A BODHISATTVA MANIFESTS A NUMINOUS SIGN AS HE ASCENDS TO THE UPPER REALM

HAN XIANGZI GUARDS THE ELIXIR CAULDRON WITH FIRM CONCENTRATION

Shakyamuni was a Buddha from the west,
The Lord Lao was an eminent worthy of the east.
The words of the Buddha and Laozi are ancient,
And need not fear disturbance in east or west.
If the spirit is settled, the Jade Cauldron will be firm and settled.
If the mind is busy, the Elixir Stove will be unfocused.
If a bodhisattva will ascend to Heaven,
Why fear that an ordinary mortal will not turn back?

Together with the shepherd boy, Han Xiangzi rode into the mountains astride the black ox. Along the road he saw high mounds and tall cliffs, around which clouds descended to merge with the mist. The green cliffs were dotted black; the hematite rocks showed their red hue.

When they arrived at a windy mountain with a wheel-shaped cave, a flow of cold air, bleak and chilly, struck Xiangzi so violently that he almost lost his balance. The shepherd, however, was not afraid at all. On the back of the black ox he waved joyously, like an eagle or hawk greeting the wind, like an osprey spreading its wings.

Having turned in a northwesterly direction and traveled another twenty miles, they saw a bodhisattva, his pearly cap reflecting the light of the setting sun, his face solemn. He was sitting facing east under a pattra tree, auspicious herbs grow-
ing all around him. Xiangzi thought to himself, “Although the two teachings of Daoism and Buddhism are different, their source is the same. If I am really to become a golden immortal, the bodhisattva will confirm it by a numinous sign.”

As this thought occupied Xiangzi’s mind, a Buddha image appeared on the rock face, the hair gathered in blue spirals, the golden face round and radiant as the full moon, the body thirty or forty feet tall. When they had walked on another fifteen paces, five hundred blue birds came flying, circled around the bodhisattva three times, and left again. After a while, celestial standard-bearers led the bodhisattva up to the heavenly realm. Xiangzi thought to himself, “The numinous sign manifested by the Buddha means that I shall achieve the Dao and become an immortal.”

The shepherd said, “Among the Five Phases and the Three Realms the Dao alone is to be honored. This bodhisattva was the Buddha Shakyamuni. Once our Most High Lord Lao left the Han Pass riding on a black ox. He delivered the Buddha and brought him to China. It is only for this reason that he possesses this extraordinary numinosity.”

“How did you come to know him?” Xiangzi asked.

“Sages may differ in their outward majesty, but in their minds they are the same. I know this bodhisattva because he and my master often visit each other,” the shepherd said.

“If you know him, why don’t you ascend with him to Heaven?”

The shepherd boy laughed. “If I went with him, who would take you to meet my master?”

“It is just like in the saying ‘Unless you are guided by a fisherman, you won’t see the waves,’” Xiangzi said.

While they were talking, they crossed several mountains. The shepherd boy said, “Han Xiang, this is the grotto palace of the patriarchal masters, the jasper shrine of sages and immortals. Why aren’t you already hastening towards it, instead of sitting there at your self-satisfied ease? Could it be that you are becoming a bit disrespectful?”

“How could I dare be disrespectful?” Xiangzi said.

“If you have a faithful heart, then step forth courageously,” the shepherd directed.

Obediently Xiangzi descended from the back of the ox and ran on for several miles, skipping like a swallow and leaping like a snow goose in his excitement. Eventually he arrived at a place where mountain peaks with layered cliffs spread out, torrents meandered, and precipices plunged deeply. Blue cedars shaded the
peaks, green pines lined the banks. Foaming and swirling rivers wound through the land like strips of white silk, and trees grew in profusion. The cries of flying birds and soaring fowl harmonized with each other.

The double-leafed door to the grotto was half open, as a young Daoist stood in front of it. Xiangzi quickly approached and greeted him. The youth asked, “Would you be the crane boy from the mouth of the Xiang River in Cangwu Prefecture?”

“My name is Han Xiang, and I am no crane boy,” Xiangzi replied.

“If you are not the crane boy, you are not allowed to meet my masters. Please go away,” the youth said.

Xiangzi started to protest. “I have come ten thousand miles in search of my masters. Now I’ve got to this place, how can you make fun of me in this manner?”

The shepherd admonished the young Daoist, “Elder Brother, just report him to the masters, and leave it to them to decide whether they will see him or not. Relax, don’t get all tensed up.”

