Excerpts from *Inhyŏn Wanghu chŏn*, or *The History of Queen Inhyŏn*

The story of Queen Inhyŏn is an early piece of the palace literature of which *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong* is a later example. Like *The Memoirs*, it tells the story of tragic events within the palace, and it dates from the end of the eighteenth century. Unlike *The Memoirs*, however, the author of this piece cannot be determined.

The following excerpts are from *Virtuous Women: Three Classic Korean Novels*, translated by Richard Rutt and Kim Chong-Un, and published by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1974.

I.

Queen-consort Inhyŏn, wife of King Sukchong, nineteenth king of the Yi dynasty, was daughter of the Minister of Defence, Min Yu-jung, and granddaughter of the Chief Minister of State, Song Chun-gil.

It was said that her mother, Lady Song, had a strange dream while pregnant, and at last on the twenty-third day of the fourth moon of 1667 she gave birth. Auspicious signs accompanied this birth, and the room in which the child, was born was filled with aromatic fragrance. The incident was so extraordinary that her parents forbade the members and servants of the family ever to speak of it.

The child grew up to be an unusually talented and exceptionally beautiful young lady. Her skill in weaving, every movement, seemed to be aided by a host of spirits, but she never took pride in her achievements. Her conduct and bearing were so composed that no one could sense her emotional stresses.

In her retiring disposition, brilliant virtues, outstanding fidelity and modest nature, she was a model young lady. Sitting serenely in her chamber, she emanated the warmth of spring sunshine. Her graceful movements inspired such lofty and awesome feelings that those who saw her were reminded of a spray of plum-blossom in the snow and filled with the reverence experienced when suddenly finding oneself in a grove of evergreens under a bleak sky. Thus the love of her parents was redoubled, and the admiration of her kindred near and far grew till her fair name was gradually known to the world.

Her father once observed rainbow-like shimmers over her washbowl. This so convinced him that she was destined to become high and noble that he paid particular attention to her upbringing and education. Her uncle, Min Chong-jung, a renowned Confucian scholar, became extremely fond of her despite his austere personality and was said to have remarked: She is endowed with unusual gifts, natural gifts that can never deteriorate; but the excessively rare quality of such a person is apt to call forth the envy of evil spirits. She is very, very beautiful and sagacious; but I fear that she may have only a short life.

She lost her mother early, but during the whole of the long period of formal mourning she punctiliously performed every filial duty that etiquette demanded of her; and to the surprise and admiration of all around her, she was equally filial to her stepmother, Lady Cho. When her maternal grandfather Song Chun-gil was very ill, he used to enjoy her company. On these occasions he taught her the ways of saintly scholars and the manners and conduct of a lady, saying that she already had the makings of a royal consort such as T'ai-jen or T'ai-ssu. Such additional instruction, provided by the foremost families in the country, greatly strengthened her innate virtues.

In the winter of 1680 Queen Ingyŏng passed away. The lack of a royal consort worried the queen mother and she ordered that arrangements be made for the selection of a suitable successor. Kim U-myŏng, maternal grandfather of King Sukchong, had heard of the virtuous Lady Min, and at this time...
spoke to the queen mother about her. At the same time the Chief Minister of State, Song Chun-gil, gave his opinion to the king: A queen consort is the mother of all her subjects. I, your faithful subject, know that Your Majesty's Defence Minister has a daughter of exceptional wisdom and virtue. I pray that Your Majesty will choose her as the royal spouse and thereby avoid the troublesome procedure of selection.

To the happiness of the queen mother, the long consented to this arrangement. At once she sent a royal order to Minister Min describing the situation and urging him to proceed with the necessary preparations. The awe-struck minister immediately submitted a memorial declining the honor. The king, however, was quite resolved. After three such memorials had been submitted, a strict royal order was issued reproving the minister: his repeated refusals went beyond the bounds of normal courtesy and any further refusal would be deemed insubordination. The king also called Min Chong-jung, Second Minister of State, to the palace and through him reprimanded the Min family for their disrespect. Thus it became impossible to decline again, and at the ensuing family meeting the Min clan decided to accept the royal directive. They were moved to loyal tears by the greatness of the royal benevolence and favor.

A party of court ladies and eunuchs was sent to wait upon the future queen consort at her home in Öüi-dong, and the chief lady-in-waiting, in accordance with the king's wish, begged for an audience with her. After the audience the court lady, filled with admiration, reverently said to the girl's stepmother: By the king's favor I have had the honor of serving three generations of queens in the palace. I have also had the opportunity of being in contact with more than eighty ladies of noble birth. But I swear, Your Highness, that I have never met a lady of such holy and beautiful countenance as our future queen. With your permission, I should like to say that she will bring great good fortune to the state. It will be a privilege for me to serve her. I have been amply rewarded in having lived so long.

