Chapter 2

A Fairy Weeps a Lake of Tears
Moon Pearl Dances in the Bamboo Grove

On the wall of the apartment where Weilin lived was a character scroll, a poem done in black ink on white paper, the characters running from top to bottom, right to left in the old style. The poem was Du Fu's "Night in the Pavilion".

Winter—Heaven's law shortens the days.
Frost and snow—bright to the limits of the sky.
Drum and bugle bravely sound the fifth watch.
Three mountains—above winds the River of Stars.
Wild sobbing in many homes after the battle—
From fishermen and woodcutters, strange old songs.
Sleeping Dragon, Prancing Steed—now you are dust.
Let the traffic of the world yield to silence and peace!

The scroll had been made by Mother, who was a good calligrapher. Mother had helped Weilin memorize the poem, and had explained the meanings to him. Frost and snow he knew about, of course, though he had never seen them. On clear nights—all too few in this humid region—the River of Stars stretched across Heaven, a dim band of silver seeming to lie behind, beyond the actual stars. Sleeping Dragon and Prancing Steed were literary names for two great generals of the Three Kingdoms period,

many dynasties ago, even before the time of the poet, himself twelve hundred years dead.

Mother told him about this poet Du Fu. He had struggled all his life to get an official position at the court of the Tang Emperor; but just when he had succeeded a great rebellion broke out and Du, along with the Emperor and all his court, became refugees. He spent the rest of his life fleeing war and famine, trying to find safe lodgings for his family, trying to get back his position, growing his own food, trudging muddy roads to seek help from friends and relatives, worn out at last from despair and from grief for his shattered country.

"That was life in the Old Society" (Mother had concluded), "before Chairman Mao swept away all those bad things and gave us a New China."

"Don't make it too simple for him," Father had put in at this point. "Our progress has certainly been tremendous, and many evils have been eliminated. But we have not yet abolished loneliness and death."

"Hush, Bullfrog. You should not speak in such a negative way. You don't know what lesson he'll take from it."

Father had just chuckled and turned back to his book. He often spoke in this somewhat flippant style, and Mother always chided him for it. Weilin grasped, from the nervous edge on Mother's voice, that it was not correct to speak like that, though he did not know why. Nor did he know why Mother called Father "Bullfrog". Father bore no resemblance to a bullfrog, and his voice was not in the least like the lowing of bullfrogs in the empty field beyond the college wall during the rainy season. Father's pet name for Mother was "Cicada", though again Weilin did not know any reason for this. And in point of fact Father very rarely said "Cicada", at any rate in Weilin's hearing. He often called Mother "Darling" or "My Love", though. Weilin thought that all these little endearments were, like Father's sarcasm, mildly improper. This he gathered from the fact that Mother and Father never used them when anyone else was around, addressing each other then by given name or even full name as other people did. The family nickname for Weilin was "Pangolin". This was a joke of Father's. Weilin's teeth had been slow to appear, and Father said he had his teeth inside his stomach, like a pangolin.

Weilin never regretted being an only child. He liked to be with Mother and Father, and thought he would have resented having to share them. The three of them spent most of their evenings together, reading, listening to the radio or gramophone, or playing games. Mother was best at the word games, especially the one where you had to make a harmonious sentence whose first word was the last word of the previous player's effort, or "chain verse", where you built a poem by each player contributing a line in turn. Father was more inclined toward mathematical puzzles, board games and card games. He was expert at both Chinese and western chess, and used to take on Mother and Weilin simultaneously, Weilin playing the western game, Mother—who didn't care for western style—playing Chinese. When Mother was occupied with some private task, Father would play Weilin alone, spotting him a queen if western-style, a cannon if Chinese. Even with such an advantage, Weilin rarely won.

On Friday nights one of Father's colleagues, a young lecturer in the Mathematics Department called Wang Baojiang, came to the apartment to play western-style chess with Father. Sometimes when Weilin was occupied with homework Father and Mother played a card game called "Honeymoon Bridge", an adaptation for two players of the great American game. Weilin wanted to learn Honeymoon Bridge, but Mother, laughing, told him he must wait for his honeymoon, which he understood to have something to do with being married. He grasped the main points of the game anyway, from watching them play; but since he could not play himself, he would eventually get bored watching them and take up a book.

