

His wife, Hui-hsiang, continued the diatribe, saying, "That lousy backbiting whore! She may claim that the two of us have purloined a large sum of money, and that I've been running around:

While attended by three or five servants,
attempting to arrange the betrothal of our son. The fact is that I merely went out to borrow some clothes and a few hair ornaments from my elder sister, but she alleges that I used money purloined from the master to buy them. She's just trying to get rid of the two of us, but it doesn't matter. Even if we are forced to leave:

Heaven will hardly prohibit a starving
crow from eating grass.

I'm going to rinse my eyes, the better to keep track of the lot of you whorish slaves, incarcerated as you are in the Hsi-men Ch'ing household."

When Yüeh-niang saw the way in which she was:

Cursing the high and the low alike,
seeking pretexts for quarreling with people, and threatening to hang herself, as well as the way in which her husband had, at least two or three times, approached her indecorously when no one else was about, she became so angry she scarcely knew what to do with herself and felt compelled to expel the two of them from the household. Consequently, Lai-pao, as cool as you please, proceeded to open up a piece goods store together with his brother-in-law and offer a variety of fine fabrics for sale, convening conclaves and forging connections on a daily basis. But no more of this. Truly:

When prestige is lost, slaves abuse their master,
When the times are bad, ghosts manipulate people.²¹

There is a poem that testifies to this:

I would implore the people of this world,²²
Never to conduct yourselves dishonorably.
To act dishonorably is to deceive Heaven,
Don't assume that Heaven will not see it.²³
Heaven is situated right above your head,
It sees precisely and cannot be deceived.

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.