“If you say so, Elder Brother, I will go in and make a report,” the Daoist said. “If the masters don’t allow you to come in for a meeting, then be off and stop making trouble.”

Xiangzi nodded and remained standing, not daring to say too much. The Daoist youth went inside and reported Xiangzi’s presence to the two masters Zhong and Lü. They said, “Han Xiang is the crane boy. How could there be another? Bring him in.”

When he came inside, Xiangzi bowed to the two masters eight times. Kneeling on the floor he said, “Masters, you caused me much suffering when you abandoned me. After a thousand difficulties and a hundred troubles, I have finally arrived here to meet you. I hope that you will take pity on me.”

“Han Xiang, you come too late. We have no use for you here,” Master Zhong told him.

“When you were about to leave, you told me that if I wanted to see you again I could come to the Zhongnan Mountains, ten thousand miles away. Therefore I abandoned my family, scaled the wall, and fled to look for you. How can you now say that you have no use for me?” Xiangzi said.

“I told you to come quickly and look for us. By now you are too late. I have delivered another person and therefore have no use for you,” he replied.

“After I turned my back on my uncle and aunt, I lost my way and barely escaped with my life from ten thousand deadly dangers. That is why I got here late. I hope that you will find it in your hearts to deliver me—that truly would be an act of outstanding mercy.”
Master Zhong called to Master Lü, “I have no use for Han Xiang—you take him on as your disciple.”

“If you will not retain him, how could I dare do so?” Master Lü protested. When Xiangzi saw the two masters arguing about whether to keep him or not, he cried and said to them, “You don’t want to retain me as a disciple—surely it is because I didn’t plant any seeds in my previous existence that I deserve such suffering! Talking any more about it is useless. I want to crack my head on a rock and die to show my sincerity. I am ashamed to go home and face my elders.”

When Master Lü saw Xiangzi so broken-hearted, he knelt down and said to Master Zhong, “As Han Xiang is so determined, please retain him. He could guard our hut. That way he won’t have wasted his long journey here.”

“All right,” Master Zhong said, “But come forward, Xiangzi, and listen to my words.” Xiangzi knelt in front of him. “These Zhongnan Mountains of ours have always been a short-cut to official appointments. There is a sort of person who gives himself high-minded airs. He withdraws into these mountains and never enters the city or the gates of officials, so as to increase his reputation. Important personages who meet him on the road treat him respectfully, like a lucky star or an auspicious cloud, while in truth he is always scheming and worrying, seeking all day only to increase his reputation and advantage in the city.

“When he gets hold of some official affair to meddle in, he doesn’t say that relatives and friends have come to ask his advice, nor does he mention that he has given some of his own money to pay for some religious festival, including wine and the release of captive animals. No, quite modestly he just says, ‘This affair has come to my ears. Outraged by this iniquity and being straightforward and honest of character, I cannot keep quiet. Therefore I dare write this letter to clearly expose this matter.’ When a high official on the road sees this letter, he will say that the old gentleman has rather the air of a Tantai Mieming, and he will inquire into the matter. Secretly gratified, the man then receives gifts of acknowledgment, buys himself fields, and builds a house. And everyone will say that he is a good fellow. This nowadays is the road to petty officialdom.

“There is yet another kind of person, the crafty official who, on seeing that he has suffered some setback in his career and is about to be impeached, preempts his accusers by resigning his office and quickly returning to private life. He retires into the Zhongnan Mountains, saying, ‘I have no wish for official honors. Let them impeach me, I just won’t serve as an official anymore.’

“When the judicial officials see that he has resigned his office, they drop the impeachment. When he notices after a year or so that people take no notice of him anymore, he schemes and intrigues until he gets to resume his position.
he meets people, he brags, ‘I never intended to seek riches and prestige; who could have known that riches and prestige would come after me?’ This is the road of groveling at night and treating others arrogantly in the daytime.

“Therefore the Zhongnan Mountains are no match for the purity and stillness of the realm of the Three Isles of Penglai. Since you have come to this point, I shall lock up this pass of fame and profit for you, which would otherwise cause you to dash around madly all your life in search of honor and enjoyment.”

“Why are they called the Three Isles of Penglai?” Xiangzi asked.

“Penglai is located at the center of the ocean,” Master Zhong explained. “The distance between its eastern, western, southern, and northern shores is five thousand miles each way, so that it is square in shape. Because it is wide on top, it is called Mount Kunlun.

