CHAPTER 3

A Man and a Woman Who Became the Gods of the Sun and the Moon

Lady Myŏngwŏl’s real name was Haedanggûm. In the first year of their acquaintance, Scholar Kungsan brought up the matter of marriage with Lady Myŏngwŏl. In the second year he received a letter of acceptance. Then in the third year they were married. When he went to her parents’ house for the wedding, he found he had nothing with which to wrap the letter of matrimony. So he gathered the pieces of silk hanging at Kuksadang1 to wrap it. He found he had no box for the present of silk to the bride. Looking under the veranda he found an old wooden clog, and used that as the box for the silk. He found he had no horse to carry the letter of matrimony, so he loaded it on a rooster. And he married Lady Myŏngwŏl.

Scholar Kungsan stayed at his wife’s home for a few days, then returned home with his wife, and celebrated his wife’s first coming to his home.2

Thereafter, because his bride was so pretty, Scholar Kungsan could not bear to leave her and so couldn’t work for a living.

One day Bride Myŏngwŏl told her husband, ‘Go and gather firewood today.’ But Scholar Kungsan said, ‘I cannot go to gather firewood.’

‘Why can’t you go?’ asked Bride Myŏngwŏl.

‘I can’t go and leave you behind’, replied Scholar Kungsan.

‘I will paint you a picture of me’, said Bride Myŏngwŏl.

And when Bride Myŏngwŏl had painted the picture, Scholar Kungsan took it with him when he went to gather firewood. While he was gathering firewood, he hung it on a branch so he could cut some wood. But when he looked at the picture, a violent wind arose and the picture flew away, landing downriver at the house of Scholar Pae.

When Scholar Pae saw the picture, he exclaimed, ‘How beautiful she is, Bride Myŏngwŏl from upriver!’

Scholar Pae filled a boat with gold ore and went to play chess with Scholar Kungsan.

‘I can’t play, because I have nothing to put at stake’, said Scholar Kungsan.

‘If I lose, I will give you a shipload of gold ore. If you lose, you will give me your wife’, said Scholar Pae.

Scholar Kungsan agreed, but when they played, he lost three games three times. There was nothing to be done about it, he had to give away his wife. He went home, spread his bed, and would neither get up nor eat.
‘Why won’t you eat your food?’ asked Bride Myôngwŏl.

‘I played chess with Scholar Pae from downriver. He came with a shipload of gold ore, and if Scholar Pae lost he said he would give me the shipload of gold ore, and if I lost I said I would give him my wife. And I lost. It’s because I will lose you that I am like this’, said Scholar Kungsan.

‘Great! Wonderful! Fine! It will be better to live with someone who has so much, instead of Scholar Kungsan, who has nothing’, said Bride Myôngwŏl.

Scholar Kungsan cried even louder.

‘Look here, my husband, listen to my words! When Scholar Pae comes to take me away, we shall dress up the oldest servant girl of our house in all my finery and you, my husband, will joke with her. I, walking with a limp, hiding my eyes, with an old skirt on, will go to draw water. Then he will be fooled and take the servant along. Now eat your food!’ said Bride Myôngwŏl.

As soon as Scholar Kungsan heard this he cried, ‘Great! Wonderful! Fine! Oh, my dear wife, where does this idea come from? Does it come from your heart? Does it come from your kidneys? Great! Wonderful! Fine!’

Then Scholar Pae from downriver came to take Bride Myôngwŏl.

When he demanded that she be given to him, Scholar Kungsan pointed to the girl with whom he had been joking and said, ‘Here, take her with you!’

Then Scholar Pae looked at her and said, ‘No, I cannot do it. If I take your wife with whom you are supposed to grow old and live a hundred years, you will resent me. Therefore you should give me the servant girl who goes to draw water, down there in the yard.’

There was nothing to be done; Scholar Pae went to take Bride Myôngwŏl with him.

But Bride Myôngwŏl said, ‘Give me but five days, then I will go with you.’

‘Do as you wish’, said Scholar Pae.

When he had gone, during these five days, Bride Myôngwŏl slaughtered a cow, cut thin strips of meat and dried them, and used these to pad Scholar Kungsan’s trousers and jacket. In his collar she put a spool of silk thread and a pack of needles.

Then Scholar Pae came to take her away. He said to her, ‘Now we two will live together. Let’s take Scholar Kungsan with us and leave him on an island.’

‘Let’s do so, then’, replied Bride Myôngwŏl.

So they took Scholar Kungsan along and left him on an island. Because he had nothing at all to eat he tore open his clothes, and found the beef jerky. After he had eaten the jerky, he again had nothing to eat and so with the silk thread and the needles he made a fishing line and fishhooks and kept himself alive by fishing.

Scholar Kungsan was keeping himself alive when a crane from heaven alighted and laid her eggs. After the eggs hatched, the mother crane was arrested because she had committed an offence against the King of Heaven and the baby cranes were left to starve. But Scholar Kungsan caught fish, and fed the baby cranes. The mother crane, cleared of charges, returned and