The books Weilin read were mostly Father's. Father had all the old classic novels and poetry anthologies, of course, and many western books in translation. Of the Chinese books, Weilin's favorites were *Strange Tales from Liao's Studio*, a collection of ghost stories from the Manchu dynasty, and *Stories Ancient and Modern,* from the same period but with more commonplace themes. At first his favorite Western writer was the storyteller Antusheng. Weilin especially liked the story called "The Tinder Box". In this story a poor soldier finds a magic tinder box. When he strikes the flint once, a dog appears with eyes like saucers. Twice, and another dog comes, with eyes like mill wheels. If he strikes the flint three

times a third dog comes, "with eyes like the Round Tower". Weilin had no idea what the Round Tower was, but he trembled to think of those dogs. The dogs would do anything the soldier told them. If he wanted gold, they brought it to him. At last the people made him king, and he married the beautiful princess.

How marvelous it would be to have that tinder box! You could get anything you wanted. Nobody would dare to bully you or insult you. Weilin half convinced himself that such a tinder box really existed. He did not grasp that the story was supposed to have happened in Denmark—did not, in fact, know that Denmark existed—and thought the round tower must be somewhere in China. Very carefully, not to give away his reason for wanting to know, he asked Father if he knew the whereabouts of a round tower. Sure enough, Father said he thought there was one near Changsha, in the next province. Weilin determined to go there and find the tinder box. Then he thought of the dogs with those terrifying eyes, and inwardly trembled, and thought perhaps he ought to wait until he was older. But what if someone found the tinder box in the meantime?

While he was vacillating about the tinder box, Weilin happened to read *Treasure Island*, a story about pirates and buried treasure. This was so exciting it swept Mr Antusheng from his mind. Then he discovered *Tom Sawyer*. This was a revelation. The boys in it were so bold, so unrestrained, and showed so little respect for their parents and teachers! The book thrilled him none the less, and he dreamed of being a bold American lad, having adventures in caves and cemeteries. When, some months later, he picked up the book of Antusheng stories again, they seemed very babyish.

Father was Assistant Professor of Mathematics at the college, so of course he had many textbooks and stories about science. He had several of Jules Verne's romances on his shelves, and *The Invisible Man* and *The Time Machine*, as well as W.W. Rouse Ball's *Mathematical Recreations*. These were all in Chinese translations, but there were real foreign-language books, too, just as Weilin had boasted to the girl Han Yuezhu: dictionaries of German and Russian, some mathematical texts in German, full of strange symbols and diagrams of various sorts of shapeless blobs joined by lines. There was even an American book: Abramowitz and Stegun's *Handbook of Mathematical Functions*.

This last was very fascinating to Weilin; not because of the English text, which he could not understand at all, but because the majority of its pages were filled with numbers—ten thousands, perhaps ten thousands of ten thousands, of numbers, marching down the pages and from page to page in ranks and files. So many numbers! It filled him with awe to think of all the numbers, and that a book should be made like this, presumably because there were people—people like Father—who wanted to read pages and pages of numbers.

Once Weilin had asked Father about the numbers. Had he really read them all?

Father laughed. "Of course not, Little Pangolin. It's a reference book. Like a dictionary. You just dip into it for one number. You don't *read* it."

Weilin felt foolish, thinking he should have realized this.

The older books were battered and stained, having been packed, unpacked and repacked in Father's numerous moves around the country. Father was much older than the generality of fathers. He had been born in 1911, the year called "Xinhai" in the old calendar, when the Manchu dynasty had been overthrown by revolution. He had been 46 when Weilin was born. Yet he had married at a normal age, to a girl of normal age. It was only that they had waited seventeen years before having Weilin. Mother said that in fact Weilin had had a sister, born during the war against Japan, but in the wartime conditions there had not been enough food and medicine to keep her healthy and she had died from an infection. After New China was established of course there was enough food for everyone, and so Father and Mother had decided to have Weilin. He was all the more precious (Mother said) because they had waited so long for him.

Mother was herself a Manchu from the northeast. The northeast was all mountains and forests, Mother said. There were bears and wolves in the forests. In the winter it was bitterly cold, often forty or fifty below. It was so cold that if you were to spit, the spit would freeze in midair and hit the ground—which was hard as iron—with a *ting-ting* sound. The bears found a warm place in the forest and slept through the cold weather, but the wolves used to come down from the mountains to attack the livestock of the farms, and the people had to shoot them with guns. In summer the air was pleasant, not stifling like Seven Kill Stele's; but then there were

horseflies the size of small sparrows that could sting through leather. The peasants in the northeast used to wear iron bands round their heads with burning tapers set in them, to keep the horseflies at bay while they plowed. However, you could go up in the mountains to escape from the horseflies. Up in the mountains, as well as bears and wolves, there was gold, and wild ginseng. Before Liberation the mountains had been full of bandits, who went there to mine the gold and dig up the ginseng. Now, of course, it was all very peaceful. The highest mountain was called Ever-White Mountain, and it had a lake at the very top called Heaven Lake.

