

THE JOURNEY TO THE WEST

VOLUME THREE

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Princess Iron Fan



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the palace, she will want me to perform the conjugal rite with her. How could I consent to lose my original yang and destroy the virtue of Buddhism, to leak my true sperm and fall from the humanity of our faith?" "Once we have agreed to the marriage," said Pilgrim, "she will no doubt follow royal etiquette and send her carriage out of the capital to receive you. Don't refuse her. Take a ride in her phoenix carriage and dragon chariot to go up to the treasure hall, and then sit down on the throne facing south. Ask the queen to take out her imperial seal and summon us brothers to go into court. After you have stamped the seal on the rescript, tell the queen to sign the document also and give it back to us. Meanwhile, you can also tell them to prepare a huge banquet; call it a wedding feast as well as a farewell party for us. After the banquet, ask for the chariot once more on the excuse that you want to see us off outside the capital before you return to consummate the marriage with the queen. In this way, both ruler and subjects will be duped into false happiness; they will no longer try to block our way, nor will they have any cause to become vicious. Once we reach the outskirts of the capital, you will come down from the dragon chariot and Sha Monk will help you to mount the white horse immediately. Old Monkey will then use his magic of immobility to make all of them, ruler and subjects, unable to move. We can then follow the main road to the West. After one day and one night, I will recite a spell to recall the magic and release all of them, so that they can wake up and return to the city. For one thing, their lives will be preserved, and for another, your primal soul will not be hurt. This is a plot called *Fleeing the Net by a False Marriage*. Isn't it a doubly advantageous act?" When Tripitaka heard these words, he seemed as if he were snapping out of a stupor or waking up from a dream. So delighted was he that he forgot all his worries and thanked Pilgrim profusely, saying, "I'm deeply grateful for my worthy disciple's lofty intelligence." And so, the four of them were united in their decision, and we shall leave them for the moment.

We tell you now about that Grand Preceptor and the clerk of the post-house, who dashed inside the gate of the court without even waiting for summons and went before the white-jade steps. "The auspicious dream of our mistress is most accurate," they cried, "and nuptial bliss will soon be yours." When the queen heard this report, she had the pearly screen rolled up; descending from the dragon couch, she opened her cherry lips to reveal her silvery teeth and

asked, full of smiles and in a most seductive voice, "What did the royal brother say after our worthy subjects saw him?" "After your subjects reached the post-house," said the Grand Preceptor, "and bowed to the royal brother, we immediately presented to him our proposal of marriage. The royal brother still expressed some reluctance, but it was fortunate that his eldest disciple gave his consent for them without hesitation. He was willing to let his master become the husband of our ruler and call himself king, facing south. All he wanted was to have their travel rescript certified so that the three of them could leave for the West. On their way back after acquiring the scriptures, they will come here to bow to father and mother and ask for travel expenses to go back to the Great T'ang." "Did the royal brother say anything more?" asked the queen, smiling. The Grand Preceptor said, "the royal brother did not say anything more, but he seemed to be willing to marry our mistress. His second disciple, however, wanted to drink to their consent first."

When the queen heard this, she at once ordered the Court of Imperial Entertainments to prepare a banquet. She also requested that her imperial cortège be readied so that she might go out of the capital to receive her husband. The various women officials, in obedience to the queen's command, began to sweep and clean the palaces and to prepare the banquet with the utmost haste. Look at them! Though this Nation of Western Liang is a country of women, the carriage and chariot are not less opulent than those of China. You see

Six dragons belching colors—
Two phoenixes bringing luck—
Six dragons, belching colors, support the chariot;
Two phoenixes, bringing luck, lift up the carriage.
Strange fragrance in endless waves;
Auspicious airs continuously rise.
Fish-pendants of gold or jade by many officials worn;
Rows and rows of lovely locks and bejeweled hair.
A royal carriage shielded by mandarin-duck fans;
Through pearly screens glisten the phoenix hairpins.
Melodic pipes,
Harmonious strings.
What great sense of joy reaching to the sky!
What boundless bliss leaving the Estrade Numina.⁵
Three-layered canopies wave above the royal house;

Five-colored banners light up the imperial steps.

This land has ne'er seen the nuptial cup exchanged;

Today the queen marries a gifted man.

In a moment, the imperial cortège left the capital and arrived at the Male Reception Post-house. Someone went inside to announce to Tripitaka and his disciples: "The imperial cortège has arrived." On hearing this, Tripitaka straightened out his clothes and left the main hall with the three disciples to meet the carriage. As the queen rolled up the screen to descend from the carriage, she asked, "Which is the royal brother of the T'ang court?" Pointing with her finger, the Grand Preceptor said, "The one in a clerical robe standing behind the incense table outside the post-house gate." Lifting her moth-brows and opening wide her phoenix-eyes, the queen stared at him and found that this was an uncommon figure indeed. Look at him!

What handsome features!

What dignified looks!

Teeth white like silver bricks,

Ruddy lips and a square mouth.

His head's flat-topped, his forehead, wide and full;

Lovely eyes, neat eyebrows, and a chin that's long.

Two well-rounded ears betoken someone brave.

He is all elegance, a gifted man.

What a youthful and comely son of love,

So worthy to wed the pretty girl of Western Liang!

Utterly ravished by what she saw, the queen was swept away by amorous passion. Opening her tiny, cherrylike mouth, she cried out: "Royal brother of the Great T'ang, aren't you coming to take and ride the phoenix?" When Tripitaka heard these words, his ears turned red and his face, scarlet; filled with embarrassment, he dared not lift his head at all.

On one side, however, Chu Pa-chieh stuck up his snout and stared with glassy eyes at the queen, who was quite beguiling herself. Truly she had

Brows like kingfisher hair,

And flesh like mutton jade.

Peach petals bedeck her face;

Her bun piles gold-phoenix hair.

Her eyes' cool, liquid gaze—such seductive charm.

Her hands' young, tender shoots—such dainty form.