "that can break that rascal."

The Pilgrim could not help himself: "The Old Mother has done me a disservice! Had I known it was an embroidery needle, I need not have troubled you—old Sun could have furnished a whole shoulder-load of them!"

"Your embroidery needles are steel and iron and gold, no more—useless," said Pilan. "This treasure of mine is neither steel, nor iron, nor gold: it was refined in the eye of the sun by my little son."

"And who is your son?" asked the Pilgrim.

"My son is the Star Officer Mao, the cockerel of the sun," said Pilan.

The Pilgrim was struck with amazement beyond all telling. And already the golden light blazed bright in the distance; he turned back to Pilan: "Where the golden light is—that is the Yellow Flower Temple."

Pilan drew from her collar an embroidery needle, as thick as an eyebrow-hair and five or six fen long, took it between her fingers, and cast it into the sky. After a moment there was a crack—the golden light was broken.

The Pilgrim rejoiced: "Bodhisattva—marvelous! Marvelous! Find the needle! Find the needle!" Pilan held it out on her palm: "Is this not it?"

The Pilgrim pressed down the cloud with her, and they walked into the temple. There was the Daoist with his eyes shut tight, unable to lift a step.

The Pilgrim cursed: "You brazen monster—playing the blind man, are you!" He drew the cudgel from his ear to strike, but Pilan caught hold of him: "Great Sage, don't strike—let us first look to your master."

The Pilgrim went straight to the guest seats at the back, and there were his three men lying on the floor, spitting and foaming at the mouth. The Pilgrim's tears fell: "What is to be done! What is to be done!"

"Do not grieve, Great Sage," said Pilan. "Since I have come out today, let me make it a whole deed of hidden merit. I have pills that undo poison—let me give you three."

The Pilgrim turned and begged with a bow. The Bodhisattva took from her sleeve a tattered paper packet, and from it handed him three red pills, telling him to put them into their mouths. The Pilgrim pried open their clenched jaws and slipped one pill into each mouth. In a little while the medicine's power sank into their bellies, and all together they retched and vomited, bringing up the poison—and their lives were saved.

Bajie was first to scramble up: "Smothered, I was—smothered!" Sanzang and the Sha Monk both came to: "What a giddiness!" The Pilgrim said: "You took poison in that tea! It was the Bodhisattva Pilan who saved you—quick, all of you, come and give thanks." Sanzang rose, straightened his robes, and gave his thanks.

Bajie said: "Brother—where is that Daoist? Let me go ask him a question or two: why did he do this to us!"

The Pilgrim told the whole story of the spider spirits, and Bajie raged: "The rascal—sworn brother to spiders! A demon beyond doubt!" The Pilgrim pointed: "He's standing outside the hall, playing the blind man." Bajie took up his rake to smash him, but Pilan stopped him again: "Tianpeng, calm your wrath. The Great Sage knows there is no one in my cave—let me take him home to watch my gate for me."

The Pilgrim said: "For such great kindness, what could we do but comply! Only—have him show his true form, that we may all have a look."

"Easy enough," said Pilan. She stepped forward and pointed at him with one finger; the Daoist toppled into the dust, and there was his original body—a great centipede spirit, seven feet long.

Pilan picked it up on the tip of her little finger, mounted her auspicious cloud, and returned straightaway to the Thousand Flower Cave.

Bajie staggered back in awe: "And that old dame is formidable too—how does she bag a wicked thing like that?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "I asked her what weapon she had to break the golden light, and she said an embroidery needle, refined by her son in the eye of the sun. When I asked who her son might be, she said: the Star Officer Mao. And I reckoned: the Star Officer Mao is a cockerel—so this old mama must be a hen. Cocks are the born subduers of centipedes; that is how she could take him in."

Hearing this, Sanzang bowed in worship without end, and said: "Disciples, let us pack up and go." The Sha Monk went within, found some rice and grain, and prepared a meal; all of them ate their fill. They led out the horse, shouldered the luggage, and asked their master out the gate. The Pilgrim set a fire in the kitchen, and in a moment the whole temple was burned to ash and cinder; then they stretched their strides and journeyed long. Truly:

The Tang monk wins his life and gives his thanks to Pilan; His nature perfected, the Many-Eyed Monster is swept away.

But what matters still awaited them upon the road ahead—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 74

Changgeng Reports How Savage the Demon Chiefs Are; The Pilgrim Displays His Powers of Transformation

The root of passion and desire is ever the same: Where there is passion and desire, things go on of themselves. Many are the monks who train and cultivate— To cut off desire and forget passion, that is Chan. You must set your mind on it; your will must be firm, Spotless as the moon in mid-sky. Take care not to err as you advance by stages in your work; When conduct is complete and merit fulfilled, you become an enlightened immortal.

The story continues: The Tang Priest and his disciples, having broken open the net of desire and leapt free of the prison of passion, let their horse travel westward. After they had gone a long while, summer was ending and autumn beginning, and a fresh coolness pierced to the skin. Just look at it:

Swift rain sweeps away the last of summer's heat; A single wutong leaf gives autumn's first alarm. Fireflies flit along the sedge-grass paths at evening; Crickets chirp beneath the bright moonlight. Yellow mallows open, dew upon their petals; Red smartweed spreads over every sandy islet. The reeds and willows are the first to shed their leaves; The cold cicadas sing in keeping with the season's law.

As the elder was traveling along, he suddenly saw a high mountain ahead, its peaks thrusting into the azure void—it truly scraped the stars and blocked the sun.

The elder's heart filled with fear, and he called to Wukong: "Look at this mountain ahead of us. It towers dreadfully. I only wonder whether there is a road through it."

"Master, what kind of talk is that?" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "As the old saying goes, 'Where the mountain is high there is always a road for travelers; where the water is deep there is always someone to ferry you across.' How could there be no way to get through? Set your mind at ease and let's go forward."

At these words the elder's face bloomed with delight. He raised his whip, urged on his horse, and rode straight up onto the high crags.

After they had traveled a few li, they saw an old man: his temples were tousled, his white hair streaming and fluttering; his beard was sparse, its silver threads swaying. Around his neck hung a string of beads, and in his hand he bore a staff with a dragon's head at its top.

Standing far off on the mountain slope, he shouted loudly: "Elder traveling west! Halt your noble steed a while and tighten your jade bridle! On this mountain there is a pack of demons who have eaten up every soul in the world of Jambudvipa. You must not go forward!"

When the Tang Priest heard this he was so horrified that his face changed color. In the first place the ground under his horse's hoofs was uneven, and in the second place he sat unsteadily in his carved saddle—thump! He tumbled off his horse, struggled but could not rise, and lay in the grass moaning.

The Pilgrim came up close, helped him to his feet, and said: "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! You have me here!"

"Elder brother, listen to that old man on the high crag," said the elder. "He reports that on this mountain there is a pack of demons who have eaten up everyone in the world of Jambudvipa. Who would dare go and ask him what the truth of it really is?"

"You just sit here, and let me go ask him."

"But your looks are ugly and your speech coarse. I'm afraid you'd give offense and wouldn't get any reliable information out of him."

The Pilgrim laughed and said: "Then I'll change into something more presentable and go ask him."

"Show me how you change," said the Tang Priest.

Marvelous Great Sage! He made a magic sign with his fingers, shook his body, and changed into a neat and clean little monk—truly a lovely sight: refined eyes and elegant brows, a round head and a well-formed face, a genteel and scholarly air in his every movement, and no vulgar words ever passing his lips. He shook out his brocade cassock, strode forward, and said to the Tang Priest: "Master, have I changed well?"

The Tang Priest saw him and was delighted. "You've changed very well!"

"What do you mean, well!" said Zhu Bajie. "He's just put the rest of us to shame! Old Pig could roll around for two or three years and still never turn out anything that handsome!"

Marvelous Great Sage! He slipped away from the others, walked straight up to the old man, bowed, and said: "Venerable Grandpa, this humble monk greets you."

The old man saw that he was elegant in appearance, young, and light of bearing, and half-heartedly returned his bow. Reaching out his hand to pat the little monk's head, he asked with a chuckle: "Little monk, where do you come from?"

"We come from the land of the east, from Great Tang," said the Pilgrim, "bound for the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. Just now as we arrived here, we heard your honorable self report that there are monsters about. My master is timid and fearful, so he sent me to ask a question: what sort of monster can it be, that dares to waylay travelers on this road? I beg you, Grandpa, to tell me all the details, so that I can send the creature packing."

The old man laughed. "Little monk, you are young and don't know what's good for you—your tongue runs ahead of your strength. Those demons have enormous magic powers. How could you talk of sending them packing?"

"From what you say," the Pilgrim replied with a smile, "you seem inclined to protect them. You must be kin to them, or else close neighbors and sworn friends. Otherwise, why would you puff up their prestige and vaunt their courage, refusing to open your heart and tell me plainly where they come from?"

The old man nodded and chuckled. "This monk certainly has a clever tongue! I suppose you travel about with your master, picking up magic arts here and there—you can perhaps exorcise hobgoblins and ward off evil for householders. But you've never run into a truly vicious monster!"

"How vicious?" asked the Pilgrim.

"When that demon sends a single letter to the Vulture Peak, five hundred arhats come out to welcome him," said the old man. "When a single note of his goes up to the Heavenly Palace, the eleven great luminaries each pay him reverence. The Dragon Kings of the Four Seas have been his friends; the immortals of the eight grottoes hold regular gatherings with him. The Kings of Hell of the Ten Courts address him as brother; the gods of the soil and the city walls cherish him as an honored guest."

When the Great Sage heard this, he could not help bursting into loud laughter. Seizing the old man by the hand, he cried: "Enough! Enough! That demon was a young lackey and servant to me, one of my brothers and friends—there's nothing so exalted about him. If he knew this little monk was coming, he'd pack up and move away overnight!"

"Nonsense, little monk!" said the old man. "Shame on you! What god or sage could ever have been your young lackey?"

"I'll tell you the truth," said the Pilgrim with a smile. "This little monk's ancestral home is the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the land of Aolai. My surname is Sun, my name Wukong. In years past I too was a monster, and I did great deeds. Once, at a gathering of demons, I drank a few cups too many and fell asleep. In a dream I saw two men carrying a summons to drag me off to the Palace of Darkness. In a flash of fury I took my gold-banded cudgel and wounded the ghost judges, terrified the King of Hell, and very nearly overturned the Hall of Judgment. The officer in charge of the records scrambled for paper, and all ten Kings of Hell signed their names and marked their seals, begging me to spare them a beating—declaring themselves willing to be my lackeys and servants!"

When the old man heard this, he said: "Amitabha Buddha! This monk has told such an outrageous lie, he'll never grow any taller!"

"Old sir," said the Pilgrim, "a size like mine is quite big enough."

"How old are you, then?"

"Take a guess."

"Seven or eight, no more."

"I have ten thousand seven-or-eights! Let me show you my old face—then see if you dare blame me."

"What do you mean, another face?" asked the old man.

"This little monk has seventy-two faces," said the Pilgrim.

The old man, not knowing enough to leave well enough alone, kept right on questioning him, so the Pilgrim gave his face a wipe—and instantly revealed his true form: fangs bared, cheeks blazing red on both sides, a tiger-skin kilt tied round his waist, the gold-banded cudgel gripped in his hand as he stood beneath the rocky crag—the very image of a live Thunder God.

At the sight the old man's face drained of color. His legs went numb and weak and would not hold him—down he flopped! He scrambled up, then tumbled into another squatting sprawl.

The Great Sage came forward and said: "Old sir, don't be alarmed. We may look fierce, but our hearts are good. Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! Just now you were kind enough to warn us of demons. How many monsters are there, really? Do go on and tell me, and I'll thank you for it."

The old man trembled from head to foot, unable to speak a word; he pretended to be deaf and answered not a syllable.

Seeing that he would say nothing, the Pilgrim turned and went back down the slope.

"Wukong, you're back?" said the elder. "What did you learn?"

"It's nothing! It's nothing!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "If the Western Heaven has a demon or two, so what? The people here are just timid and take such things to heart. No matter! No matter! You have me here!"

"But did you ask him what mountain this is, what cave, how many monsters there are, and which road leads to the Thunder Monastery?"

"Master, don't take this amiss," put in Bajie, "but when it comes to contests of transformation, sly tricks, and making fools of people, three or five of us couldn't match Elder Brother. But when it comes to plain honesty—line up a whole column of Elder Brothers, and they still couldn't match old me."

"Exactly! Exactly!" said the Tang Priest. "You are the honest one."

"He pokes his head into things without a thought for his tail," said Bajie. "He asked a question or two, then came scurrying back without any proper word. Wait here—old Pig will go ask and get the truth of it."

"Wuneng, be careful," said the Tang Priest.

Marvelous idiot! He tucked his rake into his belt, straightened his black cassock, and minced and wobbled his way up the mountain slope. Calling out to the old man, he said: "Grandpa, your servant bows!"

Now that the Pilgrim had gone, the old man had managed to get to his feet with the help of his staff and was preparing, trembling, to make off—when suddenly he caught sight of Bajie, and his terror redoubled. "Merciful ancestors!" he cried. "What nightmare did I dream last night, to run into this pack of horrors! That first monk was ugly, to be sure, but still had some three-tenths of a human look. But this monk—what a mallet of a snout, ears like winnowing fans, a face of iron plate, a neck of bristles! Not one scrap of human air left in him!"

Bajie chuckled. "You're a disagreeable grandpa, I must say, always running people down. What's wrong with how I look? Ugly I may be, but I'm well worth looking at. Give me an hour or two and I'll grow handsome."

When the old man heard him produce actual human speech, he had no choice but to speak. "Where do you come from?"

"I'm the Tang Priest's second disciple," said Bajie. "My religious name is Wuneng, and I'm called Bajie. That one who asked you just now is called Wukong the Pilgrim—my elder brother. Our master was vexed that he gave you offense and got no true word out of you, so he sent me especially to pay respects and inquire. What mountain is this, truly, and what cave? What monster lives in the cave, truly? And which is the great road west? I beg you, Grandpa, to point us the way."

"Are you an honest one?" asked the old man.

"In all my life I've never dared tell even a hair's worth of a lie."

"Don't be like that monk who just came, all flowery words and fancy water."

"I'm not like him."

Leaning on his staff, the old man said to Bajie: "This mountain is called Lion Camel Ridge, eight hundred li across. In its midst there is the Lion Camel Cave, and in that cave there are three demon chiefs."

Bajie spat. "What a suspicious old fellow you are! Three monsters, and you trouble yourself to come all this way with the news!"

"Aren't you afraid?"

"I'll tell you the truth," said Bajie. "Of those three monsters, my elder brother could kill one with a single blow of his staff. I could finish one off with one rake. And I have another junior brother—one stroke of his demon-quelling staff would account for the third. With all three dead, my master could simply ride on through. What's so hard about that?"

The old man laughed. "This monk has no notion of the depths! Those three demon chiefs have vast and mighty magic powers. And the little fiends under them: five thousand on the southern ridge, five thousand on the northern ridge, ten thousand at the eastern pass, ten thousand at the western pass; four or five thousand on patrol duty, another ten thousand guarding the gates; those who tend the fires are past counting, and those who gather firewood likewise—altogether some forty-seven or forty-eight thousand. Every one of them is a registered name with a badge on his body, and all they do here is devour human beings."

When the idiot heard this, he came scurrying back in a tremble. Drawing near the Tang Priest, he said not a word, but set down his rake and relieved himself on the spot.

When the Pilgrim saw this he shouted: "You don't make your report—what are you squatting there for?"

"The fear's squeezed the crap out of me!" said Bajie. "There's nothing more to say. Let's each of us hurry and look out for his own life!"

"What an idiot!" said the Pilgrim. "When I went to ask, I wasn't scared in the least, but the moment you go asking you panic and lose your wits!"

"What really happened?" asked the elder.

"That old man says this mountain is called Lion Camel Mountain, eight hundred li across," said Bajie. "In its midst is the Lion Camel Cave, and in that cave are three old demons with forty-eight thousand little ones who do nothing there but eat people. If we so much as brush the edge of their mountain, we're food in their mouths—there's no getting past!"

At this the Tang Priest trembled, every hair standing on end. "Wukong, what are we to do?"

"Master, set your mind at ease," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "It's nothing serious. I expect there are a few demons here, but the local people are timid, so they multiply them into many monsters of great size, frightening themselves with their own fancies. You have me here!"

"Brother, what kind of talk is that!" said Bajie. "I'm not like you. What I asked about was the truth, and there's not one false word in it. The whole mountain and every valley are full of demons—how are we to go forward?"

"Idiot's talk! Don't work yourself into a fright," said the Pilgrim with a smile. "If it's a question of fiends filling the mountains and valleys, one round of old Sun's cudgel would smash the lot of them to pieces by midnight!"

"Shame! Shame! No more of your boasting!" said Bajie. "Just to call the roll of those little demons would take seven or eight days—how could you smash them all so fast?"

"Then how would you have me do it?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Knock them down, tie them up, freeze them with a body-fixing spell—even then it couldn't be that quick."

"I don't need any grabbing or tying," said the Pilgrim. "I take this cudgel of mine and pull at both ends, crying 'Grow!'—and it's forty zhang long. I give it a shake and cry 'Thicken!'—and it's eight zhang around. Then I roll it once along the south of the mountain—five thousand crushed; once along the north—another five thousand; and one roll from east to west—forty or fifty thousand little fiends ground to meat paste and mush!"

"Brother," said Bajie, "if it's a flour-kneading sort of battle like that, you might have the whole business done by the second watch."

Standing beside them, Sha Monk said with a laugh: "Master, with Elder Brother's powers like these, what is there to fear from them? Please mount the horse and let's be off."

Seeing them all expounding their skills, the Tang Priest had no choice but to compose his mind, mount his horse, and ride on.

As they were traveling along, the old man who had brought the report was nowhere to be seen. "He was a monster himself," said Sha Monk, "deliberately borrowing the tiger's might to come and scare us with his warning."

"Don't be hasty," said the Pilgrim. "Let me go and have a look."

Marvelous Great Sage! He leaped onto a high peak and looked all around, but there was no trace of anyone. Then, turning quickly, he saw a colored radiance shimmering in midair. Soaring up on his clouds to give chase, he found it was the Gold Star of Venus.

Going up to him, the Pilgrim seized hold of him with his hand, calling over and over by his personal name: "Li Changgeng! Li Changgeng! What a lazy rascal you are! If you had something to say, you could have said it to our faces. Why dress yourself up as some old mountain wraith to muddle me?"

The Gold Star hurriedly returned his courtesy. "Great Sage, forgive me for bringing my warning so late! Forgive me! These demon chiefs do indeed have vast magic powers and towering strength. Whether you pass through depends entirely on your shifts and transformations, your cleverness and cunning. If you are careless in the least, it will truly be hard to get through."

"Thank you! Thank you!" said the Pilgrim. "It's a hard road indeed. Old Star, go up to the upper regions and put in a word with the Jade Emperor—lend old Sun some heavenly soldiers to help out."

"You shall have them! You shall have them!" said the Gold Star. "You need only carry back my verbal message—even a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers can be had."

The Great Sage took leave of the Gold Star, brought his cloud down, and went to the Tang Priest. "That old man just now," he said, "was really the Gold Star of Venus, come to bring us the news."

The elder pressed his palms together. "Disciple, hurry after him and ask whether there's another road somewhere, so we can go around."

"We can't go around," said the Pilgrim. "This mountain runs straight through eight hundred li, and who knows how much farther it stretches on every side? How could we get around it?"

When the Tang Priest heard this, he could not hold back his tears. "Disciple, with hardships like these, how am I ever to worship the Buddha?"

"Don't cry! Don't cry!" said the Pilgrim. "The moment you cry, you turn coward. There must be some exaggeration in his report; he only wanted us to keep up our guard and be careful. As the saying goes, 'the teller overstates.' Dismount and sit down a while."

"What are you planning now?" asked Bajie.

"No plan at all," said the Pilgrim. "You stay here and keep careful watch over Master. Sha Monk, guard the luggage and the horse well. Let old Sun go up the ridge first and scout about—see how many demons there are, front and back. I'll seize one and question him closely, make him write out a deposition and a roster, get every last one of them, old and young, checked and registered, and order him to shut the cave doors and not bar our road. Then we'll invite Master to pass through quietly and peacefully. That will show old Sun's true craft!"

"Do be careful! Do be careful!" was all Sha Monk could say.

"No need for all the instructions," the Pilgrim said with a laugh. "On this trip of mine, even the Eastern Ocean would open a road, and even a mountain cased in iron and silver would have its gate battered through!"

Marvelous Great Sage! With a whistle he sprang onto his summit on his somersault cloud, clutching at vines and haulng himself up by creepers, surveying the mountain level. The mountain was silent and empty of anyone.

He suddenly cried out loud: "Wrong! Wrong! I should never have let old Gold Star go. He was just trying to scare me—there isn't a single demon here! If they were out gamboling in the wind at play, they'd surely be twirling spears and flourishing staves, drilling in the martial arts. Why is there not one of them?"

As he was puzzling it over by himself, he heard, from behind the mountain, the ting-ting-tang-tang and the rat-a-tat-tat of watchman's clapper and bell. Turning hastily to look, he saw it was a little fiend, carrying a flag marked "Order," a bell hanging at his waist, a clapper beating in his hand, walking from north to south. Looking at him closely, the Pilgrim saw he had a body one zhang two feet tall.

The Pilgrim chuckled to himself. "He must be a courier fiend. I expect he's carrying dispatches and delivering notices. Wait till I go listen to him a bit and hear what he says."

Marvelous Great Sage! He made a magic sign, recited a spell, shook his body, changed into a fly, and lightly alighted on his hat, pricking up his ears to listen.

The little fiend went striding along the highway, beating his clapper, swinging his bell, and muttering to himself: "We scouts must all be on our guard against Sun the Pilgrim: he can turn into a fly!"

When the Pilgrim heard this he was secretly startled and suspicious. "This fellow has seen me! If he hadn't, how would he know my name, and how would he know I can turn into a fly?" In fact the little fiend had not seen him at all; it was just that the demon chief had somehow given him those instructions—the rumor was abroad, and he was made to gabble it as he went.

The Pilgrim, not knowing this, suspected that the fiend had seen him, and was about to pull out his cudgel and finish him. But he held back, thinking: "I remember when Bajie was questioning the Gold Star, he said there were three old demons and forty-seven or forty-eight thousand little ones. Little fiends like this, even tens of thousands more of them, wouldn't matter. What I don't know is how great the powers of those three old demons are. Wait till I ask him a thing or two—then it won't be too late to strike."

Marvelous Great Sage! And how do you suppose he went about asking?

He flew down off the fiend's hat, clung to a treetop, and let the little fiend walk on a few paces. Then he turned quickly about, transformed with a shake of his body into another little fiend, dressed exactly like the first, beating the same clapper, swinging the same bell, carrying the same flag—only he stood three or four inches taller. Muttering the same words as he went, he hurried forward and called: "Hey, traveler! Wait for me!"

The little fiend turned his head. "Where are you from?"

"What a fine fellow!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "Don't you know your own family?"

"There's no one like you in my household."

"How could there not be me? Take a good look."

"Strange face—can't say I know you! Can't say I know you!"

"That's just it—my face is strange to you. I'm one of the fire-tenders. You seldom meet any of us."

The little fiend shook his head. "No, no! Even the fire-tending brothers in our cave—there's not one with a pointed snout like that."

The Pilgrim thought to himself: "So this snout of mine has changed a bit too pointed." Dropping his head at once, he covered his mouth with his hand and gave it a rub. "My snout isn't pointed," he said—and sure enough, it wasn't any longer.

"How was it pointed just now," said the little fiend, "and not pointed after one rub? What a suspicious creature! Very hard to recognize! You're not one of our family! Good-bye, good-bye! Doubtful, doubtful! Our Great King's household rules are strict: fire-tenders tend only fires, scouts do only scouting. It's hardly likely they'd have you tend fires and then send you out scouting too."

The Pilgrim, quick of tongue, slid right along with it. "You don't know," he said. "The Great King saw how well I kept the fires, and promoted me to scout."

"Very well, then. We scouts go in squads of forty, ten squads in all—four hundred men. Each has his own age, his own looks, his own registered name. The Great King feared we'd mix up our squads and make the roll call difficult, so he gave each of us a badge as a token. Have you a badge?"

Now the Pilgrim, seeing how the fiend was dressed and how he reported his duties, had transformed himself in that same fashion; but since he had never seen the fiend's badge, he had none on him.

Marvelous Great Sage! Far from admitting he had none, he answered glibly: "How could I have no badge? Only, mine is newly issued—I've just collected it. Bring yours out and let me see."

The little fiend, quite unsuspicious of the trick, lifted his garment. Next to his skin he wore a badge of gilt lacquer, strung on a cord of floss silk, and pulled it out to show the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim saw that on the back of the badge was a gold plate inscribed "Awing All Demons," and on the front three characters in formal script: "Little Wind-Chaser."

"No need to say more," he thought to himself. "All who scout the mountain must have 'Wind-Chaser' at the end of their names."

Then he said: "Just you put your garment down and walk over. Let me show you my badge." Turning away, he thrust down his hand, plucked a single tiny hair from the tip of his tail, pinched it, and cried "Change!" It became a badge of gilt lacquer, likewise strung on a green floss-silk cord, inscribed with three characters in formal script—"Chief Wind-Chaser." He took it out and handed it over for the fiend to see.

The little fiend was greatly astonished. "We're all called 'Little Wind-Chaser'—why should you alone be called some kind of 'Chief Wind-Chaser'!"

The Pilgrim, who carried every scheme through to perfection and spoke always to the purpose, said: "The truth is, you don't know. The Great King saw how well I kept the fires, so he promoted me to chief of the scouts and gave me a new badge called Chief Wind-Chaser, appointing me to command your squad of forty brothers."

When the fiend heard this he hastened to bow and greet him: "Your honor! Your honor! Newly appointed, and strange of face—I spoke out of turn, forgive me!"

The Pilgrim returned his courtesy with a laugh. "Forgive you I shall—but there's one thing: I'll be wanting my meeting-money. Five taels from each of you."

"Your honor, don't be impatient," said the little fiend. "Wait till I go to the southern ridge and gather up my whole squad—then we'll settle up all at once."

"In that case, I'll go along with you."

The little fiend walked on ahead, and the Great Sage followed.

After a few li they came upon a Brush-Peak Peak. Why was it called Brush-Peak? From the summit of that mountain there grew up a single spire, four or five zhang high, like a brush standing in a rack—hence the name.

When the Pilgrim came to its foot, he cocked his tail, leaped up, and sat down on the very tip of the peak, calling out: "Wind-Chasers! All come here!"

The little Wind-Chasers below bowed and said: "At your service, your honor."

"Do you know why the Great King sent me out?"

"We do not."

"The Great King wants to eat the Tang Priest," said the Pilgrim, "but he fears the vast powers of Sun the Pilgrim. He's heard that the fellow knows transformations, and he worries that he may turn himself into a Little Wind-Chaser, sneak along these paths, and spy out the news. So he promoted me to Chief Wind-Chaser, to inspect your squad and see whether there's any fake among you."

"We're all genuine, your honor!" the little Wind-Chasers cried with one voice.

"If you're genuine, then you know what powers the Great King has. Do you?"

"Yes, we know."

"If you know, then out with it, quick, and let me hear. If what you say squares with what I know, you're genuine. If you're off by even a hair, you're fakes, and I'll surely haul you before the Great King for punishment."

The little Wind-Chasers, seeing him perched up there on high, putting on airs and bawling them out, had no choice but to tell the truth. "Our Great King has vast magic powers and mighty skills. With one swallow he once took in a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he let out a snort. "You're fakes!"

The little fiends panicked. "Your honor, my lord, we're genuine! Why call us fakes?"

"If you were genuine, how could you talk such rubbish? How big is the Great King's body, that he could swallow a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers in one gulp?"

"Your honor doesn't know," said the little fiend. "Our Great King knows transformations. If he wants to be big, he can prop up the heavens; if he wants to be small, he's no bigger than a mustard seed. That year, when the Queen Mother held the Peach Banquet and invited all the immortals, no summons came to him. Our Great King thought to contend for Heaven, and the Jade Emperor sent a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers to subdue him. Our Great King then transformed his body, opened his great mouth till it was wide as a city gate, and made to swallow them down with all his might. The heavenly soldiers were so terrified that none dared engage him, and they shut the Southern Gate of Heaven. That's why we say one swallow took in a hundred thousand soldiers."

When the Pilgrim heard this he chuckled inwardly: "If it's a matter of boasts like that, old Sun has done the same himself." Then he went on aloud: "And what powers has the Second Great King?"

"The Second Great King is three zhang tall, with silkworm-brow eyes like a phoenix's, a beautiful voice, teeth like a carrying-pole, and a nose like a dragon's. When he fights, one sweep of his nose carries off his foe. Even if you had a back of iron and a body of bronze, your soul would still fly from you in fright!"

"A monster who hauls people off with his nose—easy enough to catch," said the Pilgrim, pressing on: "And what powers has the Third Great King?"

"Our Third Great King is no common monster of this mortal world," said the little fiend. "His style is the Great Peng of Ten Thousand Li in the Clouds. When he moves, he wheels on the wind and plies the seas, beating north and turning south. He carries about with him a treasure called the yin-yang two-qì vase. If a

man is put inside that vase, within an hour and three quarters he is dissolved into liquid."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he was secretly alarmed. "The demons themselves are nothing to fear—but I'd best be careful of that vase." Then he said aloud: "You've not done badly in describing the powers of the three Great Kings—it matches what I know. But which of the Great Kings is it that wants to eat the Tang Priest?"

"Don't you know, your honor?" asked the little fiend.

"Do I not know more than you!" the Pilgrim thundered. "It's because I feared you underlings didn't know the details that I was sent to put the questions to you sharply!"

"Our First Great King and Second Great King have long lived in the Lion Camel Cave on Lion Camel Ridge. The Third Great King doesn't live here. His former home is about four hundred li to the west of here. There is a city there called the Kingdom of Lion Camel. Five hundred years ago he ate the king of that city and all his civil and military officials; every man, woman, and child in the city was devoured clean away. That is how he seized the kingdom, and now it is all monsters there. Some years ago he learned that the Tang court in the eastern lands had sent a monk to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures, and that this Tang Priest is a good man who has cultivated his conduct through ten lifetimes—anyone who eats a single piece of his flesh will live long and never grow old. But because he feared one of the disciples, Sun the Pilgrim, so formidable a fellow, and could hardly manage him alone, he came straight here to swear brotherhood with our two Great Kings, so that, of one mind and purpose, they might together seize that Tang Priest."

When the Pilgrim heard this, rage blazed up in his heart. "What outrageous insolence from these wicked demons! I'm protecting the Tang Priest so he may attain the true fruit—and they plot to eat the man under my care!" With a grinding of his steel teeth he whipped out his iron cudgel, leaped down from the high peak, and brought the staff down on the little fiend's head and ground it in. Alas! The fiend was crushed into a shapeless lump of flesh.

Even the Pilgrim himself could not bear the sight. "Ai!" he said. "He meant well enough—he told me all the family gossip. How could I finish him off with one blow like that? Well—what's done is done!"

Marvelous Great Sage! Only because the road was blocked for his master did he, having no alternative, do this deed. He untied the fiend's badge and hung it on his own waist, slung the "Order" flag over his back, hung the bell at his waist, took the clapper in his hand, made a magic sign against the wind, recited a spell, shook his body, and changed into the very image of the Little Wind-Chaser. Then he turned about and retraced the old road, seeking out the cave, to probe the real strength of those three old demon chiefs.

This was truly:

A Monkey King of a thousand transformations, True mastery of ten thousand shifts and dodges.

Bursting deep into the mountains, he was following the old road along when suddenly he heard the shouts of men and the neighing of horses. Raising his eyes to look, he saw that before the mouth of the Lion Camel Cave ten thousand little fiends stood arrayed with spears, swords, halberds, and daggers, banners and standards, streamers and plumes. The Great Sage rejoiced inwardly: "What Li Changgeng said was no lie! No lie!"

There was an order to this array: two hundred and fifty made one great company. Seeing some forty long banners of mixed colors dancing wildly in the wind, the Pilgrim knew there must be ten thousand men—and he reasoned to himself: "Old Sun has turned into a Little Wind-Chaser. Once I go in, if the old demon asks me about scouting the mountain, I can improvise my answers as it goes. But if I slip up in a single word and they recognize me, how am I to get clear? And if I try to bolt for the door, that crowd of gatekeepers will block the way—how would I ever get out? If I want to seize the demon kings inside the cave, I must first get

rid of the crowd of monsters outside the gate!"

And how do you suppose he got rid of the crowd of monsters? Marvelous Great Sage—he thought it over: "That old demon has never met me face to face, yet he already knows old Sun's reputation. Let me lean on that very reputation, ride on its prestige, and let fly a few big boasts, and see if I can't frighten them. If the monks of the Middle Land are fated and have their share of destiny, and the scriptures are to be fetched home, then a few hero's words from me will put those crowds of monsters to rout before the gate. But if the monks have no fate, no share, and the true scriptures cannot be had—why, even if I talked till lotus flowers bloomed in the air, I still couldn't clear the fiends from outside the Western cave."

He questioned his heart, and his heart questioned his mouth; weighing this plan over, he beat his clapper, swung his bell, and marched straight up to the mouth of the Lion Camel Cave. The little fiends of the forward camp barred his way at once: "Little Wind-Chaser's back?"

The Pilgrim made no answer, but walked on with lowered head. When he reached the second line of camp, the little fiends grabbed hold of him again: "Little Wind-Chaser's back?"

"I'm back."

"You went out scouting at dawn—did you run into any Sun the Pilgrim?"

"Run into him? I certainly did. He's down there honing his pole."

The little fiends quaked. "What does he look like? What pole is he honing?"

"He was squatting by the stream like some road-opening god," said the Pilgrim. "If he stood up, he'd be ten-odd zhang tall! In his hand he held an iron staff, a great pole as thick as a bowl. He'd scoop up a handful of water from the rocks, grind his weapon on it a stroke or two, and mutter as he worked: 'Ah, my pole! It's been an age since I brought you out to show your powers. On this trip, were there a hundred thousand demons, you'd kill them all for me! When I've slain those three demon chiefs, I'll offer sacrifice to you!' And before he's done honing it bright, he means to start by crushing the ten thousand fiends at your gate!"

At these words every one of the little fiends felt his heart quake and gallbladder tremble, soul scattered and spirit in flight.

The Pilgrim went on: "Gentlemen, there's not many pounds of meat on this Tang Priest—it'll never come our way in the shares. Why should we carry the blame for him? Better we all scatter, each for himself."

"What you say is right," the crowd of fiends agreed. "Let's each look out for his own life."

Had these been soldiers or civilians who had drunk in the sagely transformation of the empire, they would not have dared run even at death. But these were all wolves, beasts, tigers, panthers, running creatures and flying fowl—and with one howl they all dissolved away in a rout. This was not merely a few bluffing words from the Great Sage Sun—it was the songs of Chu scattering eight thousand soldiers!

The Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "Splendid! The old demon is as good as dead! The moment they heard the news they ran—who'd dare face him in the flesh? If only it goes as well as this inside! But if I put a word wrong, and one or two of this crowd of little fiends has slipped inside and heard it, won't the news leak out?"

Just look at him:

With fixed resolve he seeks the ancient cave; With boldened heart he enters the deep gates.

If you would know which of the old demon chiefs he will meet, and whether for good or ill, then listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 75

The Mind Monkey Drills Through the Yin-Yang Aperture; The Demon King Returns to the True Great Way

The story continues: The Great Sage Sun entered the cave mouth and looked to both sides. This is what he saw:

Skulls piled like ridges, bones strewn like forests. Human hair trodden into felt, human skin and flesh rotted into dust and mud. Human sinews wrapped around trees, dried stiff and shining like silver. Truly a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood—the stench was past bearing. On the east side, little demons were butchering live humans for their flesh; on the west, savage fiends were cooking human meat, fresh-boiled and fresh-roasted. Had it not been the Handsome Monkey King with his heroic courage, no ordinary mortal could ever have set foot inside their gate.

Before long he had passed through the second gate, and he looked: my! Here it was different from outside—pure and elegant, fair and spacious. On either side grew fairy grass and immortal flowers; before and behind stood tall pines and emerald bamboo. He walked another seven or eight li before reaching the third gate. Dodging to one side, he stole a glance: up above sat three old demons, fiercely hideous.

The one in the middle looked like this:

Chisel fangs and saw teeth, round head and square face. His roar was like thunder, his gaze like lightning. His nose tilted up toward heaven, his red eyebrows streamed like flame. Wherever he walked, all beasts panicked with fear; Whenever he sat, every demon's courage quaked. This one was the king of beasts—the Azure-Maned Lion monster.

The one on the left looked like this:

Phoenix eyes with golden pupils, yellow tusks and thick legs. Long nose and silver hair, his head and tail much alike. Round forehead, wrinkled brow, a body massive and grand. His voice was fine as a lovely lady's, His face was like an ox-headed fiend's. This one was the Yellow-Tusked Old Elephant, who had cultivated his conduct for many years.

The one on the right looked like this:

Head of the golden-winged Kun, eyes of a leopard starred with light. Shaking the north, he schemes for the south—fierce, resolute, and brave. Transformed, he soars; he mocks the quail and makes the dragon despair. Folding his wind-quills, all birds hide their heads; Stretching his sharp talons, every fowl loses courage. This one was the Great Peng of Ten Thousand Li in the Clouds.

[Translator's note: the Kun is a legendary giant fish from ancient mythology that transforms into the Peng, a colossal bird.]

Below them on either side stood some hundred-odd leaders of greater and lesser rank, every one fully armed and armored, helmets and cuirasses in fine order, terrible in majesty, reeking of slaughter.

When the Pilgrim saw this he was inwardly delighted, and not in the least afraid. With great strides he walked straight through the gate, set down his clapper and bell, and called upward: "Great Kings!"

The three old demons laughed and asked: "Little Wind-Chaser, you've returned?"

"I've returned," the Pilgrim answered.

"You went to scout the mountain—what news of Sun the Pilgrim?"

"Great Kings above," said the Pilgrim, "I wouldn't dare say."

"Why wouldn't you dare say?"

"I was carrying out your orders," said the Pilgrim, "beating my clapper and ringing my bell as I walked along, when I suddenly looked up and saw a man squatting there honing a pole. He looked like a road-opening god. If he stood up, he'd be ten-odd zhang tall! He scooped water from the stream by the crag, ground his weapon on it a stroke or two, and muttered: 'Ah, my pole! It's been an age since I brought you out to show your powers. On this trip, were there a hundred thousand demons, you'd kill them all for me! When I've slain those three demon chiefs, I'll offer sacrifice to you!' And before he's done honing it bright, he means to start by crushing the ten thousand fiends at your gate! I knew it was Sun the Pilgrim, and came straight back to report."

When the old demon heard this, sweat drenched his whole body. Trembling with fear, he said: "Brothers, I said we shouldn't provoke the Tang Priest! His disciple has vast magic powers—he's already made preparations, honing his staff to strike us down. What are we to do?" He called: "Little ones! Summon every last one from outside, great and small, into the cave. Shut the doors! Let him pass!"

Among the leaders, those who knew reported: "Great King, the little demons outside have all scattered."

"How—scattered?" cried the old demon. "They must have heard the bad news! Quick, shut the doors! Quick, shut the doors!" The demons slammed both front and rear doors, bolting them tight.

The Pilgrim thought to himself: "Now that the doors are shut, if he asks me about family details, I won't be able to answer. Won't that give me away and get me caught? I'd better scare him some more and make him open the doors, so I can run."

He stepped forward again: "Great King, what he said was even worse than that."

"What else did he say?" asked the old demon.

"He said he'd peel the First Great King's skin, scrape the Second Great King's bones, and pull the Third Great King's sinews. And if you close the doors and won't come out, he can transform—into a fly, for instance—and fly in through the crack, and carry us all out one by one. What then?"

The old demon said: "Brothers, be careful! There's never been a fly in our cave. If a fly comes in, it's Sun the Pilgrim!"

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "I'll turn into a fly and scare him, so he opens the door." The Great Sage slipped to one side, reached behind his head, plucked a single hair, blew on it with immortal breath, and cried "Change!" It became a golden fly, and he flew it straight at the old demon's face, bumping him on the nose.

The old demon panicked: "Brothers! Bad business! That fellow has come in the door!"

The fiends, great and small, were so startled that one and all they seized rakes and brooms and rushed forward to swat the fly. The Great Sage couldn't help himself—he laughed out loud.

Now, it was ill-advised of him to laugh. That laugh let out his true face, and the Third Great King leaped forward, seized him, and cried: "Brothers! We nearly let him fool us!"

The old demon said: "Worthy brother, who's fooling whom?"

The Third King said: "That little fiend who just reported—the one who answered our questions—he isn't Little Wind-Chaser. He's Sun the Pilgrim himself! He must have run into the real Little Wind-Chaser and killed him somehow, then transformed himself to come deceive us!"

The Pilgrim panicked: "He's recognized me!" He felt himself all over and said to the old demon: "How am I Sun the Pilgrim? I'm Little Wind-Chaser! The Great King has mistaken me."

The old demon laughed: "Brother, he is Little Wind-Chaser. He reports for duty three times a day, right here in front of me. I know him." Then he asked: "Do you have a badge?"

"I do," said the Pilgrim.

He pulled aside his garment and brought out the badge. The old demon examined it and was all the more certain: "Brother, don't wrong him."

The Third King said: "Brother, you didn't see what I saw. Just now, when he dodged aside and laughed, I saw him flash a Thunder God's mouth. And when I grabbed him, he shifted into this appearance again." He called: "Little ones, bring rope!"

The leaders brought rope at once. The Third King wrestled the Pilgrim to the ground, hogtied him with four hooves gathered, lifted his shirt to look, and there, sure enough, was the body of the Bimawen. For the Pilgrim's nature was such that he knew seventy-two transformations: when he changed into birds, beasts, flowers, trees, vessels, or insects, his whole body went along with the change. But when he changed into a person, only his head and face changed; his body stayed the same—truly a coat of yellow fur, two red buttocks, and a tail.

The old demon looked and said: "It's Sun the Pilgrim's body with Little Wind-Chaser's face. It's him all right!" He called: "Little ones, bring out wine first, and pour the Third Great King a cup of triumph! Since we've caught Sun the Pilgrim, the Tang Priest is surely our meat to eat."

The Third King said: "Not so fast with the wine. Sun the Pilgrim is slippery—he knows the arts of escape. I'm afraid he'll get away. Have the little ones bring out the vase. Put Sun the Pilgrim inside it, and then we can drink at ease."

The old demon laughed: "Exactly! Exactly!" He dispatched thirty-six little fiends to open the storehouse and bring out the vase.

And how big was this vase? Only two feet and four inches tall. How could it take thirty-six men to carry? That vase was a treasure of yin and yang, the two qi. Inside it were the Seven Treasures, the Eight Trigrams, and the Twenty-Four Qi. It required thirty-six bearers, matching the number of the Heavenly Dipper Stars, before it could be moved.

Before long, the precious vase was brought out and set outside the third gate. They wiped it clean, lifted the lid, untied the Pilgrim's bonds, stripped off his clothes, and—wafted by the immortal breath within the vase—with a swoosh he was sucked inside. The lid was clamped down, the seal pasted on, and they went off to drink, saying: "You monkey, now you're in our precious vase! Forget about the road to the Western Heaven! If you'd still worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures, you'd have to turn the wheel of rebirth and go be born all over again!"

The fiends, great and small, all laughed and went off to celebrate the triumph. Let us leave them for now.

Now the Great Sage, once inside the vase, found his body constricted small by the treasure. He simply transformed and squatted in the middle.

After a while it was still quite cool and shaded. He burst out laughing: "This demon has a great name but nothing real behind it! He goes about telling people that this vase dissolves a man into pus and blood in an hour and three quarters. At this rate of coolness, I could live in here seven or eight years with no trouble!"

Ha! The Great Sage did not know the true nature of that treasure. If a man was put inside and said nothing for a year, it would stay cool and shaded for a year. But the moment human speech was heard, fire would come. The Great Sage had not finished speaking when the entire vase filled with flames.

Fortunately, he had the skill: he sat in the middle, pinching the fire-avoiding sign, and was wholly unafraid. After half a watch, forty snakes bored out from all four sides and tried to bite him.

The Pilgrim swung his arms, grabbed them, and with all his strength squeezed—each snake snapped into two pieces, all forty making eighty.

A short while later, three fire dragons came forth and wound themselves around the Pilgrim, top and bottom, until he could hardly bear it. Panic seized him. "Other things I can manage," he said, "but these three fire dragons are too much. If I stay in here much longer, the fire will attack my heart. What then?"

He thought: "Let me stretch my body and push through—break the thing!" Marvelous Great Sage! He pinched the sign, recited a spell, and cried "Grow!" In an instant he grew a dozen-odd zhang tall. But the vase clung tight to his body and grew along with him. He shrank himself down, and the vase shrank right along.

The Pilgrim's heart went cold: "Hard! Hard! Hard! How can it grow when I grow, and shrink when I shrink? What's to be done?"

Before he could say more, his ankle bone began to hurt. He reached down to feel it—it had been softened by the fire! He groaned in anguish: "What's to be done? My ankle's been burned soft! I'll be a cripple!" He couldn't help the tears rolling down.

Truly:

Meeting demons, enduring torment, he thought of Sanzang; Facing disaster, in peril, he worried for the holy monk.

"Master!" he cried. "Years ago, when I turned to the faith, Guanyin persuaded me to do good and freed me from Heaven's punishment. With you I have toiled over mountain after mountain, subduing and destroying many a monster, winning over Bajie, taking in the Sha Monk. Through a thousand hardships, I hoped to witness the Western Paradise and attain the true fruit together with you. Who could have foreseen that today I would meet these vicious demons? Old Sun has stumbled into this place and lost my life, leaving you stranded halfway up the mountain, unable to go forward! It must be that my fame was too great in former days, and so this calamity has come upon me!"

In the midst of his grief, he suddenly remembered that years ago, on Snake-Coil Mountain, the Bodhisattva Guanyin had given him three life-saving hairs. He didn't know whether they were still there—he'd better search and see.

He reached all over his body, felt around, and there, at the back of his head, were three hairs, stiff and rigid. Joy leapt in him: "The hair all over my body is soft and fine, but these three are stiff as pikes. They must be the ones to save my life!"

He grit his teeth, bore the pain, plucked the hairs, blew on them with immortal breath, and cried "Change!" One became a diamond drill, one a bamboo strip, and one a cotton cord.

He bent the bamboo strip into a bow, threaded the drill with the cord, and set to work on the bottom of the vase—drilling with a rapid swish-swish until he'd bored a hole, letting in a gleam of light. "What luck! What luck!" he cried. "I can get out!"

He transformed and slipped out of his body-shape, and the vase turned cool again. How did it turn cool? Because he had drilled through it, the yin-yang breath had leaked out, and so it cooled.

Marvelous Great Sage! He gathered up his hairs, shrank his body, and changed into a tiny gnat, light as could be—fine as a thread of hair, long as an eyebrow. He crept out through the hole, but instead of fleeing, he flew straight up and perched on the old demon's head. The old demon was drinking wine when he suddenly set down his cup and said: "Third Brother, has Sun the Pilgrim dissolved by now?"

The Third King laughed: "Give it until this time!"

The old demon ordered them to bring up the vase. The thirty-six little fiends came to lift it, and the vase was much lighter. The little fiends scrambled to report: "Great King, the vase is light!"

"Nonsense!" the old demon barked. "The treasure embodies the full power of yin and yang—how could it be light?"

One bolder little fiend hauled the vase up and said: "Look—is this not lighter?"

The old demon lifted the lid and looked: inside, it was bright and clear through. He couldn't help crying out: "This vase is empty—empty!"

The Great Sage, perched on his head, couldn't resist calling out: "My son! Gone—gone!"

The demons heard and cried: "He's gone! He's gone!" Orders went out: "Shut the doors! Shut the doors!"

The Pilgrim gave his body a shake, gathered up his stolen clothes, revealed his true form, and bounded out of the cave.

He turned and cursed: "Don't be impudent, you demons! The vase is drilled through—won't hold anyone now! It's only fit for a piss-pot!"

Merry and boisterous, he rode his cloud and sped straight back to the Tang Priest. The elder was just then scooping up earth for incense and praying toward the heavens. The Pilgrim paused his cloud and listened to what the elder prayed.

The elder pressed his palms together and said to Heaven: "I pray to the immortals of the cloud and haze, to the Six Dings and Six Jias and all the heavenly gods. Protect my good disciple Sun Wukong, whose magic is vast and whose power knows no bounds."

Hearing these words, the Great Sage redoubled his effort. He gathered in his cloud-light, came forward, and called: "Master, I'm here!"

The elder held onto him: "Wukong, you've been toiling! You went far to scout the mountain and were gone so long—I was worried. What fortune or misfortune is there in this mountain, truly?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, on this trip of mine—first, the monks of the eastern lands have fate and a share of destiny; second, your merit and virtue are boundless; and third, you owe something to your disciple's magic powers!" He recounted in detail the whole affair: disguising himself as Wind-Chaser, falling into the vase, and escaping. "To see your honored face again today—I'm a man born twice over!"

The elder thanked him without end: "But did you not fight the demons?"

"I did not," said the Pilgrim.

"Then you can't guarantee me safe passage over this mountain?"

The Pilgrim, proud of spirit, cried: "How can you say I can't guarantee your passage?"

The elder said: "You haven't met them in a contest of victory and defeat. With things so unsettled, how dare I go forward?"

The Great Sage laughed: "Master, you are too inflexible. As the saying goes, 'A single thread makes no cord, and one hand claps no sound.' Those demons are three, and their little fiends are in the thousands. How do you expect old Sun alone to fight them?"

The elder said: "The few cannot match the many, and you'd be hard-pressed alone. Bajie and the Sha Monk also have their skills. Let them all go with you, and work together with one heart to sweep the mountain road clear and see me through."

The Pilgrim pondered: "Master's words are most reasonable. Sha Monk, you protect him; Bajie, you come with me."

The idiot panicked: "Brother, you've no eye for people! I'm big and clumsy, with no special skill. Walking, I just catch the wind. What good would I be going with you?"

"Brother," said the Pilgrim, "you may not have much skill, but you're still a person, after all. As the saying goes, even a fart adds to the wind—you'd lend me some courage."

Bajie said: "Very well, very well. Just don't play any tricks on me when the going gets rough."

The elder said: "Bajie, be careful. The Sha Monk and I will wait here."

The idiot roused his spirit, bounded with the Pilgrim on a wild wind, rode the clouds and mist, and leaped up onto the high mountain. When they reached the cave mouth, they found the doors shut tight, not a soul in sight.

The Pilgrim stepped forward, gripped his iron staff, and called out in a loud voice: "Demons, open up! Come out and fight old Sun!"

The little fiends inside reported. The old demon, his heart pounding, said: "For years they've said the monkey is fierce—the talk is no lie! He's the real thing!"

The Second Great King asked from beside: "Brother, what do you mean?"

The old demon said: "That Pilgrim came this morning disguised as Little Wind-Chaser and we couldn't tell him apart. Lucky for us, the Third Worthy Brother recognized him and we put him in the vase. But he used his tricks, drilled a hole through the vase, made off with his clothes, and now he's outside challenging us! Who dares to go out and fight the first round?"

Not a single one answered. He asked again, and again no one answered—all playing deaf and dumb.

The old demon flew into a rage: "We've made a name for ourselves on the great western road, and for Sun the Pilgrim to slight us like this—if I don't go out and face him in battle, our reputation will sink. Let me risk this old life of mine and fight him three rounds! If I can last three rounds, the Tang Priest is ours to eat. If I can't, then we'll shut the doors and let him pass."

He put on his armor and went out the door.

The Pilgrim and Bajie watched from beside the gate. What a monster he was! Just look:

Iron brow and copper head, he wore a precious helm, Its plume dancing wildly, bright and gleaming. His eyes flashed like lightning, twin lights ablaze; His temples flew with sunset colors. Claws like silver, sharp and pointed, Saw teeth like chisels, close and even. Golden armor on his body, not a seam to be seen, A dragon sash at his waist, finely wrought. In his hand a steel blade, bright and gleaming— A hero fierce, rare in all the world!

With one shout like a thunderclap, he demanded: "Who is it that knocks at the door?"

The Great Sage turned and said: "It is your Grandpa Sun, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven!"

The old demon laughed: "You're Sun the Pilgrim? You brazen monkey! I never provoked you—why do you come challenging at my gate?"

The Pilgrim said: "Where there's wind, waves rise; where there's no tide, the water stays still. If you hadn't provoked me, would I have come seeking you? It's because you and your pack of foxes and hounds have banded together to scheme after my master's flesh that I've come here to deal with you."

The old demon said: "Coming at my door with all this bluster—are you looking to fight?"

"Exactly," said the Pilgrim.

The old demon said: "Don't be so cocky! If I were to muster my demon troops, set out a battle formation, wave banners and beat drums, and fight you in full array, it would look as though I were a home-body tiger bullying you. I'll fight you one on one—no seconds allowed!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim called: "Zhu Bajie, step aside! Let's see what he can do to old Sun!" The idiot ducked out of the way.

The old demon said: "Come here. First be a post for me—let me put all my strength into hacking your bald pate three times. If you can take it, I'll let your Tang Priest pass. If you can't, bring your Tang Priest here posthast, and I'll make a meal of him!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Demon! If you've got paper and pen in your cave, bring them out and let's draw up a contract. From this day forward, even if you chop until next year, I won't take you seriously!"

The old demon braced himself, planted his feet in a T-stance, raised his blade with both hands, and brought it crashing down on the Great Sage's crown. There was a great CRACK—but the Pilgrim's scalp wasn't even red.

The old demon was astounded: "What a hard head this monkey has!"

The Great Sage laughed: "You don't know old Sun! Listen:

Born with a copper head and iron skull, In all the world, in heaven and earth, there is none like it. Axe and hammer cannot crack it; In my youth I entered Lord Lao Zi's furnace. The Four Star Officers oversaw the work, The Twenty-Eight Mansions put in their labor. Boiled in water time and again, it would not break; All around, plate-sinews were laid on thick. The Tang Priest still feared it might not hold, And bound it with a purple-gold band to be sure!"

The old demon said: "Monkey, enough of your big talk! Watch this second blade—it won't spare your life!"

The Pilgrim said: "Let's see—it'll be the same kind of chop, won't it?"

The old demon said: "Monkey, you don't know this blade:

Forged in the crucible of gold and fire, Tempered by divine skill through a hundred refinements. Its edge follows the Three Strategies, Its temper obeys the Six Tactics. Slim as a fly's tail, Supple as a white python's waist. Raised in the mountains, clouds roll and surge; Plunged in the sea, waves tower and roar. Polished beyond counting, Searred and stoked through hundreds of ordeals. Worn in deep mountains, in ancient caves, It has won its laurels on every field of battle! Set against your monk's skull— One stroke, and you're two gourds!"

The Great Sage laughed: "This demon has no eye! He takes old Sun for a gourd-head! Very well, since you missed and missed again, chop once more and let's see what happens."

The old demon raised his blade and chopped again. The Great Sage met the blow, and CRACK—CRACK—the head split into two halves. The Great Sage rolled on the ground, and there were two of him.

The demon was thrown into a panic and pressed down his blade.

Zhu Bajie saw it from a distance and laughed: "The old demon does a fine chopping job! Aren't there four of us now?"

The old demon pointed at the Pilgrim: "I heard you knew the art of dividing your body—how dare you use such a trick in front of me!"

The Great Sage said: "What dividing art?"

The old demon said: "Why is it that when I chopped you the first time you didn't move, but this time one chop makes two of you?"

The Great Sage laughed: "Demon, don't you be afraid. Chop me ten thousand times and I'll give you twenty thousand men!"

The old demon said: "You monkey—you can only divide, not recombine. If you've got the skill to recombine into one, then hit me with your staff."

The Great Sage said: "No lies now! You were to chop three times and only chopped twice. Now let me hit you once. If I hit you with even half a staff, my name isn't Sun!"

"Exactly, exactly," said the old demon.

Marvelous Great Sage! He drew his two halves together, rolled once, and was one body again. He whipped out his cudgel and brought it crashing down on the demon's head. The old demon raised his blade to block: "Brazen monkey, no manners! What kind of mourning staff is that, coming to my door to strike people?"

The Great Sage bellowed: "If you ask about this staff of mine, its name is known in heaven above and earth below!"

The old demon said: "How is its name known?"

The Pilgrim said:

"This staff is forged of nine-times refined iron, By Lord Lao Zi's own hand in the furnace fired. King Yu obtained it and called it the Divine Treasure, To fix and prove the four seas and eight rivers. In its core the stars and constellations lie hid, Both ends are banded with plates of gold. Dense patterns cover it, ghost and god aghast; Its upper end bears dragon motifs and phoenix script. Its name is the Numinous Yang Staff, Deep hidden in the sea's storehouse, seen by none. Once shaped, it can change and soar on high, Wafting five-hued clouds of rosy light. Old Sun, his Way attained, took it to his mountain home; Its transformations past counting, its wonders proven true. One moment thick as a great vat, Then fine as a thread of iron. Thick as the Southern Peak, fine as a needle— Long or short, it changes as my heart desires. Lightly raised, it stirs up colored clouds; Brightly flying, it darts like lightning. Cool breaths stream from it, biting cold, Strip on strip of killing mist hangs in the air. Subduing dragons, conquering tigers, it follows me close; From heaven's edge to sea's corner, I've wandered everywhere. With this staff I made havoc in the Heavenly Palace, Scattered the Peach Banquet with my might. The Heavenly King fought me but could not win; Nezha faced me but could not hold the field. Staff struck all the gods, none dared to hide; A hundred thousand heavenly troops fled in rout. The Thunder Guard protected the Lingxiao Hall— I flew up and battered the Hall of Brilliant Light. The court ministers were all aghast; The imperial guards were thrown into turmoil. I raised my staff and overturned the Dipper Palace, Turned and shattered the South Pole Court. The Golden Gate Emperor of

Heaven saw the staff was fierce, And summoned the Tathagata to come meet me. Victory and defeat in war are as they are— No pleading when you're trapped in hardship and peril. I served my full five hundred years, Till the Bodhisattva of the South Sea persuaded me. There is a monk in the Great Tang, Who swore a great vow to the Heavens: To free the ghosts in the City of the Unjustly Dead, And seek the scriptures at the Spirit Mountain assembly. The western road is beset with demons, And travel is far from easy. Knowing my iron staff has no peer under heaven, They begged me to be their companion on the way. When evil demons meet it, they go to the shades of death, Flesh turns to red dust, bone turns to flour. Everywhere the demons die beneath this staff, By the tens of thousands, past all counting. In heaven above it smashed the Dipper-Bull Palace, Below it crushed the Hall of King Yama. It once chased off heavenly generals and the Nine Luminaries; In the underworld it beat the judgment-summoning clerk. Dropped from mid-air, it shakes the mountains and rivers, More terrible than the sword of the New Year's God. It is with this staff that I protect the Tang Priest, And have beaten every demon under heaven!"

Hearing this, the demon trembled, but staking his life he raised his blade and struck. The Monkey King, laughing, brought up his iron staff to meet it. The two of them first sparred at the cave mouth, then leaped up and fought in mid-air. What a battle this was!

The Heaven-River-fixing Divine Treasure Staff, A staff called As-You-Will, highest in all the world. The demon chief, boasting his skill, grew enraged, His great blade raised, his magic power proud. Outside the gate, their struggle might be reckoned near; In mid-air, their duel allows no mercy!

One, following his heart, changes his face; The other, on the spot, grows tall his waist. They fight till the sky is thick with clouds, And mist rolls over all the fields. The one, time and again, means to eat Sanzang; The other, with all his magic, guards the Tang. All because the Buddha passed the scriptures down, And evil battles good with bitter hate.

The old demon and the Great Sage fought more than twenty bouts, neither besting the other. Now Bajie, watching from below, saw that the two were at the height of combat and couldn't resist. He snatched up his rake, rode the wind, leaped into the air, and brought the rake smashing down on the demon's face.

The demon panicked—not knowing that Bajie was the type who had more front than back, all bluster and false ferocity. He saw that long snout and great ears, that hard grip and fearsome rake, and he was sure he'd lost. He dropped his blade and fled.

The Great Sage shouted: "After him! After him!" The idiot, emboldened by victory, raised his nail-rake and chased the demon down the slope.

The old demon saw him closing in. On the slope he stopped, faced the wind, shook himself, and revealed his true form: his great mouth yawning wide, he meant to swallow Bajie.

Bajie was terrified. He ducked into the grass and hid, heedless of thorns and brambles, heedless of scrapes and cuts, cowering in the undergrowth, listening for the clapper.

Then the Pilgrim came up. The demon opened his mouth to swallow him too, but this was exactly what the Pilgrim wanted. He shrank his iron cudgel, went forward to meet him, and was swallowed in one gulp by the old demon.

The idiot, hiding in the grass, grumbled and complained: "That Bimawen doesn't know when to quit! The demon comes to eat you, and you don't run—you go and meet him! Swallowed into a belly today, still a monk, but by tomorrow you'll be nothing but a great turd!"

The demon, having won, went back to his cave. The idiot crawled out of the grass and sneaked back the way he'd come.

Now Sanzang was on the mountainside with the Sha Monk, watching and hoping, when Bajie came running up, panting hard.

Sanzang was startled: "Bajie, why are you in such a state? Where is Wukong?"

The idiot wept and wailed: "My elder brother was swallowed by the demon in one gulp!"

When Sanzang heard this, he fell to the ground in a faint. After a long while he came to, stamping his feet and pounding his chest: "Disciple! I thought you were skilled at subduing demons and would lead me to the Western Heaven to see the Buddha. How could I know you'd die at the hands of this monster today! Oh, the bitterness! Oh, the bitterness! All the merits and labors of my disciples are turned to dust and ashes!" The elder grieved beyond measure.

And look at that idiot—he didn't try to comfort his master. Instead he called: "Sha Monk, bring the luggage here. Let's you and me divide it up."

"Divide what, Second Brother?" asked the Sha Monk.

"Divide it up, and each of us goes his own way," said Bajie. "You go back to the Flowing Sands River and eat people again. I'll go back to Gao Family Village and visit my wife. We'll sell the white horse and buy the master a coffin for his funeral."

The elder, hearing this, gasped for breath and cried out to high Heaven, weeping aloud. But let us leave him for now.

The old demon, having swallowed the Pilgrim, thought he had scored a triumph. He returned to his cave, where the demons came to ask how the battle had gone.

"Caught one," said the old demon.

The Second Great King was pleased: "Brother, who did you catch?"

"Sun the Pilgrim," said the old demon.

"Where is he caught?"

"I swallowed him in one gulp, into my belly."

The Third Great King was shocked: "Big Brother! I didn't get to tell you—Sun the Pilgrim isn't fit to eat!"

But the Great Sage, inside the belly, called out: "Oh, I'm quite fit to eat! Good against hunger—I'll never go hungry again!"

The little fiends panicked: "Great King, bad news! Sun the Pilgrim is talking inside your belly!"

The old demon said: "Let him talk! If I had the skill to eat him, don't I have the skill to deal with him? You lot, go heat some salt water. I'll pour it down and vomit him up, and then we'll fry him slowly and eat him with wine."

The little fiends duly mixed half a basin of salt water. The old demon drank it down in one go, bent over, and retched mightily. But the Great Sage had taken root inside his belly and didn't budge. The demon retched and retched till he was dizzy and his eyes swam, his gall nearly bursting—but the Pilgrim didn't move an inch.

The old demon caught his breath and called: "Sun the Pilgrim, won't you come out?"

"Not yet! I'm just fine in here!" said the Pilgrim.

"Why won't you come out?"

"You demon, you have no understanding," said the Pilgrim. "I've been a monk for a long time, and my life is simple. Now that autumn is cool, I still wear only a thin cassock. But in this belly of yours it's nice and warm, and there's no draft. Let me winter here, and then I'll come out."

The little fiends heard this and said: "Great King, Sun the Pilgrim wants to winter inside your belly!"

The old demon said: "If he wants to winter here, I'll sit in meditation and use the transport method—I won't eat all winter, and I'll starve that Bimawen to death!"

The Great Sage said: "My son, you don't know the first thing about it! Old Sun, protecting the Tang Priest on his scripture quest, passed through Guangdong and brought along a folding pot. I'll cook up your innards—liver, intestines, lungs, and all—and eat them bit by bit. That'll keep me in provisions clear through to the Qing Ming Festival!"

The Second Great King was appalled: "Brother, this monkey can actually do it!"

The Third King said: "Brother, well and good if he eats the innards—but where will he set up his pot?"

The Pilgrim said: "Right on the three-pronged bone—that's the perfect spot."

The Third King said: "Bad news! If he sets up a pot and lights a fire, the smoke will get up into the nasal passages—won't he sneeze?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "No problem! Old Sun will thrust the gold-banded cudgel up through the crown of his head and bore a hole. It'll serve as a skylight, and a chimney to boot!"

The old demon heard this. Though he said he wasn't afraid, his heart quailed. He put on a brave front and called: "Brothers, don't fear! Bring me my medicinal wine. I'll drink a few cups and poison the monkey to death!"

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "When old Sun made havoc in the Heavenly Palace five hundred years ago, I ate Lord Lao Zi's pills, the Jade Emperor's wine, the Queen Mother's peaches, phoenix marrow and dragon liver—what haven't I tasted? What kind of medicinal wine dares to poison me?"

The little fiends duly brought two pots of medicinal wine, filled a cup to the brim, and handed it to the old demon.

The old demon took it in hand, but the Great Sage inside could already smell the bouquet. "Don't let him drink it!" Marvelous Great Sage! He twisted his head and turned it into a great funnel-shape, opening wide below the demon's throat. As the demon gulped, the Pilgrim intercepted and swallowed the wine. The demon gulped a second cup—the Pilgrim intercepted and swallowed again. Seven or eight cups in a row, all of them he drank down.

The old demon set down his cup: "I'm not drinking any more. This wine, when I have a couple of cups, makes my belly burn like fire. But I've had seven or eight now, and my face isn't even red!"

Now the Great Sage couldn't hold much liquor. Having drunk seven or eight cups, he grew tipsy inside the belly and began to run riot. He propped himself up on his arms, did flat-back stunts, kicked flying kicks, grabbed the liver and swung on it like a swing, stood on his hands like a dragonfly, and tumbled and capered without cease. The demon, racked with agony, fell to the ground.

Whether he lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 76

The Mind-Spirit Resides in Its Dwelling, the Demon Returns to Its Nature; The Wood Mother Together Subdues the Monster's True Form

The story continues: The Great Sage Sun was carrying on his mischief inside the old demon's belly for a while, until the demon fell flat in the dust, without a sound or a breath. Since he said nothing, the Pilgrim thought he must be dead, and let go a little. The demon's breath came back, and he cried: "Greatly Merciful, Greatly Compassionate, Great Sage Equal to Heaven Bodhisattva!"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he said: "Son, don't waste your effort. Save a few words and just call me Grandpa Sun."

The demon, clinging to his life, actually cried: "Grandpa! Grandpa! It was my fault! By a slip and a blunder I swallowed you, and now you turn and torment me. I beg the Great Sage to show mercy—pity the wish of even an ant to live—and spare my life. I will see your master carried over the mountain."

Though the Great Sage was a hero, he was very much concerned for the Tang Priest's progress. When he saw the demon pleading and flattering, his heart turned to mercy. He called: "Demon, I'll spare you—how will you carry my master?"

The old demon said: "I've no gold or silver, no pearls or jade, agate or coral, lapis lazuli or amber or tortoise shell—no rare treasures to give you. But my three brothers will carry a rattan sedan chair and bear your master over this mountain."

The Pilgrim laughed: "If you'll carry him in a sedan chair, that's better than any treasure. Open your mouth, and I'll come out."

The old demon opened his mouth wide. But the Third King came close and whispered to the old demon: "Big Brother, when he comes out, snap your mouth shut and chew the monkey to bits, then swallow him. That'll be the end of his tormenting you."

Now the Pilgrim heard this from inside, and he didn't come out first. Instead he thrust out his gold-banded cudgel to test him. Sure enough, the demon bit down—CRACK!—and shattered his front teeth.

The Pilgrim pulled his cudgel back: "Fine demon, am I! I was sparing your life and coming out, and you turn around to bite me, wanting my life! I won't come out! I'll torment you to death right here! I won't come out! I won't come out!"

The old demon grumbled at the Third King: "Brother, you're playing your own family false! If you'd just let him come out and be done with it—but you told me to bite him. He didn't get bitten, but my gums are split and aching—how did this come about?"

When the Third King saw the old demon blaming him, he tried a provocation. He called out in a loud, stern voice: "Sun the Pilgrim! Your name rings like thunder in my ears—they say you showed your might outside the South Gate of Heaven and flaunted your power beneath the Lingxiao Hall. Now, on the road to the Western Heaven, subduing demons and binding monsters—you turn out to be a petty monkey!"

The Pilgrim said: "How am I petty?"

The Third King said: "A true hero is a guest for a thousand li, traveling ten thousand to spread his name. Come out and fight me—then you're a hero! How can you skulk inside a man's belly doing mischief? If that's not petty, what is?"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he thought to himself: "True, true, true! If I tore his intestines apart and ripped his liver to pieces and tormented this demon to death, what difficulty would that be? But it would ruin my reputation. Very well! Very well! Open your mouth, and I'll come out and fight you. Only, your cave mouth is too narrow for weapons—we'd better go to a wide place."

When the Third King heard this, he dispatched his demons, great and small—more than thirty thousand of them, all bearing sharp weapons—out of the cave. They deployed in a Three Talents formation and waited for the Pilgrim to emerge, ready to swarm him all at once.

The Second King supported the old demon and led him outside, calling: "Sun the Pilgrim! Come out, hero! Here is your battlefield—come and fight!"

The Great Sage, inside the belly, heard the cawing of crows and magpies, the crying of cranes and the whistling of wind outside, and knew it was an open place. He thought: "If I don't go out, I break my word. If I do go out, this demon has the face of a man and the heart of a beast. First he said he'd carry my master, then he tried to lure me out to bite me. Now he's called up his troops. Very well—very well. I'll give him a two-way solution: I'll go out, but I'll leave a root behind in his belly."

He turned his hand, plucked a single hair from his tail, blew on it with immortal breath, and cried "Change!" It became a cord, as fine as a hair but forty zhang long. He threaded the cord out, and when it met the wind it thickened. He tied one end to the demon's heart and liver with a slip knot—a knot that didn't hurt unless pulled, but pulled tight, sent pain shooting through him.

Holding the other end, he laughed: "When I go out, if he carries my master, fine. If he doesn't, if he starts waving swords and spears, I won't waste time fighting him. I'll just yank this cord, and it'll be as though I'm still inside his belly!"

Then he shrank his body small and crawled outward. He reached the throat and saw the demon's great square mouth gaping wide, upper and lower teeth ranked like sharp blades. He thought: "Bad! Bad! If I go out through the mouth pulling this cord, and it hurts him, he'll bite down—won't that snap the cord? I'd better go out where he has no teeth." Marvelous Great Sage! He threaded the cord along, crawled from the upper palate forward, and came out through the demon's nostril.

The old demon's nose tickled, and with a great "Achoo!" he sneezed the Pilgrim out. The Pilgrim caught the wind, arched his back, and grew to three zhang tall, one hand holding the cord, the other gripping his iron cudgel.

The old demon, not knowing any better, saw him out and raised his steel blade to strike at his face. The Great Sage met him with his iron cudgel in one hand.

Then the Second King came with his spear, and the Third King with his halberd, and they all swarmed him headlong. The Great Sage let go of the cord, stowed his cudgel, leaped up on his cloud and flew—not because he feared the crowd of little demons, but because with them swarming around, he couldn't work. He bounded clear of the camp, landed on a spacious mountaintop, and hauled on the cord with all his might. The old demon's heart seized with pain. He jerked upward, and the Great Sage yanked him downward.

The little fiends saw from a distance and cried: "Great King, don't provoke him! Let him go! This monkey is out of season—Qing Ming isn't here yet, but there he is flying a kite!"

[Translator's note: Qing Ming is the tomb-sweeping festival in early April, when kite-flying is traditional. The little demons compare the Pilgrim's rope to a kite string.]

When the Great Sage heard this, he gave a mighty tug, and the old demon fell from mid-air—crashing down like a spinning spindle—and plowed into the hard yellow earth at the foot of the slope, making a pit two feet

deep.

The Second King and the Third King hastened to bring their clouds down, came forward, and seized hold of the cord. They knelt at the foot of the slope and pleaded: "Great Sage! We thought you were an immortal of great magnanimity, but you turn out to be one with the belly of a mouse and the intestines of a snail! We truly meant to lure you out and fight you face to face—we never expected you to tie a rope around our brother's heart!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "You pack of demons, utterly shameless! The first time, you lured me out to bite me. The second time, you lured me out to array troops against me. With these tens of thousands of demon soldiers fighting one of me, there's no justice in it. I'll haul him along! Haul him along to see my master!"

The demons all kowtowed: "Great Sage, have mercy! Spare our lives! We will carry the Venerable Master over the mountain!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "If you want your lives, just take a knife and cut the cord."

The old demon said: "Grandpa! If we cut the cord on the outside, the part on the inside is tied to my heart, and my throat feels scratchy and sick. What are we to do?"

The Pilgrim said: "In that case, open your mouth. Let me go back inside and untie the cord."

The old demon panicked: "If you go back in, you won't come out again! That'll be trouble! Trouble!"

The Pilgrim said: "I have the skill to undo the cord from the outside. If I undo it, will you truly carry my master?"

The old demon said: "Untie it and we'll carry him. We would never dare lie."

The Great Sage was satisfied that they were telling the truth. He gave his body a shake, and gathered up the hair. The demon's heart stopped hurting.

This was the Great Sage Sun's trick of camouflage: he used a hair to tie the demon's heart; when he gathered up the hair, it no longer hurt.

The three demons rose to their feet and thanked him: "Great Sage, please return. Tell the Tang Priest to pack his luggage, and we'll bring the sedan chair to carry him."

The demons laid down their weapons and all returned to the cave.

The Great Sage gathered up his cord and flew back east of the mountain. From far off he saw the Tang Priest rolling on the ground weeping, while Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk had opened the bundles and were dividing the luggage.

The Pilgrim sighed inwardly: "Needless to say, that idiot must have told Master I was eaten by the demon. Master couldn't bear to lose me and is weeping, and that idiot is dividing the goods to split up. Huh! I'm not sure that's it, though—let me call out and see."

He brought his cloud down and called: "Master!"

When the Sha Monk heard this, he grumbled at Bajie: "You're a coffin-stand, you are—nothing but bad luck for people! My elder brother wasn't dead, but you said he was, and here you are up to this business! And he's calling from over there!"

Bajie said: "I saw with my own eyes the demon swallow him in one gulp. It must be an unlucky day—the monkey's ghost is coming back to haunt us."

The Pilgrim came up, grabbed Bajie by the face, and gave him a slap that sent him staggering: "You lout! What ghost am I haunting?"

The idiot clutched his face: "Brother, the demon really did eat you—how are you alive again?"

The Pilgrim said: "You worthless bag of pus! He ate me, so I grabbed his intestines and squeezed his lungs, then threaded a rope through his heart and pulled till he was in such agony that one and all they kowtowed and begged for mercy. I spared his life. They're bringing a sedan chair to carry Master over the mountain!"

When Sanzang heard this, he scrambled to his feet and bowed to the Pilgrim: "Disciple, you've suffered so! If I had believed Wuneng's words, I'd be done for!"

The Pilgrim swung his fist at Bajie and cursed: "You chaff-swilling idiot, utterly useless, no good for anything! Master, don't be upset—they're coming to carry you." The Sha Monk was much ashamed and hastened to cover his embarrassment, packing up the luggage and saddling the horse. They waited by the road. Let us leave them for now.

Now the three demon kings led their host of fiends back to the cave. The Second King said: "Brother, I thought Sun the Pilgrim would have nine heads and eight tails, but he turns out to be such a tiny monkey! You shouldn't have swallowed him. If you'd just fought him, he could never have matched us! With these tens of thousands of demons in the cave, we could have drowned him in spit. But you swallowed him, and he worked his magic inside you and made you suffer. How could you compete with him? That talk of carrying the Tang Priest was all false—we only said it to save your life, to lure him out. We will not carry the Tang Priest!"

The old demon said: "Worthy Brother, what's the reason you won't carry him?"

The Second King said: "Give me three thousand little demons. I'll set out a battle formation and I'll capture that monkey-head!"

The old demon said: "Never mind three thousand—take the whole camp if you like. Just capture him, and we'll all share the credit."

The Second King mustered three thousand little demons and marched to the great road, where he deployed them. He sent a blue-flag courier back and forth to report, and challenged: "Sun the Pilgrim! Come out and fight the Second Great King, your grandpa!"

When Bajie heard this, he laughed: "Brother, as the saying goes, you can't lie to the locals. Here they are, pulling tricks and playing deceptions! You said you'd subdued the demons and they'd bring a sedan chair to carry Master, but now they're out challenging to battle. What gives?"

The Pilgrim said: "The old demon I already subdued. He doesn't dare show his face—when he hears the word 'Sun,' his head hurts. This must be the Second Great King, who won't accept the arrangement and wants to fight. I say, brother, these demons are three brothers, with such loyalty. We three brothers too—have we no loyalty? I've subdued the First Great King. The Second Great King comes out. You go and fight him—there's no shame in it."

Bajie said: "What's there to fear? Let me go fight him!"

The Pilgrim said: "If you want to go, then go."

Bajie laughed: "Brother, I'll go, but lend me that rope of yours."

The Pilgrim said: "What for? You can't crawl into his belly, you can't tie a rope around his heart—what use would it be?"

Bajie said: "I want to tie it around my waist as a life-line. You and the Sha Monk hold the other end. Send me out to fight him. If it looks like I'm winning, you let go, and I'll capture him. If it looks like I'm losing, you pull me back. Don't let him drag me off."

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "Here's a chance to play a trick on the idiot!" He tied the rope around Bajie's waist and sent him out to fight.

The idiot raised his nail-rake and ran up the hillside, shouting: "Demon, come out! Fight your Pig Grandpa!"

The blue-flag courier reported hastily: "Great King, a long-snouted, big-eared monk is coming!"

The Second King came out of the camp, saw Bajie, and without a word thrust his spear at his face. The idiot raised his rake and met him.

The two of them joined battle on the hillside. After seven or eight bouts, the idiot's arms went soft. He couldn't hold off the demon. He turned his head and called: "Brother, bad news! Pull the life-line! Pull the life-line!"

On this side, when the Great Sage heard this, he tossed the rope loose and let it fly. The idiot, beaten, turned to run. The rope had dragged along fine while he charged forward, but now that it was slack and he turned back, it tangled his feet. He tripped and fell, got up and fell again. At first he merely stumbled, but then he went face-first into the dirt.

The demon caught up, uncoiled his trunk like a flood dragon, and wrapped Bajie up by the waist with one curl of his nose. Victorious, he returned to the cave. The fiends sang triumphal songs and swarmed in after him.

When Sanzang saw this from the foot of the slope, he was angry with the Pilgrim: "Wukong, no wonder Wuneng curses you for dead! You brothers have no love for one another—you're full of jealousy and spite! He called for you to pull the life-line. Why didn't you pull it? And you threw the rope away! Now he's been captured—what are we to do?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, you're too partial, too biased! When old Sun was captured, you didn't fret at all—I was just a life to be thrown away. But the moment the idiot gets caught, you blame me. Let him suffer a little—that's the price of fetching scriptures."

Sanzang said: "Disciple, when you went, how could I not worry? But I thought of your transformations and was sure you wouldn't come to harm. That idiot, though, is big and clumsy, and he can't somersault about. If he goes, luck is thin and danger thick. Go and save him."

The Pilgrim said: "Master, don't complain. Let me go save him."

He bounded up the mountain, thinking darkly: "That idiot cursed me dead. I won't give him an easy time! Let me follow and see how the demon handles him. Let him suffer a while first, then I'll save him." He pinched the sign, recited the spell, shook his body, and turned into a tiny gnat. He flew after and perched on the root of Bajie's ear, traveling with the demon into the cave.

The Second King led his three thousand little fiends, with much blowing of horns and beating of drums, to the cave mouth, where they set up camp. He himself dragged Bajie inside and said: "Brother, I caught one!"

The old demon said: "Bring him here, let me see."

He loosened his trunk and dumped Bajie on the ground: "Here he is."

The old demon said: "This one's no use."

When Bajie heard this, he said: "Great King, if I'm no use, let me go. Go catch someone useful."

The Third King said: "He may be no use, but he's the Tang Priest's disciple Zhu Bajie. Tie him up and soak him in the pond out back. When his hair's soaked loose, split him open, salt him down, and dry him in the sun. We'll eat him with wine on rainy days."

Bajie was terrified: "Done for! Done for! I've run into a pickle-peddling monster!" The fiends all set to at once, hogtyed the idiot, and hauled and carried him to the pond, shoved him in, and all went away.

The Great Sage flew up and looked. The idiot lay floating face-up, snout pointing skyward, half-submerged, half-afloat, mouth puffing. It was a comical sight—he looked just like a great black lotus pod, stripped of its seeds by the frost in the eighth or ninth month.

The Great Sage looked at him and felt both annoyance and pity. "What's to be done?" he thought. "He too is a person destined for the Longhua Assembly. But I can't stand how he's always dividing the luggage to split up, and how he keeps egging Master on to recite the Band-Tightening Spell and torture me. I heard from the Sha Monk that he's been hoarding some private money. I wonder if it's true. Let me give him a scare and see."

Marvelous Great Sage! He flew close to his ear, disguised his voice, and called: "Zhu Wuneng! Zhu Wuneng!"

Bajie panicked: "Bad luck! My name Wuneng was given by Guanyin Bodhisattva. Since I joined the Tang Priest, they've called me Bajie. How does anyone here know I'm called Wuneng?"

The idiot couldn't resist asking: "Who's calling my dharma name?"

The Pilgrim said: "It's me."

The idiot said: "Who are you?"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm a soul-reaper from the underworld."

The idiot was alarmed: "Official, where do you come from?"

The Pilgrim said: "I've been sent by the Fifth King of Hell to fetch you."

The idiot said: "Official, please go back. Tell the Fifth King of Hell that my elder brother Sun Wukong is a great friend of his. Ask him to give me a day's grace. Let him come tomorrow."

The Pilgrim said: "Nonsense! When Yama decrees death at the third watch, who dares keep a man till the fourth! Come with me now, or I'll put the rope on you and drag you along!"

The idiot said: "Official, show some mercy anywhere you can. Look at my face—do I look like I'll live much longer? I'm dead for certain. Just give me one day. The demon will soon capture my master and the others. We'll all have a reunion, and then we'll settle our accounts together."

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "Very well. My warrant has thirty names on it, all in this area. Let me summon them, and that'll give you a day's delay. But have you any traveling money? Give me some."

Bajie said: "Alas! What traveling money does a monk have?"

The Pilgrim said: "If you have no money, I'll put the rope on you! Come with me!"

The idiot panicked: "Official, don't put the rope on me! I know your rope—it's called the Soul-Chasing Rope. Once it goes on, a man stops breathing. I have some! I have a little, but not much."

The Pilgrim said: "Where is it? Bring it out, quick!"

Bajie said: "Pitiful, pitiful! Since I became a monk, when pious folk have given alms to the monks, they saw I had a big appetite and gave me a little more than the others. I took it and saved it. In bits and pieces it came to five mace of silver. It was hard to keep in scraps, so when we passed through a city I asked a silversmith to melt it into one piece. The scoundrel had the nerve to steal a few candareens of it, so all I got was one piece of four mace and six candareens. You take it."

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "This idiot doesn't even have pants to wear—where did he hide it? Hey! Where's your silver?"

Bajie said: "I stuffed it in my left ear. I'm tied up and can't reach it. You'll have to take it yourself."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he reached into the ear and pulled it out. Sure enough, it was a saddle-shaped silver ingot, weighing a good four mace and five or six candareens. Holding it in his hand, he couldn't help bursting into loud laughter.

The idiot recognized the Pilgrim's voice and cursed from the water: "Murderous Bimawen! At a pass like this, you still come to extort money!"

The Pilgrim laughed again: "You chaff-swilling lout! Old Sun protects the Master, heaven knows how many hardships I've endured, and here you are hoarding private money!"

Bajie said: "What a face! What private money? It was scraped together from what people gave me for my teeth. I couldn't bear to spend it on food—I saved it to buy a bolt of cloth for a shirt. And you frightened me out of it! You should give me some back."

The Pilgrim said: "Not a half-candareen will you get!"

Bajie cursed: "The ransom money's all yours—but at least save me!"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't rush. Let me save you." He pocketed the silver, returned to his true form, whipped out his iron cudgel, gathered the idiot to him, hauled him up by the feet, pulled him out of the water, and untied his bonds.

Bajie jumped up, stripped off his wet clothes, shook them, and draped them over himself, dripping: "Brother, let's go out the back door."

The Pilgrim said: "Going out the back door—is that what a man of ambition does? We go out the front." Bajie said: "My feet are numb from the tying. I can't run."

The Pilgrim said: "Follow me, quick."

Marvelous Great Sage! He swung his iron cudgel, unleashing a flurry of martial routines, and smashed his way out. The idiot, enduring his numbness, had no choice but to follow close. By the second gate they saw his nail-rake leaning against the wall. He stepped forward, shoved aside the little fiends, snatched up his rake, and began swinging, fighting his way out with the Pilgrim through three or four layers of gates. Heaven knows how many little fiends they killed.

When the old demon heard the commotion, he said to the Second King: "Fine captives! Fine captives! Look—Sun the Pilgrim's broken out Zhu Bajie and battered the fiends at the gates!"

The Second King leaped up, snatched his spear, and rushed out the door, cursing: "Brazen macaque! So insolent! How dare you slight us!"

When the Great Sage heard this, he stopped and stood. The demon gave him no chance to speak, but thrust his spear. The Pilgrim, being an expert, was in no hurry. He whipped out his iron cudgel and met the blow. The two of them fought at the cave gate. What a battle this was!

The Yellow-Tusked Old Elephant took human form, And swore brotherhood with the Lion King. Because the Great King brokered the match, They joined hearts to scheme to eat the Tang Priest. The Great Sage Equal to Heaven has magic vast, Aiding the right, destroying evil, he means to end the fiend. Bajie, unskilled, suffered the vicious blow; Wukong rescued him and marched out the gate. The demon king caught up, fierce and brave; Spear and staff crossed, each showing his skill. The one's spear came like a python threading through the wood, The other's staff rose like a dragon bursting from the sea. The dragon leaves the sea gate, clouds thick and dark; The python threads the forest trees, mists boiling up. Reckon it—they all fight for the Tang Monk, In bitter hatred, locked in combat, with no mercy.

When Bajie saw the Great Sage fighting the demon, he planted his rake on the hillside and didn't join in—he just stood there watching. The demon saw that the Pilgrim's cudgel was heavy, his techniques flawless, with no opening to exploit. He pushed his spear up to block, uncoiled his trunk, and made to coil it around the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim knew his trick. He gripped the gold-banded cudgel with both hands, raised it high, and the demon's trunk coiled around his waist and hips—but not his hands. And there was the Pilgrim, juggling and twirling his cudgel with both hands right on the tip of the demon's trunk, having a fine time.

Bajie saw this and beat his chest: "Huh! That demon has bad luck! When he caught me, the clumsy one, he caught my hands too, and I couldn't move. But when he catches the slippery one, he doesn't catch the hands! Those two hands of his are holding the cudgel—if he just thrusts it up the trunk, it'll hurt and make it run, and how can he hold on?"

The Pilgrim hadn't thought of this, but Bajie had taught him. He gave his cudgel a shake, made it small as an egg and a zhang long, and thrust it straight up the demon's nostril. The demon panicked—with a swoosh he let go of his trunk. The Pilgrim seized it with one hand, hauled forward with all his might, and the demon, hurting, came following step by step. Only then did Bajie dare come close, swinging his rake at the demon's haunches.

The Pilgrim said: "No good! No good! Those rake-tines are sharp—you might break the skin and draw blood. If Master sees it, he'll say we're killing creatures. Just use the handle to beat him."

The idiot dutifully raised the rake handle, taking a step and landing a blow each time. The Pilgrim led the demon by the trunk, and they were like two elephant-trainers, walking him down to the foot of the slope. Sanzang, straining his eyes in hope, saw the two of them coming, shouting and bustling along. He called: "Wujing, look—what is it that Wukong is leading?"

The Sha Monk saw and laughed: "Master, Eldest Brother is dragging the demon along by the nose. How delightfully satisfying!"

Sanzang said: "Good! Good! Such a big demon! Such a long nose! Ask him: if he's willing to carry us over the mountain in good cheer, spare him. Don't harm his life."

The Sha Monk hurried forward and called: "The Master says: if you truly carry him over the mountain, he orders us not to harm your life!"

When the demon heard this, he quickly knelt and mumbled assent—he'd been pulled by the nose so hard his speech was stuffed up, as though he had a terrible cold. He called: "Lord Tang, if you'll spare my life, we'll bring the sedan chair and carry you at once."

The Pilgrim said: "My master and I are men of peace and good faith. By your word, I'll spare your life. But bring the sedan chair quickly. If you change your mind again, we'll capture you, and there will be no second pardon!"

The demon got his hands free, kowtowed, and went.

The Pilgrim and Bajie went to see the Tang Priest and recounted the whole affair. Bajie was utterly ashamed, and at the foot of the slope he hung out his clothes to dry. They waited. Let us leave them for now.

The Second King, trembling, returned to the cave. Before he arrived, little fiends had already reported to the old demon and the Third King that the Second King had been dragged off by the nose. The old demon, frightened, was about to lead the whole host out when he saw the Second King returning alone. They brought him in and asked why he'd been released. The Second King told them of Sanzang's merciful and peaceful words. The demons looked at one another, none daring to speak.

The Second King said: "Brother, will you carry the Tang Priest?"

The old demon said: "Brother, what are you saying? Sun the Pilgrim is a monkey of broad humanity and righteousness. When he was in my belly, if he'd wanted my life, a thousand of me would have been killed. Just now, when he grabbed your nose, if he hadn't let you go but kept pulling, he'd have ripped the tip right off—how frightening! Hurry and arrange to carry the Tang Priest."

The Third King laughed: "Carry him! Carry him! Carry him!"

The old demon said: "Worthy Brother, you sound like you're still sulking. If you won't carry him, the two of us will."

The Third King laughed again: "Two elder brothers above, if the monk doesn't want us to carry him and just tries to slip past, that'll be his good fortune. But if he does want carrying—he won't know he's walking right into my Lure-the-Tiger-from-the-Mountain stratagem!"

The old demon said: "What is the Lure-the-Tiger-from-the-Mountain?"

The Third King said: "Now, muster the whole host of fiends in the cave. Select a thousand from ten thousand, a hundred from a thousand, sixteen from a hundred, and another thirty."

The old demon said: "Why sixteen and thirty both?"

The Third King said: "Thirty who know how to cook—give them fine rice, fine flour, bamboo shoots, tea buds, fragrant mushrooms, tofu, and wheat gluten. Have them go twenty or thirty li ahead, set up camps, and prepare tea and meals to entertain the Tang Priest."

The old demon said: "And the sixteen?"

The Third King said: "Eight to carry the sedan chair, eight to clear the road. We three brothers will escort him, seeing him on his way. Four hundred li to the west from here is my city. I have my own troops and horses waiting there. When we reach the city walls, thus and thus—and the Tang Priest and his disciples won't be able to help each other, front or rear. To capture the Tang Priest, it all hangs on those sixteen."

When the old demon heard this, he was overjoyed—as though wakened from a drunken stupor, as though roused from a dream. "Good! Good! Good!" he said.

He mustered the demons, first selecting thirty and giving them their provisions. Then he selected sixteen, who brought out a rattan sedan chair. They all went out the door, and he ordered the host: "Not one of you is to wander on the mountain! Sun the Pilgrim is a suspicious monkey. If he sees you coming and going, he'll grow suspicious and see through the plan."

The old demon led the host to the great road and called out: "Lord Tang, today is no inauspicious day. Please set out early and cross the mountain."

When Sanzang heard this, he said: "Wukong, who is it that calls me?"

The Pilgrim pointed: "Over there—it's the demon I subdued, come with a sedan chair to carry you."

Sanzang pressed his palms together and said to Heaven: "Good! Good! Were it not for my worthy disciple's skill, how could I ever get through?" He went straight forward and bowed to the demons: "Much indebted for your kindness. When my disciple and I fetch the scriptures and return east to Chang'an, I shall spread the word of your good deed."

The demons kowtowed: "Please mount the sedan chair, Venerable One."

Now the Tang Priest, with his mortal flesh and eyes, did not know it was a trap. And the Great Sage Sun, being a Golden Immortal of the Great Yi and of a loyal and upright nature, thought only that his capture and release had truly subdued the demons. How could he have expected that they all harbored different schemes? He didn't look closely, but followed his master's wishes. He had Bajie secure the bundles on the horse, and the Sha Monk follow close behind. The Pilgrim took his iron cudgel and went ahead to clear the road, watching for fortune and misfortune.

Eight demons lifted the sedan chair, and eight called out to clear the road in alternating voices. The three demon kings walked beside the chair rails. The master, happy and content, sat upright in the sedan chair as they climbed the high mountain and followed the great road.

On this journey, who could have known that joy would bring sorrow in its train? As the classic says: when peace reaches its extreme, misfortune returns. The season's fortune met the true Year Star, and the Mourning and Guest-Weeping Stars were ascendant.

That pack of demons, of one mind and purpose, served on left and right, attentive morning and night. At thirty li they served breakfast; at fifty li, another meal. Before dark they invited him to rest, and all along the road things were neat and orderly. Three meals a day, to his heart's content; a good bed each night, in comfort.

They traveled westward over four hundred li, and suddenly the city came into view. The Great Sage, holding his iron cudgel, was about a li ahead of the sedan chair. When he saw the city, the sight struck him down—he stumbled and couldn't get up.

You might think him bold—how could this sight so frighten him? It was because he saw that the city was full of evil aura. This is what he beheld:

Packed and clustered, demons and monsters; At all four gates, wolf spirits. Striped tigers served as overseers, White-faced fierce boars as commanders. Antlered stags carried documents and passes, Clever foxes patrolled the roads. Thousand-foot pythons paced the city walls, Ten-thousand-fathom serpents blocked the roads. Below the towers, gray wolves shouted commands; Before the dais, spotted leopards made human sounds. Those who waved flags and beat drums were all monsters; Those who watched the night and guarded the posts were all mountain spirits. Crafty hares opened the gates and plied their trades; Wild boars carried loads and ran their businesses. In former years it had been a kingdom of the heavenly court, But now it had become a city of tigers and wolves.

As the Great Sage stood in fear, he heard the wind whistling behind his ears. He turned his head quickly—and there was the Third King, raising a painted-shaft square-heaven halberd with both hands, bringing it crashing down on the Great Sage's head. The Great Sage scrambled to his feet and brought up his gold-banded cudgel to meet it. Each seething with rage, panting with fury, they fought without a word, teeth gritted, each determined to win.

Then the old demon gave the command, raised his steel blade, and brought it down on Bajie. Bajie, panicked, dropped the horse's reins, snatched up his rake, and charged forward, swinging wildly. The Second King came with his long spear, thrusting at the Sha Monk. The Sha Monk raised his demon-quelling staff and set

his stance to meet him. Three demon kings and three monks—one against one—fought on the mountaintop, each risking life and limb in bitter combat.

The sixteen little fiends, following their orders, each did his part. They seized the white horse and the bundles, surrounded the Tang Priest, lifted the sedan chair, and bore it straight to the city wall, calling: "The Great King has planned it, and the Tang Priest is captured!"

On the wall, the fiends great and small all ran down, flung open the city gates, and ordered every camp to furl its banners and silence its drums. No one was to shout or bang the gongs. "The Great King gave orders beforehand," they said. "Don't frighten the Tang Priest. He can't take fright—if he's frightened, his flesh turns sour and won't be fit to eat."

The fiends all rejoiced and welcomed the Tang Priest, bowing and bending to receive their master. They carried the Tang Priest in his sedan chair up to the Golden Throne Hall, seated him in the center, and served tea and food, swirling around him on every side. The elder, dazed and confused, looked around and saw no one he knew.

Whether he lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 77

The Host of Demons Overcomes the True Nature; All Together They Worship the True Thusness

Let us leave aside the Tang Elder's suffering for now, and speak of the three demon kings, who, of one mind and with all their might, fought the Great Sage and his two brothers on the mountain east of the city. This battle was truly like an iron brush scrubbing a copper pot—both sides equally hard. What a fight!

Six kinds of forms, six kinds of weapons, Six kinds of bodies, six kinds of spirit. Six evils, six roots, linked to six desires; Six gates, six paths, wagering win and loss. The thirty-six palaces, spring at ease; Six times six forms and colors, each with a name. The one's gold-banded cudgel had a thousand routines; The other's square-heaven halberd had a hundred fierce forms. Bajie's nail-rake was fierce and ferocious; The Second King's long spear was handsome and skilled. The little Sha Monk's precious staff was uncommon, with heart set on killing; The old demon king's steel blade was sharp and swift, raised without mercy. These three were invincible generals guarding the true monk; Those three were savage demons who defied the Law and insulted the king. At first it was bearable, but it grew fiercer as they went. All six used the art of rising to the sky, Tumbling and rolling in the clouds. In an instant they breathed fog and spat clouds, And heaven and earth went dark— Growls and roars—all you could hear was the sound.

The six of them fought for a long while, and dusk gradually fell. Then mist and fog rolled in, and in an instant everything went black.

Now Bajie's big ears covered his eyes, making him all the more dazed. His hands and feet slowed, and he could no longer hold his guard. Dragging his rake, he broke and ran. The old demon raised his blade and hacked at him—Bajie barely escaped with his life. His head was spared, but the blade sheared off a few bristles from his neck. The demon caught up, opened his mouth, and bit him by the collar, dragging him into the city. He was tossed to the little fiends and tied up in the Golden Throne Hall. The old demon then mounted his cloud and rose into midair to help the fight.

When the Sha Monk saw things going badly, he feinted with his precious staff and turned to run. The Second King uncoiled his trunk—there was a swoosh—and coiled it around him, hands and all. He was hauled into the city, handed to the little fiends, and also tied up beneath the hall. Then the Second King rose into the air again, calling for them to capture the Pilgrim.

When the Pilgrim saw that both his brothers had been seized and he alone could not hold the field—as the saying goes, "Two hands are no match for four"—he gave a shout, knocked aside the three demons' weapons with his staff, leaped on his somersault cloud, and flew.

When the Third King saw the Pilgrim take to the somersault cloud, he shook his body, revealed his true form, spread his wings, and gave chase. How could he catch up? When the Pilgrim made havoc in Heaven, a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers couldn't seize him, precisely because he rode the somersault cloud—one trip covered 108,000 li, and no god could catch him. But this demon could flap one wing for 90,000 li, and two flaps overtook him. He seized the Great Sage in his grip. The Pilgrim struggled left and right, but could not break free. He tried to escape by transformation and the arts of evasion, but it was no use: make himself bigger, and the demon loosened his grip just enough to hold him; make himself smaller, and the demon tightened his grip just as much.

The demon bore him back to the city, let go, and dropped him to the ground. He ordered the fiends to tie him up alongside Bajie and the Sha Monk. The old demon and the Second King both came down to welcome him. The three demon kings mounted to the throne hall together. Huh! This time they weren't so much tying up the Pilgrim as seeing him off on his way.

By now it was the second watch. When all the fiends had gathered, they pushed the Tang Priest down from the hall.

The elder, in the lamplight, suddenly saw his three disciples tied up on the ground. The old master threw himself down beside the Pilgrim and wept: "Disciple! In every past trouble, you were on the outside, working your magic, going to fetch help and subdue demons. But now you've been captured too. How is this poor monk to survive?"

When Bajie and the Sha Monk heard their master's bitter grief, they too broke into loud wailing.

The Pilgrim smiled faintly: "Master, set your mind at ease. Brothers, don't cry! Whatever happens, we'll come to no harm. Wait till the old demon settles down, and we'll be on our way."