To this the stepmother replied with such modesty, humility and dignity that the court lady was deeply moved. On returning to the palace she related the scene to the queen mother. The queen mother was pleased to hear all this, and it was said that she openly showed her eagerness for the day of the royal nuptials.

Finally the day of the wedding came. Officiating at the grand ritual, in dignified and stately attire, was Min Yu-jung, father of the new queen. The nineteen-year-old king, attended by high civil and military officials, went to the Öüi-dong mansion where the bride was waiting. There he presented the geese, then urged the queen's palanquin-bearers to return to the palace for the second half of the ceremony. He himself saw to sealing the door of the gold-adorned vehicle. Most royal weddings are of crown princes, but this was the wedding of the king himself and accordingly the ceremony was most magnificent. The royal colors with images of the dragon and phoenix, along with banners, golden halberds and battle-axes, all signifying sovereign power, fluttered in the air at the head of the procession; solemn-faced officials and court ladies and ladies-in-waiting escorting the procession in colorfully ornate dresses formed a line that extended several miles; burning incense and stately tunes of court music filled the air. The grandeur of the wedding truly defied description. All who lived in the capital turned out to rejoice and pray for the long life of the royal family.

The ceremony closed with the exchange of cups of wine in the palace. The new queen consort's manners were exceedingly graceful. It was as if her whole being radiated light, like the full moon in autumn, and this light, lucid and soft, filled the royal palace, richly embossed in gold, and bedimmed its brilliance and that of all the other precious treasures there displayed. Thus the hearts of all who witnessed the ceremony swelled with rapturous admiration. Above all, immeasurable was the delight of the queen mother and the queen dowager.

Another ceremony the same day enthroned her formally as queen consort. After that she gave
audience to the ladies and princesses of the royal family and the three hundred ladies-in-waiting. The weather was exceptionally fine; refreshing breezes carried auspicious cloudlets over the royal palace, to make a day truly in accord with the blissful occasion. The official enthronement affected the people strangely, and their jubilant voices chanting blessings of peace were heard throughout the length and breadth of the land.

After the accession, the queen’s performance of her filial duty to (the queen mother and queen dowager was impeccable. In managing the palace affairs, her guiding principle was benevolence. In directing the ladies and maids in the palace, she balanced dignity and lucidity with affection and grace, never allowing herself to handle matters with partiality. Because of her love of mankind, peace and harmony reigned over the palace and consequently extended over all the land.

Her solemn deportment and perfect decorum dazzled the court ladies. All in the palace adored and respected her. By her example she caused the general manners in the palace to improve greatly, and within three months a complete transformation of the atmosphere could be felt. This pleased the queen mother and the queen dowager as well as the king and everyone in and out of the court. The queen mother composed a letter commending the merits of the queen consort and sent it to Song Si-yŏl, First Lord of the Advisory Council. She also wrote letters graciously praising the king’s mother-in-law for raising such a virtuous daughter, and sent royal gifts to her. The Min family were overwhelmed by these august favors.

During the winter of 1683 the king contracted smallpox, and at times his condition was critical. The queen consort nursed him, denying herself food, sleep, change of dress and all personal comforts. The queen mother also was distressed. Together they bathed in cold water and, at a little shrine in a corner of the back garden of the palace, prayed day and night for the swift recovery of the king. The queen consort, apprehensive for the queen mother’s health, implored that she be allowed to perform the devotions alone, but the queen mother would not comply. Perhaps Heaven was moved by their faith and devotion, for the king recovered. In and out of the palace, happiness overflowed.

Ever, the queen mother by nursing him and performing acts of devotion had exhausted herself during the king’s illness. She herself fell ill. Now the king and queen cared for her night and day, anxious to see her recover. They even prepared herb medicines themselves, personally waiting on her in her sick-room, but despite their efforts and devotion, her health deteriorated rapidly. In desperation the king sent a prayer-party of cabinet ministers to the Chong-myo, the shrine of the royal ancestors, and as a votive offering to Heaven he proclaimed an official amnesty for all prisoners throughout the land. At the same time he brought all the best doctors to the palace to tend the queen mother. All was in vain. It is impossible to describe the anxiety of the royal family and the whole nation. Deep gloom covered the land.

