

## Basics of chapters 81-86:

Bao-yu's education begins as do discussions about his marriage possibilities

Dai-yu has a dramatic dream regarding Bao-yu's heart, a dream that seems to be shared

Dai-yu is ill, while Bao-yu, Yuan-chun, Qiao-jie are, too, but less so

Xue Pan's women arguing and Pan kills someone and goes on trial

Huan's continued clumsiness

Bao-yu's father is promoted

Dai-yu is interested in the qin.

## Brief summaries of chapters 87–94, to be used for discussion

### 87 (Bao-chai, Dai-yu laments; Adamantina's excitement)

- Bao-chai sends a poem lament to Dai-yu and Dai-yu considers her own sad situation (including when she sees handkerchiefs with poems written by Bao-yu and given to her)
- With a cancelled school day, Bao-yu goes to Dai-yu's place to discover Xi-chun and Adamantina playing go. Adamantina asks him, in Zen fashion, "Where have you come from?"
- Adamantina and Bao-yu continue on to Naiad's House and hear Dai-yu playing the qin. She breaks a string.
- Adamantina is apparently over-stimulated by her time with Bao-yu and falls ill

### 88 (Bao-yu's success at studies; discord of servants; Xi-feng's private worries)

- Various individuals will copy out sutras for Grandmother Jia's 81st birthday
- Bao-yu is making progress in school. Li Wan's boy Lan is also doing well. Huan is asking Bao-yu for help
- Discord among Bao Er, He San and Zhou Rui over accounting inaccuracies (causing negative gossip not about them but about acting head of family Cousin Zhen's incompetence as a leader)
- the Jia clan tries to profit from Zheng's new promotion, including Jia Yun who is refused by Xi-feng. Jia Yun and Crimson have feelings for each other.
- Xi-feng hears about trouble at the Water-Moon Priory, including the apparitions, sends monetary support. Apparitions at the Jia estate, too.

89 (Bao-yu's memories of Skybright; Dai-yu's desire to die when she hears a false rumor of Bao-yu's engagement)

- most of the winter Zheng is busy at the ministry
- mid-10th month, Bao-yu is depressed when he sees the cloak that the now dead Skybright has mended for him. He recovers after writing an ode for her. (Skybright had been, probably unfairly, removed from service in Chpt 76 and dies in Chpt 77.)
- Dai-yu is interested in the qin but Bao-yu wonders if music has any value.
- Dai-yu overhears the incorrect rumor that a wife for Bao-yu has been settled and it is not her. She is determined to die.

90 (Dai-yu recovers; Bao-yu's marriage machinations advance; Xue Ke becomes the object of illicit designs)

- The error is corrected and Dai-yu recovers. This spurs some to settle Bao-yu's betrothal more quickly, and though there is concern about Dai-yu's reaction, they determine that social rule must be followed and Bao-yu must first marry, then, after that, they can turn their attention to Dai-yu's own marriage needs (a disastrous idea).
- Grandmother Jia asks Xi-feng, even if ill, to spend more time policing the Garden and through this we see that there is disarray there among servants.
- Jin-gui (Xue Pan's husband – Pan is in jail for now) and her maid Moonbeam have designs on Xue Ke

91 (Jin-gui and Moonbeam continue to entangle Xue Ke; Xue Pan in deeper trouble)

- Jin-gui and Moonbeam continue to plot. Jin-gui adopts a brother, Xia San.
- Xue Pan's troubles deepen since his sentence has been overturned at a higher level of court. Further need for bribery.
- Timeline for Bao-chai and Bao-yu decided: betrothal during the winter, early the next year exchange of presents, marriage after Grandmother Jia's birthday
- Dai-yu and Bao-yu discuss matters of illusion along Zen lines.

92 (Chess and Pan You-an die; the Jia cannot afford to buy expensive items and seem in steep decline)

- Qiao-jie (Xi-feng's daughter) seems very capable. (You might remember that she was born on an unlucky day: 7th month, 7th day. Also, she should be only 2 years old at this point in the narrative, if it were keeping fidelity of the ages.) She also tells Bao-yu that Fivey might be coming his way. He is delighted.
- The tragic double-suicide of Chess and Pan You-an

- Jia Zheng and a literati are playing go. Feng Zi-ying visits and tries to sell them some very expensive articles. (A "Mother" pearl, a remarkably thin fabric, and two other objet d'art.) It is clear that the Jia family no longer has the financial means to buy such things. (Xi-feng notes how they are investing in land instead.)
- Yu-cun, the young student-to-become-official that we met at the beginning of volume 1 is once again promoted. His winding fortunes are recounted.
- The troubles with the Jias are getting quite explicit with comments such as this from Zheng: "We are living on borrowed time ..." (4:260)

### 93 (theater performances; theft of rent payments; Bao-yu's double; problems of truth; corruption among nuns and those who oversee them)

- Bao-yu attends a theatric performance sponsored by Earl of Lin-an, where he meets Jiang Yu-han (with whom he exchanged a sash in chpt 28, who was then a female impersonator actor). Bao-yu discovers the value of music.
- Rent headed for the Jia household is detained by corrupt highway patrol.
- The Zhen family, now collapsed, sends a favorite servant, Bao Yong, to serve the Jia. Bao Yong suggests that Zhen is too good a man and when Zheng says that honesty is a virtue, Yong counters that "Too much of it doesn't always go down well."
- Bao Yong tells the story of the other Bao-yu, Zhen Bao-yu, whose life seems to parallel our Bao-yu's life (chpt 56). Remember that "Jia" means provisional or false and "Zhen" means true.
- Jia Qin is sleeping with nuns at the Iron Threshold Temple. (Please note the appendix on this temple.) He brings shame to the Jia family. But the matter is resolved in a way not to root out the immorality of the event but rather preserve the Jia name. The 24 Buddhist and Daoist novices are sent away, in theory to their families, but we are not told their true fate. Zheng couldn't oversee this event because he was called to office, Xi-feng has illicit affairs at the Water-moon Priory so she doesn't want a high profile punishment. Etc. The matter is taken care of quietly.

### 94 (trees bloom out-of-season; Bao-yu loses his jade)

- (portions of the comments immediately above play out at the beginning of this chapter)
- Nightingale is getting tired of Dai-yu's lovesickness, and she doubts Bao-yu's ability to be a good husband anyway.
- Grandmother Jia has a gathering to celebrate the out-of-season blooming of trees in front of Bao-yu's Green Delights. Some take this as a positive sign (Grandmother Jia, Lady Wang), others find this an ill-omen (Xi-feng, Tan-chun, Jia Zheng, etc).
- Bao-yu loses his jade stone and it is searched for everywhere. Divination is also tried.

