

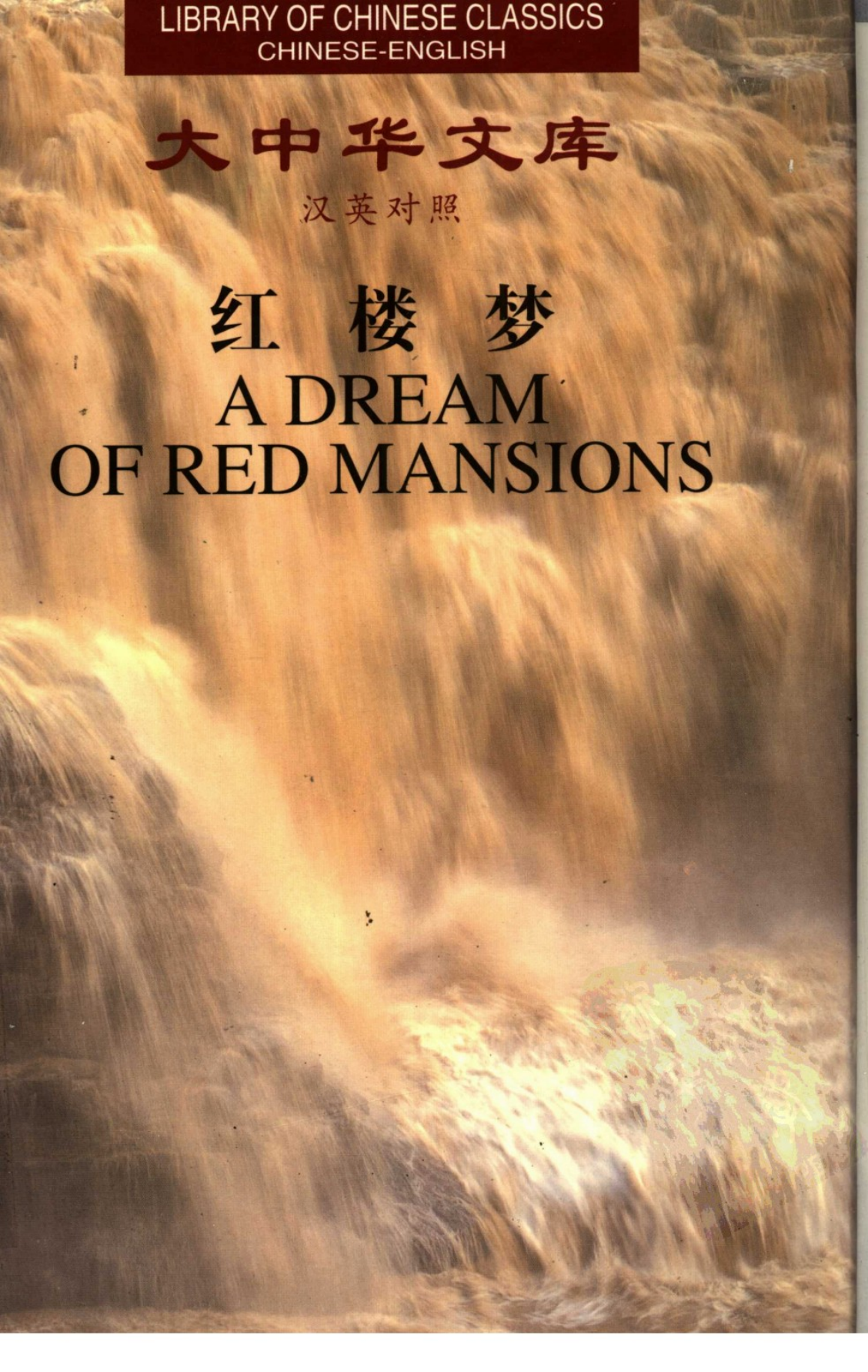
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红楼梦

