

Novels

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The Journey to the West

Chapter 7

Attributed to Wu Ch'eng-en (c. 1506–1582)

From the Brazier of Eight Trigrams the Great Sage escapes;
Beneath the Five Phases Mountain the Monkey of the Mind¹ is stilled.

The Journey to the West (*Hsi-yu chi*) is a comic fantasy based on the pilgrimage of the monk Hsüan-tsang (596–664), also known as Tripitaka (“Three Baskets,” i.e., the Buddhist Canon), to India for the purpose of collecting Buddhist scriptures. His journey lasted seventeen years altogether in real life, although the novel only has him spending fourteen years on the road. From the factual travelogue written by the monk himself and a biography of him written by his disciples, the story of Hsüan-tsang’s passage to India underwent a long period of development through various forms of popular literature, culminating in the one-hundred-chapter novel of which the present selection is the seventh.

As portrayed in the novel, Hsüan-tsang is accompanied by four disciples of superhuman ability. Foremost among them is Sun Wu-k’ung, whose name may quite literally be interpreted as “The Monkey Who Is Enlightened to Vacuity.” In many ways, the novel may be said to be more about Sun Wu-k’ung than about Hsüan-tsang, ostensibly the main character. Next comes Chu Pa-chieh, whose revealing name may be rendered as “The Pig of Eight Prohibitions.” He is the epitome of sensuality, slothfulness, and gargantuan appetite. Sha Ho-shang (“Sand Monk”), a cannibalistic monster symbolizing the dangers of the desert, is converted by Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara), the salvific Bodhisattva of Compassion. Lastly, there is the faithful white horse who was originally a dragon prince.

On their way, the pilgrims encounter all sorts of demons and monsters who are determined to devour Tripitaka, in part because it was thought that consuming his flesh would make them

Fame and fortune,
 All predestined;
 One must ever shun a guileful heart.
 Rectitude and truth.
 The fruits of virtue grow both long and deep.
 A little presumption brings on Heaven's wrath;
 Though yet unseen, it will surely come in time.
 If we ask the Lord of the East² for reasons why
 Such pains and perils now appear,
 It's because pride has sought to scale the limits,
 Confounding the world's order and perverting the law.

We were telling you about the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, who was taken by the celestial guardians to the monster-execution block, where he was bound to the monster-subduing pillar. They then slashed him with a scimitar, hewed him with an ax, stabbed him with a spear, and hacked him with a sword, but they could not hurt his body in any way. Next, the Star Spirit of the South Pole ordered the various deities of the Fire Department to burn him with fire, but that, too, had little effect. The gods of the Thunder Department were then ordered to strike him with thunderbolts, but not a

immortal. Tripitaka is repeatedly captured and in danger of being eaten or otherwise destroyed, but he is invariably rescued by his disciples, especially by Sun Wu-k'ung, who are assisted by various protective deities.

The first seven chapters of the novel tell of the birth and acquisition of magical powers of Sun Wu-k'ung. He represents the human mind and, as such, is resourceful and intelligent, but at the same time is unbridled and wild unless controlled. In the novel, we see Sun Wu-k'ung being tamed by the powerful discipline of Buddhism. This selection is one of the chapters dealing specifically with Sun Wu-k'ung and his subjugation. He is hatched from a stone egg that for eons had absorbed the essences of Heaven and Earth and the Sun and the Moon. In this connection, we should note the cosmogonic symbolism of stone in Chinese mythology. The Monkey King raises turmoil in Heaven until the Jade Emperor entitles him Great Sage Equal of Heaven. Eventually, Sun Wu-k'ung becomes possessed of formidable powers of transformation and a magic rod with which he can conquer any opponents. He is kept in check, however, by the tight fillet which has been fastened around his head and which ensures that his awesome powers are harnessed for Buddhism. The chapters dealing with Sun Wu-k'ung could well stand alone as an independent story cycle, but they are an essential underpinning for the rest of the novel.

Readers of the *Journey to the West* who are familiar with the *Rāmāyaṇa* will note many striking correspondences between Sun Wu-k'ung and Hanumat, the famous monkey-chief of that great Indian epic.

1. This is the first of several instances in the chapter (e.g., the second poem on p. 570) and in the book (e.g., the titles of chapters 14, 30, 35, 36, and 41) where reference is made to the phrase "Monkey of the Mind and Horse of the Will." Bridling these symbols of restless human intelligence and impetuous self-assertiveness is a theme central to the entire narrative. Sun Wu-k'ung is the very embodiment of the Monkey of the Mind; it is necessary for Tripitaka to control this wayward and forceful creature if he is to achieve his religious and spiritual goals.