"If the mountain was ever-white, wouldn't the lake be ever-frozen?" asked Weilin when Mother told him this.

Mother kissed him and said he was a clever boy to reason so well. But Ever-White Mountain was white because of a kind of white gravel that covered its upper slopes. It only had snow on it in winter. The pool at the top was pure and clear, made from the tears of a beautiful fairy who had lived there in ancient times. The fairy was unhappy because she had had no children, so she had wept this lakeful of tears. At last Manzhushuli, the King of Heaven, taking pity on her, had given her the finest of all children, named Guoruo, which meant "Blessed One" in the Manchu language. The fairy had added the name Aixin, which means "Golden"; and Aixin Guoruo had become the ancestor of the whole Manchu race (named after Manzhushuli himself), whose destiny was to conquer China and build the greatest dynasty the Empire had ever known. The dynasty was to be called Qing, which means 'clear' and is written with the three-drops-of-water symbol at one side. The water was for the tears of the fairy, and also to show that the previous dynasty (called Ming, which means 'bright' and is a fire-word, and whose ruling family had the surname Vermilion, another fire-word) was to be extinguished.

Weilin loved to hear Mother talk about the northeast. It seemed like a very romantic place, with the bears and wolves and mountains with lakes on top. He hoped he would see the northeast one day. Mother still had relatives there, he knew. He had heard her speaking of Cousin This and Uncle That, and he thought that once or twice there had been a letter from the northeast. Father's only relatives were Grandmother and Auntie Shi, who both lived in Nanjing, a thousand miles away. Mother's relatives

were not close relatives, either. They were all cousins and uncles. She had no brothers or sisters. Her parents had fled the northeast to escape from the Japanese. They had gone to Chongqing; then her parents had died in an epidemic; then she met Father, and they had got jobs at the college in Seven Kill Stele when it opened, soon after Liberation. Mother's parents lived only in a photograph which stood on the dresser.

The dresser was set against the wall which separated the living-room from the kitchen. It had drawers and a door at each side. The drawers held clothes and an overflow of table utensils from the kitchen. Behind the right-hand door were kept Father's things, and the cards and board games. Father's things dwelt in a square tin box with a lid on the topmost of the two shelves behind the door. Weilin was not supposed to touch Father's things, but once he had peeped into the box. Notebooks; some letters tied with string; Father's personal chop, in an ivory container with a carved lid and a compartment for red ink; needles for the gramophone; writing-brushes and a fancy, unused ink-block; a peculiar kind of ruler, with a smaller ruler sliding inside it and a little glass window fixed over both, that could also slide; a miscellany of small metal or wooden implements, of which the only one not entirely mysterious (he had actually seen Father use it once) was a thing made of pressed tin and wire, for threading needles with ease. Behind the left-hand door were Mother's things: some hanging cloths she chose not to hang, needlework accessories, hair ornaments.

On top of the dresser was a radio, a Chinese model in a black plastic case. Around the radio were the photographs. Mother's parents; Father as a college student; Father and Mother at West Lake in Hangzhou, a famous scenic spot; and one Weilin especially liked, of himself at one month old, with Father and Mother holding him between them.

Keeping company with the photographs were two little porcelain love-birds. When Weilin had first been old enough to reach the top of the dresser he had knocked off one of the love-birds. By a miracle it had not broken; instead of falling to the bare concrete floor it had hit his own infant foot and rolled off unharmed. Mother had scolded him severely for that—one of the very few scoldings he had had—and even Father had looked stern and said: "Listen to your mother, don't be naughty." Then

3791-DERB

Mother had put back the love-bird very tenderly, setting it and its companion further back, our of Weilin's reach. Because of the love-bird's narrow escape, and the vivid memory of being scolded, Weilin regarded these creatures even now with some awe. They were perched out in front of the photographs, one on each side of a slender flower-vase in which Mother always kept two or three wild daisies picked in the college grounds.