A DREAM OF RED MANSIONS





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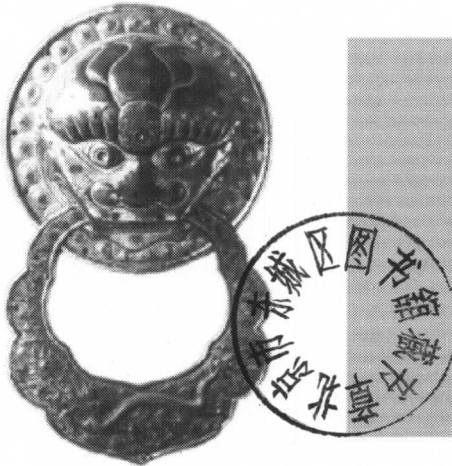
LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS

Chinese-English

红楼梦

A Dream of Red Mansions

V



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第七十八回

老学士闲征婉嫔词 痴公子杜撰芙蓉诔

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2372

话说两个尼姑领了芳官等去后，王夫人便往贾母处来省晨，见贾母喜欢，便趁便回道：“宝玉屋里有个晴雯，那个丫头也大了，而且一年之间病不离身；我常见他比别人分外淘气，也懒；前日又病倒了十几天，叫大夫瞧，说是女儿痲，所以我就赶着叫他出去了。若养好了也不用叫进来，就赏他家配人去也罢了。再那几个学戏的女孩子，我也作主放出去了。一则他们都会戏，口里没轻没重，只会混说，女孩儿们听了如何使得？二则他们既唱了会子戏，白放了他们，也是应该的。况丫头们也太多，若说不够使，再挑上几个来也是一样。”贾母听了，点头道：“这倒是正理，我也正想着如何呢。但晴雯那丫头我看他甚好，怎么就这样起来。我的意思，这些丫头的模样爽利，言语针线多不及他，将来只他还可以给宝玉使唤。谁知变了性。”王夫人笑道：“老太太挑中的人原不错。只怕他命里没造化，所以得了这个病。俗语又说，‘女大十八变’。况且有本事的人，未免就有些调歪。老太太还有什么不曾经验过的。三年前我就留心这件事，先只取中了他，我便留心。冷眼看去，他色色虽比人强，只是不大沉重。若说沉重知大礼，莫若袭人第一。虽说贤妻美妾，



Chapter 78

An Old Scholar at Leisure Has Eulogies Composed His Unorthodox, Witless Son Laments the Hibiscus

After the two abbesses had taken the young actresses away, Lady Wang called to pay her morning respects to the Lady Dowager. And finding her in a good mood she reported:

"Baoyu's maid Qingwen has grown up now, and this last year or so she's kept falling ill. I've noticed too that she's saucier and lazier than the others. Recently she was ill again for over ten days, and the doctor diagnosed it as consumption; so then and there I dismissed her with instructions not to come back when she's better, giving her to her family to marry off. I also took it on myself to send away those few young actresses. Because, on account of their theatrical training, they talked in a wild way we don't want our girls to hear; and as they performed for us here for a time, it wouldn't have been right to ask for money for them. In any case, we have too many maids. If we need more in future, we can always pick a few others."

"Quite right and proper." The old lady nodded approval. "Exactly what I had in mind myself. But I always thought Qingwen a very nice girl. How could she have turned out so badly? She struck me as smarter than the other maids, with a ready tongue too and better at needlework the best choice as a concubine for Baoyu in future. Who could have dreamed that she'd change for the worse?"

"You made the right choice, madam, only she wasn't fated to have such good fortune. That's why she contracted this illness. As the saying goes, 'A girl changes eighteen times before reaching womanhood.' And the smarter the girl, the more out of hand she'll get. You must have seen many such cases.

