

CLASSIC STORIES  
OF  
• CHINA •

# Folk Tales

Compiled by Wu Min



INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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# Preface

When the apes finally evolved into Man, they awoke to find a world they enjoyed and innumerable things which were beyond their imagination. Wow! Why? Fantastic folk tales were thus created.

Such tales were passed down through history orally, but are still told today. The more recent versions are, of course, masterpieces of modern fiction.

This book is highlighted with the inclusion of the Four Most-Favored Folk Love



Tales of China.

*Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (or *The Butterfly Lovers*). It is a Chinese legend about the tragic romance between two lovers, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, who died for love and became reincarnated as two butterflies flying freely together. The legend is often regarded as the Chinese equivalent of *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Legend of the White Snake*. It is an ancient Chinese story in which a snake lady one day happened to meet a scholar and they fell in love and got married. They enjoyed their life, but unfortunately suffered from the evil ministrations of a sorcerer-monk.

*Great Wall Collapse as Meng Jiang Nu Cried*. Meng Jiang Nu is said to have trudged a great distance to the Great Wall with the purpose of bringing winter clothes for her husband, a Wall builder. On learning that he was dead and buried under the Great Wall,



she cried so loudly that a large section of the Great Wall collapsed over her.

*The Cowherd and the Weaver Maid* (or *Niu Lang and Zhi Nu*). This tells of the source of the Chinese equivalent of Valentine's Day, which is comparably romantic yet heartrending, because this is the only time of year when the Cowherd and the Weaver Maid meet each other across the Milky Way.

In China, operas, plays, music and movies, based on the theme of folk tales, are very popular. From these, our readers, especially those are still young, will gain a love and understanding of traditional Chinese culture.





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# Legend of the White Snake

A cave in the Emei Mountain of Sichuan Province was home to Master Lishan Laomu. The master had two disciples, both snake demons - the female white snake who had been cultivating herself under the Master for some 1,000 years and the female green snake who has been doing the same for about 800 years. The two snake demons had hearts of gold and never attacked human people.

One fine day, the two snake demons, who felt lonely in the meditation cave, incarnated themselves into two beautiful girls:



Bai Suzhen and Xiao Qing, Bai meaning white and Qing green. They descended to Hangzhou, hailed as the “Paradise on Earth”.

They were enjoying the smiling lotuses on the West Lake by the Broken Bridge when dark clouds gathered and thunder began rumbling in the sky. A downpour was obviously imminent.

Bai and Qing both possessed the magic power to turn something by the road into the umbrellas they needed, but how could they do so when there were so many people around?

What was to be done then? A young man came over and addressed them politely, “Don’t worry. You may use my umbrella.”

Bai and Qing accepted the offer and promised to return it the next day.

The next day saw the two snake ladies go and visit the young man at the given address. They found he was Xu Xian and his parents were dead. He lived with his sister’s family and worked in a drug store.

As Xu was handsome and honest, Bai





白蛇传

Legend of the White Snake



fell in love with him and, with the assistance of Qing, they were married.

The young couple moved out of Xu's sister's home and opened a drugstore by a picturesque lake lined with blossoming peach flowers and weeping willows. Xu was good with the customers and Bai, his wife, boasted the magic power to find needed herbal remedies. The business boomed and the two lived happily along with Qing.

One day a monk seeking alms came and told Xu he was Abbot Fahai from the Jinshan Temple in Zhengjiang.

"You carry an inhuman outlook in your face," the monk said. "There must be a demon haunting your family."

"Wrong!" replied Xu, who went on to tell the monk there were only his wife and servant Qing at home.

The monk said: "Your wife is the said demon. Keep this knowledge secret and wait for the Festival that falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. By then you should



have tried your best to make her drink a cup of Realgar Wine. If you can do so, everything will become clear. You are more than welcome to visit me if you come across any problems.”

When the wife Bai drank a cup of Realgar Wine that day, she felt dizzy and hurried to ask Qing to support her back to her bed chamber.

Worried about her health, the husband Xu went to examine what had happened to her. As he lifted up the mosquito net, a giant white snake, thick as a water bucket, was found sleeping in the bed and there was the smell of alcohol on its breath.

Xu cried out and was terrified out of his wits. Then he fainted and fell to the floor. Woken up by Xu’s terrifying cry, the white snake transformed itself into Xu’s lovely wife Bai.

Bai and her sister Qing carried Xu onto the bed but the man’s eyes remained closed and his soul had obviously left his body.



“He won’t come back until he is fed with Glossy Ganoderma,” the wife Bai said.

“Where can we find it?” Qing replied.

“Lingshan Mountain. But the immortals there refuse anyone who goes in search of the elixir.”

After a moment’s thought, Qing told Bai she would go. “You should stay at home because you are carrying a child,” Qing said.

“Thank you. But my husband is in imminent danger, so I have to go myself.”

Bai rode on drifting clouds toward the Lingshan Mountain.

A deer spirit and a crane spirit were on duty that day. They fought with Bai, forcing her to retreat step by step. Bai, who was pregnant, was exhausted and her life hung in the balance. But for the sake of the life of her husband Xu, Bai frenetically went on fighting the two deity guards, her hair drooping loosely over her shoulders and her face reddened as a result of the desperate struggle.

“Stop!” shouted the master god of the