Bajie said: "Brother, there you go playing tricks again! Hemp rope tied tight—and they'll spray water on it. Maybe a skinny fellow like you doesn't feel it, but a fat one like me is in for misery! Look—see, the rope's already sunk two inches into my arms. How am I to get free?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Never mind hemp rope—even palm cables as thick as a bowl would be no more to me than an autumn breeze past the ear. What's the worry?"

As master and disciples were talking, they heard the old demon say: "Third Worthy Brother, you have power and you have strategy. What a perfect plan—the Tang Priest is captured!" He called: "Little ones! Five of you draw water, seven scrub the pots, ten tend the fires, twenty bring out the iron steamer! We'll steam those four monks until they're tender, and we brothers will enjoy them. We'll scatter a piece for each of the little ones too, so they may all live long."

When Bajie heard this, he trembled: "Brother, listen! The demon's planning to steam us and eat us!"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't be afraid. Let me see whether they're novices or old hands at this."

The Sha Monk wept: "Brother! Don't talk big. We're already next door to King Yama—what's all this about novices and old hands!"

Before he could finish, they heard the Second King say: "Zhu Bajie is hard to steam."

Bajie was delighted: "Amitabha! Who's the kind soul who says I'm hard to steam?"

The Third King said: "Hard to steam? Peel his skin and steam him."

Bajie panicked and shouted: "Don't peel my skin! I may be tough, but once the water boils, I'll be tender!"

The old demon said: "The one that's hard to steam, put him in the bottom rack."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Bajie, don't worry. They're novices, not old hands."

"How can you tell?" asked the Sha Monk.

The Pilgrim said: "When you steam things, you always start from the top. What's hard to steam goes on the top rack—give it more fire, let the steam build, and it's done. If you put it on the bottom, the steam gets blocked, and even if you boil for half a year, the heat won't reach. He said Bajie was hard to steam and put him on the bottom—if that's not a novice, what is?"

Bajie said: "Brother, by your reasoning, I'll be killed stone-dead! When they see the steam isn't getting through, won't they open the lid, flip me over, and start a new fire, so I end up cooked on both sides and raw in the middle?"

Just then a little fiend came to report: "The water's boiling." The old demon ordered them to bring out the prisoners. The fiends all set to at once—Bajie was lifted to the bottom rack, the Sha Monk to the second.

The Pilgrim, reckoning they'd come for him next, made his escape: "This lamplight is just right for some tricks!" He plucked a single hair, blew on it with immortal breath, and cried "Change!" It became a counterfeit Pilgrim, tied up in hemp rope. He left his real body in spirit-form, leaped into midair, and looked down. The fiends, not knowing true from false, lifted the "fake Pilgrim" to the third rack. Then they flipped the Tang Priest over, tied him fast, and lifted him to the fourth rack. Dry firewood was stacked, and fierce flames roared and crackled.

The Great Sage, in the clouds, sighed: "My Bajie and Sha Monk can stand a boil or two, but my Master will be tender after just one. If I don't use magic to save him, he'll be gone in an instant!"

Marvelous Pilgrim! In midair he pinched the sign and recited the spell: "Om—Blue—Pure Dharma Realm—Heaven: Origin, Success, Benefit, Righteousness!" He summoned the Dragon King of the North Sea, who arrived at once.

A dark cloud appeared in the sky, and a voice called from it: "Ao Shun, Little Dragon of the North Sea, bows his head!"

The Pilgrim said: "Rise, rise! I wouldn't dare trouble you without cause. I've come here with the Tang Master, and we've been seized by vicious demons who are steaming us in an iron steamer. Go and protect us—don't let the heat harm us."

The Dragon King at once transformed himself into a gust of cold wind that blew beneath the cauldron, coiling and swirling, shielding it so that no fire-heat reached the pot. And so the three of them came to no harm.

By the end of the third watch, they heard the old demon give his orders: "Men, we've worked our bodies to the bone with our plans to capture the Tang Priest and his four, and then toiled to escort them here. We haven't slept in four days and nights. Now they're tied in the steamer—surely they can't escape. You men keep careful watch. Have ten little fiends take turns tending the fire. Let us retire to the palace and get a little sleep. By the fifth watch, when the sky grows light, they're bound to be tender. Prepare garlic paste, salt, and vinegar, and wake us. We'll enjoy them on an empty stomach."

The fiends obeyed. The three demon kings retired to their sleeping palaces. The Pilgrim, in the clouds, had heard this clearly. He brought his cloud down and listened—but heard no sound from inside the steamer.

He thought: "The heat rises—surely it's hot. How can they not be afraid, and yet say nothing? Hm! Could they be steamed to death? Let me go closer and listen."

Marvelous Great Sage! He rode his cloud, shook his body, and turned into a black fly. He perched on the outside of the iron steamer and listened. He heard Bajie inside: "Bad luck, bad luck! I don't know if this is closed-steam or open-steam."

The Sha Monk asked: "Second Brother, what's closed-steam and open-steam?"

Bajie said: "Closed-steam is when they put the lid on. Open-steam is when they don't."

Sanzang called from the top rack: "Disciples, the lid's not on."

Bajie said: "What luck! We won't die tonight! It's open-steam!"

When the Pilgrim heard all three of them talking, he knew they were alive. He flew off, picked up the iron steamer lid, and gently set it on top.

Sanzang panicked: "Disciples! The lid's on!"

Bajie said: "Done for! This is closed-steam now. We're dead by morning!" The Sha Monk and the elder began to sniffle and cry.

Bajie said: "Don't cry yet. The fire-tenders just changed shifts."

"How do you know?" asked the Sha Monk.

Bajie said: "When they first brought me up, I was quite pleased—I've a touch of cold-damp illness, and I wanted a good steam. But now the cold air's come up instead. Hey! Fire-tending masters, how about adding some firewood? What's it to you?"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he couldn't help laughing inwardly: "This lout! The cold he can still endure, but if it gets hot, he'll lose his life. If he says a few more words like that, he'll give us away. I'd better save them fast."

But wait—to save them, he'd have to show his true form. And if he did, the ten fire-tenders would see, shout, and alarm the old demon—wouldn't that make trouble? He thought: "I'd better send them a little trick first."

He remembered: "When I was the Great Sage, I used to play guessing games with the Kingdom-Protecting Heavenly King at the North Heaven Gate. I won his Sleepy Bugs from him. I should still have a few. Let me give them a dose."

He felt in his belt and found twelve. "I'll give them ten and keep two for seed."

He tossed the bugs. They scattered onto the faces of the ten little fiends, crawled into their nostrils, and soon they were all dozing and falling asleep. But one fire-tender, who was holding a fire-poker, couldn't settle. He kept rubbing his head and face, pinching his nose left and right, sneezing without stop.

The Pilgrim said: "This one knows something's up. I'll give him a double dose." He tossed another bug onto his face. "Two bugs—one goes in left, out right; the other out right, in left. One of them is bound to settle."

The little fiend gave two or three great yawns, stretched his back, dropped his fire-poker, and flopped over asleep, never to turn again.

The Pilgrim said: "What a marvel—this trick works wonders!"

He returned to his true form, came forward, and called: "Master!"

When the Tang Priest heard, he said: "Wukong, save me!"

The Sha Monk said: "Brother, are you calling from outside?"

The Pilgrim said: "I'm not outside—should I be in here suffering with you?"

Bajie said: "Brother, the slippery one slipped away, and we're the ones left holding the bag, steaming in here!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Idiot, don't bellow. I've come to save you."

Bajie said: "Brother, if you save us, save us to the root. Don't let us end up back in the steamer again."

The Pilgrim lifted the lid, untied his master, shook his hair-clone and gathered it back onto his body. Then, layer by layer, he freed the Sha Monk and Bajie.

The idiot, once untied, couldn't wait to run.

The Pilgrim said: "Not so fast! Not so fast!" He recited a spell to release the Dragon King, then said to Bajie: "On our way to the Western Heaven, there are still high mountains and steep ridges. Master has no mount to carry him—let me fetch the horse." See him walk softly and lightly to the Golden Throne Hall. The fiends,

great and small, were all fast asleep. He untied the reins without disturbing anyone.

The horse was a dragon horse. If a stranger had approached, it would have kicked and neighed. But the Pilgrim had once been Keeper of the Heavenly Stables—the Bimawen—and the horse was one of his own, so it didn't start or neigh. He quietly led it out, tightened the girth, saddled it properly, and asked his master to mount.

The elder, trembling, mounted and wanted to leave at once.

The Pilgrim said: "Not so fast either. On our way west we'll still pass through kingdoms. We need our travel permit to get through. Otherwise, what's our proof of passage? Let me go find the luggage."

The Tang Priest said: "I remember when we were brought in, the fiends put the luggage on the left side of the throne hall. The carrying pole was there too."

The Pilgrim said: "I understand." He bounded to the throne hall to search. Suddenly he saw a glow wafting in the air. The Pilgrim knew it was the luggage—how did he know? The Tang Priest's brocade cassock was studded with night-pearls, and so it glowed.

He rushed forward. The luggage was untouched. He took it down and handed it to the Sha Monk to carry. Bajie led the horse. The Pilgrim guided the way, making straight for the main south gate. But they heard clappers and bells clanging, and the gate was locked with a seal pasted on the lock.

The Pilgrim said: "With defenses like this, how are we to get out?"

Bajie said: "Let's go out the back gate."

The Pilgrim led the way to the back gate. But there too, the sound of clappers and bells, and the gate was locked and sealed. What were they to do? "This time," the Pilgrim thought, "if it weren't for the Tang Priest being a mortal body, the three of us could ride the clouds and fly away, no matter what. But the Tang Priest hasn't transcended the three realms—he's still within the five elements. His whole body is of impure mortal bone inherited from his parents, so he can't rise on the clouds and make good his escape."

Bajie said: "Brother, no need to deliberate. Let's find a spot with no clappers or guards and hoist Master over the wall."

The Pilgrim laughed: "That won't do. In this pinch, it's unavoidable—we'd hoist him over. But when we come back with the scriptures, you lout, with your big mouth, would go blabbing to everyone that we were wall-climbing monks."

Bajie said: "This is no time to worry about reputation. Let's just run for our lives."

The Pilgrim had no choice but to agree. They went to a clear stretch of wall and began to plan their climb.

But alas! Such is the way of things! The Tang Priest's star of misfortune had not yet passed. The three demon kings, sleeping in the palace, suddenly woke.

They cried that the Tang Priest had escaped. Each threw on a robe and hurried to the throne hall. "How many boils has the Tang Priest had?" they asked.

The fire-tending fiends had been dosed with Sleepy Bugs and were fast asleep. You couldn't have woken one of them with a beating.

The other fiends, those with no duties, were startled awake. A few stammered: "Se... se... se... seven boils!"

They rushed to the cauldron and found the steamer racks scattered on the ground, the fire-tenders all asleep. They scrambled back to report: "Great King, they're go... go... go... gone!"

The three demon kings came down from the hall and went to the cauldron. Sure enough—the racks were scattered, the water was cold, no fire remained, and the fire-tenders were snoring like logs, dead to the world.

The fiends raised a great outcry: "Capture the Tang Priest! Capture the Tang Priest!"

The shout roused every fiend, front and back, great and small. With swords and spears in hand, they rushed to the main south gate. The seals were intact, the clappers still ringing. They asked the night patrol: "Did the Tang Priest come out this way?"

"Not a soul came through," they said.

They hurried to the back gate—same seals, same clappers. Then, with lanterns and torches blazing so bright it was like daylight, they clearly saw the four of them climbing the wall! The old demon rushed forward and barked: "Where do you think you're going!"

The elder's legs went soft and his sinews numb with fright. He tumbled off the wall and was seized by the old demon. The Second King caught the Sha Monk, the Third King tackled Bajie, and the fiends snatched the luggage and the white horse. Only the Pilgrim got away.

Bajie, mumbling and grumbling, complained about the Pilgrim: "Murderous—I said if you save us, save us to the root! Now we're back in the steamer again!"

The fiends hauled the Tang Priest back to the hall, but didn't put him in the steamer this time. The Second King ordered Bajie tied to the front eaves-pillar of the hall. The Third King ordered the Sha Monk tied to the rear eaves-pillar. Only the old demon held the Tang Priest in his arms and wouldn't let go.

The Third King said: "Big Brother, what are you holding him for? You're not going to eat him alive, are you? That would be no fun. This creature isn't like some common fool you can just gobble down for a meal. He's a rare treasure from a great kingdom. We must wait for a rainy day of leisure, bring him out, prepare him with care and refinement, play guessing games and drinking games, and eat him to the accompaniment of fine music. That's the way to do it."

The old demon laughed: "Worthy Brother, your words are sound, but Sun the Pilgrim will come to steal him back."

The Third King said: "Inside my palace there is a Brocade Fragrance Pavilion, and inside the pavilion, an iron cabinet. I say we hide the Tang Priest in the cabinet, lock the pavilion, and spread a rumor that we've already eaten the Tang Priest—half-raw, half-cooked. Have the little fiends spread it all over the city. When the Pilgrim comes to scout for news, he'll hear it and be convinced, and he'll leave in despair. Once we've gone three or five days without his interference, we'll bring the Tang Priest out and enjoy him slowly. How about it?"

The old demon and the Second King were both delighted: "Yes, yes, yes! The brother speaks reason!" And so, poor Tang Priest was taken inside that very night, hidden in the cabinet, and the pavilion locked. The rumor was spread, and the whole city was abuzz. Let us leave that for now.

Now the Pilgrim, at midnight, had no choice but to abandon the Tang Priest and flee on his cloud. He went straight to the Lion Camel Cave, where with one sweep of his cudgel he exterminated every last one of the ten-odd thousand of little fiends. He hurried back. By the time the eastern sun rose, he was at the city wall. He didn't dare challenge them openly—as the saying goes, "A single thread makes no cord, and one hand claps no sound." He brought his cloud down, shook his body, and turned into a little fiend. He slipped into the city, and through the streets and lanes he searched for news. Everywhere in the city, they were saying: "The Tang Priest was eaten by the Great King last night—half-raw, half-cooked."

Front and back, it was all the same. The Pilgrim's heart burned with anxiety. He walked to the front of the Golden Throne Hall and looked. Inside were many spirits, all wearing leather-gold caps, yellow cloth robes, holding red-lacquered sticks, with ivory plaques at their waists, walking back and forth without stop.

The Pilgrim thought: "These must be palace-serving demons. I'll change to look like one of them and go in to scout."

Marvelous Great Sage! He transformed himself to look exactly like them and slipped through the golden gates. As he was walking along, he saw Bajie tied to the front pillar of the hall, humming and groaning. The Pilgrim came close and called: "Wuneng."

The idiot recognized the voice: "Brother, you've come? Save me, save me!"

The Pilgrim said: "I'll save you—but do you know where Master is?"

Bajie said: "Master's gone. Last night the demons ate him—half-raw, half-cooked." When the Pilgrim heard this, he burst out weeping, tears gushing like a spring.

Bajie said: "Brother, don't cry. I'm only going by what the little fiends were saying—I didn't see it with my own eyes. Don't jump to conclusions. Go ask around some more."

The Pilgrim dried his tears and went deeper inside to search. Suddenly he saw the Sha Monk tied to the rear eaves-pillar. He came forward, felt his chest, and called: "Wujing."

The Sha Monk recognized the voice: "Brother, you've transformed your way in? Save me! Save me!"

The Pilgrim said: "Saving you is easy. But do you know where Master is?"

The Sha Monk shed tears: "Brother, Master—the demons couldn't wait to steam him, so they ate him half-raw, half-cooked!"

When the Great Sage heard both of them saying the same thing, his heart was ground as if by knives, his tears flowed like water. He leaped into the sky, without rescuing Bajie or the Sha Monk, and returned to the mountain east of the city. He brought his cloud down and wept aloud, crying:

"Master! I regret that I deceived Heaven and was caught in the net, And the Master came to save me from deep affliction. With devoted heart and steadfast will, together we served the Buddha, Exerting ourselves, cultivating our bodies, together we tempered the demons. Who would have thought that today we'd suffer such venomous harm, Unable to protect you through the mortal realm! The Western Paradise, we have no fate to reach— Spirit scattered, soul dissolved—what can be done!"

Weeping and wretched, the Pilgrim thought to himself, his heart questioning his heart: "It's all because my Buddha, the Tathagata, sits in his realm of ultimate bliss with nothing to do, and dreamed up this scripture of the three baskets! If he truly meant to encourage goodness, he should just send the scriptures to the Eastern Lands—wouldn't that make them last through the ages? But no, he couldn't bear to part with them, and made us come fetch them. Who could have known we'd toil over a thousand mountains, only to lose our lives here today! Enough! Enough! Enough! Old Sun will ride the somersault cloud and go see the Tathagata, and tell him the whole story. If he's willing to send the scriptures to the Eastern Lands, first, it will spread the good fruit; second, it will fulfill our wish. If he won't, then let him recite the Band-Loosening Spell, take off this band, and I'll give it back to him. Old Sun will return to his own cave, set himself up as a king, and go live as he pleases."

Marvelous Great Sage! He somersaulted up, mounted his cloud, and made straight for Tianzhu. In less than a watch, he could see Spirit Mountain not far ahead. In a moment he brought his cloud down to the foot of Vulture Peak. He raised his head and saw the Four Diamond Kings blocking his way: "Where are you

going?"

The Pilgrim bowed: "I have business and seek audience with the Tathagata."

At the head, the Eternal Vajra King, Lord of the Golden Glow Ridge of the Kunlun Mountains, barked: "You brazen monkey, so coarse and wild! Last time, when the Bull Demon was causing trouble, we put in effort for your sake. Today you show your face with not a bow of courtesy! If you have business, you must first submit a memorial and wait for a summons. This isn't the South Gate of Heaven—you can't just wander in and out and go running wherever you please! Bah! Step aside!"

The Great Sage, already in a temper, was further stung by this scolding. He roared with rage, shouting and bellowing, and the commotion reached the Tathagata.

The Buddha, sitting upright on the nine-grade lotus throne, was expounding sutras with the eighteen arhats who reincarnate in the world. He opened his mouth and said: "Sun Wukong has come. Go out and receive him."

The assembly of arhats, following the Buddha's command, went out the mountain gate with banners and canopies, calling: "Great Sage Sun, the Tathagata summons you."

The Four Diamond Kings at the mountain gate then stepped aside and let the Pilgrim through. The arhats led him beneath the lotus throne. He saw the Tathagata, fell to the ground, and bowed, two streams of tears flowing.

The Tathagata said: "Wukong, what brings you to such tears?"

The Pilgrim said: "This disciple has been the recipient of your teaching time and again, and takes shelter under the gate of the Buddha Grandfather. Since I turned to the true fruit, I've protected the Tang Priest, who became my master and model. The hardships along the way are past telling! Now, at the Lion Camel Mountain, the Lion Camel Cave, and the Lion Camel Kingdom, there are three vicious demons—a Lion King, an Elephant King, and a Great Peng. They seized my master, and me as well—we were all tied up and put in a steamer to suffer the disaster of boiling water and fire. By good fortune I escaped, and called the Dragon King to save us. That night I stole my master and brothers out, but the star of disaster was not yet passed—we were captured again. At daybreak I went into the city to scout, and those demons were so vicious, so fierce, that they ate my master last night—half-raw, half-cooked! Now not a scrap of flesh or bone remains. And my brothers Wuneng and Wujing are still tied up there—their lives too will soon be lost. This disciple has no other recourse, and so has come specifically to pay respects to the Tathagata. I beg your great mercy—recite the Band-Loosening Spell, take off this band from my head, and return it to you. Let your disciple go back to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, to live at ease and play!"

Before he finished, tears gushed like a spring, and his sobs would not stop.

The Tathagata laughed: "Wukong, calm your grief. That demon has vast magic powers. You couldn't beat him, and so your heart aches."

The Pilgrim knelt below, pounding his chest: "I won't hide it from the Tathagata—when this disciple made havoc in the Heavenly Palace and called himself the Great Sage, from the day I was born until now, I've never come out the worse. But this time, I've fallen into the hands of these vicious demons!"

The Tathagata said: "Don't hate them so. I know that demon."

The Pilgrim blurted: "Tathagata! I've heard people say that the demon is kin to you!"

The Tathagata said: "You crafty macaque! How is the demon kin to me?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "If he's not kin to you, how do you know him?"

The Tathagata said: "I see him with the Wisdom Eye, and so I know him. The old demon and the Second King have masters." He called Ananda and Kashyapa: "You two, each ride a cloud—go to Mount Wutai and Mount Emei, and summon Manjusri and Samantabhadra to see me." The two venerable ones departed on the Buddha's command.

The Tathagata said: "These are the masters of the old demon and the Second King. As for the Third King—it must be said, he too has some kinship with me."

The Pilgrim said: "Kin on the father's side, or the mother's?"

The Tathagata said: "When Chaos was parted, Heaven opened at Zi, Earth was founded at Chou, and Humankind was born at Yin. Then Heaven and Earth intermingled again, and all the myriad creatures were born. Among the creatures were beasts and birds. The beasts took the qilin as their chief, and the birds took the phoenix as their chief. That phoenix, in turn, received the breath of union and bred the Peacock and the Great Peng. The Peacock, when it was born, was the most vicious of creatures. It could devour people—drawing a person in from forty-five li away with one gulp. I had cultivated a sixteen-foot golden body on the snow mountain, and the Peacock swallowed me too. I wanted to come out through his back passage, but feared defiling my true body. So I split open his spine and emerged on Spirit Mountain. I wished to take his life, but the other Buddhas persuaded me: to harm the Peacock is like harming one's mother. And so I kept him at the Spirit Mountain assembly, and granted him the title of Peacock Great Bright King Bodhisattva, Mother of Buddhas. The Great Peng and the Peacock were born of one mother, and so there is some kinship."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he laughed: "Tathagata, by this reasoning, you're the demon's nephew!"

The Tathagata said: "I must go myself to subdue that one."

The Pilgrim kowtowed and pleaded: "I beg you to descend, a thousandfold!"

The Tathagata descended from the lotus throne and, with the assembly of Buddhas, went straight out the mountain gate. There they saw Ananda and Kashyapa leading Manjusri and Samantabhadra to meet them. The two bodhisattvas bowed to the Buddha. The Tathagata said: "Bodhisattvas, how long have your beasts been down the mountain?"

Manjusri said: "Seven days."

The Tathagata said: "Seven days in the mountains is several thousand years in the world. Who knows how many lives they've harmed! Come with me quickly and subdue them."

The two bodhisattvas took their places at his sides, and the whole assembly took flight. See this:

Across the sky, the auspicious clouds parted, swirling; Our Buddha, in his mercy, descended through the Dharma gate. Clearly showing the principle that opened Heaven and brought forth life, In detail speaking of splitting Earth and transforming forms. Before him, five hundred arhats; Behind him, three thousand guardian spirits. Kashyapa and Ananda followed on left and right; The bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjusri destroyed the demonic miasma.

Thanks to the Pilgrim's good offices, he had invited the Buddha Grandfather and the whole assembly. Before long, they could see the city in the distance.

The Pilgrim reported: "Tathagata, that place belching black aura is the Lion Camel Kingdom."

The Tathagata said: "You go down first. Enter the city and fight the demon. You may feign defeat, but you must not win. Retreat up to me, and I'll subdue him myself."

The Great Sage brought his cloud down to the city wall, planted his foot on the battlement, and cursed: "You wicked beasts! Come out and fight old Sun!"

The little fiends on the tower scrambled down into the city and reported: "Great King, Sun the Pilgrim is on the wall, challenging us!"

The old demon said: "This monkey hasn't shown himself for two or three days, and now he's challenging again. Could he have brought reinforcements?"

The Third King said: "What's there to fear? Let's all go out and see."

The three demon kings, each bearing his weapon, rushed up onto the wall. Seeing the Pilgrim, they didn't say a word but thrust their weapons at him all at once. The Pilgrim swung his iron cudgel to meet them.

After seven or eight bouts, the Pilgrim feigned defeat and fled. The demon kings shouted: "Where are you going!" The Great Sage somersaulted up into midair. The three demons mounted their clouds and gave chase. The Pilgrim gave a flash and hid himself inside the Buddha Grandfather's golden light, completely invisible.

And there were the Three Honored Buddhas of Past, Future, and Present, with five hundred arhats and three thousand guardian spirits, deployed on all sides. They surrounded the three demon kings so tightly that not a drop of water could have passed through.

The old demon panicked: "Brothers, bad news! That monkey is a real sly one—wherever did he fetch such masters?"

The Third King said: "Big Brother, don't fear! We'll all charge forward together, spear and stab the Tathagata, and seize his Thunder Temple!"

This demon didn't know when he was beaten. He truly raised his blade and charged forward, hacking wildly. But Manjusri and Samantabhadra recited their true words and shouted: "You wicked beasts—will you not submit? How much longer will you wait!"

The old demon and the Second King, terrified, dropped their weapons, rolled on the ground, and revealed their true forms. The two bodhisattvas threw their lotus thrones onto the demons' backs, leaped up, and sat astride. The two demons laid their ears flat and submitted.

Now that the two bodhisattvas had subdued the Azure Lion and the White Elephant, only the Third King would not yield. He spread his wings, dropped his square-heaven halberd, soared straight up on the whirlwind, and with sharp talons made to snatch the Monkey King. But the Great Sage was hidden in the golden light—how could the demon come near? The Tathagata, knowing his intention, flashed his golden light. He shook the crown of his head, shaped like a magpie's nest, and transformed it into a piece of fresh red flesh and blood.

The demon swooped with his sharp talons to snatch at it, but the Lord Buddha pointed upward with his hand—and the sinews in the demon's wings froze. He could not fly away. He could only perch above the Buddha's head, unable to escape, and revealed his true form: a Golden-Winged Great Peng Eagle. He opened his beak and called to the Buddha: "Tathagata, how do you use your great dharma power to trap me?"

The Tathagata said: "You have wrought many evils here. Come with me, and there will be progress in your practice."

The demon said: "Where you are, you eat vegetarian and keep the fast—utterly poor and bitter. Here I eat human flesh and enjoy myself without end! If you starve me, you'll bear the sin."

The Tathagata said: "I govern the four great continents, and countless beings revere me. Whenever anyone makes a good offering, I shall have them first present it to your mouth."

The Great Peng, unable to break free and with nowhere to flee, had no choice but to submit.

Only then did the Pilgrim step forth. He bowed to the Tathagata and said: "Lord Buddha, you've now subdued the demon and rid us of a great evil—but I've lost my Master."

The Great Peng grit his teeth and said bitterly: "You brazen monkey-head! To find such a ruthless enemy to trap me! When did your old monk ever get eaten? Isn't he right now in the iron cabinet in the Brocade Fragrance Pavilion?"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he hurriedly kowtowed and thanked the Buddha Grandfather. The Buddha did not dare release the Great Peng, but installed him as a Dharma-protector on the light-flame, and led the assembly back to the Thunder Monastery.

The Pilgrim brought his cloud down and flew straight into the city. Not a single little fiend was to be found—a snake without a head can't move, a bird without wings can't fly. When they saw the Buddha subdue the demon kings, each had fled for his life.

The Pilgrim freed Bajie and the Sha Monk, found the luggage and the horse, and said to them: "Master hasn't been eaten. All of you, come with me."

He led the two of them straight into the inner palace, found the Brocade Fragrance Pavilion, and broke open the door. Inside was an iron cabinet, and from within came the sound of the Tang Priest weeping.

The Sha Monk struck the iron lock with his demon-quelling staff, lifted the cabinet lid, and called: "Master!" When Sanzang saw them, he wept aloud: "Disciples! How did you subdue the demons? How did you find your way here to me?"

The Pilgrim recounted the whole affair from beginning to end, and Sanzang thanked him without end.

Master and disciples found some rice and provisions in the palace, prepared tea and a meal, and ate their fill. Then they packed up and left the city, finding the great road and heading west. Truly:

The true scriptures must be fetched by a true person; All noise of mind and toil of heart is vanity.

Whether on this journey they knew when they would meet the Tathagata face to face—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 78

The Bhiksu Takes Pity on Children and Dispatches the Dark Spirits; In the Golden Hall the Demon Is Identified and the Way Is Discussed

One thought stirs, and a hundred demons rise— Cultivation is the hardest work, and who can help it? Only by washing clean of dust and grime, And binding and training with constant refining. Sweep back the ten thousand causes, return to stillness; Clear away a thousand demons, don't waste time. Rest assured, you'll leap free of the cage— When practice is complete, you'll ascend to the Great Purity.

The story continues: The Great Sage Sun, having used every resource to invite the Tathagata and subdue the demons, freed the Tang Priest and his disciples from their ordeal. They left the Lion Camel Kingdom and traveled west. After several months, winter was upon them. See how:

Mountain plums were about to crack their jade; Pool water was slowly turning to ice. Red leaves had all drifted down; Green pines had taken on a fresher hue. Pale clouds flew as if about to snow; Withered grass lay flat along the hillsides. Everywhere the eye turned, cold light glinted; A gloomy chill crept to the bone.

Master and disciples braved the cold, sleeping in the rain and dining in the wind. As they traveled, they saw another city ahead.

The Tang Priest asked: "Wukong, what place is that over there?"

The Pilgrim said: "We'll know when we get there. If it's a royal capital, we'll have to exchange our travel documents. If it's a prefecture, city, or county, we'll just pass through."

Before master and disciples had finished talking, they reached the city gate. The Tang Priest dismounted, and the four of them entered the outer gate. They saw an old soldier, sleeping against the sun-facing wall, sheltering from the wind.

The Pilgrim went up, gave him a shake, and called: "Officer!"

The old soldier startled awake, opened his eyes in a blur, and when he saw the Pilgrim, he dropped to his knees and kowtowed: "Grandpa!"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't be alarmed. I'm no fierce god. Why call me Grandpa?"

The old soldier kowtowed: "You're the Thunder God Grandpa!"

"Nonsense!" said the Pilgrim. "I am a monk from the Eastern Lands, going to the Western Heaven to fetch scriptures. I've just arrived and don't know the name of this place, so I'm asking you."

When the old soldier heard this, he composed himself, yawned, climbed to his feet, and stretched his back: "Elder, Elder, forgive my offense. This place was originally called the Kingdom of Bhiksou, but now it's been renamed Little Children City."

The Pilgrim said: "Is there a king in this country?"

"There is! There is! There is!"

The Pilgrim turned to the Tang Priest: "Master, this place was originally the Kingdom of Bhiksou, now renamed Little Children City. But I don't know the reason for the name change."

The Tang Priest was puzzled: "If it's called Bhiksou, why also call it Little Children?"

Bajie said: "I suppose the Bhiksou king died, and the new king is a little child, so they call it Little Children City."

The Tang Priest said: "That makes no sense! That makes no sense! Let's go inside and ask in the streets."

The Sha Monk said: "Exactly. That old soldier either doesn't know, or he was too scared by Eldest Brother to talk sense. Let's go into the city and inquire."

They entered through the third gate and reached the great market street. The people were well-dressed and handsome. See how:

Wine houses and singing halls, voices clamoring; Brocade shops and tea rooms, curtains hung high. Ten thousand households, a thousand doors, business booming; Six streets and three markets, broad streams of wealth. Buyers of gold and silk, thick as ants; Fighting for profit, contending for fame, all for money. Dignified manners, splendid sights— Rivers clear, seas calm, a year of peace.

The four of them, leading the horse and carrying the baggage, walked along the market street for a good while, taking in all the bustle and prosperity. But they noticed that at every household, there was a goose cage by the door.

The Tang Priest said: "Disciples, every household here has a goose cage at the door. Why?"

Bajie looked left and right—sure enough, they were goose cages, draped with curtains of five-colored silk.

The idiot laughed: "Master, today must be an auspicious day for weddings and gatherings. They're all celebrating."

The Pilgrim said: "Nonsense! How could every household be celebrating? There must be a reason. Let me go have a look."

The Tang Priest held him back: "Don't go. Your face is ugly—you might offend someone."

The Pilgrim said: "I'll change and go." Marvelous Great Sage! He pinched the sign, recited a spell, shook his body, and turned into a bee. He spread his wings, flew up close, slipped under the curtain, and looked inside—there sat a child.

He went to the second house and looked in the cage—another child. He looked at eight or nine houses in a row, and every one had a child—always a boy, never a girl. Some were playing in the cage, some were crying, some were eating fruit, some were sleeping or sitting.

The Pilgrim returned to his true form and reported to the Tang Priest: "Inside those cages are children—the oldest no more than seven, the youngest only five. I don't know why."

When the Tang Priest heard this, his mind was full of doubt and unease. Then, turning a corner, they saw a government office—the Golden Pavilion Post Station.

The elder was pleased: "Disciples, let's go into this station. First, we can ask about the place; second, we can feed the horse; third, it's getting late and we need lodging."

The Sha Monk said: "Exactly, exactly. Let's hurry in."

The four entered cheerfully. The officials on duty reported to the station superintendent, who came out to receive them. They exchanged greetings and sat down.

The superintendent asked: "Elder, where do you come from?"

The Tang Priest said: "This poor monk has been dispatched by the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. I have now arrived at your honorable place and have travel documents to be verified. I would borrow your honorable station for a brief rest."

The superintendent ordered tea served, and after tea, arranged provisions, ordering the attendants to prepare a meal.

The Tang Priest thanked him, then asked: "May I enter the court today to see His Majesty and have my documents verified?"

The superintendent said: "Not tonight. You must wait for the morning audience tomorrow. Tonight, please rest at our humble station."

Shortly, the arrangements were made. The superintendent invited the four to share a vegetarian meal, then had his staff show them to guest rooms to rest. The Tang Priest thanked him without end.

Once seated, the elder said: "This poor monk has one matter he does not understand, and would like to ask your guidance. In your honorable place, how do you treat and raise children?"

The superintendent said: "There is but one sun in the sky, and but one principle among men. The begetting of children—from the father's essence and the mother's blood, ten months in the womb, and born when the time comes—nursed for three years, gradually taking shape. How could there be anything we don't know?"

The Tang Priest said: "By your words, it is no different from our own land. But when this poor monk entered the city, I saw that every household on the street had a goose cage by the door, and in each cage was a child. This I do not understand, and so I venture to ask."

The superintendent leaned close and whispered: "Elder, don't meddle in it, don't ask about it, don't pay it any mind, and don't speak of it. Please rest now, and tomorrow morning be on your way."

When the elder heard this, he seized the superintendent by the arm and insisted on knowing. The superintendent shook his head and waved his hands, saying only: "Speak carefully! Speak carefully!"

The Tang Priest would not let go, insisting on a full explanation.

The superintendent, having no choice, sent away all the attendants and officials. Alone under the lamplight, he whispered: "What you asked about—the goose cages—that is a matter of the present king's misrule. Why do you keep asking about it?"

The Tang Priest said: "What do you mean by misrule? I must be told clearly, or my heart will not be at ease."

The superintendent said: "This country was originally the Kingdom of Bhiksou. Recently a folk rhyme has renamed it Little Children City. Three years ago, an old man dressed as a Daoist brought a young girl of sixteen years. She was beautiful and charming, her face like Guanyin's. He presented her to His Majesty, and the king, loving her beauty, favored her in the palace, calling her the Beautiful Consort. Since then he has ignored all the ladies of the three palaces and the consorts of the six courts, day and night indulging his lust without cease. Now his spirit is worn, his body emaciated, he can barely eat, and his life hangs by a thread. The Imperial Medical Academy has tried every good prescription, and none can cure him.

"The Daoist who brought the girl was given a royal patent by our king and titled the State Father. The State Father has a secret formula from overseas that can greatly extend life. Some time ago he went to the Ten Continents and Three Islands to gather the medicinal ingredients, and all is ready. But the guiding ingredient is a terrible one: he needs exactly one thousand one hundred and eleven children's hearts and livers, to be decocted in a soup and taken with the medicine. After taking it, one will not age for a thousand years. Those children in the goose cages have all been selected and are being raised inside them. The parents, fearing the king's law, dare not weep, and so the rumor spread, and the city is called Little Children City. If this is not misrule, what is? Elder, when you go to court tomorrow, only exchange your travel documents—do not speak of this."

Having said this, he withdrew.

The elder was so horrified that his bones turned soft and his sinews numb. Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he cried out: "What a foolish king! What a foolish king! For your own lust and love of beauty, you've made yourself ill, and now you would cruelly take the lives of all these children! Oh, the bitterness! The bitterness! This breaks my heart!"

There is a poem in testimony:

A benighted ruler, ignorant, lost the true and right, Lusting after pleasure, unknowing, he injured his own body. Seeking eternal life, he slaughters children's lives, To avert heaven's disasters, he kills his own people. The monk's compassion cannot bear to let them go; The official's words of harm are past endurance to hear. Before the lamp, he sheds tears with long sighs— A meditating Buddha-worshipper, struck down with grief.

Bajie came forward: "Master, what's the matter with you? You're always bringing other people's coffins into your own house to cry over! Don't worry! As the saying goes, 'If the king orders his minister to die, the minister who doesn't die is disloyal. If the father orders his son to die, the son who doesn't die is unfilial.' He's harming his own subjects—what's it to you? Come on, loosen your clothes and go to sleep. Don't borrow other people's troubles."

The Tang Priest, shedding tears, said: "Disciple, you have no compassion! We monks, accumulating merit and practicing good deeds, must above all practice convenience and kindness. How can this foolish king act so recklessly! Never have I heard of eating human hearts and livers to extend one's life. This is all the work of misrule—how can I not grieve!"

The Sha Monk said: "Master, don't grieve yet. Tomorrow morning, when we go to exchange the travel documents, speak to the king face to face. If he won't listen, let's see what this State Father looks like. Perhaps this State Father is a demon who wants to eat human hearts and livers, and so he has devised this scheme. We can't know for certain."

The Pilgrim said: "Wujing speaks reason. Master, you go to sleep. Tomorrow, let old Sun go with you to court and see what kind of man this State Father is. If he's human, I fear he's gone down a side path and doesn't know the true Way, mistaking the gathering of herbs for truth. Old Sun will expound the essentials of the Primal Heaven and convert him to the right. If he's a demon, I'll seize him and show the king, persuading him to curb his lust and nourish his body, and I will never let him harm those children."

When the Tang Priest heard this, he rose and bowed to the Pilgrim: "Disciple, this plan is excellent! Excellent! But when you see the foolish king, don't ask about this matter right away. I fear that the foolish king, not distinguishing right from wrong, might take it as rumor and hold it against us. What then?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old Sun has his own magic. I'll first move the children in the goose cages out of this city, so that tomorrow they'll have nothing to take hearts from. The local officials will surely submit a report. The foolish king will issue orders, or discuss with the State Father, or perhaps select new children. At that point, I'll bring up the matter, and we'll certainly not be blamed."

The Tang Priest was delighted: "But how will you get the children out of the city? If you can really get them out, it will be a deed of heaven-sized virtue for you, my worthy disciple! Do it quickly—even a moment's delay might be too late."

The Pilgrim roused his spirit, rose, and instructed Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Sit here with Master. Watch for me—when you feel a yin wind blow, that's the children leaving the city."

The three of them all began to chant: "Namo the Healing Buddha Who Saves Lives! Namo the Healing Buddha Who Saves Lives!"

The Great Sage went out the door, gave a whistle, rose into midair, pinched the sign, recited the true words, and cried: "Om—Pure Dharma Realm!" He summoned the city god, the local earth deity, the shrine gods, the true officials, the Guardians of the Five Quarters, the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons, the Six Dings and Six Jias, and the Protectors of the Faith. They all arrived in the sky and bowed: "Great Sage, you summon us at night—what urgent business?"

The Pilgrim said: "I am passing through the Kingdom of Bhiksou. The king is benighted, listening to a demon who wants to take children's hearts and livers as a medicinal guide, hoping for long life. My master cannot bear it, and wishes to save the children and destroy the demon. And so old Sun has called upon all of you: each use your divine powers, and take the children in the goose cages on every street and lane in this city—cages and all—out beyond the city walls, into mountain hollows or deep in the woods. Keep them hidden for a day or two. Give them fruit to eat—don't let them go hungry. Guard them secretly—don't let them be frightened or cry. When I've destroyed the demon, set the kingdom right, and persuaded the king, I'll send for them to be returned."

The gods received their orders and each used his divine power. They brought their clouds down, and across the city, yin winds rolled and dreary fogs spread:

The yin wind blew dark the stars in the sky; The dreary fog veiled the moon across a thousand li. At first it was gentle, wafting and drifting; Then it grew mighty, roaring and raging. Drifting and wafting, they sought each house to save the children; Roaring and raging, they found every goose cage to rescue flesh and blood. The cold pierced to the bone—how could one show one's face? The frost pierced the body, clothes stiff as iron. Parents panicked in vain; Brothers and sisters-in-law all grieved. Across the ground the yin wind swirled; The cages were taken by the gods. Though this night was sorrowful, At dawn, all would be joy.

There is a poem in testimony:

The Buddhist gate has had compassion since ancient times; True goodness and success speak of the Great Vehicle. Ten thousand sages and a thousand worthies all amassed merit; The Three Refuges and Five Precepts require harmony. The Kingdom of Bhiksou was not thrown into chaos by its king; A thousand children's names were doomed in error. The Pilgrim, for his master's sake, together saved them— This deed of hidden merit surpassed the paramitas.

That night, at the third watch, the gods and spirits carried the goose cages to various hiding places and kept them safe.

The Pilgrim brought his auspicious light down to the post station courtyard. He could hear the three of them still chanting "Namo the Healing Buddha Who Saves Lives!" Inwardly pleased, he came forward and called: "Master, I'm here. How was the yin wind?"

Bajie said: "Some yin wind!"

The Tang Priest said: "And the rescue of the children—how did it go?"

The Pilgrim said: "I've taken them all out, one by one. When we leave, I'll send them back."

The elder thanked him again and again, and only then did they retire for the night.

At dawn, the Tang Priest woke, dressed, and prepared: "Wukong, I'll go to the morning audience and exchange our travel documents."

The Pilgrim said: "Master, if you go alone, I fear it won't go well. Let old Sun go with you and see whether this State Father is upright or evil."

The Tang Priest said: "If you go, you won't perform the proper courtesies. I fear the king will take offense."

The Pilgrim said: "I won't show myself. I'll follow you in secret and serve as your protector."

The Tang Priest was pleased. He instructed Bajie and the Sha Monk to watch the luggage and horse, then set out. The station superintendent came to see him off.

See how the elder was dressed today—different from yesterday:

On his body, a brocade cassock of rare treasures, On his head, a Vairocana cap with a golden peak. In his hand, a nine-ring tin staff; In his chest, a wondrous point of divine light. Travel documents close by his side; In his wrapping bag, brocade cases wound round. He walked like an arhat descended to the world— Truly like a living Buddha's real face.

The superintendent bowed, leaned close, and whispered, cautioning him not to meddle in other people's affairs. The Tang Priest nodded in assent.

The Great Sage slipped to the side of the door, recited a spell, shook his body, and turned into a tiny gnat. With a hum, he flew onto the Tang Priest's cap. They left the station and made straight for the court.

When they reached the palace gate, they saw the Yellow Gate Official. The elder bowed: "This poor monk is sent by the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. I have now arrived at your honorable place and must exchange my travel documents. I wish to see His Majesty. I beg you to announce me, to announce me."

The Yellow Gate Official duly reported. The king was pleased: "A monk from afar must have spiritual attainment. Invite him in." The Yellow Gate Official, following the decree, led the elder inside. The elder paid his respects at the foot of the steps, and the king invited him up to the hall and offered him a seat.

The elder thanked him for the grace and sat down. He saw that the king was emaciated and haggard, spirit weary and spent: when he raised his hands to bow, the gesture was clumsy; when he spoke, his voice was broken and halting. The elder presented his travel documents. The king's eyes were dim and bleary. He looked and looked, then took the royal seal, affixed his signature, and handed it back. The elder received it.

The king was about to ask the reason for the scripture quest when the Court Herald announced: "The State Father has arrived."

The king, leaning on the arm of a young eunuch, scrambled down from the dragon throne and bowed to receive him. The elder hastily rose and stood to one side. He turned to look—and saw an old Daoist, swaying and mincing up from the jade steps.

Just look at him:

On his head, a pale goose-yellow cloud-brocade gauze cap; On his body, a crane-down cloak of aloeswood-scented silk floss. Around his waist, a three-strand cord belt of indigo floss; On his feet, a pair of cloud-toed shoes of hemp and ko-hemp weave. In his hand, a nine-jointed withered-vine dragon-coiled staff; At his chest, a brocade pouch embroidered with dragons and phoenixes. His jade face was sleek and glowing; His gray beard drifted beneath his chin. His golden eyes flashed fire; His long eyes reached past his brow-tips. As he walked, clouds followed his steps; At ease, wreathed in fragrant mist. Below the steps, all the officials bowed, All calling: "The State Father enters the court!"

The State Father came to the front of the throne hall and did not even bow. Proud and erect, he walked straight up to the throne.

The king inclined his body: "State Father's immortal footsteps—I am glad you have come early." He invited him to sit on the left-hand embroidered stool.

The Tang Priest took a step forward, bowed, and said: "Lord State Father, this poor monk greets you."

The State Father sat high and did not return the courtesy. He turned to the king and asked: "Where does this monk come from?"

The king said: "He is sent by the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. He has come to exchange his travel documents."

The State Father laughed: "The road to the Western Heaven—dark and dismal, what good is there?"

The Tang Priest said: "Since ancient times, the West has been the supreme realm of ultimate bliss. How can it not be good?"

The king asked: "I have heard it said since ancient times that monks are disciples of the Buddha. I would truly like to know: can a monk achieve immortality? Can one who turns to the Buddha attain long life?"

When the Tang Priest heard this, he pressed his palms together and replied: "He who is a monk renounces the ten thousand causes; he who understands his nature finds all dharmas empty. Great wisdom is at ease, tranquil in the realm of the unborn. The true mechanism is silent, free in the midst of stillness. The three realms are empty and all things are governed; the six roots are pure and a thousand things are understood. If you would be firm in awareness and perception, you must first know the mind: when the mind is pure, a single light shines alone; when the mind is sustained, all realms are clear. The true form lacks nothing and has nothing extra—it can be seen in this life. Illusory forms have shape and will ultimately perish—why seek beyond your lot? Sitting in meditation is the source of entering samadhi; giving charity and showing kindness is the root of cultivation. Great skill seems clumsy—know that all things are non-action; good strategy needs no calculation—you must put everything down. Only let one mind not act, and ten thousand practices are complete. As for gathering yin to nourish yang, those are false words; taking elixirs for long life is truly a vain claim. Only let every dusty bond be abandoned, every form and color be empty. Pure and simple, with few desires, you will naturally enjoy endless years."

When the State Father heard this, he laughed it off. Pointing at the Tang Priest, he said:

"Ha! Ha! Ha! You monk, what a load of nonsense you spout! In the gate of stillness, you must know your nature—but you don't know where that nature comes from or where it ends! Sitting in meditation is all blind cultivation and foolish practice. As the saying goes: 'Sit, sit, sit—your backside will split!' The fire burns and grinds you—what good does it do? You don't know that we cultivators of immortality have bones that are firm and fine; those who attain the Way have spirits that are most divine. We carry basket and gourd into the mountains to visit friends, gather a hundred herbs and come to the world to save people. We pluck fairy flowers to weave our hats, break fragrant iris to spread our beds. We sing and clap our hands, we dance and then sleep on the clouds. We expound the Dao, spreading the true teaching of the Most High; we apply talismanic water, ridding the world of demonic miasma. We seize the finest essence of Heaven and Earth, gather the radiant精华 of sun and moon. We work yin and yang until the elixir forms, regulate water and fire until the embryo congeals. When the two-eight yin wanes, it is as if in a trance; when the three-nine yang waxes, it is dim and obscure. We gather herbs according to the four seasons, and cultivate the nine-turn elixir until it is done. We ride the blue luan bird and ascend to the Purple Court; we mount the white crane and go up to the Jasper Capital. We take part in the splendor that fills the heavens, displaying the devotion of the wondrous Way. Compared to your silent Zen of the Buddhist teaching—stillness, dark spirits, nirvana leaving a stinking husk—you don't even escape the mortal dust! Among the Three Teachings there is no higher rank—from ancient times, only the Dao is called supreme!"

The king was delighted to hear it, and all the court officials cheered: "Only the Dao is supreme! Only the Dao is supreme!" The elder, seeing everyone praising him, was overcome with shame.

The king ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments to prepare a vegetarian meal and send the visiting monk on his way west.

The Tang Priest thanked the king for his grace and withdrew. He had just stepped down from the hall and was walking out when the Pilgrim flew down from his cap, came to his ear, and said: "Master, that State Father is a demon. The king has been corrupted by his demonic aura. You go back to the station and wait for your meal. Old Sun will stay here and gather news."

The Tang Priest understood and went out the palace gate alone. Let us leave him for now.

See the Pilgrim—he flew onto the emerald screen of the Golden Throne Hall and perched. From the ranks of officials, the Commander of the Five Cities' Troops stepped forward and reported: "Your Majesty, last night a blast of cold wind blew away the children in the goose cages on every street and in every household—the cages and all—without a trace."

When the king heard this, he was both shocked and angered. He said to the State Father: "This matter is Heaven destroying me! For months I've been gravely ill, and the imperial physicians have been useless. By good fortune, the State Father provided an immortal prescription, and I was waiting for today at noon to take the children's hearts and livers as the guide. And now the cold wind has blown them away. If this is not Heaven wanting to destroy me, what is?"

The State Father laughed: "Your Majesty, don't be troubled. The children being blown away—this is Heaven sending you long life!"

The king said: "The children in the cages have been blown away, and you say this is Heaven sending long life?"

The State Father said: "When I came to court just now, I saw an even better medicinal guide—far better than the hearts of one thousand one hundred and eleven children. Those children's hearts could only extend Your Majesty's life by a thousand years. But this guide, taken with my immortal medicine, can extend your life for ten thousand myriad years."

The king, not knowing what guide he meant, pressed him again and again. At last the State Father said: "That monk sent by the Eastern Lands to fetch scriptures—I observed that his bearing is pure, his appearance refined. He is a true body cultivated through ten lifetimes. A monk from childhood, his primal yang has never been discharged—he is ten thousand times better than those children. If you can obtain his heart and liver, decoct them in a soup, and take them with my immortal medicine, you will be guaranteed ten thousand years of life."

The foolish king, hearing this, was utterly convinced. He said to the State Father: "Why didn't you say so sooner? If it's truly this effective, I should not have let him go just now."

The State Father said: "What difficulty is there? I just ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments to prepare a meal for him. He must be eating before he leaves the city. Now, hurry and issue an edict: lock every gate, and send troops to surround the Golden Pavilion Post Station. Bring that monk here. We must politely ask for his heart. If he consents, cut it out at once, give his body a royal burial, and build a temple in his honor. If he refuses, then use force—tie him down and cut it out. What difficulty is there!"

The foolish king followed his words and immediately issued the edict: every gate was shut. He also dispatched the Feathered Forest Guard, officers and soldiers, to surround the post station.

When the Pilgrim heard this news, he flew back to the station on the wing, returned to his true form, and said to the Tang Priest: "Master, disaster! Disaster!"

The Tang Priest, who had just received the imperial vegetarian meal with Bajie and the Sha Monk, was so horrified at these words that his Three Corpses scattered and smoke rose from his seven apertures. He collapsed to the ground, drenched in sweat, eyes staring, unable to speak.

The Sha Monk rushed forward, holding him up: "Master, wake up! Master, wake up!"

Bajie said: "What disaster? What disaster? If you'd spoken slower, it might not have been so bad—but you've scared Master out of his wits!"

The Pilgrim said: "After Master left the court, old Sun stayed behind to watch. That State Father is a demon. Presently, the Commander of the Five Cities' Troops reported the matter of the children being blown away by the cold wind. The king was upset, but the State Father turned it to joy, saying this was Heaven sending you long life. He wants to take Master's heart and liver as a medicinal guide, saying it can give ten thousand years of life. The foolish king believed the false words, and so he's dispatched troops to surround the station and sent a brocade-clad official to summon Master and ask for your heart."

Bajie laughed: "What a fine compassion! What a fine rescue of children! What a fine yin wind you raised—and now it's brought disaster on us!"

The Tang Priest, trembling, climbed to his feet, seized the Pilgrim, and pleaded: "Worthy disciple, what are we to do?"

The Pilgrim said: "If you want to come out right, the great must become the small."

The Sha Monk said: "What do you mean, the great becomes the small?"

The Pilgrim said: "If you want to save your life, the master becomes the disciple and the disciple becomes the master. Only then can we preserve you."

The Tang Priest said: "If you can save my life, I'm willing to be your disciple and grand-disciple!"

The Pilgrim said: "Since that's the case, no more hesitation." He called: "Bajie, quick—mix some mud."

The idiot took his rake, dug up some earth, and—since he didn't dare go outside for water—hiked up his robe and contributed his own water, mixing up a ball of foul-smelling mud, which he handed to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim, having no choice, spread the mud into a flat piece, pressed it onto his own face, and made a monkey-face mask. He told the Tang Priest to stand still and not speak, then pressed the mask onto the Tang Priest's face, recited the true words, blew on it with immortal breath, and cried "Change!" The elder was transformed into the likeness of the Pilgrim. He took off the elder's robes and put on the Pilgrim's clothes.

The Pilgrim then put on his master's robes, pinched the sign, recited a spell, and shook his body, transforming into the Tang Priest's face and figure—even Bajie and the Sha Monk could hardly tell them apart.

Just as they finished their disguise, they heard drums and gongs and saw spears and swords massing. The Feathered Forest Guard had arrived with three thousand soldiers and surrounded the station.

A brocade-clad official strode into the courtyard and asked: "Where is the Elder from the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands?"

The station superintendent, trembling, knelt and pointed: "In the guest room below."

The brocade-clad official went to the guest room and said: "Elder Tang, His Majesty summons you."

Bajie and the Sha Monk flanked the fake Pilgrim on either side. The fake Tang Priest came out, bowed, and said: "Brocade-Clad Lord, His Majesty summons this poor monk—what is it about?"

The brocade-clad official stepped forward, seized him by the arm: "Come with me to court. There must be a use for you."

Ah! This was truly:

The demon's slander triumphs over compassion; Compassion, in turn, invites disaster.

Whether on this journey he would live or die—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 79

Searching the Cave to Seize the Demon, He Meets the Star of Longevity; The True Ruler in Court Rescues the Infants

The story tells that the brocade-clad official dragged the fake Tang Priest out of the post station, and with the Feathered Forest Guard surrounding him in layers, they proceeded all the way to the palace gate. There he said to the Yellow Gate Official: "We have brought the Tang Priest as requested. I trouble you to announce us."

The Yellow Gate Official rushed into the court, reported as instructed to the foolish king, and was told to invite them in.

All the officials knelt and bowed at the foot of the steps. Only the fake Tang Priest stood erect in the center of the steps, calling out in a loud voice: "King of Bhiksou, what business did you have in summoning this poor monk?"

The king laughed and said: "I have been afflicted with an illness that has lingered for a long time without cure. Fortunately, the State Father bestowed a prescription upon me. All the medicinal ingredients are already prepared—only one guiding ingredient is lacking. I have specially invited you, Venerable One, to provide this medicinal guide. If my illness is cured, I shall build a shrine for you and offer sacrifices in all four seasons, establishing it as an eternal shrine of incense for the realm."

The fake Tang Priest said: "I am a monk who has come here alone. I do not know what thing the State Father wants from me as a guide."

The foolish king said: "I specifically seek the Venerable One's heart and liver."

The fake Tang Priest said: "To be honest with Your Majesty, I actually have several hearts. I do not know which kind you want."

The State Father, standing to one side, pointed and said: "That monk—we want your black heart!"

The fake Tang Priest said: "In that case, bring a knife quickly. Cut open my chest and belly. If there is a black heart, I shall respectfully comply."

The foolish king, delighted and grateful, immediately ordered an attending official to fetch a short ox-ear knife and hand it to the fake monk.

The fake monk took the knife in hand, opened his robes, thrust out his chest, pressed his belly with his left hand, held the knife in his right, and with a loud ripping sound, sliced open his belly. Out from within tumbled a pile of hearts, bubbling forth. The civil officials turned pale; the military officers went numb.

The State Father, seeing this from the hall, said: "What a many-hearted monk!"

The fake monk picked through those hearts, dripping with blood, holding them up one by one for all to see—red hearts, white hearts, yellow hearts, stingy and greedy hearts, fame-and-profit hearts, jealous hearts, calculating hearts, competitive hearts, ambitious hearts, haughty hearts, murderous hearts, vicious hearts, fearful hearts, cautious hearts, depraved and wicked hearts, nameless dark and hidden hearts, hearts of every kind of evil—but not one black heart.

The foolish king was so terrified he stood stunned, unable to speak, and trembling cried: "Put them away! Put them away!"

The "fake Tang Priest" could hold back no longer. He dropped the spell and revealed his true form.

To the foolish king he said: "Your Majesty has no discernment at all! We monks all have good hearts. It is your State Father who has a black heart—perfect for a medicinal guide. If you don't believe me, let me extract his and show you."

The State Father heard this, opened his eyes wide, and stared carefully. He saw that the monk's face had changed—it was not the same appearance as before. Ha! He recognized the Great Sage Sun of five hundred years ago, famous since olden times. He immediately pulled back, rose on the clouds, and was about to flee. But the Pilgrim flipped a somersault, leapt into the air, and shouted:

"Where are you going! Take a blow from my rod!"

The State Father brought out his coiled-dragon walking stick to meet the attack. The two of them battled in midair—what a fine fight!

The As-You-Will rod, the coiled-dragon staff— A stretch of clouds in the empty sky. The State Father was a demon all along, Who dressed a fox-spirit as a beauty. The king, greedy for pleasure, fell ill; The demon schemed to slaughter children. When the Great Sage met him, he showed his power, Seizing the monster, saving men, undoing woes. The iron rod, aimed at the head, was truly fierce; The walking stick, rising to meet it, deserved applause.

The battle filled the sky with fog, darkening the city; Every household in the city lost its color. Civil and military officials' souls flew away; Consorts and palace maids changed countenance. The foolish lord of Bhiksou, terrified, hid in confusion, Trembling and shaking, with nowhere to turn. The rod rose like a tiger charging from the mountain; The staff whirled like a dragon leaving the sea. This time, the great uproar in the city of Bhiksou Made clear the difference between evil and good.

The demon fought the Pilgrim for over twenty rounds. The coiled-dragon staff could no longer withstand the golden-hooped rod. The demon feinted with his staff, transformed his body into a beam of cold light, dropped into the inner palace, seized the Beautiful Consort who had been presented as tribute, and together they merged into cold light and vanished—no one knew where.

The Great Sage brought down his cloud, arrived at the palace, and said to the officials: "Some State Father you have!"

The officials all bowed in gratitude to the divine monk. The Pilgrim said: "Don't bow yet. Go see where your foolish king is."

The officials said: "When the fighting started, our lord was terrified and hid. We don't know which palace he went to."

The Pilgrim commanded: "Find him quickly! Don't let the Beautiful Consort carry him off!"

Hearing this, the officials searched everywhere, inside and out, rushing with the Pilgrim first to the Beautiful Consort's palace—but she too was gone without a trace.

The Principal Consort, the Eastern Palace, the Western Palace, and the Six Courts—all the consorts and concubines—came out to thank the Great Sage.

The Great Sage said: "Please rise. This is no time for thanks. Go find your lord."

Presently, four or five eunuchs were seen supporting the foolish king, coming from behind the Hall of Careful Conduct.

The officials prostrated themselves and cried in unison: "My lord! My lord! Thanks to the divine monk who came and exposed the true from the false. That State Father was a demon—and even the Beautiful Consort has disappeared."

The king, hearing this, invited the Pilgrim out of the inner palace to the throne hall, bowed in gratitude, and said: "Venerable One, when you came this morning, you looked so handsome and imposing. How is it that your appearance has changed now?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "To be honest with Your Majesty, the one who came this morning was my master—the Tang Priest, the Imperial Brother Sanzo of the Great Tang. I am his disciple Sun Wukong. I also have two junior fellow disciples, Zhu Wuneng and Sha Wujing, currently at the Golden Pavilion Post Station. Because I learned that you believed the demon's words and wanted to take my master's heart and liver as a medicinal guide, old Sun transformed into my master's appearance and came here specifically to subdue the demon."

The king, hearing this, immediately issued an edict ordering the Grand Treasurer to go quickly to the station and invite the master and his disciples to court.

Now the Tang Priest, hearing that the Pilgrim had revealed his true form and subdued the demon in midair, was so frightened his soul flew and his spirit scattered. Fortunately, Bajie and the Sha Monk were there to protect him. He still had that patch of foul-smelling mud on his face and was feeling miserable, when he heard someone calling: "Dharma Master, we are Grand Treasurers sent by the King of Bhiksou, specially inviting you to enter the court to receive thanks for your grace."

Bajie laughed: "Master, don't be afraid! They're not asking for your heart again. It must be that our elder brother has won, and they're inviting you to receive their thanks."

The Tang Priest said: "Even if they're inviting me because of victory, with this foul-smelling face, how can I face anyone?"

Bajie said: "Can't be helped. Let's go see our elder brother first—he'll have an explanation."

The elder, having no other plan, had to lean on Bajie while the Sha Monk carried the luggage and led the horse, and together they went to the courtyard of the station.

The Grand Treasurer, seeing them, was frightened and said: "Good heavens! These all look like monster heads and demon brains!"

The Sha Monk said: "Court official, don't be put off by our ugliness. We were born with these bodies. When my master sees our elder brother, he'll be handsome again."

The three of them came to court without waiting for announcement, straight to the foot of the steps. The Pilgrim saw them, turned and came down from the hall, met them face to face, and scraped the mud mask off his master's face. He blew an immortal breath and cried "Correct!" The Tang Priest instantly reverted to his original appearance, his spirit feeling even more refreshed than before.

The king came down from the hall to personally welcome them, calling: "Dharma Master, Living Buddha!" The master and disciples tethered their horse and all went up to the hall to meet each other.

The Pilgrim said: "Does Your Majesty know where that demon came from? Let old Sun go and capture him at once, to eliminate future troubles."

The Three Palaces and Six Courts, all the consorts and concubines, behind the emerald screen, heard the Pilgrim speak of eliminating future troubles. Without regard for the propriety of inner and outer, men and women, they all came out to bow and plead: "We earnestly beg the divine monk and living Buddha to exert his great dharma power, to pull up the weeds by the roots, to eliminate him utterly. That would be the greatest grace—we shall surely repay you handsomely!"

The Pilgrim hurriedly returned their bows, asking only that the king tell him where the demon lived.

The king, with shame, said: "Three years ago, when he arrived, I asked him. He said not far from the city, just seventy li to the south, at Willow Grove Slope, there is a Qinghua Village. The State Father, being old and without sons, had a daughter by his second wife, aged sixteen, unwed, whom he was willing to present to me. I, because of the girl's beauty and grace, took her and favored her in the palace. Unexpectedly, I fell ill, and the imperial physicians' medicines were of no avail. He said he had an immortal prescription that only required the hearts of young children, decocted in soup as a guide. It was my unworthiness that I lightly believed his words and selected children from the common people, choosing today at noon to cut them open and take their hearts. Who could have expected that the divine monk would descend, and that just then the caged children would all disappear. Then he said the divine monk had cultivated truth through ten lifetimes, his primal yang never discharged—obtaining his heart would be ten thousand times better than a child's heart. For a moment I was misled—I had no idea the divine monk could see through the demon. I beseech you to wield your great dharma and eliminate this future trouble. I shall repay you with all the wealth of my realm!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "To be honest, the children in the cages—my master took pity and had me hide them. Let's not talk about repaying with wealth. Once I capture the demon, that will be my merit." He called: "Bajie, come with me!"

Bajie said: "I'll follow your command. But my belly is empty—I won't have the strength."

The king immediately issued an edict: "The Court of Imperial Entertainments is to quickly prepare a vegetarian feast."

In no time the meal arrived. Bajie ate his fill, roused his spirits, and followed the Pilgrim, rising on the clouds.

The king, consorts, and all the civil and military officials each bowed toward the sky, all saying: "True immortals and true Buddhas have descended to the mortal world!"

The Great Sage, carrying Bajie, went seventy li to the south, halted the wind and clouds, and searched for the demon's lair. But he saw only a clear stream, banks on both sides lined with thousands upon thousands of willow trees, and no sign of Qinghua Village anywhere. Indeed:

Ten thousand acres of wild fields, endless to view; A thousand dykes of misty willows, hiding all trace.

The Great Sage, unable to find it, pinched a spell, recited the "Om" true word, and summoned the local Earth God of that place, who approached trembling and knelt: "Great Sage, the Earth God of Willow Grove Slope bows his head."

The Pilgrim said: "Don't be afraid. I won't hit you. I ask you: there is a Qinghua Village at Willow Grove Slope—which direction is it?"

The Earth God said: "Here there is a Qinghua Cave, but no Qinghua Village. I understand now—the Great Sage must be coming from the Kingdom of Bhiksou?"

The Pilgrim said: "Exactly, exactly. The King of Bhiksou was deceived by a demon. Old Sun went there, recognized the demon, and fought him off. He turned into a beam of cold light and vanished, no one knows where. When I asked the King of Bhiksou, he said three years ago, when the demon presented the beauty, he had asked about his origins. The demon said he lived at Qinghua Village, Willow Grove Slope, seventy li south of the city. I came here and see only the willow grove, not Qinghua Village. That is why I ask you."

The Earth God kowtowed: "I beg the Great Sage to forgive me. The King of Bhiksou is also the lord of my land. I should have been watchful. But the demon's spiritual power and magic are great—if I had leaked his affairs, he would have come and bullied me. That is why I did not report. Now that the Great Sage has come,

go to the south bank, to the root of a single willow tree with nine branches. Turn left three times, turn right three times, slap the tree with both hands together, and call out 'Open the door' three times—the Qinghua Cave dwelling will appear."

The Great Sage, hearing this, sent the Earth God away, and with Bajie leapt over the stream to find that willow tree.

Sure enough, there was a tree with nine branches, all from a single trunk.

The Pilgrim instructed Bajie: "You stand far off. When I call open the door and find the demon, I'll chase him out, and you come to support me."

Bajie, hearing the order, stationed himself half a li from the tree. The Great Sage, following the Earth God's instructions, walked around the tree root—left three turns, right three turns—slapped the tree with both hands, and called: "Open the door! Open the door!" Instantly, with a loud crash, the tree split open like double doors, and the tree vanished without a trace. Inside, the light was radiant and colorful, but there was no sign of people.

The Pilgrim, taking advantage of his divine prowess, charged in. He saw a fine place indeed:

Mist and glow shimmered bright, The sun and moon borrowed their light. White clouds drifted constantly from the cave, Green moss ran wild across the courtyard. Along one path, rare flowers vied in splendor; On every step, jade grasses contended in fragrance. The air was warm, the scene ever-spring— Just like the Garden of Langyuan, No less than Penglai or Yingzhou. Slippery seats were overgrown with long vines; A level bridge was hung with tangled creepers. Bees carried red stamens to the rocky cave; Butterflies played among hidden orchids past the stone screen.

The Pilgrim hurried forward, looked closely, and saw four large characters on the stone screen: "Qinghua Immortal Palace."

Unable to contain himself, he leapt past the stone screen and saw the old monster embracing a beautiful woman, panting heavily, talking about the Bhiksou affair, both crying out: "What a fine opportunity! Three years' work, finished today—ruined by that monkey head!"

The Pilgrim rushed up, whipped out his rod, and shouted: "You bunch of hairy louts! What fine opportunity! Take a blow from my rod!" The old monster dropped the beauty, swung his coiled-dragon staff, and hurried to meet the attack. The two of them fought before the cave—this battle even fiercer than before:

The rod rose, spewing golden light; The staff whirled, belching vicious air.

The monster said: "You ignoramus, you dare enter my door!"

The Pilgrim said: "I mean to subdue you, evil monster!"

The monster said: "I courted the king—what's it to you? Why do you come bullying your way in?"

The Pilgrim said: "A monk's practice is rooted in compassion; I cannot bear to see children slaughtered alive."

Words flew back and forth, each side full of hatred; The rod met the staff, aimed straight at the heart. Fine flowers were crushed in the heat of battle; Green moss was trampled where feet slipped. The battle dimmed the cave's radiant glow; The fragrant blooms on the rocks were all pressed flat.

The clash startled birds so they could not fly; The shouts frightened the beauty into flight. Only the old monster and the Monkey King remained, As howling winds swept the ground.

Just as they fought their way out the cave door, they ran into Bajie, whose dull nature was roused. Originally, Bajie outside had heard the commotion inside, and it had made him itch with impatience. He took out his rake, uprooted the nine-branched willow tree, and hacked at it a few times. Blood spurted out, with a faint crying sound.

He said: "This tree has become a spirit! This tree has become a spirit!" He pressed it down and was about to strike again when he saw the Pilgrim chasing the demon out. Without a word, the idiot rushed forward, raising his rake to strike. The old monster, already hard-pressed fighting the Pilgrim, saw Bajie's rake coming and grew even more panicked. He lost the fight, shook his body, turned into a beam of cold light, and fled eastward. The two of them refused to let go and gave chase to the east.

Just as they were shouting and pursuing, they heard the sound of luan cranes and auspicious light, ethereal and faint. Looking up, they saw it was the Old Man Star of the South Pole—the Star of Longevity. The old man enveloped the cold light and called: "Great Sage, slow down! Tianpeng, stop chasing! This old Daoist is here to bow."

The Pilgrim returned the bow: "Brother Longevity Star, where are you coming from?"

Bajie laughed: "Meat-headed old fellow, you've enveloped the cold light—you must have caught the monster."

The Star of Longevity smiled apologetically: "He's here, he's here. I beg you two gentlemen to spare his life."

The Pilgrim said: "This old monster has nothing to do with you, brother—why do you intercede?"

The Star of Longevity laughed: "He is my mount. I never expected him to run off and become this monster."

The Pilgrim said: "Since he is your creature, brother, make him show his true form for us to see."

The Star of Longevity, hearing this, released the cold light and shouted: "Wicked beast! Show your true form at once, and I'll spare your death sentence!" The monster turned around—and it was a white deer. The Star of Longevity picked up his walking stick: "This wicked beast! He even stole my staff!" The deer prostrated itself on the ground, unable to speak, only kowtowing and shedding tears.

Just look at him:

His body was like jade, mottled with streaks; His two antlers branched in seven curving tines. When hungry, he sought the herb garden; When thirsty, he drank from cloud-fed streams. Over the years he learned the arts of flight; In time he mastered the power of transformation. Now, summoned by his master, He showed his form, ears folded, prostrate in the dust.

The Star of Longevity thanked the Pilgrim and was about to mount the deer and leave, but the Pilgrim seized him and said: "Brother, wait—there are still two things unfinished."

The Star of Longevity said: "What things are still unfinished?"

The Pilgrim said: "First, the beauty hasn't been captured yet—I don't know what kind of monster she is. Second, we need to go together to the Kingdom of Bhiksou to show the foolish king and report back."

The Star of Longevity said: "In that case, I'll wait here. You and Tianpeng go into the cave and capture that beauty, then we can all go and reveal the truth."

The Pilgrim said: "Just wait a moment, brother. We'll be right back."

Bajie, rousing his spirits, followed the Pilgrim straight into the Qinghua Immortal Palace, shouting: "Capture the demon! Capture the demon!"

The beauty, trembling and terrified, had no way to escape. Hearing the shouts grow louder, she ducked behind the stone screen—but there was no back door. Bajie shouted: "Where are you going! You seductive spirit who deceived men! Take my rake!"

The beauty had no weapon and could not fight back. She flashed to the side, turned into a beam of cold light, and tried to flee outward. But the Great Sage blocked the cold light—crack! One blow of the rod—and the monster could not keep her footing. She fell in the dust and revealed her true form: it was a white-faced fox. The idiot could not restrain himself—raising his rake, he brought it down on her head. Pitiful—that beauty whose smile could topple cities and kingdoms, now transformed into a hairy fox corpse!

The Pilgrim called out: "Don't smash her—keep the body to show the foolish king."

The idiot, not minding the filth, grabbed the fox by the tail and dragged her out, following the Pilgrim through the door.

They saw the Star of Longevity, hand on the deer's head, scolding: "You wicked beast! How could you betray your master and run off to become a demon here! If I hadn't come, the Great Sage Sun would surely have beaten you to death."

The Pilgrim leapt out: "What are you saying, brother?"

The Star of Longevity said: "I was scolding the deer! I was scolding the deer!"

Bajie flung the dead fox down in front of the deer: "Is this your daughter?" The deer nodded and shook its head, stretching its mouth to sniff at the fox several times, making soft sounds, as if reluctant to part. The Star of Longevity slapped it on the head: "Wicked beast! You're lucky to keep your life—why do you sniff at her?" He untied his sash, looped it around the deer's neck, and led it: "Great Sage, let's go see the King of Bhiksou together."

The Pilgrim said: "Wait! Let's sweep this place clean, so no more demons arise here in years to come."

Bajie, hearing this, raised his rake and hacked wildly at the willow trees.

The Pilgrim recited the "Om" true word again, summoning the local Earth God once more: "Gather some dry firewood and light a blazing fire, to eliminate this demon's lair for your area, so it won't trouble you again." The Earth God turned, and with a gust of cold wind, led his ghost soldiers to gather frost-grass, autumn-green grass, smartweed grass, mountain-rue grass, basket-mugwort wood, dragon-bone wood, and reed-catkin wood—all dried-out remnants from the year before, catching fire as readily as oil.

The Pilgrim called: "Bajie, no need to hack the trees. Just stuff these into the cave and set them ablaze—burn it clean." Once the fire was lit, it indeed burned the Qinghua demon's lair to a scorched pit.

Only then did they dismiss the Earth God. Together with the Star of Longevity leading the deer and dragging the fox, they returned to the court. The Pilgrim said to the king: "Is this your Beautiful Consort? Was she fun to play with?"

The king trembled with fear. Then he saw the Great Sage Sun leading the Star of Longevity, pulling the white deer—they had all arrived before the hall. The king, officials, and consorts all bowed down at once.

The Pilgrim stepped forward, supported the king, and laughed: "Don't bow to me. This deer is your State Father—you should bow to him."

The king was so ashamed he wished the ground would swallow him, and could only say: "I thank the divine monk for saving the children of my entire kingdom. This is truly Heaven's grace!" He immediately issued an edict for the Court of Imperial Entertainments to arrange a vegetarian banquet, to open the Eastern Pavilion, and invite the Old Man Star of the South Pole and the Tang Priest's four disciples to sit together in gratitude.

Sanzo bowed to the Star of Longevity, and the Sha Monk also greeted him with proper ceremony. They all asked: "Since the white deer belongs to the Old Star of Longevity, how did he come here to cause harm?"

The Star of Longevity laughed: "Earlier, the Imperial Lord of the Eastern Florescence visited my humble mountain. I kept him to play chess, and before the game was finished, this wicked beast slipped away. After my guest departed, I looked for him but could not find him. I calculated with my fingers and knew he had come here. I came to find him, and just in time met the Great Sage Sun exerting his power. If I had been any later, this beast would have been finished."

Before the conversation was done, someone reported: "The banquet is ready." What a fine vegetarian feast:

Five colors filled the gate; Extraordinary fragrance filled every seat. The tables were hung with embroidered valances, gorgeous with brocade; The floor was covered with red carpets, shimmering with rosy light. In precious duck censers, aloeswood and sandalwood curled; Before the royal feast, vegetable dishes steamed with fragrance. On the serving platters, tall fruit was stacked into pavilions, And dragon candy was twisted into the shapes of beasts. Mandarin-duck ingots, lion-immortal candies— Each in lifelike shape; Parrot cups, egret dippers— Each as if real. Fruits before the seats, every kind abundant; Vegetarian dishes on the tables, every item exquisite. Giant chestnuts and small bulbs, Fresh lychees and peaches. Dates and dried persimmons, sweet to the taste; Pine nuts and grapes, fragrant and rich. Several kinds of honeyed sweets, A number of steamed pastries. Fried in oil, drizzled with sugar— A tapestry of blooms and brocade. Golden plates heaped high with large steamed buns; Silver bowls brimming with fragrant rice. Spicy-hot soup with long glass noodles, Fragrant and savory, brought in continuous procession. Beyond telling: mushrooms, tree-ear fungus, Tender bamboo shoots, yellow essence root— Ten-fragrance vegetarian dishes, a hundred delicacies. Servers came and went without pause; As courses advanced and retreated, all was sumptuously set.

When the seats were arranged, the Star of Longevity took the seat of honor, the Elder took the second seat, the king took the front seat, and the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk took the side seats. Two or three Grand Preceptors accompanied them on either side. The Music Office was ordered to play. The king held up a purple aurora cup and personally poured wine for each guest—only the Tang Priest did not drink.

Bajie said to the Pilgrim: "Elder brother, you can have the fruit, but let me enjoy the soups and rice."

The idiot, not distinguishing good from bad, piled everything together, and whatever came, he ate clean. When the banquet was over, the Star of Longevity took his leave.

The king approached, knelt, and bowed to the Star of Longevity, begging for a method to cure his illness and prolong his life. The Star of Longevity laughed: "I came to find my deer and didn't bring any elixir. I'd like to teach you a cultivation method, but your sinews are withered and your spirit is broken—you cannot return to the elixir. I only have three dates in my sleeve—they were presented to the Imperial Lord of the Eastern Florescence for tea, and I hadn't eaten them. Let me give them to you."

The king swallowed them and gradually felt his body lighten and his illness recede. Those who later attained long life in that kingdom all originated from this.

Bajie, seeing this, called out: "Old Longevity! You have fire-dates—give me a few to eat!"

The Star of Longevity said: "I didn't bring any. Some other day I'll send you a few catties." He then exited the Eastern Pavilion, expressed his thanks, gave the white deer a shout to rise, leapt onto its back, and rode away on the clouds. The king, consorts, and the common people of the city all burned incense and bowed—let us not dwell on this.

Sanzo called: "Disciples, pack up and bid farewell to the king." The king again earnestly begged for instruction.

The Pilgrim said: "Your Majesty, from now on, indulge less in sexual desire and accumulate more hidden merit. In all things, make up for shortcomings with your strengths, and you will naturally be able to cure illness and prolong your life—that is the teaching."

The king brought out two plates of loose gold and silver, offering them as travel expenses. The Tang Priest firmly refused, not accepting a single coin. The king, having no other choice, ordered the imperial carriage to be prepared, invited the Tang Priest to sit in the phoenix carriage and dragon chariot, and the king himself along with the consorts pushed the wheels and turned the axle, seeing them out of the court. The main streets and markets—the common people—all filled their bowls with clean water and lit true incense in their censers, and saw them out of the city.

Suddenly, a gust of wind sounded in midair. On both sides of the road, one thousand one hundred and eleven goose cages descended. Inside, children were crying. Invisible in the air, the City God, the Earth God, the Village God, the True Officials, the Five-Direction Protectors, the Four Duty Officers, the Six Ding and Six Jia, and the Guardian Sangharama all called out in unison: "Great Sage, we were previously commanded by you to take away the children in the goose cages. Now that we know the Great Sage has succeeded and is departing, we have brought them all back, one by one."

The king, consorts, and all the subjects bowed down once more.

The Pilgrim called to the sky: "I have troubled you all. Please return to your respective shrines. I shall have the people offer sacrifices to thank you."

Whoosh, whoosh—the cold wind rose again and departed. The Pilgrim called for the families of the city to come claim their children.

Word spread quickly. They all came, each claiming their child from the cages—joyfully, hugging them out, calling "big brother!" "my little flesh!"—some jumping, some laughing, all crying: "Hold onto the Grandfathers from the Great Tang! Come to our house to receive our thanks for saving our children!"

Young and old, men and women, none were afraid of their ugly appearances. They hoisted up Bajie, carried the Sha Monk, lifted the Great Sage Sun on their heads, supported the Tang Priest, led the horse, carried the luggage—and surged back into the city. The king could not stop them. This family opened a banquet, that family set out a feast. Those who could not invite them in time made monk's hats, monk's shoes, monastic robes, cloth socks—clothes large and small, inside and out—all coming to present as gifts.

In this manner they lingered for nearly a month before they could leave the city. Some even had portraits painted and spirit tablets set up, burning incense and making offerings. This was truly:

Hidden merit piled high—a mountain of grace, Saving thousands upon thousands of lives.

But what happened after—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 80

The Fair Maiden Nourishes Yang and Seeks a Mate; The Mind-Ape Protects His Master and Knows the Demon

The story continues: The lord, ministers, and common people of the Kingdom of Bhikshu escorted Tang Sanzang and his three disciples out of the city for a full twenty li and still would not let them go. Sanzang reluctantly dismounted from his carriage, mounted his horse, and took his leave. Those who watched him go did not turn back until they could no longer see his silhouette. The four pilgrims traveled for a good long while. Winter had ended and spring was nearly spent. They gazed at wild flowers and mountain trees, the scenery fragrant and lush, and ahead they saw another high mountain with steep ridges.

Sanzang's heart filled with alarm, and he asked: "Disciples, there is a high mountain ahead. Is there a road through it or not? We must be careful!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, that talk of yours doesn't sound like a man who has traveled a long road—it sounds more like some prince or noble's son sitting at the bottom of a well looking at the sky. As the old saying goes, 'Mountains don't block roads; roads make their own way through mountains.' Why ask whether there is a road or not?" Sanzang said: "Though it is true that mountains don't block roads, I fear that in the perilous heights monsters may be born, and in the depths of dense forests demons may emerge." Bajie said: "Don't worry, don't worry! We are not far now from the Land of Ultimate Bliss. I guarantee we'll be safe and sound!" As master and disciples were talking, they arrived at the foot of the mountain before they knew it.

The Pilgrim took out his gold-banded cudgel, walked up onto the rocky cliff, and called: "Master, here is the road that winds around the mountain—very easy walking. Come along, come along!"

The elder had no choice but to set his mind at ease and urge his horse forward. The Sha Monk called: "Second Brother, take a turn carrying the load." And indeed Bajie took up the load and shouldered it. The Sha Monk gathered the reins, the old master sat steady in his carved saddle, and they all followed the Pilgrim up the great road along the cliff. Just look at that mountain:

Clouds and mists shroud the mountain's crown; In the ravines below, stream waters surge and flow. A hundred flowers' fragrance fills the road; Ten thousand trees grow dense and close. Green plums and white peaches, Green willows and red peach-blossoms. Where cuckoos call, the spring is drawing to its close; Purple swallows twitter—the season's rites are done. Towering crags of stone, Pines with emerald canopies. Rugged, winding mountain trails, Sharply rising, finely wrought. Sheer cliffs and hanging precipices, steep and high; Ivy, creepers, grass, and trees, thick and lush. A thousand crags vie in beauty, ranked like a line of halberds; Ten thousand gorges race with streams, their distant waves in flood.

The old master gazed slowly at the mountain scenery, when suddenly he heard the call of birds and was stirred once more by homesickness. He reined in his horse and cried:

"Disciples! By the heavenly tablet I received the imperial decree, Beneath the brocade screen I was given my travel pass. On the night of the Lantern Festival I left the Eastern Land, And only then did the Tang king and I part as heaven and earth. We had our meeting of dragon and tiger, wind and cloud, But now master and disciples are scattered like a routed cavalry. I have traveled past all twelve peaks of Mount Wu— When shall I see my sovereign face to face again?"

The Pilgrim said: "Master, you are always brooding on homesickness, not at all like a man who has left the world. Set your mind at ease and keep going. Don't worry so much. As the ancients said, 'If you seek wealth and glory in life, you must put in the hardest work.'"

Sanzang said: "Disciple, though you speak reason, I wonder—where is the road to the Western Heaven, after all?" Bajie said: "Master, my Buddha, the Tathagata, can't bear to part with those Three Vehicle scriptures.

He knows we're coming to fetch them, and I'll wager he has moved them away. Otherwise, why do we keep going and never arrive?" The Sha Monk said: "Stop your nonsense! Just follow Elder Brother and keep walking. Put in the work, and one day we'll get there."

As master and disciples were chatting, they saw before them a great forest of black pines. The Tang Priest was afraid and called again:

"Wukong, we have just passed that rugged mountain road, and now we encounter this deep, black pine forest? We must be careful." The Pilgrim said: "What's there to fear?" Sanzang said: "What do you mean, what's there to fear! 'If you don't believe in the straightness of the straight, you must beware of the unkindness of the kind.' I have walked through many a pine forest with you, but none so deep and far-reaching as this one. Look:

Dense and thick they stand east and west, In rows they march north and south. Dense and thick they stand east and west, piercing the clouds; In rows they march north and south, invading the azure sky. Thorn and bramble bind around in tangles; Smartweed twines its branches up and down. Vine comes to entangle kudzu, Kudzu goes to entangle vine. Vine comes to entangle kudzu—travelers east and west can barely pass; Kudzu goes to entangle vine—merchants north and south, how can they advance? Dwell in this forest half a year, and you'd lose all track of sun and moon; Walk for miles, and not a single star is to be seen. Look at the shady places—a thousand kinds of scenes; In the sunny spots—ten thousand clusters of flowers.

There too were thousand-year-old locusts and ten-thousand-year-old cypresses, cold-defying pines, mountain peaches, wild peonies, and drought-enduring hibiscus, all clustered in dense profusion, piled and tangled so thickly that even immortals could not paint them. And listen to the hundred birds: parrots whistling, cuckoos calling, magpies darting through branches, crows feeding their parents, yellow orioles flying and dancing, thrushes tuning their voices, partridges crying, purple swallows chattering, mynah birds learning to talk like men, and the thrush-cock who could even read scripture. And there were great tigers lashing their tails and grinding their teeth, foxes and badgers of many years dressed up as women, and aged gray wolves whose howling shook the very forest. Even if the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King came here, for all his skill at subduing demons, he too would lose his nerve!"

But the Great Sage Sun was not afraid in the least. He wielded his iron staff, stepped forward, and parted a way through, leading the Tang Priest straight into the deep forest. Leisurely they walked for half a day, yet found no way out of the forest.

The Tang Priest called: "Disciples, ever since we set out westward, we have seen countless mountains and forests, rugged and perilous, but fortunately this place is quiet and elegant, and we have been safe all along. The strange flowers and rare herbs in this forest are truly pleasing. I want to sit here a while: first, to rest the horse; second, I am hungry. Go somewhere and beg some vegetarian food for me to eat."

The Pilgrim said: "Master, please dismount. Old Sun will go and beg for food." The elder indeed dismounted. Bajie tied the horse to a tree, the Sha Monk set down the luggage, took out the alms bowl, and handed it to the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim said: "Master, sit steady. Don't be alarmed. I'll go and come right back." Sanzang sat upright beneath the shade of the pines. Bajie and the Sha Monk went off looking for breezes and fruit, idly amusing themselves.

Now the Great Sage leapt into the air on his somersault cloud, halted his cloud light, and looked back. He saw that within the pine forest auspicious clouds drifted and propitious mists curled. He cried out involuntarily: "Fine! Fine!" Why did he cry "Fine"? He was praising the Tang Priest, saying that he was the reincarnation of the Elder Golden Cicada, a good man who had cultivated for ten lifetimes, and therefore he had this auspicious radiance canopying his head.

"If it were me, Old Sun, five hundred years ago when I wreaked havoc in Heaven's palace, roaming the corners of the sea, running wild to the ends of the earth, gathering a host of demons to call myself the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, subduing dragons and tigers, striking my name from the registers of death—I wore a triple-crested golden crown, golden armor on my body, the gold-banded cudgel in my hand, cloud-stepping boots on my feet, with forty-seven thousand monsters under my command, all calling me Grandpa Great Sage—that was truly something! Now I have shed Heaven's punishment, humbled and submitted, and become your disciple. But seeing my master's head canopied by auspicious clouds and propitious mists, I think he will surely achieve some great good when he returns to the Eastern Land, and Old Sun will surely attain a true fruition as well."

As he was thus praising and reflecting, suddenly he saw below, at the southern end of the forest, a thread of black air bubbling up. The Pilgrim cried in alarm: "That black air surely means there is evil afoot! My Bajie and the Sha Monk would never give off any black air." The Great Sage hovered in mid-air, observing carefully but unable to decide.

Now Sanzang sat in the forest, his mind clear and his nature manifest, reciting the Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra, when suddenly he heard a thin, plaintive voice calling: "Save me!"

Sanzang was startled and said: "Goodness! Goodness! In this deep forest, who could be calling? It must be someone frightened by wolves, tigers, or leopards. Let me go and see."

The elder rose to his feet, shifted his steps, passed through thousand-year-old cypresses and ten-thousand-year-old pines, clambered over vines and ivy, and drew near to look. He saw a woman bound to a great tree—her upper half tied to the tree with kudzu vines, her lower half buried in the earth.

The elder planted his feet and asked: "Lady Bodhisattva, what has happened to you? Why are you bound here?"

Alas! The creature was obviously a monster, but the elder's mortal eyes and fleshly body could not perceive it. When the demon saw him come and ask, tears poured from her like a spring. Just look at her: peach-blossom cheeks streaming with tears, a beauty to sink fish and startle wild geese; starry eyes brimming with grief, a face to shame the moon and close the flowers.

The elder dared not go closer. He asked again: "Lady Bodhisattva, what crime have you committed? Tell this poor monk, so that I may save you."

The demon, with glib words and honeyed phrases, false sentiment and hollow feeling, hastily answered: "Master, my home is in the Kingdom of Pinpo, more than two hundred li from here. My parents are still alive and are very devoted to doing good; all their lives they have lived in harmony with kin and friends. It was the season of Qingming, and they invited all our relatives and the entire family to sweep and offer sacrifices at our ancestors' tombs. A whole procession of sedan chairs and horses went out to the wilderness. When we reached the tombs and set out the sacrificial offerings, just as we were burning paper money, there was a sudden clashing of gongs and drums, and a gang of bandits rushed out, brandishing swords and staves, shouting and killing their way toward us. We were so terrified our souls flew and our spirits scattered.

"My parents and all the relatives got horses and sedan chairs and each fled for their lives. I was young and couldn't run—I fell to the ground in fright. The bandits carried me off into the mountains. The first great chief wanted to make me his wife, the second chief wanted me for his consort, and the third and fourth all coveted my beauty. Seven or eight of them quarreled at once, none willing to yield. So they tied me to a tree in the forest and went their separate ways. It has been five days and five nights now. I am at the end of my strength and will not live much longer!

"I don't know what virtue my ancestors accumulated in some past life, but today I have met you, venerable master. I beg you, in your great compassion, to save my life. Beneath the Nine Springs, I will never forget your kindness!" So saying, her tears fell like rain. Sanzang's heart was truly moved. He could not hold back his own tears. His voice choking, he called: "Disciples!"

Now Bajie and the Sha Monk were in the forest looking for flowers and fruit. When they suddenly heard the master cry out so piteously, the idiot said: "Sha Monk, has the master found some relative here?"

The Sha Monk laughed: "Second Brother, what nonsense! We've been walking all this time and haven't met a single good person. Where would a relative come from?" Bajie said: "If not a relative, where would the master be crying with someone? Let's go and see." The Sha Monk indeed returned to the old place, led the horse, shouldered the load, and came before them, calling: "Master, what is it?" The Tang Priest pointed at the woman on the tree and said: "Bajie, untie that Lady Bodhisattva and save her life." The idiot, not knowing good from bad, went to work immediately.

Now the Great Sage in mid-air saw the black air growing thick and dense, completely covering the auspicious light. He cried: "Bad, bad! Black air shrouding the auspicious light—I fear some demon is trying to harm my master! Begging for food is a small matter; let me go see about my master first." He turned his cloud around, descended into the forest, and saw Bajie untying the ropes in great haste. The Pilgrim stepped forward, grabbed him by the ear, and threw him to the ground with a thud.

The idiot looked up, scrambled to his feet, and said: "Master told me to save the woman. Why do you use your strength to fling me down?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Brother, don't untie her. She is a monster, making trouble to deceive us." Sanzang shouted: "You rogue monkey, talking nonsense again! How can you tell that such a woman is a monster?" The Pilgrim said: "Master, you don't know. This is all Old Sun's old trade—these are tricks to get human flesh. How would you recognize them?" Bajie, with a snort, said: "Master, don't listen to this Bimawen fooling you! This woman is a local person of this place. We have come all the way from the Eastern Land; we're neither her kinfolk nor her relations. Why does he say she's a monster? He wants to send us on ahead, then he'll somersault back and use magic to have his secret tryst with her, playing the live-in son-in-law!" The Pilgrim shouted: "Blockhead! Stop your prattle! Old Sun has been traveling westward all this way—when have I ever been so debauched? You, with your lust for beauty and contempt for life, your eye on profit and forgetfulness of duty, you gluttonous lout who can't tell good from bad—you'd get hoodwinked into being some family's son-in-law and end up tied to a tree!" Sanzang said: "Very well, very well. Bajie, your elder brother is often right. Since he says so, let's leave her be and go." The Pilgrim was overjoyed: "Good! The master is saved! Please mount your horse. Outside the pine forest there will be a household where we can beg food." The four of them indeed went forward together, leaving the demon behind.

Now the demon, bound to the tree, gnashed her teeth and said: "For years I've heard people say that Sun Wukong has vast magic powers. Seeing him today, the words are no exaggeration. That Tang Priest is a man who has cultivated his whole body, with not a single drop of his primal yang spent. I was about to take him and couple with him, to become a Taiyi Golden Immortal. Who knew this monkey would see through my art and take him away? If he had untied me and let me down, I could have seized him on the spot—wouldn't he have been my man? Now he's talked them away with a bunch of scattered words, and my effort has come to nothing.

"Let me call out to him a couple more times and see what happens." The clever demon, without moving her bonds, sent a few fine words and gentle phrases on a favorable wind, piping them thinly into the Tang Priest's ear. What did she say? She called:

"Master! You will not save a living person's life— With guilty heart, what scripture do you seek to fetch?"

The Tang Priest on his horse heard her calling again, and he reined in his horse and said: "Wukong, go and save that woman."

The Pilgrim said: "Master, we're on our way—why do you think of her again?" Sanzang said: "She's calling again." The Pilgrim asked: "Bajie, did you hear her?" Bajie said: "My big ears blocked the sound. I didn't hear a thing." He asked again: "Sha Monk, did you hear?" The Sha Monk said: "I was carrying the load, walking ahead. I wasn't paying attention, so I didn't hear." The Pilgrim said: "Old Sun didn't hear either. Master, what did she say? Only you heard." Sanzang said: "She spoke with reason. She said, 'You will not save a living person's life—with guilty heart, what scripture do you seek to fetch?' To save one life is better than building a seven-story pagoda. Go and save her—it's better than seeking scriptures and worshiping Buddha." The Pilgrim laughed: "When Master starts being virtuous, there's no medicine to cure it. Think about it—you left the Eastern Land and have been traveling westward. You've crossed several mountain ranges and met many a monster, who have often carried you into their caves. Old Sun came to save you, swinging his iron staff, and has beaten them by the thousand and ten thousand. Today you can't bear the life of a single monster, and you want to save her?" Sanzang said: "Disciple, the ancients said, 'Do not fail to do good because it is small; do not do evil because it is small.' Go and save her." The Pilgrim said: "Since you are so set on it, Master, this is one burden Old Sun cannot bear.

"If you want to save her, I won't try hard to dissuade you—dissuade you for a while and you'll get angry. Save her as you please." Sanzang said: "Monkey, enough talk! You sit here. Let me and Bajie go save her."

Sanzang went back into the forest and told Bajie to untie the upper half of the ropes and use his rake to dig out the lower half of her body. The demon straightened her shoes, gathered her skirt, and followed the Tang Priest out of the pine forest, delighted. When she saw the Pilgrim, the Pilgrim only laughed coldly without end. Sanzang scolded: "Rogue monkey! What are you laughing at?" The Pilgrim said: "I laugh that when your fortune's high, you meet good friends; when your luck runs out, you meet a beauty." Sanzang scolded again: "Rogue macaque! Nonsense! Ever since I came out of my mother's womb, I've been a monk. Now I've been sent by imperial decree to travel westward, devoutly worshiping Buddha and seeking scriptures. I'm no seeker of wealth and rank—what 'luck running out' is there for me!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, though you've been a monk since childhood, you've only read scriptures and chanted Buddha's name. You've never seen the statutes and laws of the king. This woman is young and pretty. You and I are men who have left the world. If we walk with her and happen to meet some evildoers who seize us and take us before the magistrate, then whatever scriptures or Buddha-worship we're about, we'd all be charged with illicit relations. Even if there's nothing to it, we'd be accused of abducting a person. You'd have your ordination certificate revoked and be beaten half to death. Bajie would be sentenced to military exile. The Sha Monk would be sent to serve as a posting-station attendant. [Translator's note: in ancient times, sending a convict to serve as a station attendant was called "posting."] And Old Sun wouldn't get off clean either—even if I could talk my way through it, I'd still be charged with 'failure to prevent.'"

Sanzang shouted: "Stop your nonsense! Surely saving a life couldn't bring such entanglement! If we take her along, whatever happens, it's all on me." The Pilgrim said: "Master, though you say it's on you, I fear you're not saving her but harming her." Sanzang said: "I save her from the forest and let her live—how is that harming her?" The Pilgrim said: "When she was tied in the forest, in three or five days, or a month, she'd have starved to death, and at least returned to the underworld with her body intact. Now you bring her out—you ride a fast horse and travel like the wind; we can only follow you. That woman has small feet and walks with difficulty. How can she keep up? Leave her behind for a moment, and if wolves, tigers, or leopards come by and swallow her in one bite—wouldn't that be harming her life instead?" Sanzang said: "You're right. I hadn't thought of that. What should we do?" The Pilgrim laughed: "Have her sit up and ride the horse with you." Sanzang hesitated: "How could I share a horse with her! ... How would she get there?" The Pilgrim said: "Have Bajie carry her." The Pilgrim laughed: "The idiot's luck has come!" Bajie said: "On

a long road even a light load is heavy. If you make me carry a person, what luck is that?" The Pilgrim said: "Your snout is long. If you carry her and turn your snout around for a bit of private talk, wouldn't that be convenient?" Bajie heard this, beat his chest and jumped: "Bad, bad! If Master wants to beat me a few times, I'd rather suffer the pain. But carrying her—no, I'd never come clean. Elder Brother has spent his whole life pinning false charges on people. I won't carry her!" Sanzang said: "Very well, very well. I can still walk a few steps. Let me get down and walk slowly with her. Bajie, you lead the empty horse." The Pilgrim laughed loudly: "The idiot has a bargain—Master is looking after him by letting him lead the horse." Sanzang said: "This monkey, more nonsense! The ancients said, 'A horse may travel a thousand li, but without a man it cannot get there on its own.' If I walk slowly on the road, would you leave me behind? If I'm slow, you're slow too. Let's all walk together with this Lady Bodhisattva down the mountain. When we reach a nunnery, temple, or any human dwelling, we'll leave her there. That will count as saving her." The Pilgrim said: "Master speaks sense. Let's go forward quickly." Sanzang strode ahead, the Sha Monk carried the load, Bajie led the empty horse, the Pilgrim carried his staff and kept watch over the woman. They went forward together.

Before they had gone twenty or thirty li, the sky was growing dark, and they saw another building with towers and pavilions.

Sanzang said: "Disciples, that must be a nunnery or monastery. Let's ask for lodging there and set out early tomorrow."

The Pilgrim said: "Master is right. Let's all walk a little faster." In a moment they reached the gate.

He said: "You all wait a bit farther off. Let me go in first and ask for lodging. If there's a suitable place, I'll call you in."

They all stood beneath the willow shade, while only the Pilgrim, holding his iron staff, kept watch over the woman.

The elder stepped forward and saw that the gate was tilting and crumbling, scattered and broken. He pushed it open and could not help feeling sad at heart: the long corridors were silent, the ancient temple desolate; moss covered the courtyard, weeds choked the paths;

Only fireflies flew in place of lamps, and frogs croaked in place of water clocks. The elder suddenly shed tears. Truly:

Halls and shrines crumbling and collapsed, Corridors and chambers desolate and ruined. Broken bricks and shattered tiles in a dozen heaps, All twisted beams and snapped pillars. Front and back, all overgrown with green grass, The rotting incense table buried in dust. The bell tower has crumbled, the drum has lost its skin; The glazed lamps and incense burners are smashed. The Buddha's golden image has lost all its color; The arhats lie toppled, this way and that. Guanyin, soaked and ruined, has crumbled into mud; Her willow sprig and pure water vase lie on the ground.