"Three years ago when I thought about this question too, she was my first choice. No one's a match for her in other ways, it's just that she's



却也要性情和顺举止沉重的更好些。就是袭人的模样虽比晴雯略次一等，然放在屋里，也算得一二等的了。况且行事大方，心地老实，这几年来，从未逢迎着宝玉淘气。凡宝玉十分胡闹的事，他只有死劝的。因此品择了二年，一点不错了，我就悄悄的把他丫头的月钱止住，我的月分银子里批出二两银子来给他。不过使他自己知道，越发小心学好之意。且不明说者，一则宝玉年纪尚小，老爷知道了又恐说耽误了书；二则宝玉再自为已是跟前的人，不敢劝他说他，反倒纵性起来。所以直到今日才回明了老太太。”贾母听了，笑道：“原来这样，如此更好了。袭人本来从小儿不言不语，我只说他是没嘴的葫芦。既是你深知，岂还有错误的。而且你这不明说与宝玉的主意更好，且大家别提这事，只是心里知道罢了。我深知宝玉将来也是个不听妻妾劝的。我也解不过来，也从未见过这样的孩子。别的淘气都是应该的，只他这种和丫头们好却是难得。我为此也耽心，每每冷眼查看他。只和丫头们闹，必是人大心大，知道男女的事了，所以爱亲近他们。既细细查找，究竟不是为此，岂不奇怪。想必他原是个丫头，错投了胎不成。”说着，大家笑了。王夫人又回今日贾政如何夸奖，又如何带他们逛去，贾母听了，更加喜悦。

一时，只见迎春打扮了前来告辞过去。凤姐也来省晨，伺候过早饭，又说笑了一回。贾母歇晌午觉，王夫人便唤了凤姐，问他丸药可曾配好。凤姐道：“还不曾呢，如今还是吃汤药。太太只管放心，我已是大好了。”王夫人见他精神复



a bit flighty. For steadiness and propriety, Xiren comes first. Though what's wanted in a wife is virtue, they say, and in a concubine beauty, still it's better to choose a girl with a sweet disposition and steady character. Xiren may not be up to Qingwen in looks, yet she's the best for Baoyu's chamber. Trustworthy, too, and honest. These last few years she's never once led Baoyu into mischief. In fact, whenever he does wrong she tries her best to dissuade him — after watching her for two years I know this for certain. That's why I secretly stopped her pay as a maid and gave her two taels a month from my own allowance, so that she'd understand and look after him even better. I didn't make it public for two reasons: partly because Baoyu's young, and if his father knew of this he might think it bad for his studies; partly because if she was known to be his concubine she wouldn't dare gainsay him, and Baoyu would carry on more wildly than ever. This is why I didn't report it to you earlier."

The Lady Dowager smiled.

"If that's the case so much the better. Xiren's always been so quiet I felt she was rather stupid; but as you know her so well you can't be wrong. I'm all in favour, too, of not letting Baoyu know. None of us must mention this, just let it be understood. I'm well aware that in future Baoyu won't listen to his wife's or concubines' advice. I can't understand him either. I've never known another child like him. One expects a boy to be mischievous, but this extraordinary liking he has for maids has been preying on my mind. I'm for ever finding him fooling about with them. At first I thought this intimacy was because he'd grown big enough to know about sex; but watching him more closely I realized that wasn't the reason, which makes it even odder. Could it be that he was really meant to be born a girl...."

This set every body laughing. Then Lady Wang went on to describe how Jia Zheng had praised Baoyu today and taken the boys out with him to pay a call. This pleased the old lady still more.

Soon Yingchun, dressed to go out, came to take her leave. Then Xifeng arrived to pay her respects and wait upon the old lady as she had breakfast. They chatted till it was time for her siesta, when Lady Wang called Xifeng over to ask her whether she had prepared her pills.