Very early in the morning of the fifth day of the last moon, the queen mother passed away in the Chŏsŭng Hall of the Ch’anggyŏng Palace at the age of forty-one. Again the people were deeply moved, and the sound of wailing rose to heaven. The king and queen mourned with inexpressible grief, refusing all food, and earning the deep admiration of the court for their exemplary filial piety. So they continued for three years to carry out the ceremonies for the dead queen.

(after a short life of good works, the young bride of the preceding passage has died.)

V.

On the fourth day of the ninth moon there was another ceremony for the deceased queen, and on this occasion the king himself composed a lament to be read by an official. In substance the lament said:
With simple offerings we address the soul of the deceased Queen Min.

Alas! Is it true that you have passed away, or is this merely a dream? We are still troubled and unable to determine its certainty, though days have passed and the moon has changed. It must be true that you are dead, for we can no longer hear your sweet voice nor see your beautiful face. From ancient times it has been said that the sorrow of a widower is the most pitiable of all sorrows; but alas! our pain and agony have no equal in history.

You were born to a family of noble lineage and disciplined by sagacious parents. Although you were endowed with exceptional gifts and rare virtues, owing to a whim of fate and our indiscretion, you suffered five long years in exile. In time of difficulty you behaved virtuously and with discretion in order to make our faults less manifest. Through your example of filial devotion and virtuous actions, you filled the palace with an atmosphere of courtesy and warmth. It was our desire to enjoy the blessings of peace with you, but alas! Heaven took you away from us prematurely.

Now you rest in peace oblivious of everything, but how shall we endure our sorrow and remorse throughout this long, hard life?

Alas! In spite of your exceptional virtues, you did not enjoy the blessings of children or long life. Such is the heartless way of Heaven; it may be the way Providence chooses to punish us for our faults and wrong-doing, so that we are burdened with regret for the rest of our life. In the distance stands Tongmyong Hall, and beholding it we are under the illusion that we see your virtuous image and hear your gentle voice; but there is an unbridgeable gulf between you and us. Even if we had done you no wrong, your sudden death would have filled us with equal sorrow. How then can we reproach ourselves enough for having been solely responsible for causing you to suffer the hardships of banishment for five years?

Here we end, lest the lament be too long.

When the official finished reading this encomium, the king began to mourn aloud. His tears and lamentations were enough to move Heaven. All the officials present also wept in company, and no one dared to look up at the king.

The posthumous title of Queen Consort Inhyŏn was then conferred upon her, and a site for the royal tomb was chosen in the county of Koyang and designated Myŏngnŭng. The king issued a royal order for a memorial hall called Kyŏngyŏn Hall to be built within the precincts of the tomb, and commissioned an official of ministerial rank to supervise its construction. He also manifested his wish to be buried beside her and directed that this wish be reflected in the construction plans.

The funeral date was finally fixed for the eighth of the twelfth moon. The span of earthly life is beyond the control of human beings, and the queen's life, characterized by childlessness, premature death and the evil schemings of wicked persons, was by no means a happy one. When the life of a good and virtuous person can be visited by such misfortunes, how can the life of an evil person be expected to flourish? The retribution of Heaven may sometimes be slow in working, but Heaven certainly did not forget the name of Lady Chang.

While the queen was still suffering in her sick-room, Lady Chang visited her twice only, on the pretext that she herself was sick. The queen was aware that this was a deliberate incivility but, knowing Lady Chang, she pretended not to notice it. Lady Chang, on her part, never uttered the rightful title of Her Majesty the Queen Consort. She always referred to the queen by the title of Lady. When the queen's health took a turn for the worse, Lady Chang triumphantly intensified her evil imprecations in the hope of hastening her death.
As soon as the queen died Lady Chang, overjoyed, wanted to remove the shrine from her quarters, because the purpose for which it had been built was accomplished. However, her shamans and shamanesses feared that such an abrupt removal after years of supplication might provoke the spirits into harming the crown princess or Lady Chang, and advised her that a proper ritual be held first. This ritual was arranged for the seventh of the ninth moon. The delay in removing the shrine was to be the cause of her undoing, but there was no means by which the triumphant woman could know that.

Since the queen’s demise the king had never visited the quarters of the royal concubines; instead, he continued daily to grieve for his loss. When his ministers counselled him against excessive mourning, he drew a long sigh and said: My sorrow is not merely that of a man who has lost his spouse; I am much sadder when I think of her noble virtues and fair character.