There is a poem as proof:

An ancient temple, long unvisited by any hand to mend it— Pitifully ruined, crumbling more with every passing year. Fierce winds have cracked the temple guardians' faces; Beating rains have battered down the Buddha images' heads. The vajra warriors have fallen and lie drenched in rain; The local earth god has no house to shelter him at night. And two more things there are to sigh and grieve over: The bronze bell lies on the ground, its hanging tower gone.

Sanzang gathered his courage, walked through the second gate, and saw that the bell and drum towers had both collapsed. There was only one bronze bell, half buried in the ground. Its upper half was white as snow, and its lower half was blue as indigo—after long years, the top had been bleached white by rain, and the

bottom had taken on the green patina of copper from the earth's vapor.

Sanzang touched the bell with his hand and called loudly:

"O bell! You too once hung from a high tower and roared, Your voice once rang far beneath the painted beams. You once reported the dawn at cockcrow, And once saw off the dusk at day's end. Where has the Daoist who cast your copper gone? Where is the coppersmith who forged you? I suppose both their lives have returned to the underworld— He has left no trace, and you have no voice."

The elder's loud lamentation aroused someone in the temple. Inside, there was a Daoist who served the incense. He heard voices, crawled up, picked up a piece of broken brick, and threw it at the bell. The bell went "clang!" The elder was so startled he fell over. He struggled to his feet to leave, but tripped on a tree root and fell again with a thud.

The elder lay on the ground, looked up, and said:

"O bell! This poor monk was just sighing over you, When suddenly you clanged with a ring! I suppose on the road to the Western Heaven no one comes— And after many years, you have become a spirit."

The Daoist hurried forward, helped him up, and said: "Master, please rise. It's not that the bell became a spirit—it was I who struck it." Sanzang looked up and saw that the man's face was ugly and black. He said: "You aren't some evil spirit, are you? I'm no ordinary person—I come from Great Tang, and I have disciples who can subdue dragons and tigers. If you run into them, your life won't be spared!" The Daoist knelt and said: "Master, don't be afraid. I'm not an evil spirit. I'm a Daoist who serves the incense in this temple. I heard your fine words of praise just now and was about to come out to welcome you. But I was afraid it might be some evil ghost knocking at the door, so I picked up a piece of broken brick and struck the bell to calm my nerves before I dared come out. Master, please rise." The Tang Priest then composed himself and said: "Abbot, you nearly frightened me to death. Take me inside."

The Daoist led the Tang Priest all the way to the third gate. Inside, the sight was very different from the outside. Just look:

Walls of blue brick built like banks of colored cloud; Halls roofed with green tile, glazed like sapphire. The holy images are dressed in gold; The steps and platforms are made of white jade. In the Hall of the Great Hero, green light dances; Beneath the Vairocana Pavilion, a keen spirit rises. In the Manjusri Hall, colored silks fly like clouds; In the Scripture Cabinet Hall, flowers are painted and kingfisher feathers piled. On the three-eaved rooftop, the jeweled finial points sharp; In the Five Blessings Tower, a level embroidered canopy spreads. A thousand stems of emerald bamboo sway by the meditation couch; Ten thousand kinds of green pines reflect before the Buddha's gate. In the Azure Cloud Palace, golden light radiates; Amid the purple mists, auspicious vapors float. At dawn, one hears the fragrant wind from the four fields afar; At dusk, one listens to the painted drums echoing from the mountain heights. If there should be a morning sun to mend a tattered robe, Should there not also be a moon to finish reading a half-read scripture? And there again: lamplight from the rear court lights up half the wall, And a line of incense smoke illumines the central courtyard.

Sanzang saw this and did not dare enter. He called: "Daoist, the front of your temple is in terrible disrepair, but the back is so neat and fine. Why?"

The Daoist laughed: "Master, this mountain is full of demons and bandits. When the weather is clear, they roam the mountain robbing; when it's overcast, they come and hide in the temple. They knock over the Buddha images to use as seats and haul off timber to burn for fire. The monks of this temple are weak and dare not argue with them. So we gave those broken front buildings to the bandits for their rest, and went and found new patrons to build a whole new temple at the back.

The clean and the corrupt are kept separate—such is the way of things in these western lands." Sanzang said: "So that's how it is."

As they walked on, they saw above the mountain gate five great characters: "Zhenhai Chan Forest Monastery." [Translator's note: Zhenhai means "Sea-Guarding."] He had just stepped through the gate when a monk came walking toward them. Look at him:

On his head a brocade hat, pinned at the left; A pair of copper rings hung from his earlobes. He wore a robe of coarse highland wool; A pair of white eyes gleamed bright as silver. In his hand he shook a rattle drum; His mouth recited foreign scriptures, hard to make out.

Sanzang did not recognize him, but this was a Lama monk of the western road. The Lama monk came out the gate, saw that Sanzang had clear brows and fine eyes, a broad forehead and level crown, ears that reached his shoulders and hands that passed his knees—like an arhat descended to the world, truly elegant. He came forward and seized him, his face full of smiles, squeezing his hands and feet, rubbing his nose, pulling his ears, all to show his affection.

He brought him into the abbot's quarters, and after the courtesies, asked: "Where does the venerable master come from?" Sanzang said: "This disciple is an imperial envoy from Great Tang in the Eastern Land, dispatched to the Western Heaven, to the Great Thunder Monastery in the kingdom of Tianzhu, to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. We have just arrived at your precious region at evening, and have come to your temple to beg lodging for one night. We will set out early tomorrow. I hope you will grant us this convenience." The monk laughed: "Outrageous! Outrageous! We didn't choose to leave the world out of goodwill—we were born of our parents, our fates afflicted with the Parasol Star, and our families couldn't keep us, so we were given up to become monks. But since we've become disciples of the Buddha, let's not speak of empty words." Sanzang said: "I speak the honest truth."

The monk said: "From the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven—what a distance that is! On the road there are mountains, in the mountains there are caves, and in the caves there are demons. A lone man like you, so tender and delicate—you don't look like a scripture-seeker at all!"

Sanzang said: "The abbot speaks truly. How could this poor monk have come here alone? I have three disciples who open roads through mountains and build bridges over waters to protect me. That is how I have reached your temple." The monk said: "Where are your three disciples?" Sanzang said: "They are waiting outside the mountain gate." The monk was alarmed and said: "Master, you don't know that we have tigers, wolves, demons, bandits, and ghosts that harm people here. We don't dare go far even in daylight, and we bar the gates before dark. And you've left your people outside at this hour!" He called: "Disciples, go quickly and invite them in."

Two young lamas ran outside, saw the Pilgrim, and fell over in fright. They saw Bajie and fell over again. They scrambled up and ran back, crying: "Grandpa! Bad luck! Your disciples are nowhere to be seen—there are only three or four monsters standing at the gate!" Sanzang asked: "What do they look like?"

The little monks said: "One has a thunder-god's beak, one has a pestle-like snout, and one has a green face and fangs. Beside them is a woman—she's a painted face, powdered and oiled."

Sanzang laughed: "You don't recognize them. Those three ugly ones are my disciples, and the woman is one I saved from the pine forest." The Lama said: "Grandpa, such a handsome master—how could you find such ugly disciples?" Sanzang said: "Ugly they may be, but they're all useful. Go and invite them in quickly. If you delay much longer, the one with the thunder-god's beak is a bit of a troublemaker—not born of human parents, he'll come barging in and start a fight." The little monk hurried out, fell to his knees trembling, and said: "Gentlemen, the Tang Master invites you in." Bajie laughed: "Brother, he invites us in, fine—but why is he trembling so?" The Pilgrim said: "They see our ugliness and are afraid." Bajie said: "What rot! We were

born this way—does anyone choose to be ugly?" The Pilgrim said: "Well, put away that ugliness a little!" The idiot indeed tucked his snout into his robe, lowered his head, and led the horse. The Sha Monk carried the load. The Pilgrim brought up the rear, carrying his staff and watching over the woman. They all went in through the collapsed corridors and through the third gate. They tied up the horse, set down the load, and entered the abbot's quarters, where they met the Lama monk and took their seats in order. The monk went inside and brought out seventy or eighty young lamas. After greeting them, they prepared a vegetarian feast. Truly:

To amass merit, one must hold thoughts of compassion; When the Dharma flourishes, monks praise monks.

But to know how they departed from the temple—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 81

At Zhenhai Monastery the Mind-Ape Knows the Monster; In the Black Pine Forest the Three Disciples Seek Their Master

The story resumes with Sanzang and his disciples arriving at the Zhenhai Chan Forest Monastery, where the monks received them and arranged a vegetarian feast. The four pilgrims finished eating, and the woman also got a little food in her. As dusk fell, lamps were lit in the abbot's quarters. The monks, first to ask about the Tang Priest's scripture-seeking journey, and second because they were eager to gaze at that woman, all crowded round in a cluster beneath the lamps.

Sanzang said to the Lama monk he had first met: "Abbot, tomorrow we will leave your precious mountain. How is the road westward?"

The monk fell to both knees. The elder hastily pulled him up and said: "Abbot, please rise! I only asked you about the road—why do you bow?" The monk said: "Venerable master, tomorrow when you travel west, the road will be flat and level; you need not worry. Only there is one small matter that is a bit awkward. I wanted to mention it the moment you arrived, but feared to give offense. Now that the meal is done, I venture to tell you: You, master, have come far from the east, weary and toilworn, and it would be fine for you to rest in the little monk's quarters. But this Lady Bodhisattva is not convenient to place—where to have her sleep, I don't know." Sanzang said: "Abbot, do not suspect us of any improper intention. This morning, passing through the Black Pine Forest, we came upon this woman tied to a tree. My disciple Sun Wukong would not save her, but I, out of bodhicitta, rescued her. Now we leave it to you, abbot, to find her a place to sleep." The monk thanked him and said: "Since the master is so generous, let us take her to the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, and set up a straw bedding behind the Heavenly King's image for her to sleep on." Sanzang said: "Excellent, excellent." And so the young monks led the woman away to sleep behind the hall.

The elder stayed in the abbot's quarters and told the abbots to make themselves free, and they all dispersed.

Sanzang instructed Wukong: "You've worked hard. Sleep early, rise early!"

And so they all bedded down in one place, not daring to leave his side, keeping watch over the master. As the night deepened, it was truly:

The Jade Rabbit rises high, all sounds grow still; The Heavenly Street is silent, no one passes by. The Milky Way gleams bright, the stars are brilliant; The watch drums from the tower mark the changing watches.

One night passed without further incident. When dawn came, the Pilgrim rose and told Bajie and the Sha Monk to pack up the baggage and the horse, then went to ask the master to set out. At this hour the elder was still sleeping heavily and had not woken. The Pilgrim went close and called: "Master!" The master lifted his head a fraction but could not manage to answer.

The Pilgrim asked: "Master, what is it?" The elder groaned: "Why is my head so dizzy and my eyes so swollen, and every bone and muscle in my body aching?" Bajie heard this and reached out to feel him—his body was somewhat hot to the touch.

The idiot laughed: "I know what it is. Last night he saw free food and ate a few extra bowls, then slept with his head tucked—indigestion!"

The Pilgrim shouted: "Nonsense! Let me ask the master what is truly the matter." Sanzang said: "In the middle of the night I got up to relieve myself and didn't put on my hat. I must have caught a draft." The Pilgrim said: "That could be. Can you travel now?" Sanzang said: "I cannot even sit up, let alone mount a horse. But what about delaying the journey!" The Pilgrim said: "Master, what are you saying! As the saying goes, 'A teacher for a day, a father for life.' We are your disciples, like your own sons. And another saying:

'You don't need your son to produce gold and silver; it's enough that he rises to the occasion.' Since you're unwell, what does it matter if we lose a few days? Resting a few days is no harm!" The brothers all attended to the master, and before they knew it morning was gone and evening came, a good night passed and dawn crept in.

Time flew; three days had already passed.

On that day, the master propped himself up and called: "Wukong, these two days I've been so ill I never asked—has anyone brought food to that woman we saved?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Why worry about her? Just mind your own illness." Sanzang said: "True, true. But help me up, and fetch my paper, brush, and ink. Let me borrow an inkstone from the temple." The Pilgrim said: "What for?" The elder said: "I want to write a letter and seal it together with my travel pass. Take it to Chang'an and present it to Emperor Taizong." The Pilgrim said: "That's easy! Old Sun may have no talent for other things, but when it comes to delivering letters, I'm the best in the world. You get the letter ready and give it to me—one somersault and I'll be in Chang'an, hand it to the Tang king, another somersault and I'll be back before your ink is even dry. But why send a letter? Read me what you mean to write first, and then write it." The elder shed tears and said: "I would write:

'Your monk bows his head and thrice makes full kowtow, Crying "Long life!" to worship the sovereign lord. Let the civil and military ranks both read this, Let the four hundred ministers all know and hear: That year I received the decree and left the Eastern Land, Hoping to see the World-Honored One at Vulture Peak. I did not expect to meet disaster on the road, I never thought calamity would strike at mid-journey. The monk, gravely ill, cannot take another step; The Buddha's gate is far and deep, touching Heaven's gate. With scriptures unfetched and life spent—toil in vain! I beg my sovereign: send another in my stead.'"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he could not help laughing aloud: "Master, you're too feeble! A little illness and you think like this. If you were truly at death's door, you need only ask me. Old Sun has his ways—I'd ask, 'Which King of Hell dares harbor such a thought? Which judge dares issue a warrant? Which ghost officer dares come to fetch you?' If they angered me, I'd bring out the temper I had when I wreaked havoc in Heaven, take my staff, and fight my way into the underworld again, seize all ten Kings of Hell, and pull the sinews out of every one of them—and still not let them off!"

Sanzang said: "Disciple, I am very ill—do not speak such big words." Bajie stepped forward and said: "Elder Brother, the master says he's not well, and you keep saying he's fine—this is very awkward. Let's talk it over while there's time: first we sell the horse, pawn the baggage, buy a coffin, see him to the end, and then scatter." The Pilgrim said: "Idiot, more nonsense! Don't you know that the master is the Tathagata's second disciple, originally called the Elder Golden Cicada? Because he slighted the Buddha's Law, he was meant to endure this great trial."

Bajie said: "Brother, if the master slighted the Buddha's Law and was sent back to the Eastern Land, into the sea of right and wrong, the arena of gossip, to be born as a human and vow to go to the Western Heaven to worship Buddha and seek scriptures—if he gets tied up by demons and strung up by monsters, and suffers every kind of misery, isn't that enough? Why make him sick on top of it?"

The Pilgrim said: "What would you know? The venerable master, while listening to the Buddha lecture on the Law, dozed off. As he slumped, his left foot slipped and crushed a single grain of rice, and for that he was sent down to the mortal world—and so he must endure these three days of illness." Bajie was startled: "With the way Old Pig splashes and scatters his food, I must be in for years and ages of sickness!" The Pilgrim said: "Brother, the Buddha does not hold it against you common folk. And besides, as the poem goes:

'Hoeing the grain under the midday sun, Sweat drips into the soil beneath the grain. Who knows that the meal on the plate— Every single grain is the fruit of bitter toil!'

The master will be better by tomorrow." Sanzang said:

"Today is worse than yesterday. My throat is very dry. Go find some cool water for me to drink." The Pilgrim said: "Good! If the master wants water, that means he's getting better. Let me go fetch it."

He took the alms bowl at once and went to the monastery kitchen at the rear to draw water. There he saw the monks, every one of them red-eyed, weeping and sobbing, yet not daring to cry aloud. The Pilgrim said: "You monks are too petty! We've stayed a few days, and when we leave we'll thank you and pay for firewood by the day. Why so spineless!" The monks fell to their knees in alarm: "We wouldn't dare! We wouldn't dare!" The Pilgrim said:

"Why wouldn't you dare? Is it that long-snouted monk of ours, with his big appetite, has eaten you out of house and home?"

The monks said: "My lord, on this barren mountain, great and small, we have a hundred-odd monks. If each of us fed your lordship for one day, we could feed you for a hundred days. How would we dare be so petty as to quarrel over food!"

The Pilgrim said: "If you're not quarreling, then why are you weeping?"

The monks said: "My lord, we don't know where the demon that has come to this temple came from, but every night we send two young monks to ring the bell and beat the drum. We hear the bell and drum sound, but the monks never return. The next day, when we search for them, we find only their monk's cap and shoes left in the rear garden—their bones still there, the flesh eaten off. In the three days you've been here, six of our monks have vanished. And so, my brothers cannot help but fear, cannot help but grieve.

Seeing that your venerable master is so compassionate, we did not dare tell him. But we could not hold back our tears."

When the Pilgrim heard this, he was both startled and pleased. "No need to say more," he said. "There must be a demon here harming people. Let me exterminate it for you." The monks said: "My lord, if it's a demon, it's no ordinary spirit—it surely can ride clouds and drive mists, come and go through the dark. As the ancients said well, 'Don't believe in the straightness of the straight; beware the unkindness of the kind.'

"My lord, do not blame us for saying so: if you can catch it, you'll rid our barren mountain of this scourge—three lifetimes' good fortune! But if you can't catch it, there would be a number of inconveniences."

The Pilgrim said: "What inconveniences?"

The monks said: "To tell the truth, my lord: this barren mountain, though it has a hundred-odd monks, is made up of folk who left the world as children—letting their hair grow till the razor came, stitching their ragged robes. In the morning they rise and wash their faces, press their hands together, bow low, and take refuge in the Great Way;

At night they tidy up, burn incense, piously click their teeth, and recite the name of Amitabha. Looking up, they see the Buddha—the nine-grade lotus, the Three Vehicles, the vessel of mercy and the cloud of Dharma—yearning to see the World-Honored One in the Jetavana grove. Looking down, they see their own hearts—keeping the Five Precepts, saving the great chiliocosm, amid the ten thousand dharmas—yearning to awaken from stubborn emptiness to the emptiness of form.

When the benefactors come—old and young, tall and short, fat and thin—each one beats his wooden fish, strikes his golden chime, jostling and crowding, chanting two scrolls of the Lotus Sutra, performing one session of the Liang King's Repentance. When the benefactors don't come—new and old, green and seasoned, rustic and refined—each one presses his palms together, closes his eyes, and in silent stillness

enters meditation on his rush mat, firmly shutting the door under the moon.

Let the orioles sing and the birds chatter and quarrel outside—they pay no heed, up on their great vehicle of expedient mercy. And so: they cannot subdue tigers, nor can they tame dragons; they know neither demon nor spirit. If your lordship provokes that demon, our hundred-odd monks would only be enough for one of its meals. First, it would send us all tumbling into the cycle of rebirth; second, it would wipe out this ancient Chan forest; and third, at the Tathagata's assembly, there would be not one speck of glory.

Those are the inconveniences."

When the Pilgrim heard the monks spell out this whole speech, anger rose in his heart and fury swelled in his breast. He cried out in a loud voice: "You monks are fools! You know all about the demon, but you know nothing of old Sun's reputation?"

The monks answered softly: "Truly, we do not know." The Pilgrim said: "Let me give you a brief summary today. Listen well:

I once subdued tigers and dragons on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit! I once went up to Heaven and wreaked havoc in the Heavenly Palace! When hungry, I nibbled two or three of Lord Lao Zi's elixir pills; When thirsty, I downed six or seven cups of the Jade Emperor's wine. With a pair of golden eyes, neither white nor black, I made the sky turn sallow and the moon grow dim! With a staff, neither short nor long, the gold-banded cudgel, I come without a shadow, leave without a trace! Never mind the big demons and the small monsters— Who cares if they're lazy or festering or rotten? One chase—those who run, run; those who tremble, tremble; those who hide, hide; those who panic, panic! One grab—those to be filed, filed; those to be burned, burned; those to be ground, ground; those to be pounded, pounded! Truly, the Eight Immortals cross the sea, each showing his own divine power! Monks, I'll catch this demon and show it to you—then you'll know who old Sun is!"

The monks listened, nodding secretly: "This bald head opens a big mouth and talks big talk—he must have some background." They all murmured assent. Only the Lama monk said: "Wait! Your venerable master is ill—catching this demon is not urgent. As the proverb says, 'When a young lord attends a banquet, if he doesn't get drunk, he'll at least be full; when a warrior goes into battle, if he doesn't die, he'll be wounded.' If you and the demon clash and it brings trouble to your master, that would not be very convenient." The Pilgrim said: "Fair point! Fair point! Let me first bring the master some cool water, and then I'll come."

He lifted the alms bowl, filled it with cool water, left the kitchen, and went to the abbot's quarters. He called: "Master, here's your cool water."

Sanzang, in the midst of his feverish thirst, lifted his head, cradled the bowl, and drank it down in one breath. Truly, when you're thirsty, a single drop is sweet as nectar; when the right medicine comes, the illness departs.

The Pilgrim saw the elder's spirit reviving, his brow and eyes relaxing, and asked: "Master, would you like some soup and rice?"

Sanzang said: "This cool water is like an elixir—the illness has lifted by half. I could eat some soup and rice." The Pilgrim called loudly: "The master is better! He wants soup and rice!" He had the monks hurry and prepare. They washed rice, boiled porridge, rolled noodles, griddled flatbreads, steamed buns, made noodle soup—four or five tables' worth.

The Tang Priest managed only half a bowl of rice broth. The Pilgrim and the Sha Monk had one table's worth. The rest—all of it—Bajie devoured in one belly. When the dishes were cleared and the lamps lit, the monks dispersed.

Sanzang said: "How many days have we been here now?" The Pilgrim said: "Three full days. By tomorrow evening, it will be four." Sanzang said: "Three days—so much journey lost." The Pilgrim said:

"Master, it can't be counted as lost journey. Let's go tomorrow."

Sanzang said: "True—even with a touch of illness, there's no help for it." The Pilgrim said: "Since we're going tomorrow, let me catch that demon tonight." Sanzang was startled: "Catch what demon?" The Pilgrim said: "There's a demon in this temple. Let old Sun catch it for you." The Tang Priest said: "Disciple, I'm still sick—why do you take up such a notion! If that demon has magic powers and you can't catch it, wouldn't that be worse for me?"

The Pilgrim said: "You do love to dampen a man's spirits! Old Sun has subdued demons everywhere—have you ever seen me bested by anyone? I only need to strike—and when I strike, I win."

Sanzang caught hold of him and said: "Disciple, as the saying goes, 'When you can do a kindness, do a kindness; where you can spare a person, spare a person. To harbor a good heart is better than fretting; to swallow your anger is higher than fighting for pride!'" But the Great Sage Sun saw his master urgently pleading with him not to subdue the demon, so he told the truth: "Master, to tell you plainly, that demon has been eating people here." The Tang Priest was shocked: "Eaten whom?" The Pilgrim said: "In the three days we've been here, it has already eaten six young monks of this temple." The elder said: "When the rabbit dies, the fox grieves; when one of their kind is hurt, all feel the wound. Since it has eaten monks of this temple, and I am a monk too, I will let you go—only be careful." The Pilgrim said: "No need to say more. Old Sun's hand will clear it up."

See him, before the lamp, instruct Bajie and the Sha Monk to guard the master. Then he stepped gleefully out of the abbot's quarters and went straight to the Buddha hall. The stars were out in the sky, but the moon had not yet risen, and the hall was dark. He blew out true fire, lit the glazed lamp, beat the drum on the east side, and rang the bell on the west.

After the sounding, he shook his body and changed into a little monk, no more than twelve or thirteen years old, wearing a yellow silk tunic and a white cloth robe, tapping a wooden fish and reciting scripture with his mouth. He waited until the first watch—no sign of anything. At the second watch, the waning moon rose, and suddenly there came a great gust of wind. What a wind!

Black mists shrouded the sky in darkness; Sorrowful clouds cast a murky gloom on the earth. All around, it was like ink splashed everywhere; One whole expanse dyed in indigo haze. First it raised dust and scattered earth; Then it felled trees and wrecked the forest. When it raised dust and scattered earth, the starlight showed through; When it felled trees and wrecked the forest, the moon grew dim. It blew so hard that Chang'e clutched the cassia tree in the moon, And the Jade Rabbit scurried round and round looking for its mortar. The Nine Luminaries all shuttered their doors; The Dragon Kings of the Four Seas all shut their gates. In the temple, the City God searched for his little ghosts; In the air, how could the immortals ride their clouds? In the underworld, King Yama hunted for his horse-faced demon; The judges ran about, chasing their headgear. It blew the very rocks from the peak of Mount Kunlun, And churned the rivers and lakes into a muddy swirl.

As the wind passed, there came suddenly a fragrance of orchid and musk, the tinkling of jade pendants. The little monk lifted his head to look—and there was a beautiful woman, walking straight into the Buddha hall. The Pilgrim kept mumbling his scripture, wah-wah-wah.

The woman drew near, threw her arms around him, and said: "Little master, what scripture are you reciting?"

The Pilgrim said: "One I vowed to recite." The woman said: "Everyone else is free and sleeping—why do you still recite scripture?" The Pilgrim said:

"I vowed to recite it. Why wouldn't I?" The woman held him close and gave him a kiss: "Let's you and me go to the back and play a while." The Pilgrim deliberately turned his head away and said: "You don't know proper conduct!" The woman said: "Can you read faces?" The Pilgrim said: "I know a little." The woman said: "What do you read in mine?" The Pilgrim said: "I read that you're the sort who sneaks around with men and got chased out by your parents-in-law."

The woman said: "Wrong! Wrong! I wasn't chased out by my parents-in-law, and not for sneaking around with men.

My fate in my former life was thin and poor; I was matched to a husband too young. He knew nothing of the bridal chamber and the nuptial candles, So I fled my husband and ran away. Now, while the stars are bright and the moon is clear— 'Those fated to meet will meet across a thousand li'— Let's you and me go to the rear garden And make our match, our lovebird pair!"

The Pilgrim heard this and nodded inwardly: "Those foolish monks were all lured by lust, and so they lost their lives. Now she's come to seduce me too."

He answered casually: "My lady, I left the world young and don't know anything about such goings-on." The woman said: "Come with me—I'll teach you." The Pilgrim laughed inwardly: "All right, I'll go with her and see what she's up to."

The two of them walked arm in arm, hand in hand, out of the Buddha hall and straight to the rear garden. The demon threw a foot behind the Pilgrim's leg and tripped him to the ground, crying "Heart! Sweet brother!" pell-mell, and reached to grab his privates.

The Pilgrim said: "My child, you really want to eat old Sun!"

But the Pilgrim caught her hand, used a little wrestling trick, and flipped the demon over and onto the ground.

The demon, still on the ground, called: "Sweet brother, you do know how to throw your mother!"

The Pilgrim calculated inwardly: "If I don't strike now, when will I? As the saying goes, 'The first to strike gains the advantage; the one who strikes second suffers the harm.'" He thrust out his hand, arched his back, leapt up, and revealed his true form and dharma body. He swung the gold-banded iron cudgel and brought it crashing down on her head.

The demon was indeed startled. She thought: "This little monk is so fierce!"

She opened her eyes wide for a look—and saw that it was the Tang elder's disciple surnamed Sun. But she did not fear him. What kind of spirit was she? Just look:

Gold for her nose, snow for her pelt. Earth-paths serve as her door and house; Wherever she settles, her lair is secure. She had cultivated three hundred years of primal breath, And had visited Vulture Peak several times. After feasting on incense, flowers, and candles, The Tathagata ordered her sent down by the Heavenly Bureau. The Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King's beloved daughter, Prince Nezha acknowledged her as sister of the same womb. She is no Jingwei bird that tries to fill the sea, No giant turtle that bears a mountain on its back. She fears not Lei Huan's legendary sword, She fears not Lu Qian's fabled blade. Coming and going, she goes where she pleases— Let the Yangtze and the Han flow as wide as they will! Up and down—what matter if mountains rival Mount Tai or Mount Heng in height? Just look at her moon-like face and flower-like beauty, so tender and frail— Who would know she is an old rat turned spirit, flaunting her cunning ways!

She trusted in her own vast magic powers, raised her twin swords, and clashed with him, ringing and clanging, parrying left and right, swaying east and west. The Pilgrim, though stronger, could not bring her down. Yin winds rose on all sides; the waning moon lost its light. Just look at the two of them—a fine battle

in the rear garden!

Yin winds rose from the earth; The waning moon shed a faint glimmer. Silent was the hall of the Brahma King; Dim was the corridor of the little ghosts. In the rear garden lay a battlefield! The Great Sage Sun, a saint of Heaven, And the hairy fair maiden, queen among women— Each wagered divine powers, neither willing to yield. One turned her fragrant heart to rage at the black-headed monk; The other rounded his shining eyes, hating the painted face. Twin swords flew—who would recognize a Lady Bodhisattva? A single staff struck, fierce as a living vajra-warrior. Where it rang, the gold-banded cudgel flashed like lightning; In a flash, the iron gleamed like starlight. Jade towers had their kingfisher feathers torn; Golden halls had their mandarin-duck ornaments shattered. The ape cried beneath the small moon of Ba; The wild goose called in the long sky of Chu. The Eighteen Arhats silently cheered; The Thirty-Two Devas were all in a panic.

The Great Sage Sun fought with full vigor, his staff never missing a beat. The demon, seeing she could not best him, suddenly knitted her brow and a plan came to her. She pulled away and fled. The Pilgrim shouted: "You wretch! Where are you going? Come back and surrender!" But the demon paid no heed and kept retreating. When the Pilgrim pressed hard, she pulled the flowered shoe off her left foot, blew on it a fairy breath, recited a spell, and cried "Change!"—and the shoe became a copy of herself, wielding two swords and dancing forward to fight. Her true body flickered, turned into a breeze, and was gone. Was this not the Tang Priest's star of disaster?

She went straight to the abbot's quarters, seized Tang Sanzang, and carried him up onto the clouds. Far and dim, in the blink of an eye she arrived at the Mountain of Sunken Emptiness, entered the Bottomless Cave, and told her underlings to prepare a vegetarian banquet for the wedding. We shall speak no more of that for now.

Now the Pilgrim, fighting with mounting impatience, spotted a gap and swung his staff—down came the demon, but it was only a flowered shoe. The Pilgrim knew he had been tricked. He spun around to check on his master. But where was the master? He saw only the idiot and the Sha Monk, mouths moving, wah-wah-wah, saying he knew not what. The Pilgrim's chest filled with rage. Not caring about anything, he grabbed his staff and began thrashing them, shouting: "I'll beat you dead! I'll beat you dead!"

The idiot panicked and ran every which way. But the Sha Monk, a veteran of Vulture Peak, had seen much in his time. He came forward gently and submissively, knelt down, and said: "Elder brother, I understand. You want to beat us to death and then go rescue the master alone, without us—then go home."

The Pilgrim said: "Beat you two dead? I'll rescue him myself!" The Sha Monk laughed: "Elder brother, what are you saying? Without us two, it's as the saying goes: 'A single thread makes no string; a single hand makes no sound.' Brother, who would look after the baggage and the horse? Better to learn from Guan and Bao sharing their gold than to imitate Sun and Pang matching wits. As the old saying goes, 'To fight a tiger, you need real brothers; to go to war, you need father and son.' Please, brother, stay your staff. When dawn comes, we'll go together, heart and strength as one, and seek the master."

The Pilgrim, for all his vast magic powers, was also a reasonable man who knew when to yield. Hearing the Sha Monk's earnest plea, he relented:

"Bajie, Sha Monk, get up. Tomorrow, when we search for the master, you'll have to put your backs into it." The idiot, hearing that he was forgiven, could have wished the sky itself to fall down half: "Brother, it's all on old Pig!" The brothers sat and thought and fretted—there was no sleeping that night. They could have wished to nod and summon the sun from the Fu Sang tree, and blow away the stars from the sky.

The three of them sat until dawn. They packed up to leave, but the temple monks stopped them at the gate: "Where are you going, my lord?" The Pilgrim laughed: "I'm embarrassed to say. Yesterday I boasted to you

all that I'd catch the demon. I never caught the demon—but my master has gone missing. We're going to find our master." The monks were alarmed: "My lord, over such a small matter, and now we've caused trouble for your venerable master! Where will you look?" The Pilgrim said: "There's a place to find him." The monks said: "Since you're going, don't rush—eat some breakfast first." They hurriedly brought out two or three bowls of soup and rice.

Bajie ate it all clean and said: "Good monks! When we find the master, we'll come back here and have fun."

The Pilgrim said: "Come back here and eat their food again! First go to the Hall of the Heavenly Kings and see if that woman is still there." The monks said: "My lord, she's gone, she's gone.

She stayed the one night, and the next day she was gone."

The Pilgrim took his leave of the monks, had Bajie and the Sha Monk lead the horse and carry the load, and set off back the way they had come, heading east. Bajie said: "Brother, you're wrong. Why are we going east again?" The Pilgrim said: "What do you know! Back in the Black Pine Forest, that woman tied to the tree—old Sun's fiery golden eyes saw right through her, but you all thought she was a good person. Today it was she who ate the monks, and she who took the master!

Some Lady Bodhisattva you saved! Now that she has carried off the master, we'll search for him along the old road."

The two sighed in admiration: "Good, good, good! Truly, the coarse hides the fine! Let's go, let's go!"

The three hurried into the forest, where they saw:

Clouds drifting thick, mists billowing wide; Layers of stone, a winding, coiling path. Fox tracks and rabbit prints crisscrossing; Tigers, leopards, wolves, and jackals prowling back and forth. Within the forest, not a trace of any demon— Where is Sanzang? No one knows.

The Pilgrim, burning with impatience, whipped out his staff. He shook his body and changed into his true form from the days of havoc in Heaven—three heads, six arms, and six hands, each wielding a staff. Through the forest he went, smashing and crashing with a tremendous clatter.

Bajie saw this and said: "Sha Monk, Elder Brother has lost his temper. He can't find the master, and he's gone mad with rage."

Now the Pilgrim, after flailing his way through the forest, thrashed out two old men. One was the mountain god, the other the local deity. They came forward and knelt: "Great Sage, the mountain god and local deity present themselves." Bajie said: "What a marvel! He thrashed through the forest and thrashed out two mountain gods and local deities. If he thrashed a bit more, he'd thrash out the God of the Year himself!"

The Pilgrim asked: "Mountain god! Local deity! What insolence! You have been colluding with bandits here—when the bandits pull off a robbery, they buy pigs and sheep to sacrifice to you. And you have been in league with the demon, banding together to seize my master! Where is he hidden? Tell me plainly and at once, or taste my staff!" The two deities panicked and said:

"Great Sage, you wrong us! The demon is not on my mountain, and not under my jurisdiction. But when the wind blew last night, we caught wind of a thing or two."

The Pilgrim said: "Since you know, tell me all!" The local deity said: "That demon seized your master and took him due south, a thousand li from here. There is a mountain there called the Mountain of Sunken Emptiness. In that mountain there is a cave called the Bottomless Cave. It is the demon of that mountain who came here in disguise and seized him." When the Pilgrim heard this, his heart secretly skipped a beat. He dismissed the mountain god and local deity, put away his dharma body, and showed his true form. To Bajie

and the Sha Monk he said: "The master has gone far." Bajie said: "Far? Then we'll ride clouds and catch up!" Good idiot—he leapt up on a fierce gust of wind. The Sha Monk followed on cloud. The white horse, being a dragon prince by birth, bore the baggage and also rode the wind and mist.

The Great Sage launched his somersault cloud and flew due south. Before long, he saw a great mountain blocking the cloud's path. The three reined in and held their cloud still, looking at that mountain:

Its summit touched the azure sky; Its peaks reached the blue heavens. All around, a myriad of mixed trees; To and fro, flying birds chattered and clamored. Tigers and leopards marched in formations; Deer and roe deer moved in herds. On the sunny side, rare flowers and fairy grasses breathed fragrance; On the shady side, last year's snow and stubborn ice never melted. Rugged, steep ridges; sheer cliffs and hanging precipices. Straight-standing, lofty peaks; winding, deep ravines. Pines, dense and dark; rocks, jagged and sharp—Travelers who saw them felt their hearts go cold. Not a woodcutter was to be seen; No herb-gathering immortal lad appeared. Before your eyes, tigers and leopards could raise the mists; All over the ground, foxes made mischief in the wind.

Bajie said: "Brother, a mountain this fierce and steep must have demons."

The Pilgrim said: "No need to say it—where the mountains are high, there are always monsters; where the ridges are steep, there are always spirits!" He called: "Sha Monk, you and I wait here. Let Bajie go down into the mountain hollow first and scout around. See which road is good to take, whether there is in fact a cave, and where the gate opens. Scout it all out carefully, and then we can all go together to find and rescue the master." Bajie said:

"Old Pig's luck is bad! I'm the one they send as the goat!" The Pilgrim said: "Last night you said it was all on you. How come you're backing out now?" Bajie said: "Stop your shouting. I'll go." The idiot set down his rake, shook out his robe, and bare-handed, leapt down from the high mountain to search for a path.

How this scouting expedition turned out—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 82

The Fair Maiden Seeks Yang; The Primal Spirit Guards the Way

The story continues: Bajie leapt down from the mountain, found a small path, and followed it onward. After five or six li, he suddenly spotted two female demons drawing water at a well. How did he know they were demons? By the hair buns on their heads—wrapped in bamboo splint, a foot and more high, a style hopelessly out of fashion.

The idiot walked up and called: "Demons!" When the two heard this, they were furious. They turned to each other and said: "This monk is insolent! We don't know him at all—we've never traded words with him before. Why does he call us demons?"

In their anger they raised the water-carrying pole and brought it down on his head. The idiot had no weapon and could not defend himself. He took several blows, clutched his head, and ran back up the mountain: "Brother, let's go back! The demons are fierce!" The Pilgrim said: "How fierce?" Bajie said: "In the mountain hollow, two female demons were drawing water at a well. I just called them by name, and they beat me three or four times with the pole!" The Pilgrim said:

"What did you call them?"

Bajie said: "I called them demons." The Pilgrim laughed: "You got off lightly." Bajie said: "Thanks for your concern! My head is swollen, and you say lightly!" The Pilgrim said: "'Gentleness gets you anywhere in the world; stubbornness cannot move an inch.' They are the local demons, and we are monks from far away. Even if you're all hands, you should still be a little gentle. You go and call them demons—if they don't beat you, who would they beat? A man should lead with courtesy." Bajie said: "I don't understand any of this!" The Pilgrim said: "You grew up in the mountains eating people. Do you know there are two kinds of wood?" Bajie said: "I don't. What wood?" The Pilgrim said: "One is poplar wood, the other is sandalwood. Poplar wood is soft by nature. A skilled craftsman takes it and carves a holy image, or sculpts the Tathagata, dresses it in gold and powder, inlays it with jade and sets it with flowers, and ten thousand people burn incense and worship it—it receives boundless blessings. But sandalwood is hard by nature. The oil press takes it and makes it into an oil-press wedge, hoops its head with iron, and pounds it down with an iron hammer—all because it is stiff and stubborn, it must endure this suffering." Bajie said: "Brother, if you'd told me this fine talk earlier, I wouldn't have taken those blows." The Pilgrim said: "Go back and ask them the facts." Bajie said: "They'll recognize me now." The Pilgrim said: "Change your form and go." Bajie said: "Brother, even if I change, how do I ask?" The Pilgrim said: "Change and go up to them, make a bow, and see how old they look. If they're about our age, call them 'miss'; if they're older, call them 'grandma.'" Bajie laughed: "What a comedown! This far from home, and I'm claiming kin!" The Pilgrim said: "It's not claiming kin—I want to draw out their talk. If they're the ones who took the master, we can move at once; if not, we won't waste time and miss our business elsewhere." Bajie said:

"Good reasoning. Let me go again."

Good idiot! He tucked his rake into his belt, went down into the hollow, shook his body, and changed into a dark, fat monk. Swaying and swaggering, he walked up to the demons, made a deep bow, and said: "Grandmas, this poor monk greets you." The two were pleased: "This monk is nice—he knows how to bow and to call us properly." They asked: "Where are you from, master?" Bajie said: "From where I'm from." They asked: "Where are you going?" He said: "To where I'm going." They asked: "What is your name?" He answered: "My name is what my name is." The demons laughed: "This monk is nice enough, but he has no sense—he just echoes whatever we say." Bajie said: "Grandmas, what are you drawing water for?" The demons said: "Monk, you wouldn't know. Our lady captured a Tang Priest last night and brought him to the cave. She wants to entertain him. The water in our cave isn't clean, so she sent the two of us to draw this

water of yin-yang union, to prepare a banquet of vegetarian fruits and dishes for the Tang Priest to eat—for tonight she means to wed him!" When the idiot heard this, he spun around and ran up the mountain, shouting: "Sha Monk! Bring the baggage quick! Let's divide up!" The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, divide what?" Bajie said: "Divide and be done! You go back to the Flowing Sands River and eat people. I'll go to Gao Village and visit my in-laws. Brother goes to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit to play the sage. The white dragon horse returns to the sea to be a dragon. The master is already getting married in the demon's cave! We can all go mind our own business!" The Pilgrim said: "This idiot, talking nonsense again!" Bajie said: "Your son is the one talking nonsense! Those two water-carrying demons said it themselves—they're preparing a vegetarian banquet for the Tang Priest to eat and then get married!" The Pilgrim said: "The demon has the master trapped in the cave, and the master is looking to us to save him, and you talk like this!" Bajie said: "How do we save him?" The Pilgrim said: "You two lead the horse and carry the load. We'll follow those two female demons—they'll lead us to the door. Then we'll strike together." And so the idiot had no choice but to come along.

The Pilgrim trailed the two demons from afar, deeper into the mountains, for a good ten or twenty li, when suddenly they vanished.

Bajie was startled: "The master's been taken by a daytime ghost!" The Pilgrim said: "Good eyes! How did you see their true form?" Bajie said: "Those two demons were carrying water, and then they just vanished—isn't that a daytime ghost?" The Pilgrim said: "They must have ducked into the cave. Let me go look."

Good Great Sage! He opened his fiery golden eyes wide and scanned the whole mountain. Nothing stirred—until he saw, before a steep cliff, an exquisite, finely ornamented archway, painted in five colors, with three eaves and four clusters of brackets. He and Bajie and the Sha Monk came close to look. On it were six large characters: "Mountain of Sunken Emptiness, Bottomless Cave."

The Pilgrim said: "Brothers, the demon has set up its gateway here—but which way does the door open?"

The Sha Monk said: "Not far! Not far! Let's look carefully." They turned and looked: at the foot of the archway, on the mountain slope, there was a great stone, about ten-odd li in circumference. Right in the middle of it was a hole the size of a water jar mouth, worn smooth and shiny.

Bajie said: "Brother, this is the hole the demons go in and out of."

The Pilgrim looked and said: "Strange! Since old Sun began guarding the Tang Priest—and I won't hide it from you two—I've caught my share of demons, but I've never seen a den like this. Bajie, you go down first and test how deep it is, so I can go in and rescue the master." Bajie shook his head: "Hard! Hard! Old Pig's body is heavy and clumsy. If my foot slips and I fall in, it might take two or three years to reach the bottom!" The Pilgrim said: "Is it that deep?" Bajie said: "You look!" The Great Sage lay on the edge of the hole and peered down carefully. Oh!

Deep! The circumference was at least three hundred li. He turned back: "Brothers, it truly is deep!"

Bajie said: "You'd better go back. The master can't be saved!" The Pilgrim said: "What are you saying! Don't go lazy, don't go idle. Set down the baggage, tie the horse to the archway pillar. You take your rake, Sha Monk take his staff, and block the cave mouth. Let me go in and scout.

If the master is truly inside, I'll use my iron staff to beat the demon out from within. When she runs to the mouth, you two block her from outside—that's an inside-outside pincer. We'll kill the demon and rescue the master." The two obeyed.

The Pilgrim leapt into the hole. Beneath his feet ten thousand rays of colored cloud sprang up, and a thousand layers of auspicious air wrapped around him. Before long he reached the deep interior, where it was

bright and clear, with its own sunlight and wind, flowers and grass, fruits and trees.

The Pilgrim was delighted: "What a place! When old Sun was born, Heaven gave me the Water Curtain Cave—and here's another cave heaven and blessed land!"

As he looked, he saw a two-eaved gatehouse, surrounded by pines and bamboo, with many houses inside. He thought: "This must be the demon's dwelling. Let me go in and scout. Wait—if I go like this, she'll recognize me. Let me change." He shook his body, made a magic sign, and changed into a fly. Lightly he flew onto the gatehouse to listen.

He saw the demon sitting high in a thatched pavilion. Her appearance now was different from when they had saved her in the pine forest or when he had fought her in the temple—she was dressed up even more finely:

Hair coiled in cloud-like coiffure, dark as a raven's wing; Body clad in a green velvet flowered vest. A pair of golden lotus feet, barely half a span; Ten fingers like spring bamboo shoots. A round, powdery face like a silver basin; Crimson lips, smooth as a cherry. A truly elegant, upright beauty— Even Chang'e in the moon would be envious. Today she has captured the scripture-seeking monk, And means to share joy with him on pillow and bed.

The Pilgrim held his peace and listened to what she would say.

Presently she parted her cherry lips and called, beaming with joy: "Little ones, quickly set out the vegetarian banquet! I and my Tang Priest brother will eat and be wed."

The Pilgrim laughed inwardly:

"So it's true! I thought Bajie was just talking nonsense! Let me fly in and look for the master, see how he's doing. If she's already seduced him, well, he can just stay here."

He spread his wings and flew inside. There, in the eastern corridor, behind a lattice of red paper, upper panels bright and lower ones dim, sat the Tang Priest.

The Pilgrim flew through the lattice, landed on the Tang Priest's bald head, and called: "Master!" Sanzang recognized the voice and cried: "Disciple, save my life!" The Pilgrim said: "Master, you're done for! The demon is preparing a banquet—she means to eat with you and wed you. If you have a son or a daughter, that'll be your monk's descendant—what are you worried about?" The elder heard this, gnashed his teeth, and said: "Disciple, ever since I left Chang'an and took you in at the Mountain of Two Frontiers, all the way west, when have I ever eaten meat? On what day have I had an evil thought? Now I've been seized by this demon who demands a mate—if I lose my true yang, I'll fall into the cycle of rebirth, cast behind the Yin Mountain, never to rise again!" The Pilgrim laughed: "Don't swear. If you truly mean to seek scriptures at the Western Heaven, old Sun will get you out." Sanzang said: "I've forgotten the way I came in." The Pilgrim said: "Never mind you forgetting—this cave isn't like walking in and out the front door. You came in by drilling down from above. To rescue you, we'll have to drill up from below. If our luck is good and we find the hole, we'll be out; if our luck is bad and we don't, we'll be suffocated." Sanzang's eyes brimmed with tears: "If it's this hard, what are we to do?" The Pilgrim said: "No problem! No problem! The demon is fixing wine for you. You'll have to drink a cup. Just pour it quickly—pour it so it forms a flower of foam on the surface. I'll change into a tiny gnat and fly under the foam bubble. She'll swallow me in one gulp, and then I'll punch through her heart and tear apart her lungs and kill the demon—and you'll be free." Sanzang said: "Disciple, to speak so is hardly proper." The Pilgrim said: "If you keep being saintly, you'll lose your life. The demon is a creature that harms people—why pity her?" Sanzang said: "Very well, very well. Only you must stay close to me." Truly, the Great Sage Sun guarded Tang Sanzang, and the scripture-seeking monk relied on the Handsome Monkey King.

Master and disciple had barely finished their plotting when the demon had everything arranged. She came to the eastern corridor, unlocked the door, and called: "Venerable master." The Tang Priest did not dare answer. She called again, and still he did not dare answer. Why did he not dare? He thought: "When the mouth opens, the spirit scatters; when the tongue moves, trouble is born." And yet another thought: if he clamped his mouth shut and refused to speak, he feared her ruthless heart might kill him in an instant.

He was caught between two minds, heart asking mouth, three times thinking and enduring, mouth asking heart. While he hesitated, the demon called once more: "Venerable master." The Tang Priest had no choice but to answer: "My lady, I am here."

When the elder spoke that one word, it was like shedding a thousand pounds. People all say the Tang Priest was a true-hearted monk going to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures—how could he bandy words with a female demon? They do not know that this was a moment of mortal peril, ten thousand parts out of no choice. Though he answered outwardly, inwardly he desired nothing.

The demon heard the elder answer. She pushed the door open, helped the Tang Priest to his feet, took his hand, leaned against him, put her head to his ear—and see how she displayed a thousand coquettish airs and ten thousand seductive charms! How could she know that Sanzang's heart was full of nothing but anguish?

The Pilgrim laughed in the dark: "My master, seduced like this—I only hope his heart doesn't stir."

Truly:

A true monk in the demon's trial meets a beauty; The monster's grace and charm are indeed worth praising. Light, light green brows like willow leaves parted; Full, full rosy cheeks set off by peach blossoms. Embroidered shoes just showing twin phoenix hooks; Cloud-coiffure piled high, two temples dark as raven. Where she smiles and takes the master's hand, The scent of orchid and musk fills his cassock.

The demon led Sanzang to the thatched pavilion and said:

"Venerable master, I have prepared a cup of wine. Let us drink together."

The Tang Priest said: "My lady, this poor monk does not eat meat." The demon said: "I know you don't eat meat. The water in our cave was not clean, so I specially sent to the mountain top for pure water of yin-yang union, and made a banquet of vegetarian fruits and dishes, to enjoy with you." The Tang Priest followed her in to look. Sure enough:

At the doorway, embroidered hangings and colored knots; In the courtyard, fragrant smoke from golden incense burners. Set out were black lacquered inlaid tables And red lacquered bamboo-splint platters.

On the inlaid tables were exotic delicacies; in the splint platters were rare vegetarian fare: crabapples, olives, lotus seeds, grapes, torreya nuts, crabapples, hazelnuts, pine nuts, lychees, longans, chestnuts, wind-dried water caltrops, jujubes, persimmons, walnuts, ginkgo nuts, golden mandarins, fragrant citrons—fruits from every mountain; and vegetables fresh in season: tofu, wheat gluten, wood-ear fungus, fresh bamboo shoots, mushrooms, fragrant dried mushrooms, Chinese yam, Solomon's seal.

Stone-flower seaweed and day-lily buds, fried in clear oil; hyacinth beans and cowpeas, dressed with seasoned sauce. Cucumbers, bottle gourds, ginkgo nuts, turnips. Peeled eggplants made into quail shapes, seeded winter melon cut in square cubes. Stewed taro with sugar, white-boiled radish with vinegar. Pepper, ginger, spicy and savory—all of it fine; salt and seasoning, every flavor balanced.

The demon pointed her jade-white fingers, lifted a gleaming golden cup, filled it with wine, and handed it to the Tang Priest, saying: "Venerable brother, you wonderful man—please drink a cup of nuptial wine."

The Tang Priest took the wine bashfully, gazed up, and poured a libation, praying silently: "Guardian devas of the Dharma, Guardians of the Five Quarters, Duty Officers of the Four Seasons: this disciple, Chen Xuanzang, since leaving the Eastern Land, has been protected in secret by all you gods, sent by the Bodhisattva Guanyin, that I might reach Thunder Peak and see the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Now on the road I have been seized by a demon who forces me to wed, and she hands me this cup of wine. If this wine is truly vegetarian, I shall drink it and still see the Buddha and succeed; if it is not, and breaks my vow, I shall fall forever into the suffering of rebirth!" Now the Great Sage Sun, in his tiny form, hovered by his ear like a voice in his ear—so that when he spoke, only Sanzang could hear; no one else could.

He knew the master usually liked grape wine, and so told him to drink a cup.

The master had no choice but to drink. He hastily filled a cup to the brim and offered it back to the demon. And sure enough, as he poured, a flower of foam rose on the surface. The Pilgrim changed into a tiny gnat and slipped under the foam. The demon took the cup in her hand but did not drink. She set the cup down, bowed twice to the Tang Priest, and murmured a few tender words of affection. Then she raised the cup—but the foam had already dispersed, and the gnat was visible.

The demon did not know it was the Pilgrim transformed. She thought it was just a bug. She flicked it off with her little finger and tossed it away.

The Pilgrim saw the plan had failed and knew he could not get into her belly. He changed at once into a hungry eagle. Truly:

Jade talons, golden eyes, iron pinions— A proud form and fierce spirit soaring in the clouds. Fox-demons and cunning rabbits faint at the sight of him; A thousand li of mountains and rivers, he traverses in a trice. When hungry, he faces the wind and hunts sparrows; When full, he soars high against Heaven's gate. His old fists, hard as steel, hurt most of all; When his ambition is fulfilled, he soars beyond the azure and disdains what's near.

He swooped up, spread his jade talons, and with a crash overturned the table and scattered the feast. Every vegetarian fruit and dish, every plate and dish—he smashed them all. Leaving the Tang Priest, he flew out. The demon was terrified, her courage shattered. The Tang Priest's bones and flesh turned to jelly.

The demon, trembling, clutched the Tang Priest and said: "Venerable brother, where did that thing come from?"

Sanzang said: "This poor monk does not know." The demon said: "I spent so much effort preparing this feast for us to enjoy, and I don't know where this flat-feathered beast flew in from to smash all my dishes!" The little demons said: "Madam, the smashed dishes are bad enough, but the food is scattered on the ground, fouled—how can we use it?" Sanzang knew perfectly well it was the Pilgrim's magic, but he dared not say so.

The demon said: "Little ones, I understand now. It must be that Heaven and Earth will not tolerate my keeping the Tang Priest, and so sent this creature. Pick up the broken dishes and take them out. Prepare some more wine and food—I don't care whether it's vegetarian or meat. I'll point to Heaven as my matchmaker and to Earth as my witness, and then I'll wed the Tang Priest."

And so she had the elder taken back to the eastern corridor to sit. We shall speak no more of that for now.

The Pilgrim flew out, resumed his true form, and reached the cave mouth. He called: "Open up!" Bajie laughed: "Sha Monk, brother's back!" The two set down their weapons.

The Pilgrim leapt out. Bajie stepped forward, grabbed him, and said: "Any demon? Any master?"

The Pilgrim said: "Yes! Yes! Yes!" Bajie said: "Is the master suffering in there? Tied up? To be steamed or boiled?" The Pilgrim said: "None of that—just a vegetarian banquet, and she means to do that thing with him." Bajie said: "You lucky dog, you lucky dog! You got to drink the wedding wine!" The Pilgrim said: "Idiot!

The master's life is in danger—what wedding wine!

"Bajie said: "Then why did you come back out?" The Pilgrim told them everything—how he had seen the Tang Priest, worked his transformations, and what had happened. He said: "Brothers, stop your wild thoughts. The master is here. Old Sun is going in again, and I'll surely get him out." He turned and dove back inside, changed again into a fly, and landed on the gatehouse to listen. He heard the demon, huffing with anger, ordering from the pavilion: "Little ones, I don't care if it's meat or vegetarian—bring it and burn paper. I'll ask Heaven and Earth to be my matchmaker and witness. I must wed him!" The Pilgrim heard this and laughed inwardly: "This demon has not a shred of shame! In broad daylight she locks up a monk and bosses him around. But don't rush—let old Sun go in and have another look." With a buzz he flew to the eastern corridor, where he saw the master sitting inside, tears streaming down his cheeks.

The Pilgrim flew in, landed on his head, and called again: "Master!" The elder recognized the voice, leapt up, gnashed his teeth, and said: "You macaque! Other people's boldness is body wrapping around guts—but your boldness is guts wrapping around your body! You worked your transformations and smashed the dishes—what was that worth? You riled the demon's lust, and now she's arranging meat and vegetarian alike, determined to have her way with me! How will this end!"

The Pilgrim apologized with a hidden laugh: "Master, don't be angry—there's a way to save you." Sanzang said: "How can you save me?" The Pilgrim said: "When I flew up just now, I saw a garden behind her place. You coax her into the garden for a stroll, and I'll save you." Sanzang said: "How will you save me in the garden?" The Pilgrim said: "When you and she reach the garden, walk to the peach trees and stop. I'll fly onto a peach branch and change into a red peach. You'll want to eat a fruit—pick the red one first. The red one is me. She'll surely want to pick one too—you must insist she take the red one. If she eats it in one bite, I'll be in her belly, and I'll punch through her hide, tear apart her liver and bowels, kill her, and you'll be free." Sanzang said: "If you have the skill, just fight her outright—why must you burrow into her belly?" The Pilgrim said: "Master, you don't understand.

"This cave of hers—if it were easy to get in and out, we could fight openly. But the way in and out is hard, the passage winding and difficult. If we fight openly, her whole crew—old and young—will grab even me, and then what?

We have to do it this way, clean and neat, so everyone gets out safe." Sanzang nodded and trusted him, saying only: "Stay close to me." The Pilgrim said: "I know! I know! I'm on your head."

Master and disciple having settled their plan, Sanzang propped himself up, held the lattice, and called: "My lady! My lady!" The demon heard him and came running, smiling: "Wonderful brother, what is it?" Sanzang said: "My lady, since I left Chang'an and traveled west, there has not been a day without mountains, not a day without water. Yesterday at the Zhenhai Monastery I caught a heavy cold. Today, after sweating, I'm a little better; and with your kindness in bringing me to this fairy palace, I've been sitting all day, and my heart feels stuffy. Won't you take me somewhere to stroll and clear my head?" The demon was delighted: "My wonderful brother has some spirit after all! I'll take you to the garden to play." She called: "Little ones, bring the keys, open the garden gate, and sweep the paths!" The demons all ran to open up and tidy.

The demon opened the lattice and helped the Tang Priest out. And see what a host of little demons there were—oiled hair and powdered faces, graceful and elegant—all clustered around, escorting the Tang Priest to the garden. What a monk! In that bevy of beauties he was no different from stone; in that grove of silks he

played deaf and dumb. If not for this iron-cast heart set on the Buddha, a second wine-and-woman mortal could never have sought the scriptures.

They all reached the garden gate. The demon said, softly and sweetly: "My wonderful brother, let's play here—it will truly ease your heart and dispel your gloom."

The Tang Priest took her hand and they entered together. He looked up and saw what a fine place it was:

Winding paths, every inch strewn with green moss; Elegant latticed windows, all hung with embroidered curtains. When the breeze first stirred, gossamer lightly spread like Shu brocade and Wu silk; When the fine rain just lifted, tender and moist, it revealed an ice-and-jade beauty. Sun-scorched fresh apricots, red as a fairy drying her rainbow robes; Moon-lit banana leaves, green as the imperial consort waving her feather fan. Powder-white walls on all four sides, ten thousand willows where orioles sang; Leisure pavilions all around, a courtyard full of crabapple where white butterflies fluttered. And look at the Pavilion of Concentrated Fragrance:

The Pavilion of Green Brows, the Pavilion of Sobering from Wine, the Pavilion of Lovesick Yearning—layer upon layer, their vermillion blinds hung on shrimp-whisk hooks. Then the Pavilion of Nourishing Sourness, the Pavilion of Draped White, the Pavilion of Painted Eyebrows, the Pavilion of Four Rains—each one lofty, with plaques inscribed in bird-script. Look at the Pool of Bathing Cranes, the Pool of Washing Wine Cups, the Pool of Delighting in the Moon, the Pool of Rinsing Cap-Strings—green duckweed and golden-scaled fish shimmering. There were also the Studio of Ink Flowers, the Studio of Strange Boxes, the Studio of Suitable Amusement, the Studio of Yearning for Clouds—jade cups and jade goblets floating with green-tinted wine. Above and below the pools and pavilions were Taihu rocks, purple fluorite stones, parrot-landing stones, and Jin-chuan stones, with tiger-whisker rush planted green among them. East and west of the studios and pavilions were wooden artificial mountains, Emerald Screen mountains, Whistling Wind mountains, and Jade Fungus mountains, all overgrown with phoenix-tail bamboo.

Blackberry-lily trellis, rose trellis, standing by the swing frame—like brocade canopies and silk bed-curtains; Pine and Cypress Pavilion, Magnolia Pavilion, facing the Rose Pavilion—like a jade city with an embroidered screen. Peony rails, peony clusters, red and purple vying in glory; Night-blooming Jasmine Terrace, Jasmine Railing, year after year blooming in charm. The purple smiling-face flower dripped with dew, fit to paint, fit to draw; the red hibiscus blazed in the sky, fit to write of, fit to compose on. For scenery, do not boast of the fairy gardens of Langyuan and Penglai; for fragrance, it need not yield to the Yao Yellow and Wei Purple peonies. If in third month you came to compete in gathering herbs, the only thing this garden lacked was the jade qiong-flower.

The elder walked with the demon, admiring the garden, gazing at wonders without end. Past many pavilions they went, and truly the scenery grew finer and finer. Then he looked up and saw the peach grove. The Pilgrim pinched the master's head. The elder knew.

The Pilgrim flew onto a peach branch, shook his body, and changed into a red peach—red and lovely. The elder said to the demon: "My lady, in your garden the flowers are fragrant and the branch-fruits are ripe:

The garden's fragrance draws bees to compete; The branches' ripe fruit draws birds to snatch.

But how is it that on this peach tree, some fruits are red and some are green?" The demon laughed: "Without yin and yang, the sun and moon would not shine; without yin and yang, the grass and trees would not grow; without yin and yang, there would be no division of male and female. On this peach tree, the fruit on the sunny side, touched by the sun, ripens first and turns red; the fruit on the shady side, without sun, stays unripe and green. This is the principle of yin and yang."

Sanzang said: "Thank you for the lesson, my lady. Truly, this poor monk did not know."

He reached forward and plucked a red peach. The demon also went and plucked a green peach.

Sanzang bowed and offered the red peach to the demon: "My lady, you love beauty—please eat this red peach. Give me the green one."

The demon traded indeed, and thought, pleased: "What a monk! He is a true man! Not a day of marriage yet, and already he shows such tenderness." The demon, delighted, offered the Tang Priest her reverence. The Tang Priest took the green peach and ate it. The demon, pleased to keep him company, opened her mouth and bit into the red peach.

She parted her crimson lips, bared her silver teeth—but before she could bite down, the Pilgrim Sun, being all too impatient, somersaulted right down her throat and past it, into her belly. The demon was frightened and said to Sanzang: "Venerable master, this fruit is fierce! How could it roll down before I even bit through?" Sanzang said: "My lady, it's the first fruit picked from a newly opened garden, so it went down fast." The demon said: "I didn't even spit out the pit, and it slid right down."

Sanzang said: "My lady, your heart is so full of love and joy that you ate it so eagerly you didn't even spit out the pit—it just went down."

The Pilgrim, inside her belly, resumed his true form and called: "Master, stop talking to her—old Sun has got hold of her!" Sanzang said: "Disciple, be gentle." The demon heard this and said: "Who are you talking to?" Sanzang said: "I'm talking to my disciple, Sun Wukong." The demon said: "Where is Sun Wukong?" Sanzang said: "In your belly. That red peach you just ate—wasn't that him?" The demon panicked: "It's over, it's over! This monkey head has burrowed into my belly—I'm a dead woman!

"Sun Wukong! What are you doing, burrowing into my belly by every trick and scheme?" The Pilgrim, inside, snarled:

"Nothing much! Just eating your six-lobed liver and lungs, your three-haired, seven-holed heart! I'll clean out all five viscera and turn you into a hollow clapper!"

When the demon heard this, her soul flew and her spirit scattered. Trembling, she clutched the Tang Priest and said: "Venerable master! I thought our fate from former lives was tied with the red thread, That fish and water would blend, our hearts deep in accord. But who would expect the mandarin ducks to be torn apart today? Who would think the phoenix pair would scatter, east and west? At Blue Bridge the waters rise—the tryst cannot be kept; The Buddha's temple, incense gone cold—the happy meeting is vain. This earnest meeting ends in parting once more— What year shall I see you again!"

The Pilgrim, inside her belly, heard her words and feared the master's soft heart might be swayed again. So he swung his fists, stomped his feet, braced himself in a wide stance, and nearly punched through her hide. The demon could not bear the pain. She fell to the ground and did not dare speak for a long while. When the Pilgrim saw she was not speaking, he thought she was dead and loosened his grip a little. She gasped back to life and called: "Little ones! Where are you?" Now those little demons, ever since entering the garden, had each gone his own way—picking flowers, competing in games, amusing themselves as they pleased, leaving the demon and the Tang Priest to their own private romance.

Hearing the call, they all came running. They saw the demon lying on the ground, her face changed, moaning and unable to crawl. They hurriedly helped her up and crowded around: "Madam, what's wrong? Is it a fit of heart-pain?"

The demon said: "No! No! Don't ask—there is already a person inside my belly! Quickly, take this monk out of here—spare my life!" The little demons all came to carry him.

The Pilgrim called from inside her belly: "None of you dare carry him! You'd better carry my master out yourself. Once you're outside, I'll spare your life!"

The demon had no other plan. With only her life to think of, she struggled to her feet, hoisted the Tang Priest on her back, and strode out.

The little demons followed: "Madam, where are you going?"

The demon said: "As long as the bright moon of the Five Lakes remains, what worry is there that I can't cast my golden hook somewhere else? Let me send this fellow out, and I'll find another man!" Good demon! She leapt up on a cloud and flew straight to the cave mouth. Again came the clanging and clashing of weapons. Sanzang said: "Disciple, I hear weapons outside." The Pilgrim said:

"It's Bajie scraping his rake. Call him." Sanzang called: "Bajie!" Bajie heard: "Sha Monk! The master's coming out!" The two snatched up their rake and staff. The demon carried the Tang Priest out. Oh! Truly:

The Mind-Ape strikes from within, subduing the evil monster; Wood and Earth guard the gate, receiving the holy monk.

But whether the demon lived or died—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 83

The Mind-Ape Recognizes the Demon's True Origin; The Fair Maiden Returns to Her Original Nature

The story continues: When Sanzang was carried out of the cave by the demon, the Sha Monk came forward and asked: "Master, you're out—where is Elder Brother?"

Bajie said: "He's got a plan. He must have traded himself for the master." Sanzang pointed at the demon and said: "Your elder brother is inside her belly." Bajie laughed: "Filthy business! What's he doing in there? Come on out!" The Pilgrim called from inside: "Open your mouth and let me out!" The demon indeed opened her mouth.

The Pilgrim shrank himself tiny and was just emerging from her throat when he feared she might snap her jaws and bite him. He took out his iron staff, blew a fairy breath on it, and cried "Change!"—it turned into a jujube-pit peg that propped her upper jaw open. He gave a leap, jumped out of her mouth, whisked the staff out after him, arched his back, and resumed his true form and dharma body. He raised his staff and struck. The demon, at the same time, whipped out her twin swords and clashed them to block. The two of them on the mountaintop—what a battle!

Twin swords flew, parrying face to face; The gold-banded cudgel rose, aimed at the head. One was the Heaven-born monkey breed, the Mind-Ape's body; One was the Earth-produced spirit, the Fair Maiden's frame. The two of them, hearts full of hatred, Joy turned to vengeance—a great contest on the field. She wanted to take his primal yang and make a mate; He wanted to conquer her pure yin and form the holy elixir. The staff rose up—a sky of cold fog rolled; The swords met—a ground of black dust sifted. All for the elder, to worship the Tathagata, They fought in bitter struggle, each showing great power. Water and fire cannot mix—the mother principle suffers harm; Yin and yang cannot join—they part and go their ways. The two fought for a long time, Till the earth shook, the mountains trembled, and the trees were shattered.

Bajie, watching them fight, kept up a running commentary of complaints, resenting the Pilgrim. He turned to the Sha Monk and said:

"Brother, Elder Brother is confused! Just now he was inside her belly. He could have swung his fists, punched her into a belly full of red, and burst out through her stomach—wouldn't that have been the end of it? Instead he comes out of her mouth and fights her, letting her run so wild!"

The Sha Monk said: "True, but we owe it to Elder Brother for getting the master out of the deep cave, and now he's fighting the demon again. Let's have the master sit here by himself, and you and I take our weapons and help Elder Brother bring down the demon." Bajie waved his hand: "No, no, no! She has magic powers—we're not up to it." The Sha Monk said: "What are you saying! This is for everyone's benefit. Even if we're not up to it, even a fart adds to the wind." The idiot, fired up at last, snatched up his rake and shouted: "Let's go!" The two of them, not even looking back at the master, sprang up on the wind and rushed forward, raising rake and staff to strike the demon from all sides.

The demon, who already could not hold her own against the Pilgrim, now saw two more charging in. How could she fight? She turned and fled. The Pilgrim shouted: "Brothers, after her!" The demon, seeing them pressing close, pulled the flowered shoe off her right foot, blew on it a fairy breath, recited a spell, and cried "Change!" The shoe turned into a copy of herself, wielding twin swords and dancing forward. Her true body flickered, turned to a gust of clean wind, and was gone.

She thought she could not win the fight and was racing home to save her life—but who could have known this would happen!

And it was Sanzang's star of disaster still unspent: when the demon reached the archway at the cave mouth, there was the Tang Priest sitting all alone. She rushed up, seized him in one arm, grabbed the baggage, bit

through the horse's reins, and carried the man, the horse, and all back inside the cave. We shall speak no more of that.

Now Bajie, spotting a gap, swung his rake and brought the demon crashing down—but it was a flowered shoe.

The Pilgrim saw and said: "You two idiots! Watching the master was all you had to do—who asked you to come and help?"

Bajie said: "Sha Monk, you see! I said don't come. This monkey has got some madness in the head. We help him subdue the demon, and he turns around and complains about us!" The Pilgrim said: "Where did you subdue a demon? That demon used the same shoe trick on me yesterday to fool me. You two ran off—now who knows what's happened to the master. Let's go look, quick!" The three hurried back, and sure enough—the master was gone, and the baggage and the white horse along with him.

Bajie ran frantically back and forth. The Sha Monk searched high and low. The Great Sage Sun too was burning with impatience. As they searched, they suddenly saw on the road a half-length of reins lying askew. The Pilgrim picked it up, and tears he could not hold back streamed from his eyes. He cried aloud:

"Master! When I left, I said goodbye to man and horse; When I came back, I found only this bit of rope!" Truly, seeing the saddle makes one think of the fine horse; shedding tears, one thinks of one's loved one. Bajie saw him weeping and could not help throwing back his head and laughing.

The Pilgrim cursed: "You blockhead! You want to break up the party again!"

Bajie laughed again: "Brother, that's not it. The master must have been taken back into the cave by the demon. As the saying goes, 'Things succeed on the third try.' You've been in the cave twice—go in once more, and you'll surely get the master out." The Pilgrim wiped his tears and said: "All right—things being what they are, I have no choice. I'll go in again. You two have no baggage or horse to worry about—just guard the cave mouth well."

Good Great Sage! He turned and leapt into the cave. This time he did not change his form—he went in his own true dharma body. Truly:

A strange, odd face, a heart of iron, A monster from his youth, with godlike might. His face, high and low, could rival a saddle bow; His eyes shot golden light, bright as fire. His whole body covered in hair, stiff as steel needles; His tiger-skin kilt hung with ringing flowers. In Heaven he scattered ten thousand clouds; In the sea he churned up a thousand layers of waves. With his own strength he fought the Heavenly King head-on; He drove back a hundred and eight thousand generals. Ennobled as the Great Sage, the Handsome Monkey King, His hand ever wields the gold-banded cudgel. Today on the Western road he shows his powers anew, Returning to the cave to save Sanzang.

He halted his cloud light and went straight to the demon's dwelling. He saw the gatehouse door was shut. Not caring whether it was wise, he swung his iron staff and smashed it open, then charged in. But inside it was dead silent, without a trace of anyone. In the eastern corridor, no Tang Priest. In the pavilion, the tables, chairs, and all the household goods—every single item, gone.

It turned out that her cave was over three hundred li in circumference, with many demon lairs. The first time she seized the Tang Priest there, the Pilgrim found him. This time, fearing he would come looking again, she had moved out—no one knew where.

This so vexed the Pilgrim that he stamped his feet and beat his breast, crying at the top of his voice: "Master! You are a Tang Sanzang made of bad luck, a scripture-seeking monk forged from disaster! Bah! This road I know well—how can she not be here? Where is old Sun to find her?"

As he was shouting and fuming, suddenly he caught a whiff of incense smoke. He collected himself and said: "This incense smoke drifts from the back—she must be in there." He strode forward, staff in hand, and went to look. Still no sign of anything. Then he saw three back rooms, and against the rear wall stood a carved lacquer altar table with a dragon's-head design. On the table was a large gilded incense burner, and from it rose fragrant smoke.

Above it was set up a large gilded name tablet. On the tablet was written: "To My Venerable Father, Heavenly King Li." Below it, slightly smaller: "To My Venerable Brother, the Third Prince Nezha."

When the Pilgrim saw this, his heart filled with joy. He did not bother to search for the demon or the Tang Priest. He shrank his iron staff into an embroidery needle, tucked it behind his ear, reached out, snatched up the tablet and incense burner, turned on his cloud, and went straight out the cave mouth. At the cave entrance he laughed and laughed, hooting and hollering without end.

Bajie and the Sha Monk heard him. They set down their guard at the cave mouth and came to meet him: "Brother, so happy—have you rescued the master?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "No need for us to rescue him. We just ask this tablet for the man." Bajie said: "Brother, that tablet isn't a demon—it can't talk. How do you ask it for the man?" The Pilgrim set it on the ground and said:

"Look!" The Sha Monk came forward and read: "To My Venerable Father, Heavenly King Li." "To My Venerable Brother, the Third Prince Nezha."

The Sha Monk said: "What does this mean?" The Pilgrim said: "This is what the demon worshipped in her home. I barged into her dwelling—no one there, only this tablet. So she must be the daughter of the Heavenly King Li, sister of the Third Prince, who longed for the mortal world and came down to become a demon and seize my master. If we don't ask them for the man, who do we ask? You two guard this place. Old Sun will take this tablet to Heaven and file a petition before the Jade Emperor, and make the Heavenly King father and son return my master." Bajie said:

"Brother, as the saying goes, 'To accuse a man of a capital crime, you'd better have a capital case.' You need solid grounds before you can do it. And a petition before the Emperor—is that something to file lightly? Tell me, how will you word it?" The Pilgrim laughed: "I have a plan. I'll use this tablet and incense burner as evidence, and write out a separate paper petition." Bajie said:

"How will the petition read? Read it to me."

The Pilgrim said:

"The plaintiff, Sun Wukong, of age as recorded on his ordination certificate, is a disciple of Tang Sanzang, a scripture-seeking monk sent from Great Tang in the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven. This is a complaint regarding a false demon seizing and trapping persons.

Now, the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li Jing, together with his son Prince Nezha, have been negligent in their household discipline. Their own daughter has escaped and gone down to the mortal world, to the Mountain of Sunken Emptiness, the Bottomless Cave, where she has transformed into a demon and deluded and killed countless people. She has now seized my master and trapped him in a winding, deep cave, with no way to find him. If I do not file this complaint, I submit that the father and son are unkind, having allowed their daughter to become a demon and harm the people.

I humbly beg that this complaint be received and approved, that they be summoned to court, the demon seized, the master rescued, and the crime properly punished. This would be a great kindness.

This complaint is hereby submitted."

When Bajie and the Sha Monk heard this, they were greatly pleased: "Brother, the complaint is sound. You'll surely win. But you must come back quickly—if you're slow, the demon may do the master harm." The Pilgrim said: "I'll be fast! I'll be fast! By the time the rice is cooked—no, by the time the tea boils, I'll be back."

Good Great Sage! Taking the tablet and incense burner, he leapt up and rode his auspicious cloud straight to the South Gate of Heaven. The heavenly gatekeepers, the Great Spirit God and the Kingdom-Protecting Heavenly King, saw the Pilgrim coming and each bent his back and bowed, not daring to bar his way. They let him through.

He went straight to the Hall of Universal Brightness, where the Four Great Heavenly Masters—Zhang, Ge, Xu, and Qiu—came forward and greeted him: "Great Sage, what brings you here?" The Pilgrim said: "I have a paper petition. I want to sue two people." The heavenly masters were startled: "This rascal—who does he mean to sue?" They had no choice but to lead him into the Lingxiao Hall and announce him. By imperial decree he was admitted. The Pilgrim set down the tablet and incense burner, bowed to the throne, and presented his petition. The immortal Ge took it, unfolded it, and laid it on the imperial desk.

The Jade Emperor read it from beginning to end. Seeing what it contained, he endorsed the petition as an imperial decree and ordered the Planet Venus, Taibai Jinxing of the West, to take the decree to the Cloud Tower Palace and summon the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li to present himself.

The Pilgrim stepped forward and petitioned: "May the Heavenly Lord punish him strictly—otherwise there will be more trouble."

The Jade Emperor also said: "The plaintiff shall go too." The Pilgrim said: "Old Sun goes too?"

The Four Heavenly Masters said: "His Majesty has issued the decree. You may go together with the Planet Venus."

The Pilgrim indeed followed the Planet Venus, and they rode the clouds to the Cloud Tower Palace. It was the Heavenly King's residence, called the Cloud Tower Palace.

The Planet Venus saw a boy attendant at the palace gate. The boy recognized the Planet Venus and went in to report: "Lord Taibai Jinxing has arrived."

The Heavenly King came out to welcome him. Seeing the Planet Venus bearing a decree, he ordered incense burned. Then he turned and saw the Pilgrim following him in—and the Heavenly King grew angry. Why did he grow angry?

Years ago, when the Pilgrim wreaked havoc in Heaven, the Jade Emperor had appointed the Heavenly King as Great Marshal Who Subdues Demons, and Prince Nezha as the Spirit of the Three Altars and the Ocean Assembly. They had led the heavenly troops to subdue the Pilgrim, but after many battles could not prevail. It was the grudge from that defeat five hundred years ago that still rankled—and so he grew angry. He could not hold back and said:

"Old Venus, what decree do you bring?"

The Planet Venus said: "It is the Great Sage Sun's petition against you." The Heavenly King, already annoyed, heard the word "petition" and flew into a towering rage: "What does he sue me for?" The Planet Venus said: "He sues you for a false demon seizing and trapping persons. You've burned the incense—read it for yourself." The Heavenly King, huffing with anger, set up an incense table and gave thanks to Heaven.

After the bows, he opened the decree and read it. It was thus and thus, so and so. He slammed his hand on the incense table and said: "This monkey head! He has accused me falsely!"

The Planet Venus said: "Calm your anger. There is the tablet and incense burner as evidence before the throne, saying she is your own daughter." The Heavenly King said: "I have only three sons and one daughter. My eldest is Jinzha, who serves the Tathagata as a frontline dharma-protector. My second is Muzha, a disciple following the Bodhisattva Guanyin in the South Sea. My third is Nezha, who is by my side, attending the court day and night. My daughter is only seven years old, named Zhenying—she does not even understand the affairs of the world yet. How could she be a demon?

If you don't believe me, I'll carry her out and show you. This monkey head is truly insolent! Never mind that I am a great meritorious minister of Heaven, invested with the authority to execute first and report after—even if I were a common citizen of the lower world, I could not be falsely accused. The law says: a false accusation adds three degrees of punishment."

He called his subordinates: "Bring the demon-binding rope and tie up this monkey head!"

In the courtyard below stood the Great Spirit God, the Fish-Belly General, and the Yaksha Commander. They surged forward and bound the Pilgrim.

The Planet Venus said: "Heavenly King Li, don't cause a disaster! I came before the throne with him, bearing the decree to summon you. That rope of yours is heavy—if you bind him too tightly and harm him, he'll suffocate."

The Heavenly King said: "Venus, with this kind of false, fraudulent accusation, how can I let him off! Sit down. Let me fetch the demon-cutting blade and cut off this monkey's head, and then go with you to see the Emperor and report!" The Planet Venus saw him reach for his blade and was terrified. He said to the Pilgrim: "You've bungled this. A petition before the Emperor—is that something to file lightly? You didn't even check the facts. If you mess about like this and he takes your life, what then?" The Pilgrim was completely unfazed. He smiled and said: "Old sir, don't worry. Nothing will happen. Old Sun's business is always done this way—lose first, win later."

Before he could finish, the Heavenly King swung his blade and brought it down on the Pilgrim's head. But the Third Prince leapt forward, caught the blade on his waist-cutting sword, and called: "Father, stay your anger!" The Heavenly King turned pale with fright. Oh!

A father seeing his son block his blade with a sword should have ordered him away—why did he turn pale with fright? It turns out that when the Heavenly King's son was born, the character "Ne" (哪) was on his left palm, and "Zha" (吒) on his right—hence the name Nezha. At three days old, this prince had gone down to the sea to bathe and caused havoc—he kicked over the Crystal Palace and seized a flood dragon, wanting to draw its sinews for a belt. The Heavenly King, fearing future trouble, wanted to kill him.

Nezha, in fury, took a blade, cut off his own flesh to repay his mother, and carved out his bones to repay his father. Having returned the father's seed and the mother's blood, his solitary soul went straight to the Western Paradise to appeal to the Buddha. The Buddha was lecturing to the bodhisattvas when, amid banners and jeweled canopies, someone cried: "Save me!" The Buddha's all-seeing eye saw that it was Nezha's soul. He used green lotus root for bone and lotus leaf for skin, and recited the true incantation of resurrection. Nezha came back to life.

With his divine powers, he subdued ninety-six cave-demons, and his magic was vast. Later he wanted to kill the Heavenly King, to avenge the bone-carving. The Heavenly King, helpless, appealed to my Lord, the Tathagata. The Tathagata, valuing harmony, gave him a wish-fulfilling golden pagoda of relics, exquisite and finely wrought. On each level of the pagoda were Buddhas, shining with brilliant light. He bade Nezha regard the Buddha as his father, and thus the feud was resolved. This is why he is called the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li.

Today, being at leisure at home, he had not been holding the pagoda. Fearing that Nezha might still harbor thoughts of revenge, he went pale with fright.

He reached back at once, took the golden pagoda from its stand, held it in his hand, and asked Nezha: "My son, you blocked my blade with your sword—what do you have to say?"

Nezha dropped his sword and kowtowed: "Father, you do have a daughter in the lower world." The Heavenly King said: "My son, I only had you four siblings—where would another daughter come from?" Nezha said: "Father, you have forgotten. That daughter was originally a demon spirit. Three hundred years ago she became a monster and stole the Tathagata's scented flowers and precious candles at Vulture Peak. The Tathagata dispatched us father and son with heavenly soldiers to capture her. When she was caught, she should have been killed. But the Tathagata said: 'Water raised to feed fish is never fished out; deer fed in the deep mountains are left to live long.' He spared her life then. Out of gratitude for that mercy, she bowed to Father as her father and to me as her brother, and set up a tablet below, burning incense in worship. We did not expect her to become a demon again and trap the Tang Priest. But Sun Wukong searched out her lair, took the tablet, and used it to file a petition before the Emperor.

She is an adopted daughter of gratitude, not my own sister of the same womb." When the Heavenly King heard this, he was startled and amazed:

"My son, I truly forgot. What is her name?" The prince said: "She has three names:

By her true origin, she is called the gold-nosed, white-haired rat spirit. After stealing the scented flowers and precious candles, she changed her name to the Half-Bodied Guanyin. Now, having been spared and sent down to the lower world, she changed it again—she calls herself the Lady Who Bursts from the Earth." The Heavenly King finally understood. He set down the pagoda and reached out to untie the Pilgrim himself. But the Pilgrim, playing the rogue, said:

"Nobody untie me! You can carry me, ropes and all, before the Emperor—then old Sun wins his case!" The Heavenly King's hands went weak with panic. The prince was speechless. The generals slunk away. The Great Sage rolled on the ground, playing the rascal, insisting that the Heavenly King go before the Emperor. The Heavenly King, at his wit's end, begged the Planet Venus to mediate. The Planet Venus said: "As the ancients said, 'In all things, lean to mercy.' You acted too harshly—binding him and then wanting to kill him.

This monkey is a famous rogue. How can you expect me to deal with him now? By your son's account, she is a daughter of gratitude, not a true daughter. But still, the bond is heavy. However you argue it, you still bear some blame." The Heavenly King said: "Old Star, find a way to let me off." The Planet Venus said:

"I'd like to mediate between you, but I have no argument to make."

The Heavenly King laughed: "Tell him about the time you handled the amnesty and conferred the official title—that will do it." And so the Planet Venus went up to the Pilgrim, patted him, and said: "Great Sage, for my sake, let him untie the ropes so you can go before the Emperor." The Pilgrim said: "Old sir, no need to untie. I know how to roll. I'll roll all the way there." The Planet Venus laughed: "You monkey, you are too ungrateful. In years past I showed you some kindness. For this small matter, you won't do as I say?"

The Pilgrim said: "What kindness did you show me?"

The Planet Venus said: "Years ago, when you were a monster on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, subduing tigers and dragons, erasing your name from the registers of death, gathering demons and running wild—when Heaven wanted to seize you, it was I who urged that you be granted amnesty and summoned to Heaven, where you were appointed Keeper of the Heavenly Horses. After you drank the Jade Emperor's immortal wine and caused more trouble, it was again I who urged amnesty and had you titled the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. Then you did not keep your place—you stole peaches, pilfered wine, and burgled Lord Lao

Zi's elixir. And so on, and so forth—until you attained the state of neither birth nor destruction. If not for me, how would you be here today?" The Pilgrim said: "The ancients said it well: 'When you die, don't share a grave with an old man—he'll cleanly dig up all your faults!' I was only the Keeper of the Heavenly Horses and wreaked havoc in Heaven—nothing so grand. All right, all right—for your sake, let him untie me himself." The Heavenly King then dared to step forward and untie the bonds. He invited the Pilgrim to dress, take the seat of honor, and came forward one by one to bow.

The Pilgrim turned to the Planet Venus and said: "Old sir, you see? I said it—lose first, win later. That's how the business is done. Now hurry him to the Emperor—don't delay my master's rescue."

The Planet Venus said: "Don't rush. After all this fuss, at least have a cup of tea." The Pilgrim said: "You drink his tea, take his bribe, let the prisoner go, slight the imperial decree—what crime would that be for you?" The Planet Venus said: "No tea! No tea! Now he's dragging me into it too! Heavenly King Li, go, go!" The Heavenly King did not dare to go—he feared the Pilgrim would make something out of nothing, play the rogue, and rave, and how could he argue with him? He had no choice but to beg the Planet Venus again to mediate.

The Planet Venus said: "I have a suggestion. Will you go along?"

The Pilgrim said: "The binding and the blade-swinging, I already let pass for your sake. What else is there? Speak!

Speak! If it sounds good, I'll agree. If not, don't blame me."

The Planet Venus said: "A lawsuit started in a day takes ten days to settle. You filed a petition, saying the demon is the Heavenly King's daughter. The Heavenly King says she is not. The two of you will argue back and forth before the throne, endlessly. Now, they say one day in Heaven is a year in the world below. In that year, the demon will have your master trapped in the cave. Never mind a wedding—if she bears a son, you'll have a little monk on your hands—won't that ruin everything?"

The Pilgrim hung his head and thought: "True! I left Bajie and the Sha Monk saying I'd be back by the time the rice was cooked, the tea was boiled. It's already been a while—am I not late? Old sir, if I go along with you, how do I return the decree?"

The Planet Venus said: "Have the Heavenly King muster his troops and go down with you to subdue the demon. I'll go back and report." The Pilgrim said:

"How will you report?" The Planet Venus said: "I'll say that the plaintiff fled, and the defendant is released from the charge." The Pilgrim laughed: "Ha! I was doing you a favor, and you say I fled! Have him muster the troops and wait for me outside the South Gate of Heaven. I'll come with you to report and withdraw the petition." The Heavenly King, still afraid, said: "If he goes and says anything, it will be a minister betraying his lord." The Pilgrim said: "What kind of man do you take old Sun for? I too am a man of honor! A word once spoken cannot be chased by four horses—how could I slander you?" The Heavenly King thanked the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim went with the Planet Venus to report.

The Heavenly King mustered his own heavenly troops and went straight out the South Gate of Heaven.

The Planet Venus returned to the Jade Emperor and reported: "The one who trapped the Tang Priest is a gold-nosed, white-haired rat spirit. She had falsely set up tablets of the Heavenly King father and son. The Heavenly King, upon learning this, has already mustered his troops to go and capture the demon. I beg Your Majesty to pardon the offense."

The Jade Emperor, already knowing the facts, granted his heavenly mercy and waived all charges. The Pilgrim turned his cloud light around, went out the South Gate of Heaven, and saw the Heavenly King, the

prince, and the heavenly troops arrayed and waiting. Oh! Those divine generals, in rolling winds and billowing mists, fell in with the Great Sage. Together they brought down the clouds and soon arrived at the Mountain of Sunken Emptiness.

Bajie and the Sha Monk, eyes wide with waiting, saw the heavenly troops and the Pilgrim arrive. The idiot went up to the Heavenly King and bowed: "Sorry to trouble you! Sorry to trouble you!" The Heavenly King said: "Canopy Marshal, you wouldn't know—just because my father and son accepted one stick of her incense, the demon had the audacity to trap your master. Forgive our delay. This is the Mountain of Sunken Emptiness? But which way does her cave door open?" The Pilgrim said:

"This road I know well. But this cave is called the Bottomless Cave, over three hundred li in circumference, with many demon lairs. Last time my master was in the two-eaved gatehouse. This time it's dead silent—not a ghost of a trace. She must have moved somewhere else."

The Heavenly King said: "Let her try a thousand tricks—she cannot escape the heavenly net. We'll go to the cave mouth and take it from there." They all set off. In about ten li, they reached the great stone.

The Pilgrim pointed at the jar-mouth-sized hole: "There it is." The Heavenly King said: "How will you catch the tiger cub without entering the tiger's den? Who dares go first?" The Pilgrim said: "I'll go first." The Third Prince said: "I was ordered to subdue demons—I'll go first." The idiot, rough and blunt, bellowed: "At the head, it's still old Pig!" The Heavenly King said: "No need to quarrel. Follow my deployment: Sun Wukong and the prince will lead the troops down inside. The three of us will guard the mouth—an inside-outside pincer. We'll give her no road to Heaven, no door to Earth. That will show some real skill." Everyone answered: "Yes!"

See the Pilgrim and the Third Prince, leading the troops, swoop into the hole. They rode the cloud light, shimmering and glittering. They looked up—indeed, what a cave!

Still the twin wheels of sun and moon, Lighting the same wide vistas of mountain and stream. Jade wells and pearl pools breathe warm mists; There is much here to admire. Tier upon tier of vermillion towers and painted pavilions; Lofty red cliffs and blue-green fields. Third-month willows and ninth-month lotus— What a rare cave heaven indeed!

In an instant they halted their cloud light and went straight to the demon's old dwelling. Door by door they searched, shouting and hollering, one hall after another, one place after another. They trampled the grass flat across those three hundred li—but where was a demon? Where was Sanzang?

They all said: "That wretch must have slipped out of this cave long ago and gone far away."

But little did they know that in the dark southeastern corner, looking down, there was another small cave. Inside the cave was a tiny door, a low little room, with a few pot-grown flowers and several bamboo by the eaves. Black mists curled, dark fragrance hung heavy. The old demon had seized Sanzang and moved him here, forcing the marriage—thinking the Pilgrim would never find him.

But her fate was sealed. Inside, the little demons were buzzing and chattering, jostling and crowding. One of them, bolder than the rest, craned his neck and peeked outside—and ran headlong into a heavenly soldier. The soldier cried: "Here they are!" The Pilgrim, inflamed, gripped his gold-banded cudgel and charged in. Inside it was narrow and cramped—a whole den of demons.

The Third Prince launched the heavenly troops. They swarmed in. Where could the demons hide? The Pilgrim found the Tang Priest, the dragon horse, and the baggage. The old demon, seeing no way out, could only kowtow to Prince Nezha, begging for her life. The prince said:

"This is an imperial decree to capture you—this is no small matter. My father and son accepted one stick of incense from you, and nearly—like a monk dragging timber—built ourselves a temple!" [Translator's note: 寺 (sì, "temple") is a pun for 事 (shì, "trouble"). The saying means "to get into trouble."]

He barked: "Heavenly soldiers, bring out the demon-binding ropes and tie up all these demons!" The old demon could not escape a taste of suffering. They turned their clouds and all came out of the cave. The Pilgrim was laughing and joking the whole way.

The Heavenly King opened the cave mouth and greeted the Pilgrim: "This time you've got your master back."

The Pilgrim said: "Many thanks! Many thanks!" He led Sanzang to bow and thank the Heavenly King, and then the prince.

The Sha Monk and Bajie wanted to hack the old demon to pieces. The Heavenly King said: "She was taken by imperial decree. She cannot be dealt with lightly. We still need to go back and report."

On one side, the Heavenly King and the Third Prince led the heavenly troops and generals, escorting the demon, to report to the Heavenly Bureau for her sentence. On the other side, the Pilgrim helped the Tang Priest. The Sha Monk packed the baggage. Bajie brought the horse. They seated the Tang Priest on the horse and set out on the great road. Truly:

The silken vines were severed, the golden sea drained; The jade lock was broken, and out of the cage they strode.

But what lay ahead on their journey—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 84

The Ordeal of the Dharma-Destroying Kingdom, Through Bodhisattva's Grace, Completes the Great Awakening; The Dharma-King Turns Orthodox, Restored to His Natural State

The story resumes: Tang Sanzang, having preserved his primal yang and broken free from the snare of passion, followed the Pilgrim westward. Before they knew it, summer had come. The warm breeze was just beginning to stir, and the plum rains fell in silken threads. What a fine scene:

Slowly the green shade grows dense; A light breeze guides the swallows and their young. New lotus leaves turn on the pond's surface; Tall bamboo shoots rise, fresh and flourishing. Fragrant grass stretches to the sky in emerald; Mountain flowers blanket the ground everywhere. By the stream, the sweet flag thrusts up like swords; Pomegranate flames blaze bright on the traveler's road.

The four pilgrims, sweltering in the heat, were walking along when they suddenly saw two rows of tall willows by the roadside. From the willow shade an old woman came forth, leading a little child by the right hand. She called out to the Tang Priest: "Monk, stop! Turn your horse around and go back east. Going west is all dead ends." Sanzang was so startled he tumbled off his horse. He pressed his palms together and said:

"Old Bodhisattva, the ancients said, 'The sea is wide enough for fish to leap; the sky is vast enough for birds to fly.' How can there be no road going west?"

The old woman pointed west and said: "That way, five or six li, is the Kingdom That Destroys the Dharma. In some former life, the king there incurred a load of karmic debt, and in this life he commits crimes without cause. Two years ago he made a great vow to kill ten thousand monks. Over these two years, one by one, he has killed nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-six nameless monks. He only waits for four famous monks to make up the full ten thousand and bring his vow to completion. If you go there, you'll be delivering your lives straight to the King of Death!" Sanzang heard this and his heart filled with fear. He said, trembling: "Old Bodhisattva, I am deeply grateful for your kindness. But tell me—is there no convenient road that bypasses the city? This poor monk could go around." The old woman laughed:

"You can't go around, you can't go around—unless you can fly, you'll get through."

Bajie, beside them, shot off his mouth: "Mother, don't talk in riddles. We can all fly." The Pilgrim's fiery golden eyes saw the truth in a flash—that old woman with the child was the Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Sudhana boy. He fell to his knees and bowed, crying: "Bodhisattva! Your disciple failed to welcome you!" The Bodhisattva rose on a cloud of auspicious light and drifted away, leaving the Tang elder so awed that he could only kneel and kowtow on the spot.

Bajie and the Sha Monk also hastily fell to their knees and bowed to Heaven. In a moment, the auspicious clouds grew dim and vanished, returning to the South Sea.

The Pilgrim rose and helped the master up: "Please rise, Master. The Bodhisattva has returned to her precious mountain."

Sanzang rose and said: "Wukong, since you knew it was the Bodhisattva, why didn't you say so sooner?" The Pilgrim laughed: "You hadn't finished asking questions when I was already bowing—how is that not soon enough?" Bajie and the Sha Monk said to the Pilgrim: "We are grateful for the Bodhisattva's guidance. Ahead is the Kingdom That Destroys the Dharma, which kills monks. What are we to do?" The Pilgrim said: "Don't be afraid, idiot! We have faced vicious demons and monsters, tiger dens and dragon pools, and never come to harm. This place is only a kingdom of ordinary mortals—what is there to fear? Only this is no place to stay. It's getting late, and there will be villagers and merchants coming home from the city. If they see us and recognize us as monks, the news will spread, and that won't be convenient. Let's get off the main road and find a quiet spot where we can talk." Sanzang did as he said. They all slipped off the road and sat down

in a hollow by the roadside.

The Pilgrim said: "Brothers, you two guard the master well. Old Sun will change and go into the city to scout. I'll find a quiet road and we'll pass through in the night." Sanzang instructed: "Disciple, don't take this lightly. The king's law is unforgiving. Be careful!" The Pilgrim laughed: "Don't worry! Don't worry! Old Sun has his own plan."

Good Great Sage! He finished speaking, leapt up, and with a whistle was in the air. Strange to say:

No rope pulls him up from above, No pole props him from below, Born of the same parents as everyone else, But his bones are lighter than air!

He stood in the clouds and looked down. He saw the city filled with joyous energy, auspicious light rippling. The Pilgrim said: "What a fine place—why does it destroy the Dharma?"

He watched for a while. As dusk fell, he saw:

The crossroads' lamps blazing bright; The nine-tiered palace, incense haze and bells chiming. Seven bright stars shone in the azure sky; Travelers from all eight directions unloaded their baggage. In the military camps, the painted horns were just beginning to sound; In the five-drum tower, the copper water clock began its first drops. On all sides, the night mists hung heavy; Over the three markets, cold smoke curled. In pairs, husbands and wives retired to their embroidered curtains; A single bright moon rose in the east.

He thought: "If I go down to the streets to scout the roads, this face of mine will give me away as a monk. Let me change."

He made a magic sign, recited the true words, shook his body, and changed into a moth:

Tiny body, fragile wings, light and deft— Snuffing lamps, darting at candles, seeking the light. Its original form born of transformation, A spirit from the midst of rotting grass. It loves the hot glow and touches the flame, Buzzing and circling without rest. In purple vest and fragrant wings, it chases the firefly; It loves best the deep night when the wind is still.

See him fluttering and flitting, flying toward the main streets and markets. By the eaves and corners, just as he was flying along, he suddenly saw a row of houses at a corner with lanterns hanging at every door.

He said: "Is it the Lantern Festival? Why are they all lit up in a row?"

He flew closer for a careful look. On one square lantern in the middle was written: "Lodging for Traveling Merchants." Below it: "Wang Xiao'er's Inn." The Pilgrim now knew it was a tavern. He poked his head in for another look and saw eight or nine men who had finished their evening meal, loosened their clothes, removed their caps, washed hands and feet, and gone to bed.

The Pilgrim thought, pleased: "The master can get through." How did he know they could get through? He was planning something underhanded—wait till those men fell asleep, then steal their clothes and caps, dress up as laymen, and enter the city.

But alas—things did not go as he wished!

Just as he was scheming, Xiao'er came forward and said: "Gentlemen, be careful. In this house, honest men and rogues are not separated—each man must look after his own clothes and baggage."

Now, those men were traveling merchants—what one of them is not careful? And hearing the innkeeper's warning, they grew even more cautious.

They all sat up and said: "The innkeeper speaks sense. We travelers are tired and fear that once asleep we won't wake easily. If something goes missing in the night, what then? Take our clothes, caps, and saddlebags

inside. When dawn comes, hand them back to us as we set out."

Wang Xiao'er indeed gathered all their clothes and things and carried them into his own room. The Pilgrim, impatient, spread his wings and flew in after, landing on a cap rack. He saw Xiao'er go to the door, take down the lantern, lower the shutter, and close the doors and windows. Then the man came in, took off his clothes, and lay down. But Xiao'er had a mother-in-law there, with two children, crying and fussing, and she could not sleep.

The old woman was also patching a torn garment, sewing and stitching, and showed no sign of sleeping.

The Pilgrim thought: "If I wait for this old woman to sleep, won't I delay the master?"

And he feared that at the deeper hour the city gates would be shut. He could not hold back—he swooped down and flung himself at the lamp. Truly, he risked his life on the flame, scorching his brow for a thread of life—the lamp went out. He shook himself again and changed into a rat, squeaking twice, jumped down, grabbed the clothes and caps, and headed for the door. The old woman, flustered, cried: "Old man! It's bad! A night rat has turned into a demon!"

