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警世通言

STORIES TO CAUTION
THE WORLD
III

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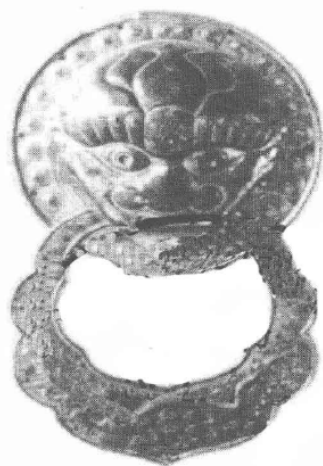
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Chinese-English

警世通言

Stories to Caution the World

III



[明] 冯梦龙 编著
杨曙辉 杨韵琴 英译

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Translated into

unqin Yang

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第 二十四 卷

玉堂春落难逢夫

与旧刻《王公子奋志记》不同

公子初年柳陌游，玉堂一见便绸缪。黄金数万皆消费，
红粉双眸枉泪流。财货拐，仆驹休，犯法洪同狱内囚。
按临骢马冤愆脱，百岁姻缘到白头。

话说正德年间，南京金陵城有一人，姓王，名琼，别号思竹，
中乙丑科进士，累官至礼部尚书。因刘瑾擅权，劾了一本，圣旨
发回原籍。不敢稽留，收拾轿马和家眷起身。王爷暗想：有几两
俸银，都借在他人名下，一时取讨不及。况长子南京中书，次子
时当大比，踌躇半晌，乃呼公子三官前来。那三官双名景隆，字
顺卿，年方一十七岁。生得眉目清新，丰姿俊雅，读书一目十行，
举笔即便成文，元是个风流才子。王爷爱惜胜如心头之气、掌上





Story 24

Yutangchun Reunites with Her Husband in Her Distress

(A different version of the traditional story

“Young Master Wang’s Assiduous Application of Himself ”)

*In his youth, he toured the houses of pleasure;
At first sight, he lost his heart to Yutangchun.
All his heaps of gold went down the drain;
She shed bitter tears of grief in vain.*

*The jewelry taken, the page boys and horse gone,
She was thrown into Hongtong Prison.
Only when the inspector redressed her wrongs
Did they join in blissful, enduring marriage.*

Our story takes place during the Zhengde reign period [1506–22]. There was a man named Wang Qiong, courtesy name Sizhu, who was a native of Jinling, Nanjing. After passing the imperial civil service examinations as a *jinshi* in the year of *yichou* [1505], he rose through a series of promotions to be secretary of the Ministry of Rites. But because he wrote a memorial to the imperial court to demand impeachment of the power-abusing eunuch Liu Jin, the emperor ordered him to return to his native place, Nanjing. Not daring to remain in Beijing a moment longer, he packed and got the horses and carriages ready for his family. Before he set off on the journey, he thought, “I don’t have time to collect the small loans I made to others out of my salary.” Since his oldest son was occupied as a secretariat drafter in Nanjing and his second son was in the midst of the imperial examinations at the provincial level, he decided, after much hesitation, to summon his third son Jinglong, courtesy name Shunqing [to Beijing].

At seventeen years of age, the third young master had fresh features and a graceful deportment. He was able to read ten lines at one glance and write essays as fast as his brush-pen could go. A dashing young scholar he was. Mr. Wang Senior loved this son as he did the



之珍。当下王爷唤至，分付道：“我留你在此读书，叫王定讨帐，银子完日，作速回家，免得父母牵挂。我把这里帐目，都留与你。”叫王定过来，“我留你与三叔在此读书讨帐，不许你引诱他胡行乱为。〔眉批〕使王定可托，则三子不必留矣。若不可托，然又安能钳制三叔，使不胡行耶！吾若知道，罪责非小。”王定叩头说：“小人不敢。”次日收拾起程，王定与公子送别，转到北京，另寻寓所安下。公子谨依父命，在寓读书。王定讨帐。不觉三月有馀，三万银帐，都收完了。公子把底帐扣算，分厘不欠。分付王定，选日起身。公子说：“王定，我们事体俱已完了，我与你到大街上各巷口闲耍片时，来日起身。”王定遂即锁了房门，分付主人家用心看着生口。房主说：“放心，小人知道。”二人离了寓所，至大街观看皇都景致。但见：

人烟凑集，车马喧阗。人烟凑集，合四山五岳之音；车马喧阗，尽六部九卿之辈。做买做卖，总四方土产奇珍；闲荡闲

breath of his life and treasured him as he would a precious pearl in his palm.

