

CHINESE MYTHOLOGY (THE JIANGSHI)

It had been a long day. Winter had set in early, and the days were getting shorter. The darkness wrapped the village in obscurity. The lantern held before him lit his way home. In the distance he heard the call of a rooster, which brought him a superstitious feeling of comfort.

The other men in the village had left work early, fearing the fantastical tales of the Jiangshi; but he had no time for such nonsense.

They said that the cadaver of the deceased -if improperly buried, cursed, or possessed by demons- could return to life. Stiff and necrotic, the Jiangshi would hop, with outstretched arms, towards its victims in the night; feeding on their blood and qi; the life energy.

The only things that could repel the Jiangshi were the trotting hooves of a black donkey, the wood of the peach tree, or the call of the rooster.

As he entered the village, he pushed to the back of his mind such thoughts, dismissing them as nothing more than superstitions passed from parent to child to scare them into staying home after dark. Still, when the rooster crowed, he couldn't help but feel some mild relief.

The dim lights of the swinging lanterns that hung outside of the houses in the village guided him to his door. For a moment, he imagined a

Jiangshi watching him from the corner; the reanimated cadaver of some long dead migratory worker, improperly buried many miles from the place of his birth, crouching in the shadows, desiccated and rotting, dressed in the robes of the Qing Dynasty; his angered soul, aching to return to his homeland for burial.

His home was in sight, and he quickened his pace as he approached his door; the thoughts of the outstretched arms, the hopping feet, the lipless mouth and protruding teeth becoming more and more tangible as he approached his door.

As his door came into view, he broke into a run, running through the door, and breathing a sigh of deep relief. He panted, reminding himself that such monsters were nothing more than tall tales.

In the race to the sanctuary of his house, his lantern had been extinguished. He stood with his back to the wall, trying to control his breathing. When he'd calmed himself down, he made his way through to the bedroom.

Silhouetted against the moonlight, which poured through the window, a figure awaited him; with outstretched arms and beastlike teeth glistening in the moonlight.

Q: When can a corpse return to life?

A: If it is improperly buried, cursed or possessed by demons.

Q: What is 'qi'?

A: The life energy

Q: What can repel the Jiangshi?

A: The call of the rooster, the trotting hooves of a black donkey, or the wood of a peach tree