2. Possibly a reference to the sun god.

single one of his hairs was destroyed. The demon king Mahābāli and the others therefore went back to report to the Throne, saying, “Your Majesty, we don’t know where this Great Sage had acquired such power to protect his body. Your subjects slashed him with a scimitar and hewed him with an ax; we also struck him with thunder and burned him with fire. Not a single one of his hairs was destroyed. What shall we do?” When the Jade Emperor heard these words, he said, “What indeed can we do to a fellow like that, a creature of that sort?” Lao Tzu³ then came forward and said, “That monkey ate the immortal peaches and drank the imperial wine. Moreover, he stole the divine elixir and ate five gourdfuls of it, both raw and cooked. All this was probably refined in the stomach by the Samādhi fire⁴ to form a single solid mass. The union with his constitution gave him a diamond body which cannot be quickly destroyed. It would be better, therefore, if this Taoist takes him away and places him in the Brazier of Eight Trigrams, where he will be smelted by high and low heat. When he is finally separated from my elixir, his body will certainly be reduced to ashes.” When the Jade Emperor heard these words, he told the Six Guardians of Darkness and the Six Guardians of Light to release the prisoner and hand him over to Lao Tzu, who left in obedience to the divine decree. Meanwhile, the illustrious Sage Erh-lang⁵ was rewarded with a hundred gold blossoms, a hundred bottles of imperial wine, a hundred pellets of elixir, together with rare treasures, lustrous pearls, and brocades, which he was told to share with his brothers. After expressing his gratitude, the Immortal Master returned to the mouth of the River of Libations, and for the time being we shall speak of him no further.

Arriving at the Tushita Palace,⁶ Lao Tzu loosened the ropes on the Great Sage, pulled out the weapon from his breastbone, and pushed him into the Brazier of Eight Trigrams. He then ordered the Taoist who watched over the brazier and the page-boy in charge of the fire to blow up a strong flame for the smelting process. The brazier, you see, was of eight compartments corresponding to the eight trigrams of Ch’ien, K’an, Ken, Chen, Sun, Li, K’un, and Tui.⁷ The Great Sage crawled into the space beneath the compartment

3. The legendary founder of Taoism (see selection 9).

4. The fire that is said to consume the body of Buddha when he enters Nirvāṇa. But in the Buddhism of popular fiction, this fire, possessed by many fighters or warriors who have attained immortality, is often used as a weapon.

5. The supernatural creature who was able to subdue the not yet fully developed Sun Wu-k’ung in a fantastic battle of transformations. Erh-lang was an extremely powerful deity in folk religion. His name literally means “Second Young Gentleman” because the historical personage out of whom the deity evolved was the second son of Li Ping. Together, father and son were responsible for the construction of the celebrated large-scale irrigation system outside Ch’engtu (in Szechwan) called Tu-chiang-yen. The cult devoted to Erh-lang was first centered in the temples at the site that were dedicated to Li Ping and his son.

6. A heaven ruled over by Maitreya, the Buddha of the future.

7. See selection 3.

which corresponded to the Sun⁸ trigram. Now Sun symbolizes wind; where there is wind, there is no fire. However, wind could churn up smoke, which at that moment reddened his eyes, giving them a permanently inflamed condition. Hence they were sometimes called Fiery Eyes and Diamond Pupils.

Truly time passed by swiftly, and the forty-ninth day⁹ arrived imperceptibly. The alchemical process of Lao Tzu was perfected, and on that same day he came to open the brazier to take out his elixir. The Great Sage at the time was covering his eyes with both hands, rubbing his face, and shedding tears. He heard noises on top of the brazier and, opening his eyes, suddenly saw light. Unable to restrain himself, he leaped out of the brazier and kicked it over with a loud crash. He began to walk straight out of the room, while a group of startled fire tenders and guardians tried desperately to grab hold of him. Every one of them was overthrown; he was as wild as a white-brow tiger in a fit, a one-horn dragon with a fever. Lao Tzu rushed up to clutch at him, only to be greeted by such a violent shove that he fell head over heels while the Great Sage escaped. Whipping the compliant rod out from his ear, he waved it once in the wind, and it had the thickness of a rice bowl. Holding it in his hands, without regard for good or ill, he once more careened through the Heavenly Palace, fighting so fiercely that the Nine Luminaries¹⁰ all shut themselves in and the Four Devarājas¹¹ disappeared from sight. Dear Monkey Monster! Here is a testimonial poem for him. The poem says:

This cosmic being perfectly fused with nature's gifts
 Passes with ease through ten thousand toils and tests.
 Vast and motionless like the One Great Void,
 Perfect and quiescent, he's named The Primal Depth.
 Refined a long while in the brazier, though not of mercurial stuff,¹²
 He's the very immortal, living ever above all things.
 Knowing boundless transformations, he changes still;
 The three refuges and five commandments¹³ he all rejects.