“On that mountain there is a copper pillar, its height reaching into the sky. This is the so-called Pillar of Heaven. Its circumference is three thousand miles, and it is perfectly round, as if it has been pared off. At its foot there is a stone building, which houses the nine government offices of the immortals. On the pillar’s top there is a great bird, whose name is Rare. Facing south, its extended right wing covers the Royal Lord of the East and its left wing the Queen Mother of the West. On its back is a narrow area without feathers which stretches for nineteen thousand miles.

“Once a year the Queen Mother of the West ascends its wings to go to the Royal Lord of the East. Therefore the pillar carries the following inscription: ‘The copper pillar of Kunlun is so high it reaches into the clouds. It is perfectly round as if pared off, beautiful within and without.’ On the bird the inscription says, ‘There is a bird named Rare, its beak red and its golden eye glittering. It does not cry and does not eat. To the east it covers the Royal Lord of the East, to the west the Queen Mother of the West. When the Queen Mother wants to go east, she ascends this bird and passes over. Yin and yang are dependent on each other; only their union benefits creation.’

“Above there is a palace of gold, jade, and crystal, surrounded by embroidered clouds that dazzle the eye and a vermillion mist that gives off nine rays of light. This is the office of the Overseers of Destiny of the Three Heavens, where all those among the immortals who do not want to ascend to Heaven come.”

Xiangzi said, “I have abandoned ready-made riches and prestige like drifting clouds. I only ask that you lead me to the Three Isles of Penglai to become an immortal at leisure. That would be the greatest grace you could afford me. I decidedly do not want to emulate those high-minded or crafty fools who covet honor and enjoyment, and yet only end up enslaved to their descendants.”
“Since your heart is determined, I will do my best to teach you,” Master Zhong said. He sang the following song to the tune “Cassia Fragrance”:

“\textit{The sky is clear, the moon bright.}\hfill
Cultivate perfection and study the Dao.\hfill
As you were led into the mountains this morning,\hfill
I will transmit to you the mysterious marvels of the perfected scriptures.\hfill
Extinguish darkness, extinguish darkness!\hfill
Do not speak, do not laugh, practice reversal,\hfill
And guard the door firmly.\hfill
On the day when the Five Marchmounts face Heaven,\hfill
The Golden Elixir will burn within the fire.”

Master Lü also struck the fisher drum and sang,

“\textit{The mind is clear, thoughts are bright.}\hfill
The work is not insignificant.\hfill
Thanks to karmic affinity inherited from previous lives,\hfill
You have encountered the true Way of immortality.\hfill
Vanquish the Three Worms! Vanquish the Three Worms!\hfill
Your body and spirit will attain marvelous perfection and roam freely.\hfill
Only if you drink the wine of eternal spring slowly,\hfill
Will you realize its excellent taste.”

Xiangzi lowered his head, bowed, and said, “It was my karmic affinity to have met you, my masters.” And he also chanted a lyric:

“\textit{The masters are clear, their methods are bright,}\hfill
Holding incense I say my prayer.\hfill
Only if I can realize my nature and make clear my mind\hfill
Will a merciful teacher appear and transmit the teachings to me.\hfill
I take joy that Heaven knows me! That Heaven knows me!\hfill
My mind inside and my feelings outside all show that this morning\hfill
Qian and kun have exchanged places,\hfill
And li and kan have merged in the middle.”
When Xiangzi had finished his song, Master Zhong said, “Xiangzi, do you know the secret of the great way of the Ninefold Returns and Seven Reversions?”

“I am ignorant. Please instruct me,” Xiangzi replied.

“The Golden Elixir is composed of the unified pneuma of Former Heaven,” Master Zhong said. “It is the mother and the ruler, and is therefore called the Lead Tiger. One’s own perfected pneuma came into being after the separation of Heaven and Earth. It is the son and minister, and is therefore called the Mercury Dragon. It is little known that although these two things have different names, the trigrams $qian$ and $kun$ are their body, yin and yang are their roots, dragon and tiger are their symbols, male and female are their form, lead and mercury are their perfection, others and self are their differentiation, essence and pneuma are their function, and the Mysterious Female is their gate. The primordial, perfectly unified pneuma of Former Heaven actually is produced within these two things. The Mercury Dragon and the Lead Tiger combine in the Divine Chamber to produce a sacred embryo in limitless divine transformations. The knowledge of ordinary mortals is limited and cannot distinguish Dragon and Tiger. They are like frogs in a well or quails in a hedge—unable to see the grand scheme of things. They try to measure the ocean with a ladle or gaze at a leopard through a narrow pipe. How could people of such limited perspective realize the highest degrees of perfection and complete the Supreme Liquid and Golden Elixir?”

