

**WHITE SNAKE and GUAN YIN**

WHITE SNAKE:

My Lady Bodhisssattva!

GUAN YIN:

White Snake! What are you doing roaming the mountain this time of night?

WHITE SNAKE:

I confessss, I was trying to meditate, but I could not.

GUAN YIN:

Dear White Snake, your studies have brought you so far, you know how to fly on the clouds and change your shape; you are a skilled warrior – the immortals are all proud of you – and yet you have not transcended. Have you not wondered why? And why you are still so restless?

WHITE SNAKE:

I assumed, Lady Bodhisssattva, that your poor sservant has not yet had the patience nor the ssskill –

GUAN YIN:

That's not it. Let me tell you this. Before you were reborn on this mountain, many reincarnations ago, you were just a little snake in the mortal world, in the red dust.

WHITE SNAKE:

I wasss?

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GUAN YIN: One day you were caught by a poor man by the side of the road. He was just about to cut you in half to take your gall –

WHITE SNAKE:

Oh no!

GUAN YIN:

...when a timber merchant came by. When he saw what was about to happen his heart was moved, and –

WHITE SNAKE:

Why is that?

GUAN YIN:

What?

WHITE SNAKE:

Why was the merchant's heart moved by a sssnake on the side of the road? I thought that humans abhorred a snake.

GUAN YIN:

No one can say. There are few things so unsteady as those hearts of men.

WHITE SNAKE:

I sssee. Forgive my interruption. What happened then?

GUAN YIN:

He bought you from the poor man for one hundred copper coins and set you free, and that is why you have been able to practice self-cultivation

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to this day; the good deed of the timber merchant passed into you and made you something special.

But now you must repay this favor – it is the only way to gain your final merit. Fortunately for you, that timber merchant has been reborn in the city of Hangzhou and his name is Xu Xian. Go there and serve this man as he once served you, and then you may at last join the ranks of the immortals.