8. Pronounced *soon*, this is the name of a trigram and has nothing whatsoever to do with the English word "sun" or the surname of Wu-k'ung, which means "monkey."

9. The time is calculated according to the sacred number 7. In popular Buddhism, forty-nine days is the usual amount of time it takes for a soul to be reincarnated after death. This accounts for the customary length of a complete cycle of funeral services.

10. The sun, moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, the spirit that causes eclipses, and the comet Ketu.

11. Guardian generals of the god Indra, who dwell on the four sides of Mount Meru (the *axis mundi*) and who ward off the attacks of evil spirits.

12. Mercury is one of the crucial elements in alchemy.

13. The "three refuges," or *Triśaraṇa*, refer to three kinds of surrender: to surrender to the Buddha as master, to the Law (*Dharma*) as medicine, and to the community of monks (*Saṅgha*) as friends. The "five commandments" (*pañca veramaṇī*) are prohibitions against killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and intoxicating beverages.

Here is another poem:

Just as light supernal fills the boundless space,
So does that cudgel serve his master's hand.
It lengthens or shortens according to the wish of man;
Upright or recumbent, it grows or shrinks at will.

And another:

A monkey's transformed body weds the human mind.
Mind is a monkey—this, the truth profound.
The Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, is no idle thought.
For how could the post of pi-ma ¹⁴ justly show his gifts?
The Horse works with the Monkey—this means both Mind and Will
Must firmly be harnessed and not be ruled without.
All things return to Nirvāṇa, taking this one course:
In union with Tathāgata ¹⁵ to live beneath twin trees.¹⁶

This time our Monkey King had no respect for persons great or small; he lashed out this way and that with his iron rod, and not a single deity could withstand him. He fought all the way into the Hall of Perfect Light and was approaching the Hall of Divine Mists, where fortunately Wang Ling-kuan, aide to the Immortal Master of Adjuvant Holiness, was on duty. He saw the Great Sage advancing recklessly and went forward to bar his way, holding high his golden whip. "Wanton monkey," he cried, "where are you going? I am here, so don't you dare be insolent!" The Great Sage did not wait for further utterance; he raised his rod and struck at once, while the Ling-kuan met him also with brandished whip. The two of them charged into each other in front of the Hall of Divine Mists. What a fight that was between

A red-blooded patriot with reputation great,
And a defier of Heaven with notorious name!
The saint and the sinner gladly do this fight,
To test the skills of two warriors brave.
Though the rod is brutal
And the whip is fleet,
How can the hero, upright and just, forbear?
This one is a supreme god of vengeance with thunderous voice;

14. A minor position in the stables of Heaven to which Sun Wu-k'ung had been appointed and which he found terribly insulting.

15. Tathāgata ("Thus Come/Gone"): one of the highest titles of Buddha. It may be defined as: "He who comes as do all other Buddhas"; or, "He who took the absolute way of cause and effect, and attained perfect wisdom."

16. The twin Sāl trees in the grove in which Śākyamuni entered Nirvāṇa.

The other, the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, a monstrous ape.
 The golden whip and the iron rod used by the two
 Are both weapons divine from the House of God.
 At the Treasure Hall of Divine Mists this day they show their might,
 Displaying each his prowess most admirably.
 This one brashly seeks to take the Big Dipper Palace.
 The other with all his strength defends the sacred realm.
 In bitter strife relentless they show their power;
 Moving back and forth, whip or rod has yet to score.

The two of them fought for some time, and neither victory nor defeat could yet be determined. The Immortal Master of Adjuvant Holiness, however, had already sent word to the Thunder Department, and thirty-six thunder deities were summoned to the scene. They surrounded the Great Sage and plunged into a fierce battle. The Great Sage was not in the least intimidated; wielding his compliant rod, he parried left and right and met his attackers to the front and to the rear. In a moment he saw that the scimitars, lances, swords, halberds, whips, maces, hammers, axes, gilt bludgeons, sickles, and spades of the thunder deities were coming thick and fast. So, with one shake of his body, he changed into a creature with six arms and three heads. One wave of the compliant rod, and it turned into three; his six arms wielded the three rods like a spinning wheel, whirling and dancing in their midst. The various thunder deities could not approach him at all. Truly his form was

Tumbling round and round,
 Bright and luminous;
 A form everlasting, how imitated by men?
 He cannot be burned by fire.
 Can he ever be drowned in water?
 A lustrous pearl of *maṇi*¹⁷ he is indeed,
 Immune to all the spears and the swords.
 He could be good;
 He could be bad;
 Present good and evil he could do at will.
 Immortal he'll be in goodness or a Buddha,
 But working ill, he's covered by hair and horn.¹⁸
 Endlessly changing he runs amok in Heaven,
 Not to be seized by fighting lords or thunder gods.

