



The Divided Daughter

In A.D. 692, the third year of the reign of the Empress Wu, the scholar Chang Yi took up residence in Hengchou, Hunan, to serve as an official there. He was a simple, quiet man with few close friends. He had fathered two daughters (no son), of which the elder had died early. The younger, Ch'ien Niang, was a beauty beyond compare.

Now, Chang Yi had a nephew named Wang Chou, who was clever and handsome. Chang Yi always thought of the boy as having a promising future, and he would say, "When the time comes, Ch'ien Niang should be his wife."

After Wang Chou and Ch'ien Niang reached maturity, they often pictured one another in their secret dreams. But neither of the families knew anything about it, and some time later when an eligible member of Chang Yi's staff sought Ch'ien Niang's hand, the father said yes.

The news made Ch'ien Niang terribly sad, and Wang Chou was bitterly disappointed. On the pretext that he was to be transferred, he requested permission to go away to the capital. Nothing could dissuade him, and so he was sent off with many gifts.

Wounded by sorrow, Wang Chou bid a final farewell and boarded the boat. By sunset he had gone several miles into the surrounding hills. That night he was lying awake when suddenly he heard the sound of footsteps along the shore. In moments the pattering reached the boat, and Wang Chou discovered that it was Ch'ien Niang, who had been running barefoot.

Wang Chou nearly went mad with delight and amazement. Gripping her hands, he asked where she had come from. She said tearfully, "Your depth of feeling moved us both in our dreams. Now they want to deprive me of my free will. I know your love will never change, and I would give up my life to repay you, so I ran away."

This was more than Wang Chou had ever expected. He could not control his excitement. He hid Ch'ien Niang in the boat, and they fled at once, pressing the journey day and night. A few months later they reached Szechwan in the far west.

Five years passed. Ch'ien Niang bore two sons. She exchanged no letters with her parents, but she thought of them incessantly. One day she said in tears to Wang Chou, "Time was when I could not desert you, so I set aside a great duty to run away to you. Now it has been five years. I am cut off from my parents' love and kindness. How am I to hold up my head in this wide world?"

Wang Chou took pity on her and said, "Let's go home; no sense in grieving like this." And so they returned together to Hengchou. When they arrived, Wang Chou went alone first to the house of Chang Yi to confess the whole affair. But Chang Yi said, "What kind of crazy talk is this? My daughter has been lying ill in her room for many years."

"But she's in my boat right now," said Wang Chou.

Amazed, Chang Yi sent someone to see if it were true. Indeed Ch'ien Niang was there, with joy on her face and spirit in her expression. The astonished servant rushed back to tell Chang Yi.

When the sick girl in the chamber heard the news, she rose and joyfully put on her jewelry, powdered her face, and dressed in her finest clothes. Then, smiling but not speaking, she went out to welcome the woman from the boat. As they met their two bodies stepped into each other and became one, fitting together perfectly. Yet there was a double suit of clothes on the single body.

The family kept the entire affair secret in the belief that it was abnormal. Only a few relatives learned the facts. Husband and wife died forty years later, and their two sons both attained the second-highest official degree and rose to be deputy commanders.

I often heard this story when I was young. There are many

different versions, and some people say it is not true. But more than eighty years after the events, I chanced to meet a magistrate of Lai Wu. His father was cousin to Chang Yi, and since this magistrate's account is the fullest I know, I have put it down on paper.

—*Ch'en Hsüan-yu*

- The Master and the Serving Maid (Liu Ch'ing), Luan Yang Hsü Lu from Chiu Hsiao Shuo, Ch'ing
- A Cure for Jealousy (I Chi), Hsin Ch'i Hsieh
- The Fortune Teller (Suan Ming Te Tzu), Cho Keng Lu from Li Tai Hsiao Shuo Pi Chi Hsüan, Yüan
- A Dead Son, Lieh Tzu
- The Golden Toothpick (Chin Pi Tz'u Jou), Cho Keng Lu
- The King's Favorite, Han Fei Tzu
- The Divided Daughter (Li Hun Chi), T'ang Jen Hsiao Shuo, late T'ang
- The Scholar's Concubine (Kung-sun Hsia), LCCI
- Three Former Lives (San Sheng), LCCI
- The Monk from Everclear (Ch'ang Ch'ing Seng), LCCI
- The Monk's Sins (Seng Nieh), LCCI
- The Truth About Ghosts (Ch'en Tsai-heng), Chin Hu Ch'i Mo, Ch'ing
- Sung Ting-po Catches a Ghost (Sung Ting-po Cho Kuei), Sou Shen Chi, Chin
- The Man Who Couldn't Catch a Ghost (Kuei Pi Chiang San-mang), Yüeh Wei Ts'ao T'ang, Ch'ing
- Ai Tzu and the Temple Ghost, Ai Tzu Tsa Shuo, Sung
- Escaping Ghosts (Yü Ssu Pi Kuei), Ch'i Hsiu Lei Kao, Ming
- Test of Conviction, Sou Shen Chi
- Drinking Companions (Wang Liu-lang), LCCI
- The Censor and the Tiger (Li Cheng), Hsüan Shih Chih, late T'ang
- Underworld Justice (Hsi Fang-p'ing), LCCI
- Sharp Sword (K'uai Tao), LCCI
- The Skull, Chuang Tzu
- The Sheep Butcher and His King, Chuang Tzu
- The Prime Minister's Coachman, Shih Chi, early Han
- The Royal Jewel, Shih Chi
- Country of Thieves, Shih Chi
- Strategy, Tso Chuan, Spring and Autumn period, fifth century B.C.
- Buying Loyalty, Chan Kuo Ts'e
- The Groom's Crimes, Yen Tzu Ch'un Ch'iu, Spring and Autumn period
- The Chain, Shuo Yüan, early Han
- Hearsay, Lieh Tzu
- Dreams, Lieh Tzu
- The Mortal Lord, Lieh Tzu

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