On the seventh evening of the ninth moon, the king felt a particular sadness. The signs of autumn were already in the air, the waxing moon looked lonely in the cold night sky, and he could hear the chirping of the crickets. Leaning against a cushion, he shed silent tears as he watched the candles slowly burn away. For a brief moment he dozed off in that position. In his dream a eunuch who had died some time ago appeared and said to him: Your Majesty, wicked and detestable spirits have filled and plagued the palace. The death of the queen was their doing. They will breed more calamities in the future unless immediate action is taken to exorcise them.

The eunuch pointed toward Chŏwisŏn Hall and motioned the king to follow him. He also wished the king to visit the place where the queen’s remains were lying in state until her funeral. The eunuch opened the door to a hall where the pallid queen was sitting with her ladies-in-waiting. She broke into sobs as the king entered, and said: Your Majesty, I might have had a short life even without the workings of evil spirits. My death, however, was unnatural, and the evil imprecations employed by Lady Chang were its direct cause. Since she was my mortal enemy, I have the power to destroy her life, but I would rather you should examine this and do justice so that the palace can be restored to its former peace and blessedness.

The king tried to grasp the queen’s hands, but she disappeared, and he awoke from his dream.

Eunuchs waiting in an adjoining room full of autumn moonlight heard the king wailing aloud for a while before he arose. He then ordered them to prepare a palanquin to take him to Lady Chang’s quarters, adding that he wished to make an unannounced visit. This command aroused great surprise, for it was his first visit to Lady Chang’s quarters in seven or eight years.

That day also happened to be Lady Chang’s birthday. Sukchŏng, Lady Chang’s evil sister-in-law, and her other followers were all present to celebrate her birthday as well as the queen’s death, and each of them claimed credit for the role she had played. A group of shamans and shamanesses was chanting in the shrine. The king’s unexpected appearance created confusion and consternation among them. He had overheard their conversation, and stood in silent anger, but they quickly found a favorable interpretation, because the queen was dead and it was Lady Chang’s birthday. They thought this sudden visit meant the restoration of Lady Chang to favor. Lady Chang hastily ordered food, but the king spurned it and looked sharply round for evidence of evil-doing. He noticed that the shrine in the yard, which had been bright with candles a moment ago, was now dark and quiet. This roused his suspicions, and he stepped outside to it. He found a folding screen placed in an unlikely spot. He ordered it to be removed; the women hesitated, but then were obliged to remove it and reveal a portrait pasted on the wall. Careful examination of the portrait, which was badly tattered by the countless arrow-holes in it, confirmed that it was a picture of Queen Min.

Can anyone explain this to me? asked the king.
When no one dared answer, Lady Chang ventured a reply: It is a portrait of the deceased queen. I had it put up so that I could admire her virtues day and night, Your Majesty.

Then how do you explain the arrow-holes? pressed the king, and to this Lady Chang had no ready answer.

The indignant king ordered a eunuch to light the way, proceeded to the shrine in the yard and found it was a place for cursing. Aghast, he called the palace guards and made them arrest all who worked for Lady Chang.

I have suspected all along, said the king, that you might be plotting evil in this building. Now that I have evidence before me, you shall die immediately unless you confess all you know of this heinous plot.

Even with this trenchant warning, none of them confessed the truth. When the guards began beating them, they broke down and recounted the details of their wicked practices. The horror of the story made the king's hair stand on end, and he said: This proves the truth of the saying that if one nurtures a snake one is preparing trouble. I should have removed Lady Chang from the palace entirely, for that would have prevented the misfortunes from which I suffer now.

After committing all those who had taken part in the plot to the palace prison and ordering an inquisition to be set up the following day, the king went to the outer palace and was unable to sleep all night. In the morning he issued a royal writ in which he made known all the facts of the plot undertaken by Lady Chang and her followers. Then he ordered that all, including Lady Chang, be duly punished according to the law relating to treason. Chang Hŭi-jae, Lady Chang's brother, was arrested and brought back from his exile in Cheju Island to Seoul for the royal inquisition. Sukchŏng, Chang Hŭi-jae's concubine, was also brought under investigation as an accomplice. Finally, the king ordered the royal household office to fetch the court ladies Chŏnunsang, Chŏnryang and others from the palace prison and question them at the Injŏng Gate.

Yun In-ji, the royal secretary, ventured to suggest that Lady Chang's punishment be mitigated, for though her treason was grave, her position as mother of the crown prince should be taken into consideration.