At the time the various deities had the Great Sage surrounded, but they could not close in on him. All the hustle and bustle soon disturbed the Jade

17. The *maṇi* pearl, said to give sight to the blind, is known for its luster.

18. I.e., he is reduced to an animal.

Emperor,¹⁹ who at once sent the Wandering Minister of Inspection and the Immortal Master of Blessed Wings to go to the Western Region and invite the aged Buddha to come and subdue the monster.

The two sages received the decree and went straight to the Spirit Mountain. After they had greeted the Four Vajra-Buddhas²⁰ and the Eight Bodhisattvas²¹ in front of the Treasure Temple of Thunderclap, they asked them to announce their arrival. The deities therefore went before the Treasure Lotus Platform and made their report. Tathāgata at once invited them to appear before him, and the two sages made obeisance to the Buddha three times before standing in attendance beneath the platform. Tathāgata asked, "What causes the Jade Emperor to trouble the two sages to come here?"

The two sages explained as follows: "Some time ago there was born on the Flower-Fruit Mountain a monkey who exercised his magic powers and gathered to himself a troop of monkeys to disturb the world. The Jade Emperor threw down a decree of pacification and appointed him a pi-ma-wen,²² but he despised the lowliness of that position and left in rebellion. Devarāja Li and Prince Naṭa were sent to capture him, but they were unsuccessful, and another proclamation of amnesty was given to him. He was then made the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, a rank without compensation. After a while he was given the temporary job of looking after the Garden of Immortal Peaches, where almost immediately he stole the peaches. He also went to the Jasper Pool and made off with the food and wine, devastating the Grand Festival. Half-drunk, he went secretly into the Tushita Palace, stole the elixir of Lao Tzu, and then left the Celestial Palace in revolt. Again the Jade Emperor sent a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers, but he was not to be subdued. Therefore Kuan-yin²³ sent for the Immortal Master Erh-lang and his sworn brothers, who fought and pursued him. Even then he knew many tricks of transformation, and only after he was hit by Lao Tzu's diamond snare could Erh-lang finally capture him. Taken before the Throne, he was condemned to be executed; but, though slashed by a scimitar and hewn by an ax, burned by fire and struck by thunder, he was not hurt at all. After Lao Tzu had received royal permission to take him away, he was refined by fire, and the brazier was not opened until the forty-ninth day. Immediately he jumped out of the Brazier of Eight Trigrams and beat back the celestial guardians. He penetrated into the Hall of Perfect Light and was approaching the Hall of Divine Mists when Wang Ling-kuan, aide to the Immortal Master of Adju-

19. It is interesting to observe that the chief deity in the Taoist pantheon here invites the Buddha to restore order to his own heaven.

20. Diamond Buddhas, the same as the Four Heavenly Kings (Devarājas), on which see note 11.

21. Eight saviors.

22. See note 14.

23. Avalokiteśvara, the all-seeing, all-hearing Bodhisattva (savior) of compassion.

vant Holiness, met and fought with him bitterly. Thirty-six thunder generals were ordered to encircle him completely, but they could never get near him. The situation is desperate, and for this reason, the Jade Emperor sent a special request for you to defend the Throne.”

When Tathāgata heard this, he said to the various bodhisattvas, “All of you remain steadfast here in the chief temple, and let no one relax his meditative posture. I have to go exorcise a demon and defend the Throne.”

Tathāgata then called Ānanda and Kāśyapa, his two venerable disciples, to follow him. They left the Thunderclap Temple and arrived at the gate of the Hall of Divine Mists, where they were met by deafening shouts and yells. There the Great Sage was being beset by the thirty-six thunder deities. The Buddhist Patriarch gave the dharma²⁴ order: “Let the thunder deities lower their arms and break up their encirclement. Ask the Great Sage to come out here and let me inquire of him what sort of divine power he has.” The various warriors retreated immediately, and the Great Sage also threw off his magical appearance. Changing back into his true form, he approached angrily and shouted with ill humor, “What region are you from, monk, that you dare stop the battle and question me?” Tathāgata laughed and said, “I am Śākyamuni, the Venerable One from the Western Region of Ultimate Bliss. I have heard just now about your audacity, your wildness, and your repeated acts of rebellion against Heaven. Where were you born? When did you learn the Great Art? Why are you so violent and unruly?”