When the Pilgrim heard this, he played another trick. He blocked the door and called in a loud, stern voice: "Wang Xiao'er, don't listen to your old woman's nonsense. I am not a night rat turned demon. An honest man does not do deeds in the dark. I am the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, descended to the mortal world, guarding the Tang Priest on his journey to the Western Heaven to seek scriptures. Your king is without the Way. I have come to borrow clothes and caps to dress my master. Once we have passed through the city, we will return them."

When Wang Xiao'er heard this, he tumbled out of bed. In the pitch dark, and being a man in a panic, he grabbed his trousers and tried to put them on as a shirt—left arm in, right arm out, and could not get them on either way.

The Great Sage used a spirit-carrying spell and was already out on the clouds. He turned and flew back to the hollow by the roadside.

Sanzang, seeing the starlight and moonlight clear, leaned forward to look. When he saw it was the Pilgrim coming near, he called out: "Disciple, can we get through the Dharma-Destroying Kingdom?"

The Pilgrim came forward and set down the clothes: "Master, to get through the Dharma-Destroying Kingdom, we can't be monks." Bajie said: "Brother, who are you putting on the spot? Not being a monk is easy enough—just don't shave your head for six months and the hair will grow." The Pilgrim said: "Who can wait six months! Right now we all have to be laymen!" The idiot panicked: "But you talk without thinking. We're all monks now. To be laymen, how do we wear caps? Even if we get them on at the edges, there's no place to tie the top string." Sanzang barked: "Stop joking around. What's the real plan?"

The Pilgrim said: "Master, I've scouted the city. Though the king is without the Way and kills monks, he is a true Son of Heaven—there was auspicious light on the city walls. I know the streets, and I know the local dialect—I can speak it. Just now I borrowed these clothes and caps from an inn. We'll dress as laymen, enter the city, and find lodging. At the fourth watch we'll rise, have the innkeeper prepare breakfast, and at the fifth watch we'll slip through the city gate and head west on the main road. Even if someone stops us, we can argue that we are imperial envoys from a great kingdom. The Dharma-Destroying King won't dare detain us—he'll have to let us through."

The Sha Monk said: "Elder Brother's plan is sound. Let's follow it." The elder, with no other choice, took off his monk's tunic and cap, put on layman's clothes, and wore a cap. The Sha Monk changed too. Bajie's head was too big for a cap, so the Pilgrim took out needle and thread, tore open two caps, sewed them into one, and fitted it on his head. He found a large, loose robe for him to wear, and then changed his own outfit. He

said: "Gentlemen, from now on, the words 'master' and 'disciple' go away."

Bajie said: "If not those four words, what do we call each other?" The Pilgrim said: "We all call each other 'brother.' The master is Master Tang the Eldest. You are Master Zhu the Third. The Sha Monk is Master Sha the Fourth. I am Master Sun the Second. But when we reach the inn, don't any of you say a word—let me do all the talking. If they ask what our business is, say we're horse traders. We'll use this white horse as a sample, and say we're ten brothers—four of us came ahead to rent a room and sell horses. The innkeeper will surely give us fine treatment. When we've eaten and are ready to leave, I'll pick up a shard, turn it into a piece of silver to thank him, and then we'll go." The elder, having no choice, went along.

The four pilgrims hurriedly led the horse and carried the baggage, and ran over to the other side. This was a peaceful region—at the first watch, the gates were not yet shut. They went straight in. When they reached Wang Xiao'er's inn, they heard a commotion inside: one said, "My cap is missing!" Another said, "My clothes are missing!" The Pilgrim pretended not to know and led them to the inn across the street.

That house had not yet taken in its lantern. He went to the door and called: "Innkeeper, do you have a spare room for us to rest?"

A woman inside answered: "Yes, yes, yes—come up, gentlemen." A man came out to take the horse. The Pilgrim handed the horse over to be led inside, then guided the master up through the lamplight to the upper floor. There were convenient tables and chairs; they pushed open the lattice windows and sat down together in the moonlight.

Someone came up with a lamp. The Pilgrim blocked the door and blew it out: "With a moon like this, we don't need a lamp."

The person went back down. Then a maid brought four bowls of clear tea.

The Pilgrim took the tea. Another woman came up from below, about fifty-seven or fifty-eight years old. She came straight upstairs, stood to one side, and asked: "Where are you gentlemen from? What fine goods do you carry?"

The Pilgrim said: "We come from the north, with some rough horses to sell." The woman said: "Horse traders—still young men."

The Pilgrim said: "This is Master Tang the Eldest, this is Master Zhu the Third, this is Master Sha the Fourth, and I am Master Sun the Second."

The woman laughed: "Different surnames." The Pilgrim said: "Exactly—different surnames, living together. We're ten brothers in all. Four of us came ahead to rent a room and set up shop. The other six are resting outside the city walls with the herd of horses, because it's too late to bring them in. Once we've rented a place, we'll all come in tomorrow morning. We won't leave until the horses are sold." The woman said: "How many horses in the herd?"

The Pilgrim said: "A hundred or so, big and small. All about the size of this horse of mine, but of different colors."

The woman laughed: "Master Sun the Second is truly a man who knows the rules of the road. Good thing you came to us—another house might not have taken you in. Our yard is spacious, our troughs and stalls are complete, we have hay and feed—we could stable several hundred horses. But one thing: I've run this inn for many years and have a name to it. My late husband was surnamed Zhao, and he passed away long ago. I am known as the Widow Zhao's Inn. We have three grades of service for our guests. I always state the terms first, before we settle accounts—business before pleasure." The Pilgrim said: "Fair enough. What are the three grades? As the saying goes, 'Goods come in high and low grades at different prices; guests are all

treated the same, near or far.' What do you mean by three grades? Tell me." The Widow Zhao said: "We have upper, middle, and lower. The upper grade: a banquet of five fruits and five dishes, with sugar sculptures of lions and immortals as table centerpieces, two persons to a table, singing girls invited to sing and keep company—five mace of silver per person, including the room." The Pilgrim laughed: "Cheap! Where I come from, five mace of silver wouldn't even cover the singing girls." The widow went on: "The middle grade: a shared table, just fruit and warm wine, poured for you to play your guessing games and drinking games—no singing girls—two mace of silver per person." The Pilgrim said: "Even cheaper! What about the lower grade?" The woman said: "I wouldn't dare say it before such honored guests." The Pilgrim said: "No harm in telling us. We'll pick what suits." The woman said:

"The lower grade: no one to serve you. Whatever rice is in the pot, you eat as you please. When you're full, spread some straw on the floor, make a bed, and sleep where you can. At dawn, pay whatever you think fit for the rice—we won't quarrel."

Bajie, hearing this, said: "Lucky, lucky! Old Zhu's fortune has come! Let me stick by that pot, eat my fill, and sleep in front of the stove!" The Pilgrim said: "Brother, what are you saying! You and I are men of the world—where can we not earn a few taels of silver? Bring on the upper grade." The woman, full of joy, called: "Bring good tea! Kitchen, hurry and prepare the food!" She went downstairs and called:

"Kill chickens and geese, boil the salted meats for the side dishes!" She called again: "Kill pigs and sheep—what we don't use today can be used tomorrow. Bring out the good wine! Steam the white rice, roll the white-flour flatbreads!" Sanzang, hearing this from upstairs, said:

"Master Sun, what shall we do? He's killing chickens and geese, pigs and sheep. If they serve it up, we're all strict vegetarians—who would dare eat it?" The Pilgrim said: "I have a plan." He went to the stairhead and stomped his foot: "Mother Zhao, come up."

The old woman came up: "What does the Second Master wish?" The Pilgrim said: "No killing of living creatures today. We are keeping a fast." The widow was surprised: "Are the gentlemen on a permanent fast, or a monthly fast?" The Pilgrim said: "Neither. We keep what is called the Gengshen fast. [Translator's note: In Daoist tradition, the Gengshen day was observed by fasting and staying awake all night.] Today is a Gengshen day, and we must fast. After the third watch, it will be Xinyou, and the fast is lifted. You may kill tomorrow. For now, prepare some vegetarian dishes, and we will pay the full upper-grade price." The woman was even more pleased. She ran downstairs and called: "Don't kill! Don't kill! Get some wood-ear fungus, dried bamboo shoots, tofu, wheat gluten. Pull some fresh greens from the garden, make noodle soup, steam raised buns, boil white rice, and brew fragrant tea."

Oh! Those kitchen hands, being used to the work day in and day out, had everything ready in no time, spread on the upstairs table. There were ready-made sugar sculptures of lions and immortals, and the four pilgrims ate as they pleased. The widow asked:

"Would you like some vegetarian wine?" The Pilgrim said: "Master Tang the Eldest doesn't drink. The rest of us will have a few cups." The widow brought up a pot of warm wine. The three had just begun to pour when there came a banging and clatter below. The Pilgrim said:

"Mother, did something break down there?" The widow said: "No—some farmhands from my little country place came late to deliver the rent rice, and I put them to sleep downstairs. When you guests arrived, I had no one to run errands, so I sent them with a sedan chair to the entertainment house to invite singing girls to keep you company. That thumping must be the sedan chair bumping the floorboards."

The Pilgrim said: "You should have said so earlier. Quick, don't go and invite anyone. First, it's a fasting day. Second, our brothers haven't arrived yet. Wait till tomorrow when they come in—then we'll invite a courtesan each, have some fun at your place, and leave after we've sold the horses." The widow said: "Good

man, good man! You keep the harmony and save your strength." She called:

"Bring the sedan chair back inside. Don't go." The four ate their wine and food, cleared the dishes, and everyone dispersed.

Sanzang whispered in the Pilgrim's ear: "Where do we sleep?" The Pilgrim said: "Right here on the upper floor." Sanzang said: "It's not safe. We're all tired. If we fall asleep and someone from the house comes to tidy up, sees our caps knocked off and our bald heads showing, and recognizes us as monks—the uproar! What then?" The Pilgrim said: "True!" He went to the stairhead and stomped his foot again.

The widow came up once more: "What does Master Sun wish now?"

The Pilgrim said: "Where do we sleep?" The woman said: "The upper floor is fine for sleeping—no mosquitoes, and a south breeze. Leave the windows wide open—it's perfect for sleeping." The Pilgrim said: "We can't sleep here. My Master Zhu the Third has a touch of rheumatism. Master Sha the Fourth has a bad shoulder. Eldest Brother Tang needs to sleep in the dark. And I have sensitive eyes. This room won't do." The old woman went back down, leaned on the counter, and sighed.

Her daughter, holding a baby, came near and said: "Mother, as the saying goes, 'Ten days sitting idle on the shore, but one day rushing past nine shores.' It's summer now and business is slow, but when autumn comes, we won't be able to keep up. Why sigh?"

The woman said: "Daughter, it's not worry about business. Tonight, just as we were closing up, at the first watch, four horse traders came to rent a room. They wanted the upper-grade treatment. I was hoping to earn a few mace of silver off them—but they eat vegetarian food, and I can't make any money off them. That's why I sigh." The daughter said: "They've already eaten. They can't very well go to another house. Tomorrow we can still serve meat and wine—why can't we make money?" The woman said: "They all have ailments—afraid of wind, sensitive to light, all want to sleep in the dark. Think about it: our house is all thin-roofed rooms—where do we find a dark place? Better to give them a free meal and send them elsewhere." The daughter said: "Mother, we have a dark place here, with no draft. It would do very well." The woman said: "Where?" The daughter said:

"When father was alive, he had a big cabinet made. It's four feet wide, seven feet long, and three feet high. It can hold six or seven people sleeping. Let them sleep in the cabinet."

The woman said: "I don't know if they'll like it. Let me ask. Master Sun, our humble dwelling has no dark room—only one large cabinet. No draft, no light. Would you sleep in the cabinet?" The Pilgrim said: "Good! Good!

Good!" He had the farmhands bring out the cabinet, open the lid, and invite them downstairs. The Pilgrim led the master, the Sha Monk carried the baggage, and by the lamplight they went to the cabinet. Bajie, not caring about anything, crawled in first. The Sha Monk passed in the baggage, helped the Tang Priest in, and then climbed in himself.

The Pilgrim said: "Where is my horse?" A servant said: "The horse is tied in the back, eating hay." The Pilgrim said: "Bring him here. Move the trough over, and tie him right next to the cabinet." Then he climbed in and called: "Mother Zhao, put on the lid, drive in the lock pins, and lock it. And look around—anywhere it lets in light, paste some paper over it. Come early tomorrow to open it." The widow said: "You're too cautious!" And so they all closed their doors and went to sleep. We'll say no more of them.

Now, the four of them in the cabinet—poor souls! First, they were not used to wearing caps. Second, the weather was hot. Third, the air inside was close and stuffy, with not a breath of breeze. They all took off their caps, stripped to their robes, and having no fan, used their monk's caps to fan themselves. Packed shoulder to shoulder, they waited until the second watch, when they all fell asleep. Only the Pilgrim, with a mind for

mischief, could not sleep. He reached over and pinched Bajie on the leg.

The idiot pulled his foot back and mumbled: "Go to sleep! We're all worn out. What's the matter with you, pinching and pulling?"

The Pilgrim, playing the ghost, said: "Our original capital was five thousand taels. The horses we sold before brought three thousand. Now in the two saddlebags we have four thousand. The rest of the herd will sell for three thousand more. That's a good round profit—enough! Enough!" Bajie, a man who wanted to sleep, could not be bothered to answer.

But who could have known that the inn's waiters, water carriers, and fire-tenders were all in league with bandits? When they heard the Pilgrim say there was all that silver, a few of them slipped out, gathered a band of twenty-odd thieves, and came with torches and weapons to rob the horse traders. They burst through the gate, and the Widow Zhao and her daughter, trembling, shut their door and let them loot. The thieves didn't want the inn's goods—they were looking for the guests.

Upstairs, they found no trace. With their torches, they searched all around and saw in the courtyard a large cabinet, with a white horse tied to the cabinet's leg. The cabinet lid was locked fast and could not be pried open.

The thieves said: "Men of the road have eyes and hands. This cabinet is heavy—there must be baggage and money locked inside. Let's steal the horse, carry the cabinet out of the city, break it open, and split the loot. Wouldn't that be fine?"

The thieves found ropes and poles, hoisted the cabinet, and marched off, swaying and lurching.

Bajie woke up and said: "Brother, go to sleep. What are you shaking for?"

The Pilgrim said: "Don't talk! No one's shaking." Sanzang and the Sha Monk woke with a start: "Who is carrying us?" The Pilgrim said: "Don't shout, don't shout! Let them carry! Carry us all the way to the Western Heaven and save us the walking."

The thieves, having gotten their prize, did not head west but went east through the city. They killed the guards at the gate, broke open the city doors, and fled. The alarm went through all six streets and three markets. Every ward captain and watchman reported to the city garrison commander and the Eastern City Military Office. The commander and the military officers, taking it as their own affair, mustered troops and archers and rode out of the city in pursuit.

The thieves, seeing the government troops were too strong, dared not fight. They dropped the cabinet, abandoned the white horse, and scattered into the hills. The troops did not catch a single bandit. They only recovered the cabinet and seized the horse, and returned in triumph. In the lamplight, the commander saw the horse—what a horse!

Its mane parted in silver threads; Its tail hung like a jade sash. Never mind the Eight Steeds of King Mu, or the legendary Su Shuang; It put every plodding nag to shame. Worth a thousand gold for its bones alone, It could chase the wind for ten thousand li. Climbing a mountain, it seemed to merge with the blue clouds; Neighing at the moon, it was white as driven snow. Truly, a dragon let loose from the sea isle— In the human world, a jade qilin.

The commander did not ride his own horse but mounted this white horse. He led his troops back into the city, had the cabinet carried to his headquarters, wrote a seal, sealed the cabinet, posted guards, and waited for dawn to memorialize the throne for a decision. The troops dispersed. We'll say no more of them.

Now the Tang elder, in the cabinet, grumbled at the Pilgrim: "You monkey head, you've killed me!

If they'd caught us outside and taken us to the Dharma-Destroying King, at least we could have argued our case. But now we're locked in a cabinet, stolen by thieves, then recovered by soldiers. Tomorrow, when they present us to the king, we'll be served up ready-made for the chopping block—won't that make up his ten thousand?"

The Pilgrim said: "If we were outside, they'd have opened the cabinet, and we'd be either tied up or strung up. In here, at least we're spared the tying and stringing. Tomorrow, when we see that benighted king, old Sun will have an answer. I guarantee not a hair on your head will be harmed. Relax—get some sleep."

They endured until the third watch. The Pilgrim worked a trick—slipped his staff out, blew a fairy breath on it, and cried "Change!" It became a three-pointed drill. He drilled at the corner of the cabinet, two or three times, and made a hole. He put the drill away, shook his body, changed into an ant, crawled out the hole, resumed his true form, rose on his cloud, and went straight to the palace gate.

The king was sleeping soundly. The Pilgrim used his Great Body-Splitting Universal Assembly spell. He plucked all the hairs from his left arm, blew a fairy breath, and cried "Change!"—each hair became a little Pilgrim. He plucked all the hairs from his right arm, blew a fairy breath, and cried "Change!"—each hair became a sleep bug.

He recited the "Om" true word and commanded the local earth god to lead them throughout the palace, the five offices and six ministries, and every official's residence, large and small. To every person who held office, they gave a sleep bug—everyone fell into a sound sleep, none allowed to turn over.

Then the Pilgrim took his gold-banded cudgel in hand, weighed it, waved it, and called: "Treasure, change!" It became a thousand and more razors. He took one and had each little Pilgrim take one, and they went through the palace, the five offices and six ministries, and every government office, shaving heads. Oh!

The Dharma-King destroys the Dharma, but the Dharma is endless; The Dharma pervades heaven and earth, the Great Way is open. The source of all dharmas returns to one body; The wondrous forms of the Three Vehicles are originally the same. Drilling open the jade cabinet reveals the message; Scattering golden hairs breaks through the veil of ignorance. Rest assured, the Dharma-King will attain true fruition— Neither born nor destroyed, gone and come are void.

By midnight, the shaving was done. The Pilgrim recited the incantation, dismissed the earth god and spirits, shook his body— and the hairs on both arms returned to their places. He gathered all the razors and turned them back into their true nature—once again a single gold-banded cudgel. He shrank it to its tiny form and tucked it behind his ear. Then he turned back into an ant, crawled back into the cabinet, and resumed his true form, keeping the Tang Priest company in his captivity. We'll say no more of that.

Now, in the palace, the palace maids and ladies rose before dawn to wash and comb—and every one of them had lost her hair. The eunuchs of the palace, great and small, had all lost their hair too. They crowded to the bedchamber door, played their music to wake the royal couple—every one of them holding back tears, not daring to speak.

Presently, the empress of the three palaces woke up—and she too had lost her hair. She hastily moved the lamp to the dragon bed and saw that under the brocade quilt lay a monk. The empress could not hold back her words. She woke the king.

The king opened his eyes wide, saw the empress's bald head, and scrambled up: "My love, what has happened to you?"

The empress said: "Your Majesty, the same has happened to you." The king felt his own head and was so terrified that his Three Corpses howled and his Seven Souls flew into the void: "What has happened to me?!" In his panic, the concubines of the six courts, the palace maids, the eunuchs, great and small—all with bald

heads—knelt and said: "Your Majesty, we have become monks!" When the king saw this, tears streamed from his eyes. He said: "It must be because I have killed monks." He issued a decree: "Do not speak of the head-shaving. I fear the civil and military ministers will censure the state as improper. All of you, to the court—hold audience."

Now, the officials of the five offices and six ministries, all the functionaries great and small, were supposed to go to court before dawn. And they too, every one of them, had lost their hair in the night. Each had written a memorial reporting the matter. And they heard:

Three cracks of the silent whip announce the Emperor's audience; Memorials report the cause of today's head-shaving.

But what became of the cabinet the garrison commander had seized, and what of the Tang Priest and his four disciples' lives—listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 85

The Mind-Monkey Teases the Wood-Mother; The Demon Lord Plots to Swallow the Chan

The story goes that at the king's morning court, the civil and military officials all came forward with memorials in hand and pleaded: "Sovereign Lord, we beg you to pardon the crime of our breach of decorum."

"What breach of decorum?" said the king. "Your manners are as proper as ever."

"Sovereign Lord," said the officials, "for some unknown reason, every one of us lost all his hair in the course of a single night."

Holding the memorial about the vanished hair, the king came down from his dragon couch and said to his assembled ministers: "It is truly a mystery. Every soul in my palace, great and small, lost their hair in one night as well." Ruler and ministers alike wept streaming tears, saying: "From this day forward, never again shall we dare slaughter monks!" The king returned to his dragon throne, and the officials each took their places in their ranks.

The king said again: "Let those with business step forward to report it; if there is none, let the curtain be rolled up and court dismissed."

From the military ranks flashed the Grand Commander of the City Patrol; from the civil ranks came the Commissioner of Troops of the Eastern City. Kneeling at the steps, they reported: "By your sacred command we patrolled the city, and last night we seized a cabinet of stolen goods, and a white horse besides. We dared not act on our own authority; we await your decree."

The king was greatly pleased. "Bring them here, cabinet and all." The two officials withdrew to their offices, mustered a smart company of soldiers, and had the cabinet carried out.

Inside it, Sanzang's soul had all but left his body. "Disciples," he cried, "when we are brought before the king, how are we ever to explain ourselves?"

"Don't fret," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "I have everything arranged. The moment the cabinet is opened, he'll be taking us as his masters. Just see that Bajie doesn't start any quarrels."

"As long as my life is spared," said Bajie, "that's blessings beyond all measure—how would I dare quarrel!"

Before they had finished talking, the cabinet was carried up to the palace, through the Tower of Five Phoenixes, and set down below the steps of the throne hall. The two officials asked the king to open and inspect it, and the king gave the command.

The lid had scarcely been lifted when Zhu Bajie could contain himself no longer and leapt right out, frightening the assembled officials till their gallbladders quaked and their tongues were tied. Then they saw Sun the Pilgrim helping out the Tang monk, and the Sha Monk hauling out the luggage. When Bajie saw the Grand Commander holding the horse by its rein, he walked up and barked: "That horse is mine! Hand it over!"—so terrifying the officer that he turned a somersault and fell flat on the ground. The four travelers all stood together amid the palace steps.

When the king saw that they were four monks, he hurried down from his dragon couch, summoned the queens and consorts of the three palaces, descended from the Golden Chimes Treasure Hall, and together with his ministers bowed in inquiry: "Venerable elders, whence do you come?"

"We are sent from the land of the East, from Great Tang," said Sanzang, "bound for the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the Land of India of the West, to worship the living Buddha and fetch the true scriptures."

"Venerable sir," said the king, "coming from so far away, why did you take your rest inside a cabinet?"

"This humble monk knew that Your Majesty had vowed to kill monks," said Sanzang, "and I dared not present ourselves openly at your honorable court. We disguised ourselves as laymen and at night sought lodging at an inn within your precious realm. Fearing lest our true identities be discovered, we took our rest in the cabinet. Unhappily, we were stolen away by thieves, seized by your Grand Commander, and carried here. Now that we have beheld Your Majesty's dragon countenance, it is truly as the saying goes—parting the clouds to behold the sun. We beg Your Majesty to release this humble monk; your grace would be deep as the sea!"

"Venerable sir," said the king, "you are a high monk of the celestial court of the Middle Kingdom, and I failed to go out to welcome you. It is true that I long nurtured a vow to kill monks. Once a monk slandered me, and I made a vow to Heaven to slay ten thousand monks to bring it to fulfillment. Who could have foreseen that last night I would turn to the faith, and that all of us would be made monks! Now ruler and ministers, consorts and queens, have had our heads shaven clean. We beg you, venerable teacher, not to begrudge your lofty wisdom: be willing to take us as your disciples."

When Bajie heard this, he burst out laughing. "If you want to take us as your masters, where is your gift of presentation?"

"If you, our teacher, will accept us," said the king, "we are willing to offer up all the treasure of the kingdom."

"Never mind treasure," said the Pilgrim. "We monks are monks who have the Way. Just have our travel permit stamped and send us out of the city, and I guarantee your royal house stands firm forever, with blessings and long life ever on the increase."

When the king heard this, he ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments to lay out a grand banquet. Ruler and ministers together took the vows, bowing to the one faith; the travel permit was exchanged on the spot, and they begged Sanzang to change the name of their kingdom.

The Pilgrim said: "Your kingdom's name of 'Dharma-Extinguishing' has a fine enough sound to it—only the word 'extinguish' will not do. Now that we have passed through, you may change it to the Kingdom That Reveres the Dharma. I guarantee you calm seas and clear rivers, victory for a thousand generations; winds and rains in season, peace in every quarter."

The king gave thanks for the grace, ordered the full royal cortege made ready, and escorted the Tang monk and his three disciples out of the city and on their way west. Of ruler and ministers turning to goodness and to truth, we shall say no more.

Now the elder, having taken leave of the king of the Kingdom That Reveres the Dharma, said happily from horseback: "Wukong, this method of yours was splendid—a truly great deed of merit!"

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "wherever did you find so many barbers, to shave so many heads in a single night?"

The Pilgrim then told the whole story of how he had used his transformations and magic powers, and master and disciples laughed until they could not close their mouths. And just at the height of their delight, they saw a high mountain blocking the road. The Tang monk reined in his horse and said:

"Disciples, look how steep and towering the mountain is before us. We must take great care!"

"Set your mind at ease! Set your mind at ease!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "I promise you no harm!"

"Don't speak so lightly of harm," said Sanzang. "I see those peaks standing up sharp and sheer; from far off there is something sinister in them, an evil cloud bursting forth. I feel a growing dread—my whole body has gone numb, and my spirit is ill at ease."

The Pilgrim laughed. "Have you forgotten the Heart Sutra of the Chan Master of the Crow's Nest?"

"I remember it."

"You may remember it, but there are four lines of gatha that go with it, and those you have forgotten."

"Which four?"

"The Buddha is on Vulture Peak—seek him not afar; Vulture Peak is only in your heart. Everyone has a Vulture Peak pagoda; Best cultivate beneath the Vulture Peak pagoda."

"Disciple," said Sanzang, "do you think I do not know? By those four lines, a thousand scriptures and ten thousand classics all come down to one thing: cultivating the mind."

"No need to say more," said the Pilgrim. "When the mind is pure, it shines alone in solitary brightness; when the mind is present, the ten thousand circumstances are all clear. Slip but a little, and you grow slack and listless—then for a thousand years, ten thousand ages, success will never come. It takes only a single strip of perfect sincerity, and the Thunderclap is right before your eyes. But if you go on like this, frightened and trembling, your spirit in turmoil—why, the Great Way is far off indeed, and the Thunderclap far off too. No more doubting—just follow me."

At these words the elder's heart and spirit revived at once, and all his cares fell away.

The four of them pressed on together. In a few steps they were up on the mountain, and lifting their eyes to look—what a fine mountain it was! Look closely, how its colors gleam in patches:

Above the summit, clouds go drifting; Before the cliffs, the tree-shadows are cold. Winged things scatter shrilling; the beasts are fierce and wild. In the woods, a thousand trunks of pine; On the crests, a few slender bamboos. The howling is gray wolves fighting over prey; The roaring is hungry tigers wrangling for their meal. Wild gibbons cry long, seeking fresh fruit; Elk and deer climb flowered slopes up into the green mists. The wind soughs, the water gurgles— Now and again a hidden bird warbles in the passes. Here and there, creepers tug and tangle; A whole brook of jade grass mixed with fragrant orchids. Glittering strange rocks; sheer-cut crags and peaks. Foxes and badgers troop along in herds; Monkeys and apes frolic in bands. The traveler already grieves at so much peril— And what can he do, when the old road twists and turns besides!

Master and disciples went on nervously, trembling as they walked—and just then they heard a great whishing as a wind rose.

The terrified Sanzang said: "The wind is rising!"

"In spring there are gentle breezes, in summer warm winds, in autumn golden winds, in winter north winds," said the Pilgrim. "Every season of the year has its winds. What is to fear from a rising wind?"

"This wind came on so suddenly—it is certainly no wind of nature."

"Since ancient times wind rises from the earth, and clouds come out of mountains. Where would a wind from Heaven come from?" But even as he spoke, they saw a fog rise besides. That fog was truly:

Vast and murky, darkening all the sky; Dense and hazy, dimming all the earth. The sunlight casts no shadow anywhere; No birdcall can be heard in any place. Just as if primal Chaos had come again, Or the whole world had turned to flying dust. The trees upon the mountaintop cannot be seen— And where now shall you meet the herb-gatherer?

Sanzang's alarm redoubled. "Wukong, the wind has not yet settled—why does this fog rise besides?"

"Don't be hasty," said the Pilgrim. "Please dismount, Master. You two brothers stay here and keep guard while I go and see whether this means fortune or ill."

Marvelous Great Sage! He arched his waist and rose straight into midair, set his hand above his brow, opened wide his fiery eyes, and looked down—and there, sure enough, on the edge of a jutting cliff sat a demon. Just look at him:

Brilliant dappled markings, gorgeous and bright; A haughty heroic bearing, brisk and bold. Firm teeth protrude from his mouth like steel awls; Sharp talons, sheathed in his paws, are like jade hooks. His golden round eyes frighten bird and beast; His silver whiskers bristle till they grieve the gods. With wild roars and growls he puts forth savage might, Breathing out fog, spraying wind, plying cunning schemes.

And at his left and right, thirty or forty little demons stood arrayed while he puffed out wind and belched fog with all his art.

The Pilgrim chuckled inwardly. "So my master had a premonition after all. He said it was no natural wind, and indeed it is not—a demon is putting on this show here. If old Sun were to bring his iron cudgel straight down on him now, that would be a garlic-pounding blow—pound him dead I certainly would, but it would hurt old Sun's good name."

For the Pilgrim was a hero to the end of his days, and never once had he stooped to striking a man from ambush.

"I'll go back," he thought, "and fix up Zhu Bajie a bit—get him to go meet this demon in battle first. If Bajie has the skill and fells the demon, we'll count it his merit; if he lacks the means and gets himself carried off, then I'll go rescue him, and only then will the fame be mine. Now Bajie is somewhat lazy and never eager to step forward, but there is one thing that loosens his tongue—his love of food. Let me dangle a bait before him and see what he says."

He dropped out of the clouds at once and came before Sanzang.

"Wukong," asked Sanzang, "what fortune lies in that wind and fog?"

"It has all cleared now," said the Pilgrim. "There's no more wind or fog."

"True—I can feel it has died down somewhat," said Sanzang.

The Pilgrim laughed. "Master, I generally read these matters well, but this time I read them wrong. I thought there might be a demon in that wind and fog, but there is none."

"Then what is it?"

"Not far ahead lies a village. The households there are kindly folk, steaming white rice and white-flour buns to feed monks. All that fog, I take it, was the steam rising from their steamer-baskets—the response Heaven makes to accumulated goodness."

When Bajie heard this, he took it for gospel truth, and pulling the Pilgrim aside he whispered: "Brother, did you eat their vegetarian food before you came back?"

"A little—not much. The vegetables were too heavily salted; I didn't care to eat a great deal."

"Pooh!" said Bajie. "Salted or not, I'd stuff myself one full bellyful! And if it made me thirsty, I'd come back and drink water."

"You want to eat, then?"

"That I do. My belly's a bit hungry—I'd like to go eat a little first. What do you say?"

"Brother, don't bring it up. As the ancient book says, 'While the father lives, the son may not act on his own authority.' And Master is sitting right here—who would dare go off first?"

Bajie laughed. "If you won't say anything, then I'm off."

"I won't say anything. Let's see how you manage to go."

Now that idiot had plenty of clever notions when it came to feeding his own mouth. He walked up, made an elaborate bow, and said: "Master, just now Elder Brother said there is a household in the village ahead that feeds monks. Now look at this horse—it's going to trouble somebody, wanting grass and wanting fodder; wouldn't that be a needless bother? And luckily the wind and fog have all cleared. Why don't the rest of you sit and rest a little while I go cut some tender grass and feed the horse first; after that we can go to that household and beg our meal."

The Tang monk was delighted. "Splendid! What makes you so diligent and careful today? Off with you—quickly there and quickly back."

The idiot set out, snickering to himself. But the Pilgrim caught up and grabbed hold of him. "Brother, that household feeds monks—feeds only handsome ones, not ugly ones."

"Then you mean I have to transform."

"Exactly. Go and change yourself a bit."

A fine idiot! He had his thirty-six transformations too. He walked into a hollow of the mountain, made a magic sign, recited a spell, shook his body, and transformed into a short fat monk, tapping a wooden fish in his hand, humming and droning away—but since he could not recite a sutra, all he could hum was the primer "Shang Da Ren"—"The Great Superior Man."

[Translator's note: Shang da ren is the opening of the traditional children's copybook text—the first characters a schoolboy ever learns to write.]

Now that monster had gathered in his wind and fog and marshaled his demon host. At the great crossroads he had arrayed them in an encircling ring formation, waiting expressly for travelers. And that idiot had the ill luck, before long, to blunder right into the middle of it. The demons closed round him: one seized his clothes, another clutched his silk sash; pushing and shoving, they all set on him at once.

"Don't pull!" said Bajie. "Let me eat my way from house to house."

"Monk," said the demons, "what is it you want to eat?"

"You people here feed monks," said Bajie, "so I've come for the food."

"You think this is a place that feeds monks? Don't you know this is a place that eats monks? We are demon immortals who have gained the Way in these mountains, and our whole trade is hauling you monks home, popping you into the steamer and eating you well boiled—and you have the gall to come here looking for a meal!"

Hearing this, Bajie was terrified, and he began to curse the Pilgrim: "That Protector of Horses is truly a good-for-nothing scoundrel! He fooled me into believing the villagers here feed monks. Where are there any village households here? What monks would anyone feed? It's nothing but demons, the whole pack of them!"

The idiot, hard pressed by all that tugging, reverted to his true form at once, whipped the rake from his belt, and delivered a wild flurry of blows that drove back the little demons.

They scurried off to report to the old monster: "Great King, disaster!"

"What disaster?"

"There's a monk come to the front of the mountain, and a clean, decent-looking fellow too. I said we'd carry him home and steam him for eating—if we couldn't finish him off, we'd keep some against a rainy day. But who could have known—the fellow knows transformations!"

"Transformed into what sort of shape?"

"He never made anything like a human shape! A long snout, great big ears, a mane down his back, both hands whirling a rake—blows raining down every which way, no head or face to them! Scared us all running back to report to you, Great King."

"Don't be afraid. Let me go and have a look." Wielding an iron pestle, he came up close—and saw that the idiot was indeed a fearsomely ugly creature.

He was:

A pestle of a snout, three feet and more in length; Tusks jutting from his jaws, outshining silver nails. A pair of round eyes flashing like lightning; Two ears fanning wind with a whooshing roar. Behind his head, a mane like rows of iron arrows; Over all his body, hide all scabby, coarse, and green. And in his hands he swings a wondrous rarity— A nine-toothed rake to strike them all with fright.

The demon screwed up his courage and shouted: "Where do you come from, and what is your name? Speak quickly, and spare your life!"

Bajie laughed. "My boy! So you don't know your Pig Grandpa either! Come forward, and I'll tell you:

A monstrous mouth, huge tusks, and strength divine— The Jade Emperor raised me Marshal Tianpeng, Commanding eighty thousand troops of the River of Heaven. In the Heavenly Palace, happy and free I ranged. But drunk on wine, I trifled with a palace maid, And there and then my hero's name was sold. One heave of my snout upset the Dipper-and-Ox Palace, And I ate the Queen Mother's purple-zhi greens. The Jade Emperor himself dealt me two thousand hammer blows And banished me down from the triple heavens, Bade me school my will and nurse my primal spirit— But down below I turned into a monster instead. Just as I was happily wedding at Gao Village, My luck ran low, and Brother Sun arrived. Beneath the gold-banded cudgel I was conquered, And only then bowed my head to take the Buddhist vows. Leading the horse, carrying packs, a beast of burden— I must have run short on the Tang Priest's account in a former life. The iron-footed Tianpeng, surnamed Zhu from birth, My religious name was changed to Zhu Bajie."

When the demon heard this, he shouted: "So you're a disciple of the Tang Priest! I've long heard it said the Tang Priest's flesh is good eating, and I was just looking to catch you—and here you've blundered right into my clutches! Think I'll spare you? Stand not! Taste my pestle!"

"You wretched beast," said Bajie, "so you were a dyer by trade!"

"How was I a dyer?"

"If you're not a dyer, how come you're so handy with a laundry club?"

The demon would hear no more argument, but closed in and struck out wildly.

The two of them, in that hollow of the mountain—what a battle they fought! A nine-toothed rake against an iron pestle. The rake spun out its patterns, rolling like a whirlwind; the pestle plied its cunning, flying like pelting rain. The one, a nameless wicked monster blocking the mountain road; the other, a guilty Tianpeng upholding his true-natured lord. When nature is upright, what fear of fiend or demon? Though the mountain

be high, earth still brings forth its metal. That one's pestle-guard was like a python leaving its pool; this one's rake came on like a dragon quitting the shore. Their shouts and cries shook mountains and rivers; their roaring menaces terrified the very underworld. Two heroes, each exerting his powers, staking body and soul in a wager of magic arts.

Bajie's prowess swelled as he battled the demon—while the monster bellowed to his little demons to close Bajie in on every side, and of that we say no more.

Now the Pilgrim, standing behind the Tang monk, suddenly let out an involuntary cold laugh.

"Why do you laugh coldly, brother?" asked the Sha Monk.

"Zhu Bajie really is a fool! He heard the words 'feeding monks' and let me lure him off—and at this hour he still hasn't come back. If he beats the demon off with his rake, just watch him come swaggering back, clamoring over the fruits of his victory. But if he can't beat it and gets carried off—why, that's my hard luck! Behind my back and to my face, who knows how many times he'll curse me as that Protector of Horses! Wujing, not a word from you—let me go and have a look."

Marvelous Great Sage! Without letting the elder know, he quietly plucked a hair from the back of his head, blew on it a breath of magic air, and cried "Change!" It became his very image, keeping the Sha Monk company and attending upon the elder.

Then his true spirit slipped out, leaped into midair, and looked down: the idiot was hemmed in by the monster and his host, his rake strokes falling into disorder, weakening by degrees.

The Pilgrim could hold back no longer. He pressed down his cloud and cried in a ringing voice: "Don't panic, Bajie—old Sun is here!"

Hearing the Pilgrim's voice, the idiot took heart and his valor rose. With a burst of raking he charged forward, striking out wildly—and the demon could not withstand him. "This monk was no good just now," the demon marveled, "so how has he turned so fierce all of a sudden?"

"Don't bully me, my boy!" said Bajie. "My family has come!" And he pressed forward all the harder, raining down blows without head or face. Unable to hold out, the demon led his demon host off in defeat.

When the Pilgrim saw the demon flee, he did not go near, but wheeled his cloud around, returned to his place, gave the hair a shake, and took it back onto his body. The elder, with his mortal flesh and carnal eyes, could never have told the difference.

Before long the idiot came swaggering back in triumph, spent and streaming—snot and slaver and froth bubbling fresh at his mouth, gasping for breath. He came up and cried: "Master!"

The elder looked at him in astonishment. "Bajie, you went to cut grass for the horse. Why do you come back in such a sorry state? Could it be there were watchers from the mountain households who would not let you cut their grass?"

The idiot threw down his rake and beat his breast and stamped his feet. "Master! Don't ask! The very telling of it would shame a man to death!"

"Shame over what?"

"Elder Brother made a fool of me! First he said there was no demon in that wind and fog, nothing ominous at all—just a village of kindly folk steaming white rice and white-flour buns to feed monks. I took it all for the truth, and being hungry, I thought I'd go eat a little first, using grass-cutting as my cover. And what did I find? A whole pack of demons! They closed me round and gave me this bitter fight! If it hadn't been for Elder Brother's mourning-staff coming to my aid, I'd never have struggled out of that net and made it back!"

The Pilgrim laughed beside them. "What nonsense from this idiot! If you were a thief, you'd drag a whole jailful of men into the charge. I've been right here watching Master—when did I ever step away?"

"That's so," said the elder. "Wukong has not left my side."

The idiot hopped and bellowed: "Master! You don't know! He has a double!"

"Wukong," said the elder, "was there truly a demon or not?"

The Pilgrim could not hide it; he bowed and said with a laugh: "There was a small demon or two—but he dared not meddle with us. Bajie, come here, and I'll fix things up for you as well. Since we are escorting Master across this perilous mountain road, we should go at it like an army on the march."

"And what of an army on the march?"

"You be the general who opens the road, marching in front to clear the way. If the demon doesn't come, so much the better; if he comes, you fight it out with him—and if you fell the demon, we'll count it your merit."

Bajie reckoned that the demon's skill was about on a level with his own, and said: "Then even if I die at his hands, let me march first!"

"This idiot, speaking ill luck before anything else—how will he ever get ahead in life?" said the Pilgrim with a laugh.

"Brother," said Bajie, "don't you know the saying? 'The young lord at the banquet—if not drunk, then filled; the brave man at the front—if not dead, then wounded.' Say a word of ill luck first, and the glory comes after."

The Pilgrim was pleased. He saddled the horse at once, helped the master mount, the Sha Monk shouldered the luggage, and they followed Bajie, all the way into the mountains—and of that we say no more.

Now that demon, leading his few battered little fiends, returned straight to his cave and sat high on the rocky ledge, silent and glum.

There were many lesser demons keeping the cave, and they came up and asked: "Great King, whenever you go out, you come back pleased and merry. Why so downcast today?"

"Little ones," said the old demon, "when I used to leave the cave to patrol the mountain, no matter whose they were—men or beasts—I could always bag a few to bring home and keep you all fed. But today my fortune ran low, and I ran into a match for myself."

"Who was that match?"

"A monk—a disciple of the Tang Priest of the East who is fetching scriptures, by the name of Zhu Bajie. He beat me off with one burst of his rake. How vexing! All this while I've heard people say the Tang Priest is a luohan who has cultivated through ten lifetimes, and that whoever eats a single piece of his flesh may extend his years and live forever. And today he walks right into my mountain—the perfect chance to seize him and steam him! Who knew he had such disciples under him?"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when, from among the ranks, a little demon stepped forward before the old monster and—hic!—heaved three sobs, and then burst into three peals of laughter.

"Why do you weep and laugh both?" the old demon barked.

The little demon knelt down. "Great King, you say you want to eat the Tang Priest—but the Tang Priest's flesh is not good to eat."

"Everyone says one piece of his flesh brings agelessness and length of days equal to Heaven's. How is it not good to eat?"

"If it were good to eat, he'd never have gotten this far—the demons everywhere else would have eaten him long ago. He has three disciples under him."

"And do you know which three?"

"His eldest disciple is Sun the Pilgrim; his third is the Sha Monk; and this one who beat you is his second disciple, Zhu Bajie."

"How does the Sha Monk compare with Zhu Bajie?"

"About the same."

"And how does this Sun the Pilgrim compare with them?"

The little demon stuck out his tongue. "I dare not say! That Sun the Pilgrim has vast magic powers and a thousand transformations! Five hundred years ago he wrecked the Heavenly Palace. The Twenty-Eight Constellations above, the Nine Luminaries and Star Officers, the Twelve Hour-Sovereigns, the Five Lords and Four Ministers, the Star-Dippers of East and West, the Two Gods of South and North, the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Rivers, all the divine generals under Heaven—none of them could get the better of him. How could you dare dream of eating the Tang Priest?"

"How do you know all this in such detail?"

"In days gone by I lived with that Great King in the Lion Camel Cave on Lion Camel Ridge. That Great King did not know what was good for him and wanted to eat the Tang Priest—and Sun the Pilgrim came smashing through the gate with one gold-banded cudgel. A pity! He pounded them till they all made the names of domino tiles, ones and sixes wiped out entire. Only because I had some sense did I slip out the back door and make my way here, where Your Majesty took me in—that is how I know his methods."

[Translator's note: "ones and sixes wiped out" translates a dominoes term for a winning hand—here a grim pun on the demons being wiped out to the last tile.]

At these words the old demon turned pale with horror. Truly, even a great general dreads an ill-omened word—and hearing his own household talk this way, how could he not be frightened?

And just as they were all quailing, another little demon stepped forward. "Great King, don't be vexed, don't be afraid. As the common saying goes, matters must be taken as they come. If it is the Tang Priest you want to eat, let me work out a scheme for catching him."

"What scheme have you?"

"I have the Plum-Blossom Split-Petal Stratagem."

"What is this Plum-Blossom Split-Petal Stratagem?"

"Draw up all the demons of the cave, great and small. From a thousand choose a hundred; from the hundred choose ten; and from the ten pick just three—and they must be capable fellows who know transformation. Let all three transform into Your Majesty's likeness, wear Your Majesty's helmet, don Your Majesty's armor, and wield Your Majesty's pestle, and lie in ambush at three places. Let the first engage Zhu Bajie, the second Sun the Pilgrim, and the third the Sha Monk—sacrifice three little demons to draw off the three brothers. Then Your Majesty, up in midair, need only reach down your cloud-seizing hand and pluck up this Tang Priest—as easy as fishing something out of a bag, as easy as snatching a fly from a basin of water! What difficulty is there in that?"

Hearing this, the old demon was delighted through and through. "This scheme is marvelous! Marvelous! This time, if we fail to catch the Tang Priest, so be it; but if we do catch him, I shall not treat you lightly—I will make you Vanguard of the Van."

The little demon knocked his head upon the floor in thanks, and called the roll of demons. All the demons of the cave, great and small, were drawn up, and sure enough three capable ones were chosen; all three transformed into the old demon, each grasping an iron pestle, and lay in ambush awaiting the Tang Priest—but of that we say no more.

Now this venerable Tang, without worry or care, followed Bajie onto the highway. After they had traveled a good long while, there came from the roadside, with a sudden crash, a little demon leaping out and darting forward to seize the elder.

"Bajie!" cried Sun the Pilgrim. "The demon's here! Why don't you strike?"

The idiot, not stopping to weigh false from true, whipped out his rake, gave chase, and struck out wildly. The demon hastily raised his iron pestle to meet him. The two of them, thrusting and parrying, were fighting out their wager below the mountainside—when from the deep grass came another crash, and out leapt a second monster, making straight for the Tang monk.

"Master! This is bad!" cried the Pilgrim. "Bajie's eyes have failed him and let the demon through to seize you—wait till old Sun beats him off!" He whipped out his cudgel and hurried forward, shouting: "Where are you going? Taste my staff!" The demon wasted no words, but raised his pestle to meet him. The two of them clashed and battered below the grassy slope—and just as they were locked in struggle, from behind the mountain came another whoosh of wind, and out leapt yet another demon, heading straight for the Tang monk.

When the Sha Monk saw this he cried out in alarm: "Master! Elder Brother's and Second Brother's eyes have both gone dim, letting the demons through to seize you! Stay on your horse—let old Sha handle this one!"

This monk, too, without pausing over true or false, whipped out his staff and blocked the demon's iron pestle head-on, battling bitterly. With shouting and bawling, wild yelling and wild fighting, they gradually drew farther and farther off. And the old monster, up in midair, saw the Tang monk sitting alone on his horse—he reached down his five-clawed steel hooks and snatched the Tang monk up in a single grab. The poor master lost his horse, slipped his stirrups, and was whisked away on a rush of wind by the demon. Alas! Truly it was:

His Chan nature meets the demon and the fruit of truth is hard to win; The River-Float meets again his star of bitter calamity!

The old demon brought his wind down to earth, carried the Tang monk into his cave, and called: "Vanguard!"

The little demon who had devised the scheme came forward and knelt. "I dare not! I dare not!"

"Why say that?" said the old demon. "A great general's word, once spoken, is like white silk dyed black—it cannot be made white again. I said then that if we failed to catch the Tang Priest, so be it; but if we caught him, I would make you Vanguard of the Van. Today your clever scheme has indeed prevailed—how could I break faith with you? Bring the Tang Priest here, have the little ones carry water and scrub the pots, fetch firewood and light the fires, and give him a good steaming. You and I shall each eat a piece of his flesh, and look to live long and never age."

"Great King," said the Vanguard, "we must not eat him yet."

"Now that we have him, why may we not eat him?"

"If Your Majesty eats him, no great harm: Zhu Bajie can be done a favor, and the Sha Monk can be done a favor. But I fear that master of theirs, Sun the Pilgrim, is a cruel one. If he learns it was we who ate him, he will not bother coming to trade blows with us. He will simply take that gold-banded cudgel of his and thrust it into the mountainside—punch a hole clean through it—and topple the whole mountain over, and then we shall have nowhere left to live!"

"Vanguard, what better counsel have you?"

"Do as I say: carry the Tang Priest to the back garden, tie him to a tree, and give him no food for two or three days. First, it will clean him out inside; second, we wait until those three stop searching at our gate and word comes that they have gone back—then we bring him out and enjoy him at our leisure. Wouldn't that be better?"

The old demon laughed. "Right! Right! The Vanguard speaks sense!" At one command the Tang Priest was carried into the back garden and bound fast with a rope to a tree, while the little demons all went to the front to stand by.

Look at that poor elder, bitterly enduring the rope's winding and binding, lashed tight and fast—he could not hold back the tears rolling down his cheeks, and he cried out: "Disciples! While you seize demons in the mountains, along what road do you chase the fiends? Taken by this wicked monster, I suffer here in captivity—what day shall we meet again? Oh, the pain of it kills me!"

And even as the two streams of tears flowed down, he heard someone on the tree opposite call out: "Elder, you've been brought in too!"

The elder steadied his nature and said: "Who are you?"

"I am a woodcutter of this mountain," said the man. "The master of this mountain caught me the other day and tied me up here. It has been three days now—they are reckoning to eat me."

The elder's tears fell. "Woodcutter, if you die, you die but one death, with nothing left holding you back. But my death will not be a clean one."

"Elder, you are one who has left the world—no parents above, no wife or children below. If you die, you die. What is unclean about that?"

"I am one sent from the East to fetch the scriptures of the Western Heaven, bearing the imperial mandate of Taizong, Emperor of the Tang, to worship the living Buddha and bring back the true scriptures, to save and deliver the masterless lonely souls of the nether world. If I now lose my life, will not that sovereign king be sick with waiting, and those loyal ministers be betrayed? And the countless wronged souls in the City of the Unjustly Dead—will they not be utterly dashed in their hopes, never to be delivered through all eternity? A whole work of merit, all blown away as dust and wind—how could that ever be called clean?"

When the woodcutter heard this, tears fell from his eyes. "Elder, if you die, it is only this. My own death is more heartbreaking still. I lost my father when I was young and lived alone with my mother, with no family estate at all—nothing to live on but my firewood. My old mother is eighty-three this year, and I am her one sole support. If I die, who will bury her body and see her to her end? Bitter, bitter! Oh, the pain of it kills me!"

Hearing this, the elder wailed aloud: "Pitiful! Pitiful! Even this mountain man has the heart that thinks upon his kin, while this poor monk can only recite his sutras! To serve one's sovereign and to serve one's parents—it is all one principle. You grieve for a parent's kindness; I grieve for my sovereign's." Truly it was tear-filled eyes gazing upon tear-filled eyes, one heartbroken man seeing off another heartbroken man!

But let us speak no more of Sanzang in his suffering, and tell instead of Sun the Pilgrim, who below the grassy slope had fought off the little demons and hurried back to the roadside—only to find his master gone, with nothing left but the white horse and the baggage.

In panic he led the horse and shouldered the load, searching over the mountain heights. Ah! Truly:

The River-Float, born to calamity, meets calamity once more; The Great Sage who quells the demons is himself beset by one.

If you would know how the search for the master turned out in the end, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 86

The Wood Mother Lends His Might to Punish the Monster; The Metal Lord Works His Magic to Destroy the Fiends

The story continues: The Great Sage Sun, leading the horse and shouldering the load, was searching and calling for his master all over the mountain, when suddenly Zhu Bajie came running up, panting hard. "Brother, what are you shouting for?"

"Master has disappeared—have you seen him?" said the Pilgrim.

"I signed on simply to be a monk with the Tang Priest," said Bajie, "and then you had to make a fool of me, making me out to be some general! I risked my life fighting that demon for a while, and barely won it back. Master was in your keeping and the Sha Monk's—why come asking me?"

"Brother, I don't blame you," said the Pilgrim. "Somehow your eyes went dim and you let the demon through to seize Master. I went to beat that demon and left the Sha Monk watching Master—and now even the Sha Monk has vanished."

Bajie laughed. "I expect the Sha Monk took Master off somewhere to relieve his bowels." Even as they spoke, the Sha Monk came along.

"Sha Monk," asked the Pilgrim, "where has Master gone?"

"You two both went dim-eyed and let the demons through to seize Master," said the Sha Monk. "Old Sha went off to fight that demon, and Master was sitting on his horse by himself."

The Pilgrim leaped about in a fury. "We've fallen for their trick! Fallen for their trick!"

"Fallen for what trick?" asked the Sha Monk.

"It was the Plum-Blossom Split-Petal Stratagem! It drew us three brothers apart, and from right among us it scooped up Master and made off with him! Heaven! Heaven! What are we to do?" And the tears rolled unchecked down his cheeks.

"Don't cry!" said Bajie. "The moment you cry, you turn craven! He can't be far—it's on this very mountain. Let's go search."

The three of them, helpless for any better plan, went into the mountains to search. After they had traveled some twenty li, they saw below a jutting cliff a cave dwelling: sheer peaks half-veiling one another, strange rocks jumbled and towering. Rare flowers and jade grasses breathed their fragrance; red apricots and green peaches blazed in beauty. The ancient trees before the cliff, frost-barked and rain-slicked, forty spans around; the dark pines outside the gate, their blue-black crowns two thousand feet in the sky. Pairs of wild cranes came often to dance in the clear wind before the cave mouth; couples of mountain birds sang the daylight through upon the branches. Clusters of yellow rattan hung like draped cords; rows of misty willows trailed like drooping gold. A square pond gathered its waters; a deep burrow leaned against the hill. The square pond gathering its waters hid an unhorned dragon, its scales not yet changed; the deep burrow leaning against the hill housed a many-year-old, man-eating monster. Truly no whit inferior to an immortal's realm—a very nest of hoarded wind and gathered breath.

When the Pilgrim saw it, in two or three bounds he leaped to the front gate and looked: the stone door was shut fast, and across its top was set a stone slab bearing eight large characters: "The Mountain of Hidden Mist; the Linked-Ring Cave of Broken Peaks."

"Bajie, to work!" said the Pilgrim. "This is where the demons live—Master must be in their house."

That idiot, throwing his weight about, raised his rake and struck with all his strength, smashing a great hole in the stone door, and shouted: "Demons! Bring my master out at once, or my rake will batter down your door, and your whole household will be settled for good!"

The little demons guarding the gate ran panic-stricken inside to report: "Great King, trouble has come to our door!"

"What trouble?"

"Someone out front has smashed the gate, and he's bawling for his master!"

The old demon was startled. "Who can have tracked us here?"

"Never fear!" said the Vanguard. "Let me go out and see."

The little demon ran to the front gate and, at the smashed hole, cocked his head sideways to peer out. Seeing a long snout and great big ears, he turned and called out loudly: "Great King, don't fear him! This is Zhu Bajie—he hasn't much skill, and he dares not behave badly. If he does behave badly, we'll open the door, grab him, and throw him in the steamer. The one to fear is that hairy-faced, Thunder-God-beaked monk."

Outside, Bajie heard him. "Brother, he's not afraid of me—only of you! Master must be in his house. Go on up, quick!"

The Pilgrim cursed: "Wretched beast! Your Grandpa Sun is here! Send my master out, and I'll spare your lives!"

"Great King, this is bad!" said the Vanguard. "Sun the Pilgrim has tracked us here too!"

The old demon grumbled: "It's all your doing, with your 'split-petal this' and 'split-petal that'—and now the trouble is at our very gate! How is this to end?"

"Great King, set your mind at rest and stop your grumbling," said the Vanguard. "I recall that Sun the Pilgrim is a magnanimous, ocean-hearted sort of monkey. Vast as his magic powers are, he loves to be flattered. Let's take out a fake human head to fool him, butter him up with a few soft words, and tell him simply that his master has been eaten by us. If we fool him into leaving, the Tang Priest is still ours to enjoy; if we can't fool him, we'll think again."

"Where are we to get a fake human head?"

"Let me make one and see."

A clever monster indeed! Taking a keen steel ax, he hacked a willow root into the shape of a human head, sprayed on it a little human blood, smeared it over carelessly, and had a little demon carry it out on a lacquer tray to the gate, where he called: "Great Sage Grandpa, stay your wrath and hear us out."

Now the Pilgrim did indeed love flattery, and the moment he heard the cry "Great Sage Grandpa," he held Bajie back. "Don't strike yet—let's hear what he has to say."

The little demon with the tray said: "Your master was carried into our cave by our Great King. But the little demons of the cave are a rude, boorish lot who know no better—one came to swallow, another came to gnaw; grabbing and biting, they have eaten your master, and only the head is left, right here."

"If he's eaten, then so be it," said the Pilgrim. "Just hand out the head and let me see whether it is real or fake."

The little demon tossed the head out through the hole in the door, and the moment Zhu Bajie saw it he began to wail: "Oh, the pity! A master went in looking like that, and look what a master comes out!"

"Idiot," said the Pilgrim, "first see whether it's real or fake, and then cry!"

"Don't be silly—since when does a human head come in real and fake?"

"This is a fake human head."

"How can you tell it's fake?"

"A real head, when it's thrown out, lands with a muffled thud. A fake one rings out like a clapper. If you don't believe me, let me throw it and you listen." He picked it up and dashed it against the stones—with a loud clang.

"Brother," said the Sha Monk, "it rang!"

"If it rang, then it's fake. I'll make it show its true form for you to see." He whipped out his gold-banded cudgel, and with one crack smashed it open. When Bajie looked, it was a willow root.

The idiot could not hold back his cursing: "You pack of shaggy louts! You've hidden my master in your cave and try to fob off your Pig Grandpa with a willow root—do you imagine my master was some willow-tree spirit transformed?"

The little demon with the tray fled in terror, quaking, and ran to report: "Hard! Hard! Hard!"

"What is so hard?" asked the old demon.

"Zhu Bajie and the Sha Monk were fooled easily enough, but Sun the Pilgrim is an antique dealer—he knows the genuine goods! He knew at a glance it was a fake head. Now we must get him a real human head—maybe then he'll go away."

"But where do we get a real human head? Go to the Flaying Pavilion and pick one from the heads of the men we couldn't finish eating."

The demons went at once to the pavilion and chose a fresh head; they had it gnawed clean of scalp, slick and smooth, and again carried it out on a tray, calling: "Great Sage Grandpa, the head before was indeed a fake. This one is truly Master Tang's head. Our Great King kept it to guard the house, and now we present it to you." And with a plop they tossed the head out through the hole in the door, where it rolled dripping blood all about.

Sun the Pilgrim could see it was a real human head. There was nothing for it but to weep, and Bajie and the Sha Monk both wailed aloud with him.

Bajie, tears in his eyes, said: "Brother, don't cry for now. The weather is none too good—the head may soon go rank. Let me carry it off and bury it while it's still fresh, and then we'll cry."

"That makes sense," said the Pilgrim. The idiot, shrinking from no foulness, tucked the head in his arms and ran up the mountainside.

On the sunny side he found a sheltered spot where wind was stored and breath gathered, drove his rake in and dug a pit, buried the head, and piled up a grave mound over it. Then he called to the Sha Monk: "You and Brother cry here, while I go find some offerings to make to him."

He went off to the ravine, broke off several big willow branches, picked up a few goose-egg stones, and came back to the grave. He planted the willow branches left and right and piled the stones in front.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the Pilgrim.

"These willow branches will serve for pines and cypresses, to shade the master's grave mound; these stones will serve for pastries, as offerings to the master."

"Lout!" the Pilgrim thundered. "The man is dead, and you'd offer him stones!"

"It's but to show the heart of the living—a token of a filial heart."

"None of your foolery! Sha Monk, stay here: first, to keep vigil at the tomb; second, to guard the luggage and the horse. You come with me, Bajie—we'll smash their cave, seize the demon, and hack him into ten thousand pieces, and avenge our master!"

The Sha Monk said through his tears: "Elder Brother speaks rightly. You two take care; I will stay here and keep watch."

A fine Bajie! He stripped off his black brocade tunic, tightened the light clothes on his body, raised his rake, and followed the Pilgrim.

The two of them pressed forward furiously, brooking no parley, and straightaway smashed through the stone door, their cries shaking Heaven: "Give us back our living Tang Priest!"

In the cave, all the demons, great and small, felt their souls fly and scatter, and every one of them blamed the Vanguard.

The old demon asked the Vanguard: "These monks are beating in our very door—how are we to deal with them?"

"The men of old said it well," the Vanguard replied: "the hand that dips into the fish basket cannot escape the fishy smell. One thing not done, two things never done—let us marshal the household troops either way and go kill those monks!"

Hearing this, the old demon had no better plan; he truly gave the order: "Little ones, be all of one heart! Take your sharpest weapons and follow me out to battle!" And with a mighty shout they all charged out of the cave gate.

The Great Sage and Bajie hastily fell back a few paces to a level spot on the mountain, where they checked the demon host and shouted: "Which of you is the famous chief? Which is the demon who seized our master?"

The demon host planted their camp, a brocade banner of flowers flashed once, and the old demon, gripping his iron pestle, answered in a ringing call: "You reckless monks, do you not know me? I am the Great King of the Southern Mountain, who has run wild here for several hundred years. Your Tang Priest is already seized and eaten by me—what can you do about it?"

The Pilgrim cursed: "What a brazen shaggy lout! How many years can you have to your name, that you dare take the words 'Southern Mountain' to yourself? Lord Lao Zi, the patriarch who opened Heaven and split Earth, still sits on the right of the Grand Pure One; the Buddha Tathagata, honored as the sovereign of this age, still sits below the Great Peng; and Confucius the Sage, the honored patriarch of the Confucian teaching, is called only 'the Master.' And you—a wretched beast—dare style yourself the Great King of the Southern Mountain, these several hundred years of wildness! Stand not! Take a blow from your Grandpa!" The demon swayed aside and blocked the iron cudgel with his pestle, glaring round-eyed: "With that monkey mug of yours, you dare crush me with so many words! What powers have you, to run riot at my very gate?"

The Pilgrim laughed. "You nameless wretched beast—so you do not know old Sun! Stand fast, screw up your courage, and listen:

My home of old was the great Divine Continent of the East, Held in the embrace of Heaven and Earth for tens of thousands of autumns. On the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit lay the immortal stone egg; The egg cracked open and brought forth my root and sprout. Born unlike any child of common clay, My holy body

was the companion of sun and moon. The nature I cultivated of myself was no small matter; Heaven-endowed and quick of wit, the germ of the Great Elixir. By royal seal a Great Sage, I dwelt in the Cloud Palace, Throwing my weight about, battling the Dipper and Ox. A hundred thousand divine soldiers could not come near me; The starry host of all the heavens was easy game to bag. My fame filled the universe—every quarter knew it; My wisdom threaded heaven and earth—every place preserves it. Now happily I have turned and taken the Buddhist faith, Escorting the elder on the journey to the West. Where mountains bar the way, I open roads, and none can stop me; Where waters block the path, I build bridges, to the demons' grief. In the woods I wield my might and seize tigers and leopards; Before the cliffs, with one turn of the hand I snare the pixiu. From the East, bearing the true fruit, I have come to the West— What demon or fiend would dare show his head? Beast, you harmed my master, and my hatred is true: I promise you—this very hour, your life shall end!"

Hearing this, the monster was both startled and enraged. Gritting his teeth, he leaped in close and brought his iron pestle down on the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim lightly caught it on his cudgel, still minded to parley with him—but Bajie could contain himself no longer, whipped out his rake, and struck wildly at the Vanguard. The Vanguard led all the rest in a charge. This battle, joined on the level ground of the mountain, was truly a fine fight:

Monks of a great eastern land, a sovereign realm above all realms, Come west to the Utmost Bliss to fetch the true scriptures. The great leopard of the Southern Mountain sprays wind and fog, Blocking the road in deep mountains, showing off alone. He laid his clever scheme, played his cunning game, And in ignorance seized by mistake the monk of Great Tang. Now he meets the Pilgrim, vast in magic powers, And Bajie besides, a man of no small name. The demon host rages in melee on the level mountainside; Dust and dirt fly thick; the sky itself turns dark. On that side the little demons howl and roar, spears and swords thrusting wild; On this side the godly monks shout and bawl, rake and cudgel rising together. The Great Sage, a hero with no match under heaven; Wuneng, stout and hale, brimming with battle-glee. The old monster of the Southern Waste, the Vanguard of his band— All for one piece of the Tang Priest's flesh, They stake their lives and throw their souls away. These two have made a blood-feud for their master's life; Those two, for lust of Tang Priest's flesh, have turned so vicious. Back and forth they fought past half a session, Clashing and battering with no victory either way.

Now the Great Sage saw that the little demons were fighting fiercely and could not be beaten back despite repeated blows. So he used his body-splitting magic: he plucked off a handful of hairs, chewed them in his mouth, sprayed them out, and cried "Change!"—and all of them became his very image, each wielding a gold-banded cudgel, and they struck inward from the front. Those one or two hundred little demons could not guard the front and the rear at once, could not shield left and right together; one by one they fled for their lives, routed back to the cave. The Pilgrim and Bajie came slashing out from within the melee. A pity for those demons who knew no better: those who met the rake bled from nine holes; those who caught the cudgel were ground to mud and bone!

The Great King of the Southern Mountain, scared out of his wits, rolled up wind and fog and fled for his life. The Vanguard, having no art of transformation, was felled at once by one blow of the Pilgrim's cudgel, and reverted to his true form—an iron-backed gray wolf demon.

Bajie walked up, seized him by the feet, flipped him over and looked. "This rascal—since he was a young one, who knows how many people's piglets and lambs he stole and ate!"

The Pilgrim shook his body, took back his hairs, and said: "Idiot! No dawdling! Quick—chase the old demon and make him pay for our master's life!"

Bajie turned his head—the little Pilgrims were nowhere to be seen. "Brother, all your magic doubles have gone!"

"I've already taken them back."

"Splendid! Splendid!" And the two of them went merrily back in triumph.

Now the old demon, having escaped with his life, returned to his cave and ordered the little demons to haul stone blocks and carry earth and stop up the front gate. The little demons who had survived, every one trembling, stopped up the gate and dared not show their heads again. When the Pilgrim led Bajie up to the gate and shouted, no one answered within. When Bajie struck with his rake, it would not so much as budge.

The Pilgrim knew what it meant. "Bajie, waste no strength—they've blocked up the door."

"Blocked the door—and how then do we avenge our master?"

"Let's go back and see the Sha Monk at the grave." The two returned to the place and found the Sha Monk still weeping. Bajie's grief redoubled. He dropped his rake, flung himself upon the grave, and pawed the earth, weeping: "Master of bitter fate! Master from a far country! Where shall we ever see you again!"

"Brother, don't grieve so," said the Pilgrim. "The demon has blocked the front gate, so there must be a back gate to go in and out by. You two stay here while I go look again."

Through his tears Bajie said: "Brother, be careful! Don't let them scoop you up too, or we won't know how to cry—we'd cry one cry for Master, one cry for Elder Brother, and soon be crying all to pieces."

"No fear! I have my own methods!"

Marvelous Great Sage! He put away his cudgel, tightened his kilt, stretched his stride, and rounded the mountainside. Suddenly he heard the gurgle of rushing water. Turning to look, he saw it was the water of a mountain torrent pouring down from upstream. And on the far side of the torrent he saw a door, and to the left of the door a hidden channel where water ran out—a channel from which red water was flowing.

"No need to say more—that is the back gate. If I went in with my own face, some little demon opening the door might see me and know me. Let me turn into a water snake and slip across. Hold on—if I turn into a snake, my master's ghost may learn of it and blame me, a man of religion, for turning long and wriggling. Let me turn into a little crab and scuttle across. No, that's not good either—Master might blame me, a man of religion, for having too many legs."

So he made himself a water rat, and with a whizz darted across, slipping in through the outflow channel and burrowing into the courtyard within. Poking out his head to look, he saw several little demons in a sunny spot, laying out strips of human flesh, piece by piece, to dry.

"Ah, my boys! That must be Master's flesh—too much to eat, so they're drying it into jerky against rainy days. If I showed my true form and rushed up and clubbed them dead, it would look like I have courage but no cunning. Let me transform again, go deeper in, and find that old demon, and see how things stand."

He leaped out of the channel, shook his body, and changed again—this time into a winged ant. Truly:

Weak of strength and small of body, called the Dark Steed, Long years of hidden cultivation gave it wings to fly. At ease it crosses by the bridge, marshaling its ranks; In merry mood it comes beneath the bed to match its wits. It knows full well when rain is due and seals its hole; The piled-up dust grows deep at last, and all turns gray. Nimble, nimble; light, light—so deft and quick, Time after time it slips unmarked past the wicker gate.

He spread his wings and, soundless and shadowless, flew straight into the main hall. There sat the old demon, glum and fretting, when a little demon came bounding in from the rear to report: "Great King, ten thousand joys!"

"Whence comes the joy?"

"I was just now scouting at the head of the torrent outside the back gate when I suddenly heard someone wailing. I climbed the peak to look, and it was Zhu Bajie, Sun the Pilgrim, and the Sha Monk, bowing over a grave and weeping bitterly. I reckon they took that human head for the Tang Priest's head, buried it, piled it into a grave mound, and are crying there."

Hearing this in the shadows, the Pilgrim rejoiced inwardly: "If that's the tale, then my master is still hidden in there, not eaten yet. Let me go search him out and see whether he lives or dies, and then deal with them."

Marvelous Great Sage! He flew into the main hall, peering this way and that, and saw a small side door, shut very tight. He slipped in through the crack to look—and it was a great garden, and faintly he could hear the sound of grief. He flew straight into its depths and saw a grove of great trees, and beneath the trees two men tied up—and one of them was the Tang Priest.

At the sight, the Pilgrim's heart itched beyond bearing; he could not help reverting to his true form. He drew near and called softly: "Master!"

The elder knew him, and his tears fell. "Wukong, you've come? Save me, quickly! Wukong! Wukong!"

"Master, don't keep calling my name—there are people about; the news might leak. Since you still have your life, I can save you. That monster claimed he had already eaten you and fobbed me off with a fake human head, and we fought him bitterly for it. Set your heart at ease, Master, and bear it a little longer; wait till I have toppled the demon, and then I'll come free you."

The Great Sage recited a spell, shook his body, and changed back into an ant, returning to the main hall, where he clung to the main beam. He saw the little demons who had escaped with their lives clustering and crowding, babbling and wrangling. Suddenly one of them leaped out to report: "Great King, they found the gate stopped up and could not batter their way in. So they've given up all hope, abandoned the Tang Priest, and made that fake head into a grave. Today they'll cry one day, tomorrow they'll cry another, and the day after they'll keep the third-day rite—and then, no doubt, they'll go home. Once we learn they've scattered, we bring out the Tang Priest, chop him fine, stew him with plenty of spices, and fragrant and steaming we'll each eat a piece—we'll all get a share of long life out of him!"

Another little demon clapped his hands: "Say no more, say no more! Steaming's the tastiest way to eat him!"

Another said: "Boiling saves firewood."

And another: "He's a rare thing to begin with—salt him down a bit, and we can eat him that much longer."

On the beam the Pilgrim heard all this, and rage blazed in his heart: "What mortal grudge has my master done you, that you scheme over how to eat him!" He plucked a handful of hairs, chewed them to pieces in his mouth, blew them out lightly, and recited a secret spell, commanding them all to become sleep bugs, which he cast onto the faces of the demon crowd. One by one they bored into their nostrils, and the little demons began to nod and doze; before long, all of them had dropped off to sleep. Only the old demon could not sleep soundly. He kept rubbing his head and scrubbing his face with both hands, sneezing without stop and pinching his nose.

"Can it be he has found out?" thought the Pilgrim. "Give him a double dose!" He plucked another hair, made it over in the same pattern, and threw it onto his face; it bored into his nostril. Two sleep bugs now, one entering from the left, one from the right. The old demon sat up, stretched, yawned twice, and—snoring away—he too toppled into sleep.

The Pilgrim rejoiced in secret, leaped down, and reverted to his true form. He took the cudgel from his ear, gave it a flourish till it was thick as a duck's egg, and with one great blow smashed through the side door. He

ran to the back garden and called loudly: "Master!"

"Disciple, come quickly and untie the rope—it has cut me to the bone!"

"Master, don't be hasty. Wait till I've killed the demons, then I'll come free you." He whipped around and ran to the main hall. Just as he raised his cudgel to strike, he checked his hand: "No! Wait till I've freed Master, then strike." He returned to the garden, then thought again: "No—strike first, then rescue." Thus he went back and forth two or three times, until at last he came capering and dancing into the garden.

The elder, seeing him, turned grief to joy: "Monkey, is it that you've seen my life was not taken, and you're so happy you don't know what to do with yourself—dancing about like that?"

Only then did the Pilgrim come forward, untie the rope, and lead his master away by the arm. Then he heard the man tied to the tree opposite call out: "My lord, in your great mercy, save my life too!"

The elder stood fast and called: "Wukong, untie that man as well."

"Who is he?"

"He was carried in a day before I was. He is a woodcutter, and he says he has an aged mother he thinks on most tenderly—he is a dutiful son. Save him along with me."

The Pilgrim did as he was told, untied the cords, and brought him out through the back gate with them. They climbed the rocks and crossed the steep torrent.

The elder gave thanks: "Worthy disciple, it is thanks to you that his life and mine were saved! Where are Wuneng and Wujing?"

"Those two are over there weeping for you. Give them a shout."

The elder indeed called out at the top of his voice: "Bajie! Bajie!"

The idiot had wept himself dizzy. Wiping his sniveling nose and eyes, he said: "Sha Monk, Master's ghost has come home to haunt us! Isn't that him calling us somewhere?"

The Pilgrim stepped up and barked: "Lout! What ghost? Is this not Master come back?"

The Sha Monk raised his head and saw. Hurriedly he knelt before them: "Master, how much you must have suffered! How did Elder Brother save you?"

The Pilgrim told the whole story. Hearing it, Bajie ground his teeth in hatred, and could not restrain himself: he raised his rake and battered down the grave mound in one burst, dug out the human head, and smashed it to a pulp.

"Why did you smash it?" asked the Tang Priest.

"Master," said Bajie, "who knows whose dead man this was—making me bow over him and cry!"

"It was thanks to him that my life was saved," said the elder. "When you brothers stormed their gate demanding me, they must have taken him to fend you off; otherwise they would have killed me outright. Bury him again—it befits us men of religion."

Hearing the elder's words, the idiot gathered up the mangled flesh and bones, buried the bundle, and raised a grave mound over it.

Then the Pilgrim said with a laugh: "Master, pray rest here a moment while I go wipe the nest out."

He leaped down the rocks once more, crossed the torrent, and entered the cave. Carrying the ropes that had bound the Tang Priest and the woodcutter into the main hall, he found the old demon still asleep, trussed him

up with his four hooves gathered, hoisted him onto his shoulder with the gold-banded cudgel, and marched straight out the back gate.

Zhu Bajie saw him from far off. "Brother certainly loves this load-carrying work! Why not find another one to make a matched pair for your carrying pole?"

When the Pilgrim reached them and set the demon down, Bajie raised his rake to strike.

"Hold!" said the Pilgrim. "There are still little demons in the cave we haven't caught."

"Brother, if there are, take me in to smash them."

"Smashing them would waste time. Better gather some firewood and finish them off at the root."

The woodcutter, hearing this, led Bajie at once to the eastern hollow, where they gathered broken bamboo tops, blighted pines, hollow willows, severed vines, yellow wormwood, old reeds, rushes, and dry mulberry—quite a load of it—and carried it in through the back gate. The Pilgrim set the fire, and Bajie fanned it with his two ears. The Great Sage leaped up, gave his body a shake, and took back the hairs that had been the sleep bugs. As the little demons came to, flames and smoke burst out together—alas! Not one of them kept half a life. The whole cave dwelling burned down to bare emptiness, and they went back to see the master.

The master heard the old demon, just now waking, groaning and grumbling, and called: "Disciples, the demon has come to."

Bajie stepped up and with one stroke of the rake killed the old monster, who reverted to his true form—and he was a mugwort-leaf spotted leopard spirit.

"A spotted leopard can eat tigers," said the Pilgrim, "and of late he could turn into a man as well. Killing him with this stroke ends the evil for good and all!"

The elder's thanks were beyond all words as he climbed into the saddle. The woodcutter said: "My lord, not far to the southwest lies my humble home. I beg you honor it with a visit, so my mother may see you and bow her thanks for the gift of my life, and then we will see you on your way."

The elder gladly agreed; he did not ride, but walked together with the woodcutter, the four of them traveling in company, winding their way southwest. Before many a mile, this is what they saw: stone paths deep in moss, a wicker gate netted over with flowering vines. Mountain light closing in on every side; a whole wood of birds clamoring. Dense pines and bamboos mingling their green; rare plants and wondrous blossoms in profusion. A place of secluded cloud in deep seclusion—a household of bamboo fence and thatched hut.

From far off they saw an old woman leaning on the wicker gate, her eyes brimming with tears, wailing to heaven and earth for her son.

When the woodcutter saw it was his mother, he left the elder and hurried ahead to the gate, where he knelt and cried: "Mother! Your son has come!"

The old woman seized him in her arms. "My son! These days you never came home, and I thought the master of the mountain had carried you off and done you to death—the ache in my heart was past bearing. Since you were not killed, why did you only come back today? Where are your rope-frame and your ax?"

The woodcutter knocked his head to the ground. "Mother, your son had indeed been carried off by the master of the mountain and tied to a tree, and truly my life hung by a thread—thanks be to these honored lords! This lord is a luohan of the Tang court of the East, journeying to the Western Heaven for scriptures. He too had been carried off by the master of the mountain and tied to a tree; but his three disciples, lords of vast magic power, beat that mountain master dead with one furious pounding—and he was a mugwort-leaf spotted

leopard spirit. All the little demons were burned to death, and they brought this honored lord down and delivered him, and delivered your son as well. This is a kindness high as Heaven and deep as Earth! Had it not been for them, your son would surely have died. Now the mountain is at peace, and your son could walk it all night long without harm."

Hearing this, the old woman bowed with every step as she received the elder and his three disciples, and they all entered the wicker gate and sat down in the thatched cottage. Mother and son knocked their heads in thanks without end, and bustled about in a flurry to prepare a vegetarian meal in gratitude.

Bajie said: "Woodcutter brother, I can see your household is poor and thin. Just make do with a simple meal—don't trouble yourself laying out a grand spread."

"I'll not deceive you, my lord," said the woodcutter. "Here in these mountains we are truly poor. We have no fragrant mushrooms, no winter mushrooms, no Sichuan pepper, no fine spices—only a few dishes of wild greens to set before you, in token of our small hearts."

Bajie laughed. "Much noise, much noise! Just be quick about it—our bellies are hungry."

"At once! At once!" And sure enough, before long the tables and stools were wiped and spread, and up were set several platters of wild greens. Just look:

Tender blanched day-lily shoots, Sour pickled dandelion greens. Floating pondweed and purslane, River cress and "goose-gut" sprouts. "Swallow-won't-come," fragrant and tender; Fist-curled little buds, crisp and green. Well-stewed "horse-indigo" tops, White-braised "dog's-footprint" weed. Cat's-ear leaves and wild pepperwort, Lambsquarters boiled soft and fit to eat; "Scissor-handles" and "ox-pond spears," Snail-coil cress and besom shepherd's-purse. Broken-rice cress, lettuce cress— Several dishes, green and fragrant, smooth and rich. Oil-fried "black-hero" flowers, and water-caltrop shoots worth boasting of; Cattail-root stems and wild-rice shoots, Four kinds grown by the water, truly pure and fine. "Wheat-watcher," delicate and choice; "Tattered-cloth," that none will wear, With bitter-hemp stalks by the fence-side trellis. "Sparrow's cotton sheet" and "monkey's footprints," Fried till they glisten—just right for eating. Slanting wormwood, green wormwood, "embrace-mother" wormwood, Where moths fly up onto the buckwheat trays. "Sheep's-ear" bald-head and wolfberry shoots, Add some "black-orchid"—and no oil needed. Thus several wild greens made one whole meal— The woodcutter's devout heart, given in thanks.

Master and disciples ate their fill, packed up, and prepared to set out. The woodcutter dared not detain them long; he asked his mother to come out, and they bowed and gave thanks again and again. The woodcutter could only knock his head; then he took a jujube-wood staff, bound up his clothes, and came out to see them on their way.

The Sha Monk led the horse, Bajie carried the load, the Pilgrim kept close on either side, and the elder, with folded hands from the saddle, said: "Woodcutter brother, be so good as to lead the way first; we shall part at the highway."

Together they climbed heights and descended slopes, rounded torrents and searched out the paths. From horseback the elder mused:

"Disciples! Since I left my sovereign for the Western lands, On and on, far and far, the road ahead runs long. Waters upon waters, mountains upon mountains—calamity never frees me; Demons upon demons, fiends upon fiends—fate is hard to escape. Heart upon heart set only on the Tripitaka's scriptures; Thought upon thought still seeking the ninth heaven above. Toiling and moiling—what day will it ever end? When will my conduct be fulfilled and I return to the Tang court?"

Hearing him, the woodcutter said: "My lord, do not grieve. Along this highway, westward, it is not a thousand li to the Land of India, the home of Utmost Bliss."

Hearing this, the elder turned and dismounted. "You have labored far on our behalf. Since we have reached the highway, Woodcutter brother, pray return home. Give our deepest respects to your honored mother: for the generous vegetarian meal we have just troubled her with, this humble monk has nothing to repay it with—only morning and evening I shall recite the scriptures, praying that mother and son be kept in peace, with long life of a hundred years."

The woodcutter bowed and took his leave again and again, and returned by his own road; and master and disciples pressed straight on toward the West. Truly:

Subduing the monster, dissolving the wrong, they left the bitter pass; Receiving kindness, they took the road and walked with heedful hearts.

If you would know how many days more it took them to reach the Western Heaven, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 87

Fengxian County Offends Heaven and the Rain Is Barred; The Great Sage Sun Preaches Goodness and Sends Down Sweet Rain

The Great Way is deep and dark—how shall one speak of its workings? Once spoken, it startles gods and ghosts. It holds the whole universe hidden in its breast, parts the dark and unveils mysterious light— A joy beyond compare in all the world. Before the peak of the Vulture, the pearl of price held up between two fingers, Shining bright with fivefold radiance, Lights every living being, above and below, in heaven and earth— And those who know it live as long as mountains and seas.

The story continues: Sanzang and his disciples, having taken leave of the woodcutter, came down from the Mountain of Hidden Mist and hurried onto the highway.

After several days of travel, they suddenly saw a walled city drawing near, and Sanzang said: "Wukong, look at that city ahead—is it the Land of India?"

The Pilgrim waved his hand. "No! No! The Tathagata's home may be called the Utmost Bliss, but it has no walled city. It is a great mountain, and in the mountain are towers, terraces, halls, and pavilions, called the Great Thunderclap Monastery of Vulture Peak. Even when we reach the Land of India, that is still not where the Tathagata lives—there is no telling how far the Land of India still is from Vulture Peak. That city, I expect, is an outer prefecture of India; we'll know for certain when we get there."

Before long they arrived outside the city. Sanzang dismounted and entered in through the triple gates, and saw that civic life was desolate and the streets deserted and cold. Coming to the market place, they saw many men in black robes ranged left and right, and several capped and belted officials standing beneath the eaves of houses. As the four of them walked along the street, those people made no move to give way.

Zhu Bajie, the rustic boor, thrust out his long snout and bawled: "Make way! Make way!" The people looked up with a start, and at the sight of his face every one of them went limp of bone and numb of sinew, staggering and stumbling, all crying: "A demon! A demon!" The capped and belted men under the eaves, terrified, bowed trembling and asked: "Travelers—from what quarter do you come?"

Fearing his disciples would stir up trouble, Sanzang pushed himself to the front and addressed the crowd: "This humble monk is from the Great Tang empire of the East, sent to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures at the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the Land of India. Passing through your honorable region, I know neither the name of the place nor any household to lodge at; only now entering the city, I have sadly failed to keep out of your way. I beg you gentlemen to pardon the offense."

The officials then returned his courtesy and said: "This is an outer prefecture of India called Fengxian County. Drought has plagued us year after year, and the prefect has sent us to post here a notice seeking a master of the law to pray for rain and save the people."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim said: "And where is this notice of yours?"

"The notice is here. We had just swept the eaves-gallery this moment and have not yet hung it up."

"Bring it and let me see." The officials unrolled the notice at once and hung it beneath the eaves. The Pilgrim and his three companions came forward and read it together. It said:

"I, the prefect of Fengxian County of the great Land of India, surnamed Shangguan, issue this notice to engage an enlightened master and summon great rites of the Law. Whereas the lands of this county are broad and generous, and soldier and citizen once prospered, drought has scorched us year upon year and dry famine followed age after age: the people's fields lie waste and the troops' land is barren; the rivers run shallow and

the field-ditches stand empty. There is no water in the wells, no moisture at the springs' bottoms. The rich households barely scrape by with their lives; the poor folk can hardly stay alive. A measure of millet costs a hundred in gold; a bundle of firewood, five taels of silver. A girl of ten is traded for three sheng of rice; a boy of five is given to whoever will take him. Within the walls, fearing the law, men pawn clothes and belongings to keep body and soul; in the countryside, defying authority, they rob and cannibalize to preserve their lives. For this cause I hereby put forth this notice, gazing up in hope toward the worthy and wise of the ten quarters: pray for rain and save the people, and the kindness shall be richly repaid. I offer a thousand pieces of gold in thanks—no empty words. Given under this notice as required."

When the Pilgrim finished reading, he said to the officials: "Prefect Shangguan—what is that?"

"Shangguan is a surname—the surname of our prefect," said the officials.

The Pilgrim laughed. "That's a rare one."

"Brother never studied his books," said Bajie. "In the Hundred Family Surnames there's a line: 'Shangguan Ouyang.'"

[Translator's note: the Hundred Family Surnames is the classic schoolboy primer of Chinese surnames; the quoted line strings two rare surnames together.]

"Disciples, enough idle chatter," said Sanzang. "Who among us can pray for rain? Let us pray one sweet rain for him and relieve the people's misery—that is a deed of ten thousand goodnesses. If we cannot, let us be on our way and not delay our journey."

"What difficulty is there in praying for rain!" said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun has churned rivers and stirred seas, swapped the Dipper and shifted the stars, kicked at Heaven and toyed with wells, breathed fog and sprayed cloud, shouldered mountains and chased the moon, summoned rain and called the wind—there's not one of those but was child's play in my younger days! What's so rare about it?"

When the officials heard this, they sent two men hurrying to the prefect's seat to report: "My lord, joy beyond measure has come!"

The prefect was just then burning incense in silent prayer, and hearing that joy was reported, asked at once: "What joy?"

"Today we received the notice and had just come to the market to hang it up when four monks appeared, calling themselves envoys of the Great Tang of the East, sent to the Great Thunderclap in the Land of India to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures. The moment they saw the notice they declared they could pray for sweet rain, and we hastened to report it."

The prefect straightened his robes at once and set out on foot—no sedan chair, no horse, no retinue—going straight to the market place to invite them with full ceremony. Suddenly someone announced: "His Honor the prefect is come!" The crowd opened a way, and the prefect, the moment he saw the Tang monk, took no fright at the ugliness of his disciples but threw himself down in the middle of the street and bowed, saying: "Your servant is the prefect of Fengxian County, of the Shangguan family. Bathed and perfumed, I reverently beg you, venerable teacher, to pray for rain and save the people. I pray you, great master, extend vast compassion, exert your divine power, and deliver us!"

Sanzang returned his courtesy and said: "This is no place for talk. Wait till this humble monk reaches some temple or monastery—there we may best attend to the matter."

"Let the teacher come to my humble office," said the prefect; "there is clean and quiet space there." So master and disciples led the horse and shouldered the load and went straight to the prefect's residence, where they were presented one by one.

The prefect at once ordered tea and a vegetarian feast. Shortly the meal arrived, and Bajie, eating his fill with the greed of a starving tiger, so terrified the tray-bearers that their hearts pounded and their gallbladders quivered; back and forth they hurried with soup and rice like figures in a revolving lantern, barely keeping him supplied, and only when he was stuffed full to bursting did he stop.

When the meal was done, the Tang monk gave thanks and then asked: "Your Honor, how long has this drought been upon your land?"

The prefect said: "This humble region is an outer prefecture of the great Land of India—Fengxian, my charge to govern:

Three years together it has met with dry famine; The grass seed sprouts not; the five grains are gone. Great and small, all households find their trading hard; Of every ten doors, nine are houses of weeping. Of every three parts of the people, two parts have starved to death; The one part left is like a candle in the wind. Your servant put out a notice seeking the worthy everywhere, And happily true monks have come to our land. If you grant an inch of rain to relieve the common folk, I vow to present a thousand gold to repay such goodness!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim's face bloomed with joy, and he chuckled: "Say no more! Say no more! If it's a thousand gold you offer in thanks, there won't be half a drop of sweet rain. But if it's a matter of piling up merit and virtue—old Sun will give you one great rain."

That prefect was in truth a most upright and worthy man, who bore the people a heavy love in his heart. He at once begged the Pilgrim to take the seat of honor, bowed his head low, and said: "If the teacher truly extends such mercy, your servant shall never dare betray the goodness."

"No more talk—rise, I beg you," said the Pilgrim. "Only trouble you to watch well over my master while old Sun does his work."

"Brother," asked the Sha Monk, "how will you work?"

"You and Bajie come over here, and beneath this hall of his follow me as my wings of assistance, while old Sun calls the dragons to make rain."

Bajie and the Sha Monk obeyed his orders faithfully; the three of them all stood below the hall. The prefect burned incense and bowed in worship, while Sanzang sat reciting sutras.

The Pilgrim recited his true words and chanted his spells, and at once a black cloud was seen in the due east, sinking gradually down before the hall—and it was Ao Guang, the old Dragon King of the Eastern Sea.

Ao Guang drew in the hem of his cloud, transformed into human form, walked forward, and bowed to the Pilgrim: "The Great Sage has called this little dragon—what use do you have for me?"

"Rise, please. I have troubled you to come from afar—there's nothing else. This is Fengxian County, parched for years on end. Why haven't you come to make rain here?"

"Report to the Great Sage and let it be known," said the old dragon, "that though I can indeed make rain, I am one who is dispatched by Heaven for the purpose. If Heaven does not send me, how would I dare come here of my own accord to make rain?"

"I am only passing through this place," said the Pilgrim, "and seeing the people's suffering in this long drought, I have called you here in particular to pour out rain for their relief. How can you make excuses?"

"How dare I make excuses? But when the Great Sage recited the true words and called me, I dared not not come. First, I have received no imperial decree from Heaven above; second, I have not brought with me the rain-making divine generals—how could I set the Ministry of Rain in motion? Since the Great Sage has this

heart to deliver the people, allow this little dragon to return to the sea and muster his troops; and trouble the Great Sage to go up to the Heavenly Palace and obtain sanction, request a sacred decree commanding the rainfall, and ask the Water Officials to release the dragons. Then I can rain according to the numbers in the decree."

Since the dragon spoke reason, the Pilgrim could only dismiss the old dragon back to his sea. He stepped out of the Dipper-pattern he had traced and told the Tang monk the whole matter of the Dragon King.

"In that case, go and do it," said the Tang monk. "Only take care you speak no lies."

The Pilgrim then instructed Bajie and the Sha Monk: "Guard Master well—old Sun is off to the Heavenly Palace!" Marvelous Great Sage! The moment he said "I'm off," he vanished without a sound.

The prefect trembled in alarm: "Where has Lord Sun gone?"

"He's ridden his cloud up to Heaven," Bajie said with a laugh.

The prefect, in deep reverence, sent flying notices throughout the city, bidding every great street and small lane, without distinction of noble or commoner, soldier or citizen, in every household to set up a tablet for the Dragon King's worship, place a vat of clear water at the door with willow branches set in it, tend incense and fire, and worship Heaven—and of that we say no more.

Now the Pilgrim, on his somersault cloud, went straight to the gate of the Western Heaven, where the Heaven-Protector Heavenly King, leading celestial strongmen and warriors, came forward to greet him: "Great Sage, is the business of the scriptures finished?"

"Not far from it now," said the Pilgrim. "We have reached the borders of the Land of India, where there is an outer prefecture named Fengxian County. For three years no rain has fallen there, and the people are in bitter hardship. Old Sun would pray for rain to save them, and called the Dragon King to the place; but he says that without a decree he dare not act on his own, so I have come to court for an audience with the Jade Emperor and to request one."

"That quarter, I fear, is not due for rain," said the Heavenly King. "I heard it said long ago that the prefect there ran wild and gave offense to Heaven and Earth; the Supreme Lord held it against him, and set up a mountain of rice, a mountain of flour, and a great golden lock. Only when those three things are finished and broken is that place due for rain."

The Pilgrim knew not what this meant and asked to see the Jade Emperor. The Heavenly King dared not bar him, and let him pass in. Going straight to the outer court of the Hall of Universal Brightness, he was met by the Four Great Celestial Masters: "Great Sage, what brings you here?"

"While escorting the Tang monk," said the Pilgrim, "we came to the borders of the Land of India. Fengxian County has no rain, and the prefect summoned priests to pray for it. Old Sun called the Dragon King and meant to have him make rain, but he says that without the Jade Emperor's decree he dare not act on his own. I have come especially to request the decree, to revive the people in their hardship."

"That quarter is not due for rain," said the Four Celestial Masters.

The Pilgrim laughed. "Due or not due, be so good as to present me and announce me—let's see how much face old Sun can command."

"As the proverb says," chuckled the Immortal Ge, "the fly wraps itself in a net—what an enormous face it must have!"

[Translator's note: a fly wearing a hairnet presumes a face far bigger than it has—i.e., "what nerve you have, trading on your 'face'."]

"Don't bandy nonsense," said Xu Jingyang. "Just take him in." Qiu Hongji, Zhang Daoling, and the two others, Immortal Ge and Xu, led him beneath the Hall of Divine Mists and announced: "Myriad Years! Sun Wukong has come to the borders of the Land of India, to Fengxian County, and wishes to pray for rain there. He has come especially to request a decree."

The Jade Emperor said: "Three years ago, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, I went on progress to observe and inspect the myriad heavens, drifting free through the Three Realms. My carriage passed over that place, and I saw that this Shangguan was a man not good: he pushed over the vegetarian offerings set out to feast Heaven and threw them to the dogs, and foul words proceeded from his mouth, thereby committing an offense. I straightway set up the three things, and they stand in the Hall of Spreading Incense. Take Sun Wukong to see them. If the three things are finished and broken, I shall grant the decree; if they are not, let him not meddle in what is no business of his."

The Four Celestial Masters led the Pilgrim into the Hall of Spreading Incense to look. They saw a mountain of rice, some ten zhang high; and a mountain of flour, some twenty zhang high. Beside the rice mountain was a chicken, no bigger than a fist, pecking the rice, one quick peck, one slow peck. Beside the flour mountain was a golden-haired lapdog, licking the flour with its tongue, one long lick, one short lick. On the left hung an iron frame, and from the frame hung a golden lock, about a foot and three or four inches long, its shank the thickness of a finger; below it stood a bright lamp, whose flame licked and singed the lock's shank.

Not knowing what it meant, the Pilgrim turned and asked the Celestial Masters: "What is the meaning of this?"

"That fellow gave offense to Heaven," they said, "and the Jade Emperor set up these three things. Only when the chicken has pecked the rice all gone, the dog has licked the flour all gone, and the lamp flame has burned through the lock's shank, is that place due for rain."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim turned pale with horror. He dared press his suit no further; he walked out of the hall, shame written all over his face.

The Four Great Celestial Masters laughed. "Great Sage, there is no need for distress. This matter can only be dissolved by goodness. If but one thought of kind compassion stirs, it will startle Heaven above, and the mountains of rice and flour will topple that instant, and the lock's shank will snap that instant. Go and persuade him to return to goodness, and blessing will come of itself."

The Pilgrim took their advice. Without going to the Hall of Divine Mists to take leave of the Jade Emperor, he went straight down to the lower world to rejoin the mortals. In a moment he reached the Western Gate of Heaven and saw the Heaven-Protector Heavenly King again.

"How went the request for a decree?"

The Pilgrim told the whole story of the mountain of rice, the mountain of flour, and the golden lock. "It was just as you said—he would not issue the decree. The Celestial Masters saw me off and told me to persuade that fellow back to goodness—then blessing would return of itself." So they parted, and he sank his cloud down to the lower world.

The prefect, together with Sanzang, Bajie, the Sha Monk, and officials great and small, came out to meet him, all crowding round to ask.

The Pilgrim gave the prefect a bark: "It's all because of you, you wretch! Three years ago, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, you gave offense to Heaven and Earth, and brought this misery upon the common people. That is why Heaven will not send down rain!"

The prefect panicked and knelt flat upon the ground. "Teacher, how could you know of what happened three years ago?"

"What about the vegetarian offerings you set out to feast Heaven—how came you to push them over and feed them to the dogs? Tell the truth, now!"

The prefect dared not conceal it. "Three years ago, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, within this very office, I laid out offerings to feast Heaven. My wife was unwise, and we fell to quarreling with wicked words; in a moment of mindless rage I pushed over the offering table and spilled the vegetarian dishes, and in truth I called the dogs and they ate them. These two years the memory has gnawed at my heart; my spirit has been dazed and distraught, with nowhere to lay it down—and I did not know that Heaven had marked the offense and left this scourge upon my people. Now that you, teacher, have descended upon us, I beg with ten thousand hopes to be plainly instructed: how is this reckoned in the world above?"

"That day," said the Pilgrim, "was the very day the Jade Emperor came down to the lower world. He saw you feed the feast-offerings to the dogs and heard the foul words from your mouth, and the Jade Emperor straightway set up the three things as a record against you."

"Brother," asked Bajie, "what three things?"

"In the Hall of Spreading Incense," said the Pilgrim, "stands a mountain of rice, some ten zhang high, and a mountain of flour, some twenty zhang high. Beside the rice mountain is a little chicken no bigger than a fist, pecking the rice, one quick peck, one slow peck; beside the flour mountain is a golden-haired lapdog, licking the flour, one long lick, one short lick. On the left there is also an iron frame, and hanging on the frame a great golden lock, its shank the thickness of a finger, with a bright lamp beneath, whose flame licks and singes the shank. Only when the chicken has pecked the rice all gone, the dog has licked the flour all gone, and the lamp has burned through the lock's shank—that is when that place becomes due for rain."

Bajie laughed. "No matter! No matter! If Brother will take me along, I'll change into my magic body and gobble up his rice and flour in one sitting, and snap the lock's shank, and he'll have to send his rain!"

"Don't talk rubbish, idiot!" said the Pilgrim. "This is a device set up by Heaven above—how would you ever get to see it?"

"With things as they are," said Sanzang, "what are we to do?"

"No trouble! No trouble! When I was leaving, the Four Cele Masters told me: only goodness can dissolve it."

The prefect bowed down upon the ground and pleaded: "I beg you, teacher, instruct me; your servant will turn to the good, one and all."

"If you turn your heart to goodness, then lose no time in chanting the Buddha's name and reading the scriptures, and I will still act on your behalf. But if you remain as before, unchanged, I cannot dissolve it either—Heaven will soon destroy you, and your life will not be saved."

The prefect knocked his head to the ground in worship and vowed to turn to the good. He then summoned the monks and Daoist priests of the place and set up a great altar, each and all writing out documents of appeal, to be presented to the Three Heavens. The prefect led the throng in grasping incense and gazing upward in worship, thanking Heaven and Earth, confessing his fault and reproaching himself; Sanzang too recited sutras on his behalf. On another front, flying notices went out ordering every household in city and countryside alike, man and woman without exception, to burn incense and chant the Buddha's name. From that hour, a whole tide of the sound of goodness filled the ears.

Only then was the Pilgrim pleased. He said to Bajie and the Sha Monk: "You two guard Master well, while old Sun goes and comes again for them."

"Brother, where are you off to now?" asked Bajie.

"This prefect heeded old Sun's words, truly took the teaching, reveres goodness and mercy, and chants the Buddha's name with a sincere heart. I am going up to report once more to the Jade Emperor and ask him for some rain."