Because Weilin's father was an Assistant Professor the family had a pleasant apartment on the edge of the college grounds. The apartment was on the third floor of a small block assigned to senior staff at the college. There was running cold water and a water toilet you could flush by pouring a bucket of water down it. From the window of the living-room you could look out over some bamboo thickets to fields and villages, with Mount Tan in the distance, rice-fields terraced all up its lower slopes. Weilin had a bed in the living-room, right under the window. His parents had a bedroom all their own, a thing few of his classmates' families could boast, and there was a separate kitchen and bathroom, though both very tiny. The kitchen had a kerosene stove for cooking, and a large white enamel sink.

The "Night in the Pavilion" character scroll was on the wall opposite the dresser. Beneath and to the left of it stood a wind-up gramophone—a cabinet model built in the ponderous, factual Russian style. Father was in charge of loading the records and changing the needles, but Weilin was allowed to open the doors at the front of the cabinet, which was the only way to regulate the volume. Father and Mother both loved to listen to music. Mother liked piano pieces, most especially Mr Chopin; Father preferred Mr Beethoven and Mr Mozart. They had to ration their use of the gramophone rather carefully, though. The needles it used were of a soft metal which did not damage the disks; but these needles wore out quickly, and you always needed a good supply of them. For some reason they were difficult to obtain. In fact they could only be got in Shanghai, and then not very reliably; so Father had to wait until he heard of someone going to Shanghai, and ask them to get needles for him.

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Coming home after the incident at the pool, Weilin told Father about the foreigners. Of course, Father already knew. Father knew pretty much everything. This was a Friday night. Lecturer Wang Baojiang had arrived, and he and father were sitting at the table drinking tea and trading morsels of professional gossip, preparatory to their chess game.

"They're from England," said Father. "The old one is a famous journalist. He's writing articles about our country for the English newspapers."

"I though England was one of the Imperialist countries."

"The government is Imperialist," said Lecturer Wang. "The common people are our friends."

"You can speak English, can't you, Father?"

"Mm, only a little." Father chuckled. "I can read it, at any rate for professional purposes. But English is very difficult, you know." Father explained about the horrors of English spelling, and wrote out the words *though, bough, cough, enough* to illustrate his point. Weilin thought this very interesting, and tried to memorize the strange words: *though, bough, cough, enough*. It was clear to Weilin that Lecturer Wang did not know these English words. He nodded when Father was explaining them, as if he was entirely familiar with the peculiarities of English orthography; but somehow Weilin knew with certainty that he was only pretending.

Lecturer Wang said he always composed his papers with a maximum of mathematical symbols and a minimum of words, so that when they were published they could be read by anybody in any country. Father laughed and said perhaps one day the human race would be able to dispense with natural languages altogether, as Mr Leibnitz had proposed.

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Later Weilin tried to teach these strange English words to Yuezhu. After their first meeting at the pool they had become friends. They had met at the pool most days until it closed, in November. Weilin had even managed to teach her to swim a little. Then they would walk home together, as

3791-DERB

the barracks where Yuezhu's father was stationed was on the road that led out to the college, which was located out on the very edge of the town. It was on the open grassy area in front of the barracks gate that he tried to show Yuezhu the English words. However, she could not grasp the point at all.

"I don't see what's so interesting. Lots of Chinese characters look the same but sound different."

Weilin let it go. He thought Yuezhu was not really very clever. At first he had over-estimated her, because she could speak Mandarin. Weilin's family, being educated people, and his mother coming from the north, spoke Mandarin at home, and Weilin was perfectly fluent—more so than most of the teachers at his school. Yuezhu's family spoke Mandarin because everyone in the army did. She did not speak as well as he, but it was something that she could speak it at all; most of their classmates knew only the thick local dialect. The two of them had soon begun speaking Mandarin together, as their private language.

Mandarin, however, proved to be Yuezhu's only claim to intellectual distinction. Weilin was only six months older than she, but he knew far more about the world. So it seemed to him. Yuezhu, however, was airily sure of herself, and thought her tiny stock of knowledge—which encompassed very little beyond her own immediate circumstances—quite adequate for her needs. From dealings with his classmates Weilin knew better than to press his superiority. He husbanded it quietly, bringing it out for employment only when he thought he might raise her a little from her slough of ignorance without risking a scornful rebuff. Above all else he did not want to lose Yuezhu because he felt sure he was in love with her.

The peculiar attraction he had first experienced that day in the pool could be nothing but love, Weilin believed. Though much too young to have known the tug of sexual feeling, and entirely ignorant of the facts of life, Weilin was familiar with the concept of love. How could he not have been? There was a large poster on one wall of the school auditorium promoting the Three Loves:

Love the country!
Love the Party!
Love Socialism!