The Great Sage said, “I was

Born of Earth and Heaven, immortal magically fused,
 An old monkey hailed from the Flower-Fruit Mount.
 I made my home in the Water-Curtain Cave;
 I sought friend and teacher to gain the Mystery Great.
 Perfected in the many arts of ageless life,
 I learned to change in ways boundless and vast.
 Too narrow the space I found on that mortal earth;
 I set my mind to live in the Green Jade Sky.
 In Divine Mists Hall none should long reside,
 For king may follow king in the reign of man.
 If might is honor, let them yield to me.
 Only he is hero who dares to fight and win!”

When the Buddhist Patriarch heard these words, he laughed aloud in scorn. “A fellow like you,” he said, “is only a monkey who happened to become a spirit. How dare you be so presumptuous as to want to seize the honored throne of the Exalted Jade Emperor? He began practicing religion when he was very young, and he has gone through the bitter experience of one

24. The Buddhist law or doctrine.

thousand, seven hundred and fifty kalpas, with each kalpa lasting a hundred and twenty-nine thousand, six hundred years. Figure out yourself how many years it took him to rise to the enjoyment of his great and limitless position! You are merely a beast who has just attained human form in this incarnation. How dare you make such a boast? Blasphemy! This is sheer blasphemy, and it will surely shorten your allotted age. Repent while there's still time and cease your idle talk! Be wary that you don't encounter such peril that you will be cut down in an instant, and all your original gifts will be wasted."

"Even if the Jade Emperor has practiced religion from childhood," said the Great Sage, "he should not be allowed to remain here forever. The proverb says, 'Many are the turns of kingship, and next year the turn will be mine!' Tell him to move out at once and hand over the Celestial Palace to me. That'll be the end of the matter. If not, I shall continue to cause disturbances and there'll never be peace!" "Besides your immortality and your transformations," said the Buddhist Patriarch, "what other powers do you have that you dare to usurp this hallowed region of Heaven?" "I've plenty of them!" said the Great Sage. "Indeed, I know seventy-two transformations and a life that does not grow old through ten thousand kalpas. I know also how to cloud-somersault, and one leap will take me a hundred and eight thousand miles.²⁵ Why can't I sit on the Heavenly throne?"

The Buddhist Patriarch said, "Let me make a wager with you. If you have the ability to somersault clear of this right palm of mine, I shall consider you the winner. You need not raise your weapon in battle then, for I shall ask the Jade Emperor to go live with me in the West and let you have the Celestial Palace. If you cannot somersault out of my hand, you can go back to the Region Below and be a monster. Work through a few more kalpas before you return to cause more trouble."

When the Great Sage heard this, he said to himself, snickering, "What a fool this Tathāgata is! A single somersault of mine can carry old Monkey a hundred and eight thousand miles, yet his palm is not even one foot across. How could I possibly not jump clear of it?" He asked quickly, "You're certain that your decision will stand?" "Certainly it will," said Tathāgata. He stretched out his right hand, which was about the size of a lotus leaf. Our Great Sage put away his compliant rod and, summoning his power, leaped up and stood right in the center of the Patriarch's hand. He said simply, "I'm off!" and he was gone—all but invisible like a streak of light in the clouds. Training the eye of wisdom on him, the Buddhist Patriarch saw that the Monkey King was hurtling along relentlessly like a whirligig.

As the Great Sage advanced, he suddenly saw five flesh-pink pillars supporting a mass of bluish air. "This must be the end of the road," he said. "When I go back presently, Tathāgata will be my witness and I shall certainly take up residence in the Palace of Divine Mists." But he thought to himself,

25. Seventy-two and one hundred and eight thousand are both sacred Buddhist numbers.

"Wait a moment! I'd better leave some kind of memento if I'm going to negotiate with Tathāgata." He plucked a hair and blew a mouthful of magic breath onto it, crying, "Change!" It changed into a writing brush with extra thick hair soaked in heavy ink. On the middle pillar he then wrote in large letters the following line: "The Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, has made a tour of this place." When he had finished writing, he retrieved his hair, and with a total lack of respect he left a bubbling pool of monkey urine at the base of the first pillar. He reversed his cloud-somersault and went back to where he had started. Standing on Tathāgata's palm, he said, "I left, and now I'm back. Tell the Jade Emperor to give me the Celestial Palace." "You stinking, urinous ape!" scolded Tathāgata. "Since when did you ever leave the palm of my hand?" The Great Sage said, "You are just ignorant! I went to the edge of Heaven, and I found five flesh-pink pillars supporting a mass of bluish air. I left a memento there. Do you dare go with me to have a look at the place?" "No need to go there," said Tathāgata. "Just lower your head and take a look." When the Great Sage stared down with his fiery eyes and diamond pupils, he found written on the middle finger of the Buddhist Patriarch's right hand this sentence: "The Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, has made a tour of this place." A pungent whiff of monkey urine came from the fork between the thumb and first finger. Astonished, the Great Sage said, "Could this really happen? Could this really happen? I wrote those words on the pillars supporting the sky. How is it that they now appear on his finger? Could it be that he is exercising the magic power of foreknowledge without divination? I won't believe it! I won't believe it! Let me go there once more!"