The king replied angrily: In spite of her cunning attitude and rudeness toward the queen, I let Lady Chang remain in the palace for the sake of the crown prince. Then what happened? Unmoved by this unprecedented favor, she constructed an evil shrine in the palace and plotted against the queen, casting deadly spells. Now that I intend to make a personal inquiry into this matter and do justice to appease the dead queen's soul, is it proper for a subject to try to shield the criminal who plotted his queen's death? Officers! Strip Yun of all his titles and honors and banish him from the capital!

In the course of the inquisition, Chŏnryang confessed that the shamans and shamanesses had been called and the construction of the shrine begun in 1695, and that the shooting and burying of the queen's portrait had started at about the same time. She also gave a detailed account of the imprecations. She said that was all she knew, because Sihyang and others were responsible for the other activities. Accordingly, Sihyang, a 22-year-old court maid, was called to speak.

At first, I acted as a messenger between Lady Chang and Sukchŏng, her brother's concubine. The only thing I noticed then was Lady Chang's pleasure in receiving letters from Sukchŏng. Then Sukchŏng moved into the palace to live with Lady Chang. They often ordered me and Chŏnryang to follow them at night with a basketful of something I did not know what to the palace ponds and...
the court yard behind the building where the queen resided. They buried what we had carried in the basket beside the pond, under the north wall of the queen's residence. Once I overheard Chwiyŏng reporting to Lady Chang that the work was finished. To this Lady Chang said: Do Siyŏng and Chŏrhyang know what we have been doing? To this Chwiyŏng replied: We did everything together, so they must know. They are faithful, and it is better not to deceive them. I was never let in on the secret, but I am sure there was some secret plot between the two women.

Then Siyŏng, a woman of forty, was questioned. She was crafty, but she was forced to tell the truth.

We wrapped a skeleton in silk cloth of the five colors and buried it with pieces of paper on which the name and birth date of the queen were written. We also prepared a dress with a cotton lining dusted with pulverized human bones as a present for the queen on her birthday. The queen declined the present the first year. The following year she declined again, but at the repeated entreaties of the crown prince, finally accepted it. The actual wording of the imprecations was prepared by Sukchŏng.

Thus it was Sukchŏng's turn to be interrogated, with the shamans and shamanesses.

We were originally in the service of Chang Hŭi-jae while he was in office, said a shamaness. And when he was exiled he gave us a large quantity of silver, asking us to help Lady Chang when the need arose. Thus out of ignorance end greed we came to be involved in this treasonous crime.

Sukchŏng said: Lady Chang often asked me to make children's clothes for her and sent precious gifts in return, so it became my habit to comply. Once she sent me a letter saying that she was not feeling well. She said the building where she resided often rocked and swayed at night and for that reason she felt the need to have a shamanistic rite performed to exorcize its evil spirits. That is how I came to move into the palace with the shamanesses. Once I moved in, Lady Chang confided to me her secret wish to kill the queen by imprecations, and I was forced to take part. I prepared the cursed dress, but the skeleton was obtained by my husband's former steward, Chŏlmyŏng.

Arrangements were at once made to arrest Chŏlmyŏng. He had already fled from the capital, but because of his distinctive appearance, he was caught within a few days. He confessed that there was a blood pledge between himself and Hŭi-jae. When Hŭi-jae was exiled, Chŏlmyŏng was asked to help Lady Chang. He added that for the sake of his promise to Chang Hŭi-jae, he had searched all the provinces to obtain skeletons.

These stories horrified the interrogators. When they excavated the spots pointed out to them, the gruesome skeleton was found; the cotton lining ripped out of the queen's dress gave out greyish powder when shaken. With a deep sigh the king remarked: I cannot blame anyone, for the seed was sown by me. How shall I be able to face the queen when we meet in the next world?

Nearly a dozen of the evil-doers were beheaded at the armory that very day, and about the same number of ladies-in-waiting and maids were exiled to distant places. The king said: Murdering a queen by calling down evil upon her is a grave and treasonous crime. Perhaps even more serious is the crime of those among the high-ranking officials who have in the name of propriety counselled me against presiding over this inquisition. I have decided to punish them, for their presence in my court will surely invite graver calamities.

Accordingly, some of them were exiled and all of them were deprived of rank and title and relieved of their offices.

Meanwhile, Lady Chang had been confined to her room, and the king's blood boiled with rage.
against her. Had it not been for his feelings for the crown prince, he would have had her slain instantly. Instead, he said: She deserves the severest form of execution, but I will mitigate her punishment to save the crown prince from humiliation. Let her die by taking poison; that way her body will not be scarred at death.