"Brother, since you must go, don't delay," said the Sha Monk. "This has already held up our journey—be sure to obtain one full altar of rain, so that our own true fruit may be completed."

Marvelous Great Sage! He mounted his cloud again and went straight to the gate of Heaven, where he met the Heaven-Protector Heavenly King once more.

"What have you come to do this time?"

"The prefect has already turned to goodness." And the Heavenly King rejoiced too.

Just as they were speaking, they saw the Duty Envoy, bearing sealed documents of the Daoists and permits of the monks, arriving at the gate of Heaven to deliver them through. The Envoy bowed to the Pilgrim: "This, too, is the merit of the Great Sage's exhortation to goodness."

"Where are you taking those documents?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Straight to the Hall of Universal Brightness, to be passed by the Celestial Masters before the Great Heavenly Venerable Jade Emperor."

"Very well—you go ahead; I shall follow." The Envoy entered the gate of Heaven.

"Great Sage," said the Heaven-Protector Heavenly King, "there is no need to see the Jade Emperor. You need only go to the Prefecture of the Ninefold Heaven's Responsive Power and borrow some thunder gods; make your thunder and flash your lightning of your own accord, and the rain will be repaid at once."

And indeed the Pilgrim took his advice. Entering the gate of Heaven, he did not go to the Hall of Divine Mists to request a decree, but turned his cloud-steps straight toward the Prefecture of the Ninefold Heaven's Responsive Power. There the Thunder-Gate Messenger, the Corrector of Records, and the Inspector of Conduct all came out to meet him with bows: "Whence comes the Great Sage?"

"I have business that requires seeing the Celestial Worthy."

The three messengers announced him at once, and the Celestial Worthy came down from behind the nine-phoenix cinnabar screen, straightened his robes, and came out to receive him. When the courtesies were done, the Pilgrim said: "I have come especially to ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"In escorting the Tang monk I came to Fengxian County, and seeing how dreadfully it suffered from drought, I promised them rain, and have come to beg the loan of your ministry's officers and generals to go there and sound the thunder."

"I know that the prefect there offended Heaven," said the Celestial Worthy, "and that the three things were set up. I do not know whether that place is due for rain."

The Pilgrim laughed. "Yesterday I already saw the Jade Emperor and asked for a decree. The Jade Emperor had the Celestial Masters lead me into the Hall of Spreading Incense to see the three things—the mountain of rice, the mountain of flour, and the golden lock. Only when the three things are finished and broken is rain due. I fretted that they could never be finished, but the Celestial Masters told me to go persuade the prefect and his people to do good—since when a man has a good thought, Heaven surely follows it, there was hope of turning the heart of Heaven and dissolving the calamity. Now the good thought has sprung up at once, and

the sound of goodness fills every ear. Just now the Duty Envoy has carried up to the Jade Emperor the documents of their reform and return to goodness, and so old Sun has come especially to your honored prefecture to beg the loan of your ministry's officers and generals for a little help."

"Since this is so," said the Celestial Worthy, "I dispatch Marshals Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao, commanding the Lady of Lightning, to go down at once with the Great Sage and sound the thunder over Fengxian County."

The four generals, together with the Great Sage, reached the borders of Fengxian in no time and at once began working their magic in midair. Hear the rolling boom of thunder and the hissing crackle of lightning—truly:

The lightning darts like a purple-gold snake; The thunder booms like all the waking insects in uproar. Blazing firelight flying in streams; Bolts that split mountainsides and caves. The lightning fills the whole sky bright; The shock runs shuddering through the earth. One crimson flash, and sprouting buds break forth; Ten thousand li of rivers and hills are all ashake.

In Fengxian County, within the walls and without, officials great and small, soldiers and people, had not heard thunder or seen lightning for three whole years. Now, seeing the lightning flash and hearing the thunder roll, all fell to their knees together, incense burners held atop their heads, some grasping willow branches in their hands, all chanting: "Homage to Amitabha Buddha! Homage to Amitabha Buddha!" That one sound of goodness truly startled Heaven above; as the old poem says:

When in the human heart one thought is born, Heaven and Earth both know it through and through. If good and evil went without their recompense, Then Heaven and Earth would surely play favorites.

But let us leave the Great Sage Sun commanding the thunder generals, flashing lightning and rolling thunder over Fengxian County, with everyone turning to goodness.

Now the Duty Envoy of the upper world carried the documents of monk and Daoist alike to the Hall of Universal Brightness, and the Four Celestial Masters passed them in before the Hall of Divine Mists. The Jade Emperor read them and said: "Since those wretches have thoughts of goodness, let us see how the three things stand."

Even as he spoke, the officer in charge of the Hall of Spreading Incense came to report: "The mountains of rice and flour that were set up have both toppled; in an instant the rice and flour were gone, and the lock's shank has snapped."

Before the report was finished, yet other officials of the court led in the local deity, the city god, and the gods of the parish of Fengxian County, who all came bowing to report: "The prefect of this county and every household of the common people throughout the city, great and small, without one family or one person failing, have turned to the true fruit of goodness, worshiping the Buddha and revering Heaven. We now beg you to let fall your mercy, universally sending down sweet rain to deliver the people."

Hearing this, the Jade Emperor was greatly pleased and issued his decree at once: "Let the Ministries of Wind, Cloud, and Rain each obey the command, go down to the lower world, and over the borders of Fengxian County, this very day and hour, sound the thunder, spread the clouds, and send down rain to the measure of three feet and forty-two points." The Four Great Celestial Masters, bearing the decree, transmitted it to the several ministries, which descended at once to the lower world, each putting forth its divine majesty, all roused together.

The Pilgrim was just then directing the Lady of Lightning under Marshals Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao, flashing lightning and rolling thunder in midair, when he saw the host of gods all arrive—heaven's assembly gathered in one. And then wind and cloud came together in confluence, and the sweet rain poured down.

What rain!

Dense, dense the heavy clouds; thick, thick the black fog. The thunder-carts rumble and roll; the lightning flashes and flares. On rolls the wild wind; down patters the pelting rain. Truly, one thought turned the heart of Heaven, And the myriad people's hopes were filled. All thanks to the Great Sage wielding his primal power: Ten thousand li of rivers and hills, shadowed everywhere.

What rain! It poured like rivers overturned and seas upended, veiling the fields and blinding the sky. Before the eaves it hung in waterfalls; outside the window it rang and tinkled clear. Ten thousand households, a thousand doors—the people chanting the Buddha's name; six streets, three markets—the floodwaters rushing high. East and west, every channel of river brimming full; north and south, every stream and bay flowing through. The withered sprouts drink their moisture; the dead trees come back to life. Hemp and wheat flourish in the fields; beans and grain swell in the villages. The traveling merchants delight in roads open for trade; the farmers love you for your weeding and tilling. From now on the millet and maize will spread lush and long; of course the sowing and reaping will bring a full harvest. Wind and rain in season, and the people at peace; calm seas and clear rivers—enjoyment of the Great Peace.

In one day the rain that fell measured a full three feet and forty-two points, and the host of gods gradually drew it in.

Then the Great Sage Sun called out in a ringing voice: "Gods of the four ministries, hold your clouds a moment! Wait till old Sun fetches the prefect to bow his thanks to you all. Part the clouds and mist, I beg, and each show his true form, so these mortals may see with their own eyes—then they will believe and worship."

Hearing this, the host of gods had no choice but to halt in midair. The Pilgrim pressed down his cloud and went straight to the prefect's residence, where Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk all came out to greet him, and the prefect came bowing with every step to give thanks.

"Thank me not yet," said the Pilgrim. "I have detained the gods of the four ministries; you should summon a great company to bow thanks to them together. Bid them come hereafter to make rain again."

The prefect at once sent flying notices summoning all to join in the thanksgiving, and one by one, grasping their incense, they bowed toward heaven. Then the gods of the four ministries parted the clouds and mist, and each revealed his true form. The four ministries were the Ministry of Rain, the Ministry of Thunder, the Ministry of Clouds, and the Ministry of Wind. Behold: the Dragon King displayed his image; the thunder generals stretched their forms; the cloud youths appeared; the Lord of Wind let his true self be seen.

The Dragon King displayed his image—silver-bearded, gray of face, without peer in the world; The thunder generals stretched their forms—hook-beaked, awesome of countenance, past all comparing; The cloud youths appeared—who could match those jade faces and golden crowns? The Lord of Wind showed his true self—dry-browed, ring-eyed, just as of old. In ordered ranks they disclosed themselves upon the azure sky, Each taking his place, showing their sacred visage. The people of Fengxian County only then believed; With bows and incense their wicked hearts turned back. Today they gaze up at Heaven's generals, Washed clean, turned toward goodness, wholly converted.

The host of gods waited a full double hour while the people worshiped them without cease.

Then Sun the Pilgrim rose into the clouds again and saluted the assembly: "Much toil! Much toil! I beg you all return to your ministries. Old Sun will further bid the households of this county worship the high immortals and offer thanksgiving services at the seasons. Henceforth, a wind every five days, a rain every ten—come and deliver them again."

The gods obeyed his words and each returned to his ministry—and of that we say no more.

Now the Great Sage sank down his cloud and said to Sanzang: "The business is done, the people at peace—we may pack up and be on our way."

When the prefect heard this, he hastened to bow and said: "Lord Sun, what words are these! What has come this day is kindness beyond measure, beyond all bounds. Let your servant prepare a small banquet here in reply for this great kindness. I will also buy fields among the people and build a monastery for you, my lord, and raise a shrine to you while you yet live, carve your names on stone tablets, and offer sacrifice through the four seasons. Even were I to engrave it on my bones and carve it in my heart, I could not repay one part in ten thousand—how can you speak of going?"

"What Your Honor says is just," said Sanzang, "but we are wandering monks of the West, hanging our kettle where night overtakes us—we dare not linger long. Within a day or two we shall surely be gone."

The prefect would by no means let them go. That very night he sent many hands to prepare the banquet and to raise the shrine buildings.

The next day a grand feast was thrown open; the Tang monk was seated in the place of honor, with the Great Sage Sun and Bajie and the Sha Monk ranged below, while the prefect and the officials of the county, great and small, offered cups and dishes, with soft pipes and gentle drums, entertaining them all the day long. The occasion was truly a merry one, as the poem bears witness:

Long-parched fields meet at last the sweet rain; River channels open for trade on every side. Deep thanks to the godly monks who came within this county, And much beholden to the Great Sage who climbed to the Heavenly Palace. Dissolved, the three things planted by that old offense; With one thought of conversion, the fruit of goodness grows great. Henceforth may it be as in the days of Yao and Shun: Wind five times, rain ten times, and ten thousand years of plenty.

A day of feasting, a second day of banquets; thanks today, gratitude tomorrow—they were held fast nearly half a month, waiting only for the monastery and the living shrine to be completed.

One day the prefect invited the four travelers to view the work, and the Tang monk marveled: "So vast an undertaking—how was it finished so quickly?"

"Your servant drove on the workmen day and night without rest, ordering it pressed to completion," said the prefect, "and now invites you honored lords to look it over."

"Truly a worthy and capable prefect!" said the Pilgrim with a laugh. They went at once to the new monastery and saw halls and towers towering, the mountain gate magnificent, and all praised it without end. The Pilgrim asked his master to leave a name for the monastery.

"I have one," said Sanzang. "Let it be called the Temple of the Sweet Rain That Saves All."

"Excellent! Excellent!" the prefect approved. With golden placards he summoned monks far and wide to tend the incense fires. On the left of the halls they raised the living shrine of the four travelers, for sacrifice in all four seasons each year; and they built besides temples to the thunder gods and dragon gods, in answer to the divine powers.

When they had seen it all, the prefect ordered them escorted on their way. The people of the whole county, knowing they could not be kept, prepared farewell gifts of every kind—not a copper of which would they accept. And so the officials of the whole county, with drums and music sounding grandly, banners and canopies spread wide, escorted them thirty-odd li—still unable to bear the parting; and with tears they watched them out of sight, and only then turned back. Truly:

The godly monk of lofty virtue left behind Universal Salvation; The Great Sage Equal to Heaven spread his grace abroad.

If you would know how many days more remained before they beheld the Tathagata, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 88

Chan Comes to Yuhua and a Dharma Assembly Is Held; The Mind-Monkey and the Wood-Mother Take On Disciples

The story continues: The Tang monk took leave of the prefect in high delight and, from horseback, said to the Pilgrim: "Worthy disciple, this fruit of goodness truly surpasses even the rescue of the children in the Kingdom of Bhikkhu—it is all your doing."

"At Bhikkhu you saved only one thousand one hundred and eleven little children," said the Sha Monk. "How can that compare with this great rain, soaking and drenching, bringing back to life lives past all counting! Your disciple too has been silently applauding Elder Brother's magic power, which reaches to Heaven, and his mercy, which covers the earth."

Bajie laughed. "Brother's kindness is real, and his goodness is real—but he wears righteousness on the outside and wraps a wicked heart within. Anyone who travels with old Pig gets tormented."

"Where have I ever tormented you?" said the Pilgrim.

"Enough! Enough! Always taking care to have me tied up, taking care to have me hung up, taking care to have me boiled, taking care to have me steamed! Today in Fengxian County you did kindness to thousands upon thousands—and you might have stayed half a year and let old Pig eat his fill of a few comfortable meals! Instead, nothing but hurrying us along the road!"

Hearing this, the elder barked: "This idiot! Why is it he thinks of nothing but stuffing his mouth! Quick, on the road—and no more squabbling!"

Bajie dared say no more. He thrust out his snout, shouldered the luggage, gave a great chuckle, and master and disciples hurried onto the highway.

Time flew like a shuttle, and it was deep autumn once more. Just look:

The water marks recede; the mountain bones grow lean. Red leaves fly whirling—it is the season of yellow flowers. After frosty, clear days the nights feel long; The white moonlight streams through the lattice. In every house, hearth smoke against the setting sun; On every lake, the cold waters slipping by. The white duckweed breathes fragrance; the red smartweed runs rank. Oranges green, tangerines yellow; willows fading, grain heading. On the desolate village, wild geese alight among the shattered reed flowers; At the rustic inn, a cockcrow, and the beans are gathered in.

The four of them traveled a good long while, and again the shadowy outline of a city wall appeared. The elder raised his whip and pointed at it from afar, calling: "Wukong, look—there is another city yonder. I know not what place it may be."

"You and I have never been here before—how would I know?" said the Pilgrim. "Let's walk to its edge and ask somebody."

Before the words were out, they saw an old man come walking out of a grove of trees, a bamboo staff in his hand, light clothes on his body, a pair of palm-fiber sandals on his feet, a flat sash round his waist. In a flurry the Tang monk rolled out of the saddle and went forward with a greeting.

The old man leaned on his staff and returned the courtesy. "Elder, whence do you come?"

The Tang monk pressed his palms together. "This humble monk was sent by the Tang court of the East to worship the Buddha at the Thunderclap and seek the scriptures. Today we have come into your honorable region, and gazing afar at the city walls, we know not what place it is. I have taken the liberty of asking the

old benefactor for instruction."

Hearing this, the old man said: "Reverend master of the Way, this humble place of ours is a subordinate county of the Land of India, called the County of Yuhua. The lord of the county city is of the imperial clan of the Indian emperor, invested as the Prince of Yuhua. This prince is a most worthy man, who honors monks and Daoists with all his heart and dearly loves the common people. If you, reverend master, go to see him, you will surely be received with deep respect."

Sanzang gave thanks, and the old man went off straight through the trees. Sanzang then turned and told his disciples the whole of it. The three of them were delighted, and helped their master onto the horse.

"It is not far—no need to ride," said Sanzang.

So the four of them walked to the streets by the city wall and looked about. In the gate-quarter the households plied their trades; people gathered thick, and business was brisk. In their voices and faces they were no different from the people of China.

Sanzang gave his instructions: "Disciples, be careful—no wild behavior." Bajie lowered his head, the Sha Monk covered his face, and only Sun the Pilgrim walked supporting the master. But the people on both sides came crowding to look at them, all crying out together: "Here we have only ever heard of high monks who subdue dragons and tame tigers—never have we seen monks who tame pigs and subdue monkeys!"

Bajie could not hold back. He thrust out his snout and bellowed: "Have any of you ever seen the monk who is the Pig-Quelling King?" At that, the whole street's people stumbled and staggered in terror, all scattering to the two sides.

The Pilgrim laughed. "Idiot, hide that snout—no more of your playacting. Watch your feet crossing the bridge."

The idiot went with lowered head, only laughing. They crossed the drawbridge and entered the city gate, and there on the great street were wine towers and singing houses, bustling and prosperous—truly a capital city of the divine land. There is a poem in witness:

A brocade city in an iron jar, firm ten thousand years, By waters and leaning on hills, every hue fresh and bright. A hundred goods reach the lake-boats entering the markets; A thousand houses sell wine, the tavern curtains hanging low. Towers and terraces everywhere, the throngs of people wide; Lanes and alleys every morning loud with traveling merchants. No whit inferior to the fine scenery of Chang'an— Even cocks crowing and dogs barking are alike in every way.

Sanzang rejoiced in his heart: "They say that of all the foreign lands of the Western Regions, none has come to this. Look closely at this scene—how does it differ from our Great Tang? What men call the World of Utmost Bliss—truly this is what they mean!"

They heard people say besides that white rice was four coppers the picul and sesame oil eight cash the catty—truly a land where the five grains flourished. After walking a good while, they came to the prince's mansion of Yuhua. To left and right of the mansion gate stood the Office of the Chief Secretary, the Hall of Judicature, the Bureau of the Royal Table, and the Guest House.

"Disciples," said Sanzang, "this is the mansion. Let me go in and pay my respects to the prince and have our travel permit inspected, and then we shall proceed."

"Master goes in—and are we to stand about before the yamen gates?" asked Bajie.

"Don't you see the three characters 'Guest House' over that gate?" said Sanzang. "Go and sit down there. If there is fodder to be had, buy some and feed the horse. If the prince, when I see him, should grant a meal, I'll

come call you to share it."

"Master, go with an easy mind," said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun will see to everything." The Sha Monk carried the luggage into the Guest House.

The house had keepers in attendance, but at the sight of their hideous faces they dared ask them nothing, and dared not turn them out either; they could only let them sit down—and of that we say no more.

Now the venerable master changed his clothes and cap, took the travel permit, and went straight to the front of the prince's mansion, where the Master of Ceremonies came out to greet him and asked: "Whence comes the elder?"

"I am a monk sent by the Great Tang of the East to worship the Buddha Patriarch at the Great Thunderclap and seek the scriptures," said Sanzang. "Now come into your honored land, I wish to have my travel permit exchanged, and have come especially to pay court to His Highness."

The Master of Ceremonies announced him at once, and the prince, a truly wise and discerning man, gave orders to summon him in. Sanzang performed his courtesy below the hall, and the prince invited him up onto the hall and gave him a seat. Sanzang presented the travel permit. The prince read it, saw upon it the seals and signatures of all the kingdoms passed through, and gladly stamped it with his own precious seal, signed it in flowered characters, and folded it away on the desk.

He asked: "Reverend preceptor, from your Great Tang to this place, through all the kingdoms—how long is the journey in all?"

"This humble monk kept no count of the miles," said Sanzang. "But years ago, when the Bodhisattva Guanyin showed herself before my sovereign's throne, she left lines of verse saying that the West is 108,000 li away. On the road, this humble monk has now passed through fourteen rounds of winter and summer."

"Fourteen rounds of cold and heat—that is fourteen years," said the prince with a smile. "There must have been delays along the way."

"It would take long telling! Ten thousand monsters, a thousand demons—I know not how much suffering was endured before I reached your honored land!"

The prince was greatly pleased, and ordered the Steward of the Royal Table to prepare a vegetarian meal to entertain him.

"Reporting to Your Highness," said Sanzang, "this humble monk has three humble disciples waiting outside; I dare not accept the meal alone, for fear of delaying our journey."

The prince instructed the Hall Attendant: "Go quickly and invite the elder's three disciples into the mansion to share the meal."

The Hall Attendant went out at once to invite them, but everyone said: "Never saw them—never saw them." Some of the attendants said: "There are three ill-favored monks sitting in the Guest House—those must be the ones."

The Hall Attendant went with the others to the Guest House and asked the keepers: "Which are the worthy disciples of the scripture-seeking monk of Great Tang? My prince has a decree: he invites them to eat!"

Bajie was sitting there dozing, and the moment he heard the word "meal" he could not help leaping up and answering: "That's us! That's us!" One look, and the Hall Attendant's soul flew and scattered; all of them trembling, they cried: "A pig-ogre! A pig-ogre!"

The Pilgrim heard it and grabbed Bajie by the arm. "Brother, show some refinement—none of your rustic carryings-on."

When the officials saw the Pilgrim, they cried again: "A monkey spirit! A monkey spirit!"

The Sha Monk pressed his palms together. "Gentlemen, be not alarmed. The three of us are all disciples of the Tang monk."

When the officials saw him, they cried out again: "A Kitchen God! A Kitchen God!"

Sun the Pilgrim then had Bajie lead the horse and the Sha Monk carry the luggage, and they all entered the prince's mansion of Yuhua together.

The Hall Attendant went in first to announce, and the prince, lifting his eyes and seeing such ugliness, felt fear stir in his heart as well.

Sanzang pressed his palms together. "Your Highness, set your mind at ease. My unruly disciples, ugly as they are, all have good hearts."

Bajie faced the throne and made a bow with his clasped hands: "This humble monk greets Your Highness." The prince's alarm only deepened.

"My unruly disciples were all taken in among the mountains and wilds," said Sanzang. "They know nothing of ceremony. I beg ten thousand pardons for them."

The prince mastered his terror and bade the Steward of the Royal Table invite the monks to the Gauze-Drying Pavilion to eat. Sanzang gave thanks for the favor, took leave of the prince, and descended from the hall. Going with them to the pavilion, he scolded Bajie: "You lout—you understand nothing at all of manners! If you simply kept your mouth shut, that would be one thing; but such rudeness! One word of yours was enough to topple Mount Tai!"

"It's a good thing I didn't bow," said the Pilgrim with a laugh. "It saved me some effort."

"He bows out of turn, too," said the Sha Monk. "Before anyone's ready, he's already thrust out his snout, hollering."

"What a live nuisance! What a live nuisance!" said Bajie. "The other day Master taught me that greeting people with a bow is good manners. Today I greet with a bow, and that's wrong too! What would you have me do?"

"I taught you to greet people with a bow when you meet them," said Sanzang, "not to carry on like that before a prince! As the common saying goes: there are ranks of things, and ranks of men—how can you not tell the noble from the base?"

Even as they spoke, the Steward of the Royal Table came with his men, set out the tables and chairs, and spread the vegetarian meal; master and disciples said nothing more, and each fell to eating.

Now the prince left the hall and went into the palace. In the palace were the three young princes, and seeing their father's face changed in color, they asked at once: "Father King, why were you so alarmed today?"

"Just now a monk arrived, sent from the Great Tang of the East to worship the Buddha and seek scriptures, come to exchange his travel permit—and a man of no common appearance. I kept him for a vegetarian meal, and he said his disciples were waiting before the mansion, so I ordered them invited. Presently they came in, and instead of the full ceremony they only made a bow—that already displeased me. But when I raised my head and looked, one was uglier than the next, like very demons, and my heart was seized with alarm unawares. That is why my face changed color."

Now these three young princes were not like other men: every one of them loved the martial arts and prized his strength. They thrust out their fists and bared their arms: "Could they be demons come out of the mountains, wearing false human shapes? Let's take our weapons and go see!" A fine set of princes! The eldest took a brow-level staff; the second swung a nine-toothed rake; the third wielded a crow-black, oil-lacquered rod; and out of the prince's mansion they strode, fierce and martial, shouting: "What scripture-seeking monks! Where are they?"

The Steward of the Royal Table and the officials knelt down at once: "Young princes, they are in the Gauze-Drying Pavilion eating their meal."

The young princes, no stopping to ask rights or wrongs, charged right in and bellowed: "Are you men or monsters? Speak quickly—spare your lives!"

San was so frightened that his face lost its color; he set down his rice bowl and bowed with his body: "This humble monk is one come from the Tang court to seek scriptures—a man, not a monster."

"You still look something like a man," said the young prince. "Those three ugly ones—monsters beyond doubt!"

Bajie only went on eating, paying no heed.

The Sha Monk and the Pilgrim rose from their seats. "We are all men—faces ugly, but hearts good; bodies coarse, but natures kind. And you three—whence come you, to give yourselves such wild, boasting airs?"

Beside them the Steward of the Royal Table and the other officials said: "These three are the sons of our prince—the young highnesses."

Bajie set down his bowl. "Little highnesses—what are you doing with your weapons? Could it be you mean to fight us?"

The Second Prince strode forward, whirling his rake in both hands, and made to strike Bajie.

Bajie chuckled. "That rake of yours is fit for nothing but to be grandson to my rake!" He lifted his garment, took the rake from his belt, gave it one flourish—ten thousand rays of golden light!—and spun it through its patterns, with a thousand streams of auspicious vapor. The prince was frightened till his hands went soft and his sinews numb, and dared not whirl his own.

The Pilgrim, seeing the eldest wielding a brow-level staff and bouncing about, took the gold-banded cudgel from his ear, gave it a flourish till it was thick as a rice bowl and a zhang two or three chi long, drove it into the ground—a good three feet deep—and left it standing there, saying with a laugh: "I'll make you a present of this staff!"

Hearing this, the prince dropped his own staff and went to take the cudgel. Straining with both hands with all his strength, he could not budge it a hair's breadth; he heaved at it again, shook it again—it was as if it had taken root. The third flew into a temper and came striking with his crow-black staff, but the Sha Monk warded it off with one hand, took out his demon-subduing staff, and gave it a light toss—dazzling light shimmering, radiant gleams scattering—until the Steward of the Royal Table and the officials stood gaping and gasping, unable to utter a word.

The three young princes all fell to their knees together: "Divine masters! Divine masters! We common men knew you not. We beg you with ten thousand hopes to put forth a display, that we may bow and be taught!"

The Pilgrim stepped close, lifted the cudgel up lightly, and said: "It's too cramped here to stretch our arms. Let me leap into midair and play a whole routine for you to watch." Marvelous Great Sage! With a whistle he sprang on his somersault cloud, his two feet treading five-colored clouds of good omen, and rose into midair

some three hundred paces above the ground. There he spread the gold-banded cudgel into a flowers-scattering canopy-over-head, a yellow dragon turning its body—up and down, wheeling left and turning right. At first man and staff were as flowers added to brocade; then, later, no man could be seen—only a whole sky of rolling cudgel.

Below, Bajie shouted his applause, and his own hands and feet grew restless. He bellowed: "Wait for old Pig to go have a turn too!" A fine idiot! He mounted the wind, also rose into midair, and spun out his rake: three up, four down; five left, six right; seven forward, eight back—his whole repertoire—with the wind whistling about it.

Just as the show was at its height, the Sha Monk said to the elder: "Master, let old Sha go drill a little too." A fine monk! With both feet one leap, whirling his staff, he too rose into the air, and there was a haze of keen spirit and a shimmer of golden light; with both hands he swung the demon-subduing staff into a "red phoenix facing the sun," a "starving tiger pouncing on its prey," swift to meet and slow to parry, quick to wheel and nimble to dart. The three brothers each displayed his powers, all in midair together, flaunting their might. Truly:

The true aspect of Chan, uncommon and unmatched; The springs of the Great Way fill all space. Metal and Wood spread their might through the world of the Law; The knife and the spoon turn and join in perfect fusion. Divine weapons, keen and sharp, appear at every turn; The elixir's flower of light is honored everywhere. Though India stands high, still they guard their nature; The princes of Yuhua all return to the Mean.

The three young princes were frightened down onto their knees in the dust. In the Gauze-Drying Pavilion, the great and small of the household, and the old prince in the mansion, and through the whole city soldier and citizen, man and woman, monk and nun, Daoist and lay—every kind of person—chanted the Buddha's name and knocked their heads, every house taking up incense and worshiping. Truly:

Beholding the image, they turned to truth, and monks were saved thereby; Making blessings in the world of men, they enjoy the pure peace. Henceforth the road of Bodhi bears its perfect fruit, And all are men who sit in Chan and worship Buddha.

When the three had each displayed his prowess and played out their routines, they pressed down their clouds of good omen, put away their weapons, came before the Tang monk, bowed their greetings, thanked their master for his grace, and each sat down—and of that we say no more.

The three young princes hurried back to the palace and reported to the old prince: "Father King, ten thousand joys! Today has brought a service past all measure! Did you see what was performed in midair just now?"

"I saw the colored radiance in midair," said the old prince, "and in the palace court I led your mother and the rest in burning incense and worshiping—I knew not what immortals had descended to gather there."

"Not immortals from anywhere else—they are the three ugly disciples of that scripture-seeking monk. One wields the gold-banded iron cudgel, one the nine-toothed rake, one the demon-subduing staff; beside theirs, our three weapons were not worth half a hair. We asked them to play a routine, but they said the ground was too cramped to manage it in, and rose into midair to play one for us to see. Then each mounted his cloud, and the whole sky was veiled in auspicious cloud and wreathed in propitious vapor. Just now they came down and are sitting in the Gauze-Drying Pavilion. Your children are overjoyed and would take them as masters, to learn their methods and protect our state—this would truly be a service beyond all measure! What does Father King think of it?"

Hearing this, the old prince believed with a willing heart. Then and there, father and four sons, without mounting the state carriage, without spreading the canopy, walked on foot to the Gauze-Drying Pavilion. The

four travelers had just packed their luggage, intending to enter the mansion, thank their hosts for the meal, take leave of the prince, and set out—when suddenly they saw the Prince of Yuhua and his sons come up to the pavilion and throw themselves down in bows. In a flurry the elder straightened up and returned their prostration to the ground, while the Pilgrim and the others slipped aside with faint cold laughs.

When the bows were done, they invited the four into the mansion hall to be seated. The four entered gladly. The old prince rose and said: "Venerable teacher Tang, I have a favor to ask—I wonder whether your three worthy disciples can grant it?"

"Command as Your Highness pleases," said Sanzang. "My humble disciples dare not disobey."

"When I first saw you all," said the old prince, "I took you only for wandering monks come far from the Tang—fleshly eyes and mortal pupils, and I showed you scant respect. But when I saw Master Sun, Master Zhu, and Master Sha dancing in the sky, then I knew you for immortals, for Buddhas. My three curs of sons have loved the practice of arms all their lives. Today in all reverence they would take you as their masters and learn some of the martial art. I beg you, venerable teacher, open the heart of Heaven and Earth, sail the boat of mercy for all, and pass on the teaching to my boys—recompense the full wealth of the city shall surely be offered you."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim could not help laughing aloud: "Your Highness, how little you understand the ways of things! We men of religion are only too eager to take on a few disciples. Since your sons have hearts turned to goodness, never speak a word of profit—let us simply deal together with warm feeling, and that will be affection enough."

Hearing this, the prince was greatly pleased, and ordered a grand banquet set out at once in the main hall of the mansion.

And oh! At one command of his will, all was made ready in an instant. Just look: knotted streamers floating; incense smoke rich and dense. Gold-inlaid tables hung with shark-silk, dazzling the eyes; lacquered chairs spread with brocade, adding luster to the seats. Tree fruits fresh; tea fragrant and steaming. Three or five courses of delicate sweets; a serving or two of plump, clean steamed buns. Steamed pastries and honeyed preserves, more wondrous still; deep-fried and syrup-drenched, truly delicious! There were a few flasks of fragrant glutinous rice wine, poured out to rival the nectar of jade; there were rounds of Yangxian immortal tea, that smelled sweeter than cassia when it reached the hand. Every kind and every course was complete; every category and line excelled. On one side they called for entertainers to sing and dance, pipe and strum, play their turns and act their plays. The master and his disciples, together with the prince and his sons, made merry the whole day. Unnoticed, evening fell; the banquet was dispersed, and he ordered beds and curtains laid out in the Gauze-Drying Pavilion, inviting the masters to rest, for on the morrow they would burn incense with utmost devotion and bow again to beg instruction in the martial art.

All obeyed; scented bathwater was prepared, the masters were invited to bathe, and everyone retired to sleep. And then:

The birds roost high; the ten thousand sounds are stilled; The poet, come to bed, has ceased his chanting. The River of Heaven shines bright; the sky grows luminous; The wild paths lie desolate; the grass grows deeper. Fulling mallets ting-tong from some other court; The distant passes stir the heart that yearns for home. The cold cricket's ringing note knows a man's thoughts, Chirping by the bedside, breaking the dreaming soul.

One night's late scene passes from the tale. Early the next morning the old prince and his sons came again to wait upon the elder. Yesterday, when they met, it had been with the rites of a prince; today they performed the rites of disciples. The three young princes bowed their heads to the floor before the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, and begged: "Honored masters, lend us your weapons to look at."

Hearing this, Bajie gladly took out his rake and tossed it on the ground. The Sha Monk tossed out his staff and leaned it against the wall. The Second and Third Princes leaped up to seize them—and it was dragonflies shaking stone pillars: they strained till their heads were red and their faces flushed, and could not stir them half a hair's breadth.

The Eldest Prince saw it and called out: "Brothers, spare your strength! The masters' weapons are all divine arms—who knows how heavy they are!"

"My rake isn't so very heavy," said Bajie with a laugh. "It weighs just one canon's worth—5,048 catties, handle and all."

[Translator's note: 5,048 is the traditional count of scrolls in the Buddhist Tripitaka.]

The Third Prince asked the Sha Monk: "How heavy is your precious staff, Master?"

The Sha Monk laughed. "Also 5,048 catties."

The Eldest Prince begged to see the Pilgrim's gold-banded cudgel. The Pilgrim took from his ear a needle, flourished it in the wind, and it was thick as a rice bowl, standing straight up before him. Prince and princes alike shuddered; every official's heart quaked.

The three young princes bowed and asked: "Master Zhu's and Master Sha's weapons were both carried on their bodies, under their clothes, ready to hand. Why did Master Sun take his from his ear? And it grows when it meets the wind—why is that?"

The Pilgrim laughed. "You don't know that this cudgel of mine is no common thing of the mortal world. This cudgel:

When primeval Chaos first was parted, it was wrought and smelted; The divine sage Yu himself did set its measure. The lakes and seas, the rivers, shallow and deep— This staff has known them all, and known them well. When mountains were cut and waters tamed and all was peace, It drifted to the Eastern Sea to guard the ocean gates. Long days and deepening years it breathed its rosy haze; It can shrink and grow, and shine, and keep its luster clean. Old Sun, by fate's own share, fetched it away; Its changes, past all counting, follow on the spell. Made great, it fills the universe entire; Made small, it is a needle's little joint. The staff is called As-You-Will, and titled Gold-Banded— Heaven above and earth below acclaim it peerless. It weighs, all told, thirteen thousand five hundred catties, Now thick, now thin, at will it dies and lives. It helped me wreck the Palace of Heaven once, And followed me to storm the gates of Earth. It tames the tiger and subdues the dragon—everywhere it goes; It melts the demons, sweeps the fiends—through every quarter, thorough. One lift of it, one point—the very sun goes dark; Heaven and earth, the gods and ghosts, all lose their nerve. From Chaos down, the immortals passed it on to now— In truth, it is no mortal iron at all!"

Hearing this, the princes bowed to the floor in worship without end. The three came forward and bowed again and again, begging with devout hearts to be taught.

"You three—what arts would you learn?" asked the Pilgrim.

The princes said: "Those who would use the staff will learn the staff; those used to the rake will learn the rake; those who love the staff-weapon will learn the staff-weapon."

"To teach is easy enough," said the Pilgrim with a laugh, "but you have no strength—you cannot wield our weapons, and I fear you would learn imperfectly—paint a tiger badly, and it looks like a dog. As the men of old said: 'Lax teaching is the teacher's sloth; learning unfinished is the pupil's fault.' Since you have sincere hearts, go burn incense and bow to Heaven and Earth. First I will transmit some divine strength to you, and then the martial art may be taught."

The three young princes heard this with hearts full of joy; they carried out the incense table with their own hands, washed their hands and lit the incense, and bowed to Heaven in worship. When the bows were done, they begged their master to transmit the method. The Pilgrim turned about, bowed to the Tang monk, and said: "I report to my honored master, and beg pardon for his disciple's offense. Long years ago at the Mountain of Two Frontiers, Master's great virtue delivered your disciple and brought him into the Buddhist fold. Coming westward all this while, though I have never repaid Master's kindness in full, I have forded waters and climbed mountains, spent strength and heart to the utmost. Now, come to the homeland of the Buddha, we have happily met the three worthy sons of a worthy prince, who have given themselves to us as disciples to learn the martial art. Since they are our disciples, they are Master's disciples' disciples. I respectfully report this to my master, that I may then pass on the teaching."

Sanzang was greatly pleased. Bajie and the Sha Monk, seeing the Pilgrim perform his courtesy, also turned and knocked their heads to Sanzang: "Master, we are dull and slow, clumsy of mouth and heavy of jaw, no hands at speech. We beg Master to sit high on the seat of the Law and let us two each take a disciple for our amusement—it will be something to remember on the Western road." Sanzang gladly granted it to them both.

Then the Pilgrim had the three princes, behind the Gauze-Drying Pavilion in a quiet chamber, trace out the Dipper pattern, and bade all three lie prostrate within it, each closing his eyes and stilling his spirit. There he silently recited the true words and chanted the spells, breathed immortal breath into the three princes' hearts and bellies, gathered their primal spirits back into their proper abodes, and transmitted the oral formulas, endowing each with the strength of ten thousand men and adding the fire of the elixir's firing to them. It was like the method of shedding the womb and changing the bones. When he had circulated the full midnight-noon round of heaven, the three young princes came to, scrambled up all together, wiped their faces, and stood brimming with vigor, each with bones strong and sinews tough: the Eldest Prince could take up the gold-banded cudgel; the Second could swing the nine-toothed rake; the Third could lift the demon-subduing staff.

The old prince, seeing this, rejoiced beyond all measure and spread another vegetarian feast to thank the master and his three disciples. Right at the banquet each taught and each learned: the staff-learners drilled the staff, the rake-learners drilled the rake, the weapon-learners drilled the weapon. But though they turned a few turns and spun a few patterns, still they labored at it: one pass of the routine left them gasping and puffing, unable to endure. For those weapons were all subject to change, advancing and retiring, rising and sweeping, dwindling and growing at will, with all the marvel of spontaneous transformation—and these were but mortal men. How could they hope to reach it all at once? That day the feast was dispersed.

The next day the three princes came again to give thanks: "We are grateful that the divine masters bestowed strength upon us. Yet though we can wheel your divine weapons, turning them is a struggle. Our thought is to summon craftsmen to copy the pattern of your divine weapons, pared down in weight, and forge us replicas—will the masters permit it?"

"Good! Good! Good! Now that's talking sense," said Bajie. "Our weapons, first, you can't wield; second, we need them to guard the Law and subdue demons. By all means—forge new ones, forge new ones!"

The prince then summoned blacksmiths and bought ten thousand catties of iron and steel, and in the front court of the mansion they raised a shed and set up furnaces to do the casting. On the first day the metal was refined; on the next the prince asked the three travelers to bring out the gold-banded cudgel, the nine-toothed rake, and the demon-subduing staff and lay them in the shed, to serve as patterns for the work—and there they stayed, day and night, never taken in.

Ah! Those weapons were the treasures they carried on their bodies, that might not leave them for one instant; kept on their persons, they wore their many-colored radiances as a guard. Now that they had lain in the shed courtyard for days, their rosy light shot ten thousand beams to Heaven, and their propitious vapor, in a

thousand shapes, canopied the earth.

That night there was a demon spirit living some seventy li from the city—the mountain was called Leopard Head Mountain, the cave Tiger's Mouth Cave. As he sat in the night, he suddenly saw the rosy light and auspicious vapor, and rode up on his cloud to look. It was the radiance of the prefectural city. He pressed down his cloud and came close to see—and it was these three weapons giving off their light.

The demon was both delighted and covetous. "Fine treasures! Fine treasures! Whose are these, that they lie here? It is my own good fortune—take them away! Take them away!"

The moment his covetous heart stirred, he mustered his powers, swept up all three weapons in one haul, and went straight back to his own cave. Truly:

The Way may not be left for even an instant; What can be left is not the Way. The divine weapons all have fallen into emptiness— Vainly have they toiled who cultivate the Way.

If you would know how the weapons came to be found again, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 89

The Yellow Lion Spirit Vainly Holds a Rake Banquet; Metal, Wood, and Earth Plot Havoc on Leopard Head Mountain

The story tells how the blacksmiths in the courtyard, worn out from days of unrelenting toil, had all fallen asleep in the night. When they rose at daybreak to resume their forging, they found that the three weapons were gone from under the awning. Every one of them stood gaping in stupefaction, their spirits shaken, and they hunted for the weapons high and low all around.

Just then the three young princes came out from the palace to have a look, and the blacksmiths all fell to their knees and kowtowed. "Young masters," they cried, "the three weapons of the divine masters have vanished, and we know not where!"

At these words the young princes were stricken with fear and trembling. "Perhaps the masters packed them up and took them away last night," they said, and they hurried at once to the Gauze-Drying Pavilion. Seeing the white horse still standing in the corridor, they could not help calling out, "The master is still sleeping!"

"He is up," said the Sha Monk, and he opened the door of the room and let the princes come inside. But when they looked about and saw no weapons anywhere, they asked in a fluster, "Have the master's weapons all been put away?"

Monkey leaped up. "They have not been put away!"

"Then the three weapons have all disappeared in the night," said the princes.

Bajie scrambled hastily to his feet. "Is my rake still there?"

"When we came out just now," said the young princes, "we saw the workmen searching back and front without finding anything. We were afraid the master had taken charge of them, and so we came to ask. Your treasures, venerable teachers, can all grow large or small at will; no doubt you have them hidden about your persons and are only teasing your disciples."

"On my word they are not put away," said Monkey. "Let us all go and look for them."

So they went to the courtyard and looked under the awning, and sure enough there was not a trace of the weapons.

"They must have been stolen by this crew of blacksmiths!" cried Bajie. "Hand them over, and quick! If you delay even a little, we will beat every one of you to death! To death!"

The blacksmiths were so terrified that they kowtowed and wept. "Lord!" they cried. "For days on end we have toiled until, worn out, we slept through the night, and when we rose at dawn they were gone. We are plain common mortals—how could we ever have lifted them? We beg you, lord, to spare our lives! Spare our lives!"

Monkey said nothing, but silently he fretted: "It is our own fault. Once we had let them copy the patterns, we should have taken the weapons back and kept them at our sides. How could we have left them lying about there? Those treasures shed such radiant, dazzling light—no doubt they drew the attention of some villain, who stole them away in the night."

Bajie would not believe it. "What kind of talk is that, brother! This is a peaceful, well-ordered place, not some wild moor or deep mountain—how would any villain ever get here? It must be that these blacksmiths have turned crooked. They saw how our weapons gleamed and shone, and they knew they were three precious treasures. In the night they slipped out of the prince's palace, gathered up a band of confederates,

and carried them off—some hauling, some dragging, some lifting. Hand them over here and let's beat them! Beat them!"

The workmen could only kowtow and swear oaths of innocence.

Amid the uproar, the old prince came out and asked what had happened; when he heard the story, the color drained from his face too. He brooded for a long moment and then said, "The weapons of the divine masters are of course no common things—a hundred men, even ten times that number, could not have budged them. Moreover, my family has ruled this city for five generations now; this is no idle boast, but I have a certain reputation for virtue abroad, and the soldiers, civilians, and craftsmen of this city all stand in some awe of my laws and discipline. They would never dare turn crooked. I beg the divine masters to think it over once more."

Monkey laughed. "There is no need to think it over, and no need to torment the blacksmiths for nothing. Let me ask Your Highness this: in the mountains and forests round about your city, are there any monsters or demons?"

"Your question is most pertinent," said the prince. "To the north of this city there is a mountain called Leopard Head Mountain, and in that mountain there is a cave called Tiger's Mouth Cave. People have often said there is an immortal in the cave; others say there are tigers and wolves; still others say there is a monster. I have never gone to find out the truth of it, and I do not know what it really is."

Monkey laughed. "No need to say more. It must certainly be some villain from that quarter who learned that they were all treasures and stole them away in a single night."

Then he called out: "Bajie, Sha Monk, you two stay here and guard the master and protect the city while old Monkey goes to track them down." And he told the blacksmiths not to let their forges go cold, but to keep smelting and forging one thing after another.

A fine Monkey King he was! He took leave of Tripitaka, gave one shrill whistle, and vanished body and shadow alike—already he had strode to the top of Leopard Head Mountain. The city, in fact, was only seventy li away, and he covered the distance in a blink. Straight up onto the peak he went to survey the scene, and sure enough there was something of a demonic miasma about the place. Truly:

The dragon vein runs long; the terrain stretches far and wide. Sharp peaks stand tall, thrusting high into heaven; steep ravines lie deep, their rushing waters swift. Before the mountain, jasper grasses spread like carpet; behind the mountain, rare flowers brocade the ground. Tall pines and ancient cypresses, old trees renewing their green; mountain crows and magpies fly crying in swarms; wild cranes and wild gibbons alike shrill and call. Below the crags, pairs and pairs of deer; before the sheer walls, twinned badgers and foxes. Rising and falling, the dragon comes from afar; nine turns and nine bends conceal the earth's pulse. The ridge-ends join the County of Yuhua— a place of splendor for ten thousand ages, a thousand autumns.

As Monkey was gazing about, he suddenly heard voices behind the mountain. He turned his head quickly to look, and there were two wolf-headed demon sprites, chattering away cheerfully as they walked toward the northwest.

Monkey reckoned: "These must be the monsters who patrol the mountain. Let old Monkey follow them and listen to what they have to say."

He made a magic sign with his fingers, recited a spell, shook his body, and changed into a butterfly. Spreading its wings, fluttering and flitting, it caught up with them in no time. And a fine transformation it was, truly in the best style:

A pair of powdered wings, two trails of silver whiskers. Riding the wind, it flies away swift; dancing in the sunlight, it comes drifting slow. Over water and over walls it flits with nimble grace, stealing fragrance, sporting with catkins, in high delight. Light of body, it dotes on the scent of fresh flowers; elegant in manner, sweet in feeling, it curls and unfurls at will.

It flew right above the demons' heads, floating and swaying, and listened to their talk.

One of the demons suddenly called out, "Second Brother, our Great King has had a run of luck these past days. Last month he got hold of a beautiful lady, and he has been dallying with her in the cave, merry as can be. And last night he got three weapons, and they truly are priceless treasures. Tomorrow morning he opens a banquet to celebrate the Rake Assembly, and we shall all share in the feast."

"And we've had a stroke of luck too," said the other. "We're taking these twenty taels of silver to buy pigs and sheep. Now that we've reached the Qianfang Market, let's first drink a few pots of wine, cook the accounts a little, skim off two or three taels for ourselves, and buy a padded coat to get through the winter with. Wouldn't that be fine?"

And so the two monsters chatted and laughed their way onto the high road, hurrying along as fast as flying.

When Monkey heard them speak of celebrating the Rake Assembly, he was secretly delighted. He would gladly have struck them dead, but they, after all, had done no wrong worth the name; besides, he had no weapon in his hand. So instead he flew out ahead of them, resumed his true form, and planted himself squarely at the crossroads. As the monsters drew near, he spat a mouthful of magic spittle at them and recited the words "Om! Hong! Zha! Li!"—and so cast his body-fixing spell, freezing the two wolf-headed sprites in their tracks.

Wide-eyed, they could not open their mouths; stiff and straight, their feet were rooted to the ground. He toppled them over, lifted their clothes, and searched them, and sure enough they had twenty taels of silver, knotted in a carrying-bag fastened to the waistband of their skirts. Each also wore a lacquered placard: one read "Crafty Weirdo," the other "Weirdo Crafty."

A fine Great Sage! He took their silver, untied their placards, and strode back to the city. Arriving at the prince's palace, he saw the princes, the Tang monk, and all the officials great and small, the overseers and workmen, and told them the whole story.

Bajie laughed. "So it's because old Pig's treasure sheds such radiant light that they're buying pigs and sheep and laying a banquet to celebrate! But how are we to get them to come to us?"

"The three of us brothers will all go," said Monkey. "This silver was for buying the pigs and sheep, so first let's give the silver to the workmen as a reward, and let His Highness find us some pigs and sheep. Bajie, you change into Crafty Weirdo; I'll change into Weirdo Crafty; and Sha Monk, you dress up as a trader in pigs and sheep. We'll walk right into that Tiger's Mouth Cave, and when the chance offers, each of us will grab his own weapon, wipe out those demons utterly, and then come back and pack up to be on our way."

"Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful!" said the Sha Monk with a laugh. "No time like the present! Let's go!"

The old prince indeed followed this plan, and at once ordered his stewards to buy seven or eight pigs and four or five sheep.

The three of them took leave of their master and put on a grand display of supernatural power outside the city.

Bajie said, "Brother, I never clapped eyes on this Crafty Weirdo—how am I to change into his likeness?"

"That monster is pinned where he stands by old Monkey's body-fixing spell," said Monkey, "and he won't wake until this time tomorrow. I remember exactly what he looked like. Stand still, and I'll teach you to change. Like this and like that—and there you have his very image."

The blockhead truly recited the spell, Monkey blew him a puff of immortal breath, and in an instant he was transformed into the very image of Crafty Weirdo, not one whit different, with one of the lacquered placards hung at his waist.

Monkey then changed himself into Weirdo Crafty, with a placard at his waist as well. The Sha Monk got himself up to look like a trader in pigs and sheep, and all together they drove the pigs and sheep onto the high road and headed straight for the mountain.

Before long, as they entered a hollow in the hills, they met another little demon. And what a fierce and wicked face he had! Just look at him:

Two round, rolling eyes, gleaming like lanterns; a head of red bristling hair, flashing like drifting fire. A pockmarked nose, a wry, gaping mouth, tusks sharp and pointed; jagged ears, a hewn-looking brow, a green face puffy with swellings. He wears a pale yellow tunic on his body and a pair of sedge-cloth shoes on his feet. Strutting fiercely, like a baleful god; hurrying anxiously, like an evil ghost.

The little demon had a lacquered invitation box tucked under his left arm, and he hailed the three of them as they came. "Weirdo Crafty! You two are here? How many pigs and sheep did you buy?"

"Are these not the ones we're driving?" said Monkey.

The demon turned to the Sha Monk. "And who might this be?"

"He's the trader who sold us the pigs and sheep," said Monkey. "We still owe him a few taels of silver, and we've brought him along to our place to collect it. Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to Bamboo Joint Mountain," said the demon, "to invite the Senior Great King to the feast tomorrow morning."

Monkey, catching the drift of his words, asked, "How many are being invited in all?"

"The Senior Great King will sit in the seat of honor," said the demon. "Counting our own Great King of this mountain together with the chieftains and the rest, there'll be some forty or more."

As they were talking, Bajie burst out: "Get along! Get along! The pigs and sheep are scattering in all directions!"

"You go and keep them together," said Monkey, "while I ask him to show me the invitation."

The demon, taking them for his own folk, unclasped the box, took out the card, and handed it to Monkey. Monkey unrolled it and read:

"Tomorrow at dawn we reverently prepare meats and wine to celebrate the felicitous Assembly of the Rake. We beseech you to condescend to cross the mountain and join us for a while. Pray consider us no strangers—this to our utmost gratitude! Respectfully submitted to our honored grandsire, the Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity, Old Master. Your grandson, the Yellow Lion, bows his head a hundred times."

When Monkey had read it through, he handed it back to the demon, who put it away in the box and went off toward the southeast.

"What did the card say, Brother?" asked the Sha Monk.

"It was an invitation to celebrate the Rake Assembly," said Monkey. "The signature reads 'Your grandson, the Yellow Lion, bows his head a hundred times,' and it was addressed to 'our honored grandsire, the Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity, Old Master.'"

The Sha Monk laughed. "This Yellow Lion must be a golden-maned lion that has become a spirit. But I wonder what this Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity can be."

When Bajie heard this, he laughed. "That's old Pig's merchandise!"

"How do you make it out to be your merchandise?" asked Monkey.

"The ancients say," Bajie replied, "that a scabby old sow always chases after golden-maned lions. So I know it's old Pig's goods!"

Laughing and chattering, the three of them drove the pigs and sheep along until they came in sight of the gates of Tiger's Mouth Cave. And there, outside the gate:

Green hills encircle it round; a single vein of air joins the city. Sheer crags are scaled by green creepers; high cliffs hang with purple briers. Birdsong rings thick through the deep trees; flower shadows greet the cave gate. No less than the Grotto of Peach Blossom Springs— a very fit retreat from the madding world.

As they drew gradually near the gate, they saw a whole cluster of demons, big ones and little ones of every assorted kind, disporting themselves beneath the flowering trees. Suddenly they heard Bajie crying "Ho! Ho!" as he drove the pigs and sheep up, and the demons all came out to welcome them. Some seized the pigs, some seized the sheep, and they trussed them up and threw them down together.

This soon alarmed the demon king inside, who came out at the head of a dozen or more little demons and asked, "You two are back? How many pigs and sheep did you buy?"

"Eight pigs and seven sheep—fifteen head in all," said Monkey. "The pigs come to sixteen taels of silver, the sheep to nine. We drew twenty taels in advance, so we still owe five. This is the trader, come along after us for his money."

When the demon king heard this, he called out at once, "Little ones! Bring five taels of silver and send him off."

"This trader," said Monkey, "has come for his silver, it's true, but he also wants a look at our felicitous assembly."

The demon flew into a rage and cursed: "You Crafty Weirdo, you lazy lout! Buying things is one thing—but what's all this talk about a look or no look!"

Bajie stepped forward. "Our master has come by a treasure, and a rare marvel in this world it is. What harm is there in letting him have a look?"

"Hateful creature!" snapped the demon. "My treasure was got from the city of Yuhua. If this trader sees it and goes back to spread the tale in that city, and the word gets about, and the prince comes one day to seek it out—then what?"

"Master," said Monkey, "this trader is from behind the Qianfang Market, far from the city. He is no townsman of theirs—where would he go spreading tales? Besides, his belly is hungry, and the two of us haven't eaten either. There's ready wine and food in the house; give him some, send him off fed, and be done with him."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a little demon brought five taels of silver and handed them to Monkey. Monkey passed the silver to the Sha Monk. "Trader, take your silver, and come with me round to

the back for a bite to eat."

The Sha Monk summoned his courage and went with Bajie and Monkey into the cave, up to the second court and its broad hall. There, on a table in the very center, was a nine-toothed rake set up on high as an offering, truly dazzling to the eye. On the east gable leaned a gold-hooped cudgel; on the west gable leaned a demon-quelling staff.

The demon king followed along behind them, saying, "Trader, that shining thing in the middle is the rake. Look if you like—only when you leave, whatever you do, don't tell anyone."

The Sha Monk nodded his thanks.

Ah! Truly it is said: when a thing beholds its master, it must be claimed. Bajie, all his life a crude and clumsy soul, was in no mood to stand on ceremony when he saw his rake. He ran forward, snatched it down, swung it in his hands, resumed his true form, broke into his flourishes, and smote straight at the demon's face. Monkey and the Sha Monk likewise rushed to the two gables, each seized his own weapon, and showed their true forms.

The three brothers fell to belaboring the demon together. In panic the demon king wrenched himself aside, slipped away, darted into the back of the cave, and came out with a four-bright shovel, its shaft long and its edge keen. He hurried into the courtyard, parried the three weapons, and shouted in a stern voice, "Who are you, that dare play this trick and cheat me of my treasures?"

Monkey cursed him: "You thieving hairball! Don't you know me? We are the disciples of the holy monk Tang Sanzang of the Land of the East. Passing through the County of Yuhua to have our travel rescript endorsed, we were honored by your wise prince with his three young princes taking us as masters to learn the martial arts, and our treasures were used as models to forge weapons in their likeness. Because they were left standing in the courtyard, you thieving hairball stole into the city in the dead of night and carried them off—and you dare say I play tricks to cheat you of your treasure! Don't run! Have a taste of these three weapons of ours—each of them will wait on you a few strokes!"

The demon spirit raised his shovel to meet them.

This battle, from the courtyard they fought out through the front gate. Watch the three monks gang up on one monster! A fine fight:

The cudgel whooshes like the wind; the rake rolls like the rain. The demon-quelling staff rises, filling the sky with rosy clouds; the four-bright shovel thrusts out, and mists of splendor rise. Just like three immortals refining the Great Elixir, its fire and flashing light alarming gods and ghosts. Pilgrim Sun exerts his might with wondrous skill; the demon who stole the treasure shows a vast insolence! Marshal Tianpeng, Zhu Bajie, displays his power divine; General Sha the Monk, more heroic still and fine. The brothers, of one accord, lay their plans and schemes; in Tiger's Mouth Cave the battle flames arise. That monster, fierce and bold, plays all his cunning tricks; four heroes worthily matched, they lock in strifes. They fought until the sun hung in the west; the demon's strength ran soft, he could not hold.

They fought on Leopard Head Mountain for a long while, and the demon spirit could not withstand them. Before the Sha Monk he shouted, "Take my shovel!" The Sha Monk swayed aside with a twist of his body and dodged it, whereupon the demon saw his opening, fled, and rose into the southeast quarter of the Xun sign, riding the wind away in flight.

Bajie strode after him, but Monkey said, "Let him go for now. As the old saying has it, a desperate foe should not be pursued. Let us instead cut off his road home."

Bajie obeyed. The three of them went straight to the mouth of the cave and beat to death the hundred and more demons, big and little—all of them in truth tigers, wolves, panthers, leopards, horses, deer, and mountain goats become sprites. Then the Great Sage, by a lift of his magic arts, brought out everything of value from the cave, together with the carcasses of the assorted slain beasts and the pigs and sheep they had driven there.

The Sha Monk fetched dry firewood and set it ablaze, while Bajie fanned the flames with his two ears, and in a moment the whole lair was burnt to nothing. Then, with everything they had brought out, they turned back toward the city.

By this time the gates were still open and the households not yet abed. The old prince, his sons, and the Tang monk were all waiting anxiously in the Gauze-Drying Pavilion. Suddenly, with a great thump and clatter, the three of them flung down a whole courtyard full of dead beasts, pigs, sheep, and sundry valuables, crying all together, "Master! We return in triumph!"

The princes thanked them again and again with respectful murmurs, and the venerable elder Tang was overjoyed. The three young princes knelt and kowtowed on the ground. The Sha Monk raised them up, saying, "Wait with your thanks—all of you come close and look at these things."

"Where did all this come from?" asked the princes.

Monkey laughed. "Those tigers, wolves, panthers, leopards, horses, deer, and mountain goats were all demons turned sprites. We took back our weapons and fought our way out the gate. That old monster is a golden-maned lion; he wielded a four-bright shovel and fought us until the sky darkened, then fled the field to save his life and made off toward the southeast. We didn't chase him; instead we cut off his road home, beat to death this rabble of demons, rummaged out all these goods of his, and brought them back with us."

When the old prince heard this, he was glad and worried at once—glad that they had returned victorious, worried lest that demon come some day to take his revenge.

"Set your heart at ease, Your Highness," said Monkey. "I have already turned the matter over and settled how it should be handled. Rest assured I shall sweep them out to the very last before we set out on our journey; I will never leave a plague behind me. When I went at noon I ran into a little green-faced, red-haired demon delivering invitations. I read his card, and it said, 'Tomorrow at dawn we reverently prepare meats and wines to celebrate the felicitous Assembly of the Rake; we beseech your honor to cross the mountain with your retinue and join us for a while. Pray consider us no strangers—to our utmost gratitude! Respectfully submitted to our honored grandsire, the Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity, Old Master,' signed 'Your grandson, the Yellow Lion, bows his head a hundred times.' Now that the demon has lost the field, he is bound to go pour out his tale to his grandsire. Tomorrow without fail they will come seeking revenge, and it will be my task to sweep them clean away for you."

The old prince expressed his thanks, and a late vegetarian meal was laid out. When master and disciples had finished their meal, each retired to his sleeping quarters, and of them no more need be said.

The story turns instead to that demon spirit, who fled indeed toward the southeast until he reached Bamboo Joint Mountain. In that mountain there was a grotto-heaven of a cave called the Cave of Nine Windings, and in the cave dwelt the Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity, his honored grandsire. Never once pausing in his flight, the Yellow Lion traveled until the fifth watch, when he reached the mouth of the cave, knocked, and entered. The little demons who saw him said, "Great King, last night there came the green-faced one with the invitation, and the Old Master kept him overnight until this very morning, intending to go with him to your Rake Assembly. Why have you come in person at this early hour to give the invitation yourself?"

"Hard to tell, hard to tell!" cried the demon. "The assembly will never be!"

Even as he spoke, the green-faced one came out from within, saying, "Great King, what brings you here? As soon as Grandfather the Senior Great King was up, he was going with me to attend the feast!"

The demon only waved his hands in agitation, too distraught for words. Presently the old monster rose and summoned him in. The demon spirit cast down his weapon, threw himself to the ground in a bow, and could not stay the tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Worthy grandson," said the old monster, "yesterday you sent your invitation card, and this morning I was just about to come to your feast—and now you come in person as well. Why this grief and trouble?"

The demon kowtowed and said, "Your unworthy grandson was idly walking beneath the moon the night before last when he saw a radiance soaring into the sky above the city of Yuhua. Hurrying to look, I found it was three weapons shining in the courtyard of the prince's palace: a nine-toothed rake plated with gold, a precious staff, and a gold-hooped cudgel. Your grandson used magic to whisk them away, and gave the affair the grand name of the Felicitous Assembly of the Rake, ordering the little ones to buy pigs, sheep, fruits, and the like, and to lay a banquet for the celebration, inviting you, my grandsire, to enjoy it as a pleasure.

"After I sent the green-faced one with the invitation yesterday, who should come up but Crafty Weirdo and the others who had been sent to buy the pigs and sheep, driving a few hogs along, with a trading merchant in tow come for his silver. He insisted on staying to see the assembly, and because I feared he would spread talk abroad, I would not let him look. Then he said his belly was hungry and begged for some food, so I had him shown to the back to eat. But when he walked inside and saw the weapons, he claimed them for his own! The three of them each snatched one, and out of them appeared their true forms: one a monk with a hairy face and a Thunder God's beak, one a monk with a long snout and great big ears, one a monk with a face the color of doom. Without distinguishing good from bad, they raised a shout and fell to beating on every side.

"I snatched up my four-bright shovel and hurried out to hold them off, asking who they were that dared play such tricks. They said they were disciples of the Tang monk sent by the Great Tang of the Land of the East to fetch scriptures in the Western Heaven; that passing through your city to have their travel rescript endorsed, they had been detained by the prince to teach the martial arts; that these three weapons had been used as models for forging and left standing in the courtyard; and that since I had stolen them, they would have it out with me. I never learned what those three monks are called, but they truly have power. Your grandson alone could not stand against three, and so I fled away to you, my grandsire.

"I beg you to draw your blade and help me—to seize those monks and avenge me—so that I may see what a grandsire's love for his grandson is worth!"

When the old monster heard this, he pondered silently for a moment, then laughed. "So it is they. Worthy grandson, you have provoked the wrong ones!"

"Does my grandsire know who they are?" asked the demon.

"The one with the long snout and big ears is Zhu Bajie," said the old monster, "and the one with the face the color of doom is the Sha Monk. Those two are nothing much. But the one with the hairy face and the Thunder God's beak is called Sun the Pilgrim. That one has truly vast magic powers—five hundred years ago he wrought great havoc in Heaven, and a hundred thousand celestial soldiers could not lay hold of him. He makes it his whole business to hunt people out; he is a regular captain of calamity—a mountain-comber and sea-dredger, a cave-breaker and city-stormer! How could you provoke him? Well then, let me go with you, and we will seize that rogue along with the prince of Yuhua and vent your spleen for you!"

When the demon heard this, he kowtowed his thanks.

At once the old monster mustered his grandsons—the Nao Lion, the Snow Lion, the Suanni, the Bai Ze, the Fox-Subduing Lion, and the Elephant-Wrestling Lion—and each took up sharp weapons. With the Yellow

Lion leading the way, they all mounted fierce winds and made straight for the borders of Leopard Head Mountain. There the reek of smoke and fire assailed their nostrils, and they heard besides the sound of weeping. When they looked closely, it was Crafty Weirdo and Weirdo Crafty, calling upon their lord and weeping for him.

The demon spirit strode up and shouted at them, "Are you the real Crafty Weirdo, or a false one?"

The two sprites fell to their knees, holding back their tears, and kowtowed. "How could we be false? Yesterday at this hour we took the silver and went to buy the pigs and sheep. When we reached the great ravine on the west side of the mountain, we met a monk with a hairy face and a Thunder God's beak. He spat on us, and at once our legs went weak and our mouths went stiff; we could not speak, we could not stir a step. He toppled us over, searched away our silver, and untied our placards. The two of us lay groggy and befuddled until only this moment did we wake. Hurrying home, we found the smoke and fire not yet out, the whole dwelling burnt away, and no sign anywhere of our lord or the chieftains great and small; and so we are grieving and weeping here. We cannot imagine how this fire began!"

When the demon spirit heard this, he could no longer hold back; the tears gushed from him like a spring. He stamped both feet, and his cries shook the sky. "Those bald slaves!" he raged. "What consummate wickedness! To do such a poisonous deed—burning my cave-dwelling to the last stick, burning my beautiful lady to death, wiping out my whole household and all my kin! It angers me to death! It angers me to death!"

The old monster bade the Nao Lion pull him over. "Worthy grandson, the thing is done; grieving avails nothing. Rather husband your strength and spirit, and let us go into the city and seize those monks."

But the demon spirit could not stop his weeping. "Old Master! That mountain estate of mine was not the work of a single day, and now that bald slave has destroyed it utterly—what do I want with this life of mine!" He struggled to his feet and dashed his head against the stone crags, battering his own skull, until the Snow Lion, the Nao Lion, and the others reasoned with him in grief and only with difficulty made him stop.

Then they abandoned the place and all made for the city.

The wind came rolling, the fog came seething, and they drew very near. So great was the terror that the people of the wards outside the city walls, dragging their sons and carrying their daughters, with no thought for their household goods, all streamed into the city; entering the gates, they shut them fast. Someone ran to report to the prince's palace: "Calamity! Calamity!"

The prince, the Tang monk, and the rest were just taking their morning meal in the Gauze-Drying Pavilion when they heard the report of calamity, and they came out of the gate to ask.

"A whole horde of demons!" the people cried. "Flying sand, rolling stones, belching fog and heaving wind—they are near the city!"

The old prince was greatly alarmed. "What is to be done?"

Monkey laughed. "All of you set your hearts at ease! Set your hearts at ease! These are the demons of Tiger's Mouth Cave. Defeated yesterday, they went off southeast and have come back with this Nine-Spirit Sage of Primordial Sanctity, or whatever he calls himself. Wait while my brothers and I go out. Give orders to close the four gates, and muster men to stand guard over the city."

The prince indeed gave the command: the four gates were shut, and men were detailed to mount the walls. The prince and his sons, together with the Tang monk, stood on the city tower marshaling their forces, banners darkening the sun, cannon fire filling the sky. Monkey and his two brothers went out, half on cloud and half on mist, to meet the foe. And this was truly:

For heedless loss of weapons of wisdom's light, in a trice the demons rise, and thronging evils rage.

If you would know how this battle ended, in victory or in defeat, you must listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

[Translator's note: The Rake Banquet (dingpa hui) is the Yellow Lion Spirit's celebration of his stolen treasure. "Crafty Weirdo" and "Weirdo Crafty" render the paired demon names Diaozuan Gugai and Gugai Diaozuan, which are punning reversals of each other. The Suanni and the Bai Ze are mythical beasts of old Chinese lore—the former a lion-like creature often carved on temple pedestals, the latter an omniscient beast that appeared to the Yellow Emperor. "A scabby old sow always chases golden-maned lions" is Bajie's self-mocking proverb, twisting a saying about mismatches. The Xun sign denotes the southeast in the Eight Trigrams, hence the demon's flight "into the southeast quarter of the Xun sign."]

Chapter 90

Master and Lion, Teaching and Learning, Return Together to the One; The Stolen Way, Entangled with Zen, Stills the Nine Numinosities

[Translator's note: the couplet plays on the homophones shi "master/teacher" and shi "lion," shou "transmit" and shou "receive," dao "the Way" and dao "steal," and chan "entangle" and chan "Zen meditation."]

Meanwhile the Great Sage Sun, coming out over the city wall together with Bajie and the Sha Monk, faced the demons head-on and saw that the whole pack were lions of mixed, motley manes: the Yellow Lion spirit led them in front; the Suanni Lion and the Elephant-Grappling Lion held the left; the Baize Lion and the Fuli Lion held the right; the Nao Lion and the Snow Lion brought up the rear; and in the very center stood a nine-headed lion.

The green-faced monster carried a jeweled banner embroidered with clustered flowers and kept close beside the nine-headed lion, while Wily-Weird and Weird-Wily waved two red flags. In perfect order they all drew up their ranks in the quarter of the Kan trigram.

Bajie, blundering as ever, strode up to them and cursed: "Thieving demon who stole our treasures! What do you mean by going off and bringing this pack of hairy beasts back here with you?"

The Yellow Lion spirit gnashed his teeth and cursed in reply: "Vicious bald-headed ruffian! Yesterday three of you fought me all alone, and I went back beaten—I let you have the day! But how can you be so cruel and wicked? You burned my cave, wrecked my mountain grounds, and slaughtered my kinsfolk! The feud between you and me runs deeper than the sea! Don't run away—taste your grandfather's spade!" Brave Bajie raised his rake and met him head-on.

The two had barely crossed weapons and settled who was the stronger when the Nao Lion, whirling an iron spiked mace, and the Snow Lion, wielding a three-edged club, charged straight at him. "Well come!" shouted Bajie. Just look at him, plunging this way and that, tangling with the whole lot at once. Over here, the Sha Monk hastily drew his demon-quelling staff and hurried up to help; and then the Suanni spirit, the Baize spirit, and the Elephant-Grappling and Fuli spirits all surged forward in a mob together.

There the Great Sage Sun used his gold-banded cudgel to hold off the whole pack: the Suanni fought with a muffled club, the Baize with a copper hammer, the Elephant-Grappling with a steel spear, the Fuli with a battle-axe. Seven lion spirits against three fierce monks—what a fight! Cudgel and hammer, spear and axe, the three-edged club; the spiked mace and the gleaming spade. The seven lions and their seven weapons, all of piercing sharpness, ringed the three monks about and raised their battle cries together. The Great Sage's gold-banded iron cudgel was fierce; the Sha Monk's precious staff was rare in all the world; Bajie came storming in, majestic in his might, his nine-toothed rake flashing with a baleful gleam. Shielding front and covering rear, each plied his craft; parrying left and meeting right, all were brave. On the city wall the princes lent their might, beating drums and clanging gongs to hearten them. On they thrust and fought, working their magic arts, until the world was blurred and Heaven and Earth turned upside down.

The whole pack of demons fought the Great Sage and his two companions for the better part of a day, until, before any of them knew it, evening had come on. Bajie's mouth was slobbering with spit and his legs were going weak; he brandished his rake in a feint and fled the field—but the Snow Lion and the Nao Lion shouted after him: "Where do you think you're going? Take this!"

The idiot could not dodge in time. A blow from the club landed square on his backbone and down he sprawled, crying only: "It's all over! All over!" The two spirits grabbed him by the bristles and dragged him along by the tail, carrying him off to present before the nine-headed lion: "Patriarch, we've caught one!" And

before the words were even out, the Sha Monk and the Pilgrim had also been beaten in the fighting.

All the demons came charging after them, but the Pilgrim plucked out a handful of hairs, chewed them fine, blew them out, and cried "Change!" At once they changed into a hundred-odd little Pilgrims, who closed round in a ring, enveloping the Baize, the Suanni, the Elephant-Grappling, the Fuli, and the gold-furred lion monster in their midst. Then the Sha Monk and the Pilgrim pressed forward again to join in the assault. By evening they had captured the Suanni and the Baize, while the Fuli and the Elephant-Grappling had got away.

The gold-furred one reported it to the old demon. Seeing that he had lost two of his lions, the old monster gave his orders: "Tie up Zhu Bajie, but do not take his life. When they return my two lions to me, I will hand Bajie back to them. If they are so senseless as to do my two lions harm, then I will kill Bajie to square the account!"

That night the demons camped and rested outside the city. But no more of this.

Meanwhile the Great Sage Sun carried the two lion spirits back to the foot of the city wall. When the old prince saw them, he at once gave orders to open the gates and sent twenty or thirty officers out with ropes, who bound the lion spirits and carried them into the city. The Great Sage Sun took back his magic hairs and went with the Sha Monk straight up to the gate-tower, where they presented themselves before Tang Sanzang.

"This affair is truly dreadful!" said Tang Sanzang. "I wonder whether Wuneng is alive or dead."

"It's all right," said the Pilgrim. "Now that we've captured these two demons, they would never dare harm him. Keep the two spirits tightly bound and leashed, and tomorrow morning we'll trade them for Bajie." The three young princes kowtowed to the Pilgrim and said: "Master, when you fought your duel just now, we saw only a single body of you; and after you feigned defeat and came back, why were there suddenly a hundred-odd bodies of the master? And when you captured the demons and came near the city, there was only one body again—what kind of magic power is this?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "There are eighty-four thousand hairs on my body. One changes into ten, ten into a hundred, a hundred into thousands, ten thousands, millions—all these transformations are the art of bodies beyond the body." The princes one and all bowed in reverence, laid out a vegetarian feast at once, and the company ate there on the gate-tower.

At every crenel of the wall they hung lanterns and banners, and kept up their clappers, bells, gongs, and drums; they stood their night watches and passed the signal arrows, fired cannon, and raised shouts. And soon it was daylight again.

The old monster at once summoned the Yellow Lion spirit and laid his plan: "Today you and yours must give your whole minds to capturing that Pilgrim and the Sha Monk. While you are doing that, I will fly up in secret through the air to the city, seize his master and the old prince with his sons, and carry them first to the Cave of Nine Winding Turns. Wait there to report to me when you have won."

The Yellow Lion took the plan and led the Nao Lion, the Snow Lion, the Elephant-Grappling, and the Fuli, each with his weapon in hand, up to the city, where they rolled up wind and brewed up mist, challenging to battle.

Here the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk leapt out over the city wall and cursed them in stern voices: "Vicious thieving demons! Give us back our junior brother Bajie at once, and we'll spare your lives! Otherwise you'll all be ground to powder and shattered bones!"

The demons would allow not another word. With one surge they came on all together. The two brothers, the Great Sage and the Sha Monk, each plied his wiles—stratagems swift to bend with the shifting of events—and held off the five lions. This battle was very different from yesterday's:

Howling, howling, an evil wind scraped the ground; Dark on dark, thick black mists blotted out the sky. Stones flew, sand whirled, gods and ghosts alike took fright; Woods were leveled, trees were toppled, tigers and wolves were stunned. The steel spear was cruel, the battle-axe gleamed bright; Staff, spade, and copper hammer showed their vicious hearts. They longed to swallow the Pilgrim whole, To seize and bind the little Sha Monk alive. The Great Sage's single As-You-Will staff, Coiling and spreading, withdrawing and thrusting, was wondrously deft. The Sha Monk's demon-quelling staff Had made a name for itself outside the Lingxiao Hall. This time, plying their vast magic powers, They worked their might in the western marches to sweep the demons clean.

The five motley-maned lion spirits were fighting the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk at the very height of the battle when the old monster, riding a black cloud, soared straight up to the gate-tower. He shook his heads, and the very sight frightened the civil and military officials of every rank on the wall, together with the men on guard, so that they all came tumbling down from the wall. He dashed into the tower, opened his mouths, and scooped up Tang Sanzang and the old prince with his sons at one swoop; then, returning to the ground in the quarter of the Kan trigram, he took Bajie up in his mouths as well.

It turned out that with his nine heads he had nine mouths: one mouth held Tang Sanzang, one held Bajie, one held the old prince, one held the eldest prince, one held the second prince, one held the third prince—six mouths holding six people, and three mouths left over. He gave a great shout: "I'm off ahead!" The five young lion spirits, seeing their patriarch victorious, one and all spread their heroic talents all the more.

Hearing the shouts and cries of the people on the wall, the Pilgrim knew at once that he had fallen for the old demon's trick, and hastily called to the Sha Monk to be careful. Then he plucked every hair from his arms, chewed them fine in his mouth, and blew them out; they changed into a thousand-odd little Pilgrims, who surged forward all together in the attack. In that very moment they pulled down the Nao Lion, captured the Snow Lion alive, seized the Elephant-Grappling Lion, and toppled the Fuli Lion; the Yellow Lion they beat to death. Then, shouting and roaring, they swept all the way back to the foot of the prefecture city—only the green-faced imp and the two demons Wily-Weird and Weird-Wily had slipped away and escaped.

When the officials on the wall saw this, they opened the gates once more, bound the five lion spirits with ropes, and carried them into the city.

They had not yet decided what to do with them when the princess-consort came wailing and weeping, bowing low before the Pilgrim: "Divine master! My husband the prince, his sons, and your master—their lives are as good as lost! What is to become of this lone city?"

The Great Sage took back his magic hairs, made a bow to the princess-consort, and said: "Good lady, do not grieve. It is only because I captured his seven lion spirits that the old demon worked his art of snatching; he must certainly have snatched away my master and the prince with his sons by that art, and I am sure no harm has come to them. Tomorrow at the very first light of dawn, my brother and I will go into the mountains, and I guarantee we shall capture the old demon and give you back your four princes." When the princess-consort and her whole train of ladies heard this, they all bowed to the Pilgrim: "We beg that the prince and his sons may live to return whole, and that the kingdom's foundations stand firm!" When the bows were done, one by one they returned to the palace in tears.

The Pilgrim gave his orders to the officials: "Skin the Yellow Lion spirit that was beaten to death, and keep the six live lion spirits firmly shackled and locked away. Bring out some vegetarian fare—we'll eat, and then sleep. Set your minds at ease; I guarantee nothing will go wrong for you."

Early the next day the Great Sage led the Sha Monk aboard an auspicious cloud, and before long they reached the summit of Bamboo-Joint Mountain. Lowering his cloud to look about, he saw what a fine high mountain it was! Just look at it: Peaks ranged in jagged spires, ridges steep and rugged. In the deep ravines below, murmuring streams washed the stones; before the sheer cliffs, flowers spread their brocade and perfume. Winding ridges folded one upon another; the ancient paths curved and circled. Truly, when the crane comes, the pine has company; indeed, when the cloud departs, the rock has nothing to lean on. Black gibbons sought their fruit in the bright sunlight; river deer hunted blossoms, rejoicing in the warm day. Blue phoenixes cried in clear, crisp notes; yellow orioles sang in soft, sweet voices. In spring the peach and the plum vied in beauty; at summer's height the willow and the locust contended in luxuriance; when autumn came, yellow flowers spread their brocade; at winter's turn, white snow flew like floss. The fine scenes of the four seasons and the eight festivals were in no way inferior to the immortal vistas of Yingzhou.

The two of them were just enjoying the view from the mountain top when suddenly they caught sight of the green-faced imp, a short staff in his hand, dashing out from among the cliffs and ravines.

"Where do you think you're going? Old Sun is coming!" shouted the Pilgrim. The little demon was so frightened that he went tumbling and rolling down the cliff into the ravine. The two of them gave chase all the way, but the demon was nowhere to be seen. They took a few more steps forward and came upon a cave dwelling, its two gates of mottled stone shut fast. Across the lintel was set a stone tablet, engraved in formal script with ten large characters: "The Cave of Nine Winding Turns on Bamboo-Joint Mountain, Home of Ten Thousand Numinous Beings."

It turned out that the little demon had run into the cave and shut the gates behind him. Reaching the central hall, he said to the old demon: "Grandpa, two more monks have come from outside."

"Have your great king and the Nao Lion, the Snow Lion, the Elephant-Grappling, and the Fuli come back yet?" asked the old demon.

"Not seen! Not seen!" said the little demon. "Only the two monks, gazing about from the high peak. The moment I caught sight of them I turned and ran; they came chasing after me, and so I shut the gates."

The old demon heard this, lowered his head, and said nothing for a long while. Then, all of a sudden, tears rolled down his face. "Woe is me!" he cried. "My grandson the Yellow Lion is dead! And my grandsons the Nao Lion and the rest have all been captured and carried into the city by those monks! How shall I ever requite this hatred!"

Bajie, who lay bound to one side, crammed in together with the prince, his sons, and Tang Sanzang, suffering in misery and fright, heard the old demon say that all his grandsons had been captured and taken into the city by the monks, and he rejoiced in secret: "Master, do not be afraid; Your Highnesses, do not grieve. My elder brother has already won the day and caught all the demons; he will find his way here and rescue us all." Hardly had he spoken when they heard the old demon cry: "Little ones, keep careful watch here. Let me go out and seize those two monks and bring them in, to be punished together with the rest." Just look at him—no armor on his body, no weapon in his hand, striding out to the front, where the shouts of Sun the Pilgrim could be heard.

He threw the gates of the cave wide open and, without a word, charged straight at the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim thrust up his iron cudgel to block him, and the Sha Monk swung his precious staff and struck. The old demon shook his head, and the eight heads around the central one all opened their mouths together, lightly catching up the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk and carrying them into the cave. "Fetch rope!" he ordered. Wily-Weird, Weird-Wily, and the green-faced imp—those who had escaped with their lives the night before—fetched two ropes and bound the pair up good and tight.

The old demon said: "You impudent monkey! You captured my seven sons and grandsons; now I have caught four of your monks and four of your princes, which is more than enough to pay for the lives of my sons and grandsons! Little ones, pick out some brambles and willow canes and give this monkey-head a beating, to avenge my grandson the Yellow Lion!"

The three little demons each took up a willow cane and set about beating the Pilgrim alone. But the Pilgrim had a body that had been tempered through countless ordeals; such willow canes could only scratch an itch for him. How could he so much as make a sound? No matter how they thrashed him, he did not mind in the least. Bajie, Tang Sanzang, and the princes watched, and every hair on their bodies stood on end. Before long the willow canes were beaten to pieces; and they went on beating him until nightfall, without any count of the strokes.

The Sha Monk, seeing the beating go on and on, could no longer bear it. "Let me take a hundred strokes or so in his place," he said.

"Don't be in such a hurry," said the old demon. "Tomorrow it will be your turn. One by one, in turn, each of you will be beaten."

Bajie was alarmed: "So the day after tomorrow they'll get to old Pig!"

They beat for a while, until the sky gradually darkened. Then the old demon called: "Little ones, stop for now. Light the lamps, eat some food, and let me go to the Brocade Cloud Nest for a little sleep. The three of you have all suffered harm before—keep a careful watch, and tomorrow morning we'll beat them again." The three little demons brought the lamps over and took up their willow canes once more to beat the Pilgrim on the crown of the head, just like knocking on a wooden clapper—tick-tock, tock-tick, a few quick strokes, a few slow ones.

The night was growing deep, and one and all they dozed off to sleep.

Then the Pilgrim used his art of escape: he shrank his body small, slipped free of the ropes, shook out his hairs, and straightened his clothes; he took the cudgel from his ear and shook it, and it became as thick as a bucket and a good two zhang long. Turning to the three little demons, he said: "You beasts! You've given your grandfather a great many strokes of the cane! But your grandfather is still just the same as ever. Let your grandfather give you a touch of this cudgel and see how you like it!"

He pressed down on the three little demons lightly, flattening them into three cakes of flesh. Then he trimmed the lamp bright and released the Sha Monk.

Bajie, frantic from being bound so long, could not hold back and shouted at the top of his voice: "Elder Brother! My hands and feet are all swollen from the ropes! Why don't you come and untie me first?"

The idiot's shout startled the old demon awake. The old demon scrambled to his feet in a bound: "Who's being released?" The Pilgrim heard him, blew out the lamp with one breath, and, no longer able to spare a thought for the Sha Monk and the others, took his iron cudgel, smashed through several layers of doors, and fled.

The old demon went to the central hall and called: "Little ones, why is there no lamplight? You don't suppose someone has gotten away?" He called once—no one answered. He called again—still no one answered. When he brought a lamp to look, he saw three bloody cakes of flesh on the ground; the old prince and his sons, Tang Sanzang, and Bajie were all still there, but the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk were nowhere to be seen. Lighting a torch, he hurried to search front and back, when suddenly he caught sight of the Sha Monk, still standing with his back pressed against the gallery. He seized him with one grab, flung him to the ground, and bound him up as before.

He searched for the Pilgrim as well, but found only that several layers of doors had all been smashed and broken; he knew at once that the Pilgrim had broken through them and gone. He did not give chase, but patched what could be patched, covered what could be covered, and guarded his home. No more of this.

Now the Great Sage Sun, having left the Cave of Nine Winding Turns, bestrode an auspicious cloud and made straight back to the Prefecture of Yuhua. As he drew near he saw the local deities of every quarter and the city god on the city wall coming up into the air to greet him with bows.

"Why is it only tonight that you show yourselves?" asked the Pilgrim.

"We lesser gods knew that the Great Sage had descended upon the Prefecture of Yuhua," said the city god, "but since the good prince was keeping you, we dared not appear. Only now, learning that the princes had run into demons and the Great Sage had come to quell them, have we come especially to knock our heads before you."

The Pilgrim was just getting annoyed when the Gold-Headed Guardian and the divine generals of the Six Dings and Six Jias appeared, escorting a local deity, who knelt before him and said: "Great Sage, we have caught this earth-goblin for you!"

"Why are you not at Bamboo-Joint Mountain protecting my master?" demanded the Pilgrim. "What do you mean by clamoring all the way here?"

The Ding and Jia gods said: "Great Sage, after you escaped, that demon caught the Curtain-Raising General again and bound him up as before. We could see that his magic powers were enormous, so we brought the local deity of Bamboo-Joint Mountain here under guard. He knows the origins of that demon. We beg the Great Sage to question him, and then you can deal with the creature easily, and rescue the holy monk and the good prince from their suffering."

The Pilgrim was overjoyed to hear this. Trembling, the local deity kowtowed: "That old demon came down to Bamboo-Joint Mountain the year before last. The Cave of Nine Winding Turns was originally the den of the six lions, and when the old demon arrived there, the six lions all bowed to him as their patriarch. The patriarch is a nine-headed lion, styled the Primal Sage of Nine Numinosities. If you wish to have him destroyed, you must go to the Palace of Marvelous Rocks in the Eastern Pole and ask his master to come; only he can subdue him. No one else could ever hope to capture him."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim pondered for a long while, then said: "The Palace of Marvelous Rocks in the Eastern Pole—that is the Heavenly Honored One of Great Unity Who Rescues from Suffering. The beast he rides is precisely a nine-headed lion. If that is so—" Then he gave his orders: "Guardian, golden-armored generals, go back together with the local deity, and protect my master, my junior brothers, and the prince and his sons in secret. And you, the city god, keep guard over the city." Then he went out. The gods, one and all, obeyed and departed.

The Great Sage spread his somersault cloud and traveled on through the night. Toward the hour of the Tiger, about daybreak, he reached the East Gate of Heaven, where he ran straight into the Heavenly King of Far-Seeing Eyes, with his heavenly soldiers and strongmen in a train of attendants. They all halted, folded their hands, and greeted him: "Where is the Great Sage bound?"

The Pilgrim returned their greetings, then said: "I am going to take a turn at the Palace of Marvelous Rocks."

"The road to the Western Heaven lies elsewhere," said the Heavenly King. "What business have you at the East Gate of Heaven?"

"Because, on arriving at the Prefecture of Yuhua," said the Pilgrim, "I was entertained by the prince of the prefecture, who sent his three sons to bow to my brothers and me as their masters and learn the martial arts.

Unexpectedly we ran into a pack of lion demons. Now I have learned that the Heavenly Honored One of Great Unity Who Rescues from Suffering, of the Palace of Marvelous Rocks, is the master of the demon, and I want to ask him to come subdue the demon and rescue my master."

"It is because you wanted to become a master to others," said the Heavenly King, "that you stirred up this whole den of lions against yourselves."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Exactly so! Exactly so!" The heavenly soldiers and strongmen one by one folded their hands and made way for him.

The Great Sage entered the East Gate of Heaven, and before long arrived before the Palace of Marvelous Rocks, where he saw: Layered rainbow clouds, luxuriant purple vapors. On the tiles rippled waves of golden flame; at the gate stood ranks of lofty jade beasts. Flowers filled the twin towers, ringed about with rosy mists; the sun lit the soaring forest, veiled in emerald haze. Truly, ten thousand perfected ones circled it in homage; a thousand sages flourished there. Hall and pavilion, tier upon tier of brocade; windows and latticed doors, opening in every direction. A gray dragon coiled in guard, its divine light gentle; the imperial way blazed with auspicious radiance. This indeed was the realm of Azure Bloom and Lasting Joy, the Palace of Marvelous Rocks of the Eastern Pole.

Inside the palace gate stood an immortal lad in a rainbow cape. The moment he caught sight of the Great Sage Sun, he went in to announce: "Master, the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, who once made havoc in Heaven, has come."

When the Heavenly Honored One of Great Unity Who Rescues from Suffering heard this, he at once bade the attendant immortals go out to welcome him. Escorted into the palace, the Pilgrim saw the Heavenly Honored One seated high upon a nine-colored lotus throne, amid a hundred billion rays of auspicious light. Seeing the Pilgrim, he came down from his throne to greet him. The Pilgrim bowed toward him, and the Heavenly Honored One returned the courtesy and said: "Great Sage, it has been some years since we met. I heard some time ago that you had abandoned the Way of the immortals and turned to the Buddhist faith, escorting Tang Sanzang on his journey west to fetch scriptures. I suppose your merits are now complete?"

"My merits are not yet complete," said the Pilgrim, "but they are drawing near. Just now, though, because I was escorting Tang Sanzang and arrived at the Prefecture of Yuhua, the prince there was good enough to send his three sons to bow to old Sun and his brothers as their masters and learn the martial arts. He had copies made of our three divine weapons, but during the night they were stolen by thieves. When we hunted for them at daybreak, it turned out that a gold-furred lion who had become a spirit in the Tiger's Mouth Cave on Leopard Head Mountain, north of the city, had stolen them. Old Sun recovered them by a trick, whereupon that spirit gathered a number of lion spirits and made a great uproar against old Sun. Among them was a nine-headed lion of vast magic powers, who carried off my master, Bajie, and the prince with his three sons—four people in all—to the Cave of Nine Winding Turns on Bamboo-Joint Mountain. The next day old Sun and the Sha Monk went in pursuit and were carried off as well. Old Sun was bound and beaten times without number, and only escaped by a trick of magic; they are still suffering there. When I questioned the local deity of that district, I learned that the Heavenly Honored One is his master, and so I have come especially to ask you to come subdue him and rescue them."

When the Heavenly Honored One heard this, he at once ordered an immortal general to go to the lion shed and bring the lion keeper out for questioning. The lion keeper was fast asleep, and only after the generals pushed and shook him did he wake; they dragged him into the central hall for an audience.

"Where is the lion beast?" asked the Heavenly Honored One.

Weeping, the keeper kowtowed and could only cry: "Spare my life! Spare my life!"

"The Great Sage Sun is here," said the Heavenly Honored One, "so I will not beat you for now. Quickly tell me how it is that you were so careless as to let the nine-headed lion get away."

"Master," said the lion keeper, "the day before yesterday, in the Hall of Sweet Dew of the Great Chiliocosm, I saw a bottle of wine. I don't know what came over me, but I stole it and drank it all, and before I knew it I was dead drunk and sound asleep. I failed to fasten his chain, and so he ran away."

"That wine was a gift from Lord Lao Zi," said the Heavenly Honored One. "It is called the Jasper Dew of Reincarnation. After drinking it, you should lie drunk and unconscious for three days. How many days has the lion beast been gone, then?"

"According to the local deity," said the Great Sage, "he came down the year before last, so it has been two or three years by now."

The Heavenly Honored One laughed: "That is right! That is right! One day in the Palace of Heaven is a year in the mortal world." Then he said to the lion keeper: "Get up. I will spare you the death penalty. Come with me and the Great Sage down below to bring him back. All you immortals, return to your places; there is no need to follow."

The Heavenly Honored One then set off on a cloud with the Great Sage and the lion keeper, straight for Bamboo-Joint Mountain, where the Guardians of the Five Quarters, the Six Dings and Six Jias, and the local deity of the mountain all came kneeling to receive them.

"Have you been guarding and protecting my master?" asked the Pilgrim. "Has any harm come to him?"

"The demon was angered and went to sleep," said the gods, "and he has not used any torture at all."

"My Primal Sage is a true numen who has cultivated the Way through long ages," said the Heavenly Honored One. "When he roars, his voice reaches the Three Sages above and penetrates the Nine Springs below; but ordinarily he does not take life. Great Sage Sun, go challenge him at his door and lure him out, and then I can collect him."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim drew his cudgel and bounded up to the mouth of the cave, cursing at the top of his voice: "Vicious demon! Give me back my people! Vicious demon! Give me back my people!" He called several times, but the old demon was fast asleep and no one answered. The Pilgrim grew impatient; he swung his iron cudgel and charged straight in, cursing and shouting without pause. Only then did the old demon wake with a start. Furious, he scrambled to his feet and roared "To battle!" then shook his heads and opened his mouths to seize the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim turned about and leapt out.

The demon pursued him outside, cursing: "Thieving monkey! Where do you think you're going?"

Standing on a high cliff, the Pilgrim laughed: "How dare you be so bold and impudent! You don't even know whether you're alive or dead! Is this not your old master and lord standing here?"

The demon reached the foot of the cliff, but before he could do anything, the Heavenly Honored One recited a spell and thundered: "Primal Sage! I have come!" The demon recognized his master and dared not struggle. He dropped flat on the ground on all four feet and kowtowed.

The lion keeper rushed over, grabbed the mane on his neck with one hand, and struck him a hundred-odd blows on the neck with his fist, cursing: "You beast! How could you steal away like that and make me suffer!" The lion beast shut his mouth and said not a word, not daring to stir. The lion keeper beat him until his hand was tired, and only then stopped. He laid a brocade saddle-cloth on the lion's back; the Heavenly Honored One mounted it, cried "Go!" and the beast soared up on colored clouds and made straight back for the Palace of Marvelous Rocks.

The Great Sage thanked him toward the sky, then entered the cave. First he untied the Prince of Yuhua, then Tang Sanzang, then Bajie and the Sha Monk and the three young princes. Together they ransacked the cave for all its goods, and then, at their leisure, at their ease, he led them all out of the door. Bajie thereupon gathered an armful of dry brushwood, piled it up before and behind, and set fire to it, burning the Cave of Nine Winding Turns into a blackened, charred wreck of broken tiles!

The Great Sage then dismissed the gods, telling the local deity to stay and keep guard there, and ordered Bajie and the Sha Monk to use their arts to carry the prince and his sons back to the prefecture on their backs, while he himself helped Tang Sanzang along. Before long they reached the prefecture city as the light was slowly fading. The consort, the concubines, and the officials all came out to greet them. A vegetarian banquet was laid, and they sat down together to enjoy it. The elder and his disciples rested once more in the Baosha Pavilion, and the princes went into the palace to their several beds. Not a word more that night.

The next day the prince issued another decree and spread a grand vegetarian banquet, and the officials of every rank throughout the prefecture came one by one to thank him for his favor. The Pilgrim also summoned a butcher, who slaughtered the six live lions; these, together with the Yellow Lion, were all skinned, and the meat was prepared for their enjoyment. His Highness was delighted beyond measure. He gave orders that they be killed, and kept one lion for use by all within and without his own mansion, gave another to be shared out among the chief steward and officers of the mansion, and had the other five chopped into pieces of one or two catties each, which officers were dispatched to distribute among the soldiers and civilians within and without the prefecture city, so that everyone could have a taste—first, to savor the flavor, and second, to quiet their terrors. Household after household looked on them with admiration.

Then the blacksmiths and their men, who had finished forging the three weapons, kowtowed before the Pilgrim: "Master, our work is complete."

"How heavy is each one?" asked the Pilgrim.

"The gold-banded cudgel weighs a thousand catties," said the blacksmiths, "and the nine-toothed rake and the demon-quelling staff weigh eight hundred catties each."

"That will do," said the Pilgrim. He had the three princes summoned, and each took up his own weapon.

The three sons said to the old prince: "Father, today the weapons are complete."

"For the sake of these weapons," said the old prince, "we very nearly lost the lives of my sons and me."

"Happily the divine masters worked their magic arts," said the young princes, "and rescued us, and swept away the demons and monsters, and removed the danger once and for all. Truly this is what is meant by 'the sea still and the river clear'—a world of perfect peace!" The old prince and his sons then rewarded and feasted the craftsmen, and afterwards went to the Baosha Pavilion to bow and thank the masters for their kindness.

Tang Sanzang then urged the Great Sage and the others to teach the martial arts quickly, and not to delay the journey. The three of them each brandished his weapon and taught the arts one by one in the courtyard of the prince's mansion. In no more than a few days the three princes had drilled them all to perfection—the methods of attack and retreat, the ways of pressing hard and giving ground, each with its seventy-two sequences and counters, so that none of them remained unknown to the princes. On the one hand, the princes' wills were firm; on the other, it was thanks to the Great Sage Sun's earlier gift of divine strength—and that was why they could lift and wield the thousand-catty cudgel and the eight-hundred-catty rake and staff. Compared with the martial arts they had managed on their own before, it was truly as far removed as Heaven is from the abyss—as distant and as different as could be! There is a poem in witness, and the poem says:

Because good fortune and kind deeds brought them divine masters, Who could have thought that practicing arms would rouse the demon lions? They swept away the host of evil and steadied the altars of state; Turning to the One, they settled the marches of the wild. The Nine Numinosities fell in with the principle of the primal yang; The arts on every side reached through to the fruit of the Way. Teaching and learning, hearts made clear, bequeathed to ten thousand ages: The Prefecture of Yuhua rejoices forever in an age of peace.

The prince then spread a grand banquet to thank them for their teaching, and brought out a great tray of gold and silver to answer his unspoken gratitude—the feelings hidden deep in his heart.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Take it back at once! Take it back at once! We who have left the world—what use would we have for such things?"

Bajie, standing beside him, said: "Gold and silver we truly dare not accept. But this robe of mine has been torn to shreds by those lion spirits. If you would only exchange some clothes for us, that would be kindness enough."

The prince at once ordered the tailors to follow the styles and colors, fetching several bolts apiece of blue brocade, red brocade, and dark-brown brocade, and had a robe made for each of the three.

The three gladly received their gifts, and each put on his robe of brocade cloth. They packed up their baggage and set out, and see how within and without the city, great and small, there was no one who did not cry that these were arhats come down to earth, living Buddhas descended into the world. The sound of drums and music, the sight of banners and streamers, filled the streets and choked the roads. Indeed, at every house they burned incense before the door, and at every gate they offered colored lanterns; and the crowds saw them off a long way before turning back. Only then could the four travelers leave the city and head west. This departure cast off all worldly thoughts at a stroke and set their hearts upon the true fruit. This was truly:

Free of care and worry, they come to the Buddha's realm; With single heart and true intent, they ascend to the Thunderclap.

After all, who knows how many miles still lie before Numinous Mountain, or when their journey will be complete? Listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 91

On the Night of the Full Moon They View the Lanterns in the Prefecture of Jinping; In the Cave of Dark Splendor Tang Sanzang Makes a Full Confession

In cultivating Zen, where must one direct one's effort? The unbridled horse, the capering ape—cut them away at once. Grasp tight, bind fast, and the five-colored radiance is born; Pause or tarry but a moment, and you fall into the Three Evil Paths. Let the restless spirit go free, and the divine elixir leaks away; Give ease its head, and the jadelike nature withers dry. Joy, anger, worry, brooding—all must be swept clean; Then you attain the dark and the wondrous, as if you had attained nothing.

The story tells how the four travelers, the Tang Priest and his disciples, left the city of Yuhua and traveled on in peace and ease—truly, as the saying goes, through a land of supreme bliss. After five or six days' journey they saw another walled city, and Tang Sanzang asked the Pilgrim: "What place is this?"

