

# **The Lingering Death**

By P'u Sung-ling

There was a man in our village who led an exceedingly disreputable life. One morning when he got up rather early, two men appeared, and led him away to the market-place, where he saw a butcher hanging up half a pig. As they approached, the two men shoved him with all their might against the dead animal, and lo! his own flesh began to blend with the pork before him, while his conductors hurried off in an opposite direction. By-and-by the butcher wanted to sell a piece of his meat; and seizing a knife, began to cut off the quantity required. At every touch of the blade our disreputable friend experienced a severe pang, which penetrated into his very marrow; and when, at length, an old man came and haggled over the weight given him, crying out for a little bit more fat, or an extra portion of lean, then, as the butcher sliced away the pork ounce by ounce, the pain was unendurable in the extreme. By about nine o'clock the pork was all sold, and our hero went home, whereupon his family asked him what he meant by staying in bed so late. He then narrated all that had taken place, and on making inquiries, they found that the pork-butcher had only just come home; besides which our friend was able to tell him every pound of meat he had sold, and every slice he had cut off. Fancy a man being put to the lingering death like this before breakfast!