Thereupon a lady-in-waiting went to the room where Lady Chang was imprisoned. She took a bowl of poison and a message from the king: The magnitude of your crime demands a violent death. One would think that since your crime has been fully disclosed, you would choose death of your own accord. However, trusting to luck, you have not done so. This makes you even more loathsome. In order to save the crown prince from disgrace, I will diminish your punishment and let you die peacefully. Take this poison and remove yourself swiftly from this world.

Lady Chang had shown no sign of repentance, though her wicked plot had been uncovered; rather, she had savored the queen's death and trusted in her power as mother of the crown prince. Now the bowl of poison made her fly into a rage, and she screamed wildly: What have I done to deserve poison? If you must kill me, kill the crown prince first! And she threw the bowl into a corner of the room.

The panic-stricken lady-in-waiting fled back to the outer palace and reported to the king what had happened. The infuriated king said: Although I wanted to see her die, I did not think I could bear the sight of her evil face, so I sent the bowl of poison. She should not have resisted; now she is making more trouble and trying to shelter behind the crown prince. She is only making her crime graver. Now go with another bowl of poison and tell her to drink it, knowing that it is the last favor I shall grant her.

When she heard the royal command, Lady Chang stamped on the ground, screaming: Lady Min died young because she was destined to do so. By uniting against me, you may perhaps kill me now, but do you expect to be safe when my son succeeds to the throne? She continued to utter abuse, and again dashed the bowl of poison to the ground.

Hearing of this the king ordered a palanquin and went to Lady Chang's residence. He made her sit on the ground and shouted at her: Your treasonous murder warrants the most violent form of execution. I ought to have you slain and your body cut into pieces and exposed to public view, but for the sake of the crown prince I decided to favor you with the mildest form of death; after all this consideration, how dare you disobey my command and multiply your wrongdoings?

Impudently looking straight into the king's eyes, Lady Chang protested in a shrill voice: Lady Min's untimely death was nothing but just retribution for the wrongs she had done to me. In what way am I responsible for her death? You misuse the power given to you as king by doing this.

Turning back his sleeves, the king raged: What a wicked woman! Make her drink the poison!

Lady Chang pushed and kicked the ladies-in-waiting who came to her with the bowl, screaming: I am innocent. If I must die, I will die with the crown prince!

The enraged king commanded that force be used to make her drink the poison. When the ladies-in-waiting tried to subdue her, she went wild like a madwoman, pushing, kicking and scratching them. In a fit of passion, the king ordered the ladies-in-waiting to pour the poison down her throat. The ladies-in-waiting tried to obey by prizing her mouth open with the handle of a spoon. Lady Chang's attitude then changed suddenly; in panic, she began to entreat the king for mercy.

Think not only of my crime, Your Majesty, but of the love that once existed between us. That and the
crown prince are they not reasons enough to spare my life?

The king refused to listen. With tears streaming down her face, she implored him: I will drink the poison if you insist, but before I die, grant me as a final favor an audience with the crown prince.

These words were spoken in a tone so pitiful that the onlookers were touched in spite of themselves. The king, however, remained firm and repeated: Make her drink!

Finally, three bowls of poison were poured into her mouth. She screamed and fell down at the foot of the steps, vomiting blood. One bowl is potent enough to cause death; the three bowls she had taken killed her instantly, and she lay dead in a pool of dark blood. She had begun as a lowly maid in the court, and risen to a prominent position with honor and glory; but, reaching far above her station, her insatiable greed drove her into plotting the murder of the queen. This in turn resulted in the execution of many people. In view of her life, her death can be seen only as a natural and righteous retribution by Heaven.

Glancing at the body as he rode away to the outer palace, the king said: Remove it instantly from the palace.

The body was salted and quickly carried out of the palace. The following day, however, the king sent these orders: Her crime was wicked and treasonous, but give her a proper funeral to save the crown prince from disgrace.

Who would ever mourn the death of Lady Chang? Her body strangely decayed overnight and gave forth an offensive odor that everybody interpreted as a sign of heavenly justice.

About the same time, Chang Hŭi-jae, Lady Chang's brother, was executed and his body torn to pieces and exposed around the execution ground. The citizens of the capital came to see this sight and believed that he had at last been given his due. He had risen from being a mere laborer in the palace and had enjoyed the power of high office. He could have retained his power and glory had he acted within the limits of his means and station. Greed and ambition were the causes of his fall. Is not his end a lesson for all of us?