Dear Great Sage! Quickly he crouched and was about to jump up again, when the Buddhist Patriarch flipped his hand over, and tossed the Monkey King out of the West Heavenly Gate. The five fingers were transformed into the Five Phases of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. They became, in fact, five connected mountains, named Five-Phases Mountain, which pinned him down with just enough pressure to keep him there. The thunder deities, Ānanda, and Kāśyapa all folded their hands and cried in acclamation: "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

Taught to be manlike since hatching from an egg that year,
 He set his aim to learn and walk the Way of Truth.
 He lived in a lovely region by ten thousand kalpas unmoved.
 But one day he changed, dissipating vigor and strength.
 Craving high place, he flouted Heaven's dominion;
 Mocking sages, he stole pills and upset the great relations.
 Evil, full to the brim, now meets its retribution.
 We know not when he may hope to find release.

After the Buddhist Patriarch Tathāgata had vanquished the monstrous monkey, he at once called Ānanda and Kāśyapa to return with him to the Western Paradise. At that moment, however, T'ien-p'eng and T'ien-yu, two heavenly

messengers, came running out of the Treasure Hall of Divine Mists and said, "We beg Tathāgata to wait a moment, please! Our Lord's grand carriage will arrive momentarily." When the Buddhist Patriarch heard these words, he turned around and waited with reverence. In a moment he did indeed see a chariot drawn by eight colorful phoenixes and covered by a canopy adorned with nine luminous jewels. The entire cortege was accompanied by the sound of wondrous songs and melodies, chanted by a vast celestial choir. Scattering precious blossoms and diffusing fragrant incense, it came up to the Buddha, and the Jade Emperor offered his thanks, saying, "We are truly indebted to your mighty dharma for vanquishing that monster. We beseech Tathāgata to remain for one brief day, so that we may invite the immortals to join us in giving you a banquet of thanks." Not daring to refuse, Tathāgata folded his hands to thank the Jade Emperor, saying, "Your old monk came here at your command, Most Honorable Deva. Of what power may I boast, really? I owe my success entirely to the excellent fortune of Your Majesty and the various deities. How can I be worthy of your thanks?" The Jade Emperor then ordered the various deities from the Thunder Department to send invitations abroad to the Three Pure Ones, the Four Ministers, the Five Elders, the Six Women Officials,²⁶ the Seven Stars, the Eight Poles, the Nine Luminaries, and the Ten Capitals. Together with a thousand immortals and ten thousand sages, they were to come to the thanksgiving banquet given for the Buddhist Patriarch. The Four Great Imperial Preceptors and the Divine Maidens of Nine Heavens were told to open wide the golden gates of the Jade Capital, the Treasure Palace of Primal Secret, and the Five Lodges of Penetrating Brightness. Tathāgata was asked to be seated high on the Spirit Platform of Seven Treasures, and the rest of the deities were then seated according to rank and age before a banquet of dragon livers, phoenix marrow, juices of jade, and immortal peaches.

In a little while, the Jade-Pure Honorable Divine of the Origin, the Exalted-Pure Honorable Divine of Spiritual Treasures, the Primal-Pure Honorable Divine of Moral Virtue, the Immortal Masters of Five Influences, the Star Spirits of Five Constellations, the Three Ministers, the Four Sages, the Nine Luminaries, the Left and Right Assistants, the Devarāja, and Prince Naṭa all marched in leading a train of flags and canopies in pairs. They were all holding rare treasures and lustrous pearls, fruits of longevity and exotic flowers to be presented to the Buddha. As they bowed before him, they said, "We are most grateful for the unfathomable power of Tathāgata, who has subdued the monstrous monkey. We are grateful, too, to the Most Honorable Deva, who is having this banquet and asked us to come here to offer our thanks. May we beseech Tathāgata to give this banquet a name?" Responding

