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CHAPTER I. SHU MAI'S FLIGHT.

Shu Mai, daughter of the ex-Prefect Wong Chofoo, went out alone from her father's splendid mansion in the city of Paoting to see the world.

Shu Mai's remarkable determination was not suddenly formed; it grew up steadily in her mind through many years.

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SHU MAI'S FLIGHT.

from her. At least the garments appropriate to her sex had been laid aside.

to see the "Our daughter did not answer when I called her name," said Madam Wong Chofoo, returning.

It was a lonely place in the outskirts of the city, and she wondered that the ship should be there, far away from the ordinary place of landing.

Shu Mai's remarkable determination was not suddenly formed; it grew up steadily in her mind through many years.

The little cabin in which Shu Mai found herself was very far from being a luxurious apartment.

She laid his hand upon a sword which hung at his side and seemed about to slay the affrighted Shu Mai.

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Shu Mai obeyed with alacrity. As she stepped upon the deck she saw that

the ship was moving down a great river, and the sun was setting directly upon the path over which she had come.

"What do you say? Shall we take the boy with us?"

"The fish will do very well without me, no doubt," she said, though her voice almost stuck in her throat.

The two men exchanged a glance of wonder and admiration, and in it Shu Mai read the guarantee of her safety.

From that day on Shu Mai was treated with kindness by all on board.

The clouds rose higher, and Shu Mai watched it with curiosity, which had much fear in it.

"Truly," thought Shu Mai, "I am now beyond pursuit. Whether these men will take me in their mysterious ship I know not."

Onward the ship plunged through the night. The waves rose ever higher behind her.