As we were saying, Mr. Wang Senior summoned him and gave him these instructions: "I want you to stay here and continue with your studies while waiting for Wang Ding [a servant] to collect the debts. Return home as soon as the money is in, so that your mother and I won't worry. All the account books here I leave to you." He then called for Wang Ding and said to him, "You stay here with Third Young Master. He will be continuing with his studies while you collect the debts. Do not lure him into any wrongdoing. (*If Wang Ding is trustworthy, the third son need not stay. If Wang Ding is not trustworthy, how can he be expected to keep the young master from wrongdoings?*) If I find out about any mischief, you'll have much to answer for!"

Wang Ding said with a kowtow, "I would never dream of disobeying."

The next day, Wang Ding and the young master saw Mr. Wang Senior off on his journey before they returned to Beijing and moved to a temporary residence. Obeying his father's orders, the young master kept up his studies at his lodging while Wang Ding went about collecting debts. Before they knew it, three months had gone by, and Wang Ding had recovered all the debts, which came to thirty thousand taels of silver. Upon checking the amount collected against the amount recorded in the account books, the young master did not find the least discrepancy. He told Wang Ding to choose a day for departure, adding, "Wang Ding, now that our business is done, let's go out into the streets and have some fun before our departure tomorrow."

So Wang Ding locked the rooms and told the landlord to keep an eye on their draft animals. "Don't you worry!" said the landlord. "I'll take care of everything." Thereupon, the two ventured out to enjoy the sights and sounds of the capital. Behold:

*What a heaving mass of humanity,
Speaking in the accents of all regions of the land!
What a clatter the horse carriages make,
Transporting officials of all the bureaus!*



游，靠万岁太平洪福。处处胡同铺锦绣，家家杯斝醉笙歌。

公子喜之不尽。忽然又见五七个宦家子弟，各拿琵琶、弦子，欢乐饮酒。公子道：“王定，好热闹去处！”王定说：“三叔，这等热闹，你还没到那热闹去处哩！”[眉批]王定惹事。二人前至东华门，公子睁眼观看，好锦绣景致。只见门彩金凤，柱盘金龙。王定道：“三叔，好么？”公子说：“真个好所在！”又走前面去，问王定：“这是那里？”王定说：“这是紫金城。”公子往里一视，只见城内瑞气腾腾，红光闪闪。看了一会，果然富贵无过于帝王，叹息不已。离了东华门往前，又走多时，到一个所在，见门前站着几个女子，衣服整齐。公子便问：“王定，此是何处？”王定道：“此是酒店。”乃与王定进到酒楼上，公子坐下。看那楼上有五七席饮酒的，内中一席有两个女子坐着同饮。公子看那女子，人物清楚，比门前站的更胜几分。公子正看中间，酒保将酒来，公子便问：“此女是那里来的？”酒保说：“这是一秤金家丫头翠香、翠红。”[眉批]酒保生事。三官道：“生得清气。”酒保说：“这等就说标致？他家里还有一个粉头，排行三姐，号玉堂春，有



*Traders deal in goods from all parts of the empire,
Idlers enjoy the bliss of those peaceful times.
The lanes and alleys are paved with brocade;
The houses echo with wine-induced singing.*

The young master was delighted beyond measure. Watching five or seven rich-looking young men merrily drinking, with stringed instruments in hand, he commented, "Wang Ding, what an exciting place this is!"

"Third Master," rejoined Wang Ding, "if you think this is exciting, you haven't seen anything yet!" (*What a troublemaker Wang Ding is!*) They wended their way to Donghua Gate, where the young master found himself dazzled by the sight of golden phoenixes and dragons carved on the gate and the columns.

"Third Master, do you like it?"

"Yes! This is wonderful!"

Farther down the street, he asked Wang Ding, "What's this place called?"

"This is the Forbidden City."

The young master looked inside and was impressed by the glittering red lanterns and auspicious air. He looked a while longer. Indeed, in terms of wealth and luxury, none exceeds the emperor. He sighed in admiration. After leaving Donghua Gate, they walked on and, a while later, came upon an establishment at the entrance of which stood several well-dressed women.

"Wang Ding," asked the young master. "What is this place?"

"This is a restaurant."

They went in. The young master took a seat and noticed that gathered around the tables, drinking, were five to seven groups of men, and one group included two girls even prettier than the ones who were standing in front. While he was staring at them, a waiter brought wine. "Where are these girls from?" he asked the waiter.

"They are Cuixiang and Cuihong. These girls are in Yichengjin's service." (*This waiter is another busybody.*)

"Pretty girls!" exclaimed Third Master.