26. According to the *History of the Sui*, the Six Women Officials were established in the Han dynasty. They were in charge of palace upkeep, palatial protocol, court attire, food and medicine, banquets, and the various artisans of the court.

to the petition of the various deities, Tathāgata said, "If a name is desired, let this be called 'The Great Banquet for Peace in Heaven.'" "What a magnificent name!" the various immortals cried in unison. "Indeed, it shall be the Great Banquet for Peace in Heaven." When they finished speaking, they took their seats separately, and there was the pouring of wine and exchanging of cups, pinning of corsages²⁷ and playing of zithers. It was indeed a magnificent banquet, for which we have a testimonial poem. The poem says:

That Feast of Peaches Immortal disturbed by the ape
Is now surpassed by this Banquet for Peace in Heaven.
Dragon flags and phoenix chariots stand glowing in halos bright,
As standards and blazing banners whirl in hallowed light.
Sweet are the tunes of immortal airs and songs,
Noble the sounds of panpipes and double flutes of jade.
Incense ambrosial surrounds this assembly of saints.
The world is tranquil. May the Holy Court be praised!

As all of them were feasting happily, the Lady Queen Mother also led a host of divine maidens and immortal singing-girls to come before the Buddha, dancing with light feet. They bowed to him, and she said, "Our Festival of Immortal Peaches was ruined by that monstrous monkey. We are beholden to the mighty power of Tathāgata for the enchainment of the mischievous ape. In the celebration during this Great Banquet for Peace in Heaven, we have little to offer as a token of our thanks. Please accept, however, these few immortal peaches plucked from the large trees by our own hands." They were truly

Half red, half green, and spouting aroma sweet,
Of luscious roots immortal, and ten thousand years old.
Pity those fruits planted at the Wu-ling Spring!²⁸
How do they equal the marvels of Heaven's home:
Those tender ones of purple veins so rare in the world,
And those of matchless sweetness with pale yellow pits?
They lengthen your age and prolong your life by changing your frame.
He who has the luck to eat them will never be the same.

After the Buddhist Patriarch had pressed together his hands to thank the Queen Mother, she ordered the immortal singing-girls and the divine maidens to sing and dance. All the immortals at the banquet applauded enthusiastically. Truly there were

27. Supposedly a custom of the Sung dynasty. After offering sacrifices at the ancestral temple of the imperial family, the emperor and his subjects would pin flowers on their clothes or on their caps.

28. Wu-ling is the prefecture in which is located the town of Ch'ang-te, in Hunan province. Its fame rests on the utopian "Peach-Blossom Spring," poems written by T'ao Ch'ien (365–427) and later by Wang Wei (701–761). The spring is said to be near the town (see selection 172).

Whorls of heavenly incense filling the seats.
 And profuse array of divine petals and stems.
 Jade capital and gold arches in what great splendor!
 How priceless, too, the strange goods and rare treasures!
 Every pair had the same age as Heaven.
 Every set increased through ten thousand kalpas.
 Mulberry fields or vast oceans, let them shift and change.
 He who lives here has neither grief nor fear.

The Queen Mother commanded the immortal maidens to sing and dance, as wine-cups and goblets clinked together steadily. After a little while, suddenly

A wondrous fragrance came to meet the nose,
 Rousing Stars and Planets in that great hall.
 The gods and the Buddha put down their cups.
 Raising his head, each waited with his eyes.
 There in the air appeared an aged man,
 Holding a most luxuriant long-life plant.
 His gourd had elixir of ten thousand years;
 His book listed names twelve millennia old.
 Sky and earth in his cave knew no constraint;
 Sun and moon were perfected in his vase.²⁹
 He roamed the Four Seas in joy serene,
 And made the Ten Islets³⁰ his tranquil home.
 Getting drunk often at the Peaches Feast
 He woke; the moon shone brightly as of old.
 He had a long head, short frame, and large ears.
 His name: Star of Long Life from South Pole.

After the Star of Long Life had arrived and had greeted the Jade Emperor, he also went up to thank Tathāgata, saying, “When I first heard that the baneful monkey was being led by Lao Tzu to the Tushita Palace to be refined by alchemical fire, I thought peace was surely secured. I never suspected that he could still escape, and it was fortunate that Tathāgata in his goodness had subdued this monster. When I got word of the thanksgiving banquet, I came at once. I have no other gifts to present to you but these purple agaric, jasper plant, jade-green lotus root, and golden elixir.” The poem says:

Jade-green lotus and golden drug are given to Śākya.
 Like the sands of Ganges is the age of Tathāgata.