"Not yet," was the answer. "I'm still taking herb-cordials. But don't



初，也就信了。因又告诉撵逐晴雯等事，又说：“怎么宝丫头私自回家睡了，你们都不知道？我前儿顺路都查了一查。谁知兰小子这一个新进来的奶子也十分妖娆，我也不喜欢他。我也说与你嫂子，好不好叫他各自去罢。况且兰小子也大了，用不着这些奶子了。我因问你大嫂子：‘宝丫头出去难道你也不知道不成？’他说是告诉了他的，不过住两三日，等你姨妈好了就进来。姨妈究竟无甚大病，不过还是咳嗽腰疼，年年是如此的。他这去必有原故，敢是有人得罪了他不成？那孩子心重，亲戚们住一场，别得罪了人，反不好了。”凤姐笑道：“谁可好好的得罪他？况且他天天在园里，左不过是他们一群人。”王夫人道：“别是宝玉有口无心，傻子似的，从没个忌讳，高兴了信嘴胡说也是有的。”凤姐笑道：“这可是太太过于操心了。若说他出去干正经事说正经话去，却像个傻子；若只叫他进来在这些姊妹跟前以至于大小的丫头跟前，他最有尽让，又恐怕得罪了人，那是再不得有人恼他的。我想薛妹妹此去，想必为着前时搜检众丫头的东西的原故。他自然为信不及园里的人才搜检，他又是亲戚，现也有丫头老婆子在内，我们又不好去搜检，恐我们疑他，所以多了这个心，自己回避了。也是应该避嫌疑的。”

王夫人听了这话不错，自己遂低头想了一想，便命人请了宝钗来，分晰前日的事，以解他的疑心，又仍命他进来照



you worry, madam. I'm much better."

Lady Wang believed her, having seen that she looked more energetic. She told her of Qingwen's dismissal.

"How come you didn't know that Baochai — of her own accord — had moved home to sleep with her mother?" she continued. "A couple of days ago I made a search of all the other apartments in the Garden. And, just imagine, I found young Lan's new nurse a regular vamp! I didn't like the look of her at all. So I urged your sister-in-law to send her packing, as in any case he's big enough now not to need so many nurses. And I asked her, 'Surely you knew about Baochai's leaving?'"

"She said yes, but Baochai had told her she'd be coming back in a few days, once Aunt Xue was better. Actually, there's nothing much the matter with Aunt Xue apart from that chronic cough and backache of hers which she gets every year. So Baochai must have moved out for some other reason. Do you think somebody offended her? She's a sensitive child, and it would be too bad if we offended her after living together for so long."

"Why should anyone offend them for no reason?" asked Xifeng cheerfully. "They spend all their time in the Garden, so if there *has* been any misunderstanding it must be among themselves."

"Can Baoyu have been tactless?" wondered his mother. "He's such a simpleton, so lacking in scruples, that in a fit of excitement he may have spoken wildly."

"Don't worry so much about him, madam. When Baoyu goes out on business, he may talk and behave like a simpleton. But when he's at home with all these girl cousins of his, or even with the maids, he's most considerate to them, afraid of giving offence. So no one could possibly be annoyed by *him*."

"I think Baochai must have left because of the search the other night, naturally concluding that we didn't trust certain people in the Garden. As she's a relative, we could hardly search *her* servants. But for fear that her household might be suspected, being sensitive as she is she took her self off so as to avoid suspicion. And quite right, too."

