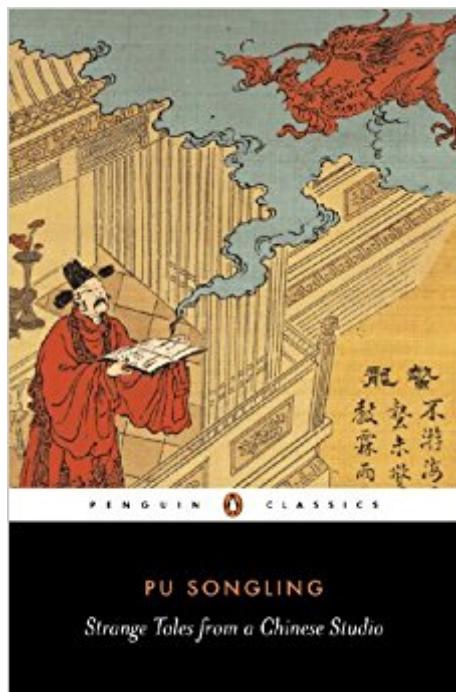


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Strange Tales From A Chinese Studio (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Exquisite and amusing miniatures regarded as the pinnacle of classical Chinese fiction. With their elegant prose, witty wordplay and subtle charm, the 104 stories in this selection from *The Strange Tales of Pu Songling* (1640-1715) reveal a world in which nothing is as it seems. Here a Taoist monk conjures up a magical pear tree, a scholar recounts his previous incarnations, a woman out-foxes the fox-spirit that possesses her, a child bride gives birth to a thimble-sized baby, a ghostly city appears out of nowhere and a heartless daughter-in-law is turned into a pig. In his tales of humans coupling with shape-shifting spirits, bizarre phenomena, haunted buildings and enchanted objects, Pu Songling pushes back the boundaries of human experience and enlightens as he entertains. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Pu Songling (1640-1715) lived and wrote during a very tumultuous time in Chinese history. He witnessed the devastating effects of the Manchu invasion and the collapse of the Ming Dynasty, peasant uprisings, natural disasters, famines, banditry and official corruption. Yet, rather than discussing such events directly in his work, Songling instead created a fictional world which was no

less uncertain, chaotic and melancholy than the one he actually lived in. His stories are populated with monsters, fox spirits, ghosts, trolls, talking animals and numerous other strange beings which alternately haunt or help his human protagonists. Yet, whatever bizarre or inexplicable situation Songling's characters encounter, they usually meet with a happy ending: either by vanquishing, or outsmarting, an enemy; or changing their dissolute ways. Unfortunately for Songling and his contemporaries, the real events of late-17th, early-18th century China rarely concluded on such optimistic notes. Readers interested in learning more about this era should also check out Jonathan Spence's "The Death of Woman Wang" (which frequently cites Songling's essays and stories). Focusing on the text itself, the stories complied in this volume do not, by any stretch of the imagination, fall into the horror or weird tale genres familiar to Western readers (so don't expect scares or chills). They should instead be considered re-imaginings of folk stories which usually carry some sort of moral message or injunction. For modern readers unfamiliar with (or uninterested in) the origins and significance of Chinese myth and lore, these pieces can be read and enjoyed purely as fantasy.

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