"It is a walled city," said the Pilgrim, "but there is a flagpole on the wall with no flag flying, so I cannot tell what place it is. Let us wait until we draw near, and then ask." When they reached the eastern outskirts, they saw the teahouses and wine shops on either side in a hubbub, and the rice market and oil shops bustling. On the streets were a few idle young dandies strolling about for pleasure; seeing that Zhu Bajie had a long snout, the Sha Monk a black face, and Sun Wukong red eyes, they all crowded around, jostling and vying to stare, though they dared not come near enough to ask questions.

Tang Sanzang was sweating with anxiety, afraid that they would make trouble.

They passed through several more lanes without reaching the city, when suddenly they caught sight of a monastery gate, over which were the three characters "Monastery of Compassionate Clouds." "Suppose we step in here for a while to rest the horse and beg a vegetarian meal?" said Tang Sanzang.

"Fine! Fine!" said the Pilgrim.

The four of them went in together. Inside they saw: Precious towers, magnificent and ornate; jeweled seats, lofty and imposing. Buddha pavilions rising beyond the clouds; monks' quarters still beneath the moon. Rosy mists drifting as the pagoda thrust upward; green trees in deep shade, the revolving scripture hall serene. A true pure land, a very dragon palace; over the Great Hero Hall, purple clouds hung. Along the two cloisters, strollers played without cease; a single pagoda, ever open, had visitors climbing. In the censers, incense and fire burned at every hour; on the altars, lamps and flowers gleamed every night. Suddenly the golden bell of the abbot's quarters rang out, and the monks, answering the Buddha, chanted the sutras aloud.

As the four travelers were looking about, a monk came out from beneath the cloister, bowed to Tang Sanzang, and asked: "Reverend master, where do you come from?"

"Your disciple comes from the Tang empire of China," said Tang Sanzang.

The monk threw himself to the ground in a deep bow. Alarmed, Tang Sanzang raised him up: "Why does the abbot do me such great honor?"

Pressing his palms together, the monk said: "We who live here and incline to good, who read the sutras and invoke the Buddha, all of us hope, through our cultivation, to be reborn in your China. Just now, seeing the bearing and dress of the reverend master, it is clear that you must have cultivated in a former life to enjoy such blessings now—and so I bowed down."

Tang Sanzang laughed: "I am overwhelmed! I am overwhelmed! Your disciple is but a traveling monk—what blessings have I to enjoy? If the abbot could pass his years here at ease, that would be the real happiness."

The monk led Tang Sanzang into the main hall, where he worshiped the images of the Buddha. Only then did Tang Sanzang call out: "Disciples, come here." It turned out that when the three disciples had seen the monk speaking with their master, they had all averted their faces, holding the horse and guarding the luggage, standing together apart; the monk had paid them no mind. When he suddenly heard Tang Sanzang call to his disciples and the three turned around, the monk was horrified and cried: "Gracious heavens! How can your worthy disciples be so hideous of aspect?"

"Ugly they are, to be sure," said Tang Sanzang, "but they have a good deal of magic power. I have relied on their protection all along the road." While he was speaking, several more monks came out from within and bowed. The first monk said to those who came after: "This reverend master is a personage from Great Tang in China, and those three are his worthy disciples."

The monks were both pleased and alarmed: "Reverend master, what business has a man of China's great nation here?"

Tang Sanzang said: "I was sent by the imperial decree of the Tang emperor to worship the Buddha at Numinous Mountain and seek the scriptures. As I happened to pass through your precious region, I have come especially to your honored monastery—first, to ask the way of the locality, and second, to beg a vegetarian meal before moving on." The monks were all delighted, and invited him into the abbot's quarters, where there were also several monks who performed vegetarian services for lay families.

The monk who had come in first called out again: "Come, all of you, and see the personages of China. It turns out that in China there are handsome folk and ugly ones—the handsome truly beyond painting or describing, and the ugly exceedingly strange."

The many monks, together with the feast patrons, all came to greet them. After the greetings, each took his seat. When tea was done, Tang Sanzang asked: "What is the name of this honored region?"

"Ours is an outlying prefecture of the Kingdom of Tianzhu," said the monks—"the Prefecture of Jinping."

"How far is your honored prefecture from Numinous Mountain?" asked Tang Sanzang.

"From here to the capital is two thousand li, which is a road we have traveled ourselves," said the monks. "As for the road west to Numinous Mountain, we have never traveled it, and do not know how much farther it is; we dare not answer at random." Tang Sanzang thanked them.

Presently the meal was laid out. When the meal was done, Tang Sanzang wanted to be on his way, but was detained by the monks and the feast patrons: "Reverend master, stay a couple of days more and enjoy yourself after the Lantern Festival."

Startled, Tang Sanzang asked: "On the road your disciple has known only mountains and rivers. My fear has always been of meeting monsters and demons, and the seasons have slipped past me unawares. I do not even know when the Lantern Festival falls."

The monks laughed: "The reverend master's heart is so set on worshiping the Buddha and comprehending Zen that you take no note of such things. Today is the thirteenth of the first month; tonight the lanterns will be tested, and the day after tomorrow, the fifteenth, is the full-moon festival. Only after the eighteenth or nineteenth is the lantern season brought to a close. We people here love such festivities. The governor of this prefecture is fond of his people, and in every district tall lanterns are hung and flutes and pipes play all night long. There is also a Golden Lantern Bridge, handed down from ancient times, richer in its display today than ever. If your honors will stay a few days, this poor mountain monastery can well afford to entertain you." Tang Sanzang had no choice but to stay.

That night they heard the bells and drums of the Buddha hall resounding to the heavens—it was the faithful of the neighborhood coming to offer lanterns before the Buddha. Tang Sanzang and the others all came out of the abbot's quarters to look at the lanterns, and then each returned to his rest.

The next day the monks offered another meal. After they had eaten, they strolled together in the back garden. It was indeed a fine place. This was:

The season was the first month, the year in its new spring. The garden was quiet and elegant, the scenery fair and luxuriant. Flowers and trees of the four seasons vied in wonder; Range upon range of peaks piled up their green. Fragrant grass sprouted at the foot of the steps; On the old plum's branches perfume was born. Red entered the peach blossom, tender; Green returned to the willow, fresh. Do not boast of the splendor of the Golden Valley Garden; Speak no more of the grace of the Wangchuan painting. A single stream flowed by, wild ducks appearing and vanishing; A thousand bamboo stalks stood, where scholars still could not settle their rhymes. Peonies, tree peonies, crape myrtles, smiling flowers— the loom of heaven just awakening; Camellias, red plums, winter jasmines, daphnes— their gorgeous forms the first to bloom. On the shady cliff the piled snow still held its frost; In distant trees the floating mist already carried spring. And one saw the deer mirroring itself by the pond, The crane come beneath the pines to listen to the zither. Halls to the east, pavilions to the west, where guests might lodge; Chambers to the south, pagodas to the north, where monks in stillness practiced Zen. Amid the flowers stood a building or two for nurturing the nature, with lofty double eaves; Among the waters and hills, three or four rooms for refining away the demon, with quiet desks and bright windows. Truly it was a natural place fit for retiring from the world— Why should one go seeking Penglai and Yingzhou elsewhere?

Master and disciples enjoyed the sights for a whole day; and after viewing the lanterns in the hall, they all went out to see the lantern games. One could see: A flower city of agate, a fairy grotto of colored glaze, palaces of crystal and of mica—like fold upon fold of brocade, tier upon tier of exquisite openwork. The star bridge's reflection swayed, and heaven and earth seemed to reel; look at the several fiery trees shaking their red. On the six streets, flutes and drums; at a thousand gates, moon-jade bright; from ten thousand households, fragrant breezes. In several places lofty turtle-mountains rose; there were fish and dragons coming forth from the sea, simurghs and phoenixes soaring in the sky. One envied the lantern light and the moonlight, their harmony so mellow. In trains of silks and satins, everyone delighted in the pipes and songs; carriages and horses rumbled past. One could not see all the flowerlike faces and jadelike forms, the gallants and the heroes—the lovely scenes were endless.

Having viewed the lanterns in the monastery, the company went on to amuse themselves in the streets of the eastern suburb. Only at the second watch did they turn back to their lodgings.

The next day Tang Sanzang said to the monks: "Your disciple has long cherished the vow to sweep the pagoda. Since today is the festival of the full moon, I beg the abbot to open the pagoda gate and let your disciple fulfill this vow of his heart."

The monks at once opened the gate. The Sha Monk took the cassock and followed Tang Sanzang; when they reached the first story, Tang Sanzang put on the cassock, worshiped the Buddha and prayed, and then took up a broom and swept the first story. He took off the cassock and handed it to the Sha Monk, and swept the second story—and so, story by story, swept all the way up to the very top. On that pagoda, every story had its Buddhas and windows opened on every side; as he swept each story, he admired and praised it.

By the time he had finished sweeping and come down, it was already evening, and the lamps were lit again everywhere.

This night was indeed the fifteenth, the night of the full moon. The monks said: "Reverend master, the other evening we only viewed the lanterns at our poor monastery and in the suburb. Tonight is the true

festival—let us go into the city and see the golden lanterns, shall we?" Tang Sanzang gladly agreed, and went with the Pilgrim and his two other disciples, together with many monks of the monastery, into the city to see the lanterns. This was indeed:

A fine night of the full moon on the fifteenth; On the first full moon, the hues of spring are mild. Colored lanterns hang in the busy market, And all together sing songs of peace.

And one saw the lanterns gleaming through the six streets and three markets, while in mid-air a single mirror rose anew. The moon was like a plate of gleaming silver shoved up by the god Fengyi, and the lanterns like a brocade carpet woven by fairy maidens and spread over the ground. Lanterns mirroring the moon gained double their brightness; the moon shining on the lanterns added tenfold their splendor. One could not take in all the iron locks and star bridges; one could not view all the lantern flowers and fiery trees. Snowflake lanterns, plum-blossom lanterns—spring ice cut to pieces; embroidered-screen lanterns, painted-screen lanterns—five colors gathered together. Walnut lanterns, lotus lanterns, hung high from the lantern towers; green lion lanterns, white elephant lanterns, raised aloft on lantern racks. Shrimp lanterns, turtle lanterns, lifted high before the awnings; sheep lanterns, rabbit lanterns, full of spirit under the eaves. Eagle lanterns, phoenix lanterns, linked one with another; tiger lanterns, horse lanterns, trotting along together. Crane lanterns and white deer lanterns, ridden by the God of Longevity; goldfish lanterns and great whale lanterns, mounted aloft by Li Bai. The turtle-mountain lantern, where the immortals gather; the horse-revolving lantern, where generals and warriors do battle. From ten thousand homes, lanterns, lights, towers, and terraces; for a dozen li, a world of clouds and mist. On that side, with a jingling, a jade-tasseled saddle flew past; on this side, with a rumbling, a fragrant carriage rolled by. On the rouge-red tower, leaning on the railings, behind the parted curtains, shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, pair after pair of lovely women gave themselves to pleasure; beside the green-water bridge, clamorous, thronged in brocade, tipsy, laughing aloud, pair after pair of strollers sported with the colored lanterns. In all the city flutes and drums clamored; all night long the pipes and songs never ceased. There is a poem in witness, and the poem says:

In the field of brocade they sing of the lotus-plucking; Within this realm of peace the people gather thick. The lanterns bright, the moon gleaming, this night of the full moon— With rain in season and wind in measure, the year shall be great and full.

At this hour the night curfew was lifted—no watchmen barred the streets, and anyone might roam at will. An immense, bustling crowd milled about: dancers, stilt-walkers, men dressed as ghosts, riders on elephants, clusters to the east, throngs to the west, too many to take in. They had just reached the Golden Lantern Bridge, and when Tang Sanzang and the monks drew near to look, it turned out to be three golden lanterns.

Those lanterns were as big as vats, and above them hung two-tiered pavilions, exquisitely worked and translucent, all woven of fine golden filaments, with thin sheets of colored glass set within. Their light swayed against the moon, and their oil sprayed fragrance all around.

Tang Sanzang turned and asked the monks: "What oil is this, that it strikes the nose with such an extraordinary fragrance?"

"The reverend master does not know," said the monks. "Behind our prefecture there is a county called Mintian, two hundred and forty li in extent. Every year, when the corvée and levies are assessed, it provides two hundred and forty households of great lamp-oil suppliers. The various levies of the prefecture and county may well be borne, but only these great households are sorely burdened: each family serves for one year, spending more than two hundred taels of silver. This oil is no ordinary oil—it is the fragrant ghee oil. One ounce of this oil costs two taels of silver, and one catty costs thirty-two taels. As for the three lanterns, each vat holds five hundred catties, and the three vats fifteen hundred catties in all, at a cost of forty-eight thousand taels of silver. Add the sundry charges and fees, and it comes to over fifty thousand taels—and it lights only three nights."

"With all that oil," said the Pilgrim, "how can it be burned up in three nights?"

"In each vat," said the monks, "there are forty-nine great lamp-wicks, bundles of rush pith wrapped in silk floss and as thick as an egg. It is only lit through tonight; when the Buddha has appeared in person, tomorrow night the oil will be gone and the lanterns will grow dim."

Bajie, standing beside them, laughed: "I suppose the Buddha takes the oil away with him."

"That is exactly the saying," said the monks. "In every household of the city, from ancient times to this day, the story has been told just so. When the oil is dry, people say the Buddha has taken away the lanterns, and naturally the five grains ripen abundantly. But if in some year the oil does not dry up, then the harvest is meager and lean, with drought and flood, wind and rain out of season. That is why every family must make this offering."

While they were speaking, they heard a whistling wind in mid-air, and the lantern viewers were so frightened that they scattered in every direction. The monks too could not keep their feet: "Reverend master, let us go back; the wind is coming. It is the Buddha descending with blessings to view the lanterns."

"How do you know it is the Buddha come to view the lanterns?" asked Tang Sanzang.

"It is like this every year," said the monks. "Before the third watch the wind always comes, and we know it is the Buddhas descending with blessings, and so everyone takes cover."

Tang Sanzang said: "Your disciple is one who has always yearned for the Buddha, invoked the Buddha, and worshiped the Buddha. Now that we meet this fine sight, and the Buddhas are indeed descending, to worship them here would be the best of good fortune." The monks urged him again and again to come back, but he would not. Presently three Buddha forms did indeed appear in the wind, drawing near the lanterns. In a fluster Tang Sanzang ran up onto the top of the bridge and threw himself down in worship.

The Pilgrim hastily pulled him up: "Master, these are not good people—they must be demons and devils!"

Before the words were out of his mouth, the lantern light went dim, and with a whoosh the wind scooped up Tang Sanzang and bore him away. Ah! Who could have known that the true monsters of some mountain cave had for years and years counterfeited Buddhas to view the golden lanterns! Bajie was terrified, searching this way and that; the Sha Monk called out to left and right.

"Brothers!" shouted the Pilgrim. "There is no need to call out here. Our master, in the very extremity of joy, has met with sorrow—he has been carried off by a demon!"

The monks were terrified: "Master, how do you know it was a demon that carried him off?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "It turns out that you mortals, for all these years, have never recognized them, and so you have been deceived by evil, taking it for true Buddhas descending with blessings to receive the lamp offering. The Buddha forms that appeared in the wind just now were three demons. My master could not recognize them either; he climbed up onto the bridge top and bowed, but they darkened the lantern light, and taking up the oil in their vessels, carried my master off along with it. I was a little slow in my pursuit, and so the three of them fled away on the wind."

"Elder Brother," said the Sha Monk, "what are we to do about this?"

"There is no need for hesitation," said the Pilgrim. "You two go back with the crowd to the monastery, watch over the horse and the luggage, and let old Sun chase after them on this wind."

Brave Great Sage! He swiftly spread his somersault cloud and rose into mid-air, and following the stench of the wind, made straight for the northeast. He pursued until daybreak, when the wind suddenly died down, and he saw a great mountain, extremely perilous, truly towering and craggy. A fine mountain: Ridge upon

ridge of ravines and hollows, spring after winding spring. Vines and creepers hung from sheer cliffs; pines and cypresses thrust up from hollow rocks. Cranes cried in the morning mist; wild geese called among the dawn clouds. Lofty and towering, the peaks stood like ranked halberds; jutting and jagged, the boulders piled like a massive wall of rock. The summit soared ten thousand fathoms high; the steep ridges folded in a thousand curves. Wild flowers and fine trees knew to burst forth in spring; cuckoos and orioles matched the season in their beauty. Majestic, craggy, strange, rugged, perilous, and hard. For a long while he paused and admired, speaking not a word, hearing only the tigers and leopards snoring in their dens. Fragrant musk deer and white deer came and went; jade rabbits and gray wolves went off and came back again. The water of the deep ravine flowed on for ten thousand li; the swirling currents dashed against the rocks with a murmuring sound.

The Great Sage, standing on the cliff and searching for a path, suddenly saw four men driving three sheep down the western slope, all shouting together: "May fortune open wide!" The Great Sage flashed his fiery golden eyes and looked closely, and recognized them as the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons of the Year, the Month, the Day, and the Hour, come in hidden form and transformation. The Great Sage at once drew out his iron cudgel, shook it to the thickness of a bowl and a dozen or so feet in length, jumped down from the cliff, and shouted: "Hiding your heads and shrinking your necks like that—where do you think you're going?"

The Duty Officers of the Four Seasons, seeing that he had laid bare their doings, in fright dispersed the three sheep with a shout, revealed their true forms, slipped to the roadside, and bowed: "Great Sage, forgive us! Forgive us!"

The Pilgrim said: "I have had no use for you all this time, and seeing that old Sun was easygoing, you have one and all grown slack and lazy—you do not even come to pay your respects to me! What is the meaning of this! Instead of secretly protecting my master, where have you all gone off to?"

The Duty Officers said: "Your master let his Zen nature grow lax and indulged in pleasure in the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds in the Prefecture of Jinping; so when good fortune reached its extreme, ill fortune followed, and from the height of joy came sorrow, and now he has been captured by a demon. The Protectors of the Faith are keeping guard at his side. We knew that the Great Sage was pursuing through the night, and fearing that the Great Sage might not know the mountain and the forest, we came especially to bring you word."

"Since you came to bring word," said the Pilgrim, "why did you hide your names and drive three sheep, bawling and shouting all the while?"

The Duty Officers said: "We set up these three sheep to answer the saying of fortune opening wide—it is called the three yangs opening up good fortune—to break through the obstructed luck of your master."

The Pilgrim was furious and meant to strike them; but seeing their good intent, he spared them, put away his cudgel, and turned from anger to delight: "Is this mountain the den of the demon?"

"Exactly so, exactly so," said the Duty Officers. "This mountain is called the Green Dragon Mountain, and within it is a cave called the Cave of Dark Splendor. In the cave are three demons: the eldest is named the King Who Expels Cold, the second the King Who Expels Heat, and the third the King Who Expels Dust. These demons have been here a thousand years. From childhood they have loved to eat the fragrant ghee oil. In the year when they became spirits, they came here disguised as Buddha images, tricking the officials and people of the Prefecture of Jinping into setting up the golden lanterns, with the fragrant ghee oil as their fuel. Every year, at the half of the first month, they change into Buddha images to collect the oil. This year they saw your master and recognized his holy monk's body, and carried your master too into the cave. Before many days they mean to carve up your master's flesh and fry it in the fragrant ghee oil for their eating! You

must hurry and work your arts to rescue him!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim dismissed the four Duty Officers with a shout, turned about the cliff, and went in search of the cave dwelling. He had not gone several li when he saw a stone cliff by the ravine, and beneath the cliff a stone house with two gates of stone, half open and half shut. Beside the gate stood a stone tablet with six characters: "The Cave of Dark Splendor on the Green Dragon Mountain." The Pilgrim did not dare enter without ceremony. Planting his feet, he called out: "Demon! Bring my master out at once!"

There was a loud crash as the gates swung wide, and out ran a swarm of ox-headed demons, who asked dully and stupidly: "Who are you, that you dare raise your voice here?"

"I am the senior disciple of the holy monk Tang Sanzang of Great Tang in the eastern land, sent to fetch scriptures," said the Pilgrim. "Passing through the Prefecture of Jinping to view the lanterns, my master was carried off by your chief demon. Send him back at once, and I will spare your lives! If not, I will overturn your nest and turn every one of your demons into pus and blood!"

Hearing this, the little demons hurried inside and reported: "Great Kings! Disaster! Disaster!"

The three old demons had taken Tang Sanzang to the far depths of the cave, and without asking what was black or white, had ordered the little ones to strip off his clothes and wash him clean in the clear water of the rushing stream, planning to mince and shred him fine and fry him in the fragrant ghee oil. When they suddenly heard the cry of "disaster," they were greatly alarmed and asked what the matter was.

The little demon said: "At the great front gate there is a monk with a hairy face and a thunder-god beak, shouting that the Great King has carried off his master, and ordering you to send him out at once, to spare our lives; otherwise, he says, he will overturn our nest and turn us all into pus and blood!"

The old demons were alarmed at this, and said one and all: "We caught this fellow just now and have not yet asked his name and origin. Little ones, put his clothes back on him and bring him here for questioning—to find out exactly who he is, and where he has come from." The host of demons surged forward, untied Tang Sanzang's ropes, dressed him, and pushed him before the throne. Tang Sanzang was so frightened that he knelt trembling below, crying only: "Spare my life, Great Kings! Spare my life!"

The three demons said with one voice: "What monk are you, and where do you come from? How is it that when you saw our Buddha images you did not dodge out of the way, but blundered into our cloud-path?"

Kowtowing, Tang Sanzang said: "This poor monk was dispatched by the imperial court of Great Tang in the eastern land, on the way to the Great Thunderclap Monastery in the Kingdom of Tianzhu to worship the Buddha and fetch the scriptures. Because I came to the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds in the Prefecture of Jinping to beg a vegetarian meal, the monks there pressed me to stay for the Lantern Festival. I was on the Golden Lantern Bridge when I saw the Great Kings reveal their Buddha forms. This poor monk has but mortal eyes and a fleshly body, and worships whenever he sees a Buddha, and so I blundered into the Great Kings' cloud-path."

The demon said: "The road from your eastern land to this place is a very great distance. How many of you are there in your company, and what are all your names? Confess truly at once, and I will spare your life."

Tang Sanzang said: "This poor monk's lay name was Chen Xuanzang. From childhood I was a monk at the Jinshan Monastery. Later, by the command of the Tang emperor, I was made an officer of monks at the Hongfu Monastery in Chang'an. Then, because Chancellor Wei Zheng in a dream beheaded the Old Dragon of the Jing River, and the Tang emperor made his journey through the underworld and came back alive to the world of the living, he opened a Great Assembly of Land and Water to release the souls of the dead from suffering, and again selected this poor monk as master of the altar, to expound the great principles of the faith. Happily the Bodhisattva Guanyin appeared and, pointing out the way, told this poor monk that in the

Great Thunderclap Monastery of the Western Heaven there were the true scriptures of the Tripitaka, which could deliver the dead and raise them to heaven, and sent this poor monk to fetch them, bestowing on me the name Sanzang. I have taken Tang as my surname, and so everyone calls me Tang Sanzang.

"I have three disciples. The eldest is surnamed Sun, named Wukong the Pilgrim—the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, returned to righteousness."

When the host of demons heard this name, they were startled: "Is this Great Sage Equal to Heaven the one who made a great uproar in Heaven five hundred years ago?"

"Exactly so, exactly so," said Tang Sanzang. "The second is surnamed Zhu, named Wuneng Bajie, the Grand Marshal Tianpeng reborn into the world. The third is surnamed Sha, named Wujing the monk, the Curtain-Raising General descended to earth."

Hearing this, the three demon kings were alarmed one and all: "It is a good thing we have not eaten him after all. Little ones, put the Tang Priest in iron chains in the rear; when we have captured his three disciples, we can eat them together." They then mustered a host of mountain-ox demons, water-buffalo demons, and yellow-ox demons, each with his weapons, and marched out the gate, sounding the signal, waving flags, and beating drums.

The three demons, fully armed and arrayed, went out the gate and roared: "Who is it that dares raise a clamor here?"

The Pilgrim hid himself on the stone cliff and looked carefully. The demons were born thus: Colored faces and round eyes, two horns jutting high. Four sharp-pointed ears, numinous apertures flashing with light. Their bodies were patterned like painted pictures, all over with brocade and embroidery, as if strewn with flowers. The first wore a warm cap of fox-fur with a flowered crown, his bristling face steaming with hot vapor; the second was draped in light gauze that sent up flying flames, his four hoofs flower-bright, translucent, jingling like jade; the third, majestic and fierce, roared with a voice like rolling thunder, his fangs sharp as silver needles. Each was brave and savage, each held one of three weapons: one wielded a battle-axe, one a mighty saber; but look at the third—across his shoulder he balanced a knotted cane of rattan. And one saw the seven-long eight-short, seven-fat eight-thin demons, great and small, all of them ox-headed monsters, each holding spears and staves. There were three great banners, on which were plainly written "King Who Expels Cold," "King Who Expels Heat," "King Who Expels Dust."

Sun the Pilgrim watched for a while, and unable to contain himself, went forward and called out in a loud voice: "Vicious thieving demons! Do you know old Sun?"

The demon roared: "Are you that Sun Wukong who made havoc in Heaven? Truly I have heard your name but never seen your face—and the sight of your face would shame the very gods! So you are nothing but such a macaque, and still you dare to talk big!"

The Pilgrim flew into a rage and cursed: "You thieving lamp-oil thieves! Oily-mouthed demons, enough of your nonsense! Give me back my master at once!" He rushed up close and swung his iron cudgel in a blow. The three old demons raised their three weapons and hastily met him. This battle in the mountain hollow was a fine one: Battle-axe, steel saber, and the knotted rattan cane—the Monkey King with one cudgel dared to meet them. The demons who expel Cold and Heat and Dust knew the name of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. The cudgel rose, making gods and ghosts afraid; the axe came, the saber hacked, everything whirling in chaos. What a sight—the true emptiness form, wondrous and law-bearing, holding off the three demons' counterfeit Buddha forms! Those three thieves of oil, who moistened their noses with it, this year had met their doom, and were bound to seize the monk of the imperial envoy. One braved the distant mountain road for his master's sake; the others, for their mouths, had set up the lamp offerings year after year. With a clatter, only the clash of saber and axe was heard; with a crack, only the thud of the cudgel

resounded. Charging and colliding, three closed on one; parrying and blocking, each displayed his skill. They fought until the sky was about to darken, and no one knew which side had lost and which had won.

With his single cudgel, Sun the Pilgrim fought the three demons for more than a hundred and fifty rounds; the sky was growing dark, and victory and defeat were still undecided. Then the King Who Expels Dust dodged aside with his knotted rattan cane, sprang to the front of the array, and waved his banner. The mob of ox-headed monsters surged forward, surrounded the Pilgrim in the very center of the field, and, whirling their weapons, struck wildly at him. Seeing that things were going badly, the Pilgrim spread his somersault cloud with a whoosh and fled from the field. The demons did not pursue him. They called back their host, prepared some evening fare, and all ate. They also had a little demon take a bowl of it to Tang Sanzang, meaning only to prepare the main dish after they had captured Sun the Pilgrim and the others. As for the master, what with his long fast on the one hand, and his grief and misery on the other, he wept and never dared touch a drop or a bite. No more of this.

Meanwhile the Pilgrim rode his cloud back to the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds and called out: "Younger brothers!" Bajie and the Sha Monk had been waiting and deliberating; hearing his call, they came out together to meet him: "Elder Brother, why have you been gone a whole day before returning? In truth, what has become of the master?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Last night I followed the wind in pursuit, and at daybreak reached a mountain, but saw nothing. Happily the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons brought me word that the mountain is called the Green Dragon Mountain, and within it is a cave called the Cave of Dark Splendor. In the cave are three demons, named the King Who Expels Cold, the King Who Expels Heat, and the King Who Expels Dust. It turns out that for years they have been stealing oil here, disguised as Buddha images, tricking the officials and people of the Prefecture of Jinping. This year they met us, and knowing no better, went so far as to carry off the master too. Old Sun got to the bottom of the matter, and bade the Duty Officers and the rest protect the master in secret, while I went up to the very door and called abuse. The three monsters all came out, each shaped like an ox-headed ghost. The eldest wielded a battle-axe, the second a great saber, the third a rattan cane, and behind them trailed a whole den of ox-headed monsters, waving flags and beating drums. They fought old Sun for a whole day, and it was a draw. Then the demon kings waved their banners, and all the little demons came at me; I saw that it was growing late and feared I could not win, and so I somersaulted back here."

"Could it be," said Bajie, "that the ghost king of the City of Fengdu is making a racket?"

"How do you come to guess the ghost king of the City of Fengdu is making a racket?" asked the Sha Monk.

Bajie laughed: "Because you said the demons looked like ox-headed ghosts, that's how I know."

"No! No!" said the Pilgrim. "Judging by what old Sun saw of those monsters, they are three rhinoceros spirits."

"If they're rhinoceroses," said Bajie, "let's capture them and saw off their horns—they'd be worth quite a few taels of silver!"

While they were speaking, the monks asked: "Master Sun, would you care for some evening fare?" "A bite or two would not come amiss," said the Pilgrim, "but I could just as well do without." "After fighting a whole day, how could you not be hungry?" asked the monks.

The Pilgrim laughed: "What is a day or two, to make old Sun hungry! Old Sun once went five hundred years without eating or drinking!" The monks did not know this was the plain truth and took it for a jest. Presently the food was brought, and the Pilgrim ate some too, and said: "Let us tidy up and go to sleep. Tomorrow we will all go and give battle, and once we have captured the demon kings we may hope to rescue the master."

The Sha Monk put in: "Elder Brother, what kind of talk is that! As the saying goes, 'Delay breeds wisdom.' What if the demon, not sleeping tonight, should harm the master—what then? Better we go right now and raise such a clamor that he is taken off his guard; that is the only way to save the master. If we tarry a little longer, something may well be lost."

Hearing this, Bajie roused his divine might: "Brother Sha is right! Let us all go right now, by this moonlight, to subdue the demons!" The Pilgrim followed their advice and at once gave his orders to the monks of the monastery: "Guard the luggage and the horse. When we have captured the demons and brought them to the prefect of this prefecture as proof of their false Buddhas, the lamp oil levy will be abolished, and the poor folk of the whole county relieved of their burden—would that not be a good thing?" The monks accepted the orders and thanked him again and again.

The three of them then spread auspicious clouds and left the city. This was truly:

The Zen nature, lax and unbounded, falls into confusion; When disaster and danger are fated, the mind of the Way is darkened.

After all, who knows how the fortunes of this venture will turn out? Listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 92

Three Monks Fight a Great Battle on the Green Dragon Mountain; The Four Star Gods Capture the Rhinoceros Monsters

Meanwhile the Great Sage Sun, with his two junior brothers in tow, rolled on the wind and rode the clouds toward the Gen quarter in the northeast; in a moment they reached the mouth of the Cave of Dark Splendor on the Green Dragon Mountain and lowered their clouds. Bajie at once made to rake the gates, but the Pilgrim said: "Easy, now. Let me go in first and see whether my master is alive or dead, and then we can fight them properly."

"This gate is shut fast," said the Sha Monk. "How will you get in?"

"I have my own magic arts," said the Pilgrim. Brave Great Sage! He put away his cudgel, made the magic sign with his fingers, recited a spell, and cried "Change!"—changing into a firefly. And indeed he was quick and agile! Just look at him: With spread wings he gleamed like a shooting star of light—the ancients said that rotting grass turns into fireflies. His magic transformations were no light matter, and he had of himself a hovering, drifting nature. He flew up to the stone gate and hung there looking, then slipped through a crack on the side, letting the wind in. With one bound of his body he reached the inner courtyard, to spy out the movements of the demons.

He flew in and saw a number of oxen lying this way and that, crooked and sprawled, each snoring like thunder, all fast asleep. He reached the middle hall, where there was not a sound. Doors and windows opened through on every side, but he could not tell where the three demons slept. He turned past the hall and looked to the rear, and heard the sound of sobbing—it was Tang Sanzang, locked to a pillar in the back room, weeping.

The Pilgrim listened in secret to what he wept, and heard him cry:

"Ten and more years since I left Chang'an, Over mountains and rivers in bitter hardship and distress. Happily I came to the western regions and met the fine festival; Gladly I reached Jinping in time for the full moon. I could not tell the false Buddhas in the lanterns— It is because my fate holds calamity and blame. My worthy disciples pursue and strike, displaying their might; I pray the heroes may unfold their great authority."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim was filled with joy. He spread his wings and flew close to his master.

Wiping his tears, Tang Sanzang said: "Ah! The scenes of the western regions are indeed different. In this season of the first month, when the hibernating insects are just beginning to stir, how is it that a firefly is already flying about?"

Unable to contain himself, the Pilgrim called out: "Master, I am here!"

Delighted, Tang Sanzang said: "Wukong, I was wondering how there could be fireflies in the first month—so it was you!"

The Pilgrim at once revealed his true form and said: "Master, because you could not tell the false from the true, how many miles of road have been wasted, how much heart and strength spent! I told you at once that they were not good people, but you bowed down all the same, and those monsters darkened the lantern light, stole the fragrant ghee oil, and carried you off as well. I then ordered Bajie and the Sha Monk back to the monastery to keep guard, and followed the wind to this place; not knowing the name of the place, I was lucky to meet the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons, who reported that this mountain is the Green Dragon Mountain, with the Cave of Dark Splendor on it. By day I fought with these monsters until nightfall before returning; I told the whole story to my junior brothers, and without a moment's sleep came here with them.

Fearing that the night was too far gone for battle, and not knowing where you were, I changed my form and came in to learn the truth of your situation."

Delighted, Tang Sanzang said: "Are Bajie and the Sha Monk outside right now?"

"They are outside," said the Pilgrim. "When old Sun looked just now, the demons were all asleep. Let me unlock your chains, smash open the gate, and take you out." Tang Sanzang nodded and thanked him.

The Pilgrim used his art of unlocking; with a wipe of his hand, the lock fell open of itself. He led the master forward, when suddenly they heard the demon king in an inner room of the middle hall call out: "Little ones, shut the gates tight and be careful with fire and lamps. Why is no one calling the watches and patrolling now? Why have the clappers and bells stopped ringing?"

It turned out that the little demons, having fought all day, were all sleeping in weary exhaustion, and only woke when they heard the call. At the sound of the clappers and bells, several of them, carrying weapons and beating gongs, came from the rear—and chanced, of all things, right upon the master and his disciple.

The little demons shouted all together: "What a fine monk! You've twisted open the lock—where do you think you're going!"

The Pilgrim would not allow another word. He drew out his cudgel, shook it to the thickness of a bowl, and struck. Two were killed where the cudgel rose; the rest threw down their weapons and hurried to the middle hall, beating on the doors and shouting: "Great Kings! It's all over! It's all over! The hairy-faced monk is inside killing people!"

The three demons heard this and scrambled to their feet in a bound, crying only: "Seize him! Seize him!" Tang Sanzang was so frightened that his hands and feet went weak. The Pilgrim, no longer able to spare a thought for his master, rolled forward with his cudgel. The little demons could not parry or hold him; he struck down two or three of them, knocked over two or three more, broke through several layers of doors, and came straight out, calling: "Brothers, where are you?"

Bajie and the Sha Monk were just standing with rake and staff raised, waiting. "Elder Brother, what's happened?" they asked. The Pilgrim told them all about his transformation, entering to release the master, and how, when the demons woke, he had been unable to spare a thought for the master and had fought his way out. No more of this.

The demon kings seized Tang Sanzang again, chained him as before with iron chains, and with knives in hand and axes whirling, all the lamps lit, asked him: "How did you undo the lock, and how did that monkey get in? Confess at once and we will spare your life! If not, you'll be cut in two with one stroke!" Tang Sanzang, terrified, knelt trembling and said: "Great Kings, grandfathers! My disciple Sun Wukong knows seventy-two transformations. Just now he changed into a firefly and flew in to rescue me. Unexpectedly the Great King became aware, and he was caught sight of by the little great kings. My disciple, knowing no better, wounded two of them, and when they all shouted and raised their weapons and lit torches, he, unable to spare a thought for me, went out."

The three demon kings burst into loud laughter: "It is a good thing we woke; he has not gotten away after all!" They ordered the little ones to close the front and rear gates tight and keep silent.

"When they close the gates and keep silent," said the Sha Monk, "I suspect they are secretly doing something to our master. Let us attack!"

"You're right," said the Pilgrim. "Let's beat down the gate at once." The idiot put on a show of his magic powers; raising his rake, he struck with all his might and smashed the stone gate to pieces, then cursed in a stern voice: "Thieving oil demons! Send our master out at once!" The little demons inside were so frightened

they came rolling in to report: "Great Kings, it's all over! It's all over! The front gate has been smashed by the monks!" The three demon kings were extremely vexed: "This fellow is truly without manners!" They at once ordered their armor brought, armed themselves, each taking his weapons, and led the little demons out the gate to meet the enemy.

It was now about the third watch; in mid-heaven the moon shone bright as day. They came out and, without a word of exchange, set to with their weapons. Here the Pilgrim parried the battle-axe, Bajie countered the great saber, and the Sha Monk met the great staff. This battle was a fine one: Three monks, with staff, cudgel, and rake, faced three demons whose courage ran high. Battle-axe, steel saber, and knotted rattan cane—one heard only the whine of the wind and the flying dust and sand. In the first exchanges they breathed out gloomy mists; then they soared and swooped, scattering colored clouds. The nine-toothed rake's every move rolled with his body; the iron cudgel's heroic mastery was yet more praiseworthy. The demon-quelling staff was rare in all the world; the demons' stubborn hearts would not yield to it. The battle-axe's blade was bright, its sharp ferrule keen; the rattan cane's knotted joints bristled all over with spines. The great saber flashed like a door plank; the monks' magic arts surpassed it nonetheless. On this side, for the master's very life, they struck in fury; on that side, the demons would not let the Tang Priest go, lashing at their faces. Axe hewed and cudgel met it, contending for victory and defeat; rake whirled and saber hacked, crossing and tangling. The knotted rattan cane and the demon-quelling staff, over and over, displayed their splendor.

The three monks and the three demons fought for a long while with neither side gaining the advantage. Then the King Who Expels Cold gave a great shout: "Little ones, come up!" The demons each seized his weapons and came on all together, and before long Bajie was tripped to the ground, and several water-buffalo demons grabbed him and dragged him into the cave, where they bound him. The Sha Monk, seeing Bajie gone, and the herd of oxen bellowing and roaring, drew his precious staff and feinted a break toward the King Who Expels Dust, meaning to flee; but the crowd of demons surged in on him all at once, caught him stumbling, and he could not scramble up in time, and was caught and bound as well. The Pilgrim, seeing the fight was too much for him, spread his somersault cloud and slipped away.

Then Bajie and the Sha Monk were dragged before Tang Sanzang. Seeing them, Tang Sanzang wept with both eyes streaming: "Alas, that you two have also fallen into vicious hands! Where is Wukong?"

"When Elder Brother saw us captured," said the Sha Monk, "he fled."

"If he has fled," said Tang Sanzang, "he must have gone somewhere to seek help. But I do not know when we shall escape this net." Master and disciples grieved together miserably. No more of this.

Meanwhile the Pilgrim, riding his somersault cloud, returned once more to the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds. The monks of the monastery came out to meet him and asked: "Has Master Tang been rescued?"

"Hard to rescue! Hard to rescue!" said the Pilgrim. "Those demons have vast magic powers. My three brothers fought their three demons for a long while, until the demon king called up his little demons and captured Bajie first and then the Sha Monk. Old Sun was lucky to get away."

The monks were frightened: "If even a master like you, who can ride clouds and mists, could not capture them, the old master must surely have been done for."

"No matter! No matter!" said the Pilgrim. "My master has the Protectors of the Faith, the Guardians, and the Ding and Jia gods protecting him in secret, and he has eaten the Grass-Returned Cinnabar besides; he is certainly not fated to lose his life. It's only that the demons have real powers. Keep a good watch over the horse and luggage, and let old Sun go up to Heaven to ask for troops."

The monks were timid: "Can the master really go up to Heaven?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "The Heavenly Palace was my old home. In those days when I was the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, because I made havoc of the Peach Banquet I was subdued by our Buddha; now, having no choice, I protect the Tang Priest on his quest for scriptures, working merit to atone for my crimes. All along the road I have upheld the right and swept away the evil. That my master should suffer this ordeal is his destiny—you would not understand." Hearing this, the monks kowtowed and bowed again.

The Pilgrim went out the gate, gave a whistle, and vanished in a moment.

Brave Great Sage! Soon he reached the West Gate of Heaven, where he suddenly saw Taibai Jinxing the Gold Star, with the Heavenly King of Growth and the four great Numinous Officers Yin, Zhu, Tao, and Xu, conversing. Seeing the Pilgrim come, they all hastened to bow and ask: "Where is the Great Sage going?"

The Pilgrim said: "Because I was escorting the Tang Priest, we came to the Mintian County of the Prefecture of Jinping, on the eastern border of the Kingdom of Tianzhu, where my master was kept by the monks of the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds to enjoy the Lantern Festival. When we reached the Golden Lantern Bridge, there were three golden lanterns there, lit with the fragrant ghee oil, worth more than fifty thousand taels of silver, and every year the Buddhas were said to descend with blessings to receive it. As we were watching, three Buddha images did indeed come down; my master, knowing no better, went up onto the bridge and bowed. I said they were not good people, but before I could stop it, they darkened the lantern light and, with a gust of wind, carried off both the oil and my master. I followed the wind in pursuit; at daybreak I reached a mountain, and luckily the four Duty Officers reported that the mountain is the Green Dragon Mountain, with the Cave of Dark Splendor upon it, and in the cave three monsters, named the King Who Expels Cold, the King Who Expels Heat, and the King Who Expels Dust. Old Sun hurried up to their door to demand him back, and fought them a bout without winning. I changed my form and went in, and saw my master locked up but unharmed; I was about to release him and come out, when he became aware of it, and I made off. Then, with Bajie and the Sha Monk, I fought them bitterly again, and they carried off those two and bound them as well. And so old Sun has come especially to lay the matter before the Jade Emperor, to find out their origin and ask for heavenly generals to subdue them."

The Gold Star laughed coldly: "Great Sage, since you have fought with the demons, how is it you could not see where they come from?"

"Recognize them I can," said the Pilgrim. "They are a pack of ox demons. But their magic powers are great, and I cannot quickly subdue them."

"Those are three rhinoceros spirits," said the Gold Star. "Because of the celestial signs, they have cultivated and awakened to truth over many years, and they can fly through clouds and walk in mists. These monsters love cleanliness above all; they often dislike their own shadow and form, and always want to go down into the water to bathe. Their names are many: there are the xi rhino, the male rhino, the bull rhino, the spotted rhino, and the hu-mao rhino, the duo-luo rhino, and the heaven-piercing flower-pattern rhino—all of them with a single nasal opening, three bristles, and two horns. They range through rivers and seas and can open up waterways. As for the Kings Who Expel Cold, Heat, and Dust, their horns carry noble vital energy, and so they take these names and call themselves kings. If you want to capture them, only the Four Wooden Animal Stars can bring them down at the sight of them."

The Pilgrim at once made a bowing salute and asked: "Who are the Four Wooden Animal Stars? I beg Senior Changgeng to explain them to me plainly, one by one."

The Gold Star laughed: "Those stars dwell beyond the Palace of the Dipper and the Ox, spread abroad over heaven and earth. Go and report the matter to the Jade Emperor, and you will see the answer."

The Pilgrim folded his hands and thanked him, then went straight in through the Gate of Heaven. Before long he reached the Hall of Universal Brightness, where he first met the four great Celestial Masters, Ge, Qiu,

Zhang, and Xu. "Where are you going?" asked the Celestial Masters. "Having recently come to the district of the Prefecture of Jinping," said the Pilgrim, "because my master relaxed his Zen nature and went out to view the lanterns on the night of the full moon, he was carried off by a demon. Old Sun cannot subdue him alone, and has come especially to report to the Jade Emperor and ask for help." The four Celestial Masters at once led the Pilgrim to the Precious Hall of Lingxiao to lay the matter before the throne.

When all the greetings were done and the whole affair had been told, the Jade Emperor issued a decree: "Which road of heavenly troops shall be sent to help?"

The Pilgrim reported: "Just now at the West Gate of Heaven old Sun met the Gold Star, who said those monsters are rhinoceros spirits, and that only the Four Wooden Animal Stars can subdue them." The Jade Emperor at once dispatched Celestial Master Xu to go with the Pilgrim to the Palace of the Dipper and the Ox, to muster the Four Wooden Animal Stars and send them down to subdue the demons.

When they reached the palace gate, the twenty-eight constellations were already there to receive them. The Celestial Master said: "I bear the imperial decree, to muster the Four Wooden Animal Stars to go down below with the Great Sage Sun to subdue the demons." At once the Wooden Dragon of the Horn Mansion, the Wooden Xiezhi of the Dipper Mansion, the Wooden Wolf of the Kui Mansion, and the Wooden Chai of the Well Mansion stepped forward and answered: "Great Sage Sun, where do you want us to go subdue demons?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "So it's you! That old Changgeng was being secretive; I couldn't understand his meaning. If he had only said outright that they were the four wooden stars of the twenty-eight constellations, old Sun would have come straight to invite you, and there would have been no need to trouble the imperial decree!"

"What talk is that, Great Sage!" said the four wooden stars. "Without the imperial decree, who of us would dare leave his post of his own accord? In truth, where is the place? Let us be off at once."

The Pilgrim said: "In the Cave of Dark Splendor on the Green Dragon Mountain, in the Gen quarter northeast of the Prefecture of Jinping—rhinoceros spirits."

The Wooden Xiezhi of the Dipper, the Wooden Wolf of the Kui, and the Wooden Dragon of the Horn said: "If they really are rhinoceros spirits, there is no need for all of us—just send the Well Star. He can climb mountains and eat tigers, and go down into the sea and seize rhinos."

The Pilgrim said: "These rhinos are not the rhinos that gaze at the moon. These are ones who have cultivated and attained the Way, all of them with a lifespan of a thousand years. It is best that all four go together. Please do not refuse; if one of you alone could not hold him, wouldn't that cause even more trouble?"

"What sort of talk is this!" said the Celestial Master. "The decree names the four of you—how could you not go? Take to the air at once; I am going back to report." The Celestial Master took his leave of the Pilgrim and went.

The four wooden stars said: "Great Sage, there is no need to hesitate. Go first and challenge them, lure them out, and we will make our move afterwards."

The Pilgrim at once went forward and cursed: "Thieving oil demons! Give me back my master!" The gate had been smashed by Bajie, and a few little demons had propped some boards against it. Hearing the cursing from inside, they hurried in to report: "Great King, the monk Sun is outside cursing!"

The King Who Expels Dust said: "He fled in defeat—why has he come again after a whole day? I expect he has gone somewhere and brought back troops."

The Kings Who Expel Cold and Heat said: "What do we care about his troops! Bring our armor at once! Little ones, all of you must surround him with care; don't let him get away."

The demons, not knowing death from life, one and all took up their spears and blades, waved their flags, beat their drums, came out of the cave, and roared at the Pilgrim: "You monkey that doesn't fear a beating—you've come again!" The word "monkey" was what the Pilgrim hated most of all; grinding his teeth, he braced himself and raised his iron cudgel to strike.

The three demon kings deployed the little demons in a ring formation, encircling the Pilgrim in the very center of the field. On the other side, the Four Wooden Animal Stars each whirled their weapons and said: "Beasts! Hold your hands!" The three demon kings, seeing the four stars, were naturally afraid, and said one and all: "It's all over! It's all over! He's found the ones who can bring us down! Little ones, each of you look to his own life!" And with a howling and roaring, a panting and gasping, all the little demons revealed their true forms—they were the mountain-ox demons, the water-buffalo demons, and the yellow-ox demons, and they ran helter-skelter all over the mountain.

The three demon kings also revealed their true forms, dropped their weapons, and still on their four hoofs, like iron cannonballs, ran straight off to the northeast. The Great Sage led the Well Chai and the Horn Dragon in hot pursuit, without a moment's slackening. Only the Dipper Xiezhi and the Kui Wolf, in the hollows of the eastern mountain, on the mountain tops, in the mountain streams, and in the mountain valleys, killed or captured every one of the ox demons and cleared them all away. Then they went into the Cave of Dark Splendor and released Tang Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk.

The Sha Monk recognized the two stars, and bowed in thanks together with the others, asking: "How did the two of you come to rescue us here?"

The two stars said: "We were sent by the Great Sage Sun, who laid the matter before the Jade Emperor and obtained the decree to subdue the demons and rescue you."

Tang Sanzang wept: "Why has my disciple Wukong not come in?"

The two stars said: "The three old monsters are three rhinoceroses. When they saw us, each thought only of saving his own life and fled to the Gen quarter in the northeast. The Great Sage Sun led the Well Chai and the Horn Dragon in pursuit. The two of us swept away the herd of ox demons and came here, especially to release the holy monk."

Tang Sanzang bowed in thanks again and again, and bowed toward Heaven besides. Bajie raised him up: "Master, too many bows must mean fraud—there's no need to keep bowing. The four star lords are here first by the Jade Emperor's decree, and second by Elder Brother's good offices. Now that the host of demons has been swept away, we still don't know how the old demons have been subdued. Let's gather up some of the fine things from the cave, overturn this cave to root it out completely, and go back to the monastery to await Elder Brother."

The Kui Wolf said: "What the Marshal Tianpeng says is right. You and the Curtain-Raising General protect your master back to the monastery to rest, and let the two of us go to the Gen quarter to meet the enemy."

"Exactly, exactly," said Bajie. "If you two would also join in the capture, it must be done thoroughly, and then you can report back." The two star lords set off at once in pursuit.

Bajie and the Sha Monk searched out the fine things and treasures of the cave—much coral, agate, pearls, amber, cowries, treasures, fine jade, and good gold—enough to fill a load. They carried it outside, invited the master to sit on the cliff, and then went back in and set fire, burning the whole cave to ashes. Only then did they lead Tang Sanzang along the road back to the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds in Jinping. This was truly:

The scripture says that from the extreme of fortune ill fortune is born; Truly, in the midst of good one may still meet with evil. Loving the flower lanterns disordered his Zen nature; Delighting to roam fair scenes drained away his mind of the Way. The great elixir from of old must be guarded long; Once it is lost, in the end all is lost. Grasp tight and bind fast, and never wander free; A moment of slackness shows its harm at once.

No more, for the moment, of the three of them returning to the monastery with their lives. Let us speak instead of the two star lords, the Dipper Xiezhi and the Kui Wolf, who rode their clouds straight to the Gen quarter in the northeast in pursuit of the demons. The two of them searched in mid-air but could see nothing, until they came to the Western Ocean, where from afar they saw the Great Sage Sun shouting on the sea. They lowered their clouds and said: "Great Sage, where have the demons gone?"

The Pilgrim said resentfully: "Why didn't the two of you come to chase and capture them? Now you come blundering up asking questions?"

The Dipper Xiezhi said: "I saw the Great Sage with the Well and Horn stars routing the demons and giving chase, and assumed they would surely be captured. So the two of us swept away the host of demons, entered the Cave of Dark Splendor, and rescued your master and junior brothers. We searched the mountain and burned the cave, and entrusted your master to your two junior brothers to lead back to the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds in the prefecture city. Not seeing your carriage return for a long time, we came searching after you here."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim was delighted and thanked them: "In that case, you have done great merit—many thanks! Many thanks! But those three demons, chased by me to this place, dived down into the sea. The Well and Horn stars are pressing them hard and told old Sun to hold the shore. Since you two have come, keep watch on the shore, and let old Sun go in again as well."

Brave Great Sage! Whirling his cudgel and making the magic sign, he parted a waterway and plunged straight into the depths of the waves. He saw the three demons beneath the water fighting desperately for their lives with the Well Chai and the Horn Dragon. He leapt up close and shouted: "Old Sun has come!" The demons, hard pressed by the two star lords and caught off guard, at the sound of the Pilgrim's shout, cared only for their remaining lives; they turned their heads and fled at a run toward the middle of the sea. It turned out that the horns on these monsters' heads could part water supremely well; with a hiss and a splash, they opened up a clear road. Behind them the two star lords and the Great Sage Sun pursued with all their might.

Now in the Western Sea there was a yaksha sounding the deep and a patroller keeping watch over the sea, who saw from afar the rhinos parting the waters, and recognized the Great Sage Sun and the two heavenly stars. They hurried to the Crystal Palace and reported in a panic to the Dragon King: "Great King! Three rhinos are being chased here by the Great Sage Equal to Heaven and two heavenly stars!"

Hearing this, the old Dragon King Ao Shun at once summoned the crown prince Mo'ang: "Quickly muster the water troops. It seems the rhinoceros spirits, the Kings Who Expel Cold, Heat, and Dust, have picked a quarrel with Sun the Pilgrim. Now that they have come into the sea, hurry and draw your blades to help." Ao Mo'ang received the order and at once mustered his troops. In a moment, turtles, terrapins, alligators, and soft-shelled turtles, bream, white mandarin fish, and carp, with shrimp soldiers and crab captains, each with spears and blades, all raised a shout and surged out of the Crystal Palace to block the rhinoceros spirits.

The rhinoceros spirits could not advance; they hastily fell back, but behind them the Well and Horn stars and the Great Sage blocked their way. In a panic they lost their formation, each seeking to save himself and scattering in all directions; and before long the King Who Expels Dust was surrounded by the old Dragon King's troops.

The Great Sage Sun rejoiced at the sight and called: "Easy! Easy! Capture him alive—don't kill him!"

Mo'ang obeyed the order; the host surged forward, flipped the King Who Expels Dust to the ground, pierced his nose with an iron hook, and bound him up, hoofs together. The old Dragon King issued another command, to divide the troops in pursuit of the other two, assisting the two star lords to capture them. The little Dragon King at once led the host forward, and saw the Well Chai, in his true form, pressing down on the King Who Expels Cold and gnawing at him in great mouthfuls and small, eating him.

Mo'ang called out loudly: "Well Star! Well Star! Don't bite him to death! The Great Sage Sun wants him alive, not dead!" He called again and again, but the Well Star had already bitten through his neck. Mo'ang ordered the shrimp soldiers and crab captains to carry the dead rhino back to the Crystal Palace, and then went forward again with the Well Chai in pursuit. They saw the Horn Dragon driving the King Who Expels Heat back, straight into the Well Star. Mo'ang led the turtles, terrapins, alligators, and soft-shelled turtles, and spread out in the winnowing-basket formation to surround him. The monster could only cry: "Spare my life! Spare my life!" The Well Chai stepped up close, seized his ear with one hand, snatched away his knife, and cried: "We won't kill you! We won't kill you! We'll take you to the Great Sage Sun for him to dispose of."

Thereupon they reversed their weapons and came back before the Crystal Palace, reporting: "They are all caught." The Pilgrim saw one lying dead on the ground, its head severed, dripping with blood, and the other held by the ear by the Well Chai, pushed down to kneel. He went close and looked carefully: "This head was not cut by blade or weapon."

Mo'ang laughed: "If I had not shouted so urgently, even his body would have been eaten by the Well Star Lord."

"If that is so," said the Pilgrim, "well, fetch a saw. Saw off his two horns and skin him, and take the hide along. Leave the rhino flesh for the Dragon King and his worthy son to enjoy." He also had the King Who Expels Dust's nose pierced and told the Horn Dragon to lead him, and had the King Who Expels Heat's nose pierced and told the Well Chai to lead him: "Take them to the Prefecture of Jinping to see the prefect, get to the bottom of the case, and question them on their years of counterfeit Buddhas that harmed the people; then they can be tried and executed."

All obeyed. They took leave of the Dragon King and his son, left the Western Sea leading the rhinos, met up with the Kui and Dipper stars, and, riding clouds and mists, made straight back to the Prefecture of Jinping. The Pilgrim, treading on auspicious light in mid-air, called out: "Prefect of Jinping, all you deputy officers and chief officials, and all you soldiers and civilians within and without the city, hear this: I am the holy monk of Great Tang in the eastern land, sent to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures. The golden lanterns offered every year by your prefecture and county, which you took for the Buddhas descending with blessings—they were none other than these rhinoceros monsters. When we passed through here and viewed the lanterns on the night of the full moon, we saw these monsters carry off the lamp oil together with my master, and I invited the heavenly gods to subdue them. Now the mountain cave has been swept clean and the demons destroyed root and branch; they can do harm no more. From now on your prefecture and county must never again offer the golden lanterns, wearying the people and wasting their money."

At the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds, Bajie and the Sha Monk had just brought Tang Sanzang through the monastery gate when they heard the Pilgrim speaking in mid-air. They at once abandoned their master, dropped their loads, soared up on wind and cloud into the air, and asked the Pilgrim how the subduing of the demons had gone.

The Pilgrim said: "One was bitten to death by the Well Star; his horns have been sawed off and his hide stripped and brought along. The other two are captured alive—here they are."

Bajie said: "These two might as well be pushed down into this city for the officials and people to see, so that they may know we are sages and gods. By the way, let us ask the four star lords to bring down their clouds

and go together to the prefectural hall, to try and execute these monsters. The facts are clear and the punishment fits the crime—what more is there to say!"

The four stars said: "The Marshal Tianpeng has lately come to understand reason and the law—well done!"

Bajie said: "Because I've been a monk these past few years, I've learned a little."

The gods indeed pushed the rhinos down, and a cluster of colored clouds descended upon the prefectural hall. The officials of the prefecture and county, and the people within and without the city, were all frightened, and every household set up incense altars, and every family bowed to the heavenly gods. Presently the monks of the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds carried the elder in a sedan chair through the prefecture gate, where he met the Pilgrim, not letting the word "thanks" leave his mouth: "The star lords took great trouble to rescue us. Because your worthy disciple was nowhere to be seen, we were anxious, thinking of you constantly; how fortunate that you return victorious! But to what place were these monsters chased before they were captured?"

The Pilgrim said: "Since the day before yesterday, when I took leave of you, honored master, old Sun went up to Heaven to make inquiries. Thanks to Taibai Jinxing recognizing that the demons were rhinos, he directed me to invite the Four Wooden Animal Stars. I reported the matter to the Jade Emperor at once, and by his decree the stars were sent with me to the very mouth of the cave to do battle. The demon kings fled, and thanks to the Kui and Dipper stars your honored master was rescued. Old Sun and the Well and Horn stars pressed the pursuit with all their might, all the way to the Western Ocean, where thanks again to the Dragon King, who sent his son with troops to help, we captured them and have brought them here for trial."

The elder praised him and thanked him again and again. Then he saw the chief officials of the prefecture and county, with their deputies and leaders, all burning precious candles and offering incense with full ladles, bowing toward Heaven. Presently Bajie's temper rose; he drew out his monk's blade and struck off the King Who Expels Dust's head with one blow, and with another blow struck off the King Who Expels Heat's head; then he fetched a saw and sawed off the four horns.

The Great Sage Sun, more resourceful still, said: "Four star lords, take these four rhino horns up to the upper world, present them to the Jade Emperor, and report the fulfillment of the decree." As for the two horns he himself had brought, he said: "Leave one in the prefectural hall to guard the treasury, as proof for the future remission of the lamp-oil levy; and we will take one with us, to present to the Buddha at Numinous Mountain."

The four stars were overjoyed. They at once took leave of the Great Sage and, riding colored clouds, went back to report. The officials of the prefecture and county detained the four travelers and laid a grand vegetarian banquet, inviting all the local gentry to attend. On the one hand they issued proclamations, informing the soldiers and civilians that in the coming year the golden lanterns would no longer be lit, and the corvée of the great oil-buying households abolished forever; on the other hand they had a butcher slaughter the rhinos and flay their hides, tan them in smoke, and make armor, while the flesh was distributed among the officials and people. And on yet another hand they drew upon the unappropriated funds of fines and confiscations, bought open ground from the people, and built a temple to commemorate the four stars' subduing of the demons; they also built a living shrine for Tang Sanzang and his three disciples, each with a stele and an inscribed record, to be handed down through a thousand ages, in gratitude and requital. Master and disciples, broadening their hearts, accepted it all. And then the two hundred and forty great lamp-oil households, this family offering feasts and that family issuing invitations, gave them no moment of respite.

Bajie was completely satisfied with all this enjoyment; he put away in his sleeves a little of each kind of the treasures searched out of the cave, to serve as presents at the vegetarian banquets of the various households.

They stayed a full month without being able to get away. At last the elder gave his orders: "Wukong, give all the remaining treasures to the monks of the Monastery of Compassionate Clouds as gifts of thanks. And hide it from those great households—we must leave before dawn. If we keep on indulging in pleasure, we shall delay the scripture quest, draw the Buddha's displeasure, and bring new calamities upon ourselves—that would be most inconvenient." The Pilgrim dealt with each of these matters in turn.

The next day they rose early at the fifth watch, and the Pilgrim called Bajie to saddle the horse. The idiot, who had eaten and drunk at his ease and slept befuddled, muttered: "Why saddle the horse this early?"

The Pilgrim shouted: "The master says we must be on the road!" The idiot wiped his face: "It's this elder again, being so capricious! Of the two hundred and forty great households that all invited us, I've only eaten thirty-odd full vegetarian meals—how can he make old Pig go hungry again!"

The elder heard this and cursed: "You trough-guzzling blockhead! No more nonsense! Get up at once! If you talk back again, I'll have Wukong knock your teeth out with the gold-banded cudgel!"

The idiot, hearing of a beating, was all a-fluster: "The master has changed! Usually he pities me and loves me, thinks me a dull blockhead and protects me; when Elder Brother wants to beat me, he talks him out of it. Why is he so harsh today, telling him to beat me?"

The Pilgrim said: "The master is angry that your mouth has delayed the journey. Quickly pack the luggage and saddle the horse, and avoid a beating!" The idiot truly feared a beating. He jumped up, put on his clothes, and shouted to the Sha Monk: "Get up quickly! A beating is coming!" The Sha Monk also jumped up, and each packed up all his gear. The elder waved his hand: "Softly, softly—do not disturb the monks of the monastery." He hurriedly mounted his horse, opened the monastery gate, found the road, and went. This departure was truly:

In secret the jade cage is opened, and the colored phoenix flies free; Privately the golden lock is unlocked, and the flood dragon escapes.

After all, who knows what the families that must offer thanks will do when morning comes? Listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 93

In the Garden of the Elder of the Orphans They Ask of Ancient Things and Trace the Cause; In the Kingdom of Tianzhu They Present Themselves at Court and Meet Their Fate

To the tune "Moon Over the West River":

Once a thought stirs, love is certain; Once affection lingers, disaster follows. Why must the numinous mind distinguish the Three Stars? When deeds are done, of itself it returns to the primal sea. Whether you would become immortal or become a Buddha, All must be arranged within the self. Pure and clear, free of every grain of dust, The fruit perfected, you soar aloft to the highest realm.

Meanwhile the monks of the monastery, when dawn came and they saw no trace of Sanzang and his disciples, all said: "They neither stayed to be entertained, nor took their leave, nor asked for a single thing—we have simply let a living Bodhisattva slip away!"

Just as they were speaking, several leading households from the southern ward arrived with invitations. The monks clapped their hands and said: "Last night we failed to keep our guard, and tonight they have all ridden away on the clouds." The crowd all bowed toward the sky in thanks. When this tale spread, the officers and people of the whole city came to know of it, and they called upon those wealthy households to prepare the five sacrificial animals—ox, sheep, pig, dog, and fowl—with flowers and fruit, and to offer them at the shrine raised to the living monks, in repayment of their kindness. Of this we say no more.

Now the four travelers from Tang, eating the wind and sleeping by the water, journeyed on in perfect peace for half a month or more. Suddenly one day they saw a lofty mountain ahead, and Tang Sanzang was afraid again. "Disciples," he said, "those ridges and peaks ahead are steep and craggy. You must be careful!"

"On this road we are drawing close to the land of the Buddha," laughed the Pilgrim, "and there can certainly be no demon or monster here. Set your mind at ease, Master, and have no worry."

"Disciple," said Tang Sanzang, "though the land of the Buddha is not far, still those monks at the monastery the other day said it is two thousand li to the capital of the Kingdom of Tianzhu. Who knows how much road still lies ahead of us."

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "have you gone and forgotten the Heart Sutra of the Chan Master of the Crow's Nest again?"

"The Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra is the robe and alms bowl I carry with me," said Sanzang. "Since the Chan Master of the Crow's Nest taught it to me, is there a single day I have not recited it, a single hour in which I could forget it? I can recite it backwards and forwards—how could I ever forget it!"

"Master, you can recite it," said the Pilgrim, "but you never asked that master to explain it."

"Monkey-head!" said Sanzang. "How can you say again that I have not understood it! Do you understand it, then?"

"I understand it, I understand it," said the Pilgrim. And from that moment on, Sanzang and the Pilgrim spoke no more.

Beside them, Bajie laughed himself to pieces and the Sha Monk was beside himself with glee. "What a face!" they said. "He was born a demon just the same as the rest of us. He is not some Chan monk who has sat through sermons on the sutras, nor a Buddhist acolyte who has seen the Dharma expounded. Putting on airs and striking a pose! 'Understand,' he says, 'comprehend,' he says! And now why has he gone quiet? Let him lecture! Let him explain!"

"Second Brother," said the Sha Monk, "don't you believe him either. Eldest Brother spins a long tale just to coax the master along the road. All he knows is brandishing his cudgel—what would he know about expounding sutras!"

"Wuneng, Wujing, stop your nonsense," said Sanzang. "What Wukong understands is the explanation that lies beyond words and letters—that is the true understanding."

While master and disciples were still talking, they had in fact covered a good stretch of road and passed beyond several ridges, when there soon appeared beside the road a great monastery.

"Wukong," said Sanzang, "there is a monastery ahead. Look at it—neither too large nor too small, and yet with its glazed green tiles; neither new nor old, and yet with its red walls spreading wide like the character 'eight.' Dimly you can see ancient pines with their green canopies, standing there heaven knows how many centuries since they were planted; murmuring you can hear flowing water like plucked strings, left behind heaven knows in which dynasty when the mountain was opened. On the mountain gate is written in large characters 'The Monastery of Spreading Gold'; on the hanging plaque is inscribed 'A Relic of Ancient Times.'"

The Pilgrim could see it was the Monastery of Spreading Gold, and Bajie also said it was the Monastery of Spreading Gold. Sanzang mused on horseback: "Spreading Gold, spreading Gold—can this, I wonder, be the borders of the Kingdom of Shravasti?"

"Master, how strange!" said Bajie. "I have followed you for years and never once known the road, but today I know it too."

"No, not that," said Sanzang. "I often read the scriptures and recite the classics, and it is written that the Buddha was in the Garden of the Elder of the Orphans in the city of Shravasti. This garden, so the story goes, the Elder of the Orphans bought from the crown prince, to invite the Buddha to preach. The prince said: 'I will not sell this garden. If he wishes to buy it from me, he must cover the whole ground with gold.' When the Elder of the Orphans heard this, he at once used gold for bricks and covered the whole ground with them; only thus did he buy the prince's Jetavana garden, and only thus did he invite the World-Honored One to preach the Dharma. I wonder if this Monastery of Spreading Gold is not that very story?"

"What luck!" laughed Bajie. "If it is that story, we should go and pry up a brick or two to give as presents." They all laughed for a while, and only then did Sanzang dismount from his horse.

As they entered the mountain gate, they saw beneath it porters with carrying poles, bearers with packs, and cart-pushers, all seated with their loads; some lay down to sleep, and some sat talking. When they suddenly caught sight of the four travelers—the handsome exceedingly handsome, the ugly exceedingly ugly—the crowd took fright, but all the same they made way for them. Sanzang, afraid of stirring up trouble, kept calling out: "Be civil! Be civil!" And at this the crowd indeed grew more restrained.

They had just turned the corner behind the Hall of the Guardian Kings when a Chan monk came out to meet them, of no common dignity. Truly:

His face was bright as the full moon's light, His body straight as the bodhi tree. A staff in hand, sleeves flying in the wind, Straw sandals upon the stony road.

When Sanzang saw him, he greeted him with palms pressed together. The monk at once returned the courtesy and asked: "Whence has the master come?"

"Your disciple is Chen Xuanzang," said Sanzang, "sent by imperial command of the emperor of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land to the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Passing through this noble region, I make bold to pay my respects and beg the loan of a night's lodging; tomorrow we

will be on our way."

"This poor mountain is a hospice for monks from the ten directions," said the monk, "and all may take their pleasure here. How much the more for an elder, a holy monk of the Eastern Land! To be able to offer you hospitality would be our very great fortune." Sanzang thanked him, and then called the other three to accompany them; they passed the cloisters and the kitchen and went straight into the abbot's quarters.

The greetings done, they sat down as host and guests, and the Pilgrim and his two companions, with their hands hanging respectfully at their sides, also took their seats.

Now when the monastery learned that a scripture-seeking monk of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land had arrived, everyone in it, great and small, whether permanent residents or transient lodgers, elders or serving boys, came one and all to pay their respects. When tea was finished, the vegetarian meal was laid out. The elder had barely begun the meal with his gatha when Bajie, in his urgency, shoveled down the steamed buns, the vegetable dishes, and the noodle soup in one great confused gulp.

The abbot's quarters were crowded just then. Those with learning praised Sanzang's dignity, while those fond of a joke watched Bajie eat.

Now the Sha Monk, quick of eye, saw how things stood, and secretly pinched Bajie, saying: "Be civil!"

Bajie, caught off guard, cried out hastily: "Civil, civil! But my belly is quite empty!"

"Second Brother, you don't understand," laughed the Sha Monk. "For all the 'civil' folk in the world, if you speak of what is in their bellies, they are just the same as you and me." Only then did Bajie stop.

Sanzang recited the gatha that closed the meal, the attendants cleared away the dishes, and Sanzang gave his thanks.

The monks asked the reason for the journey from the Eastern Land, and Sanzang spoke of ancient things, and only then asked the origin of the name of the Monastery of Spreading Gold.

The monk replied: "This monastery was originally the Monastery of the Garden of the Elder of the Orphans in the Kingdom of Shravasti, also called the Jetavana. Because the Elder of the Orphans invited the Buddha to preach and paved the ground with bricks of gold, it was changed to its present name. Within sight of this monastery lay the Kingdom of Shravasti, where the Elder of the Orphans then dwelt. This poor mountain was originally the elder's Jetavana garden, and for that reason it came to be called the Monastery of Spreading Gold of the Elder of the Orphans; behind the monastery the foundations of the Jetavana are still to be seen. In recent years, whenever the seasonal rains pour down in torrents, bits of gold, silver, and pearls are still washed out of the earth, and those with good fortune often pick them up."

"It is no empty tale, then—it is indeed true!" said Sanzang. He asked again: "When I entered this precious mountain just now, I saw beneath the gate and along the two galleries many traveling merchants with mules, carts, and carrying poles. Why are they lodging here?"

"This mountain of ours is called the Hundred-Foot Mountain," said the monks. "In former years it was quite peaceful. But lately, through the cycles of heaven, who knows how, several centipede spirits have come into being; they often lurk by the roadside and wound people. Though they do not take lives, in truth no one dares to walk the road. At the foot of the mountain there is a pass called the Cockcrow Pass, and only at the time when the cock crows do people dare cross it. Those merchants arrived late and, fearing trouble, have borrowed a night's lodging in this poor mountain; they will set out once the cock has crowed."

"Then we too will wait and leave after the cock crows," said Sanzang.

While master and disciples were still talking, another meal was brought in, and they all ate their fill.

At this time the moon of the first quarter was bright, and Sanzang and the Pilgrim strolled out to enjoy the moonlight. A serving monk came to report: "Our old abbot wishes to see people from China."

Sanzang turned hastily and saw an old monk holding a bamboo staff, who stepped forward and made a bow: "Is this the master who has come from China?"

"I am not worthy of the title," replied Sanzang, returning the courtesy. The old monk praised him without end. Then he asked: "What is the master's honorable age?"

"I have idled through forty-five years," said Sanzang. "May I ask the old abbot's venerable age?"

"I have the folly to be a full cycle of sixty years older than the master," laughed the old monk.

"That makes one hundred and five this year," said the Pilgrim. "Now, look at me—how old do you think I am?"

"The master's face is ancient and his spirit clear," said the old monk, "and besides, on this moonlit night my old eyes are dim, so I cannot make it out at a glance."

They chatted for a while, and then walked on to look at the rear cloisters. "You spoke just now of the foundations of the Garden of the Elder of the Orphans," said Sanzang. "Where exactly are they?"

"Just beyond the rear gate," said the old monk. He bade them open the gate quickly, and they saw a stretch of empty ground, with the footings of walls still built of broken stones.

Sanzang pressed his palms together and sighed:

"I think of the giver of old, Sudatta, Who used his gold and treasure to relieve the poor and sick. The Jetavana's fame remains through ten thousand ages— But in what place does the elder now keep company with the Buddha's kin?"

They all strolled slowly on in the moonlight, and when they drew near the rear gate they sat for a while on the terrace. Suddenly they heard the sound of weeping. Sanzang listened with a stilled heart, and the voice was crying out words about a father and mother who knew nothing of her suffering. Moved to the heart, he shed tears without realizing it, and turned to ask the monks: "Who is that weeping so bitterly, and where?"

At this question the old monk bade the other monks go back first and boil tea, and only when no one else remained did he kneel down before Tang Sanzang and the Pilgrim.

Sanzang raised him up: "Old abbot, why do you perform such a ceremony?"

"Your disciple is over a hundred years old," said the old monk, "and knows a little of the ways of the world. In my quiet meditations I have seen a number of visions. Of your honored master and disciples I know a thing or two—you are not like other men. As for this matter of the weeping, none but this master here can clearly discern it."

"Tell me then what it is," said the Pilgrim.

"On this very day last year," said the old monk, "while I was making bright the moon of my nature in meditation, I suddenly heard a gust of wind, and with it a voice of grief and resentment. I rose from my couch and went to look at the foundations of the Jetavana, and there was a beautiful and upright young woman. I asked her: 'Whose daughter are you, and how came you to this place?' The girl said: 'I am the princess of the King of the Kingdom of Tianzhu. Because I was viewing flowers in the moonlight, a wind carried me here.' I locked her in a shabby empty room, and had the room walled up in the shape of a prison cell, leaving only a small hole in the door, just large enough for a bowl to pass through. At the time I told the monks she was a demon spirit and that I had bound her; but we monks are people of compassion, and I would

not take her life. Each day she is given two meals of coarse tea and coarse rice to keep her alive. The girl is clever, too, and at once understood my intention; fearing the monks might defile her, she put on the airs of a madwoman, sleeping in her own urine and lying in her own filth. By day she talks wild nonsense, dazed and blank; but in the stillness of night she thinks of her parents and weeps. I have several times gone into the city to beg alms and sound out the matter of the princess, and found that no harm had come to her at all. And so I keep her tightly locked and never let her out. Now happily the master has come to this kingdom. I beg that when you reach the capital you will display your mighty powers to the full and discern the true from the false. In this way you will rescue a good and innocent soul, and in this way, too, your divine powers will be made known."

When Sanzang and the Pilgrim had heard all this, they stored it earnestly in their hearts.

As they were speaking, two young monks came to invite them to tea and to rest, and so they went back. Bajie and the Sha Monk were in the abbot's quarters grumbling away: "Tomorrow we must be on the road at cockcrow, and still they have not come to sleep!"

"What are you muttering about, you blockhead?" said the Pilgrim.

"Let's sleep," said Bajie. "It's this deep in the night, and still they must go looking at the sights." And so the old monk withdrew, and Tang Sanzang went to bed. Truly:

Men are still, and the moon sinks low, and the flowers dream in silence; A warm breeze steals through the gauze that webs the wall's niche. Drop by drop the copper clepsydra marks the third watch; The silver River shines clear upon the ninefold glories.

They had not slept long that night when they heard the cock crow. The traveling merchants up front all rose in a bustle, lit lamps, and prepared their meals. The elder also woke Bajie and the Sha Monk, saddled the horse, and packed up, while the Pilgrim called for lamps. The monks of the monastery had already risen and made ready tea, soup, and refreshments, and waited respectfully in the rear. Bajie, delighted, ate a plate of steamed buns, then led out the luggage and the horse. Sanzang and the Pilgrim took their leave of the monks with thanks, and the old monk said again to the Pilgrim: "Keep the matter of the weeping one in your heart, in your heart!"

"I take it well in mind, I take it well in mind!" laughed the Pilgrim. "When I reach the city, I will be able to hear a sound and fathom its meaning, and see a face and discern its true colors."

That band of merchants, noisy and bustling, took the highway together as well. It was around the hour of the Tiger when they passed the Cockcrow Pass, and not until the hour of the Snake did they see the city walls—truly an iron urn of a city, a golden fortress, a divine continent, a heaven-made prefecture. That city:

Tiger-crouched, dragon-coiled, its contours rise on high; Phoenix towers and unicorn pavilions shake with colored light. The palace moat flows round like a girdle of jade; The blessed land leans on the hills, flying its banners of brocade. At dawn the sun lights the banners on the imperial road; Spring winds carry flutes and drums across every bridge and ford. The king has the Way, and his court's robes surpass all others; Grain ripens in abundance, displaying its splendor and might.

That day they entered the Eastern Market Street, and the merchants each sought out their inns. As master and disciples walked into the city, they came upon a Hostel for Visiting Officials, and Sanzang and the others went straight inside.

The man in charge of the hostel at once reported to the postal official: "Four most extraordinary monks, leading a white horse, have come in from outside."

Hearing that there was a horse, the postal official knew they were on official business, and came out of the hall to greet them.

Sanzang bowed and said: "This poor monk is an imperial envoy of the Tang court of the Eastern Land, sent to the Great Thunder Monastery on Mount Ling to see the Buddha and seek the scriptures. I carry with me a travel passport, and I have come to the court to have it examined. I beg to borrow a rest in your honorable office, and when the business is done, we will go on our way."

"This office was originally established for the entertainment of envoys and guests," replied the postal official, returning the courtesy. "It is only right that we receive you. Please enter, please enter." Delighted, Sanzang bade his disciples come forward and be introduced. When the postal official saw their ugly features, he was secretly alarmed, unable to tell whether they were men or ghosts; trembling, he could only order tea and set out the meal.

Seeing his fear, Sanzang said: "Be not alarmed, my lord. These three disciples of mine, though ugly of appearance, are all good at heart. As the saying goes, a mountain may be wild and yet its people kind. What is there to fear!"

Only at these words did the postal official settle his mind, and he asked: "State Preceptor, in what direction does the Tang empire lie?"

"It lies in the land of China, on the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa," said Sanzang.

"How long is it since you left home?" he asked again.

"In the thirteenth year of the Zhenguan era," said Sanzang. "Fourteen years have now gone by, and after bitter trials over ten thousand mountains and a thousand rivers, I have only now reached this place."

"A holy monk! A holy monk!" cried the postal official.

"How long has your honored kingdom been founded?" asked Sanzang.

"Our humble region is the great Kingdom of Tianzhu," said the postal official. "From its first ancestor and its great ancestor down to the present it has passed through more than five hundred years. The present sovereign loves mountains, waters, and flowers, and is styled the Emperor Yizong; he changed the era name to Jingyan, and it is now twenty-eight years since."

"Today this poor monk must go to see His Majesty and exchange his passport," said Sanzang. "I wonder whether I may chance to find the court in session."

"Excellent! Excellent! Perfect!" said the postal official. "Lately the king's daughter, Her Highness the princess, who has reached the youthful age of twenty, is at the crossroads, where she has raised high a bower of colored silks and is throwing down a silk ball, to take a husband as heaven's match. Today is just the height of the bustle, and I think His Majesty has not yet left the court. If you wish to exchange your passport, this is the very time to go."

Sanzang was all eagerness to be off, but the meal was set out just then, and so he ate with the postal official, the Pilgrim, and the rest.

It was already past noon. "I had best be going," said Sanzang.

"I will escort you, Master," said the Pilgrim.

"I'll go," said Bajie.

"Stop that, Second Brother," said the Sha Monk. "Your face is nothing worth showing off. Don't go swelling yourself up outside the court gates. Let Eldest Brother go."

"Well said, Wujing," said Sanzang. "The blockhead is too coarse; Wukong has a little more finesse."

The blockhead pouted his lips: "Setting aside the master, the faces of us three are much of a muchness."

Sanzang then put on his cassock, and the Pilgrim took up the hand bell, and they went together. On the streets, scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants, men of letters, and simple common folk were all crying in chorus: "Off to see the silk ball thrown!"

Standing by the roadside, Sanzang said to the Pilgrim: "The people here, their dress, their palaces and utensils, their speech and bearing—all are just the same as in our Great Tang. I recall that my own late mother, before she entered the religious life, also met her destined match through the throwing of a silk ball, and so became a wife. This place has the same custom."

"Shall we go and have a look too?" asked the Pilgrim.

"No, no!" said Sanzang. "Our robes and colors would be out of place, and I fear suspicion."

"Master, have you forgotten the words of the old monk of the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold?" said the Pilgrim. "We should go to see the bower, and we should go to tell the true from the false. With all this bustle, the emperor will surely be hearing the good news of the princess—how could he be holding court and attending to business? Let us go and come back!"

Hearing this, Sanzang indeed followed the Pilgrim, and they saw every kind of person gathered there watching the throwing of the ball. Ah! Little did they know that this outing would be as when a fisherman casts his hook and line—from this moment on, trouble would be hooked out.

Now as for that King of Tianzhu: because he loved mountains, waters, and flowers, the year before last he had taken his consorts and the princess to the imperial garden to enjoy the sights on a moonlit night. This stirred up a demon spirit, which carried off the true princess and changed itself into a false one. Knowing that Tang Sanzang would arrive this year, this month, this day, this very hour, it borrowed the wealth of the kingdom to raise this bower of colored silks, intending to take Tang Sanzang as a husband and drain his primal yang, his true vital breath, so as to become a Great Unity Supreme Immortal.

It was just the third quarter of the hour of the Noon when Sanzang and the Pilgrim mingled with the crowd and drew near the tower. The princess was just lighting incense and praying to heaven and earth. Around her stood fifty or seventy richly rouged embroidering maids, and her close attendants held the silk ball. The tower had eight latticed windows, and the princess cast her eyes about. Seeing Tang Sanzang draw very near, she took the silk ball and threw it with her own hand onto Tang Sanzang's head.

Startled, Tang Sanzang had his vairochana cap knocked askew; with both hands he hurriedly caught at the ball, and it rolled down inside his sleeve.

From the tower rose a chorus of cries: "It has struck a monk! It has struck a monk!"

Ah! At the crossroads, the crowd of merchants and travelers, pressing and jostling, all came rushing to snatch the ball. But the Pilgrim gave a shout, bared his teeth, hunched his back, and grew to thirty feet tall; with a show of divine power and a display of his ugly face, he frightened the crowd so that they stumbled and crawled and dared not come near. In a moment the crowd scattered, and the Pilgrim resumed his true form.

The embroidering maids, the palace maids, and the eunuchs great and small all came down from the tower and knelt to Tang Sanzang: "Your lordship! Your lordship! Pray enter the court and accept our congratulations."

Sanzang hastily returned the courtesy and raised them up, then turned to reproach the Pilgrim: "You ape-head! You have tricked me again!"

"It hit you on the head and rolled into your sleeve," laughed the Pilgrim. "What has that to do with me? Why blame me?"

"How are we to deal with this, then?" asked Sanzang.

"Set your mind at rest, Master," said the Pilgrim. "Go into court and see His Majesty. I will return to the hostel and tell Bajie and the Sha Monk to wait. If the princess does not take you for a husband, well and good—exchange the passport and be on your way. If she insists on taking you, then tell the king to summon your disciples, for you must give them a word of instruction. When the three of us are summoned to court, I will be able to distinguish the true from the false. This is a plan to rely on the marriage to subdue the monster."

Tang Sanzang could do nothing but follow his advice, and the Pilgrim turned and went back to the hostel.

The elder was escorted by the crowd of palace maids to the front of the tower. The princess came down, took him by the hand with her jadelike fingers, and they mounted the jeweled carriage together. The procession spread out in full array and turned back toward the court gate.

A Yellow Gate officer had already reported: "Long live Your Majesty! Her Highness the princess is holding the arm of a monk. He must be the one struck by the silk ball, and they now await your command outside the Meridian Gate."

When the king heard this, he was greatly displeased and wanted to drive them off, but he did not know what the princess intended, and so, swallowing his feelings, he summoned them in. The princess and Tang Sanzang thus came before the Golden Chimes Hall—truly, a pair crying "Long live!" as husband and wife, two gates, one of evil and one of good, bowing in homage for a thousand autumns.

When the ceremony was done, they were summoned up into the hall, and the king opened his mouth to ask: "Whence comes this monk, that he should be hit by the ball my daughter threw?"

Tang Sanzang prostrated himself and memorialized: "This poor monk was sent by the emperor of the Great Tang of the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa to the Great Thunder Monastery in the Western Heaven to worship the Buddha and seek the scriptures. Because I bear a travel passport for the long road, I have come especially to court Your Majesty to exchange it. Passing beneath the bower of colored silks at the crossroads, I never expected Her Highness the princess to throw her silk ball and strike this poor monk on the head. This poor monk is a man who has left the world for another faith—how dare I become the mate of a golden branch and jade leaf! I beg only that Your Majesty pardon this poor monk's crime of death, exchange my passport, and send me early to the Spirit Mountain to see the Buddha and seek the scriptures, that I may return to my own country and forever remember Your Majesty's heaven-sent grace!"

"You are a holy monk of the Eastern Land," said the king. "As the saying goes, a marriage destined for a thousand li is tied by a single thread. My daughter, the princess, has reached the age of twenty and is still unmarried. Because today has been found auspicious in year, month, day, and hour, we raised the bower of colored silks and threw the ball, to seek a fitting mate. And as luck would have it, you were the one struck. Though I am not pleased, I do not know what the princess intends."

The princess kowtowed and said: "Father King, as the saying goes: marry a cock and follow the cock; marry a dog and follow the dog. Your daughter made a vow beforehand: once this ball was thrown, having proclaimed it to heaven and earth and the gods, the marriage would be decided by heaven. Today it has struck the holy monk. This is the destiny of a former life, meeting again in this present one—how dare I change it! I wish to take him as my prince consort."

Only then was the king pleased. He at once summoned the chief astronomer of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau to choose a date, and meanwhile ordered the dowry made ready, and issued an edict making the

matter known to all the world.

Hearing this, Sanzang did not thank the king for his favor but only cried: "Release me, pardon me! Release me, pardon me!"

"This monk has no sense of reason at all," said the king. "With all the wealth of a kingdom, I would take you as prince consort. Why will you not stay here, but insist, thought after thought, on fetching scriptures! If you refuse again, I will have the brocade-robed officers drag you out and behead you!"

The elder was so frightened that his soul fled his body, and trembling, he could only kowtow and memorialize: "I am deeply grateful for Your Majesty's heaven-sent grace. But this poor monk travels as a party of four, and I have three disciples outside. I should now accept your favor, only I have not yet spoken a single word of instruction to them. I beg that you summon them here, exchange the passport, and send them on their way early, so that the purpose of the journey west is not delayed."

The king then granted the petition: "Where are your disciples?"

"They are all in the Hostel for Visiting Officials," said Sanzang.

An officer was at once dispatched to summon the holy monk's disciples to receive the passport and go west, while the holy monk stayed there as prince consort. The elder could only rise and stand in attendance.

There is a poem as proof:

The great elixir, unspilled, needs the threefold perfection; Bitter practice is hard to complete—I hate this evil bond. The Way is handed down by sages, but the cultivation is one's own; Goodness is amassed by men, but fortune comes from heaven. Do not give rein to the six senses and their greed and lust; In an instant open the one nature at its primal source. Free of love, free of longing, pure and clear of themselves, You shall surely win deliverance to transcendent freedom.

At the time, the officer went to the Hostel for Visiting Officials to summon the disciples of Tang Sanzang—of whom we say no more.

Meanwhile the Pilgrim, having parted from Tang Sanzang beneath the bower of colored silks, walked two steps and laughed twice, and returned to the hostel brimming with joy.

Bajie and the Sha Monk greeted him: "Eldest Brother, why are you laughing so merrily? And how is it the master is not with you?"

"The master has found happiness," said the Pilgrim.

"We have not yet reached our destination, nor seen the Buddha or won the scriptures," said Bajie. "What happiness is this?"

"The master and I had only walked as far as the bower of colored silks at the crossroads," laughed the Pilgrim, "when, as luck would have it, the princess of this dynasty threw her silk ball and struck the master. The master was pushed and pulled by palace maids, painted girls, and eunuchs to the front of the tower, and mounted the carriage together with the princess into court, where he was taken as prince consort. If that is not happiness, what is?"

At these words Bajie stamped his feet and beat his breast: "If I had known, I should have gone! It is all that lazy Sha Monk's fault! If you had not stopped me, I would have rushed straight to the foot of the bower, and the silk ball would have struck old Zhu. Would not the princess have taken me instead? How fine, how wonderful! Handsome and smart and proper—we would all have had a grand stroke of luck and a fine bit of fun. What a lark!"

The Sha Monk stepped up and wiped his face: "Shameless! Shameless! What a jaw! 'Bought an old donkey for three pieces of silver, and boasts he can ride it!' If the silk ball had hit you, we would have burned paper to drive off your bad luck that very night, and still thought it too late! Who would dare invite such a hoodoo through the door!"

"You black-skinned fellow, you know nothing of taste!" said Bajie. "Ugly I may be, but I have some flavor. Since ancient times it has been said: rough skin and sturdy bones each have something to recommend them."

"Stop your nonsense, you blockhead!" said the Pilgrim. "Pack up the luggage. I fear the master may grow anxious and send for us, and then we must go into court to protect him."

"Eldest Brother, you are wrong again," said Bajie. "The master has become a prince consort. He is going into the palace to make love to the emperor's daughter. It is not a matter of climbing mountains and treading roads, or meeting monsters and demons—what need has he of your protection? At his age, does he not know what goes on between the bedclothes? Does he need you to prop him up?"

The Pilgrim grabbed him by the ear with one hand and shook his fist at him: "You beastly blockhead, with your never-ending lecherous thoughts! What nonsense are you talking!"

Just as they were quarreling, the postal official came to report: "His Majesty has issued a decree and sent an officer to invite the three holy monks."

"Why, exactly, does he invite us?" asked Bajie.

"The old holy monk has had the good fortune to be hit by the silk ball of Her Highness the princess and been taken as prince consort," said the postal official. "And so an officer has been sent to invite you."

"Where is the officer?" said the Pilgrim. "Bid him come in."

The officer bowed to the Pilgrim. When the courtesy was done, he dared not raise his eyes but kept muttering to himself: "Is it a ghost, a demon? Is it the Thunder God, a yaksha?"

"You fellow," said the Pilgrim, "if you have something to say, why do you not say it? Why are you humming and hawing?"

The officer, trembling with fright, held up the imperial decree with both hands and stammered wildly: "Her Highness the princess invites you to the meeting of relatives! His Majesty invites you to the meeting of relatives!"

"No instruments of torture here—we will not beat you," said Bajie. "Speak slowly, and do not be afraid."

"Who is afraid of your beating?" said the Pilgrim. "He is afraid of your face! Hurry—pack up the loads, lead the horse, and come into court to discuss matters with the master!"

Truly:

When roads meet on a narrow way, it is hard to turn aside; It is certain that love and favor shall turn into hatred.

After all, who knows what words they spoke when they saw the king? Listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 94

The Four Monks Feast and Make Merry in the Imperial Garden; A Single Monster Vainly Nurses the Joys of Love and Lust

The story tells how Sun Wukong and his two companions followed the summoning officer to outside the Meridian Gate, where the Yellow Gate officer at once transmitted the report and had them brought in. The three of them stood side by side and would not kneel at all. The king asked: "Those three—are they the worthy disciples of the holy monk, the prince consort? What are your names and surnames? Where do you live? Why did you take the tonsure? What scriptures do you go to fetch?"

The Pilgrim stepped forward, intending to go up into the hall, when one of the royal guards shouted: "Do not move! If you have anything to say, present your memorial from where you stand."

"We who have left the world take a step forward whenever we can," laughed the Pilgrim. Bajie and the Sha Monk also drew near after him.

The elder, fearing they might be so coarse and rude as to startle the king, rose and called out: "Disciples, His Majesty asks the cause of your coming—present your memorial at once."

When the Pilgrim saw his master standing in attendance at the side, he could not contain himself and shouted aloud: "Your Majesty thinks little of others and much of himself! Since you have taken my master as prince consort, how can you make him stand in attendance? In this world the husband of a princess is called a man of honor—surely there is no such thing as a man of honor who must stand!"

At these words the king turned pale with fright and wanted to withdraw from the hall, but fearing to lose face, he could only steel his courage and order his attendants to fetch an embroidered stool, and ask Tang Sanzang to be seated.

Only then did the Pilgrim present his memorial: "Old Sun's ancestral home is the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the Kingdom of Aolai, on the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. Heaven was my father and Earth my mother; I was born from the splitting of a rock. In time I paid my respects to a Perfected One and learned the great Way in full. I returned to my immortal home and gathered my followers in that cave heaven and blessed land. I went down into the sea to subdue dragons and up the mountains to capture beasts. My name of death was wiped out and my name entered in the register of life; I held the office of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven. I enjoyed the jade towers and delighted in roaming the jeweled pavilions. I met with the heavenly immortals and sang and rejoiced day after day; I dwelt in the holy realm and was happy morning after morning. Only because I disrupted the Peach Banquet and revolted against Heaven in a great rebellion was I captured and subdued by the Buddha. I was imprisoned beneath the Five Elements Mountain, eating iron pellets when hungry and drinking molten copper when thirsty—for five hundred years I never tasted tea or rice. Luckily my master came out of the Eastern Land to worship in the West, and Guanyin commanded that I be delivered from the disaster of heaven and freed from the great calamity, and so I took refuge in the gate of the Yogacara. My old taboo name is Wukong, but I am called the Pilgrim."

Hearing such weighty fame, the king hurried down from his dragon couch, walked over, and took the elder's arm with his imperial hand: "Prince consort, it is also heaven's destiny granted to me to meet with this immortal kin of yours."

Sanzang thanked him profusely for the favor and begged the king to return to his throne. The king asked again: "Which one is the second worthy disciple?"

Bajie pouted his lips and flaunted his might: "In a former life old Zhu was a man, fond of pleasure and lazy at heart. All my life I was muddled, my nature disordered and my mind confused. I did not know how high

heaven is or how thick the earth, could not grasp how wide the sea or how far the mountains. Just as I was idling at ease, I suddenly met a Perfected One. Half a sentence undid the net of karma; two or three words split open the gate of disaster. In that moment I awoke and took him for my master on the spot. I carefully cultivated the work of the two eights and reverently refined the sequence of the three threes. When my practice was complete I soared aloft and was raised beyond the heavenly court. Loaded with the deep favor of the Jade Emperor, I was given the office of Marshal Tianpeng, commanding the heavenly river troops, roaming free in the palaces of Heaven. Only because, drunk at the Peach Banquet, I teased the moon goddess Chang'e, I was stripped of my rank and banished to the mortal world; through an error in reincarnation I was born into the body of a pig. I dwelt on Mount Fulin and committed boundless evil. Then I met Guanyin, who pointed me to the good path. I took refuge in Buddhism and now protect Tang Sanzang. I journey straight to the Western Heaven to worship and seek the wondrous scriptures. My Dharma name is Wuneng, and I am called Bajie, the Eight Precepts."

At these words the king trembled in fear and dared not look at him. The more the blockhead played up, shaking his head, pouting his lips, cocking his ears, and roaring with laughter. Sanzang, afraid again that he would startle the king, at once scolded: "Bajie, restrain yourself!" Only then did he clasp his hands, stand at attention, and pretend to be genteel.

The king asked again: "And the third worthy disciple—why did he take the faith?"

The Sha Monk pressed his palms together and said: "Old Sha was originally a common man, and because I feared the wheel of reincarnation, I sought the Way. I wandered to the corners of the sea and roamed to the ends of the earth. I always carried my robe and bowl with me and ever refined my mind and spirit within my breast. Through such piety I came upon an immortal companion. I nourished the child within and mated with the crimson maid. When my merit of three thousand was complete and the four marks were harmonized, I rose above the heavenly realm and bowed before the azure vault. I was given the office of Curtain-Raising General, serving the phoenix carriage and the dragon chariot, with the title of General. But at the Peach Banquet I accidentally dropped and broke the crystal cup, and was banished to the Flowing Sands River, where I changed my face and form and committed sins that harmed the living. Happily the Bodhisattva, traveling far to the Eastern Land, urged me to take the faith, to await the disciple of Buddha from the Tang, and to journey west for the scriptures and the fulfillment of the true fruit. Since then I have renewed myself and again cultivated the great awakening, and I took the river for my surname. My Dharma name is Wujing, and I am called the Sha Monk."

At these words the king was at once much alarmed and much pleased. He was pleased that his daughter had taken a living Buddha, and alarmed that the three were in truth demon gods.

Just as he was between surprise and delight, the chief astrologer of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau memorialized: "The wedding date has been fixed for the twelfth day of this present month. The day is auspicious in its stems and branches, and the horoscope is smooth and favorable—it is fitting for the joining of marriage."

"What day is today?" asked the king.

"Today is the eighth, the day of wushen," memorialized the astrologer, "when the ape offers fruit—just right for receiving the worthy and accepting affairs."

The king was greatly pleased, and ordered the officers in attendance to sweep and clean the pavilions, towers, and kiosks of the imperial garden, and to invite the prince consort and his three worthy disciples to rest there; later the nuptial banquet would be arranged and the princess would be matched with him. All obeyed respectfully, and the king withdrew from court; the officials all dispersed—of which we say no more.

Now when Sanzang and his disciples all arrived in the imperial garden, evening was drawing on, and the vegetarian meal was laid out. "After all this day, it is time to eat at last!" said Bajie, delighted.

The stewards at once carried over whole loads of vegetarian rice and noodle dishes. Bajie ate and added more, added more and ate again, until his belly was stuffed and distended before he finally stopped. Soon lamps were lit, bedding was laid out, and each went to his rest.

Seeing no one about, the elder turned on the Pilgrim in angry reproach: "Wukong! You ape, you ruin me time and again! I said we should only go and exchange the passport, and not approach the bower of colored silks. Why did you insist on leading me there to look? Now—have you had a good look! And it has stirred up this whole affair. What is to be done?"

The Pilgrim smiled appeasingly: "Master said that your late mother also threw the silk ball, met her destined bond, and so became a wife. It seemed you cherished a longing for the old customs, and so old Sun led you there; and I also thought of the words of the elder of the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold, and so we might examine the true and the false here. Just now I saw the king's face, with a somewhat gloomy and darkened cast to it; but I have not yet seen what the princess is like."

"What would you do if you saw the princess?" asked the elder.

"Old Sun's fiery eyes and golden pupils," said the Pilgrim, "can recognize the true from the false, the good from the evil, the rich from the poor, the noble from the base, the moment I lay eyes on a face; then I can act well and distinguish the crooked from the straight."

"Eldest Brother has lately learned to read faces too," laughed the Sha Monk and Bajie.

"Fortune-tellers of that trade would only count as my grandsons," said the Pilgrim.

"Stop your banter!" snapped Sanzang. "The fact is, she insists on taking me now. How are we to deal with it, after all?"

"We need only wait until the twelfth, the day of the wedding rejoicing," said the Pilgrim, "when the princess is sure to come out to pay her respects to her parents. Let old Sun watch from the side. If she is still a true woman, then you can be the prince consort and enjoy the glory and wealth of the kingdom, for all I care."

At these words Sanzang grew angrier still and swore: "Fine ape, you! You are still out to ruin me! As Wuneng said, of our ten parts of the road we have climbed nine and seven-eighths, and still you jab me with your hot tongue? Fold it up at once, and keep your stinking mouth shut! If you are rude again, I will recite the spell and make you wish you were dead!"

Hearing the spell mentioned, the Pilgrim hastily knelt before him: "Do not recite it, do not recite it! If she is a true woman, then when the bridal rites are performed, we will all storm the palace together and take you away."

While master and disciples talked, before they knew it the night watch had begun. Truly:

Deep, deep the palace clepsydra sounds; thick, thick the fragrance of flowers. The embroidered doors hang with beaded blinds; the quiet courtyards show no gleam of fire. The swing's ropes are cold, only its shadow lingering; the Qiang flute's last notes fade, stilling all four quarters. About the house the flowers cage the moon's bright sheen; across the sky no trees stand to block the stars' sharp light. The cuckoo's crying has ceased; the butterfly's dream runs long. The silver River stretches across the heavens; white clouds return to their homeland. It is the very place where the traveler's longing is keenest— The wind shaking the tender willows only deepens the desolation.

