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The emperor Ming-Huang, a descendant of the T'ang dynasty, had a wife named Nai-Fe, who was as beautiful as the moon in May. However, they were never seen conversing with one another, sitting together, or holding hands. His wife Nai-Fe only appeared when the emperor put on his marvelous embroidered cloak. Then she walked behind him, keeping a great distance between them, and the yearning of her soul rested on him with her gaze. Let me tell you how all this came about.

Ming-Huang had a glorious garden that had such a powerful fragrance you could fetch an aroma out of the garden with your bare hand like water from a spring. One time he stood with his empress in this garden on the seventh night of the week, and as they looked at the constellation of the weaver and the shepherd in the sky, they swore eternal love to one another.

But the empress Nai-Fe had a dreaming soul because she had died too early in her previous life. This is why her gaze always roamed far away, following her dreams, and

carried her beyond her imperial husband. Even when he held her in his arms, her soul was very far from him. It was just like the spirit of someone sleeping that cannot be held down and flies away in the dream. This is why their love was damaged. Nai-Fe reproached herself bitterly, but she could do nothing about it.

One night, while she was sleeping in the gazebo made out of pale green jade and her bed was swaying on the fragrant waves like a boat on the back of a stream, she saw the emperor Ming-Huang. He was wearing a marvelous cloak on which all the images of her dreams had been embroidered—gigantic mountains with glistening cliffs and wide golden rivers, magical gardens and palaces, sweet fairies and wild dragons spitting fire. His cloak carried the entire dreamland for which her soul yearned. Nai-Fe's heart was delighted and filled with happiness, for now she could keep her gaze upon the emperor and hold it forever. No longer did she have to choose between the path of her dreams and the path of her love.

When Nai-Fe awakened from her sleep, she went to the emperor and said to him, "When we were standing that time on the seventh night of the week in the sweet-smelling garden and looked up at the constellation of the weaver and the shepherd, I swore eternal love to you. But I have a dreaming soul because I died too early in my previous life, and it diverts my gaze away from you. Our love has been damaged by this, and I can't keep the vow I made to you. Therefore, you must wear my dreams so that I can



gaze upon you when I look for my dreams, and when I pursue them, I'll come to you."

"How can I wear your dreams?" the emperor asked sadly.

"I shall embroider them all in a cloak that you must wear."

The empress Nai-Fe went into the gazebo made out of pale green jade, and for five long years she embroidered a cloak. For five long years she did not leave the gazebo. Only the fragrance of the garden drifted toward her, and she sensed the change of seasons as the aromas changed. This was the way she could count the five years as they passed.

When Nai-Fe finished embroidering the cloak, she brought it to the emperor Ming-Huang, and he put it on. Her bosom was filled with joy and happiness because she saw the emperor wrapped in her dreams. She looked at him, and the yearning of her soul and the yearning of her heart burned in her eyes at the same time. Then Nai-Fe stretched out her arms and wanted to approach the emperor to rest her head on his chest. But she couldn't come close to him. The gigantic mountains with the glistening rocks blocked her way. The wide golden rivers blocked her way. The large magic gardens, the sweet fairies, and the wild dragons spitting fire were embroidered so artfully that they blocked the way of the empress. The entire, spacious dreamland lay between her and the emperor, and she couldn't come to him.

Suddenly tears streamed down her cheeks, and the emperor cried out, "I won't wear the cloak!"

Nai-Fe responded very sadly, "You must choose, Ming-Huang. If you take off the cloak, you can hold me in your arms, but my soul will be far away from you. If you wear the cloak, I won't be able to approach you, and I won't be able to come to you. But the longing of my soul will eternally cast its glances upon you. You must choose, but think about the vow we made on that seventh night and about the secret talks we had that nobody knows."

So the emperor Ming-Huang chose to wear the cloak of dreams. Since then, nobody has ever seen him together with his wife Nai-Fe, who was as beautiful as the moon in May. Only when he put on his embroidered cloak could one see Nai-Fe as well. She walked behind him, keeping a great distance, and the yearning of her soul rested on him with her gaze. ■