Convinced by this estimate, Lady Wang lowered her head and after



旧居住。宝钗陪笑道：“我原早要出去的，只是姨娘有许多的大事，所以不便来说。可巧前日妈又不好了，家里两个靠得的女人也病着，所以我趁便出去了。姨娘今既知道了，我正好明讲出情理来，就从今日辞了，好搬东西出去的。”王夫人、凤姐都笑道：“你太固执了。正经仍搬进来的为是，休为没要紧的事反疏远了亲戚。”宝钗笑道：“这话说得太不解了，并没为什么事我出去。我为了妈近来神思较先大减，而且夜间晚上没有得靠的人，通共只我一个。二则我哥哥眼看要娶嫂子，多少针线活计并家里一切动用的器皿，尚有未齐备的，我也须得帮着妈去料理料理。姨妈和凤姐姐都知道我们家的事，不是我撒谎。三则自我在园里，东南上小角门子就常开着，原是为我走的，保不住出入的人就图省路，也从那里走，又没人盘查，设若从那里生出一件事来，岂不两碍脸面。而且我进园里来住原不是什么大事，因前几年年纪皆小，且家里没事，有在外头的，不如进来姊妹相共，或作针线，或玩笑，皆比在外头闷坐着好，如今彼此都大了，也都有事。况姨娘这边，历年皆遇不遂心的事故，那园子也太大，一时照顾不到，皆有关系，惟有少几个人儿，就可以少操些心。所以今日不但我执意辞去，此后还要劝姨娘，如今该减些的就减些，也不为失了大家的体统。据我看，园子里



some reflection told a maid to invite Baochai over. She explained about the recent search to set her niece's mind at rest then urged her to move back into the Garden.

"I'd been meaning to move out for some time," said Baochai with a smile. "Only I didn't find the occasion to ask you, as you have so much important business to attend to. But that day, as it happened, my mother was unwell again and our only two reliable maids were ill; so I took the chance to move out. Now that you know about it, I can explain the reason and ask leave today to move my things out too."

Neither Lady Wang nor Xifeng would hear of this.

"Don't be so stubborn!" they cried laughingly. "What you should really do is move in again, not let something so inconsequential come between us."

"I don't understand what you mean." Baochai rejoined. "I didn't leave because of anything that happened here, but because my mother'd been feeling less energetic and at night she had nobody to rely on but me. Besides, my brother will soon be getting married. There's a lot of needlework to do, his rooms still have to be furnished, and I have to help her with all the preparations. *You* know, aunt and Cousin Xifeng, how it is in our family and that I'm not fibbing.

"For another thing, after I moved into the Garden that small side gate in the southeast corner was kept open for me to go through; but other people wanting to take a short cut could use it too, and there was nobody to make a check there. If trouble had come of it, it would have been awkward for both families.

"Besides, my moving into the Garden to sleep was of no great consequence. A few years ago we were all young and I had no business at home, so I was better off here than outside, able to do needlework with the other girls and amuse myself with them — that was better than sitting idly at home by myself. Now we've all grown up and have our different tasks. Moreover, these years you've had various troubles, aunt. And the Garden is too big for you to keep an eye on everything. The fewer the people there, the less you need worry. So now I've not only made up my mind to move out, but I'll venture to advise you, aunt, to cut down as far as possible, for that won't make us lose face. It seems to me



的这项费用也竟可以免的，说不得当日的話。姨娘深知我家的，难道我们家当日也是这等零落不成？”凤姐听了这篇话，便向王夫人笑道：“这话竟是，依我说便不必强他了。”王夫人点头道：“我也无可回答，只好随你的便罢了。”

说话之间，只见宝玉等已回来，因说：“父亲还未散，恐天黑了，所以先叫我们回来了。”王夫人忙问：“今日可曾丢了丑？”宝玉笑道：“不但不丢丑，倒拐了许多东西来了。”接着，就有老婆子们从二门上小厮手里接了东西来。王夫人看时，只见扇子三把，扇坠三个，笔墨共六匣，香珠三串，玉绦环三个。宝玉说道：“这是梅翰林送的，那是杨侍郎送的，这是李员外送送的，每人一分。”说着，又向怀中取出一个旃檀香的小护身佛来，说：“这是庆国公单给我的。”王夫人又问在席何人、作何诗词，宝玉一一答应毕，只将宝玉一分令人拿着，同宝玉、环、兰前来见过贾母。贾母看了，喜欢不尽，不免又问些话。无奈宝玉一心记着晴雯，答应完了话时，便说骑马颠了，骨头疼。贾母便说：“快回房去换了衣服，疏散疏散就好了，不许睡倒。”宝玉听了，便忙入园来。

当下麝月、秋纹已带了两个丫头来等候，见宝玉出来，秋纹便将笔墨拿起，一同随宝玉进园来。宝玉满口里说“好热”，一壁走，一壁便摘冠解带，将外面的大衣服都脱下来麝月拿着，只穿着一件松花绫子夹袄，袄内露出血点般大红



that much of this expenditure in the Garden could be avoided. After all, times have changed. You know our family well, aunt — we weren't as badly off as this in the old days!"