"Master, it is late," said Bajie. "Whatever business there is, discuss it in the morning. Sleep! Sleep!"

And so master and disciples indeed settled down to rest.

The night scene has been told; soon the golden cock sang the dawn. At the third drum of the fifth watch the king mounted his throne to hold court, and one could see:

The palace gates swing wide, and purple vapor rises high; The wind carries the imperial music through the azure sky. Clouds shift the leopard-tail banners, the flags stir and sway; Sunbeams strike the dragon heads, and the jade pendants shake. Fragrant mist adds softly to the green of the palace willows; Dewdrops moisten lightly the beauty of the garden flowers. The hundred officers file in with shouts of long life and ritual dance; Seas are calm and rivers clear—one realm beneath one rule.

When the civil and military officers had finished the audience, the king summoned the Court of Imperial Entertainments to arrange the wedding feast for the twelfth, and today to prepare the spring wine vessels, inviting the prince consort to enjoy himself at leisure in the imperial garden. He ordered the Ceremonial Bureau to conduct the three worthy kinsmen to the Hostel for Visiting Officials to sit a while, and the Court of Imperial Entertainments to arrange three vegetarian banquets to attend them there. In both places the Imperial Academy of Music was to play, serving them as they enjoyed the spring scenery and whiled away the day.

Hearing this, Bajie answered at once: "Your Majesty, since my master and I met, we have not been apart for a single moment. Since you are feasting in the imperial garden today, take us along to enjoy ourselves for a couple of days, so that the master can make your family a prince consort. Otherwise, this piece of business will not go through."

The king saw that he was ugly and spoke coarsely, and saw him twist his neck, pout his lips, and waggle his ears, as if there were some madness in him; fearing he might spoil the marriage, he could only comply, and ordered: "Set two places in the Pavilion of Eternal Peace over All Lands, where I will sit with the prince consort. Set three places in the Pavilion of Lingering Spring, and ask the three to sit apart there, lest the seating of master and disciples prove awkward."

Only then did the blockhead give a shout of thanks toward the throne, and they all withdrew. The king further decreed that the palace officers prepare a banquet, and that the consorts of the three palaces and six courts should dress the princess's hair and add to her trousseau, in preparation for the fine match on the twelfth.

It was around the hour of the Snake when the king set out his procession and invited Tang Sanzang and the rest to come into the imperial garden to view the sights. A fine place indeed:

The paths are paved with colored stone, the railings carved with ornate balustrades. The paths are paved with colored stone, and beside the stones of the paths grow wondrous blossoms; the railings are carved with ornate balustrades, and beyond the rails grow rare and exotic flowers. The flowering peach dazzles the kingfishers; the tender willows flash with orioles. Each step brings secret fragrance filling one's sleeves; each stride carries the clean scent thicker on one's robes. There are phoenix terraces and dragon pools, bamboo pavilions and pine bowers. Upon the phoenix terrace, one plays the flute and beckons the phoenix to come in homage; within the dragon pools, fish are raised until they turn to dragons and fly away. The bamboo pavilion holds poems, labored over and carved like white snow; the pine bower collects essays, polished to pearls and jade, annotated in the classic texts. Rockery mounds rise green with fist-sized stones; winding waters run deep with emerald waves. Peony pavilions, rose trellises, layered brocade spread like velvet; jasmine rails, begonia beds, heaped clouds and laid jade. The peonies give off a strange fragrance; the hollyhocks are wondrously gorgeous. White pears and red apricots vie in splendor; purple orchids and golden day-lilies contend in brilliance. Poppies, lily magnolias, azaleas—all fresh and radiant; wax flowers, balsams, plantain lilies—all trembling and stately. Patch upon patch the red saturates like rouge moistened; clump upon clump

the fragrance thickens, ringed round with embroidered brocade. And how delightful that the east wind brings back the warm sun, and the whole garden, all charm, displays its radiance.

The king and his company looked for a long while. Soon the officers of the Ceremonial Bureau invited the Pilgrim and his two companions into the Pavilion of Lingering Spring, while the king led Tang Sanzang up to the Pavilion of Eternal Peace; each side feasted apart. The song and dance, the flute and strings, the spread and the display were truly:

The lofty gates stand majestic as the light of dawn is born; Phoenix towers and dragon pavilions lie athwart the auspicious haze. Spring colors lay out in fine brocade the flowers and grass; Distant light of heaven falls and makes the brocade robes shine. Flutes and songs wind about as at an immortal's feast; Cups and goblets fly from hand to hand with the clear jadelike wine. The lord is pleased and the ministers rejoice, together enjoying the sights; The lands within and without are at peace forever, and the world is hale.

At this time the elder, seeing how the king honored him, had no way out and could only feign delight—truly an outward joy and an inward grief.

As they sat, the elder noticed four golden screens hanging on the wall, painted with the four scenes of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, each with verses inscribed upon it—poems by noted scholars of the Hanlin Academy. The "Spring Scene Poem" says:

"The one vital breath of the whole round heaven turns the great potter's wheel; The earth rejoices, and all ten thousand things are new. Peaches and plums contend in beauty, the flowers in full bloom; Swallows come to the painted beams, trailing scented dust."

The "Summer Scene Poem" says:

"The warm south wind blows gently, and thoughts come slow; In the palace courts pomegranates and mallows reflect the sun's blaze. The jade flute's tune startles the noonday dream; The fragrance of water chestnuts and lotus drifts to the courtyard curtains."

The "Autumn Scene Poem" says:

"By the golden well the plane tree turns one leaf of yellow; The beaded blinds are not drawn up, and night frost comes. The swallows know the day of the earth-god and leave their nests; The wild geese, breaking the reed flowers, pass to other lands."

The "Winter Scene Poem" says:

"Heaven rains flying clouds, dim and bitter cold; The north wind blows snow, piling it on a thousand mountains. The deep palace has its own red brazier's warmth; And word comes that the plum has bloomed, jade-white along the rails."

When the king saw Tang Sanzang freely savoring the poems, he said: "Since the prince consort delights in savoring the flavor of poetry, he must surely be skilled at versifying. If you will not begrudge us your pearls and jade, may I ask you to match each poem in the same rhyme?"

The elder was a man of clear mind and manifest nature, who forgot his cares before the scene; and seeing the king's deep regard, when bidden to match the rhymes he could not help suddenly reciting a line: "The sun warms, the ice melts, and the great earth is made even."

The king was overjoyed and at once summoned the attendant officers: "Fetch the writing implements, and ask the prince consort to complete his matching verses and write them down, that I may savor them slowly."

The elder gladly did not refuse, and took up the brush to match them.

He matched the "Spring Scene Poem":

"The sun warms, the ice melts, and the great earth is made even; The flowers and plants of the imperial garden are renewed again. Harmonious winds and fattening rains give the people their share of grace; Seas calm and rivers clear, free of the world's dust."

He matched the "Summer Scene Poem":

"The Dipper points south, and the daylight hours grow long; Clouds in the locust trees and flame in the pomegranates contend in light. Yellow orioles and purple swallows sing in the palace willows, Their deft double notes turning into the crimson curtains."

He matched the "Autumn Scene Poem":

"Fragrance wafts from green tangerines and yellow oranges; The pines and cypresses stay green and welcome the frost's coming. By the hedge chrysanthemums half open, gathered in brocade; The tones of flutes and songs ring through the land of water and clouds."

He matched the "Winter Scene Poem":

"The auspicious snow has just cleared, and the air is cold; Wondrous peaks and cunning rocks—the hills are balls of jade. In the stove burns beast-shaped charcoal warming the milk cream; Hands folded in sleeves, I sing aloud leaning on the green balustrade."

Seeing the matching verses, the king was overjoyed and intoned: "A fine line—'Hands folded in sleeves, I sing aloud leaning on the green balustrade!'" He then ordered the Imperial Academy of Music to set the new poems to music, and they did not disperse until the day was done.

The Pilgrim and his two companions in the Pavilion of Lingering Spring also enjoyed themselves to the full, each drinking a few cups until they were somewhat tipsy. They were just about to go looking for the elder when they saw he was already in a pavilion with the king.

Bajie's doltish nature erupted, and he called out at once: "What joy! What ease! Today we have enjoyed ourselves for once! And now, being full, it is time to go to sleep!"

"Second Brother has no self-discipline at all," laughed the Sha Monk. "Stuffed full like this, how can you sleep?"

"What do you know!" said Bajie. "As the saying goes: if after eating you do not lie stretched out stiff, your belly will have no lining of fat!"

Tang Sanzang parted from the king with cautions to be discreet, only cautions to be discreet, and when he reached the pavilion he reproached the three: "You beastly blockheads, you grow more boorish by the day! What place do you think this is, that you must shout and bawl without cease? If you anger the king, will he not take our lives?"

"No harm, no harm!" said Bajie. "We are his in-laws now, and he can hardly take offense. As the saying goes: beating never breaks off kinship, and scolding never breaks off neighborliness. We are all just having fun—what is there to fear from him?"

The elder snapped and ordered: "Seize the blockhead and give him twenty strokes of the meditation staff!"

The Pilgrim indeed seized him and threw him down, and the elder raised the staff to beat him. The blockhead cried out: "Grandfather prince consort! Spare me, spare me!"

The attendant officers at the banquet intervened to stop it. The blockhead scrambled to his feet and grumbled: "Fine man of honor! Fine prince consort! The marriage is not even made yet, and already he is meting out the

king's law!"

The Pilgrim clapped a hand over his mouth: "No nonsense, no nonsense! Go to sleep at once."

They spent another night in the Pavilion of Lingering Spring. The next morning, the feasting and music went on as before.

Before they knew it, three or four days of pleasure had passed, and it was just the fine day of the twelfth. The officers of the several departments of the Court of Imperial Entertainments reported back: "Since your servants received the decree on the eighth, the residence of the prince consort has been completed, and waits only for the laying out of the dowry. The nuptial banquet is also fully prepared—in all, more than five hundred tables of meat and vegetarian dishes."

The king was overjoyed and was just about to invite the prince consort to the feast when a palace officer memorialized before the throne: "Long live Your Majesty! Her Majesty the principal queen invites you."

The king withdrew into the inner palace, and there he saw the queens of the three palaces and the consorts of the six courts, leading the princess, all chatting and laughing in the Zhaoyang Palace. Truly it was a mass of flowers and a heap of brocade! That expanse of splendor and allure truly surpassed the halls of heaven and the moon, no whit inferior to the jasper courts of the immortals. There are four new songs to prove it, called "The Joyful Meeting of a Fine Marriage."

The "Song of Joy" says:

Joy! Joy! Joy! Glad and merry indeed! The marriage is made; love and grace are sweet. In the cunning palace dress, how could Chang'e compare? Dragon hairpins and phoenix ornaments, gaudy with flying gold thread. Cherry lips, white teeth, and rosy face; A body as light and lissom as a flower. Layer upon layer of brocade, amid the five-colored throng; Fragrance wafting, within the company worth a thousand in gold.

The "Song of Meeting" says:

Meet! Meet! Meet! Alluring and charming. She outdoes Mao Qiang and surpasses the ladies of Chu. Toppling cities, toppling kingdoms, she rivals flowers and jade. Her dress and ornaments are fresher still, her hairpins and rings most gorgeous. An orchid heart and a spirit of thoroughwort, pure and lofty; A powdered face and ice-white flesh, noble and honored. Her dark brows a single line, faint as distant hills; Slender and graceful, she gathers the brocade company about her.

The "Song of Excellence" says:

Excellence! Excellence! Excellence! A jade maiden, an immortal child. Deeply lovable, truly praiseworthy. A strange fragrance dense and rich, powder and paint intermingled. The blessed land of Mount Tiantai is far away—how could it match the house of a king? Laughter and talk in playful charm, flutes and songs winding in din. Flowers heaped and brocade piled, a thousandfold of beauty— Search all the world, how could anything compare with her?

The "Song of Marriage" says:

Marriage! Marriage! Marriage! The scent of orchids and musk wafts forth. A host of immortals, a throng of beauties. The consorts change their colors; the princess puts on new dress. Her cloudlike locks are piled in raven coils; her rainbow skirts press down her phoenix gown. A stream of celestial music rings clear and bright; two rows of crimson and purple in profusion. In former years the pledge was made to ride the phoenix; Today, how blessed, we meet in this fine marriage.

Now when the king's carriage arrived, the queens and consorts led the princess, together with all the painted maids and palace girls, to welcome him. The king, beaming with joy, entered the Zhaoyang Palace and sat

down.

When the queens and consorts had finished paying their respects, the king said: "My worthy daughter the princess, since the eighth, when you raised the colored silks and threw the ball, you have been fortunate enough to meet the holy monk, and I suppose your heart's desire is now fulfilled. The officers of the various offices have also been able to enter into my mind, and everything is now in readiness. Today is just the fine date—hurry early to the nuptial banquet, and do not miss the auspicious hour."

The princess came forward, prostrated herself, and memorialized: "Father King, I beg you to pardon your daughter for ten thousand offenses. I have a word to present: these past days I have heard the palace officers say that the holy monk of Tang has three disciples, born utterly hideous. Your daughter dares not meet them, for fear that the very sight of them would frighten her. I beg that you will send them out of the city, Father King, and that would be best. Otherwise they might startle and harm my weak body, and turn instead into a calamity."

"If you had not spoken, my child," said the king, "I should almost have forgotten. Indeed, they are born somewhat ugly, and these days I have had them entertained in the Pavilion of Lingering Spring in the imperial garden. Take advantage of today: call them to the hall, give them their passport, and send them out of the city, and then we can hold the banquet in peace."

The princess kowtowed in thanks for the favor, and the king at once set out his carriage and mounted the throne, and gave the decree: "Invite the prince consort together with the three."

Now that Tang Sanzang had been counting the days on his fingers and had endured until the twelfth, before dawn he was already taking counsel with the three: "Today is the twelfth. How are we to deal with this matter?"

"The king—I have read that he has some ill luck about him," said the Pilgrim, "but it has not yet touched him, and it is no great harm. The only trouble is I have not been able to see the princess's face. If she comes out, one glance from old Sun will tell the true from the false, and only then will we act. Set your mind at ease. He is sure to send for us now and pack us out of the city. You just accept it and do not be afraid. I will dodge aside for a moment and come back, keeping close guard on you."

While master and disciples were talking, sure enough the officer in attendance and the Ceremonial Bureau came to invite them. "Let us go, let us go!" laughed the Pilgrim. "It must be that they are seeing us off, to keep the master for the marriage."

"If they are seeing us off, there will surely be a thousand or two taels of gold and silver," said Bajie, "and we can use it to buy some presents to take home. When we get to my in-laws' house, we can have another meeting of relatives and a bit of fun."

"Second Brother, hold your tongue," said the Sha Monk. "Stop your nonsense and let Eldest Brother decide."

And so they took the luggage and the horse and followed those officers to the foot of the vermilion steps.

When the king saw them, he bade the Pilgrim and the other two come forward and said: "Bring up your passport, and I will affix my treasure seal and countersign and hand it to you. Besides that, I will lay out ample traveling expenses and send you three on your way early to the Spirit Mountain to see the Buddha. If you return with the scriptures, there will be a heavy reward besides. Leave the prince consort here, and do not be anxious."

The Pilgrim thanked him and bade the Sha Monk bring out the passport and present it. The king examined it, at once applied the seal and affixed his countersign, and further took out ten ingots of gold and twenty ingots of silver, as a token of the kinship gift. Bajie, whose heart was ever set on wealth and women, went at once

and took them.

The Pilgrim gave a shout toward the throne: "Your pardon for the disturbance! Your pardon for the disturbance!" and turned to go. In a panic, Sanzang scrambled to his feet in a flurry, caught hold of the Pilgrim, and gritting his teeth, said: "So you are all going off and leaving me, without a care!"

The Pilgrim pressed Sanzang's palm and threw him a glance: "Stay here and enjoy yourself at ease. When we have fetched the scriptures, we will come back to see you."

The elder, half believing and half not, would not let go. All the officers saw it and took it that they were truly parting and going away.

Soon the king again invited the prince consort up into the hall, and ordered the officers to see the three out of the city. The elder could only let go and go up into the hall.

The Pilgrim and the other two, with the crowd, came out of the court gate and parted from them all. "Are we really going, then?" asked Bajie.

The Pilgrim said nothing, and walked on straight to the hostel. The postal official received them and served tea and laid out a meal.

The Pilgrim said to Bajie and the Sha Monk: "You two stay here, and by no means stick your heads out. Whatever the postal official asks about, answer him vaguely. Do not talk to me—I am going to protect the master."

Brave Great Sage! He plucked out a hair, blew on it with his immortal breath, and cried "Change!" It changed into a replica of himself, staying in the hostel with Bajie and the Sha Monk, while his true body flashed up into midair and changed into a honeybee—tiny and delicate indeed. One could see:

Wings of yellow, a mouth of sweetness, a tail of sharpness, It drifts and dances wildly with the wind. Best of all at sipping stamens and stealing fragrance, It sways past willows and threads through flowers. After all its bitter toil and washing, Flying here and flying there in empty bustle— The rich sweetness it brews it never tastes itself, And only leaves its name behind.

Look at him, flying lightly into the court. From afar he saw Tang Sanzang seated on an embroidered stool at the king's left, his brows drawn in sorrow and his heart full of anxiety. He flew straight to his vairochana cap, crept quietly down to his ear, and called: "Master, I have come. Do not worry."

These words were heard by Tang Sanzang alone; none of that crowd of mortals could have any inkling of them. Only when Tang Sanzang heard them did he begin to feel at ease.

In a moment a palace officer came to invite: "Long live Your Majesty! The nuptial banquet has been laid out in the Zhique Palace. Her Majesty and the princess are both in the palace awaiting you, and ask only that Your Majesty and the man of honor come to the meeting of relatives."

The king was overjoyed beyond measure and at once went into the palace together with the prince consort. Truly:

The wicked master loves the flower, and the flower brings calamity; The Zen mind is stirred to thoughts, and the thoughts give birth to sorrow.

After all, who knows how Tang Sanzang would free himself in the inner palace? Listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 95

The False in the Form of the True: The Jade Rabbit Is Seized; The True Yin Returns to the Right: The Primal Spirit Is Met

The story tells how Tang Sanzang, full of gloom and anxiety, followed the king to the rear palace, where he heard drums and music resounding to the heavens and a strange fragrance assailing his nostrils. He kept his head bowed and dared not look up. The Pilgrim, secretly delighted, perched on top of the elder's vairochana cap, mustering his divine light and opening his fiery eyes and golden pupils to look. He saw the two ranks of painted maids arrayed there like fairy maidens in the palace of the Queen Mother of the West, surpassing even the spring breeze behind embroidered curtains. Truly they were:

Graceful and slender, delicate and lissom, With bodies of jade and flesh of ice. In pairs they shamed the beauties of Chu; Two by two they outshone the lady Xi Shi. Their cloud-knotted locks rose high, pinned with flying colored phoenixes; Their mothlike brows were faintly traced, like distant hills low in the west. Flutes and strings played in mingled chorus, Pipes and drums sounded without pause. The five notes gong, shang, jue, zhi, yu Rose and fell, high and low, in perfect accord. Fresh songs and exquisite dances were ever a joy to behold; Brocade heaped and flowers massed, every hue a delight.

When the Pilgrim saw that his master was not moved in the least, he smacked his lips in private praise: "A fine monk! A fine monk! Living amid silk and splendor, his heart knows no desire; treading on jasper and jade, his mind is not led astray."

Before long, the queens and imperial concubines came crowding round the princess out of the Zhique Palace and advanced together to welcome the king, all crying: "Ten thousand years to Your Majesty! Ten thousand, ten thousand years!" This so flustered the elder that he trembled and did not know what to do. But the Pilgrim knew the truth of it already. He saw a wisp of demonic vapor faintly showing above the princess's head, though it was not very fierce. He hurriedly crept close to the elder's ear and called: "Master, this princess is a fake."

"If she is a fake," said the elder, "how can you make her show her true form?"

"I shall bring out my dharma body and seize her on the spot," said the Pilgrim.

"No, no!" said the elder. "I am afraid it would startle His Majesty. Wait until the king and the consorts have withdrawn, and then use your magic powers."

But the Pilgrim was impatient by nature and would not wait a moment. He gave a great shout, resumed his own form, sprang forward, seized the princess, and cursed: "Wicked beast! Here you are, making the false pass for the true, and after enjoying yourself like this, which should have been more than enough, you are still not satisfied—you want to deceive my master as well, to break his true yang and gratify your lewd desires!" The king stood as if struck dumb, the queens and consorts fell over each other in their scrambling flight, and not one of the palace maids or painted girls did anything but scurry into hiding, each bent on saving her own life.

It was as if:

The spring breeze blew, gently, gently; The autumn air came, sighing, sighing. The spring breeze passing over the gardens set a thousand flowers swaying; The autumn air sweeping through the paths sent ten thousand leaves drifting. The peonies were snapped off, tilting beneath the balustrades; The mallow roses were blown askew, lying by the rails. By the ponds and banks the hibiscus was tossed in confusion; On the terrace steps the chrysanthemum petals lay heaped. The crabapple, strengthless, sank into the dust; The rose, all fragrance, slept by the wild lane. The spring breeze snapped the lotus leaves, And winter snow weighed

down the tender plum buds.

Pomegranate petals Lay scattered east and west through the inner courts; Willow branches along the banks Hung slanting south and north across the imperial palace. One wild night of wind and rain for the fair flowers— Countless fallen petals broidered the ground like a carpet of silk.

Sanzang was now beside himself with fright. Trembling, he clung to the king, crying: "Do not be afraid, Your Majesty, do not be afraid! This is only my unruly disciple using his magic powers to tell the true from the false."

When the demon realized that things had gone wrong, she wrenched herself free, stripped off her outer garments, shook her head to knock loose her hairpins and ornaments, and ran straight into the little temple of the local deity in the imperial garden. There she took out a short cudgel shaped like a pestle, whirled round, and came at the Pilgrim in a fury. The Pilgrim followed close behind and met her head-on with his iron cudgel. Shouting and bawling, the two of them fought in the garden, and then, each displaying his great magic powers, they mounted their clouds and carried the battle into the air.

This battle: the gold-banded iron cudgel had its fame, but the pestle-shaped short staff no one knew. One had come to this region for the sake of the true scriptures; the other had come to dwell here for love of the strange flowers. The demon had long known of the holy monk of Tang and wanted to match with him to take his primal essence. In earlier years she had carried off the true princess and taken her form, cherishing the mortal body. Now she met the Great Sage, who saw through her demonic vapor and, to rescue the living and distinguish the false from the true, fought. The short staff struck fiercely, aiming at the head; the iron cudgel showed its might, meeting her face to face. Noisy and clamorous, the two held each other fast, their clouds filling the sky and hiding the sun.

The two of them fought and waged their battle in midair, frightening the common people of the whole city out of their wits and making every official at court tremble with fear. The elder supported the king and kept calling: "Be not alarmed! Pray tell the ladies and everyone else not to be afraid. Your princess is a false one wearing a true form. Wait until my disciple has caught her, and then you will know good from bad."

Among the imperial consorts there were some bold enough to pick up the clothes and jewelry the demon had cast off and show them to the queen, saying: "These are what the princess wore and put on. Now she has thrown them all away, and, stark naked, is fighting the monk up in the sky—she must certainly be a demon." Only then did the king, the queens, and the consorts begin to compose themselves, and they all looked up into the sky—but of that no more.

The demon and the Great Sage fought for half a day without either prevailing. The Pilgrim tossed up his cudgel, cried "Change!", and made one into ten, ten into a hundred, a hundred into a thousand. High in the sky they writhed like serpents and coiled like pythons, battering the demon without let. Flustered, the demon dodged aside, turned into a puff of clear wind, and fled straight up into the blue void. The Pilgrim recited a spell, gathered his iron cudgel back into one, and shot off in pursuit on his auspicious light.

As he neared the West Gate of Heaven, he saw banners gleaming and blazing there. The Pilgrim shouted at the top of his voice: "You guards of the Heavenly Gate, block that demon! Don't let her get away!"

And sure enough, on the gate the Protector of the Nation Heavenly King stood commanding the four great marshals Pang, Liu, Gou, and Bi, who all spread their weapons to bar the way. The demon could advance no further, so she turned sharply back and, heedless of death, fought the Pilgrim again with her short staff.

The Great Sage wielded his iron cudgel with all his might, and looking carefully as he met her, saw that the short staff was thick at one end and thin at the other, shaped just like the pestle of a springtime hulling mortar. He gave a thunderous shout: "Wicked beast! What weapon is that you hold, that you dare stand

against Old Sun? Surrender at once, or this one blow of mine will shatter your skull!"

The demon ground her teeth and said: "You know nothing of my weapon! Hear me tell of it:

A root of immortal stock, a length of white mutton-fat jade, Worn and carved into form through years past all counting. When Chaos was parted I already had it; When the primal mist was divided, mine was the first. Its source is no thing of the mortal world; Its nature was born of itself in Heaven above. One body of golden light matches the Four Images; The auspicious breath of the Five Elements joins the Three Powers. It has dwelt with me long within the Toad Palace, And kept me company by the cassia halls. For love of flowers I came down to the mortal world, And so to Tianzhu I came, a counterfeit beauty. To make merry with you I had no other thought Than to wed the monk of Tang and end a bond from a former life. How can you, with evil heart, break a happy match And press the fight in savagery, courting death? This weapon of mine is of no small name, And it comes before your gold-banded cudgel: In the Palace of Broad Cold it is the pestle that pounds the medicine— One stroke of it, and a man's life goes down to the springs!"

At this the Pilgrim laughed a cold, mocking laugh: "Wicked beast! If you have lived in the Toad Palace all along, how is it you do not know Old Sun's powers? And still you dare to brazen it out here? Show your true form and surrender at once, and I will spare your life!"

The demon said: "I know you—you are the Protector of the Horses who made that great disturbance in Heaven five hundred years ago. By rights I should yield to you. But to break up a man's marriage is a grudge like the murder of a parent, and so in all conscience I cannot give way. I mean to beat you, you Heaven-defying Protector of the Horses!"

Those words "Protector of the Horses" enraged the Great Sage. When he heard them, fury rose in his heart, and he raised his iron cudgel and struck at her face. The demon whirled her pestle to meet him, and there before the West Gate of Heaven they fought with all their might. This battle: the gold-banded cudgel, the medicine-pounding pestle—two immortal weapons truly matched. One had come down to the world to make a marriage; the other was here protecting the monk of Tang. It was all because the king had no sense of propriety, and his love of flowers had delighted the demon. And so today they fought in bitter hatred, both sides stirring up their stubborn hearts. They charged and clashed, wagering for victory, bandying taunts and curses as they wrangled. The pestle's prowess was rarely seen on earth, but the iron cudgel's godlike might was finer still. Golden light glimmered, dazzling the Heavenly Gate; colored mists shone, reaching down to the earth. Back and forth they fought a dozen bouts, until the demon, her strength failing, could hardly hold her ground.

After the demon had fought the Pilgrim another dozen or so bouts, she saw how tightly his cudgel was closing in and knew she could not win. She flung her pestle in a feint, shook her body, and in a blaze of ten thousand rays of golden light fled in defeat due south. The Great Sage pursued her, and presently came to a great mountain. The demon landed her golden light, slipped into a mountain cave, and vanished without a trace. Fearing she might make her way back to the kingdom by another road and secretly harm Tang Sanzang, he marked the shape of the mountain, turned his cloud around, and went straight back to the kingdom. By then it was the hour of the Monkey.

The king was still clinging to Sanzang, trembling, and crying: "Holy monk, save me!" The queens and consorts were still in their panic, when they saw the Great Sage drop down out of the clouds and call: "Master, here I am!"

"Wukong, stand still and do not startle His Majesty," said Sanzang. "Let me ask you: what, in the end, is this business of the false princess?"

Standing outside the Zhique Palace with his hands clasped before his chest, the Pilgrim said: "The false princess is a demon. First I fought her for half a day, and when she could not prevail against me, she turned

into a puff of clear wind and made straight for the Heavenly Gate. It was I who shouted to the heavenly hosts to block her. When she showed her own form again, she fought me for another dozen bouts, and then turned her body into a beam of golden light and fled in defeat to a mountain due south. I chased her there at once, but could find no trace of her. Fearing she might come back here to harm you, I turned around and came back specially."

When the king heard this, he tugged at Tang Sanzang and asked: "Since the false princess is a demon, where is my true princess?"

The Pilgrim answered promptly: "Wait until I have caught the false princess, and your true princess will come of herself." When the queens and consorts heard this, their fears were all dispelled, and they came forward one after another to bow and plead: "We beg the holy monks to rescue our true princess and separate the dark from the light—we shall surely reward you heavily."

"This is no place for us to talk," said the Pilgrim. "I beg Your Majesty to leave the palace with my master and go up into the hall. Let the ladies each return to their own apartments. Summon my younger brothers Bajie and the Sha Monk to come and protect my master, and then I can go and subdue the demon. In this way, first, the inner and the outer will be kept apart, and second, I shall be free of anxiety. I shall make all clear and show the worth of my labors."

The king followed his advice, thanking him without cease, and walked out of the palace hand in hand with Tang Sanzang, straight to the great hall, while the queens and consorts each returned to their own quarters.

On the one hand the king ordered vegetarian fare prepared, and on the other he summoned Bajie and the Sha Monk. In a moment the two had arrived. The Pilgrim told them everything that had gone before and charged them to guard their master with all their hearts. Then the Great Sage mounted his somersault cloud and flew away into the sky, while all the officials before the hall bowed toward the sky in worship—but of that no more.

The Great Sage went straight to the mountain in the due south to search. Now, when the demon had been defeated, she had come to this mountain and slipped into her lair, blocking the door with stones, hiding in fear and not daring to come out. The Pilgrim searched for a while and saw no sign of movement. In great irritation he made the magic sign, recited the true spell, and summoned the local deity and the mountain god of that mountain for questioning.

Before long the two gods arrived and kowtowed: "We did not know, we did not know! Had we known, we should have come out to greet you from afar. We beseech you, forgive our offense!"

"I won't beat you for now," said the Pilgrim. "I'll ask you: what is the name of this mountain? How many demons are there here? Tell me the truth, and I'll pardon your offense."

The two gods reported: "Great Sage, this mountain is called Mount Maoying. In the mountain there are only three rabbit burrows. Since ancient times down to today there have been no demons here at all—it is a blessed land of the Five Links. If the Great Sage wants to find demons, there are plenty along the road to the Western Heaven."

The Pilgrim said: "Old Sun has reached the Kingdom of Tianzhu in the Western Heaven. The king there had a princess who was carried off by a demon and flung into the wilderness. The demon then took the princess's form, made a fool of the king, set up a bower of colored silks, and threw a silk ball, hoping to take a prince consort. As I was escorting the monk of Tang beneath her tower, she deliberately struck the monk of Tang with the ball, meaning to make him her husband and lure away his primal yang. I saw through the plot, appeared in the palace, and went to seize her. She then threw off her human clothes and ornaments, took out a short staff called the medicine-pounding pestle, fought me for half a day, and then turned into a clear wind

and fled. Old Sun chased her to the West Gate of Heaven, where we fought another dozen bouts. Knowing she could not win, she changed again into a beam of golden light and fled here—how can she not be found?"

Hearing this, the two gods led the Pilgrim to search the three burrows. When they came first to the burrow at the foot of the mountain and looked, they saw a few wild rabbits there, which fled in fright. When they searched the burrow at the very summit, they saw two great boulders blocking the mouth of the cave.

"This is certainly where the demon slipped in in a hurry," said the local deity. The Pilgrim at once prized the boulders apart with his iron cudgel, and sure enough the demon was hiding inside. With a whoosh she leapt out and raised her medicine pestle to strike. The Pilgrim whirled his iron cudgel to block her, so frightening the mountain god that he reeled backward and the local deity that he fled in panic. The demon, muttering and grumbling, cursed the mountain god and the local deity: "Who told you to bring him here to look for me?"

Gritting her teeth, she held her pestle against the iron cudgel, fighting and retreating, until the fight drifted up into the air. Just as she was in dire straits, it had grown late in the day.

The Pilgrim, more savage still, struck with deadly intent, longing to kill her with one blow, when suddenly from amid the highest heavens someone called: "Great Sage, stay your hand! Stay your hand! Show mercy beneath your cudgel!"

The Pilgrim turned to look, and it was the Star Lady of the Moon herself, followed by the fairy maidens of Chang'e, descending on colored clouds to his very front.

In a flurry the Pilgrim put away his iron cudgel, bowed, and said: "Old Star Lady, where do you come from? Old Sun failed to keep out of your way."

"This demon you have been fighting," said the Star Lady of the Moon, "is the jade rabbit of my Palace of Broad Cold, the one who pounds the immortal elixir of Dark Frost. She secretly broke the jade locks and golden bolts and stole out of the palace, and a whole year has passed since. I have calculated that at present she is fated to meet a fatal disaster, and so I have come especially to save her life. I beg the Great Sage, for my sake, to spare her."

The Pilgrim assented with repeated bows, saying: "I dare not do otherwise! No wonder she can wield the medicine-pounding pestle—so she is a jade rabbit after all! But the old Star Lady does not know: she carried off the daughter of the King of Tianzhu and hid her away, and then put on the true form, meaning to break the primal yang of my holy master. Is there no crime in that? How can we lightly forgive her?"

"You do not know either," said the Star Lady of the Moon. "The king's princess is no ordinary mortal either—she was originally Su'e of the Toad Palace. Eighteen years ago, she once struck the jade rabbit a blow with her hand, and then she conceived a longing for the mortal world and came down to earth. A single beam of her spirit entered the womb of the principal queen of the king, and she was born at the proper time. The jade rabbit, nursing the grudge of that blow, therefore left the Palace of Broad Cold last year and flung Su'e out into the wilderness. But she should not have thought of wedding the monk of Tang—that is a crime indeed that cannot be forgiven. Fortunately you kept your wits about you and saw through the true and the false, and your master came to no harm. I beg you, for my sake, to forgive her fault. I shall take her back with me."

The Pilgrim laughed: "Since there is this chain of cause and effect, Old Sun dares not disobey. But if you take the jade rabbit away, I fear the king will not believe it. Might I trouble the Star Lady, together with all the fairy maidens, to bring the jade rabbit to that place and prove it clearly before the king—first, to show Old Sun's skill, and second, to explain the causes of Su'e's descent to earth? Then the king may bring back the body of the princess Su'e, to show the meaning of this manifest retribution."

The Star Lady of the Moon took his words to heart. Pointing at the demon with her hand, she cried: "Wicked beast, will you not yet return to the right and come with me!" The jade rabbit rolled over and resumed her true form. Truly:

A split lip, sharp teeth, Long ears, sparse whiskers. Her body curled in a ball, fur white as jade; Her legs stretched out, her feet flew over a thousand hills. A straight nose with a dewy tip, truly outdoing frost's white powder; Eyes twin crimson pools, as if rouge were dotted upon snow. Crouched on the ground, a pile of white silk; Stretching her back, a frame of silver thread. Many a time she sipped the clear dew till the jade sky dawned— The wondrous jade pestle that pounds the medicine of long life.

The Great Sage was delighted at the sight. Treading his cloud of light, he led the way, while the Star Lady of the Moon, guiding the fairy maidens of Chang'e and carrying the jade rabbit, went straight back to the borders of the Kingdom of Tianzhu. By this time dusk had fallen and the moon was just rising. As they drew near the city wall, they heard the drums on the watchtower rolling. The king and Tang Sanzang were still in the great hall, and Bajie, the Sha Monk, and all the officials were before the steps, just discussing the ending of court, when they saw a great patch of colored cloud due south, bright as daylight.

As everyone looked up, they heard the Great Sage Sun shouting at the top of his voice: "Majesty of Tianzhu, pray bring out your queen and imperial consorts to look! Beneath this jeweled canopy is the Star Lady of the Moon of the moon palace, and the fairy sisters on either side are the Chang'e of the moon. This jade rabbit here is your false princess, now showing her true form!"

The king hurriedly summoned the queen, the consorts, the palace maids, and the painted girls, and they all bowed in worship toward Heaven, while he, Tang Sanzang, and all the officials also bowed and gave thanks toward the sky. In the whole city there was not one household that did not set out incense tables and knock their heads in worship, calling on Buddha.

While everyone was watching, Zhu Bajie was stirred by lewd desire and could not contain himself. He leapt up into the air, threw his arms around the Fairy of Rainbow Robes, and said: "Sister, you and I are old acquaintances. Come, let you and me go and have some fun!"

The Pilgrim came up, seized Bajie, gave him two slaps, and cursed: "You boorish blockhead! What place do you think this is, that you dare stir up your lewd heart!"

"I was only passing the time with a bit of small talk!" said Bajie.

The Star Lady of the Moon ordered the fairy canopy turned about, and with the Chang'e maidens took back the jade rabbit and went straight up to the moon palace. The Pilgrim dragged Bajie down into the dust.

Then the king, on the dais, thanked the Pilgrim and asked further about the cause: "Much obliged to the divine monk for his great magic in seizing the false princess. But where is my true princess?"

"That true princess of yours is no mortal child either," said the Pilgrim. "She is Su'e, the fairy of the moon palace. Because eighteen years ago she struck the jade rabbit a blow with her hand, she conceived a longing for the mortal world and came down, entering the womb of your principal queen and being born into this world. The jade rabbit, nursing the old grudge, therefore stole out through the jade locks and golden bolts last year, carried off Su'e, and flung her into the wilderness, while it changed its form to deceive you. This whole chain of cause and effect was told me by the Star Lady of the Moon in her own person. Now that the false one is gone, tomorrow let the imperial carriage go and seek the true one."

When the king heard this, his heart sank with shame and sorrow, and he could not hold back the tears streaming down his cheeks: "My child! I have sat on the throne since I was a boy and have never once gone outside the city gate—where am I to go to look for you?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "No need for worry. Your princess is at this moment feigning madness in the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold. Let everyone disperse for now, and by daybreak I shall give you back your true princess."

All the officials prostrated themselves and memorialized: "Let Your Majesty's mind be at ease. These divine monks are gods and Buddhas who ride the clouds and mists; they must know the causes of past and future. Tomorrow we need only ask the four divine monks to go in search together, and we shall know the whole matter."

The king followed their advice, and invited them to the Pavilion of Lingering Spring, where a vegetarian banquet was laid and they rested for the night. It was now close to the second watch, and truly:

The copper clepsydra drips, the moonlight is bright; The golden bells tinkle, borne on the wind. The cuckoo cries, for spring is half gone; Falling petals mark the road to the third watch. In the imperial garden the swing's shadow lies lonely; The azure void hangs empty, the Silver River stretched across. The three markets and six streets have no passers-by; All night long the stars shine clear.

That night each went to his rest. The king, his demonic vapor dispelled, suddenly regained his spirit, and at the third drum of the fifth watch he came out again to hold court.

When the audience was over, he ordered that the four monks of Tang be summoned to discuss the search for the princess. The elder came in attendance and performed the ritual of reverence toward the throne, while the Great Sage and his two companions gave a salutation together.

Rising in his seat, the king said: "The matter of my daughter the princess spoken of yesterday—might I trouble the divine monks to search her out and rescue her?"

The elder said: "Your poor monk came from the east the day before yesterday and, as the day was drawing to a close, saw a Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold and went in especially to beg lodging, and was fortunate in the welcome of the monks there. That night, after the vegetarian meal, I was strolling idly in the moonlight, and walked to the old garden of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold to look at the foundations, when suddenly a sound of weeping came to my ears. When I asked the cause, an old monk of that monastery, more than a hundred years of age, dismissed everyone about him and told me the whole matter in detail, saying: 'The weeping comes, at the height of last spring, when I was sitting in the moonlight in my own illumination, and suddenly a gust of wind arose, and with it the sound of bitter lament. When I got up and went to the site of the old garden to look, there was a young woman. When I asked her the reason, she said: "I am the daughter of the King of the Kingdom of Tianzhu. Because I was enjoying the moon and the flowers by night, the wind carried me to this place."' That old monk, well versed in human propriety, locked the princess in a quiet, out-of-the-way room, and for fear that the unruly monks of his monastery would defile her, told everyone only that a demon had been locked up by him. The princess understood his meaning: by day she talked nonsense and begged a little tea and rice; and deep in the night, where no one was about, she wept for her parents in longing. The old monk also came several times to the capital to make inquiries, and seeing the princess safe in the palace, dared not speak of it in a memorial. Then, because he saw that my disciples had some magic powers, that old monk charged me over and over to come here and make inquiry. Who would have thought that she was originally the jade rabbit of the Toad Palace turned demon, putting on the true form and changing into the shape of the princess—and that she even had a mind to break my primal yang! Thanks to my disciples' show of might and magic, the true was told from the false, and now she has been taken away by the Star Lady of the Moon. The worthy princess is at this moment feigning madness in the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold."

When the king heard such a detailed account, he burst into loud weeping.

His cries soon roused the Three Palaces and Six Courts, and they all came to ask the cause. There was not one who did not weep bitterly. After a long while, the king asked again: "How far is the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans from the city?"

"It is only sixty li," said Sanzang.

The king then issued his decree: "Let the Eastern and Western Palaces guard the palace, and the Grand Preceptor in charge of state affairs protect the kingdom. I myself, with the principal queen, leading all the officials and the four divine monks, shall go to the monastery to fetch the princess."

Then the imperial carriage was prepared and the whole company set out from court. And just see the Pilgrim: he leapt into the air, gave his waist a twist, and was at the monastery before anyone else.

The monks all knelt in haste to receive him: "When you left, sir, you were walking with the rest—how is it that today you come down from the sky?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Where is your old abbot? Quickly call him out and set up an incense table to receive the imperial carriage. The King of Tianzhu, the queen, all the officials, and my master are coming." The monks did not understand what he meant, but they at once brought out the old monk. When the old monk saw the Pilgrim, he prostrated himself and bowed: "Sir, how goes the matter of the princess?"

The Pilgrim told him everything in full: how the false princess had thrown the silk ball meaning to wed the monk of Tang, how he had pursued and fought her, and how the Star Lady of the Moon had taken away the jade rabbit.

The old monk again knocked his head and bowed in thanks. The Pilgrim raised him up, saying: "Do not bow yet, do not bow yet! Quickly make ready to receive the imperial carriage."

Only then did the monks realize that what was locked in the rear room was a young woman. Filled with mingled surprise and joy, they set out incense tables before the monastery gate, put on their cassocks, struck up the bells and drums, and waited. Before long the imperial carriage arrived. Truly:

Colored auspicious clouds in profusion, fragrance filling the sky, A lone wild mountain suddenly bathed in grace. Rainbows streamed for a thousand years, cleansing rivers and seas; Lightning curled about eternal spring, outshining Yu and Tang. The grass and trees, touched by favor, put on fresh beauty; The wild flowers, moistened, gave out yet more fragrance. Of old the elder left his traces here; Today, how glad, a wise king comes down to the jeweled hall.

When the king reached the monastery gate, he saw the monks all standing neatly in rows, prostrating themselves in welcome, and there in their midst stood Sun the Pilgrim. The king said: "Divine monk, how is it you arrived here first?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old Sun just gave his waist a little twist, and there he was. How is it you all took half a day to make the journey?" Then Tang Sanzang and the rest arrived.

The elder led the imperial carriage round to the room at the back, where the princess was still feigning madness and talking wildly. The old monk knelt and pointed: "Inside this room is the princess who was blown here by the wind last year."

The king ordered the door opened at once. The iron lock was smashed and the door swung open. When the king and the queen saw the princess, they recognized her features. Caring nothing for her filth and squalor, they rushed forward and clasped her in their arms: "Our child, who has suffered so! How did you come to endure such torment and suffer here!"

Truly, the meeting of parent and child is different from any other—the three of them held each other and wept aloud. After they had wept a while and finished telling all the griefs of their separation, the king ordered fragrant hot water brought, and bade the princess bathe, change her clothes, and mount the carriage to return to the kingdom.

The Pilgrim then saluted the king with folded hands: "Old Sun has one more matter to lay before you."

The king returned the courtesy: "If the divine monk has anything to command, I shall obey at once."

"This mountain here is called Hundred-Legs Mountain," said the Pilgrim. "Of late it is said that centipedes have turned demon, harming people by night, and travelers coming and going find it very inconvenient. I think centipedes can only be subdued by chickens. Select a thousand huge cocks, turn them loose in the mountain, and rid it of these poisonous insects. And you might also change the name of the mountain, and grant a written decree of royal appointment—that may serve as thanks to these monks for sheltering and keeping the princess."

The king was greatly pleased and accepted the suggestion. He at once sent officers into the city to fetch chickens; and he changed the mountain's name to Precious Flower Mountain, ordered the Board of Works to supply materials for its rebuilding, and bestowed a title upon it, calling it "The Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold on Precious Flower Mountain, Founded by Imperial Decree." The old monk was enfeoffed as "Monk-Official Who Serves the Realm," hereditary forever, with a salary of thirty-six bushels of grain. The monks thanked the king for his grace, and escorted the carriage back to court. The princess entered the palace and was reunited with all; a banquet was laid to cheer her and congratulate her. The consorts and the mother and child were together again in a happy circle, and the king and his ministers rejoiced and feasted the whole night through—but of that no more.

The next morning, the king issued a decree summoning painters to draw the happy likenesses of the four holy monks, to be enshrined on the Tower of All Realms. He also asked that the princess, in fresh array, come out of the palace and thank the four monks of Tang for the grace of their deliverance. When the thanks were done, Tang Sanzang took his leave of the king to go west. But the king would by no means let him go. He laid on a great feast, and for five or six days running the blockhead Bajie had the best of it, opening his belly wide and enjoying himself to the full.

Seeing that their hearts were set on worshiping the Buddha and that no urging could keep them, the king took out two hundred ingots of gold and silver and a platter each of precious things as a thank-offering, but master and disciples would not accept a single jot. He ordered the imperial carriage prepared and invited the reverend master to mount it, and dispatched officers to escort him far along the way, while the consorts, the ministers, and the people all knocked their heads in thanks without end. When they came to the road ahead, they saw the monks of the monastery kneeling to see them off, none of them able to bear the parting.

Seeing that those who had come to see them off would not turn back, the Pilgrim had no choice but to make the magic sign, blow a breath of immortal air toward the quarter of Xun, and raise a dark wind that blinded the eyes of all who had come to send them off—and only then could they escape and go on their way. This is truly:

Washed clean in the waves of grace, they return to their true natures; Escaping the sea of gold, they awaken to the true Void.

If you do not know what lay ahead on the road, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 96

Elder Kou Joyfully Entertains the Eminent Monks; The Elder of Tang Does Not Covet Wealth and Rank

All forms in their origin are formless; Emptiness itself is not truly empty. In stillness and clamor, speech and silence, it is all the same from the first; Within a dream, why labor to speak of dreams? Within the useful, the useless has its use; Within the meritless, merit still works its work. It is like fruit that reddens of itself when ripe— Ask not how it was planted and tended.

This story tells how Tang Sanzang and his disciples used their magic powers to hold back the monks of the Monastery of the Elder of the Orphans Who Spread the Gold. When the monks saw that in the wake of the black wind the four pilgrims had vanished without a trace, they took them for living Buddhas come down to earth, knocked their heads in worship, and returned—but of that no more.

Master and disciples pressed westward, and it was just the season when spring was ending and summer beginning: air clear and mild, lotus sprouting in the ponds. The plums ripened after the rain; the wheat grew ripe with the wind. Where the grass was fragrant, the flowers had fallen; the orioles were growing old among the willow branches. River swallows were training their young in flight; mountain pheasants called as they fed their chicks. The Dipper pointed south, the days stretched long, and all things shone bright in the light. Morning meals and evening lodgings, winding round ravines and seeking out slopes—there was no telling it all. On that peaceful road they traveled for half a month, until another city wall drew near ahead.

"Disciples," asked Sanzang, "what place is this?"

"I don't know, I don't know," said the Pilgrim.

Bajie laughed: "This road is one you've traveled before. How can you say you don't know? There's something fishy here—you're pretending not to recognize it, just to make fools of us."

"This blockhead understands nothing at all!" said the Pilgrim. "It's true I've passed this way a few times, but always in the high heavens, coming on my cloud and going on my cloud. When did I ever set foot on this ground? What doesn't concern us doesn't need inquiring into—that's why I don't know. What's fishy about that? Who's making a fool of you?"

While they were talking, before they knew it they had reached the outskirts. Sanzang dismounted, crossed the drawbridge, and went straight through the gate. On the main street he saw two old men sitting in conversation beneath a colonnade. Sanzang called: "Disciples, stand still in the middle of the street, keep your heads down, and do not be unruly. Wait while I go to the colonnade and ask the way." The Pilgrim and the others indeed stood where they were told. The elder drew near, pressed his palms together, and said: "Old benefactors, your poor monk salutes you."

The two old men, who had been idly discussing the rise and fall of things, which were the sages and which the worthies, and what had become of the heroic deeds of their day—truly a matter for great sighs—suddenly heard themselves saluted, and returned the courtesy: "What has the reverend elder to say?"

"Your poor monk has come from afar to worship the Buddha," said Sanzang. "Having just reached your honorable region, I know not what place it is. Might there be some household here given to goodness, where I could beg a vegetarian meal?"

"Our humble region is the Prefecture of Tongtai," said the old man, "and behind the prefecture there is a county called the county of Diling. If the reverend elder wants a meal, you needn't beg for alms at all. Past this memorial arch, on the north-south street, facing east, there is a gatehouse in the crouching-tiger

style—that is the house of Elder Kou. In front of his gate hangs a sign reading 'Ten Thousand Monks Never Refused.' A distant monk like you can enjoy yourself to the full there. Go! Go! Go! Don't break off our conversation."

Sanzang thanked him, turned, and said to the Pilgrim: "This is the county of Diling in the Prefecture of Tongtai. Those two old men said: 'Past this memorial arch, on the north-south street, there is a gatehouse in the crouching-tiger style facing east, the house of Elder Kou, with a sign in front reading Ten Thousand Monks Never Refused.' They told me to go to his house for a meal."

"The Western Land is a land of Buddhists," said the Sha Monk. "There really are those who feed monks. Since this is a prefectural seat and a county town, there is no need to examine our travel permit. Let us go and beg a meal, and when we have eaten, we can be on our way."

The elder and his three companions walked slowly up the long street, and once more drew the townsfolk about the market into gasps of fear and whispered guesswork as they crowded round to stare at their faces. The elder ordered them to hold their tongues: "No rudeness! No rudeness!" And indeed the three kept their heads down and did not dare look up.

When they had turned the corner, they saw a great north-south street. As they walked along, they saw a gatehouse in the crouching-tiger style, and inside the gate, on the screen wall, hung a great placard bearing four characters: "Ten Thousand Monks Never Refused."

"The Western Land is a land of Buddhas," said Sanzang, "where neither the wise nor the foolish practice deceit. When those two old men told me, I still did not believe it; but having come here, it is just as they said."

Bajie, in his boorish way, made to go straight in.

"Hold on, blockhead," said the Pilgrim. "Wait until someone comes out and we have asked how things stand—only then will it be proper to go in."

"Eldest Brother speaks sense," said the Sha Monk. "I am afraid that if we go in without distinguishing inside from outside, we may give the benefactor offense."

So they tethered the horse and set down the luggage at the gate. In a moment an old servant came out carrying a steelyard and a basket. Catching sight of them, he was so startled that he dropped both and ran inside, crying: "Master! Four monks of strange appearance have come to the house!"

The elder Kou, leaning on his staff and pacing idly in the courtyard, his lips never ceasing to repeat the Buddha's name, threw down his staff at once when he heard the report and came out to welcome them. Seeing the four, he was not put off by their ugliness, but cried: "Come in, please come in." Sanzang, all courtesy and humility, went in with the rest.

Turning down an alley, with the elder Kou leading the way, they came to a hall. "The buildings on the upper side," he said, "are the Buddha hall, the scripture hall, and the refectory for entertaining you gentlemen. The lower side is where I and my family dwell."

Sanzang praised it endlessly, then took out his cassock, put it on, and worshiped the Buddha. He stepped up into the hall to look about, and saw:

Incense clouds thick and dense, candle flames blazing bright. The whole hall was heaped brocade and massed flowers; On every side gold was spread and color hung. On lacquered crimson racks hung bells of purple gold on high; On painted stands stood pairs of flowery-sheathed drums. Several pairs of banners, embroidered with the eight treasures; A thousand Buddhas, all gilt with gold. Ancient bronze incense burners; ancient bronze vases; Carved lacquer tables; carved lacquer boxes. Within the ancient bronze

burners, sandalwood and aloes ever burning; Within the ancient bronze vases, lotus flowers ever blooming in color. On the carved lacquer tables, the five-colored clouds were fresh; In the carved lacquer boxes, heaps of fragrant petals lay. A crystal chalice held clear pure water; A glass lamp burned with bright sesame oil. One stroke of the golden chime, and its clear note lingered slow. Truly, a tower to rival the treasures of the world, untouched by the dust of the world; A family shrine to Buddha that outdid the great monasteries.

The elder washed his hands, took up incense, and after knocking his head in worship, turned back and bowed to Elder Kou.

"Wait a moment!" said the elder Kou. "Pray come into the scripture hall and meet there."

There they saw:

Square tables and upright cabinets, jade caskets and gold cases. On the square tables and upright cabinets were piled countless scriptures; In the jade caskets and gold cases were stored many scrolls and letters. On the lacquered tables, paper, brushes, ink, and inkstones— all the fine implements of a study, exquisite and refined. Before the pepper-red screens, books, paintings, lute, and chessboard— all the subtle and mysterious delights of art. There hung a bell of light jade and floating gold; There hung a dragon-whisker staff to screen wind and moon. The clear air refreshed the spirit; The vegetarian heart found the Way's calm of itself.

The elder was just about to bow when Elder Kou caught him by the arm: "Pray lay aside your Buddhist robe." Sanzang took off his cassock, and only then did he greet Elder Kou, who then asked to meet the three pilgrims, ordered the horse fed, and the luggage set in the corridor. Only then did he ask how they had fared.

"Your poor monk is an imperial envoy of the great Tang empire of the Eastern Land," said Sanzang, "come to your honorable region to visit Spirit Mountain and see the Buddha and seek the true scriptures. Hearing that your honored house is a patron of monks, I came to pay my respects and beg a vegetarian meal, and then I shall be on my way."

A look of joy spread over the elder's face, and he said with a smile: "Your disciple's humble name is Kou Hong, style name Dakuan, sixty-four years of age this year. From the age of forty I vowed to feed ten thousand monks, and only now has the vow come to its fulfillment. It is twenty-four years since I began, and I keep an account book of the monks I have fed. Of late, having nothing to do, I counted up the monks I have fed: already nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-six. Four only were lacking to complete the ten thousand. And today, as luck would have it, Heaven has sent down your four reverend masters, exactly completing the number of ten thousand monks! Pray let me keep your honored names, and by all means stay a month or more. When the vow is fulfilled, your disciple will send you up the mountain by sedan chair or on horseback. From here to Spirit Mountain is only eight hundred li—it is not far at all."

At these words Sanzang was delighted beyond measure, and they all accepted for the time being.

Now the serving boys, great and small, carried firewood and drew water in the house, fetched rice, flour, and vegetables, and prepared the vegetarian offerings. Their bustle startled the elder's wife, who asked: "What monks have come, that you hurry about so?"

"There are four eminent monks come," said the servant boys. "Father asked how they had fared, and they said they were sent by the emperor of the great Tang of the Eastern Land to worship the Buddha at Spirit Mountain. How far they have come to our house, there is no telling. Father says they have been sent down by Heaven, and has ordered us to prepare a feast at once and make offerings to them."

Hearing this, the old lady was pleased too, and told her maids: "Fetch my clothes—I want to put them on and go and see them too."

"Goodwife," said the servant boys, "only one of them is fit to be seen. The other three are not—their faces are hideous beyond measure."

"You don't understand," said the old lady. "If their looks are strange and outlandish, weird and striking, they must be celestial beings come down to earth. Run quickly and tell your master."

The servant boy ran to the scripture hall and said to Elder Kou: "The goodwife is coming. She wants to pay her respects to the reverend masters of the Eastern Land." Hearing this, Sanzang rose at once from his seat.

Before the words were well out, the old lady had arrived at the scripture hall. She raised her eyes and saw Tang Sanzang's imposing bearing and noble grace; then she turned her head and saw the extraordinary looks of the three pilgrims. Though she knew they were celestial beings come down to earth, she was still somewhat afraid, and knelt to bow toward them. Sanzang hastily returned the courtesy: "We are beholden to the Bodhisattva for her courtesy."

The old lady asked Elder Kou: "The four masters—why do they not all sit together?"

Pursing his lips, Bajie said: "We three are disciples." Alack! His voice was like the roar of a tiger in the deep mountains, and the good lady was more frightened still.

Just as she was speaking, another servant boy came in to report: "Your two nephews have come too." Sanzang hastily turned to look, and saw two young scholars. The scholars came up into the scripture hall and prostrated themselves before the elder, so startling Sanzang that he hurriedly returned the bow. Elder Kou came forward and held them back: "These are my two sons, called Kou Liang and Kou Dong. They were reading in the study and have just come home for their midday meal. Hearing that the reverend master had arrived, they came to pay their respects."

Sanzang was delighted: "Excellent! Excellent! Truly, to raise the standing of a household one must do good, and to have fine sons and grandsons one must study."

The two scholars addressed their father: "Where does this reverend gentleman come from?"

Elder Kou laughed: "From a far place indeed—from the great Tang empire of the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa in the Eastern Land, sent by the emperor to worship the Buddha and fetch scriptures at Spirit Mountain."

"In the Forest of Events," said the scholars, "I have read that there are only four great continents under Heaven. This region of ours is called the Western Continent of Cattle-Gift, and there is also the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. One wonders how many ages it must have taken to travel from the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa to here."

Sanzang laughed: "Your poor monk spent more days in delay on the road than days in traveling. We were constantly beset by venomous demons and fierce monsters, in hardships beyond counting. Very much thanks to the protection of my three disciples, a full fourteen cycles of cold and heat have passed before I reached your honorable region."

At these words the scholars praised him without end: "Divine monks indeed! Divine monks indeed!" Before they had finished, another young servant came to invite them: "The vegetarian banquet is laid. Pray come in and eat."

Elder Kou sent his wife and sons back to their own quarters, and himself accompanied the four pilgrims into the refectory. The spread there was neatly set out, and one could see:

Gold-lacquered tables and black-lacquered chairs. In front, five colored dishes of piled fruits, freshly fashioned in the latest style by skilled hands. A second row of five plates of pickled vegetables; A third row

of five dishes of fruit; A fourth row of five great plates of snacks. Every one sweet, every one fragrant. Vegetable soup and rice, steamed rolls and buns, hot and steaming, all mouth-watering and truly filling. Seven or eight serving boys hurried back and forth; Four or five cooks never rested their hands.

Just look at them: one ladles the soup, another adds rice, back and forth like shooting stars chasing the moon. And Bajie, a bowl at each gulp, swept through it all like a whirlwind scattering clouds. Master and disciples enjoyed the meal to the full. When they had finished, the elder rose and thanked Elder Kou for the meal, and was about to take the road.

But Elder Kou barred his way: "Reverend master, rest here for a few days at ease. As the saying goes, beginning is easy, ending is hard. Only after I have made my vow complete will I dare see you off on your journey."

Sanzang, seeing the sincerity and earnestness of his heart, had no choice but to stay.

Some five or seven days had passed when Elder Kou invited the twenty-four monks who served the local Buddhist services to perform the rites of fulfilling the vow. Those monks took three or four days over their writings and ceremonies, and then, having chosen an auspicious hour, opened the Buddhist rites. In much the same fashion as the customs of the great Tang, they did indeed:

Raise banners on high, spread out the golden images; Hold candles in rank, burn incense in offering. Beat the drums and clash the cymbals. Blow the sheng and finger the pipes. Cloud-gongs and transverse flutes, their notes clear, All in proper scale and key.

They struck up one tune and blew another, opening the scriptures with clear, unison voices. First they settled the earth gods, then they invited the generals of the unseen. They dispatched their written documents and worshiped the images of Buddha. They recited the Peacock Sutra, and every line dissolved calamity and obstruction; they lit the Medicine Buddha's lamp, and flame after flame blazed bright. They performed the Water Penance, to undo wrongs and grudges; they chanted the Flower Garland, to clear away slander.

The sublime law of the three vehicles was practiced with great devotion, And all the monks, one and all, took part alike.

In this manner three days and nights were passed, and the rites of the vow's fulfillment were complete. Tang Sanzang, thinking of the Thunderclap, was set on going, and took his leave again. "You are leaving in such haste, reverend master," said Elder Kou. "I suppose the bustle of these days of Buddhist rites, with so much neglect on our part, has given you cause for offense?"

"Your honored house has done us a deep kindness," said Sanzang, "and I know not how to repay it—how should I dare speak of offense! But when the holy emperor saw me out of the pass, he asked when I would return, and I answered, in my rashness, that I should be back in three years. Who would have thought the road would delay me so—it is already fourteen years! Whether the scriptures are to be had or not, I know not; and if I am to return, it will take twelve or thirteen years more. Would that not be to disobey the imperial decree? What crime could atone for it? I beg the old benefactor to let your poor monk go. When I have fetched the scriptures, I shall come back to your house and stay a long time—would that not do?"

Bajie could no longer hold back and called out loudly: "Master is altogether too contrary and inhuman! The old benefactor is a great and wealthy man who vowed to feed monks, and now the vow is complete; and since he keeps us with such sincerity, we might well stay a year or so—what harm could it do? Why must you be forever going? Here you have this fine ready-made feast spread before you and won't eat it, but would rather go begging at other people's doors! Is there some grandpa or grandma of yours waiting up ahead?"

The elder gave a scolding shout: "You dolt! All you know is eating, and you don't care at all about the causes and rewards of merit. You're just a beast that eats at the trough and scratches its belly in the stable! Since you

are all so greedy and so foolish, tomorrow I shall go on by myself!"

Seeing the master's face change, the Pilgrim seized Bajie and beat him over the head with his fists, cursing: "Blockhead, you know nothing of what's good for you! You've made the master angry with all of us!"

"Hit him well, hit him well!" laughed the Sha Monk. "Even when he keeps quiet he's a nuisance, and here he must put his oar in again!"

The blockhead, puffed with anger, stood to one side and dared not speak again.

Seeing master and disciples at odds, Elder Kou could only put on a smile and say: "Reverend master, do not fret. Bear with us a little today. Tomorrow I shall prepare banners and drums, and invite the neighbors and kinsfolk, and see you off on your journey."

While they were speaking, the old lady came out again: "Reverend master, since you have been so kind as to come to our house, you need not plead so hard to leave. How many days is it now since you came?"

"It is already half a month," said Sanzang.

"Those half month count toward my husband's merit," said the old lady. "But I too have saved a little of my needlework money, and I am willing to feed the reverend masters for another half month."

Before she had done speaking, Kou Dong and his brother came out again: "Four reverend masters, our father has fed monks for more than twenty years and never met good men among them. Now, in the happy fulfillment of his vow, you four have come down among us—truly a thatched cottage given luster. We are young and know nothing of cause and effect, but we have heard it said: what the husband cultivates, the husband reaps; what the wife cultivates, the wife reaps; and what one does not cultivate, one does not reap. When my father and mother each wish to offer their humble gifts, they are each seeking their own share of merit—why must you refuse so hard? Even we brothers have saved a little from our school fees, and we only hope to support the reverend masters for half a month before seeing you off."

"Your honorable mother the old Bodhisattva showed us such favor that I dared not accept it," said Sanzang; "and now to be so loved by you worthy brothers as well? I truly dare not accept. Today I must by all means set out. Do not take offense, I beg you—for otherwise, overstaying the imperial limit, I should be guilty of a crime no death could atone for."

When the old lady and her two sons saw that he was obstinately set on going, they grew angry: "We kept him with the best of intentions, and he is so stubborn he must go! Well, if he must go, let him go! Why all this droning on!" And mother and sons withdrew.

Bajie could not keep his mouth shut, and said to Tang Sanzang: "Master, don't carry it too far. As the saying goes: stay, and you'll be blamed for staying. Let us stay a month and fulfill the wishes of mother and sons. Why must you be in such a rush?"

The elder gave another scolding shout, and the blockhead slapped his own mouth twice: "Pah! Pah! Pah! Keep quiet! There you go making a noise again!" The Pilgrim and the Sha Monk giggled aside. Tang Sanzang, in turn, blamed the Pilgrim: "What are you laughing at?" And he made the magic sign, meaning to recite the Band-Tightening Spell. In a fluster the Pilgrim knelt: "Master, I wasn't laughing! I wasn't laughing! Whatever you do, don't recite it! Don't recite it!"

When Elder Kou saw master and disciples growing more and more annoyed, he no longer dared press them, and only said: "Reverend master, no more quarreling. We shall see you off early tomorrow morning." With that he left the scripture hall and ordered his clerks to write out a hundred or so invitation cards, inviting the neighbors and kinsfolk to come the next morning and see the reverend masters of Tang off on their way west. On the one hand he ordered the cooks to prepare the farewell banquet; on the other he ordered the stewards to

make twenty pairs of colored banners, hire a company of musicians and trumpeters, invite a company of monks from the monastery of Nanlai, and a company of Daoists from the Dongyue Abbey, all to be in readiness by the hour of the Snake the next day. All the officers in charge received their orders and went off. Before long it was evening again. They ate the evening vegetarian meal and each retired to rest. It was truly:

A few homing crows pass over the neighboring village; From the towers the drums and bells are heard afar. The six streets and three markets are still, with no smoke of men; In a thousand gates and ten thousand doors the lamps are dim. The moon is bright, the wind clear, and flowers play with shadows; The Silver River is faint, mirrored in the stars. Where the cuckoo cries, the night deepens; No sound of nature stirs; the great earth is at peace.

At about the third and fourth watches, all the serving boys in charge of the various tasks rose early and hurried to buy the various articles. Just look at them: the cooks in the kitchen in a flurry, the makers of colored banners noisy in the hall, the inviters of monks and Daoists running on both feet, the summoners of musicians shouting with urgency, the deliverers of invitation cards dashing east and west, the preparers of sedan chairs and horses calling out above and answering below. The whole half-night rang with bustle until daybreak, and by the hour of the Snake and before, everything was done—nothing more than a matter of money, after all.

Now Tang Sanzang and his disciples rose early, with that whole company in attendance. The elder ordered the luggage made ready and the horse saddled. When the blockhead heard they were leaving, he pouted his lips and grumbled to himself, but he could only pack up his cassock and bowl and lift his tall carrying pole onto his shoulder. The Sha Monk brushed the horse, put on its saddle and bridle, and waited. The Pilgrim put the nine-ring staff into his master's hand, hung the passport and the little ritual bell about his own chest, and they were all ready to go.

Elder Kou again invited them all to the great hall behind the house, where a banquet was laid out, quite different from the fare in the refectory. One could see:

Curtains hung high, screens set all around. In the center hung a painting of the Longevity Mountain and the Sea of Happiness; On the two walls hung four scrolls of the scenes of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. From the dragon-patterned incense tripod, fragrant smoke curled; In the magpie-tail censer, auspicious vapor arose. The offering trays were heaped with color, every ornamented dish fresh and bright; The tables were piled with gold, rows of lion-and-immortal sugar figures set in order. Before the steps, drums and dances followed the scale; Within the hall, fruit and dainties spread like brocade. The vegetarian soups and rice were fine and rare; The fragrant wine and tea were exquisite. Though it was the house of common folk, it was no whit inferior to a prince's mansion. One heard only a roar of glad voices, truly enough to move heaven and earth.

The elder was just making his bows to Elder Kou when a servant boy came in to report: "The guests have all arrived." They were the invited left and right neighbors, the wife's younger brother and the elder sister's husband, the sister's husband and the younger sister's husband, together with the fellow patrons of monks and the good friends who chanted the Buddha's name. They all came forward to bow to the elder. When the bows were done, each took his seat, and below the hall the lutes were plucked and the sheng blown, while in the hall the strings and songs accompanied the wine. At this grand feast Bajie whispered to the Sha Monk:

"Brother, throw caution to the winds and eat your fill. Once we leave the Kou house, there'll be no more spreads like this!"

"Second Brother, what are you saying?" laughed the Sha Monk. "As the saying goes: of a hundred delicacies, one full meal and that's an end. There's such a thing as a private road, but no such thing as a private belly!"

"You're too feeble! Too feeble!" said Bajie. "When I've eaten my fill this one meal, I won't be hungry even in three days."

The Pilgrim heard him: "Blockhead, don't burst your belly! We have to walk today!"

Before the words were well out, the sun was at noon. The elder, sitting at the head, raised his chopsticks and recited the meal grace. Bajie, in a fluster, snatched up the rice and ate bowl after bowl, gobbling down five or six more, and stuffed his two sleeves full, without choosing good or bad, of the buns, rolls, cakes, and pastries—and only then did he follow his master to his feet. The elder thanked Elder Kou, and then thanked everyone, and together they went out the gate. And there outside, just see, were set out colored banners and jeweled canopies, drummers and musicians.

The two companies of monks and Daoists were just arriving. Elder Kou laughed: "Gentlemen are late! The master is leaving in haste, and there's no time to serve you a meal. When he returns, he shall thank you in person."

Then everyone made way, and those who were to carry sedan chairs took up their chairs, those who were to ride mounted their horses, and those who were to walk set off on foot, all yielding the leading place to the elder and his four pilgrims. One heard only drums and music resounding to the heavens, banners and streamers darkening the sun, crowds of people massing, carriages and horses jammed together—all come to watch Elder Kou see off the monk of Tang. This show of magnificence truly surpassed the girdle of pearls and ring of jade, and was no whit less than brocade curtains hiding the spring!

That company of monks played a set of Buddhist airs, and that company of Daoists blew a strain of mystic tones, and together they saw the party out beyond the walls of the prefectural city. When they reached the Pavilion of Ten Li, baskets of food and jars of wine had been set out, and cups were raised and drained as they took their leave. Elder Kou still could not bear the parting, and with tears in his eyes he said: "Reverend master, when you have fetched the scriptures and return, you must by all means come to our house and stay a few days, to fulfill the wish of this Kou Hong."

Sanzang was moved beyond measure and thanked him again and again: "If I reach Spirit Mountain and see the Buddha, I shall first of all make known the great virtue of the elder. On my return I shall certainly come to your door and knock my head in thanks! In thanks!" As they talked, they had walked another two or three li without noticing, and now the elder took his leave with earnest bows, and Elder Kou turned back, weeping aloud. This is truly:

He who vowed to feed monks returns to wondrous enlightenment; Without the bond of fate, one may not see the Buddha Tathagata.

But no more of Elder Kou's being seen off at the Pavilion of Ten Li and going home with the crowd. Now his four pilgrims, master and disciples, traveled forty or fifty li, until the day was drawing to a close.

"It's growing late," said the elder. "Where shall we ask for lodging?"

Bajie, shouldering the load, pouted: "There was ready-made tea and food left uneaten, cool tiled rooms left unoccupied, and you had to go walking—just like a man chasing after a funeral! Now it's late, and if rain should fall, what then?"

"Wicked beast!" scolded Sanzang. "Here you are complaining again! As the saying goes: though Chang'an is fine, it is no place for a long lingering. When we have had the fortune to worship the Buddha and fetch the true scriptures, and then return to the great Tang and report to the emperor, I shall have the imperial kitchens' food set before you to eat for years on end, until you burst, you wicked beast, and make a ghost of you stuffed full!"

The blockhead sniggered to himself and dared not say another word. The Pilgrim raised his eyes and looked into the distance, and saw a few buildings beside the great road. He hurriedly invited his master: "We can rest there! We can rest there!"

The elder went up to it and saw a collapsed memorial arch, with an old placard on it. On the placard, in colors faded and dust-covered, were four great characters: "The Shrine of Huaguang."

The elder dismounted: "The Bodhisattva Huaguang was a disciple of the Buddha of Fivefold Flaming Light. Because he exterminated the Ghost King of Poison Fire, he was demoted and turned into the Numinous Officer of Five Manifestations. There must be a shrine keeper here."

And so they all went in, but found the corridors and halls collapsed and the walls tumbled down, without a trace of any human being—nothing but tangled thickets of weeds. They were about to turn and leave when, as luck would have it, black clouds spread over the sky and a drenching rain poured down. With no help for it, they sheltered beneath the ruined house where it kept off the wind and rain, sitting or standing in absolute stillness, not daring to speak above a whisper for fear a demon should hear them. And so they endured miserably through the night without sleeping. Alack! Truly:

When fortune reaches its utmost, adversity is born again; In the very midst of joy, grief comes to meet one.

If you do not know how they fared when the day broke and they pressed on, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 97

Repaying Their Benefactor with Gold Brings the Demons' Poison; The Sage Appears to the Departed Soul and Saves the Root of the Good

Now we leave for a while Tang Sanzang and his companions sheltering miserably through the rainy night in the ruined Shrine of Huaguang. In the county town of Diling in the Prefecture of Tongtai there was a gang of ruffians who, through whoring, drinking, and gambling, had squandered all their family property and had no way to make a living. They had joined together, a dozen or more of them, as thieves, and were reckoning which household in the city was the richest and which the second richest, to rob them of gold and silver for their spending.

Among them one said: "We needn't scout it out and needn't scheme at all. There's only the house of Elder Kou, who saw off those monks of Tang today—he's rich beyond measure. Since tonight is rainy and dark, the people in the streets won't be on their guard, and the watchmen won't be making their rounds. Let's strike now and rob him of some capital, and then we can go whoring and gambling again. Wouldn't that be fine!" The thieves were delighted, and with one mind they all took short knives, caltrops, cudgels, bludgeons, hempen ropes, and torches, and came through the rain, burst open the great gate of the Kou house, and with a great shout charged in, murder in their hearts.

The whole household, old and young, male and female, was thrown into such a panic that every one of them hid clean out of the way. The old lady hid under the bed; the old master dodged behind the door; Kou Liang and Kou Dong, with the children of their kin, all fled in terror, scattering in every direction to save their lives. The gang of thieves, knives in hand and torches blazing, smashed open the trunks and boxes of the house and ransacked gold, silver, jewels, ornaments, clothes, vessels, and furniture to their hearts' content. The elder Kou could not bear to part with his goods. Risking his life, he went out the door and pleaded with the ruffians: "Gentlemen kings, when you have enough for your use, be content! Leave a few pieces of clothing for this old man to see him to his grave!"

The ruffians would not listen to a word. They rushed up and kicked Elder Kou in the groin, toppling him to the ground. Alas, his three souls drifted off, faint and far, to the underworld, and his seven spirits wandered away, parting forever from the world of men. Having got what they wanted, the thieves left the Kou house, made a rope ladder against the city wall, lowered themselves down over the ramparts one by one, and fled west through the night in the rain.

Only when the thieves had retreated did the servants of the Kou house venture out. And when they looked, the old master was lying dead on the ground. They burst into loud weeping: "Heavens! Our master has been beaten to death!" They all wept over the corpse, wailing and sobbing.

At about the fourth watch, the old lady, remembering how the monks of Tang had refused to accept her hospitality, and how the flamboyant, magnificent send-off had brought this calamity upon them, conceived a jealous, murderous thought, wishing to frame the four pilgrims. Leaning on Kou Liang, she said: "My child, stop crying. Your father fed monks one day and fed monks the next—who would have thought that on the day the vow was fulfilled he should be feeding that gang of death-bringing monks!"

"How are they death-bringing monks, mother?" asked the two brothers.

"The thieves came in fierce and violent," said the old lady, "and I hid under the bed, trembling, but I watched carefully in the firelight. And whom do you think I saw? The one lighting the fire was Tang Sanzang; the one holding the knife was Zhu Bajie; the one carrying off the gold and silver was the Sha Monk; the one who beat your father to death was Sun Wukong!"

Hearing this, the two sons took it for the truth: "Since mother saw so clearly, it must be so. The four of them stayed in our house half a month and got to know every door, wall, window, and passage of ours. Wealth moves a man's heart, and so, taking advantage of the rainy night, they came back to our house. Not only did they rob us of our goods, they killed our father as well. What venom! When it is daylight, we'll go to the prefectural office, file a complaint of loss, and sue them by name."

"How shall we write the complaint of loss?" asked Kou Dong.

"Just as mother said," answered Kou Liang. And they wrote: "Tang Sanzang lit the fire; Bajie shouted the killing. The Sha Monk carried off the gold and silver; Sun Wukong beat our father to death."

The whole family wrangled and argued, and before they knew it the day had dawned. On the one hand they sent for their relatives and prepared the coffin; on the other, the brothers Kou Liang and Kou Dong went to the prefectural office to file their complaint.

Now the prefect of the Prefecture of Tongtai was a man upright in all his life and virtuous in his very nature.

In youth he had bent over his books by the snowy window; In his early years he had answered the imperial questions in the golden hall. He ever cherished a loyal and righteous heart, And ever cherished thoughts of benevolence and mercy. His fame spread through the histories, to echo for a thousand years— Gong and Huang reborn; His name resounded through the prefect's hall, to endure for ten thousand ages— Zhuo and Lu come to life again.

When he took his seat in court and disposed of the day's business, he ordered the complaint-receiving board brought out. The brothers Kou Liang entered holding the board, knelt, and cried: "Honorable sir, we have come to accuse robbers of seizing goods and murdering a man—a grave matter!"

The prefect took the complaint, and seeing it set forth this and that, thus and so, asked: "Yesterday word went about that your family had completed the vow of feeding monks, and that the four eminent monks you fed were arhats from the Tang empire of the Eastern Land, sent off with drums and music filling the streets in great magnificence. How can there be such a business as this?"

Kou Liang and the others knocked their heads: "Honorable sir, my father Kou Hong fed monks for twenty-four years. Because these four monks had come from afar, just making up the full number of ten thousand, he fulfilled his vow and kept them half a month. They took note of all our lanes and doors and windows. That same day they were seen off, and that same night they came back, and under cover of the black rainy night, with blazing torches and weapons in hand, burst into the house, carried off gold, silver, treasure, clothes, and ornaments, and beat our father to death on the ground. We beg the honorable sir to do us justice!"

Hearing this, the prefect at once mustered the mounted and foot constables and the conscripted braves, a hundred and fifty men in all, each with sharp weapons, and sent them out the west gate in hot pursuit of the four monks of Tang.

Meanwhile, master and disciples had lingered in the ruined house of the Shrine of Huaguang until daybreak, and only then came out onto the road, heading west. As luck would have it, the robbers, having plundered the Kou house that same night and been lowered down over the city wall, had also taken the great western road, and at dawn, after passing some twenty li west of the Shrine of Huaguang, had hidden in a hollow of the hills to divide the gold and silver.

Before the division was finished, they suddenly saw the four monks of Tang coming along the road. The thieves' hearts were not yet satisfied, and pointing at Sanzang, they said: "Isn't that the monk who was seen off yesterday?"

"Just the thing! Just the thing!" laughed the thieves. "We're in this line of work precisely because there's no justice in Heaven. These monks have come along the road and stayed long at the Kou house besides—who knows how much they have about them! Let's simply cut them off, seize their traveling money, and grab the white horse to share among us. Wouldn't that be the height of satisfaction?" So the thieves took up their weapons, gave a great shout, ran out onto the road, spread themselves in a line, and called: "Monks, don't move! Quickly leave the toll money for the road, and we'll spare your lives! Grind out half a word of refusal, and it's one knife to each of you—no one left alive!"

Tang Sanzang trembled so in the saddle that he could hardly stay on, while the Sha Monk and Bajie were in a panic. They said to the Pilgrim: "What's to be done! What's to be done! We had to endure the rainy night, and now we run into highway robbers blocking the road—truly, misfortunes never come singly!"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Don't be afraid, master; brothers, don't worry. Let Old Sun go and ask them a question."

Brave Great Sage! He tightened his tigerskin kilt, shook out his brocade tunic, walked up close, folded his hands before his chest, and said: "Gentlemen, what are you about?"

"You wretch, with no idea of life or death, daring to come and question me!" shouted the thieves. "Have you no eyes in your forehead, that you don't know me for your grandfather the king? Quickly hand over the toll money, and I'll let you pass!"

Hearing this, the Pilgrim broke into a smile all over his face: "So you are highway robbers!"

The thieves flew into a rage and shouted: "Kill him!" The Pilgrim pretended to be frightened: "Great king! Great king! I am a monk from the countryside who knows nothing of speaking properly. Pray forgive my offense, forgive it! If you want toll money, don't ask those three—ask me alone. I'm the bookkeeper. Whatever alms or offerings there are, whatever is collected in the begging or given in charity, it's all in the bundle, and it's I who keep the accounts of it coming in and going out. That one on horseback, though he is my master, knows only how to recite scriptures and bothers with nothing else; he has forgotten wealth and women alike and hasn't a penny to his name. That black-faced one I took on halfway along the road—he only knows how to tend the horse. That long-snouted one is a hired hand of mine, and he only knows how to carry the load. Let the three of them pass, and I'll give you all the traveling money, cassock and bowl and everything, with the best of goodwill."

Hearing this, the thieves said: "This monk is an honest fellow after all. Very well then, we'll spare your lives. Tell those three to drop the luggage, and let them pass." The Pilgrim turned his head and gave a wink, and the Sha Monk set down the luggage and the load, and with the master leading the horse, went off west with Bajie.

The Pilgrim bent down and opened the bundle, scooped up a handful of dust from the ground, and cast it upward, reciting a spell—it was the body-freezing magic. With a shout of "Hold!" that gang of thieves, thirty or more of them, stood stock-still, grinding their teeth and staring wide-eyed, their hands hanging loose, unable to speak a word or move a muscle.

The Pilgrim leapt out onto the road and called: "Master, come back! Come back!"

Bajie was alarmed: "No good, no good! Eldest Brother has given us all away! He has no money on him, and there's no gold or silver in the bundle—he must have called the master back to hand over the horse, and us to strip off our clothes!"

"Second Brother, stop your nonsense!" laughed the Sha Monk. "Eldest Brother is a fellow of no common powers. If he could subdue venomous demons and fierce monsters like those before, what are a few petty thieves to him? If he's calling us back, he must have something to say. Let's hurry back and see."

The elder, hearing this, cheerfully turned his horse and came back, calling: "Wukong, what is it that you call us back for?"

"Just look at these thieves and see how they are," said the Pilgrim. Bajie went up and pushed one of them: "Thief, why don't you move?"

The thief was utterly insensible, without word or sound. "He's gone dumb and silly!" said Bajie.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old Sun has frozen them with the body-freezing magic."

"If their bodies are frozen but not their mouths, why don't they even make a sound?" asked Bajie.

"Master, pray dismount and sit down," said the Pilgrim. "As the saying goes: one may arrest by mistake, but never release by mistake. Brothers, turn the thieves over and tie them up, and make them give a statement. Let's see whether they're greenhorn thieves or practiced ones."

"We have no rope," said the Sha Monk.

The Pilgrim at once plucked out some hairs, blew on them with his immortal breath, and changed them into thirty ropes. All together they turned the thieves over and bound them like horses with their four legs trussed, and then recited the spell of release, and the gang gradually came to their senses.

The Pilgrim asked Tang Sanzang to sit in the place of honor, and the three of them stood about, weapons in hand, shouting: "Petty thieves! How many of you are there altogether? How many years have you been in this trade? How much have you robbed altogether? Have you ever wounded or killed anyone? Is this your first offense, or your second, or your third?"

"Spare our lives, honorable sirs!" cried the thieves.

"Stop your caterwauling!" said the Pilgrim. "Give a true confession!"

"Honored sirs," said the thieves, "we are not long-time thieves. We are all sons of respectable families. But we were unworthy: we drank, gambled, and whored, and squandered the whole estate our fathers and grandfathers left us. We had nothing to do and no money to spend. We learned that Elder Kou of the city of the Prefecture of Tongtai was rich beyond measure, and so yesterday we banded together, and that night, taking advantage of the dark rainy weather, went and robbed his house. We had carried off a good deal of gold, silver, clothing, and ornaments, and were right here in this hollow north of the road dividing the spoils when we saw you gentlemen coming. Among us there were those who recognized you as the monks Elder Kou had seen off, and thought you must certainly have valuables about you. And since your luggage looked heavy and the white horse was fast, and man's desires are never satisfied, we came to cut you off again. How were we to know you had great magic powers and could trap us all? We beg your mercy, honorable sirs! Take away the goods we robbed, and spare our lives!"

When Sanzang heard that the goods were what had been robbed from the Kou house, he gave a startled jump, hastily rose, and said: "Wukong, Elder Kou was a man of great goodness—how could he have met with such a calamity?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "It was all because of the send-off he gave us, with those colored canopies and flowered screens and the drums and music in full blast, catching everyone's eye—and so this gang of ruffians went and worked on his house. And now it's our good luck to meet them and take back all this gold, silver, clothing, and ornaments."

"We troubled his house for half a month," said Sanzang, "and we are deeply grateful for his great kindness, with no way to repay it. Why not escort this plunder back to his house? Wouldn't that be a good deed?"

The Pilgrim agreed, and with Bajie and the Sha Monk went into the hollow, brought out all the stolen goods, packed them up, and loaded them onto the horse. He also made Bajie carry a load of the gold and silver, while the Sha Monk shouldered his own luggage. The Pilgrim would have liked to kill the whole gang of thieves with one sweep of his cudgel, but he was afraid Sanzang would blame him for taking life, so he had to shake his body and take back his hairs. The gang, freed of their bonds, scrambled to their feet and, every one of them, slipped away into the tall grass to save their lives. Then Tang Sanzang turned his steps around and set out to take the goods back to Elder Kou. This journey was like a moth flying into the flame—they were to reap the harm instead.

There is a poem in proof:

Repaying kindness with kindness is a rare thing in the world; Men turn the very grace they have received into a grudge. He who goes into the water to save a man may yet be lost— Think three times before you act, and you will have no cause for worry.

Sanzang and his disciples were carrying the gold, silver, clothing, and ornaments along, when suddenly they saw weapons and blades coming in a dense throng. Sanzang cried out in alarm: "Disciples, look at those weapons surging toward us—is it good or ill?"

"Trouble's coming! Trouble's coming!" said Bajie. "Those are the thieves we let go! They've picked up weapons, rallied more men, and turned around to fight us to the death!"

"Second Brother," said the Sha Monk, "that doesn't look like the thieves' rabble. Eldest Brother, look carefully."

The Pilgrim said quietly to the Sha Monk: "The master's star of calamity has risen again. This must be officers and soldiers out to catch thieves." Before the words were well out, the soldiers had come up to them, opened a ring formation, and surrounded master and disciples, saying: "Fine monks! You rob other people's goods, and then you come strutting about here!" They surged forward, first dragging Tang Sanzang down from his horse and tying him up with rope, and then binding the Pilgrim and his two companions as well. They ran poles through their bonds, two men carrying each one, took the horse, and seized the loads, and made straight back to the prefectural city.

And there one could see: Tang Sanzang, trembling, weeping, unable to speak a word; Zhu Bajie, grumbling and muttering, complaining in his heart; the Sha Monk, glowering and hesitating in his mind; and Sun Wukong, grinning, ready to try his arts.

The soldiers crowded and shouldered them along, and in a moment had them in the city and brought them straight before the prefect's hall, where they reported: "Honorable sir, the constables and the people's braves have captured the robbers."

The prefect sat upright in the hall, rewarded the constables and braves, examined the stolen goods, and ordered the Kou family to come and take them away. Then he had the four pilgrims brought before the dais and asked: "You monks claim to have come from afar, from the Eastern Land, to worship Buddha in the Western Heaven—but it turns out you are thieves who spy out the lie of the land and break into houses to rob!"

"Your honor, hear my plea," said Sanzang. "Your poor monk is no thief, and I would never dare deceive you—I have on me the travel permit to prove it. It was only because Elder Kou fed us for half a month, with such deep kindness and affection, that when we met robbers on the road and seized back the goods they had stolen from the Kou house, we were taking them back to the Kou house in repayment of his kindness. We never expected the constables and braves would catch us and take us for thieves. We are truly not thieves. I beg your honor to examine into it."

"You wretch!" said the prefect. "When you saw the officers and soldiers coming, you invented this fine story about repaying kindness. If you really met robbers on the road, why didn't you seize them and bring them in, and report the matter and the repayment to the authorities? Why is it only the four of you? Look here—Kou Liang has filed a complaint of loss suing you by name. Do you still dare to wriggle?"

At these words Sanzang felt like a boat being boiled on the great sea; his soul flew away and his spirit scattered. He cried: "Wukong, why don't you come forward and defend me!"

"There is the stolen property as clear evidence," said the Pilgrim. "What's the use of defending?"

"Exactly so!" said the prefect. "With the evidence of the goods still here, do you still dare to deny it?" And he ordered his attendants: "Bring the head clamp, and clamp this shaven-headed thief's skull with it—and then beat him!"

The Pilgrim was alarmed and thought to himself: "Though my master is fated to suffer this ordeal, I must not let him suffer too terribly." Seeing the lictors preparing the cords and the head clamp, he spoke up at once: "Your honor, do not clamp that monk. Last night, when the Kou house was robbed, I was the one who lit the fire, I was the one who held the knife, I was the one who carried off the goods, and I was the one who did the killing. I am the chief of the thieves. If you must beat someone, beat me, and leave the others out of it—only don't let me go."

The prefect at once ordered: "Clamp this one first." The lictors all came and put the head clamp on the Pilgrim, drew it tight, and pulled—snap! The cord broke in two. They knotted it again and clamped him again, and again—snap! it broke. Four or five times in a row they clamped him, and his scalp did not even wrinkle.

But when they took a fresh cord and tied it, someone came in to report: "Your honor, the Junior Guardian Chen has arrived from the capital. Your honor is asked to go outside the city to receive him."

The prefect at once ordered the clerk of punishments: "Put the thieves in prison and keep a close watch on them. When I have received my superior, I shall hold the examination anew."

The clerk of punishments then pushed the four pilgrims of Tang through the prison gate. Bajie and the Sha Monk carried their own luggage in with them.

"Disciples, how did it come to this?" asked Sanzang.

The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, in you go! In you go! There's no dog barking in here—it's quite a nice place for a game!"

Alas, the four were dragged inside, and every one of them was thrust into the press-beds, with the belly-bands, head-braces, and chest-straps buckled tight, and the jailers came and beat them without stint. Sanzang could hardly bear the pain and could only cry: "Wukong! What's to be done! What's to be done!"

"These beatings are for money," said the Pilgrim. "As the saying goes: where comfort is found, one settles; where pain is found, one pays. Give them a little money now, and it will be over."

"Where am I to get money?" asked Sanzang.

"If there's no money, clothes will do," said the Pilgrim. "Give them the cassock."

At these words Sanzang felt as if a knife were twisting in his heart. But seeing that he could not bear the beating, he said at last: "Wukong, do as you please."

The Pilgrim then called out: "Worthy warders, no need to beat us. In the two bundles we carried in there is a brocade cassock worth a thousand in gold. Untie the bundles and take it."

Hearing this, the jailers all set to and undid the two bundles. There were a few cloth garments in them, and a little ritual bell, none of them worth anything; but wrapped in several layers of oiled paper was an object from which shone a blaze of rosy light—they knew it was something precious. When they shook it open to look, they saw:

Cunning pearls strung upon it, Rare Buddhist treasures gathered upon it, Coiling dragons in embroidered knots, Flying phoenixes edging the brocade.

They all scrambled to look, and the commotion drew the warden of the prison, who came over and shouted: "What are you making such a row about here?"

The jailers knelt: "The registrar just now committed four monks to us, saying they were leaders of a great band of robbers. When they saw us beat them a few strokes, they gave us these two bundles. When we opened them to look, we found this object, and don't know what to do with it. If the crowd tears it apart and shares it out, that would be a pity indeed; if one man takes it for himself alone, the rest get nothing. Happily, here comes the warden. Let the warden make the decision."

The warden saw it was a cassock, and examined the other clothes and the little bell too; and when he opened the pouch and looked at the travel permit, he saw the treasure seals and countersigns of many kingdoms. "It's a good thing I came to look!" he said. "If I hadn't, you would all have brought trouble on yourselves. These monks are no thieves. Do not touch their belongings. Wait until the prefect holds a new examination tomorrow, and then the truth will be known."

Hearing this, the jailers returned the bundles to them, wrapped them up as before, and handed them to the warden for safekeeping.

Gradually the day darkened; they heard the drums on the watchtower begin to roll, and the night patrol made its rounds. They endured until the third drum of the fourth watch, when the Pilgrim saw that none of them was groaning—they had all fallen asleep. He thought to himself: "My master is fated to have this one night of imprisonment. It was for this reason that Old Sun did not speak up in defense or use his magic powers. Now the fourth watch is almost over, and the ordeal is nearly complete. I must make my preparations, so that at daybreak we may leave the prison."

Just watch him use his arts! He made his body small and slipped out of the press-bed, then shook himself and changed into a gnat, and flew out through the cracks in the tiles of the eaves. He saw the stars bright and the moon clear—it was one of those still, clear, balmy nights. He marked the direction and flew straight to the gate of the Kou house, where he saw a household west of the street with its lamps burning bright. Flying closer to the door, he saw it was a tofu maker's. An old man was tending the fire, and his wife was straining the bean curd.

The old man suddenly called out: "Wife, Elder Kou had sons and had wealth, but no long life. He and I studied together as boys, and I was five years his elder. His father was called Kou Ming; in those days he didn't have even a thousand mu of land, and when he lent out grain at rent it could barely be collected. When Kou Hong reached twenty, old Ming died, and he took over the family estate—and truly, it was his one run of luck. The wife he married was the daughter of one Zhang Wang, whose milk name was Thread-the-Needle, and she was a good luck-bringer to her husband. From the time she entered his door, his fields prospered and his loans bore interest; whatever he bought turned a profit, whatever he did made money, until he had amassed a fortune of a hundred thousand. At forty he turned his heart to goodness, fed ten thousand monks, and who would have thought that last night he would be kicked to death by robbers? A pity! He was only sixty-four this year, just at the age for enjoying himself. Who would have thought that such a good man would meet with no good return and die a violent death? Alas! Alas!"

The Pilgrim took it all in, and by then it was the first stroke of the fifth watch. He flew into the Kou house and saw the coffin already set in the main hall, with a lamp burning at its head, incense, candles, flowers, and fruit laid out, and the old lady weeping beside it. Then he saw the two sons come in to kneel and weep, and two daughters-in-law holding bowls of offerings.

The Pilgrim perched on the head of the coffin and gave a cough, so frightening the two daughters-in-law that they flung up their hands and stumbled out in a fluster, while the brothers Kou Liang fell flat on the ground and dared not move, crying only: "Father! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The old lady was bolder. She patted the head of the coffin: "Old master, have you come back to life?"

"I have not come back to life," said the Pilgrim, imitating the voice of Elder Kou. The two sons grew still more frantic, knocking their heads without pause, their tears streaming, crying: "Father! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The old lady plucked up her courage and asked again: "Master, if you haven't come back to life, how is it you can speak?"

"I was sent back home by King Yama," said the Pilgrim, "with a demon escort, to speak with you. This Zhang, wife of the house, whose milk name is Thread-the-Needle, has been telling lies with her glib tongue and framing innocent people."

When the old lady heard him call her by her milk name, she knelt in a panic and knocked her head: "You old devil! At your age you still call me by my milk name! What lies have I told? What innocent people have I framed?"

The Pilgrim shouted: "Where is this 'Tang Sanzang lit the fire, Bajie called the killing, the Sha Monk carried off the gold and silver, and the Pilgrim beat your father to death'? It is all because of your lies that good men are suffering. Those four reverend masters of Tang met robbers on the road, seized back the goods, and brought them here to thank me—what excellent intentions! But you faked a complaint of loss and had your sons lay information with the officials. The officials have not examined the matter carefully, and now they have locked them up. The prison god, the local deity, and the city god are all in a panic, unable to sit or lie at ease, and they have reported the matter to King Yama. King Yama in turn sent a demon escort to bring me home, to tell you to set them free before it is too late. If you do not, I shall come and raise a riot in this house for a whole month, and of all the household, old and young, and the chickens and dogs as well, not one shall be left alive!"

Kou Liang and his brother knocked their heads and pleaded: "Father, pray go back. Whatever you do, don't harm the old and young. At daybreak we shall go to the prefectural office and present a writ of discharge, and accept the return of the case. We only beg that the dead and the living may both be at peace."

Hearing this, the Pilgrim called out: "Burn paper money—I'm going!" And the whole family came to burn paper money.

The Pilgrim took wing and flew off, straight into the residence of the prefect. Looking down, he saw lamplight already shining within the house—the prefect had got up. He flew into the main hall and saw, hanging on the wall at the back, a painted scroll: an official riding a dappled horse, with several attendants holding a blue umbrella and carrying a folding stool. He did not know what the subject was, and perched himself in the middle of it.

Suddenly the prefect came out of his room, bending over as he washed and dressed. The Pilgrim gave a sudden cough, so startling the prefect that he hurried, flustered, back into his room to finish his toilet, put on his great robe, came out, burned incense before the scroll, and prayed: "Spirit of my late uncle, Lord Jiang Qianyi! Your filial nephew Jiang Kunsan, thanks to the virtue of his ancestors, passed the highest examinations and now, by the favor of Heaven, holds the office of prefect of Tongtai, serving the incense of

this shrine morning and evening without cease. Why should you speak out today? Pray do not turn demon or sprite and frighten the household."

The Pilgrim laughed to himself: "This is the spirit tablet of his honored uncle!" And so, catching the thread, he called out: "Kunsan, worthy nephew! Though you received your office through your ancestors' virtue, you have been honest and clean all along. How was it that yesterday, in your folly, you took four holy sages for thieves, and without examining the cause, shut them up in prison! The prison god, the local deity, and the city god are ill at ease, and have reported to the King of Hell; the King of Hell has sent a demon escort to bring me to tell you to weigh the circumstances and examine the truth, and set them free at once. If not, he will have you summoned to the underworld to argue it out."

Hearing this, the prefect was frightened to the heart and said: "Uncle, pray go back. Your nephew will take his seat in court and release them at once."

"If that is so, burn some paper money," said the Pilgrim, "and I shall go and report to the King of Hell." The prefect added incense and burned paper money, bowing in thanks.

The Pilgrim flew out again and saw that the east was already turning pale. When he flew to the county town of Diling, he saw all the county officials already in the court hall. He thought: "If a gnat goes about talking, and someone sees it, the game will be up." So in midair he changed into a great dharma body, stretched down a foot from the sky, and filled the whole county hall with it, calling: "Hear me, all you officials: I am the Rambling Wandering Spirit sent by the Jade Emperor! You have wrongfully beaten the scripture-seeking disciples of Buddha in the prefectural prison, and stirred the gods of the Three Realms into such unrest that I have been sent to tell you: release them at once! If there is the least delay, I shall come and plant this foot again, and first kick all the prefectural and county officials to death, then trample the people of the four quarters to death, and stamp the whole city into ashes!"

Every official and clerk in the county, in a panic, knelt and knocked their heads in worship: "Most holy being, pray go back! We shall go at once to the prefecture and report to the prefect, and have them released. Whatever you do, do not move that foot and scare us underlings to death."

Only then did the Pilgrim take back his dharma body, change again into a gnat, fly in through a crack in the prison tiles, and squeeze back into his press-bed to sleep.

Meanwhile the prefect, having taken his seat and just had the memorial-receiving board brought out, saw Kou Liang and his brother kneel at the gate with the board, shouting. The prefect ordered them brought in, and the two presented their writ of discharge. The prefect read it and flew into a rage: "Yesterday you filed a complaint of loss, and I had the thieves seized for you, and you took away the goods. How is it that today you come back with a writ of discharge?"

The two brothers wept: "Your honor, last night our father's spirit appeared and said: 'The holy monks of Tang seized the thieves, recovered the goods, and let the thieves go, then in all goodwill brought the goods back to our house to repay our kindness. How could you turn on them as thieves and have them locked up in prison to suffer? The prison god and the city god are ill at ease and have reported to King Yama, and King Yama has sent a demon escort to bring me to tell you to go to the prefecture and sue again, to have the monks of Tang released, so as to escape the disaster. If not, old and young will all perish.' And so we have come especially to present this writ of discharge. We beg your honor to be accommodating!"