Master Lü said, “An elixir formula says, ‘The spirit’s work and the fire’s circulation do not require a whole day.’ It also says, ‘At dawn and dusk, the Fire Phases accord with the Celestial Pivot.’ Fire is the pneuma of the first and last quarters of the moon. Its circulation is due to the application of the tally. The $zi$ hour is the first of the six yang hours, hence is called “dawn.” The $wu$ hour is the first of the six yin hours, hence is called “dusk.”

“At dawn the $tun$ hexagram is in control; it is the time when fire is added. At dusk, the $meng$ hexagram is in control; it is the time when the tally is withdrawn. Thus two hexagrams are in control in the course of one day; it begins with $tun$ and $meng$, and finishes at the $jiji$ and $weiji$ hexagrams. And then the circulation begins again and keeps revolving ceaselessly.

“With two hexagrams per day, we arrive at sixty hexagrams in a month. Each hexagram has six lines, which (together with the four hexagrams of $qian$, $kun$, $kan$, and $li$) yields a total of 384 lines, which correspond with the number of days in a leap year. $Qian$’s first line, with a numerical value of nine, arises from $kun$’s first line of six. Thirty-six yarrow stalks yield the hexagram $qian$. If we multiply thirty-
six by the six of the six lines of a hexagram, we arrive at the number 216. Kun’s first line of six arises from qian’s first line of nine. Twenty-four stalks yield the hexagram kun. If we multiply twenty-four by the six of the six lines of a hexagram, we arrive at the number 144. Adding these two figures together, we get 360, which corresponds to the number of the celestial cycle.

“The paths of sun and moon, merging, rising, and falling, thus do not exceed the numerical scope of the hexagrams. The moon moves fast and takes one month to complete one cycle. The sun moves slowly and takes one year to complete one cycle. The celestial pivot is the pole star. One day and one night are one cycle, and after one month there occurs one shift, such as, for example, establishing yin as the cyclical sign for the first month and mao as the cyclical sign for the second month.

“Therefore it is said: If month by month you continuously strengthen your armor, then hour by hour you see the army defeated. The accomplished person knows the waxing and waning of sun and moon, and understands the rising and falling of yin and yang. If he moves zi and wu, the tally and the fire, in accordance with the sun’s varying lengths of day and night and the moon’s increases and decreases over time, then he will secretly unite with the Great Dao and complete the Great Elixir.”

“Having received your instruction, I shall not dare forget it,” Xiangzi said. “We have to go up to Heaven for a while,” Master Zhong said. “In the meantime, you sit here in meditation, warming and nurturing your elixir cauldron. We will return to look after you in two days.”

Then they took Xiangzi to a pure house, quite unlike the dwellings of ordinary mortals. Variegated clouds hovered about its roof; simurghs and cranes soared above it. In the main room there stood an elixir cauldron, only an inch in height and width. From it, purple flames gave forth a light that brilliantly illuminated the windows. Several jade maidens sat around the cauldron, and a green dragon and a white tiger were placed at its front and back. Master Lü took a rush mat and placed it by the room’s western wall. He ordered Xiangzi to sit there facing east, carefully watch the furnace, and not let anything leak out. Having given their orders, the two masters closed the door and flew off.

When Xiangzi looked carefully around the room, he saw that it was now completely empty. Thus he realized that everyone has this most precious treasure, and it is not necessary to withdraw to the stillness and solitude of the deep mountains to gain it. Those who regard it as far away have no grasp of it. Those who want to employ it recklessly reveal their attachment to the world of forms. Thereupon he closed his mouth, lowered his eyelids, and sat down cross-legged.

After a short while ten thousand chariots and a thousand horsemen, in a pro-
fusion of banners, lances and armor, suddenly covered the cliffs and valleys all around, their shouting so loud it startled Heaven and shook Earth. Among them was a man more than ten feet tall, his body covered in golden armor, its brilliance dazzling the eye. He was accompanied by a personal guard of several hundred armored knights, wielding swords and bows. Pushing open the door, he came straight in, his angry voice like thunder, his retainers pressing forward with raised swords. When Xiangzi saw him, he remained unmoved. The golden armored giant gave a signal to his followers and, suppressing his anger, left.