Xifeng after hearing this said to Lady Wang, "She's right. We needn't insist."

Lady Wang nodded.

"I've no answer to that. Just do as you think fit."

At this point Baoyu came back with the other boys.

"My father is still feasting," he said. "As it will soon be growing dark, he told us to come home first."

Lady Wang hastily asked, "Did you make any gaffes today?"

"No," he answered with a smile. "Not only that but I've brought back a lot of loot."

Then some old serving-women fetched in from the pages at the inner gate the presents the young masters had received. Lady Wang saw these were three fans, three fan-pendants, six boxes of writing brushes and ink-tablets, three strings of scented beads and three jade rings, which Baoyu explained had been given them by Academician Mei, Vice-Minister Yang and Secretary Li — one set apiece. He then pulled a talisman, a small sandalwood Buddha, from his pocket.

"This was a gift just for me from the Duke of Jingguo."

Lady Wang asked what guests had been there and what poems they had written, then took the three boys to pay their duty visit to the old lady, ordering the servant carrying Baoyu's presents to accompany them.

The Lady Dowager, delighted, inevitably cross-examined them too. Baoyu was so worried about Qingwen, however, that after answering her questions he told her that his bones ached after riding.

"Go back quickly then," urged the old lady. "Once you've changed your clothes and rested, you'll feel better. But mind you don't lie down."

Thereupon Baoyu hurried back to the Garden.

Sheyue and Qiuwen had been waiting in the old lady's place with two younger maids. When Baoyu left they followed him, Qiuwen carrying his presents.

"How hot it is!" he kept complaining.

While walking he took off his hat, belt and outer garment, which Sheyue



裤子来。秋纹见这条红裤是晴雯手内针线，因叹道：“这条裤子以后收了罢，真是物在人去了。”麝月忙也笑道：“这是晴雯的针线么。”又叹道：“真是物在人亡了！”秋纹将麝月拉了一把，笑道：“这裤子配着松花色袄儿、石青靴子，越显出这靛青头皮，雪白的脸来了。”宝玉在前只装听不见，又走了两步，便止住步道：“我要走一走，这怎么好？”麝月道：

“大白日里，还怕什么？还怕丢了你不成！”因叫两个小丫头跟着，“我们送了这些东西去再来。”宝玉道：“好姐姐，等我一等再去。”麝月道：“我们去了就来。两个人手里都有东西，倒像摆执事的，一个捧着文房四宝，一个捧着冠袍带履，成个什么样子。”宝玉听见，正中心怀，便让他两个去了。

他便带了两个小丫头到一石后，也不怎么样，只问他二人道：“自我去了，你袭人姐姐可打发人瞧晴雯姐姐去了不曾？”这一个答道：“打发宋妈妈瞧去了。”宝玉道：“回来说什么？”小丫头道：“回来说晴雯姐姐直着脖子叫了一夜，今儿早起就闭了眼，住了口，人事不知，也出不得一声儿，只有倒气的分儿了。”宝玉忙道：“一夜叫的是谁？”小丫头子道：“一夜叫的是娘。”宝玉试泪道：“还叫谁？”小丫头子道：“没有听见别人了。”宝玉道：“你糊涂，想必没有听真。”旁边那一个小丫头最伶俐，听见宝玉如此说，便上来说道：“真个他糊涂。”又向宝玉道：“不但我听得真切，我还亲自