Basics of chapters in Volume 5 so far (99-111):

99: Zheng leaves and is too honest in the provinces • Tan-chun’s groom is decided (to someone in the distant south) • Xue Pan found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

100: Aunt Xue very upset about the Pan verdict and that the Xue finances are in ruin • Jin-gui tries to seduce Xue Ke • Ying-chun suffers in marriage

101: Alone in the garden at night, Xi-feng is accosted and warned by the spirit of Qin Ke-qing • Wang Ren, Xi-feng’s brother, is corrupt • Fivey comes under Bao-yu’s care • Perfecta’s Buddhist divination • Nannie Li is secretly mistreating Qiao-jie.

102: Tan-chun leaves • You-shi is attacked by a spirit and it is determined that the Garden is haunted. • Jia Zheng is impeached and demoted, because he could not handle his inferiors.

103: Jin-gui accidentally poisons herself • Selfish and corrupt Jia Yu-cun meets the man who first helped him

104: Zheng is impeached and demoted • Tan-chun’s marriage going well. • Bao-yu seems to be getting better. • Li Wan’s son, Jia Lan, is very promising. • Huan remains a problem.

105: Ning-guo house is raided and Jia members arrested • Grandmother Jia falls ill

106: Losses due to the raid: Sir She’s property will be confiscated and he is stripped of his hereditary title (which guarantee’s annual income from the throne); She’s domestic staff is taken into public service; Lian will be deprived of position and rank and his place is ransacked • It becomes clear that the Jia estate has been involved in deficit spending for a long time

107: More punishment results: Jia Zhen (Cousin Zhen) is stripped of his hereditary rank and sent to maritime region to redeem himself; Sir She is exiled to Mongolian frontiers to redeem himself; Jia Rong is acquitted, as being too young; Jia Zheng, who has served loyally, is absolved of being connected in any way • Grandmother Jia, learning of the real state of affairs of the Jia estate, takes control • The emperor transfers one of the hereditary titles to Zheng

108: Shi Xiang-yun visits, marriage is going well • Bao-chai’s party is awkward; no one in partying mood • Bao-yu takes a walk in the garden and thinks he hears crying at Dai-yu’s former residence, Naiad’s House

109: Bao-yu is feeling amorous in this chapter towards Dai-yu, Skybright, Fivey, Bao-chai • Grandmother Jia health fails rapidly • Ying-chun dies, abused by her husband • Grandmother Jia is near death
110: Grandmother Jia dies • Xi-feng mismanages the funeral and is bullied by Ladies Xing and Wang • Shi Xiang-yun, who had a happy marriage, has a husband whose health if failing. (This is not the first mention of his health problems.)

111: Faithful kills herself • He San helps in a robbery scheme of Grandmother Jia’s personal belongings • Adamantina visits Xi-chun and while there, the robbery occurs. Adamantina is glimpsed by the thieves.

**Brief summaries of chapters for this the final week 112–120, to be used for discussion**

112

Xi-feng, Xi-chun, Jia Lian and many others are trying to do some damage control regarding the theft of Grandmother Jia’s residence

Adamantina is abducted by one of the thieves who returns a second night for her, using a sleep-inducing smoke.

Xi-chun resolves to become a nun

Aunt Zhao is possessed by an evil spirit who is questioning her about her relationship to Mother Ma

113

Aunt Zhao dies

Xi-feng resolves to die and sees You Er-jie, whom she had plotted against, in a dream and, later, other specters from her past

Xi-feng grants an audience to Grannie Liu and enjoys her company, and entrusts Qiao-jie to her. (Grannie Liu was something of a god-mother to her.)

Bao-yu makes advances on Nightingale

114

Xue Ke and Xing Xiu-yan marry in a simple ceremony

Xi-feng dies, Lian mourns

Wang Ren tries to take Qiao-jie, the first of many to try this

Patience pawns her belongings for Xi-feng’s funeral and, in so doing, becomes Lian’s confidant, to the chagrin of Autumn
Zhen Ying-jia is favored by the emperor, moves to the capital, and brings his son Zhen Bao-yu

*In this chapter, Bao-yu begins to have strange notions (from Bao-chai’s perspective); that is, he seems interested in spiritual matters*

115

The two stories about Adamantina is that she was abducted and that she went with the thieves of her own (amorous) will.

Xi-chun moves towards becoming a nun.