29. A metaphoric expression for the alchemical process.

30. Legendary home of the immortals.

The brocade of the three wains³¹ is calm, eternal bliss.
 The nine-grade³² garland is a wholesome, endless life.
 In the School Mādhyamika³³ he's the true master,
 Whose home is the Heaven both of form and emptiness.³⁴
 The great Earth and cosmos all call him Lord.
 His sixteen-foot³⁵ diamond body abounds in blessing and life.

Tathāgata accepted the thanks cheerfully, and the Star of Long Life went to his seat. Again there was pouring of wine and exchanging of cups. The Great Immortal of Naked Feet also arrived. After prostrating himself before the Jade Emperor, he too went to thank the Buddhist Patriarch, saying, "I am profoundly grateful for your dharma which subdued the baneful monkey. I have no other things to convey my respect but two magic pears and some fire dates,³⁶ which I now present to you." The poem says:

Fragrant are the pears and dates of the Naked-Feet Immortal,
 Presented to Amitābha, whose count of years is long.
 Firm as a hill is his Lotus Platform of Seven Treasures;
 Brocadelike is his Flower Seat of Thousand Gold adorned.
 No false speech is this—his age equals Heaven and Earth;
 Nor is this a lie—his luck is great as the sea.
 Blessing and long life reach in him their fullest scope,
 Dwelling in that Western Region of calm, eternal bliss.

Tathāgata again thanked him and asked Ānanda and Kāśyapa to put away the gifts one by one before approaching the Jade Emperor to express his gratitude for the banquet. By now, everyone was somewhat tipsy. A Spirit Minister of Inspection then arrived to make the report, "The Great Sage is sticking out his head!" "No need to worry," said the Buddhist Patriarch. He took from his sleeve a tag on which were written in gold letters the words *Om maṇi padme hūm*.³⁷ Handing it over to Ānanda, he told him to stick it on the top of the

31. The three vehicles (*triyāna*), drawn by a goat, a deer, and an ox to convey the living across the cycles of births and deaths (*saṃsāra*) to the shores of Nirvāṇa.

32. The nine classes or grades of rewards in the Pure Land.

33. The Mādhyamika or San-lun School advocates the doctrine of formlessness or nothingness (*animitta*, *nirābhāsa*).

34. "Form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form" is the famous statement of the *Heart Sūtra* (the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*).

35. Buddha's transformed body is said to be sixteen feet tall, the same height as his earthly body.

36. Pears and dates are the traditional fruits of religious Taoism.

37. Said to be a prayer to Padmapāṇi (Kuan-yin/Avalokiteśvara holding a lotus flower), this Lamaistic charm begins with the universal sacred syllable *Om*. Each syllable is supposed to have its own mystic power of salvation, but the prayer is often translated as meaning "Oh, jewel in the Lotus."

mountain. This deva³⁸ received the tag, took it out of the Heavenly Gate, and stuck it tightly on a square piece of rock at the top of the Mountain of Five Phases.³⁹ The mountain immediately struck root and grew together at the seams, though there was enough space for breathing and for the prisoner's hands to crawl out and move around a bit. Ānanda then returned to report, "The tag is tightly attached."

Tathāgata then took leave of the Jade Emperor and the deities, and went with the two devas out of the Heavenly Gate. Moved by compassion, he recited a divine spell and called together a local spirit and the Fearless Guards of Five Quarters to stand watch over the Five-Phases Mountain. They were told to feed the prisoner with iron pellets when he was hungry and to give him melted copper to drink when he was thirsty. When the time of his chastisement was fulfilled, they were told, someone would be coming to deliver him. So it is that

The brash, baneful monkey in revolt against Heaven
Is brought to submission by Tathāgata.
He drinks melted copper to endure the seasons,
And feeds on iron pellets to pass the time.
Tried by this bitter misfortune sent from the Sky.
He's glad to be living, though in a piteous lot.
If this hero is allowed to struggle anew,
He'll serve Buddha in future and go to the West.

Another poem says:

Prideful of his power once the time was ripe,
He tamed dragon and tiger, exploiting wily might.
Stealing peaches and wine, he roamed the House of Heaven.
He found trust and favor in the Capital of Jade.
He's now imprisoned, for his evil's full to the brim.
By the good stock⁴⁰ unfailing his spirit will rise again.
If he's indeed to escape Tathāgata's hands.
He must await the holy monk from T'ang court.

We do not know in what month or year hereafter the days of his penance will be fulfilled, and you must listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

Translated by Anthony C. Yu

38. Divine being.

39. The five elements of Chinese cosmology: earth, wood, fire, metal, water.

40. Good stock (Sanskrit *kuśala-mūla*): the Buddhist idea of the good seeds sown by a virtuous life which will bring future rewards.