"Well, if these two are pretty," said the waiter, "then you



十二分颜色。鸨儿索价太高，还未梳拢。”公子听说留心，叫王定还了酒钱，下楼去，说：“王定，我与你春院胡同走走。”王定道：“三叔不可去，老爷知道怎了！”公子说：“不妨，看一看就回。”乃走至本司院门首。果然是：

花街柳巷，绣阁朱楼。家家品竹弹丝，处处调脂弄粉。黄金买笑，无非公子王孙；红袖邀欢，都是妖姿丽色。正疑香雾弥天霭，忽听歌声别院娇。总然道学也迷魂，任是真僧须破戒。

公子看得眼花撩乱，心内踌躇，不知那是一秤金的门。正思中间，有个卖瓜子的小伙叫做金哥走来，公子便问：“那是一秤金的门？”金哥说：“大叔莫不是要耍？我引你去。”王定便道：“我家相公不嫖，莫错认了。”公子说：“但求一见。”那金哥就报与老鸨知道，老鸨慌忙出来迎接，请进待茶。王定见老鸨留茶，心下慌张，说：“三叔可回去罢！”老鸨听说，问道：“这位何人？”公子说：“是小价。”鸨子道：“大哥，你也进来吃茶去，

should see Third Sister, usually called Yutangchun, of the same house. Now that's a fine one to look at! But the madam asks too high a price for her, so she hasn't taken any clients yet."

The young master made a mental note of what he had just heard and had Wang Ding pay the bill. After going downstairs, he said, "Wang Ding, let's take a walk to the courtesans' quarters."

"No, no, Third Master! What if your father learns about this?"

"One quick look can't do any harm." And so, they walked to the entrance of the courtesans' quarters, which were registered with the Office of Music. Indeed,

*The streets are lined with flowers and willows
Amid ornate houses and vermilion buildings.
Music wafts from behind every door;
Rouge and powder are applied to every face.
Wealthy young men purchase laughter with gold;
Coquettish women beckon with their red sleeves.
As a fragrant mist spreads across the sky,
Singing voices rise above the halls.
Even moralists find themselves bewitched;
Even the best monks break their vows.*

In a daze, the young master wondered which door was Yichengjin's. At this moment, a young melon-seed peddler called Jin'ge drew near. The young master asked him, "Which house is Yichengjin's?"

"So you want to have some fun, sir? I can take you there," offered Jin'ge.

"My young master is no patron of prostitutes," Wang Ding snapped. "Don't take him for that kind of man."

"But I do wish to visit," insisted the young master.

Promptly Jin'ge went to announce the visitor to the madam, who rushed out to greet the patron and invited him in for tea, an act of courtesy that horrified Wang Ding. "Third Master," he urged, "let's get out of here!"

Hearing this, the madam asked, "Who might this be?"

"He's my servant."



怎么这等小器！”公子道：“休要听他。”[眉批]王定真小器相，反令小主无颜。跟着老鸨往里就走。王定道：“三叔不要进去，俺老爷知道，可不干我事。”在后边自言自语。公子那里听他，竟到了里面坐下。老鸨叫丫头看茶。茶罢，老鸨便问：“客官贵姓？”公子道：“学生姓王，家父是礼部正堂。”老鸨听说，拜道：“不知贵公子，失瞻休罪。”公子道：“不碍，休要计较。久闻令爱玉堂春大名，特来相访。”老鸨道：“昨有一位客官，要梳梳小女，送一百两财礼，不曾许他。”公子道：“一百两财礼小哉！学生不敢夸大话，除了当今皇上，往下也数家父。就是家祖，也做过侍郎。”老鸨听说，心中暗喜。便叫：“翠红，请三姐出来见尊客！”翠红去不多时，回话道：“三姐身子不健，辞了罢。”老鸨起身带笑说：“小女从幼养娇了，直待老婢自去唤他。”王定在傍喉急，又说：“他不出来就罢了，莫又去唤。”老鸨不听其言，走进房中，叫：“三姐，我的儿，你时运到了！今有王尚书的公子特慕你而来。”玉堂春低头不语，慌得那鸨儿便叫：“我儿，王公子好个标

"Big Brother," said the madam, "please also come in for a cup of tea. Don't be a killjoy!"

"Just don't pay any attention to him," said the young master. (*Wang Ding is a killjoy. He makes his master lose face.*) With that remark, he followed the madam into the house.

"Third Master!" cried out Wang Ding. "Don't go in there! If your father finds out about this, I'll say I had no part in it!" And so he rattled on from behind. Turning a deaf ear to him, the young master marched straight in and sat down. The madam had a maid serve him tea, and after he drank it up, she asked, "What is your honorable surname?"

"My surname is Wang. My father is the secretary of the Ministry of Rites."

With a bow, the madam said, "I didn't know you were from such a distinguished family. Please forgive me for not showing you proper respect."

"That's all right. Don't take it to heart. I'm here because I've long heard of your daughter Yutangchun's fame and would like to see her."¹

"Yesterday, someone offered a hundred taels of silver to be her first patron, but I turned him down," said the madam.

"But a hundred taels is too little! I don't want to sound boastful, but apart from the emperor, my father is the richest man in the land. Even my grandfather was a vice-minister."