Suddenly thousands of fierce tigers and poisonous dragons, lions, vipers, and scorpions struggled forward, roaring and brawling, striking and biting. Some jumped over his head, others coiled around his arms. After a short while they disappeared. Then thunder rolled and lightning struck. The sky darkened, heavy rain poured down, lightning flashed, and a storm whirled all around. Within a very short time the courtyard was filled with water ten feet deep. It was as if the mountains were collapsing, the deluge flooding everything up to Xiangzi’s seat. Xiangzi continued to fix his gaze ahead, without fully opening his eyes.

After a while the rain stopped and ox-headed underworld soldiers and horse-faced ghost kings surrounded him on all sides, holding spears and lances, knives and tridents. They set a large cauldron in front of Xiangzi, filled with a hundred gallons of seething oil, and made moves to place Xiangzi inside it. They had already seized Xiangzi’s wife Luying and held her at the bottom of the stairs. They flogged her until the blood flowed, shot her, hacked her, and burnt her.

Unable to stand the pain, Luying cried out to Xiangzi, “It isn’t my fault that we have never been close. It was you who went off to cultivate yourself and study the Dao, while treating me as if I were ugly and coarse. Now I’ve been seized by ghost soldiers and cannot bear the pain. I prostrate myself before you and beg you to please say a word to save me. Who among humans is without feelings? Are you devoid of them?” Her tears fell like rain in the courtyard as she scolded and cursed.

Suddenly Luying vanished and the ghost soldiers scattered. Instead Xiangzi now saw King Yama of the Tenth Court of Hell. He was seated solemnly in the room, and a hundred prisoners were kneeling at the margins of the courtyard, among them Xiangzi’s mother, Mme. Zheng, and his father, Han Hui. He heard King Yama give the order to smelt copper and iron and pound and grind the prisoners to sharpen their suffering. The sounds of screaming and wailing reached everywhere.

After a short while the sky cleared and the stars shone forth. All of the extraordinary phenomena had vanished. Suddenly a man pressed near. He was covered
Xiangzi guards the elixir cauldron with firm concentration.
from head to foot in ragged clothes, malignant boils and pus, so stinking and dirty that no one would go near him. He lay down on Xiangzi’s mat and demanded that Xiangzi massage him and wipe him clean. Whenever Xiangzi paused ever so slightly, the man would scream and kick madly, seeming ready to die on the spot. Xiangzi had no choice but to continue massaging him.

The pus gradually soaked Xiangzi’s skin, infecting and irritating his hands. The man shouted at him to suck and lick his hands clean and then to continue massaging him. Xiangzi was just bending over to treat the fetid man, when suddenly he saw Master Lü approaching, leading a beautiful woman by the hand. “What kind of demon are you that you dare make game of an immortal’s disciple!” Master Lü shouted, to chase the man away.

The man, scared, crawled off into hiding. Pointing to the beautiful woman, Master Lü told Xiangzi, “This woman is like the famous White Peony. If I hadn’t obtained White Peony to supplement my essence, I could not have become an immortal and entered the Dao. Now that your practice is almost complete, you need to supplement your original nature of Former Heaven; only then can you complete your ninefold returned elixir and ascend to the Jasper Terrace and the Purple Palace. Therefore I am presenting you with this woman. Make good use of her and don’t let Master Zhong know about it—he might think I harbored selfish intentions in delivering you.”

Xiangzi laughed and said, “My mind is steadfast like metal and rock; my thoughts are not affected by outside influences. You should know my mind. Why are you beguiling me with talk of white and black peonies?”

“The Yellow Emperor plucked yin to supplement yang,” Master Lü said. “When he ascended from Tripod Lake, all his ministers followed him. Qian Geng married fifty-three wives, had eighty-one sons, and lived to eight hundred years of age, roaming the Isles of Penglai. Since ancient times, none among those who became immortals did not use beautiful women to supplement his primordial yang. Furthermore, the elixir scripture says, ‘The gate of the Mysterious Female is called the root of Heaven and Earth.’ It also says, ‘The gate that gave birth to me is the door of my death—some understand this, and some don’t.’