Hearing this, the prefect thought privately: "His father is a hot corpse, a newly made ghost—it is all very well that his spirit should appear and bring retribution. But my uncle has been dead for five or six years—how is it that his spirit also appeared last night, telling me to examine and release them? It seems this must be a case of wrongful arrest." While he was pondering, the magistrate of the county of Diling and the other officials came rushing up to the hall in confusion: "Old Excellency, it's terrible! Terrible! Just now the Jade Emperor sent

the Rambling Wandering Spirit down to earth, ordering us to release quickly the good men in prison. Those monks arrested yesterday are no thieves—they are all scripture-seeking disciples of Buddha. If there is the least delay, he will kick us officials to death and stamp the whole city, with its people, into ashes."

The prefect turned pale with fright and at once ordered the clerk of punishments to write the warrant in hot haste and bring the prisoners out.

The prison gate was opened and they were brought out. Bajie said, worried: "I wonder how they'll beat us today." The Pilgrim laughed: "I guarantee not one stroke will touch you—Old Sun has fixed everything. When we get to the hall, whatever you do, don't kneel. They'll come down and ask us to sit in the place of honor. Then I'll demand our luggage and our horse from them. If a single item is missing, watch me beat them!"

Before the words were well out, they had reached the entrance of the hall. The prefect, the magistrate, and all the great and small officials of the prefecture and county, the moment they saw them, came down to welcome them: "When the holy monks arrived yesterday, first of all the reception of our superior kept us busy, and in the second place we had just seen the stolen goods that had been seized, and had no time to inquire into the details."

Tang Sanzang pressed his palms together, bowed, and told the whole story again in detail. The officials all acknowledged it and said: "A mistake! A mistake! Pray forgive us! Pray forgive us!" Then they asked whether anything had gone amiss in the prison. The Pilgrim stepped forward, glaring, and shouted at the top of his voice: "My white horse was taken by the people at the hall, and my luggage by the people in the prison! Give them back to me at once! Today it is my turn to put you on the rack! You wrongfully arrested innocent men as thieves—what punishment do you deserve?" The prefectural and county officials, seeing him so fierce, were every one of them afraid. They ordered the horse-keepers to bring the horse and the luggage-keepers to bring the luggage, and handed everything over, item by item.

Just look at the three of them swaggering and glowering, while all the officials tried to cover themselves with talk of the Kou family. Sanzang interposed: "Disciples, this will not be settled by us. Let us go to the Kou house—first, to offer our condolences, and second, to confront them and see who it was that saw us committing robbery."

"You're right," said the Pilgrim. "Let Old Sun bring the dead man back to life and see who it was that beat him." There on the prefectural hall the Sha Monk lifted Sanzang onto the horse, and with shouts and yells they all swept out. The officials of the prefecture and county followed one and all to the Kou house, so frightening the brothers Kou Liang and Kou Dong that they knocked their heads without cease at the gate as they received them into the hall.

In the mourning hall the whole family was weeping within the funeral curtains. The Pilgrim called out: "Old lady who told lies and framed innocent people, stop your crying for a moment! Let Old Sun call your husband back, to see who it was that beat him to death, and put you to shame!"

All the officials took Sun the Pilgrim's words for a jest. The Pilgrim said: "Honored gentlemen, pray keep my master company for a while. Bajie and the Sha Monk, guard him well. Wait for me—I'll be back in a moment."

Brave Great Sage! He leapt out the door and up into the sky, and one could see a colored mist veiling the house and auspicious vapor protecting his spirit. Only then did the crowd realize he was an immortal who rode the clouds and mists, a sage who could bring the dead back to life, and there they all burned incense and bowed in worship—but of that no more.

The Great Sage rode his somersault cloud all the way to the borders of the underworld and burst straight into the Hall of Darkness, so startling the ten kings of hell that they folded their hands in welcome, and the judges of the five quarters that they knocked their heads in greeting. The thousand trees of swords all leaned aside; the myriad tiers of knife mountains were leveled flat. In the City of Those Who Died Unjustly the specters were transformed; beneath the Bridge of the Nai River the ghosts won release. Truly, one beam of his divine light was like an amnesty from Heaven, and the dark underworld shone bright on every side. The ten kings received the Great Sage, and when they had met, asked where he had come from and what business brought him.

"The ghost of Kou Hong of the county of Diling in the Prefecture of Tongtai, who fed monks," said the Pilgrim. "Which of you took him in? Look him up at once and hand him over to me."

"Kou Hong was a good man," said the ten kings. "No demon escort was sent to fetch him. He came here of his own accord, and met the golden-robed acolyte of Ksitigarbha, who brought him to see the Bodhisattva."

The Pilgrim took his leave of them and went straight to the Emerald Cloud Palace to see the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. When the Bodhisattva had exchanged greetings with him, the Pilgrim told him the whole story. The Bodhisattva was pleased: "Kou Hong's span of life in the world of the yang was no more than the number allotted him; his fate ending, he died without so much as touching his bed and came to us here. Because he fed monks, and was a good man, I took him in as registrar in charge of the account book of good deeds. Since the Great Sage has come to fetch him, I will extend his span of life in the yang world by a full twelve-year cycle, and let him go with the Great Sage."

The golden-robed acolyte then brought out Kou Hong. When Kou Hong saw the Pilgrim, he cried out again and again: "Reverend master! Reverend master! Save me!"

"You were kicked to death by robbers," said the Pilgrim. "This is the place of the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha of the underworld. Old Sun has come especially to bring you back to the world of the living to have this matter set right. Since the Bodhisattva has been pleased to let you return, and to extend your life by a twelve-year cycle, you may come again after twelve years."

The elder bowed his head in thanks without end. The Pilgrim thanked the Bodhisattva, blew on Kou Hong and turned him into a breath of vapor, tucked him into his sleeve, and with him went out of the underworld palace and back to the world of the living. Riding his cloud, he came to the Kou house, and called to Bajie to pry open the coffin lid, and pushed the soul back into its own body. In a moment the breath returned and the man came back to life. Elder Kou climbed out of the coffin, and knocked his head to the four pilgrims of Tang: "Reverend masters! Reverend masters! Kou Hong died a violent death, and by your grace has been rescued from the underworld and brought back to life—this is the grace of a second creation!"

He thanked them without end. When he turned his head and saw the officials drawn up in ranks, he knocked his head again: "Honored gentlemen, why are you all here at my house?"

The prefect said: "At first your sons filed a complaint of loss, suing the holy monks by name, and I dispatched men to arrest them. It turned out that the holy monks had met on the road the thieves who robbed and murdered in your house, seized back the goods, and brought them to return to your house. It was my underlings who arrested them by mistake, and I, without due examination, had them put in prison. Last night, by your manifest spirit, and because my late uncle came to the house to complain, and the county was also honored by the descent of the Rambling Wandering Spirit, there were in a single moment all these manifold proofs—and so I released the holy monks, and the holy monks in turn went and brought you back to life."

The elder Kou knelt: "Your honor, these four holy sages were truly wronged! That night more than thirty robbers, with blazing torches and weapons in hand, carried off our family's goods. It was I who could not bear to part with them and went to argue with the thieves, and who would have thought they would kick me

in the groin and kill me! What has this to do with these four?"

He called for his wife: "Who was it that was kicked to death? How dare you make such false accusations? Pray, your honor, pass sentence on them." The whole family, old and young, could only knock their heads. But the prefect, in his broad mercy, pardoned them. Kou Hong ordered a banquet laid out to repay the great kindness of the prefecture and county, and the officials did not return to their offices until each had taken his seat at the feast. The next day he hung up his sign of feeding monks again, and pressed Sanzang to stay, but Sanzang was firmly set on going. So he invited his friends and relatives again, prepared banners and canopies, and saw them off as before. Alack!

This is truly:

The earth, though opened, can harbor deeds of wickedness; Heaven, though high, never fails the man of good heart. Free and easy, with steady steps they tread the Tathagata's road, Until they reach the gate of utmost bliss on Spirit Mountain.

If you do not know how their meeting with the Buddha fared, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 98

The Ape Is Tamed and the Horse Gentle, and the Shell Is Cast Off; Merit Achieved and Practice Complete, the True Thusness Is Seen

This story tells how Elder Kou, restored to life, once more made ready banners and canopies, drums and music, monks and Daoists, friends and relatives, and saw the pilgrims off as before—but of that no more. Now the four pilgrims of Tang took the great road, and truly the Buddha land of the West was different from every other place. They saw rare flowers, jade grasses, ancient cypresses, and hoary pines; in every place they passed, household after household was given to goodness, family after family fed monks; at every mountain's foot men were cultivating their conduct, and in the groves they saw wayfarers chanting scriptures.

Traveling by night and resting by dawn, master and disciples went on for another six or seven days, when suddenly they saw a stretch of tall towers and several tiers of lofty pavilions, truly soaring a hundred feet into the sky, rising toward the Milky Way and hanging in the void. Looking down, they viewed the setting sun; reaching up, they could pluck the flying stars. The spacious windows swallowed up the universe; the lofty ridges of the roofs met the cloudy screens of heaven. When the yellow crane brings tidings, the autumn trees grow old; when the colored phoenix brings a letter, the evening wind is clear. This was a palace of numinous halls and jeweled towers, of jade galleries and pearl courts. In the true halls the Way was discussed; through the universe the scriptures were transmitted. The flowers were loveliest as spring came on; the pines were greenest after the rain passed. The immortal herbs and fairy fruit put forth fresh splendor year after year; the red phoenix, displaying its ritual dance, stirred a thousandfold of numinous wonder.

Sanzang pointed into the distance with his whip: "Wukong, what a fine place!"

"Master," said the Pilgrim, "at that false scene and false image of Buddha, you insisted on dismounting to worship. But today, having reached this true scene and true image of Buddha, you don't even get off your horse—what have you to say to that?" Startled, Sanzang turned and threw himself off the horse—and found they had already reached the gate of the towers.

A young Daoist acolyte, standing slantwise before the mountain gate, called: "Are you not, perhaps, the scripture-seeker of the Eastern Land?"

The elder hastily composed his dress and looked up, and saw the acolyte clad in a robe of brocade, shaking a whisk of jade. Clad in a robe of brocade—he often feasted in jeweled towers by the jasper pool; shaking a whisk of jade—he swept the dust on the cinnabar terraces and the purple courts. At his elbow hung the registers of immortality; on his feet he wore cloud-treading shoes. Airy and free, a true feather-robed immortal; fair of face, he was rare indeed. He had refined his life to dwell long in a blessed spot; he had cultivated eternal youth and cast off the dust of the world. The holy monk knew not this guest of Spirit Mountain—it was the Great Immortal of the Golden Summit, come to welcome him.

The Great Sage Sun recognized him, and at once called: "Master, this is the Great Immortal of the Golden Summit of the Abbey of Jade Truth at the foot of Spirit Mountain, come to welcome us."

Only then did Sanzang understand, and he stepped forward to bow. The Great Immortal laughed: "The holy sage has only now arrived this year. The Bodhisattva Guanyin tricked me. Ten years ago, receiving the golden decree of the Buddha, she went to the Eastern Land to find the scripture-seeker, and said he would reach my place in two or three years. I have waited for him year after year, without the least news—who would have thought I should only meet him this year?"

Sanzang pressed his palms together: "We are beholden to the Great Immortal's warm regard! Our thanks! Our thanks!"

Then the four pilgrims led the horse and carried the loads into the abbey together with the Great Immortal, and met him one by one. He ordered tea and a vegetarian meal, and told the acolyte to heat fragrant water that the holy monk might bathe before setting foot on the Buddha's ground. Truly:

Merit complete and practice done, he should bathe; The nature refined and tamed must match its native truth. A thousand hardships and ten thousand toils now at last are stilled; The nine precepts and the three refuges begin to make him new. The demons all swept away, indeed he treads the Buddha's ground; The disasters dissolved, he is fit to see the monks of the Law. The dust of travel washed off, clean and undefiled; Returning to the root and the source, his body is not destroyed.

After master and disciples had bathed, before they knew it the day was drawing to a close, and they rested that night in the Abbey of Jade Truth.

The next morning, Tang Sanzang changed his clothes, put on his brocade cassock, donned his vairochana cap, took his staff in hand, and went up into the hall to take his leave of the Great Immortal. The Great Immortal laughed: "Yesterday in rags, today in bright array—looking at you now, you are a true son of Buddha indeed."

Sanzang bowed farewell and made to go, but the Great Immortal said: "Wait a moment. Let me see you off."

"No need for you to see us off," said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun knows the road."

"What you know is the cloud road," said the Great Immortal. "The holy monk has not yet mounted the cloud road; he must go by the road of the ground."

"That is well said," said the Pilgrim. "Old Sun has been here a few times, but always coming by cloud and going by cloud—never have I actually set foot on this ground. Since there is a road of the ground, I'll trouble you to see us along it. My master's heart is set on worshiping the Buddha, so pray do not hesitate."

Smiling, the Great Immortal took the hand of Tang Sanzang and led him up the sandalwood way to the gate of the Dharma. It turned out that this road did not go out through the mountain gate at all: it ran straight from the main hall of the abbey out through the back door. The Great Immortal pointed at Spirit Mountain: "Holy sage, look there at the auspicious light of five colors in midair, the thousandfold layers of auspicious mist—that is the lofty Vulture Peak, the holy realm of the Buddha."

At the sight of it Sanzang bowed, and the Pilgrim laughed: "Master, that's not the place for bowing yet. As the saying goes, 'The horse drops dead before the mountain ever draws near.' The town is still far away from here—how can you bow already? If you were to bow all the way to the summit, how many knocks of the head would that take?"

"Holy sage," said the Great Immortal, "you, with the Great Sage, the Heavenly Reeds, and the Curtain-Raiser—all four of you—have now reached the blessed land and can see Spirit Mountain. I am going back." Sanzang bowed farewell and they went on.

The Great Sage led Tang Sanzang and the others, walking slowly and at ease, up the slope of Spirit Mountain. They had gone no more than five or six li when they came upon a stretch of living water, its rolling waves surging and flying, some eight or nine li wide, with not a trace of human presence on any side.

Sanzang was alarmed: "Wukong, this road is wrong! Can it be that the Great Immortal pointed us astray? This water is so broad and so rough, and there is not a boat or a ferry to be seen—how are we to cross?"

"It's not wrong," laughed the Pilgrim. "Look over there—isn't that a great bridge? We must cross by that bridge, and only then will the true fruit be achieved." The elder and the others drew near to look, and saw a placard by the bridge with three characters: "The Cloud-Piercing Ferry." It turned out to be a single-log bridge. Truly:

Seen from afar, it spans the void like a beam of jade; Seen from near, it lies across the water, a withered raft. To bridge the rivers and dam the seas is easier far Than this single log, this one plank, that men must tread! A ten-thousand-fathom rainbow lying flat in shadow, A thousand fathoms of white silk reaching to the sky's edge. So narrow and slippery, it is hard indeed to cross— Only an immortal, treading the colored clouds, might walk it.

Sanzang trembled with fear: "Wukong, this bridge was not made for men to walk. Let us find another way."

"It is the very way! The very way!" laughed the Pilgrim.

Bajie was in a panic: "This a way? Who would dare walk it? The water's broad, the waves are high, and it's a single log, narrow and slippery—how could anyone set foot on it?"

"You all stand there," said the Pilgrim, "and let Old Sun walk it to show you." Brave Great Sage! He spread his stride and jumped up onto the single-log bridge, swaying and rocking, and in a moment had run across. On the other side he called back: "Come over! Come over!" Sanzang waved his hands, while Bajie and the Sha Monk bit their fingers: "Hard! Hard! Hard!" The Pilgrim ran back across, grabbed Bajie, and said: "Blockhead, come with me, come with me!" But Bajie threw himself down on the ground: "Slippery! Slippery! Slippery! I can't walk it! Spare me! Let me ride the wind and mist across!"

The Pilgrim held him fast: "What place do you think this is, that you may ride the wind and mist? You must cross by this bridge, and only then can you become a Buddha."

"Brother," said Bajie, "if I can't be a Buddha, so be it—but I truly can't walk it!"

The two of them rolled and scrambled, pulled and dragged, wrestling by the bridge, until the Sha Monk came over to make peace, and only then did the Pilgrim let go of him.

Sanzang turned his head and suddenly saw a man poling a boat along the lower reaches of the stream, calling: "Ferry crossing! Ferry crossing!" The elder was delighted: "Disciples, stop your fooling. There's a ferryboat coming." The three jumped up and stood still, looking with all their eyes. As the boat drew near, it turned out to be a boat without a bottom. But the Pilgrim, with his fiery eyes and golden pupils, had recognized it at once: it was the Buddha Who Welcomes, also known as the Buddha King of Light of the Jeweled Canopy. The Pilgrim, however, did not give him away, and merely kept calling: "Come here! Pole her in!"

In a moment the boat had been poled to the bank, and again the call came: "Ferry crossing! Ferry crossing!" At the sight of it Sanzang was alarmed once more: "This bottomless broken boat of yours—how can it carry people across?"

The Buddha said:

"My boat has been famous since Chaos was first parted, And lucky am I, poling it, that it never changes. With waves and wind it is steady as ever; Without beginning or end, it is glad in its peace. The six dusts unstained, it can return to the One; Through ten thousand kalpas it travels safe and free. A bottomless boat cannot cross the sea— Yet from of old till now it has ferried all living things."

The Great Sage Sun pressed his palms together in thanks: "We are beholden to your kind welcome of my master. Master, get on the boat. Though it has no bottom, it is steady; even in wind and waves it will not capsize."

But the elder still hung back, doubtful. The Pilgrim, catching him under the arms, gave him a push. The master could not keep his footing, and toppled head over heels into the water—but was at once pulled up by the ferryman and set standing in the boat. The master still shook out his clothes and stamped his shoes, grumbling at the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim then led the Sha Monk and Bajie aboard, with the horse and the loads, and they all stood in the body of the boat. The Buddha pushed off gently, and they saw floating down from upstream the corpse of a dead man. The elder was horrified at the sight. The Pilgrim laughed: "Master, don't be afraid—that was you."

"It was you, it was you!" said Bajie. The Sha Monk clapped his hands: "It was you, it was you!" And the boatman, in his chant, called out too: "That is you! Congratulations, congratulations!" And the three of them all joined in the chorus.

Poling the boat, they crossed the Cloud-Piercing Immortal Ferry in a little while, steady and safe. Then Sanzang turned and stepped lightly, lightly, ashore on the other side. There is a poem in proof:

The body of flesh and bone is cast away at last; The primal spirit alone is dear and close. Only today, practice complete, does he become a Buddha, Washed clean of the six-times-six dusts of former years.

This is truly what is called the vast wisdom that climbs to the farther shore, the dharma without limit. When the four pilgrims landed and turned to look, the bottomless boat had vanished without a trace, and only then did the Pilgrim tell them it had been the Buddha Who Welcomes.

Only now did Sanzang understand. He hastily turned around and thanked his three disciples in return. "There is no thanks on either side," said the Pilgrim. "We helped each other. We were delivered by you, master, and borrowing the gate of your path, cultivating our merits, have happily achieved the true fruit; and you, master, relying on our protection, holding fast to the faith, have happily cast off your mortal frame. Master, look at this scene before you—flowers, grass, pines, bamboo, phoenixes, cranes, stags, and deer—a blessed realm. Compared with the places where demons showed their transformed shapes, which is fair and which foul? Which good and which evil?"

Sanzang thanked him without end. Every one of them light of body and brisk of step, they walked up Spirit Mountain, and before long saw the ancient Thunderclap Monastery:

Its summit grazes the Milky Way; Its roots join the veins of Mount Sumeru. Cunning peaks in rows, strange rocks in jagged ranks. Beneath the overhanging cliffs, jade grasses and rare flowers; Beside the winding paths, purple magic herbs and fragrant orchids. Immortal apes plucking fruit enter the peach grove, Like fire gilding gold; White cranes roost on the pine boughs, Like mist cradling jade. Colored phoenixes in pairs, green simurghs in couples. Colored phoenixes in pairs, singing toward the sun, make the whole world auspicious; Green simurghs in couples, dancing in the wind, are rare sights on earth. And one could see the golden tiles, thick and dark, laid like mandarin ducks; The bright flowered bricks, paved like agate. East a row, west a row, all palaces of fairy courts and pearl towers; South a belt, north a belt, endless treasure halls and jeweled pavilions. On the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, rosy light shines; Before the Hall of the Protectors of the Faith, purple flame streams. The pagoda rises in majesty; the udumbara blossoms give forth their scent. Truly, the very ground is so blessed that it seems no part of Heaven; The clouds are so idle that the day seems long. The dust of the world never reaches here; all causes are at an end; Through ten thousand kalpas the great Hall of the Law stands unblemished.

Master and disciples sauntered free and easy up to the summit of Spirit Mountain, and saw upasakas ranged beneath the groves of green pines and good men ranked amid the thickets of verdant cypresses. The elder at once made to bow, and the upasakas, upasikas, monks, and nuns pressed their palms together in haste: "Holy sage, pray do not bow yet. When you have seen the Muni, come back and converse."

"Too early! Too early!" laughed the Pilgrim. "Let us go first and worship those who rank above." The elder, dancing with joy, followed the Pilgrim to the very gate of the Thunderclap Monastery. There the Four Vajra Guardians barred the way and asked: "Has the holy sage come?" Sanzang bowed: "It is your disciple Xuanzang, arrived." Having answered, he was about to enter the gate, but the Vajras said: "Holy sage, wait a moment. Let us report before you enter." One of the Vajras sent word round to the four Vajra Guardians of

the second gate: "The monk of Tang has arrived." And from the second gate the word passed to the third: "The monk of Tang has arrived."

Within the third gate were the divine monks in charge of offerings, and when they heard that the monk of Tang had arrived, they hurried to the foot of the Great Hall of the Mighty One and reported to the Tathagata, the World-Honored Shakyamuni: "The holy monk of Tang has come to the precious mountain to fetch the scriptures."

The Buddha was greatly pleased, and at once summoned and assembled the eight Bodhisattvas, the four Vajras, the five hundred arhats, the three thousand guardians, the Eleven Luminaries, and the eighteen Protectors of the Faith, ranged in two rows; then he issued his golden decree to summon the monk of Tang in. Within, tier by tier and rank by rank, in accordance with the Buddha's decree, the call went up: "Let the holy sage come in."

The monk of Tang, keeping strictly to the rules, went in through the mountain gate together with Wukong, Wuneng, and Wujing, leading the horse and carrying the loads. Truly:

In those years, with high resolve, he received the imperial commission, Took his passport, bade the king farewell, and went down the jade steps. At dawn he climbed the mountains, greeting mist and dew; At dusk he pillowed on stone, sleeping amid cloud and haze. Shouldering his pilgrim's load, he crossed three thousand streams; Whirling his staff, he walked ten thousand cliffs. His thought was fixed on achieving the true fruit— And only today has he come to see the Tathagata.

The four pilgrims reached the front of the Great Hall of the Mighty One and prostrated themselves before the Tathagata. When the worship was done, they bowed to left and right. Each had completed his three circuits, and then, kneeling long before the Buddha, they presented the travel permit, which the Tathagata looked through one by one and handed back to Sanzang.

Sanzang bowed low and made his address: "Your disciple Xuanzang, by the imperial command of the great Tang emperor of the Eastern Land, has come from afar to your precious mountain to worship and seek the true scriptures, for the salvation of all living beings. I beg the Buddha, in his grace, to grant them to me soon, that I may return to my own country."

Only then did the Tathagata open his lips of compassion and give full rein to his heart of mercy, saying to Sanzang: "Your Eastern Land is the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa. Because there Heaven is high and the earth thick, with countless things and teeming men, there is much greed and much killing, much lust and much deceit, much cheating and much fraud. They do not revere the Buddhist faith, do not turn to good causes, do not respect the Three Luminaries, do not value the five grains; they are disloyal and unfilial, unrighteous and unkind; they deceive their own hearts and betray their own souls; they use great measures in taking and small in giving; they take lives and slaughter beasts. They have piled up boundless sins, their crimes overflowing with evil, and so they bring upon themselves the disasters of hell, sinking forever into the dark underworld, to suffer all those pains of the pestle and the mill, and to change into beasts. There are all those forms with hair on their backs and horns on their heads, paying with their bodies, feeding their flesh to men. That they sink forever into Avici and can never win release—it is all for this reason. Though Confucius established there the teachings of benevolence, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom, and kings have succeeded one another, maintaining the punishments of exile, servitude, execution, and mutilation, what are they against those who are foolish and unenlightened, lawless and unbridled! I have here the scriptures of the Three Stores, which can lift the burden of suffering and undo the calamities of sin. Of the Three Stores: one store of dharmas, discoursing on Heaven; one store of treatises, discoursing on Earth; one store of scriptures, delivering ghosts. In all, thirty-five sections, numbering fifteen thousand one hundred and forty-four scrolls. They are truly the path to the cultivation of the truth and the gate of right goodness. In all the four great continents under Heaven, there is nothing—astronomy, geography, people, birds and beasts, flowers and

trees, vessels and implements, the affairs of men—that they do not record. Since you have come from afar, I meant to give you the whole to take away. But the people of that region are foolish and stubborn, slandering the true words, not knowing the profound meaning of our school." He called: "Ananda, Kasyapa, you two lead these four to the foot of the Jeweled Tower, and first serve them a vegetarian meal. When the meal is done, open the Treasure Hall, and from within the thirty-five sections of the scriptures of my Three Stores, select a few scrolls from each and give them to him, that he may transmit them to the Eastern Land and spread the vast grace forever."

The two venerable ones, receiving the Buddha's decree, led the four pilgrims to the foot of the tower, where there was no end to the rare treasures and wonders laid out in endless array. And there the gods who served the offerings set out the vegetarian banquet—all of it immortal fare, immortal dishes, immortal tea, immortal fruit, a hundred delicacies, unlike anything in the mortal world. Master and disciples bowed their heads in thanks for the Buddha's grace, and then ate as their hearts pleased. Truly:

Blazing flames and golden light dazzle the eye; Strange fragrances and rare dainties are the more exquisite. The thousand-tiered golden pavilions are of endless beauty; A stream of celestial music comes clear to the ear. The vegetarian delights and immortal flowers are rarely seen by man; The fragrant tea and strange foods bring everlasting life. Having suffered a thousand hardships on the road, Today he enjoys this splendor, rejoicing that the Way is achieved.

This was a real windfall for Bajie and a stroke of luck for the Sha Monk: the food of the Buddha's own place, the fare of eternal life and casting off the mortal frame, was theirs to enjoy to the full. When the two venerable ones had finished accompanying the four pilgrims at the meal, they went into the Treasure Hall, opened the doors, and climbed up to look. There, auspicious light and blessed vapor shrouded it in a thousand layers; colored mists and lucky clouds veiled it in ten thousand belts. On the scripture chests, outside the jeweled cases, were pasted red labels, with the names of the scriptures written in regular script. They were: the Nirvana Sutra, one section of seven hundred and forty-eight scrolls; the Bodhisattva Sutra, one section of one thousand and twenty-one scrolls; the Akasagarbha Sutra, one section of four hundred scrolls; the Surangama Sutra, one section of one hundred and ten scrolls; the Sutra of Grace and Good Intent, Great Collection, one section of fifty scrolls; the Sutra of Determination, one section of one hundred and forty scrolls; the Sutra of the Precious Treasury, one section of forty-five scrolls; the Flower Garland Sutra, one section of five hundred scrolls; the Sutra of Worshiping the True Thusness, one section of ninety scrolls; the Great Prajnaparamita Sutra, one section of nine hundred and sixteen scrolls; the Great Light Sutra, one section of three hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Never-Before-Had, one section of one thousand one hundred and ten scrolls; the Vimalakirti Sutra, one section of one hundred and seventy scrolls; the Separate Sutra of the Three Treatises, one section of two hundred and seventy scrolls; the Diamond Sutra, one section of one hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Discourse on the True Dharma, one section of one hundred and twenty scrolls; the Sutra of the Buddha's Acts, one section of eight hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Five Dragons, one section of thirty-two scrolls; the Sutra of the Bodhisattva Precepts, one section of one hundred and sixteen scrolls; the Great Collection Sutra, one section of one hundred and thirty scrolls; the Magadha Sutra, one section of three hundred and fifty scrolls; the Lotus Sutra, one section of one hundred scrolls; the Yogacara Sutra, one section of one hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Precious Constant, one section of two hundred and twenty scrolls; the Sutra of the Western Heaven Discourse, one section of one hundred and thirty scrolls; the Samghata Sutra, one section of one hundred and fifty-seven scrolls; the Miscellaneous Sutras of Buddha Lands, one section of one thousand nine hundred and fifty scrolls; the Sutra of the Awakening of Faith, one section of one thousand scrolls; the Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom, one section of one thousand and eighty scrolls; the Sutra of Precious Might, one section of one thousand two hundred and eighty scrolls; the Sutra of the Fundamental Pavilion, one section of eight hundred and fifty scrolls; the Sutra of the True Vinaya Texts, one section of two hundred scrolls; the Great Peacock Sutra, one section of two hundred and twenty scrolls; the Sutra of the Discourse on Consciousness Only, one section of

one hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Kosha Treatise, one section of two hundred scrolls.

Ananda and Kasyapa led Tang Sanzang through the whole list of scripture names, and then said to him: "Holy sage, coming from the Eastern Land to this place, what gift have you brought for us? Bring it out quickly, that we may give you the scriptures to take away."

Hearing this, Sanzang said: "Your disciple Xuanzang has come from so far away that he has brought nothing with him."

The two venerable ones laughed: "Very good, very good! If scriptures are given away for nothing to be passed down through the ages, then the generations after us will starve to death!"

Seeing them bargaining and reluctant to part with the scriptures, the Pilgrim could no longer contain himself and burst out: "Master, let us go and tell the Tathagata—let him come and give the scriptures to Old Sun himself!"

"Stop your shouting!" said Ananda. "What place do you think this is, that you can run wild and play the rogue here! Come over here and take the scriptures." Bajie and the Sha Monk, restraining their tempers, pacified the Pilgrim, and turned back to take the scriptures.

Scroll after scroll was packed into the bundle and loaded onto the horse, and two more loads were tied up, which Bajie and the Sha Monk carried. Then they came before the jeweled throne, knocked their heads in thanks to the Tathagata, and went straight out the door. At every Buddha they met they bowed twice; at every Bodhisattva they saw they bowed twice. When they reached the great gate, they bowed to the monks and nuns, the upasikas and upasakas, taking their leave of one and all, and then went down the mountain and took to the road—but of that no more.

Now there was on the Treasure Hall an Ancient Buddha Dipamkara, the Lamp-Lighting Buddha, who, hidden on the upper story, had listened silently to the business of transmitting the scriptures. Understanding it all, he knew that Ananda and Kasyapa had passed on the wordless scriptures, and laughed to himself: "The monks of the Eastern Land are foolish and benighted, and do not know the value of the wordless scriptures—but will they not have wasted all this holy sage's toil in coming?" He asked: "Who is at my side?" The Venerable Bai Xiong stepped out.

The Ancient Buddha charged him: "Raise your divine might, catch up with the monk of Tang as fast as a shooting star, and seize the wordless scriptures from him. Tell him to come back and ask for the true scriptures with words."

The Venerable Bai Xiong at once mounted a wild wind and rolled out beyond the mountain gate of the Thunderclap Monastery, displaying his mighty power. That wind was truly a thing to see:

A warrior before the Buddha, no mere wind god of Xun! From immortal caves it howled in fury, Far outdoing the blustering Maiden of the Wind. At this gust, fish and dragons all lost their caves; Rivers and seas ran counter to their waves. The black ape with his fruit could hardly come to offer it; The yellow crane turned back amid the clouds to find its old nest. The red phoenix's clear note sang no longer sweet; The golden pheasant's call turned to a raucous clatter. Green pine boughs snapped; udumbara blossoms scattered. Bamboo after bamboo of emerald green fell down; Lotus after lotus of gold rocked and swayed. The bell's sound carried three thousand li afar; The scripture's tones drifted lightly over ten thousand ravines. Beneath the cliffs the rare flowers lost their beauty; By the roadside the jade grasses bowed their fresh young shoots. The colored simurgh could not spread its wings to dance; The white deer hid away among the mountain crags. Boundless strange fragrance filled the universe; Pure clear wind pierced to the highest clouds.

The elder of Tang was walking along when suddenly he smelled the rolling fragrant wind and took it only for an auspicious sign from the Buddha, and so was not on his guard. Then he heard a sound—and a hand

reached down from midair and snatched the scriptures from the horse's back. Sanzang was so frightened that he beat his breast and shouted, Bajie rolled along the ground in pursuit, the Sha Monk guarded the load of scriptures, and Sun Wukong shot after the thief like flying. When the Venerable Bai Xiong saw the Pilgrim close on his heels, fearing that the cudgel might have no eyes and, in a moment of confusion, not distinguishing friend from foe, might wound his body, he tore the scripture bundle to pieces and flung it down into the dust.

When the Pilgrim saw the bundle burst open, and the scrolls blown scattering by the fragrant wind, he pressed down his cloud and, caring more for the scriptures than for the pursuit, did not chase after the thief. The Venerable Bai Xiong gathered in his wind and mist and went back to report to the Ancient Buddha—but of that no more.

Bajie, in his pursuit, saw the scriptures falling, and came back with the Pilgrim to gather them up, shoulder them, and bring them to see the master. Tang Sanzang, his eyes full of tears, said: "Disciples! Even in this realm of utmost bliss, there are vicious demons who work harm!" The Sha Monk took the scattered scrolls the Pilgrim was holding, opened one to look, and saw that it was snow-white, without the least trace of any character. He hurriedly handed it to Sanzang: "Master, this scroll has no words." The Pilgrim opened another scroll to look—it too had no words. Bajie opened a scroll—no words either. Sanzang cried: "Open them all and look!" And every scroll was blank white paper.

The elder sighed long and deep: "The people of our Eastern Land are indeed without good fortune! What use are such wordless empty books taken back? How would I dare face the king of Tang? The crime of deceiving the sovereign would deserve no pardon!"

The Pilgrim knew the truth of it already, and said to Tang Sanzang: "Master, there's no need to say more. It's that fellow Ananda—and Kasyapa—asking us for a gift. When we had none to give, they gave us these blank paper books. Let's hurry back and make our complaint before the Tathagata, and ask him to punish their crime of holding back the scriptures for bribes!"

"Exactly! Exactly!" yelled Bajie. "Let's go and sue them!" The four pilgrims hurried back up the mountain in no fine strides, and in their haste soon climbed again to the Thunderclap.

Before long they were outside the mountain gate, and the crowds folded their hands in welcome, laughing: "Have the holy sages come to exchange the scriptures?"

Sanzang nodded and gave his thanks. The Vajra Guardians did not bar their way, but let them go in, straight to the front of the Great Hall of the Mighty One. The Pilgrim shouted: "Tathagata! My master and disciples have suffered ten thousand stings and a thousand demons, ten thousand hardships and a thousand toils, and have come from the Eastern Land to worship at this place. When you were so good as to command the scriptures to be given us, Ananda and Kasyapa, not getting their bribe, joined in fraud and deliberately gave us blank paper books without a word. What use have we for them? We beg the Tathagata to punish them!"

The Buddha smiled: "Hold your shouting for a while. That they asked you for a gift, I know already. But scriptures may not be given lightly, nor taken for nothing. In former times, when the holy monks and arhats came down from the mountain, they recited these scriptures once in the house of the Elder Zhao in the Kingdom of Shravasti, ensuring the safety of the living of that house and the deliverance of the dead, and all they got for it was three pecks and three pints of rice-grain gold. I said they had sold them too cheap, so that the sons and grandsons of later ages would have no money to use. Now you have come with empty hands to take them, and so the blank books were given. The blank books are the wordless true scriptures, and they are good in their way. But because the living beings of your Eastern Land are foolish and benighted and cannot awaken to them, this is the only way they could be transmitted." He at once called: "Ananda, Kasyapa, quickly take a few scrolls from each section of the true scriptures with words and give them to him, and come

here and report the count."

The two venerable ones led the four pilgrims again to the foot of the Jeweled Tower and the Treasure Hall, and there again asked the monk of Tang for a gift. Sanzang had nothing to offer. He ordered the Sha Monk to bring out the purple-gold begging bowl, and held it up with both hands: "Your disciple is truly poor and the road was long, and I have brought no gift. This bowl was bestowed on me with the Tang emperor's own hand, that I might hold it and beg for my food along the way. I now offer it up in special token of my humble heart. I beg the venerable ones not to despise it or think it unworthy, but to accept it; and when I return to court and report to the king of Tang, there shall surely be rich thanks besides. Only grant us the true scriptures with words, so that the intention of the imperial commission and the toils of this long journey may not be in vain."

Ananda took the bowl, smiling faintly. And he was taunted by the mighty guardians in charge of the Jeweled Tower, the cooks of the fragrant kitchen, and the venerable ones who watched over the halls—one wiped his face, another slapped his back, some flicked his ear, some pursed their lips at him—all laughing: "Shameless! Shameless! Extorting a gift for giving scriptures!" In a moment his face was puckered with shame, but he still kept hold of the bowl and would not let it go.

Only then did Kasyapa go into the hall to select the scriptures, checking off each one as he handed it to Sanzang, who called: "Disciples, look at every one of them carefully, and don't let it be as it was before." His three companions took each scroll, examined each scroll, and they all had words. In this way were transmitted five thousand and forty-eight scrolls—the number of one complete canon. They were packed up neatly and loaded onto the horse, while the remainder filled another load, which Bajie carried; and the Sha Monk carried their own luggage.

The Pilgrim led the horse; Tang Sanzang took his staff, pressed down his vairochana cap, and shook out his brocade cassock, and then, joyful and delighted, came before our Buddha the Tathagata. Truly:

The true scriptures of the great canon are sweet to the taste, Made by the Tathagata with great care and rigor. Think how Xuanzang toiled up the mountain, While Ananda, the jest of it, was greedy for money. The first time, unexamined, the fault was the Ancient Buddha's; The second time, with the true text, all was at peace at last. Now, triumphant, he bears them to the Eastern Land, Where all the multitude shall share the dew of grace.

Ananda and Kasyapa led Tang Sanzang before the Tathagata. The Tathagata, high on his lotus throne, commanded the two great arhats Subduer of Dragons and Subduer of Tigers to strike the cloud-shaped gong, and to invite far and wide the three thousand Buddhas, the three thousand guardians, the eight Vajras, the four Bodhisattvas, the five hundred arhats, the eight hundred monks, and all the upasakas, nuns, and upasikas, of every heaven and every cave, of all the blessed lands of Spirit Mountain, the great and small venerable ones and holy monks—those who should sit were asked to mount their jeweled thrones, and those who should stand ranged themselves in attendance on either side. In a moment celestial music was heard from afar, immortal tones rang clear and bright, auspicious light gathered layer upon layer throughout the sky, and blessed vapor massed in fold upon fold, as all the Buddhas assembled and paid their respects to the Tathagata.

The Tathagata asked: "Ananda, Kasyapa, how many scrolls of scripture have you given him? Report the count one by one."

The two venerable ones then opened their report: "To the Tang empire we have given in all: the Nirvana Sutra, four hundred scrolls; the Bodhisattva Sutra, three hundred and sixty scrolls; the Akasagarbha Sutra, twenty scrolls; the Surangama Sutra, thirty scrolls; the Sutra of Grace and Good Intent, Great Collection, forty scrolls; the Sutra of Determination, forty scrolls; the Sutra of the Precious Treasury, twenty scrolls; the

Flower Garland Sutra, eighty-one scrolls; the Sutra of Worshiping the True Thusness, thirty scrolls; the Great Prajnaparamita Sutra, six hundred scrolls; the Sutra of the Golden Light, fifty scrolls; the Sutra of the Never-Before-Had, five hundred and fifty scrolls; the Vimalakirti Sutra, thirty scrolls; the Separate Sutra of the Three Treatises, forty-two scrolls; the Diamond Sutra, one scroll; the Sutra of the Discourse on the True Dharma, twenty scrolls; the Sutra of the Buddha's Acts, one hundred and sixteen scrolls; the Sutra of the Five Dragons, twenty scrolls; the Sutra of the Bodhisattva Precepts, sixty scrolls; the Great Collection Sutra, thirty scrolls; the Magadha Sutra, one hundred and forty scrolls; the Lotus Sutra, ten scrolls; the Yogacara Sutra, thirty scrolls; the Sutra of the Precious Constant, one hundred and seventy scrolls; the Sutra of the Western Heaven Discourse, thirty scrolls; the Samghata Sutra, one hundred and ten scrolls; the Miscellaneous Sutras of Buddha Lands, one thousand six hundred and thirty-eight scrolls; the Sutra of the Awakening of Faith, fifty scrolls; the Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom, ninety scrolls; the Sutra of Precious Might, one hundred and forty scrolls; the Sutra of the Fundamental Pavilion, fifty-six scrolls; the Sutra of the True Vinaya Texts, ten scrolls; the Great Peacock Sutra, fourteen scrolls; the Sutra of the Discourse on Consciousness Only, ten scrolls; the Sutra of the Kosha Treatise, ten scrolls. The scriptures kept in our treasury, thirty-five sections in all, have been drawn from section by section to the number of five thousand and forty-eight scrolls, given to the holy sage of the Eastern Land to transmit and keep in Tang. They are now all packed and stowed upon the men, the horse, and the loads, and we wait only for the thanks of his grace."

The four pilgrims tethered the horse and set down the loads, and pressed their palms together and bowed, facing the throne. The Tathagata said to the monk of Tang: "The merit of these scriptures is beyond all measure. Though they are the mirror of our school, they are in truth the fountainhead of the three teachings. When they reach your Southern Continent of Jambudvipa and are shown to all living beings, they must not be treated lightly. Unless one has bathed and fasted, one must not open the scrolls. Treasure them and honor them! For within them is the subtle secret of becoming immortal and attaining the Way, and the wondrous recipe for bringing forth the transformations of all things."

Sanzang knocked his head in thanks for the grace, accepted them in faith and held them in practice, and once more made the full three circuits of worship before the Buddha, and, in reverent submission, took the scriptures and went. When they reached the third mountain gate, they thanked all the holy beings one by one—but of that no more.

Only after the Tathagata had sent the monk of Tang on his way did he dissolve the assembly of the transmission of scriptures. Then the Bodhisattva Guanyin stepped forward, pressed her palms together, and addressed the Buddha: "Your disciple, having received the golden decree in former years, went to the Eastern Land to find the scripture-seeker. Now the work is accomplished: in all it has taken fourteen years, that is five thousand and forty days—still eight days short of the number of the canon. I beg the World-Honored One to send the holy sage back to the East and return him to the West, all within eight days, so that the number of the canon may be completed; and then I shall be able to lay my golden decree at your feet and have it discharged."

The Tathagata was greatly pleased: "What you say is very fitting. I grant the discharge of the golden decree." He at once summoned the Eight Vajra Guardians and commanded them: "You must quickly exercise your divine might and carry the holy sage back to the East. When the true scriptures have been transmitted and left there, bring the holy sage straight back to the West. All must be done within eight days, to complete the number of one canon. Be not slow or disobedient."

The Vajras at once caught up with the monk of Tang and called: "Scripture-seeker, follow me!" Tang Sanzang and the others, light of body and brisk of spirit, floated and drifted up into the clouds with the Vajras. This is truly:

Seeing his nature and clarifying his mind, he paid his respects to the Buddha; Merit accomplished and practice complete, he flew aloft at once.

If you do not know how the transmission fared when they returned to the Eastern Land, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Chapter 99

Nine Nines Complete, the Demons Are Wiped Away; Three Threes Fulfilled, the Way Returns to Its Root

The story has already told how the Eight Vajra Guardians carried the Tang monk back toward his own land; of that we shall say no more.

At the foot of the triple gate [of the Thunderclap Monastery], the Guardians of the Five Quarters, the Duty Officers of the Four Seasons, the Six Dings and Six Jias, and the Protectors of the Faith came before the Bodhisattva Guanyin and reported: "By the Bodhisattva's holy decree, your disciples have watched over the sage monk in secret all these years. Today his journey is complete, and the Bodhisattva has discharged the golden decree of the Buddha; we beg that the Bodhisattva will likewise permit us to discharge our own decree."

The Bodhisattva was greatly pleased: "Granted, granted." She asked again: "And how did the four of them—the Tang monk and his disciples—conduct themselves in heart and deed along the road?" The gods replied: "Truly devout and single-hearted were they; this cannot escape the Bodhisattva's far-seeing discernment. But as for the sufferings the Tang monk has endured, they are beyond all telling. The calamities and ordeals he passed through on the road, your disciples have recorded here to the last; this is the register of his tribulations." The Bodhisattva read it through from the beginning. It read:

"By the decree that sent your Guardians, reverently recording, The count of the Tang monk's tribulations, each one set clear: Golden Cicada cast down—the first tribulation; Nearly slain on leaving the womb—the second; Cast into the river at the full month—the third; Seeking kin and avenging wrong—the fourth; Meeting a tiger outside the city—the fifth; Falling in a pit, losing a follower—the sixth; On Double Fork Ridge—the seventh; On the Two-Borders Mountain—the eighth; Changing the horse at the steep ravine—the ninth; Burned by fire in the night—the tenth; The loss of the cassock—the eleventh; Subduing and winning Bajie—the twelfth; The Yellow Wind Monster's blockade—the thirteenth; Begging help of Lingji—the fourteenth; The Flowing Sands River hard to cross—the fifteenth; Winning over the Sha Monk—the sixteenth; The Four Sages manifesting—the seventeenth; In Wuzhuang Temple—the eighteenth; The ginseng fruit hard to revive—the nineteenth; The Heart Monkey dismissed in disgrace—the twentieth; Losing one another in the Black Pine Forest—the twenty-first; Bearing the letter to the Kingdom of Baoxiang—the twenty-second; Turned into a tiger in the Golden Chime Hall—the twenty-third; Meeting demons on Flat-Top Mountain—the twenty-fourth; Hung aloft in Lotus Cave—the twenty-fifth; Saving the sovereign of the Black Rooster Kingdom—the twenty-sixth; Impersonated by the demon—the twenty-seventh; Meeting a monster on Hao Mountain—the twenty-eighth; The holy monk snatched away by the wind—the twenty-ninth; The Heart Monkey done to harm—the thirtieth; Begging the sages to subdue the demon—the thirty-first; Sunk beneath the Black River—the thirty-second; Hauling loads in the Kingdom of Chechi—the thirty-third; The great wager of victory and defeat—the thirty-fourth; Driving out the Daoists, exalting the monks—the thirty-fifth; Meeting great waters upon the road—the thirty-sixth; Falling into the Heaven-Reaching River—the thirty-seventh; The fish-basket reveals her form—the thirty-eighth; Meeting a monster at Gold Mountain—the thirty-ninth; All the gods of Heaven hard put to quell him—the fortieth; Asking the Buddha the root and origin—the forty-first; Poisoned by the water he drank—the forty-second; Detained for marriage in the Kingdom of Western Liang—the forty-third; Suffering in the Lute Cave—the forty-fourth; The Heart Monkey banished once more—the forty-fifth; The macaque hard to distinguish—the forty-sixth; The road barred by the Flaming Mountain—the forty-seventh; Seeking the plantain fan—the forty-eighth; Seizing and binding the Demon King—the forty-ninth; Sweeping the pagoda at the city of Jisai—the fiftieth; Fetching the treasure to save the monks—the fifty-first; Chanting verse in the thorny grove—the fifty-second; Meeting disaster at the Lesser Thunderclap—the fifty-third; All the gods of Heaven

held captive—the fifty-fourth; Blocked by the filth of the persimmon tunnel—the fifty-fifth; Practicing medicine in the Kingdom of Zhuzi—the fifty-sixth; Saving the worn and ailing—the fifty-seventh; Subduing the demon, restoring the queen—the fifty-eighth; Beguiled and lost among the Seven Passions—the fifty-ninth; Wounded by the Hundred-Eyed—the sixtieth; The road blocked at Lion Camel—the sixty-first; The monsters in their three colors—the sixty-second; Disaster in the city—the sixty-third; Begging the Buddha to take the demon—the sixty-fourth; Saving the child in the Kingdom of Bhikshu—the sixty-fifth; Distinguishing the true from the false—the sixty-sixth; Rescuing the monster in the pine forest—the sixty-seventh; Lying sick in the monks' lodgings—the sixty-eighth; Trapped in the Bottomless Cave—the sixty-ninth; Hard going in the Dharma-Destroying Kingdom—the seventieth; Meeting a demon on Hidden Mist Mountain—the seventy-first; Praying for rain in Fengxian County—the seventy-second; The weapons lost and gone—the seventy-third; The feast that honored the rake—the seventy-fourth; The ordeal on Bamboo Joint Mountain—the seventy-fifth; Suffering in the Cave of Dark Splendor—the seventy-sixth; Chasing and catching the rhinoceros—the seventy-seventh; The marriage sought in Tianzhu—the seventy-eighth; Imprisoned in the Prefecture of Tongtai—the seventy-ninth; Casting off the shell at the Cloud-Piercing Ferry—the eightieth. The road they went, a hundred and eight thousand li; The register of the sage monk's tribulations, plainly set down."

When the Bodhisattva had run her eye over the register of tribulations, she said hastily: "In the school of the Buddha, it is nine times nine that brings the return to truth. The sage monk has endured but eighty tribulations—one is still wanting, and the number cannot be completed."

She at once commanded a Guardian: "Overtake the Vajra Guardians, and bring about one more tribulation for them." Receiving the command, the Guardian mounted the flying clouds and sped eastward.

In a day and a night he caught up with the Eight Vajra Guardians, and, whispering close to their ears, said: "Thus and thus and thus. Reverently obey the Bodhisattva's decree; you must not fail or disobey."

Hearing this, the Eight Vajra Guardians at once pressed down the wind and let the four travelers—horses, scriptures, and all—drop down to the ground. Ah! It was exactly this:

Nine nines return to truth, but the Way is hard to tread; Firm must the will be kept, standing fast at the Mystic Gate. Only by bitter trial are the evil demons driven off; Only by cultivation of the right dharma does one return. Do not think the scriptures' rolls were easily won— Many were the ordeals the sage monk could not pass. Since of old, wondrously they accord with the Harmony of the Three; A hair's-breadth of error, and the elixir never forms.

[Translator's note: "the Harmony of the Three" renders the title of the Can Tong Qi (the Scripture of the Kinship of the Three), a classic Daoist alchemical text.]

The moment his feet touched the mortal earth, Sanzang felt his heart leap within him. Bajie burst out laughing: "Good! Good! Good! This is what they mean by hurrying to be quick and ending up late." The Sha Monk said: "Good! Good! Good! It's because we went a bit too fast that they've set us down here to rest a while."

The Great Sage said: "As the proverb has it, sit ten days by the shoals, and in one day you can pass nine of them."

Sanzang said: "You three, stop your bickering for a moment. Take your bearings and see what place this is." The Sha Monk turned his head and looked all about: "It's this place! It's this place! Master, listen to the sound of the water." The Pilgrim said: "The sound of water—that must be your ancestral home." Bajie said: "His ancestral home is the Flowing Sands River." The Sha Monk said: "No, no—this is the Heaven-Reaching River." Sanzang said: "Disciple, look carefully and see which bank we are on." The Pilgrim sprang up into the air, shaded his eyes with one hand, and looked carefully. Then he came down and said: "Master, this is

the western bank of the Heaven-Reaching River."

Sanzang said: "Now I remember—on the eastern bank there is the Village of Chen. When we came here that year, thanks to your rescuing their children, they were deeply grateful and would have built a boat to send us across; but luckily the white turtle ferried us over instead. I remember that on this western bank there is no trace of human habitation for miles around. What are we to do now?"

Bajie said: "I thought only mortal folk knew how to cheat, but it seems even these Vajras before the Buddha's very face have learned the trick. They received the Buddha's decree to send us back east—how can they drop us in the middle of the road like this? Now we are caught fast, unable to advance or retreat! How are we ever to cross?"

The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, hold your grumbling. Our master has already attained the Way; at the Cloud-Piercing Ferry he cast off his mortal frame, and this time he certainly will not sink. Let elder brother and you and I all put forth our magic of transport and carry the master across."

The Pilgrim snickered to himself again and again: "It can't be done! It can't be done!" Now why did he say it could not be done? If he had been willing to put forth his magic powers and reveal the mystery of soaring aloft, master and disciples could have crossed a thousand such rivers. But he knew very well in his heart that the number of nine nines for the Tang monk was not yet complete—that one more tribulation was still owing. And so he let them linger there.

Thus talking among themselves, master and disciples walked slowly on until they came to the water's edge, where suddenly they heard someone call: "Sage Monk of Tang! Sage Monk of Tang! Come this way! Come this way!" The four travelers were all startled. They looked up, but there was no trace of any human being, nor any boat to be seen—only a great white-shelled, scab-headed turtle poking its head up from the bank and calling: "Reverend Master, I have been waiting for you all these years—so you have come back at last?"

The Pilgrim laughed: "Old turtle, we put you to trouble in years past, and now this year we meet again." Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk were all delighted beyond measure.

The Pilgrim said: "Old turtle, if you truly have a mind to receive us, come up onto the bank." The turtle at once sprang up and climbed out of the river. The Pilgrim bade them lead the horse up onto its back. Bajie crouched behind the horse's tail, Tang Sanzang stood to the left of the horse's neck, the Sha Monk stood on the right, while the Pilgrim set one foot on the old turtle's neck and the other on its head, crying: "Old turtle, mind you walk steady now."

The old turtle kicked out its four legs and trod the surface of the water as if it were level ground, bearing the four of them—master and disciples—together with the horse, five living creatures in all, straight across toward the eastern bank. Truly it was as they say:

Within the gate of non-duality the dharma is deep and dark; All demons fought and driven off, one knows both Heaven and man. Now at last is seen the original face; Now at last the one body's cause is made whole. Witness of the Three Vehicles, one may come and go at will; The elixir turned nine times, one may wander where one pleases. Of packs on the back and flying staves, speak no more— How fortunate, returning to the source, to meet the old turtle!

The old turtle carried them, treading the waves and breasting the swells, for the better part of a day. As evening was drawing on, when they were close to the eastern bank, it suddenly asked: "Reverend Master, in former years I begged you, when you reached the Western Heaven and saw the Buddha, the Tathagata, to ask on my behalf about the matter of my final destiny, and how many years of life remained to me. Did you, in truth, ask?"

Now it happened that the elder, from the time he reached the Western Heaven—bathing in the Abbey of Jade Truth, casting off his mortal frame at the Cloud-Piercing Ferry, and walking up the Spirit Mountain, where his heart was wholly set on worshiping the Buddha and paying reverence to all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and holy sages—had thought of nothing but the quest for the scriptures and had paid not the least heed to any other thing. That was why he had never asked about the old turtle's span of years. He had no answer to give, yet he dared not deceive it with a lie. He fell silent for a long while and made no reply.

The old turtle knew at once that his question had not been asked. With a shake of its body it plunged into the water with a great splash, tumbling the four travelers, horse, and scriptures all into the river. Ah! It was well that the Tang monk had cast off his mortal shell and attained the Way; had it been as before, he would have gone straight to the bottom. And it was well too that the white horse was a dragon, and that Bajie and the Sha Monk could swim. The Pilgrim, smiling broadly, displayed his great magic powers and helped the Tang monk up out of the water and onto the eastern bank. It was only the bundles of scriptures, the clothes, and the saddle and bridle that were all soaked through.

No sooner had master and disciples climbed ashore and begun to put themselves to rights than there suddenly blew up a wild wind. The sky darkened, thunder and mist broke out together, rocks flew and sand drove. Then they saw:

A blast of wind—Heaven and Earth were rocked and shaken; A peal of thunder—the mountains and rivers trembled. A flash of lightning—it bored through the clouds with flying fire; A fog-covered sky—the whole earth was shrouded. The wind roared and howled; the thunder crashed and cracked. The lightning drew red silk across the sky; the fog veiled stars and moon. The wind drove dust and sand into their faces; the thunder startled tiger and leopard into hiding; the lightning's flicker set the birds shrieking; the fog's thick pall wiped out the very trees. The wind churned the Heaven-Reaching River into surging waves; the thunder made the fish and dragons of the Heaven-Reaching River lose their courage; the lightning lit the Heaven-Reaching River through to its very bottom; the fog covered the Heaven-Reaching River's banks in murky gloom. A fine wind! It toppled mountains, shattered rocks, felled pines and bamboo. A fine thunder! Its awakening roar could wound a man; its might was overbearing. A fine lightning! Flowing across the sky, lighting the wilds, the golden serpent ran. A fine fog! Vast and confused, it blanketed the sky and hid the nine heavens.

So frightened was Sanzang that he clutched fast his bundle of scriptures; the Sha Monk pressed down the pole of scripture-loads; Bajie held fast the white horse; and the Pilgrim, swinging his iron cudgel in both hands, guarded them on either side. It turned out that the wind, the fog, the thunder, and the lightning were the war-cries of certain yin demons, who meant to snatch away the scriptures they had obtained. The turmoil lasted the whole night long, and only when morning came did it cease.

The elder, soaked to the skin, asked tremblingly: "Wukong, what is the meaning of this?"

The Pilgrim said in a huff: "Master, you do not know the whole of it. These scriptures we have won by escorting you are the achievement of seizing the secret workings of Heaven and Earth. They may endure as long as Heaven and Earth, shine as brightly as sun and moon, grant long life and eternal spring, and make the dharma body imperishable. It is for this very reason that Heaven and Earth cannot abide them and the ghosts and spirits envy them, and they came to steal them away by stealth. In the first place, the scriptures had been drenched through with water; in the second, your true dharma body pressed them down, so thunder could not blast them, lightning could not illumine them, fog could not befuddle them; and old Sun, whirling his iron cudgel, kept guard over them with the very nature of pure yang. And when dawn came, the force of yang waxed strong once more—and so they could not be carried off after all."

Only then did Sanzang, Bajie, and the Sha Monk understand, and each thanked the Pilgrim without end.

After a little while the sun shone high. They moved the scriptures onto a high cliff and opened the bundles to dry them in the sun; to this day the scripture-drying rock of that place still remains. They also spread their clothes and shoes along the cliffside to dry, some standing, some sitting, some leaping about. Truly it was:

A body of pure yang rejoices in the sun, And yin demons dare not play the tyrant. Know that the waters have prevailed—the true scriptures lie still; They fear not wind, nor thunder, nor lightning's glare, nor fog. From this day forth all is calm, and they return to right awakening; From this time on, safe and at ease, they reach the immortal land. On the scripture-drying rock their traces remain; Through a thousand ages, no demon has come to this place.

As the four of them were checking the scripture volumes and spreading them out one by one, a few fishermen came by along the riverside. Looking up and catching sight of them, one who recognized them said: "Reverend Masters, are you not the ones who crossed this river two years ago on your way to the Western Heaven to fetch the scriptures?"

Bajie said: "That's right, that's right. Where are you from? How is it you recognize us?" The fisherman said: "We are men of the Village of Chen." Bajie said: "How far is the Village of Chen from here?" The fisherman said: "Cross this ford and go south twenty li, and there it is."

Bajie said: "Master, let's carry the scriptures to the Village of Chen to dry. They have lodging there, and food to eat, and we can have the household starch our clothes for us—wouldn't that be better?" Sanzang said: "Let us not go. Once they are dry here, we shall pack up and find the road home."

The fishermen crossed the southern ford and happened to meet Chen Cheng. They called out: "Second Elder Master, the masters who took the place of your son in the sacrifice two years ago have come back!" Chen Cheng said: "Where did you see them?" The fishermen pointed back: "They're all up there on the rock, drying their scriptures."

Chen Cheng at once took a few tenant farmers with him and crossed the ford. When he saw them, he ran up close, knelt, and said: "Your lordships have returned with the scriptures, your merit accomplished and your journey fulfilled—why have you not come to my humble house, but are fussing about here? Do come, I pray, do come to my home." The Pilgrim said: "When the scriptures are dry, we'll go with you." Chen Cheng asked again: "How is it that your lordships' scriptures and clothes have got wet?"

Sanzang said: "In former years the white turtle carried us across to the western bank; this year again it has carried us across to the eastern. When we were nearly ashore, it asked me about the matter I had been entrusted with in those days—to ask the Buddha its span of years. I had in truth never asked, and so it plunged into the water, and for that reason we are wet." Then he told the whole tale over again in detail.

Chen Cheng begged and entreated them so earnestly that Sanzang, unable to refuse, packed up the scriptures. But, as luck would have it, a few rolls of the Sutra of the Buddha's Original Practice had stuck fast to the rock, and when they were pulled away, the ends of the scrolls were torn. That is why, to this day, the Sutra of the Buddha's Original Practice is incomplete, and traces of writing may still be seen on the scripture-drying rock.

Sanzang said with remorse: "It was our carelessness—we did not watch over them!" The Pilgrim laughed: "It is not that! Not that at all! Heaven and Earth are not perfect; these scriptures were originally perfect, and now that they have been torn, it is but the mysterious working of the world's imperfection answering to its turn—how could human strength have anything to do with it?" And so master and disciples packed everything up and went with Chen Cheng to the village.

The people of the village spread the news one to ten, ten to a hundred, a hundred to a thousand; old and young alike, they all came out to welcome and see them. When Chen Qing heard of it, he set out an incense

table before his gate to receive them and ordered drums and music to be struck up. Soon they arrived and were welcomed in; Chen Qing led out his whole family, young and old, to bow before them and thank them for the grace that had saved his daughter long ago. He then ordered tea to be served and a vegetarian feast laid out.

Since Sanzang had partaken of the Buddha's immortal fare, and had cast off his mortal frame to become a Buddha, he had no thought at all for the food of the mortal world. The two elders urged him with all their might, and at last, unable to refuse, he made a show of honoring their intent. The Great Sage Sun, who from of old never ate the food of cooked fires, likewise said: "Enough." The Sha Monk also ate very little, and Bajie was not as he had been before; he set down his bowl. The Pilgrim said: "So even the blockhead is not eating?" Bajie said: "I don't know how it is—my stomach and spleen have suddenly grown weak." And so the feast was cleared away, and they asked again about the quest for the scriptures.

Sanzang then told them in detail how he had first bathed in the Abbey of Jade Truth, cast off his mortal frame at the Cloud-Piercing Ferry, and reached the Thunderclap Monastery to pay homage to the Tathagata; how he had been honored with a banquet in the jeweled pavilion and the transmission of the scriptures in the treasure tower; how at first, because the two venerable ones had demanded a gift and received none, the wordless scriptures had been handed over; and how, when he had gone back to appeal to the Tathagata, he had at last received the scriptures to the full count of one canon. He told also of the white turtle's plunge and of the yin demons' secret attempt to seize the scriptures. Having set it all forth, he wished to take his leave.

How could the two elders and their whole families be willing to let them go? They said: "Long ago you rescued our children, a grace so deep we can never repay it. We have built a temple, called the Monastery of Saving Lives, and there we keep incense burning without cease in your honor." They also called out the children who had once been saved from the sacrifice, Chen Guanbao and Yichengjin, to kowtow their thanks, and invited them once more to visit the temple and see it.

Sanzang had the bundles of scriptures set up in the front hall of their house and recited for them a scroll of the Sutra of Precious Constancy. Later they went to the temple, where they found the Chen family had laid out another feast. Before they had even sat down, another company came to invite them; before they had lifted their chopsticks, yet another came—the invitations came in an endless stream, all vying to press food upon them. Sanzang did not dare refuse any of them, and made a show of partaking of each.

They saw that the temple was indeed built most handsomely:

The gate-tower's red and white plaster is fair— All owing to the benefactors' merit. Storied pavilions have risen here; Chambers along the two corridors have sprung up. Doors and screens of vermilion, Seven treasures exquisitely wrought. Fragrance drifts up to the Milky Way; Clear light fills the vast sky. A few young cypresses, still being watered; Several tall pines, not yet in clusters. Living waters greet them in front— the Heaven-Reaching River rolls wave upon wave; A high cliff leans behind— range upon range of mountains joins the veins of the earth.

When Sanzang had finished looking, they went up into the high tower, where images of the four travelers had indeed been molded and set up. When Bajie saw them, he tugged at the Pilgrim and said: "Elder Brother's likeness is very like." The Sha Monk said: "Second Brother, yours is very like as well—it's only that Master's is a bit too handsome." Sanzang said: "Very good! Very good!" Then they came down from the tower; in the front hall and rear corridors below there were still feasts spread and invitations awaiting.

The Pilgrim asked: "And what became of the temple of the Great King in former days?" The elders said: "That temple was torn down years ago. Since this one was built, your lordships, every year has brought ripe harvests and every season a full reaping—it is all the protection of your lordships' good fortune." The Pilgrim laughed: "That is Heaven's gift—what has it to do with us? But from now on, after we are gone, I guarantee

to the people of this whole village: your sons and grandsons shall multiply, your six kinds of livestock shall thrive, and year after year the winds and rains shall come in season, season after season the rains and winds shall be timely." At this, all of them kowtowed and gave thanks.

Before and behind, still more households came offering fruit and vegetarian fare, families without number. Bajie laughed: "Oh, my luck! In those days when I could eat, no household invited us so much as ten times over; today, when I can't eat, one household is not done with us before another comes along." Yet for all his complaints, he stirred himself a little and got through another eight or nine plates of vegetarian dishes; and though his stomach was aching, he ate twenty or thirty steamed buns besides. When he was quite full, still more people came to invite them. Sanzang said: "What merit has your disciple, to be so overwhelmed with your kindness! I pray you will stop for this night; tomorrow morning we will accept your invitations."

By now it was deep in the night. Sanzang, guarding the true scriptures and daring not to leave them for a single moment, sat in meditation beneath the tower and watched over them. When the third watch drew near, Sanzang said softly: "Wukong, the people of this place know that our cultivation is accomplished and our task complete. Since ancient times it has been said: the true man does not show his true face; he who shows his true face is no true man. I fear that if we are kept lingering here, we shall miss the great matter."

The Pilgrim said: "Master speaks well. Let us take advantage of this deep night, when all are fast asleep, and slip quietly away." Bajie was aware of it too, the Sha Monk understood it perfectly, and even the white horse could follow their intent. So they rose, gently loaded the packs onto the horse's back, shouldered the carrying-pole, and led the horse out through the side corridor. When they reached the temple gate, they found it locked. The Pilgrim worked his unlocking magic, opened the inner gate and the great gate, and they found the road and set off eastward.

Suddenly from midair they heard the Eight Vajra Guardians call: "You runaways, follow me!" The elder felt the fragrant wind sweeping about them and rose into the air. Truly it was:

The elixir perfected, one knows one's original face; The body hale and serene, one bows before one's sovereign.

But we do not know how he was to appear before the King of Tang; listen to the next chapter to find out.

Chapter 100

By the Straight Road They Return to the Eastern Land; The Five Sages Attain Truth

But let us say no more of how the four of them freed themselves and rose on the wind with the vajra guardians. Instead the story tells how, at the Monastery of Rescue in the Village of Chen, many of the villagers rose at daybreak and, as always, prepared fruits and delicacies to offer up. But when they came to the foot of the tower, the Tang monk was nowhere to be seen. One came asking, another went searching, all in a flurry, at their wits' end, crying out in their misery: "In broad daylight we have let a living Buddha slip away!" After a while, having no other recourse, they carried all the prepared offerings up into the tower and made sacrifice there, burning paper money. From that time on there were four great sacrifices and twenty-four lesser ones every year; and besides, those who sought cures for their illnesses, protection and peace, marriage and the fulfillment of vows, wealth and sons, came burning incense and making offerings at every hour of every day. Truly, in the golden censer the thousand-year flame never went out, and in the jade lamp the ten-thousand-year light shone ever bright. Of this we say no more.

The story now tells how the eight vajra guardians, riding their second gust of fragrant wind, carried the four of them back to the Eastern Land in less than a day, until gradually the towers of Chang'an came into sight. It turned out that after Taizong had seen the Tang monk out of the city in the thirteenth year of the Zhenguan reign, three days before the full moon of the ninth month, in the sixteenth year he had dispatched officers of the Ministry of Works to build the Scripture-Watching Tower just outside the city's west gate, where the scriptures were to be received, and every year Taizong came there in person.

As it happened, on this very day he had driven out in state and had just come up into the tower again, when suddenly, in the direction of the true west, he saw auspicious mists filling the sky and gusts of fragrant wind. The vajra guardians halted in mid-air and called out: "Holy Monk, this is the city of Chang'an. It would not be fitting for us to descend—the folk here are too clever, and might let our true forms be known. The Great Sage Sun and the other two need not go either. Go you alone, deliver the scriptures to your sovereign, and return at once. We shall wait for you here in the sky, and together we shall report the fulfillment of our command."

"What you say, Venerable One, is fitting," said the Great Sage, "but how is my master to carry the load of scriptures? How is he to lead the horse? We must all go with him to see him off. I beg you to wait a little while in the sky; I trust we shall not delay you." "The day before yesterday the Bodhisattva Guanyin petitioned the Tathagata," said the guardian, "and the whole going and coming was set at eight days, so that the number of the canon might be fulfilled. Now more than four days have already passed. I fear only that Bajie, greedy for wealth and rank, may let the appointed time slip by." "Master is to become a Buddha," laughed Bajie, "and I too hope to become a Buddha—how could there be any thought of greed in that! You rude, coarse brute! Wait here for us all; once the scriptures are delivered, I'll come back and report along with you." The blockhead shouldered the load, the Sha Monk led the horse, and the Pilgrim escorted the Holy Monk, as they all brought down their clouds and landed beside the Scripture-Watching Tower.

When Taizong and all his officers saw them, he came down from the tower at once to welcome them, saying: "Have you come, my sworn brother?" The Tang monk at once bowed down to the ground, and Taizong raised him up, then asked: "Who are these three?" "Disciples I accepted along the way," said the Tang monk. Taizong was overjoyed, and at once ordered his attendants: "Harness the horses to my imperial carriage, ask my sworn brother to mount, and ride back to court with Us."

The Tang monk gave thanks for the favor, mounted the horse, and rode off, with the Great Sage twirling his gold-banded cudgel close behind, and Bajie and the Sha Monk beside the horse, the load upon their shoulders, following in the imperial train as all entered Chang'an together. Truly:

In those old days of feasting the realm rejoiced in peace; The civil and the martial stood serene, their talents on display. On the field of the Land-and-Water Mass the monk preached the Law, And from the golden throne the sovereign sent his ministers away. By decree of the throne the passport was granted to Tang Sanzang, And the scripture rolls, by destiny, were matched with the Five Elements' way. With bitter toil he quelled the fierce demons, every one undone— His merit achieved, today he rejoices to enter the imperial city.

The Tang monk and his four companions followed the imperial procession into court, and in all the city there was not a single soul who did not know that the seekers of the scriptures had come.

The story now tells how the monks, young and old, of the Monastery of Great Blessing in Chang'an, where the Tang monk had once lodged, saw that the crowns of several pine trees had all turned toward the east, and cried out in astonishment: "How strange! How strange! There was no wind this night—how is it that the crowns of these trees have all twisted round?"

Among them a former disciple of Tripitaka said: "Quick, fetch our robes! The old master who went for the scriptures is coming back!" The monks asked: "How do you know?" The former disciple said: "When the master left that year, he spoke these words: 'After I am gone, in three or five years, or six or seven, watch the crowns of the pines—if they have turned to the east, then I am on my way back.' My master's words were the holy words of a Buddha, and so I know." He threw on his robe in haste and went out, and by the time he reached West Street there were already people spreading the word: "The scripture seekers have but this moment arrived; His Majesty has welcomed them into the city." Hearing this, the monks came running in haste and just met them; but catching sight of the imperial train, they dared not come near, and followed behind all the way to outside the court gate.

The Tang monk dismounted and entered court with the rest. He had the dragon horse and the loads of scriptures, together with the Pilgrim, Bajie, and the Sha Monk, stand below the jade steps. Taizong gave the summons: "Let my sworn brother come up the hall." A seat was offered him, and the Tang monk thanked him for the favor and sat down, then ordered the scripture rolls brought up. The Pilgrim and the others took them out, and the attendants nearest the throne presented them. Taizong asked again: "How many scriptures are there? And how did you bring them back?" Tripitaka said:

"Your servant the monk reached the Spirit Mountain and had audience with the Buddha Ancestor, who sent the two venerable ones, Ananda and Kasyapa, to lead us first to the jeweled tower, where a vegetarian meal was conferred upon us, and then to the precious pavilion, where the scriptures were imparted. Those venerable ones asked for a gratuity, but as I had made no provision for it and had given them nothing, they handed over scriptures without a single word. We bowed in thanks for the Buddha Ancestor's grace and set out eastward, when suddenly a demon wind snatched the scriptures away. Fortunately my little disciple had some magic powers and gave chase, fighting to win them back; but they had been scattered and tossed about in disarray, and when we unrolled them to look, they were all blank volumes without a single word.

"Alarmed, we went back to bow before the Buddha Ancestor and plead with him, and he said: 'When this scripture was accomplished, a holy bhikshu was about to descend the mountain to recite it once for the household of Elder Zhao of the kingdom of Shravasti, that the living of that family might be kept safe and the dead delivered. For his trouble he asked only three pecks and three pints of rice-grain gold, and even then he thought it sold too cheap, so that his descendants in later ages had no money to spend.' We knew then that those two venerable ones had asked for a gratuity with the Buddha Ancestor's full knowledge, and we had no choice but to present them with the purple-gold alms bowl conferred by imperial favor. Only then were the true scriptures, complete with words, imparted. These scriptures comprise thirty-five divisions; of each division a few volumes were selected and brought back—five thousand and forty-eight volumes in all, a number that makes up exactly one Tripitaka."

Taizong was all the more delighted, and ordered: "Let the Court of Imperial Entertainments prepare a banquet; throw open the Eastern Pavilion, that we may feast and reward them."

Suddenly he noticed his three disciples standing below the steps with their extraordinary appearance, and asked: "Are your worthy disciples truly foreigners, then?" The elder prostrated himself and said: "My eldest disciple is surnamed Sun, with the religious name Wukong, whom I also call Sun Wukong the Pilgrim. He was originally a native of the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit in the country of Aolai on the Eastern Continent of Superior Body. Because five hundred years ago he made havoc in Heaven, he was imprisoned by the Buddha Ancestor within the stone casket of the Mountain of Two Frontiers in the western marches; and it was through the Bodhisattva Guanyin's persuasion to good that he willingly took refuge in the faith. It was I who went there and rescued him, and I owe a great deal to this disciple's protection. My second disciple is surnamed Zhu, with the religious name Wuneng, whom I also call Zhu Bajie the Eight Precepts. He was originally a native of the Cloud-Fold Cave on Mount Fulin. Because he worked evil at Gao Village in Wu-si-zang, the Bodhisattva converted him to goodness and the Pilgrim took him in; all along the road he has borne the load with strength and rendered good service in fording the waters.

"My third disciple is surnamed Sha, with the religious name Wujing, whom I also call the Sha Monk. He was originally a monster that worked evil in the Flowing Sands River, and he too was converted to goodness by the Bodhisattva, and now keeps the teachings of the Buddhist order. As for that horse—it is not one that Your Majesty bestowed."

"The markings of its coat are the same—how can it not be?" asked Taizong.

"When your servant came to the ford at Eagle Sorrow Ravine on Serpent-Coil Mountain," said Tripitaka, "the original horse was swallowed by this one. Thanks to the Pilgrim, who invited the Bodhisattva to ask after this horse's history, it turned out to be a son of the Dragon King of the Western Sea. Because it had committed a crime, the Bodhisattva rescued and redeemed it, and ordered it to serve as your servant's mount. At the time it transformed itself into the very likeness of the original horse, coat and markings identical. Thanks to it we have climbed mountains and crossed ridges, toiled over rough and rugged ways—riding it when we set out westward, and having it bear the scriptures on our return—and we have depended greatly upon its strength." At these words Taizong praised him without end, and asked again: "After such a distant journey to the West, what truly is the length of the road?" Tripitaka said: "Recalling the Bodhisattva's words, it is 108,000 li. On the way I kept no count of the distance, and know only that we passed through fourteen rounds of cold and heat. Day after day of mountains, day after day of ridges; we came upon forests of no small size and crossed rivers broad and vast. We also passed through several kingdoms, and in each of them the passport was examined and sealed."

He called out: "Disciples, bring up the travel passport and deliver it to His Majesty." They presented it at once, and Taizong examined it: it had been issued in the thirteenth year of the Zhenguan reign, three days before the full moon of the ninth month. Taizong laughed: "Long has been your toil, far has been your journey—and now it is already the twenty-seventh year of the Zhenguan reign."

On the passport were the seals of the Kingdom of Baoxiang, the Black Rooster Kingdom, the Kingdom of Chechi, the Women's Kingdom of Western Liang, the Kingdom of Jisai, the Kingdom of Zhuzi, the Lion Camel Kingdom, the Kingdom of Bhikshu, and the Dharma-Destroying Kingdom; and also the seals of Fengxian County, the Prefecture of Yuhua, and the Prefecture of Jinping. When Taizong had finished examining them all, he put the passport away.

An officer in attendance had already invited them to the banquet, and Taizong at once came down from the hall and walked along holding the elder's hand, asking: "Do your worthy disciples know how to observe the courtesies?" "My disciples are all demon bodies from mountain villages and the wild open country," said Tripitaka, "unversed in the rites and usages of Your Majesty's sacred court. I earnestly beg Your Majesty to

pardon their offenses." "I shall not hold it against them, I shall not hold it against them," laughed Taizong. "Invite them all to the Eastern Pavilion for the feast." Tripitaka thanked him again for the favor and beckoned his three companions, and they all went into the pavilion to look around.

Truly this was a great nation of China, quite unlike any ordinary country. Just look:

At the gates hung colored embroideries, and the ground was spread with red felt. Strange fragrances dense and rich; rare delicacies fresh and fine. Amber cups and glass goblets, inlaid with gold and studded with emerald; Golden platters and white-jade bowls, set about with woven brocade. Turnips boiled soft and melting, sweet taro candied with sugar. Mushrooms sweet and savory, sea vegetables clear and rare. Again and again came ginger-spiced bamboo shoots in hot broth, And time and again were served sunflower hearts dressed with honey. Gluten fried with toon leaves, black fungus and sheets of beancurd.

Stone-flower immortal greens, fern-starch and dried ferns. Peppercorn-stewed turnips, cucumber shreds tossed with mustard. A few plates of vegetarian fare were fine enough, But several kinds of rare and strange fruits took the crown: Walnuts and persimmon cakes, longans and lychees. Cocoon-chestnuts from Xuanzhou and jujubes from Shandong, Ginkgo nuts of Jiangnan and hare-head pears. Hazelnuts, pine nuts, lotus seeds, and great fat grapes, Torreya nuts, melon seeds, and water caltrops in full array. Olives and crabapples, apples and sand pears, Arrowheads and tender lotus roots, crisp plums and red bayberries. Nothing that was not provided, nothing that was lacking.

And there were steamed pastries and honeyed sweets along with fine viands, With fine wines, fragrant teas, and delicacies rare and strange. Tongue cannot tell of the hundred flavors of true delicacies— Truly this great nation of China surpassed the western lands. The four of master and disciples stood in attendance on either side with the civil and military officers, While the emperor Taizong sat in state in the very midst; Songs and dances, pipes and strings, all orderly and stately, And so they made merry for the whole of one day. Truly: The sovereign's grand assembly rivaled the courts of Yao and Shun; Having won the true scriptures, his blessings are in overflow. Through a thousand ages shall it be told, through a thousand ages shall it flourish, And the Buddha's light shines far upon the sovereign's abode.

When evening fell, the banquet of thanks broke up. Taizong returned to his palace, the officers to their mansions, and the Tang monk and his party returned to the Monastery of Great Blessing, where the monks of the monastery were kowtowing to welcome them.

No sooner had they entered the mountain gate than the monks reported: "Master, this morning the crowns of all these trees suddenly turned to the east. We remembered your words, and so we came out of the city to meet you—and here you truly are!" The elder was overjoyed beyond measure, and went in to the abbot's quarters. At this time Bajie no longer clamored for tea and rice, nor played his tricks; the Pilgrim and the Sha Monk were each sedate and steady. Because the fruit of the Way was now accomplished, they were naturally quiet and still. That night they slept.

The next morning, when Taizong mounted the throne to hold court, he said to his assembled ministers: "We have pondered the merits of Our sworn brother, deep and great beyond measure, and have nothing with which to repay him. All night We could not sleep, and extemporized a few lines of plain talk [Translator's note: literally "rustic talk"—a self-deprecating term for a humble composition] as a makeshift token of Our thanks, but they have not yet been written out." He called: "Let the officer of the Secretariat come; We shall recite it to you, and you shall write it all down." The text read:

"We have heard that the Two Principles possess form, manifesting their covering and supporting in order to contain all living things; the Four Seasons are without form, working secretly through cold and heat to transform all things. Thus, gazing up at Heaven and down at Earth, even the dull and the foolish can recognize their beginnings; but to illumine yin and fathom yang, even the wise and the sagely rarely exhaust

their workings. Now Heaven and Earth encompass yin and yang, and yet are easy to recognize, because they have form; yin and yang dwell within Heaven and Earth, and yet are hard to fathom, because they are without form.

"Thus we know that where form is manifest, it may be verified, and even the foolish are not deceived; but where form lies hidden and cannot be seen, even the wise remain in the dark. How much more, then, with the Way of the Buddha, which exalts the void and rides the abstruse, steers the hidden and commands the still! It rescues in boundless measure all the ten thousand kinds of beings, and holds sovereign sway over the ten directions. Lift up its dread majesty—nothing is above it; press down its divine power—nothing is beneath it. In its greatness it fills the whole universe; in its fineness it is contained within a hair's breadth. It is neither extinguished nor born; it endures through a thousand kalpas from ages most remote; now hidden, now manifest, it has borne a hundred blessings and flourishes to this very day. The wondrous Way congeals in mystery, and those who follow it cannot perceive its borders; the stream of the Dharma lies deep and still, and those who draw from it cannot fathom its source.

"So we know that among the teeming, dull, and foolish common folk—the petty, vulgar herd—if they cast themselves upon its import, how could they remain without doubt or confusion? Yet the rise of the Great Teaching is grounded in the Western Land. It soared into the Han court in a shining dream, and shining upon the eastern regions, poured forth its compassion. In the ancient age when forms and traces were yet divided, it worked its transforming influence before a single word had spread abroad; in the age when it was sometimes seen and sometimes hidden, the people looked up to its virtue and knew to revere it.

"And when at last it veiled its shadow and returned to truth, moving through the ages and crossing the generations, the golden countenance concealed its radiance and no longer mirrored its light upon the three thousand worlds [Translator's note: according to Buddhist teaching, the light of the Buddha's golden countenance could illumine the great trichiliocosm—the cosmos of three thousand worlds]; yet its glorious image unfolded its picture, and in the void displayed the thirty-two marks. Then its subtle words spread far and wide, rescuing the creatures of the animal realm from the three evil destinies; its heritage of instruction was proclaimed afar, guiding the multitude of beings toward the ten stages. The Buddha has scriptures, by which the Greater and Lesser Vehicles may be distinguished, and he has a Law, by which the arts of the false and the true are transmitted.

"As for Our monk, the Dharma Master Xuanzang, he is the very leader of the gate of the Dharma. In childhood he cherished prudence and acuteness, and early awakened to the merit of the Three Emptinesses; in manhood he was attuned to spiritual purity, and was foremost in embracing the practice of the Four Forbearances. The wind in the pines and the moon on the water are not enough to match his pure and brilliant excellence; the dew of immortals and the bright pearl—how could they rival his radiance and luster! Thus by wisdom he penetrated without obstruction, and by spirit he fathomed what had not yet taken form. Rising far above the Six Dusts [Translator's note: the six sense objects—form, sound, fragrance, flavor, touch, and mental objects], he soars aloof, making his fragrance pass down through a thousand ages.

"He fixed his mind upon the realm within, grieving that the True Dharma had sunk into decline; he lodged his thoughts at the gate of mystery, sighing that the profound texts had fallen into corruption. He wished to sort out the branches and restore the principles, to enlarge what earlier ages had heard; to cut away the false and continue the true, and open the way for later learners. Therefore he set his heart toward the Pure Land, and made his pious journey through the Western Regions. Braving danger he traveled far, staff in hand, journeying alone. By morning, flying snow buried the road before him; by evening, startling sand rose and blurred the sky beyond the void. Through ten thousand li of mountains and rivers he pressed forward, parting the mist and haze; through a hundred turns of cold and heat he traced his way onward through frost and rain. Truly he weighed his toil light against the weight of his purpose, and in his deep seeking he was resolved to attain. He roamed through all the Western Lands for fourteen years, visited every strange kingdom to the

very end, and sought out the orthodox teaching. At the Twin Groves and the Eight Waters he savored the flavor of the Dharma and fed upon the wind; at the Deer Park and Vulture Peak he gazed upon wonders and paid homage to marvels.

"He received the supreme words from the former sages, and the true instruction from the highest worthies. He explored the depths of the wonderful gate and studied to the utmost its mysterious enterprises. The Way of the Three Vehicles and the Six Disciplines galloped across the field of his mind; the texts of a single canon in a hundred caskets surged like waves from his mouth. The countries he traversed were without limit, yet the scriptures he fetched were of a fixed number. In all he obtained the essential texts of the Greater Vehicle—thirty-five divisions, five thousand and forty-eight volumes—and these he translated and spread throughout China, proclaiming the glorious enterprise.

"He drew the cloud of compassion from the far West, and poured the rain of the Dharma upon the eastern frontier. The Holy Teaching, once impaired, is now made whole; the host of living beings, once guilty, returns to blessing. The dry flames of the burning house are moistened and quenched, and all are lifted together from the path of delusion; the murky waves of the golden water are made bright [Translator's note: in the Diamond Realm, wisdom is likened to water, hence "golden water"], and all cross together to the further shore. From this we know that evil falls through the agency of karma, and goodness rises through its causal conditions. The grounds of rising and falling are of a man's own making. As the cassia grows upon the high ridge, the clouds and dew can make its blossoms glisten; as the lotus rises from the green waves, flying dust cannot stain its leaves. It is not that the lotus is by nature pure and the cassia by nature chaste, but rather that what they cling to is high, and so no trifling thing can burden them; what they rest upon is clean, and so no turbid thing can touch them. Now the very herbs and trees, which have no awareness, still draw upon the good to become good—how much more, then, humankind, which has awareness; will it not, through auspicious conditions, attain auspiciousness? We may hope that the true scriptures, spread abroad, shall be without end, like the sun and the moon, and that abundant blessings, extended far and wide, shall endure forever, great as Heaven and Earth!"

When it was written out, the Holy Monk was summoned at once. The elder was already waiting outside the court gate to give thanks; hearing the summons, he hastened in and performed the prostration. Taizong had him invited up into the hall, and handed him the text to read through. When he had finished, the elder came down again to give thanks, and reported: "Your Majesty's style is lofty and ancient, and its reasoning is deep and subtle; but I do not know what title it bears." "It is what We composed extempore last night," said Taizong, "to answer and thank my sworn brother. It is called the Preface to the Holy Teaching. I wonder whether it is acceptable." The elder kowtowed and thanked him without end.

Taizong said further: "Our talent is ashamed before the scepter of jade, and Our words fall short of metal and stone. As for the sacred canon within, We have never so much as heard of it. The preface We extemporized is indeed rustic and clumsy; We have defiled the golden tablets with Our brush and ink, and set up tiles and pebbles in a grove of pearls. Examining Ourself in reflection, We blush for shame. It is scarcely worth your praise, and your thanks are but wasted courtesy."

At that, all the officers offered their congratulations together, and made obeisance to the imperial composition, the Preface to the Holy Teaching, which was passed about within the court and without.

"Would my sworn brother expound the true scriptures for us a while?" asked Taizong. "Your Majesty," said the elder, "to expound the true scriptures one must seek a land of the Buddha; the precious hall is no place for recitation." Taizong was delighted, and asked the officers in attendance: "Among the monasteries of Chang'an, which one is pure and clean?" Grand Secretary Xiao Yu stepped forth from the ranks and memorialized: "In the city there is the Goose Pagoda Monastery, which is pure and clean." Taizong at once ordered all his officers: "Let each of you reverently take up a few volumes of the true scriptures, and come

with Us to the Goose Pagoda Monastery, where we shall ask my sworn brother to expound them." The officers accordingly took up their volumes and followed Taizong's procession to the monastery, where a high platform was raised and everything was laid out in good order.

The elder gave his orders: "Bajie and the Sha Monk are to lead the dragon horse and put the luggage in order, and the Pilgrim is to stay at my side." He said to Taizong: "If Your Majesty wishes the true scriptures to be transmitted throughout the world, you should have copies transcribed, and only then may they be distributed. The originals should be treasured and kept, and must not be treated lightly." "My sworn brother's words are very fitting, very fitting!" laughed Taizong. He then summoned the officers of the Hanlin Academy and the Secretariat to make fair copies of the true scriptures. He also had a monastery built in the east of the city, named the Copying Monastery [Translator's note: the name literally means "transcribing the imperial yellow"—a monastery set apart for making fair copies].

The elder clasped a few volumes to his breast and mounted the platform, and was just about to begin chanting when suddenly there came the swirling of a fragrant wind, and the eight vajra guardians appeared in mid-air in their true forms, calling aloud: "You who chant the scriptures—put down your volumes and come back to the West with us!" Below, the Pilgrim and his two companions, together with the white horse, rose straight up from the level ground; the elder, too, flung down his scripture volumes and rose from the platform into the ninth heaven, following them up through the air. In consternation, Taizong and all his officers bowed low toward the sky. Truly:

With all his might the Holy Monk strove for the scriptures' text, Through the Western Lands he wandered, fourteen years from end to end. Bitter was the road he traveled, sore the trials and the distress; Many the hills and streams he crossed, many the hardships pressed. His work at eight-and-nine, one nine still more, the tally full; His conduct spanned the three thousand worlds and reached the vast chiliocosm's crest. The subtle truths of the Great Awakening returned to the land of the East, And in the Eastern Land from age to age they evermore are blessed.

After Taizong and the officers had finished bowing, he selected eminent monks and held a Mass of Land and Water in the Goose Pagoda Monastery, where the Great Treasury of the True Scriptures was chanted, to deliver the guilty ghosts of the dark underworld and spread blessings far and wide; and the transcribed scriptures were distributed throughout the world. Of this we say no more.

The story tells how the eight vajra guardians, riding their fragrant wind, led the elder and his four companions—five mouths in all, counting the horse—back again to the Spirit Mountain. Going and coming, the whole journey fell exactly within the eight days. At this time all the gods of the Spirit Mountain were before the Buddha listening to his discourse. The eight vajra guardians led master and disciples in, and said to the Tathagata: "Your disciple, having received your golden command, escorted the Holy Monk and the others to the land of Tang, where the scriptures were delivered. We have now come especially to return the command." They then bade the Tang monk and the others come forward to receive their offices.

The Tathagata said: "Holy Monk, in your former life you were originally my second disciple, named Golden Cicada. Because you would not listen to the exposition of the Dharma and treated my great teaching with contempt, I banished your true spirit to be reborn in the Eastern Land. Now I am glad that you have taken refuge, upheld my precepts, and, riding upon my teaching, fetched away the true scriptures. This is no small merit and virtue; I promote you to the high rank of the true fruition, and you shall be the Buddha of Sandalwood Merit. Sun Wukong, because you made havoc in Heaven, I pressed you with my profound dharma power beneath the Five Elements Mountain. Happily the punishment of Heaven is now fulfilled, and you have returned to the Buddhist faith. I am pleased that you have hidden the evil and spread abroad the good, and that on the road you had merit in tempering demons and subduing monsters, constant from beginning to end. I promote you to the high rank of the true fruition, and you shall be the Buddha Victorious

in Strife. Zhu Wuneng, you were originally a water god of the Milky Way, Marshal Tianpeng. Because at the Peach Banquet you got drunk and teased the immortal maidens, you were banished to the lower world to be reborn, with a body like a beast. Happily you kept your love of the human form. After working evil at the Cloud-Fold Cave on Mount Fulin, you were glad to return to the great teaching and enter my Buddhist gate, protecting the Holy Monk upon the road. Yet still you have a stubborn heart, and the lust of the passions is not extinguished in you. Because you have had merit in bearing the load, I promote you to the true fruition of your office, and you shall be the Altar Purifier."

Bajie cried out: "They are all to become Buddhas—how is it that you make me the Altar Purifier?" "Because your mouth is mighty and your body is lazy, and your appetite is enormous," said the Tathagata. "In the four great continents under heaven, those who look up to my teaching are very many. At all Buddhist services you are to purify the altars—a rank with real benefits. How could that be bad! Sha Wujing, you were originally the Curtain-Raising General. At the Peach Banquet you broke the crystal cup, and were banished to the lower world; you fell into the Flowing Sands River and committed sins by harming lives and devouring men. Happily you took refuge in my teaching, reverently upheld the precepts, and protected the Holy Monk, with merit in climbing the mountains and leading the horse. I promote you to the high rank of the true fruition, and you shall be the Golden-Bodied Arhat." He then called to the white horse: "You were originally the son of the Dragon King Guangjin of the great Western Sea. Because you defied your father's command and committed the crime of unfilial conduct, you were fortunate to take refuge in body and in the Dharma, and to return to my Buddhist gate. Day after day we are indebted to you for bearing the Holy Monk to the West, and again for bearing the holy scriptures back to the East; you too have merit. I promote you to the true fruition of your office, and you shall be the Horse of the Eight Classes of Heavenly Dragons." The elder and his four companions all kowtowed to give thanks.

When the horse too had finished giving thanks, the Tathagata ordered a Revealer to lead it down to the Dragon-Transforming Pool beside the rear cliff of the Spirit Mountain and push it into the pool. In a moment the horse stretched itself out—it sloughed off its hide and hair, changed its head and horns; golden scales grew over its whole body, and silver whiskers sprouted beneath its jaws and chin. Wrapped in an aura of auspiciousness, its four claws treading auspicious clouds, it flew up out of the Dragon-Transforming Pool and coiled around the heaven-supporting ornamental pillar within the mountain gate, while all the Buddhas sang the praises of the Tathagata's great Dharma.

The Pilgrim then said to the Tang monk: "Master, now that I have become a Buddha, just as you are—surely I cannot still be wearing this golden band? You're not going to recite some Band-Tightening Spell to squeeze me anymore, are you? Recite a Band-Loosening Spell while there is still time, so I can take it off and smash it to pieces—and don't let that Bodhisattva of yours go and play her tricks on anyone else with it again!" "In those days it was only because you were so hard to manage," said the Tang monk, "that I used this device against you. Now that you have become a Buddha, it has naturally gone—how could it still be on your head? Feel for yourself."

The Pilgrim raised his hand and felt his head—sure enough, it was gone. At this time the Buddha of Sandalwood Merit, the Buddha Victorious in Strife, the Altar Purifier, and the Golden-Bodied Arhat had all taken the true fruition of their appointed places, and the Horse of the Eight Classes of Heavenly Dragons had likewise returned to truth. There is a poem in proof:

One body of true Thusness turned and fell to the world's dust; Uniting the four marks, it built its body anew. Within the Five Elements, form and emptiness return to stillness; The empty fame of a hundred fiends is no more a thing to pursue. The true fruit of Sandalwood attained, he returns to the Great Awakening; His rank accomplished and fulfilled, from the depths of sinking he drew. The scriptures spread through all the world, their gracious light burns wide; The five sages sit exalted in the gate of Non-Duality.

When the five sages took their places in their fruition, all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, holy monks, arhats, revealers, bhikshus, and lay men and women; the immortals and great gods of every mountain and every cave; the Six Dings and Six Jias, the Duty Officers, the Protectors of the Faith, and the local deities—all the teacher-immortals who had attained the Way, who had come at the outset to listen to the discourse—now each returned to his own position. Just look:

On Vulture Peak's summit the colored mists gather; In the Land of Utmost Bliss the auspicious clouds assemble. The golden dragon lies at ease; the jade tiger rests in peace. The golden crow and the jade hare come and go as they will; The tortoise and the serpent coil and circle as they please. The scarlet phoenix and the azure simurgh are bright and gay; The black ape and the white deer are serene and content. Wondrous flowers of the eight festivals, immortal fruits of the four seasons. Lofty pines and ancient junipers, emerald cypresses and tall bamboos. The five-colored plum flowers and fruits in their season; The ten-thousand-year peaches ever ripe, ever fresh. A thousand fruits and a thousand flowers vying in beauty, And auspicious mists drifting in confusion over all the sky. The great assembly pressed their palms together in devotion, and all chanted: "Homage to the Ancient Buddha Dipankara! Homage to the King Buddha of Healing, of the Light of Lapis Lazuli! Homage to the Buddha Shakyamuni!

"Homage to the Buddha of Past, Future, and Present! Homage to the Buddha of Pure Joy! Homage to the Buddha Vairocana! Homage to the King Buddha of the Jeweled Banner! Homage to the Venerable Buddha Maitreya! Homage to the Buddha Amitabha! Homage to the Buddha of Immeasurable Life!

"Homage to the Buddha Who Guides and Leads to Truth! Homage to the Buddha Indestructible as Diamond! Homage to the Buddha of Precious Light! Homage to the Buddha-King of Dragons! Homage to the Buddha of Zealous Goodness! Homage to the Buddha of Jewel Moonlight! Homage to the Buddha Who Manifests Without Folly! Homage to the Buddha Varuna! Homage to the Buddha Narayana! Homage to the Buddha of the Flower of Merit! Homage to the Buddha of Abundant Merit! Homage to the Buddha of Gracious Wandering! Homage to the Buddha of Sandalwood Light! Homage to the Buddha of the Mani Banner! Homage to the Buddha Who Illumines with the Torch of Wisdom!

"Homage to the Buddha of Oceanic Virtue and Radiant Light! Homage to the Buddha of Great Compassionate Light! Homage to the King Buddha of Compassionate Power! Homage to the Buddha Foremost in Wisdom and Goodness! Homage to the Buddha of Broad Dominion and Solemn Majesty! Homage to the Buddha of Golden Flower Light! Homage to the Buddha of Abundant Radiant Light! Homage to the Buddha Victorious in Wisdom! Homage to the Buddha of World-Stilling Light! Homage to the Buddha of Sun-and-Moon Light! Homage to the Buddha of the Pearl Light of Sun and Moon!

"Homage to the Victorious King Buddha of the Banner of Wisdom! Homage to the Buddha of Wondrous Sound! Homage to the Buddha of the Banner of Constant Light! Homage to the Buddha of the Lamp That Gazes on the World! Homage to the King Buddha Victorious in the Law! Homage to the Buddha of Sumeru Light! Homage to the King Buddha of Great Wisdom and Might! Homage to the Buddha of the Golden Sea of Light! Homage to the Buddha of Great Penetrating Light! Homage to the Buddha of Abundant Light! Homage to the Buddha of Sandalwood Merit!

"Homage to the Buddha Victorious in Strife! Homage to the Bodhisattva Guanyin! Homage to the Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta! Homage to the Bodhisattva Manjusri! Homage to the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra! Homage to the Bodhisattvas of the Pure Great Sea Assembly! Homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ocean Assembly of the Lotus Pool! Homage to all the Bodhisattvas of the Western Land of Utmost Bliss! Homage to the Great Bodhisattvas, the Three Thousand Revealers! Homage to the Great Bodhisattvas, the Five Hundred Arhats! Homage to the Bodhisattvas among monks and nuns! Homage to the Bodhisattvas of the Boundless and Immeasurable Dharma! Homage to the Holy Bodhisattvas, the Great Vajra Heroes!

"Homage to the Bodhisattva, the Altar Purifier! Homage to the Bodhisattva, the Golden-Bodied Arhat of the Eight Treasures! Homage to the Bodhisattva of Broad Power, the Horse of the Eight Classes of Heavenly Dragons!

"To all the Buddhas of every world such as these, may we take this merit to adorn the Buddha's pure land: to repay the fourfold grace above, and to relieve the suffering of the three evil destinies below.

"If any who see or hear this, may they all awaken the thought of bodhi; together may they be born in the Land of Utmost Bliss, and thereby requite this very body.

"To all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three ages, and to all the venerable Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas: Maha Prajna Paramita!"

And here, at last, the Journey to the West comes to its end.

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