Concealing her delight at these words, the madam sent Cuihong the maid to escort Third Sister out to greet the honored guest. A short while later, Cuihong returned to say, "Third Sister is feeling indisposed and asks that she be excused."

The madam rose and said affably, "This little daughter of mine has been quite pampered since childhood. Let me go to get her myself."

Wang Ding off to one side was dismayed. He hastened to say, "It's all right if she doesn't come out. Don't bother to go and get her!"

Ignoring him, the madam went to the girl's room and called out, "Third Sister, my child! Your time has come! Secretary Wang's son is here expressly to see you!"

Yutangchun kept her head lowered and said nothing in response.



致人物，年纪不上十六七岁，囊中广有金银。你若打得上这个主儿，不但名声好听，也勾你一世受用。”玉姐听说，即时打扮，来见公子。临行，老鸨又说：“我儿，用心奉承，不要怠慢他。”玉姐道：“我知道了。”公子看玉堂春果然生得好：

鬓挽乌云，眉弯新月。肌凝瑞雪，脸衬朝霞。袖中玉笋尖尖，裙下金莲窄窄。雅淡梳妆偏有韵，不施脂粉自多姿。便数尽满院名姝，总输他十分春色。

玉姐偷看公子，眉清目秀，面白唇红，身段风流，衣裳清楚，心中也是暗喜。当下玉姐拜了公子。老鸨就说：“此非贵客坐处，请到书房小叙。”公子相让，进入书房，果然收拾得精致。明窗净几，古画古炉，公子却无心细看，一心只对着玉姐。鸨儿帮衬，教女儿推着公子肩下坐了，分付丫环摆酒。王定听见摆酒，一发着忙，连声催促三叔回去。老鸨丢个眼色与丫头：“请这大哥到房里吃酒。”[眉批]妙着。翠香、翠红道：“姐夫请进房里，我和



Exasperated, the madam cried, "My child, Mr. Wang is a handsome young man of only sixteen or seventeen, with deeply lined pockets. If you hang on to this patron, you'll not only build a nice reputation for yourself but also have enough money to last a lifetime."

Upon hearing these words, Sister Yu began to make herself up, so as to be ready to go and greet Young Master Wang. Before she left the room, the madam added, "My child, serve him well. Don't be negligent in any way."

"All right," said Sister Yu.

The young master found Yutangchun to be truly beautiful:

*She has dark clouds for hair, crescent moons for eyebrows;
Her skin is like snow, her cheeks rosy clouds;
Half-hidden in her sleeves, dainty bamboo-shoot hands;
Underneath her skirt, tiny gold-lotus feet.
An unassuming beauty with little makeup,
Her charm needs no help from rouge and powder.
None of the famed courtesans of the house
Could in any way measure up to her.*

Stealing a glance at the young master, Sister Yu was secretly delighted to see that he was a well-dressed young man with refined features, a fair complexion, red lips, and a graceful bearing. After she bowed to the young master, the madam said, "This is no place for a distinguished guest. Let's go to the study for a little talk."

And so the young man let her take him into the study, which was, not surprisingly, an exquisitely furnished room, with bright windows, and clean tables, antique paintings, and incense burners. But Mr. Wang Junior was in no mood for admiring the furnishings. His heart was set on Sister Yu. To move matters along, the madam made the girl sit down by the young man's shoulder. She then ordered maids to set out wine. At the mention of wine, Wang Ding grew all the more alarmed. Over and over again, he urged Third Master to leave the place. Throwing the maids a significant look, the madam said, "Invite this gentleman to another room for a cup of wine." (Wise move.)

"Brother," said Cuixiang and Cuihong to Wang Ding, "let's go



你吃钟喜酒。”王定本不肯去，被翠红二人，拖拖拽拽扯进去坐了，甜言美语，劝了几杯酒。初时还是勉强，以后吃得热闹，连王定也忘怀了，索性放落了心，且偷快乐。

正饮酒中间，听得传语公子叫王定。王定忙到书房，只见杯盘罗列，本司自有答应乐人，奏动乐器，公子开怀乐饮。王定走近身边，公子附耳低言：“你到下处取二百两银子，四匹尺头，再带散碎银二十两，到这里来。”王定道：“三叔要这许多银子何用？”公子道：“不要你闲管。”王定没奈何，只得来到下处，开了皮箱，取出五十两元宝四个，并尺头、碎银，再到本司院说：“三叔，有了。”公子看也不看，都教送与鴛儿，说：“银两尺头，权为令爱初会之礼。这二十两碎银，把做赏人杂用。”王定只道公子要讨那三姐回去，用许多银子；听说只当初会之礼，吓得舌头吐出三寸。却说鴛儿一见许多东西，就叫丫头转过一张空桌。王定将银子、尺头，放在桌上，鴛儿假意谦让了一回，叫玉姐：“我儿，拜谢了公子。”又说：“今日是王公子，明日就是王姐夫