He knew, however, that there was more to the matter than that. He knew about Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher, at any rate, and about the instances of thwarted love in the *Stories from Liao's Studio*, which invariably ended with a death and a haunting. At the same time he was aware of a component to his particular feelings that Mr Twain and Mr Liao had not seen fit to mention: something infinitely fascinating in the contemplation of Yuezhu's smooth, sturdy limbs and swan neck. He had no way to place these impressions as he had no frame of reference to work from; but in his own mind he grouped them under the adjective *delicious* and thought—in a way which even he could perceive to be absurdly illogical—that if Yuezhu were food, he would like to eat her. Her voice also had a peculiar effect on him. When she was imitating someone, or when she wanted to tell something she thought very important, her voice seemed to come from deep in her chest, to be very round and strong. To hear this made Weilin shiver from head to toe, though he was not sure why.

After the pool closed for the winter there was no reason to meet, as they attended different schools. Yuezhu's school was Elementary School Number Three, where the children of the textile factory workers went, and those from the army barracks. Weilin should have gone to Number Three too. It was closest to the College; but his father had felt dissatisfied with it for some reason and arranged for him to attend Number One in the town, halfway from South Lake Park to the Martyrs' Monument marking the center of Seven Kill Stele. But Weilin still passed the barracks on his way home. As often as not Yuezhu would be there in the road, or on the grassy area in front of the barracks, waiting for him. There was a point on the long straight road out from the town where he could pick her out, if she was there, and the anticipation as he approached that point, and the delight when he could pick her out, were the most thrilling things he had ever known. The first few times she would be playing with some other girls (traffic was so light you could play ball games in the roadway with only the occasional interruption from a cart or bicycle). But she soon

abandoned the pretense of nonchalance and stood there waiting for him, alone or in company with her girl friends.

The girl friends were a nuisance, smirking and giggling at them when they were together. Yuezhu felt this, too, and took to walking away with him along the road to the college gate. But this was only ten minutes, even at dawdling pace, so they extended their walk past the gate to the scruffy little store set in the college wall further along, where you could buy loquats—two for a *fen*—then past the college altogether, out beyond the end of the town to where the road was intersected by another leading to some villages, and ultimately to the provincial capital. A little way along this crossroad there was a bamboo thicket off at one side, followed by a curious depression: a little swale fifteen or twenty feet across hidden from the road by the bamboo. This became their secret place, where they would sit talking and playing and eating loquats, of which Yuezhu was very fond.

Although Weilin loved to be with Yuezhu, he did not think her talk very interesting. She knew of very little beyond her family. Her family was dominated (in her mind, at least) by her half brother. When she first mentioned this person, Weilin did not understand the expression she used, there being no common terms in the Chinese language to designate half or step-relatives. She had just put together the words for "half" and "elder brother" in a way that made no sense on a first hearing.

"He *makes* me say that," Yuezhu explained. "He won't *let* me call him Elder Brother. He says we're not really brother and sister because we have different mothers. He gets angry if I forget to say Half Brother."

"I don't see why he should care. Why does he think it's so important?"

"Because he didn't agree with my father marrying my mother. His mother died when he was small, you see. Then my father married my mother. But Half Brother didn't agree. He wouldn't even go to the wedding banquet. He stood outside the house where it was held and refused to go in. He stood there until late at night, until some of my father's relatives took him home. He's very stubborn."

"Oh, dear. So I guess he doesn't get on with your mother."

"Oh, they're all right. He won't call her Mother, though. He always says *Ayi*." [The term used in the old society for a father's secondary

wives.] "And he fights with my father. Oh! terrible fights. Shouting and cursing."

"Well, I guess it's a kind of loyalty. To his own mother, I mean."

"That's what Half Brother says. Your mother is your mother, he says. It's wrong to call another person Mother."

* * *

This half brother was eighteen years old. He was a first-year student at the college, and actually took a class from Father. When Weilin asked Father about him Father said that at this early stage of the academic year the freshmen students were like grains of rice, there was no reason to notice one rather than another. If this Han Shiru developed any distinguishing characteristics, Father would report back.

Before Father had time to notice anything about Half Brother, Weilin met him, or at any rate encountered him. One evening just before Spring Festival the two little friends were walking along the road to the bamboo thicket when they saw two male students approaching, talking busily about something. Yuezhu squeezed Weilin's arm and pulled him down to get his ear. Half Brother! she announced, in her deepest, chestiest, most dramatic whisper, sending Weilin's entire nervous system into sympathetic vibration.

"Which one?"