Bao-yu decides that his double, Zhen Bao-yu, is a “career worm” (5:274) Cousin Zhen match-makes fo Z. Bao-yu with a relative of his

Bao-yu is seriously ill and a monk visits, demanding 10,000 taels in exchange for the real (still missing) jade. Bao-yu sees the stone and begins to recover. (Again, a further step on the spiritual path.)

116

“Bao-yu’s spirit had already quit its mortal frame. Then that means he was dead, you say? The exact situation, dear Reader, was as follows: the spirit had flitted in its incorporeal fashion out to the reception hall, where it saw the jade-bearing monk and saluted him with a bow.” (5:284) Bao-yu goes, again, to the land of Disenchantment (labeled “The Paradise of Truth”), and sees, again, the registers. The monk returns him to the mortal realm with a shove.

Bao-yu is transformed and shows a rapid recovery but has begun to lose interest in the women around him.

Xi-chun is edging closer to becoming a nun, to the objections of everyone around her.

Zheng resolves to proper disposition of the coffins for everyone. (Lian thinks it too expensive.)

The monk returns again for his money.

117

... But Bao-yu understands the monk does not want money, he wants the jade. But his is forestalled by the women around him. Bao-yu instead offers himself to the monk. The monk leaves and Bao-yu reports “All is well!” (5:305)

Bao-yu hints that he will become a monk.
Sir She is sick with pneumonia.

Lady Xing’s brother (Dumbo) Xing De-quan, Xi-feng’s immoral brother Wang Ren, Jia Yun (resentful of Xi-feng’s not giving him employment and belittling him), Jia Qiang and Jia Huan (Bao-yu’s unhappy half-brother) make a miserable group. They gamble, etc.

We hear indirect evidence that Adamantina was killed by the thieves. (5:316)

118

Xi-chun becomes a nun, to Bao-yu’s (and only Bao-yu’s) delight.

The Jia Huan gang plot to give Qiao-jie away as a low-level concubine to a prince. Lady Xing “had no real mind of her own” (5:324) and acquiesces. Patience sees through the plot but Lady Wang is too weak to stop it.

Tan-chun is returning to the capital. (Her husband has a new appointment.)

Bao-chai and Bao-yu debate virtue. (5:329) Bao-yu, clearly committed to a spiritual path, first resolves to do well on the civil service exam.

119

Bao-yu and Li Wa’s son Jia Lan go to take the exam.

Huan’s plot to give away Qiao-jie is foiled by Grannie Liu and the plot is exposed and the members shamed.

The house hears that, after the exam, Bao-yu disappeared.

Tan-chun arrives and is a comfort to the distressed Lady Wang.

News arrives that Bao-yu placed 7th and Jia Lan 130th on the exam. Zhen Bao-yu also passes.

Due to Bao-yu’s success at the exam, in part, the emperor gives the entire Jia family (including Xue Pan) amnesty, restores the hereditary rank to Cousin Zhen, and returns all confiscated property and wealth. (5:351)

Various ill-behaves receive punishment. Patience is rewarded for her excellent service by Lian who determines to make her his proper wife after the mourning period. Lady Xing feels remorse and fixes her bad relationship with Lady Wang.

120

Aroma becomes ill when she thinks she hears that all of Bao-yu’s maids will be fired
Bao-chai is sad about Bao-yu but focuses on finding the money to pay her brother Pan’s enormous fine.

Everyone is buried in their proper place, including Dai-yu.

The immortal Bao-yu pays a visit to his father, kowtowing to him.

Xue Pan reunites with family and vows to mend his ways. He takes Caltrop as a proper wife.

Bao-chai weeps for Bao-yu but is described as fundamentally sound. (Bao-chai, you will remember, is pregnant from the night Bao-yu had felt bad about flirting with his maids.)

A husband is found for Aroma. Although she has secretly determined to end her life, she never finds a good time to do it, and eventually discovers she is with a good man. In fact, it is Jiang Yu-han, Bao-yu’s friend from long long ago, with whom he had exchange cummerbunds (and been thrashed for it).

Jia Yu-cun, now stripped of all worldly status for his bad deeds, reencounters his old beneficiary Zhen Shin-yin, who explains the story of Bao-yu (the Stone). Bao-yu’s karma was to do well on the exam and leave behind an heir.

The history of how the story of the stone came to be told is revealed.