“This explains that women’s yin is the true Mysterious Female. The student of the Dao will easily cross the Yellow River if he cleanses his mind, completes his spirit, and knows the meaning of the Three Peaks as well the Secret Formula in Five Characters. I shall explain the Three Peaks to you. A woman’s mouth, nose, and tongue are her Upper Peak. The two hollows beneath the tongue correlate with the heart, and connect with the meridian of the lower intestine. Therefore the heart produces the liver and the lungs produce saliva. The saliva comes out as a liquid.
When you gather it, you have to suck fast to the tip of the woman’s tongue while seizing the underside of the tongue. Then the Jade Spring will surge forth from the Flowery Pond and saliva will fill her mouth, from which you will draw it into your own mouth. Taking the clear pneuma in her nose, you send it down to the Elixir Field to irrigate your five organs. This is called the Upper Lotus Flower Peak.

“A woman’s two breasts are her Middle Peak. When you copulate, you knead her nipples with your hands. As the breasts are massaged, the body tingles all over and the milk ducts open. Inside there is a perfected pneuma, which is part of the drug derived from the gallbladder among the Three Cavities. As the milk juice flows out you swallow it. This is called the Middle Lotus Flower Peak.

“A woman’s vagina is her Lower Peak. As the numinous turtle enters the tripod, you have to advance very slowly and wait for the woman to become aroused. Then the vaginal ducts will open and their liquid will flow out. With both hands you firmly embrace the woman, and pulling in your ribs and raising your loins you draw in her essence. This is called the Lower Lotus Flower Peak.

“As for the Secret Formula in Five Characters, it is ‘Concentrating, inhaling, locking, absorbing, and contracting.’ ‘Concentrating’ means stabilizing one’s pneuma. Let the mind think of the Niwan Palace and stabilize the double spinal passes. As you swallow one or two mouthfuls of pneuma, keep thinking of the celestial cycle, and your pneuma will naturally be stabilized. This way your bodies will have intercourse, but not your spirit.

“‘Inhaling’ means that at the time of copulation you have to think of your jade stalk as a conduit of pneuma. You use your mouth, nose, and jade stalk to inhale her essential pneuma, transport it to the spine and have it penetrate the Niwan Palace. ‘Locking’ means that you must tightly lock the Human Gate. The Human Gate is connected with the Celestial Gate and this in turn is connected with the Gate of Destiny. If the Celestial Gate is not locked, the primordial spirit will escape and be lost. Like a turtle controlling its pneuma, you must not make a single mistake.

“‘Absorbing’ means to take her essential pneuma while entering very slowly, and neither deeply nor hastily. ‘Contracting’ means that during copulation you must pull in your ribs and raise your loins, making the essence move upwards, but not letting it flow down. The formula says, ‘Inhale after concentrating, lock after inhaling, absorb after locking, contract after absorbing.’ The five steps must not be employed simultaneously, but one after the other. If you observe the required speed at each stage, you will naturally attain immortality and live forever like the sun and the moon.”

When Xiangzi heard these words, his face went red and his ears became scarlet. He shouted with a loud voice, “What kind of demon are you that you dare
impersonate my master and utter these heresies designed to lead people of the world astray?"

Xiangzi’s words were as loud as thunder, shaking the sky and reverberating through the valley. The two masters Zhong and Lü descended from Heaven, and the so-called Master Lü and his beautiful woman vanished. The two masters said, “Xiangzi has come through the trials without turning back. The great elixir is completed.” They opened the cauldron and looked inside.

They saw the light of the moon and the glitter of the stars, the curtains brilliantly illuminated, the pearl completed, the size of a millet grain, and a dazzling golden flower. It truly was an extraordinary treasure not of this world, like countless tons of gold, a wealth impossible to find anywhere. It was an immense treasure within the body, whose value would hardly be exaggerated if one compared it to that white jade of antiquity for which fifteen cities were once offered.

The two masters took it up in their hands and placed it in a dish one inch square on the elixir platform. They ordered Xiangzi to give courteous thanks to Heaven, and then to inhale the elixir through his nose and let it rise to the Niwan Palace. His perfected pneuma then naturally descended into the sea of primordial pneuma, where it surged up in waves, merging with the elixir. Thereupon his ordinary body was changed, his turbid pneuma and dusty roots were expunged and transformed. Truly it was as described in the following poem:

If you are going to study immortality, make it the celestial kind;
Only the golden elixir is the most appropriate goal.
When the two things come together, emotions and nature merge,
Where the five phases are complete, dragon and tiger entwine.
From the outset rely upon earth to be the matchmaker,
Then cause husband and wife to be happily conjoined.
After the work is completed, pay court to the Northern Palace;
In the light of nine-colored clouds ride soaring simurghs.¹³

If you do not know what happened afterwards, listen to the next chapter.