"The handsome one. Not the one with glasses, the other one. Tall and handsome!"

The students differed in height by no more than an inch and a half, and neither was handsome to anyone but an adoring baby sister. But to be sure, one of them wore glasses and one didn't. The one who didn't was square-built, with broad shoulders and a powerful-looking neck, but spotty-faced and sporting a shock of unruly hair sticking up at one side. Seeing Yuezhu he stopped and broke off his conversation with the other.

"Little Half Sister. Where are you going?"

"Just up to the college. This is my friend, Liang Weilin. He lives in the college. His father teaches mathematics."

"Old Liang?" Half Brother turned his attention on Weilin. "He's too strict. Tell your Dad to ease up on the assignments."

3791-DERB

Half Brother laughed loud, showing square white teeth, and his classmate joined in. Then they walked on.

"Half Brother doesn't like mathematics," said Yuezhu. "In fact, he doesn't like the college. He wanted to go to Sichuan University but Father wouldn't do it."

"Do what?"

Yuezhu frowned, uncertain. "I'm not sure. They had a big fight. Father said Half Brother should study harder, then he could go to the University. Half Brother said Father's position was good enough to open a back door for him. But Father wouldn't do it. He said a revolutionary doesn't go in by the back door. Then Half Brother said a revolutionary should struggle by all means to serve the people and how could he serve the people if he couldn't get a good education? And Father said Half Brother was an . . . " Yuezhu squinted, trying to remember the difficult word. " . . . an on fong tu di nist."

"Opportunist."

"Yes. Oh! It was a big fight. They are both very stubborn."

Weilin heard all about Yuezhu's family, walking the road or lying back in their hollow in the early twilight. Her father was an old revolutionary who had had many adventures. He had fought against the Japanese and Chiang Kaishek all over China, and against the landlords' rebellion in Tibet. Weilin felt at a disadvantage here. His own parents, so far as he knew, had never been anything but teachers. Their lives seemed very dull. Having no stories to tell about his family, he told Yuezhu the stories he had read in Father's books. Some of them were right over her head—she dismissed *The Time Machine* as just silly and said she thought Tom Sawyer too naughty to live. But she liked the sad, sentimental tales of Old China from *Stories Old and New* and the ghost stories from *Liao's Studio*. Best of all she liked the story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai.

Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai

Zhu Yingtai was a girl in ancient times who wanted to be a scholar. Because women were not allowed to take the Imperial examinations, she dressed as a boy and journeyed to the capital

to enter the lists. In the examination halls she met Liang Shanbo, a scholar from a poor family. They became close friends. Of course, Liang did not know that Zhu was a girl. After the examinations they went back to their homes, which were not far apart. Zhu Yingtai realized that she loved Liang Shanbo. She went to see him to explain herself. Seeing her dressed as a girl, Liang Shanbo fell in love with her and proposed marriage. Her family, however, would not accept him because he was too poor. They had in fact already made an arrangement for Zhu Yingtai to marry the son of another wealthy family. When her family refused to yield, Zhu Yingtai killed herself. Liang Shanbo followed her funeral procession, weeping. Zhu Yingtai's body had been set carelessly in its coffin, and a corner of her white shroud was showing from under the lid. In his grief and despair, Liang Shanbo grasped at it and tore it off. Then he went home, and soon he too died from a broken heart. Relenting, or fearful that his ghost might haunt them, Zhu Yingtai's family agreed to let him be buried with their daughter in the family vault, and so he was. As the mourners were turning away, however, a wonderful thing happened. The funeral mound split open with a mighty *crack!* and two beautiful white butterflies fluttered out and ascended up to Heaven. It was observed that one of the butterflies had a small piece missing from the end of a wing. Later, when the workmen went to repair the tomb, they were astonished to discover that it was empty.

Yuezhu was deeply affected by this story. The first time Weilin told it she burst into tears, and wept for a long time. Afterwards, for several weeks, whenever they were alone together in the hollow she wanted to play Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. She herself played the part of Zhu Yingtai, of course, and seemed particularly to enjoy the death scene, which she prolonged to the point where Weilin could not restrain himself from laughing at her affected moaning and swooning. Later she added some dancing to the story. She tried to get Weilin to dance with her—the two butterflies ascending to Heaven—but Weilin lacked the necessary

3791-DERB

coordination and could not follow her, so at last she allowed him to lie back and watch her dance by herself: up on tip-toes, her slender arms raised above her head, eyes closed, turning and swaying in the twilight, while a chorus of cicadas played accompaniment.