



# Legends of Spirits and Artifacts: The Zhuyou Healers

仙靈傳奇之古物奇探：祝由師

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**Adaptation:** Combined with the National Palace Museum's reality escape game

**BFT2.0 Translator:** William Serrano

*Legends of Spirits*, a must-read classic in Chinese fantasy, has sold over 500,000 copies. Its spin-off series, created in collaboration with the National Palace Museum, seamlessly blends ancient artifacts with fantastical adventures. In this middle-grade novel, the young protagonists encounter danger at every turn as they strive to uncover hidden truths. Set against the backdrop of the *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* painting and featuring the mysterious ancient healing technique known as “The Zhuyou Healers,” the series delivers thrilling, action-packed stories.

Each volume is enriched with professional analysis and commentary by museum researchers, transforming the series into a captivating blend of adventure and educational art appreciation lessons.



Author **Yuju Chen**

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Yuju Chen settled in the United States after obtaining a master's degree in art. Through painting and writing, she aims to build a bridge for children to connect with Eastern culture and enjoy reading through familiar subjects. Her first full-length fantasy novel, *Cultivation*, received widespread acclaim. In 2016, she created *Legends of Spirits 1: The Soul of Poetry*, which won major annual awards from the top three distributors and was recommended as an excellent publication by the 41st Golden Tripod Awards. After writing eight fantasy novels, she began documenting her life in essays, with her first essay collection, *Zero Degrees Fahrenheit*. Her works include: *Xiulian series 1-4*, *Cultivation Prequel*, *Legend of Fairy Series Volumes 1-6*, *Yuju Chen's Travel Landscapes Series Volumes 1-3*, *My Persimmon Pancake*, and *The Guardians of the Stone of the Immortality*.

# An Adventure of Knowledge: Solving Mysteries with Artifacts

by Shiori

*Legends of Spirits and Artifacts: The Zhuyou Healers* is a spin-off of the *Legends of Spirits* series, particularly focusing on five cultural artifacts housed in the National Palace Museum. The five protagonists travel through the famous *Up the River During Qingming* painting, exploring the events depicted in the artwork. Although readers who haven't seen the original *Legends of Spirits* series can still enjoy the story, halfway through the book, I couldn't help but find the interactions among these teenagers endearing. I ended up revisiting the original series to learn more. The poetic imagery and the depth of the painting draw you in, sparking a desire to explore more poetry or to understand various works of art as tools or clues for solving

puzzles. This series takes these elements to the next level, delving into rare artifacts and their historical contexts, encouraging readers to explore the connections between these items and the mysteries they embody.

The story also incorporates elements that are beloved by young readers, such as magical cultivation, adventure, and emotional connections. The themes of good versus evil and justice are woven into these events, prompting readers to reflect on the significance of these artifacts and to understand the complexity of human nature. Not everyone starts as a villain; kindness can be a chosen value, and intense positive emotions can quickly turn into negative anger and hatred. Through

these portrayals, the series highlights the complexity and subtlety of human emotions.

A particularly compelling aspect of the story is the clash between modern and ancient values. The characters within the painting reflect the social norms of their time, while the modern protagonists openly critique outdated and sometimes harmful beliefs. For instance, they challenge the expectation that women should prioritize marriage and criticize the villain's actions, which resemble those of a terrifying stalker, nearly causing the painted world to collapse. While these observations are often delivered with humor, they carry deeper meanings that resonate as readers reflect on them.

The modern protagonists, despite being endowed with magical abilities, do not view themselves as superior. Instead, they use their powers to help others, even if their acts of kindness are confined to the painted or dreamlike realm. Their strong sense of empathy stands out, embodying a level of emotional maturity that even adults may find challenging to maintain.

After finishing *Legends of Spirits and Artifacts: The Zhuyou Healers*, the first thing I wanted to do was visit the National Palace Museum and see the *Up the River During Qingming* for myself. The book seriously analyzes the differences between various versions of the painting and its vivid depiction of details, which made me wish I had the magical powers of the characters to explore the painting firsthand.

*This foreword has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.*

*Shiori, a member of the Mystery Writers of Taiwan, has served as a book selector for the Reading Detective School, and written mystery-related articles for Readmoo's Reading Frontline and Unitas. Shiori has been involved in various mystery-related activities and is dedicated to promoting different forms of mystery writing. Recently, she has become passionate about exploring e-books and the possibilities surrounding self-publishing.*

# 1

“So this is *Up the River During Qingming*. It’s so long!” Tsung-yuan said in amazement.

Tsung-yuan, Tzu-shan, Ye-ting, Yi-hsuan, and Ya-ching had come to visit Taiwan’s National Palace Museum together. They had seen *Jade Album of Slips Inscribed with the Ritual Shan Prayer to Land Deity* by the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang and *Bronze Light-penetrating Mirror with Seven Knobs Before*. This time, they decided to step into the calligraphy and painting gallery to view *Up the River During Qingming*.

“I thought *Up the River During Qingming* was painted by Zhang Zeduan and is exhibited in Beijing’s Palace Museum,” Tzu-shan remarked, glancing at Ya-ching.

“This is the Qing Court version,” Ya-ching replied, pointing to the museum label. Everyone crowded together for a closer look.

“So this one was painted later,” Tzu-shan said, nodding thoughtfully. “The original work from the Song dynasty by Zhang Zeduan is in Beijing’s Palace Museum, but it was so beloved by people in the later Ming and Qing dynasties that many painters attempted to replicate it, resulting in

multiple versions. In the Qing era, the Yongzheng Emperor commissioned the court painters Chen Mu, Sun Hu, Jin Kun, Dai Hong, and Cheng Zhidao to produce what we now call the Qing Court Version of the work. Together, they completed it in the first year of the Qianlong Emperor’s reign. Compared to the original by Zhang Zeduan, their version is much longer. It shows a variety of customary celebrations at the Qingming Festival. Check it out! There are actors performing opera, a procession, and even western-style buildings!”

She pointed at the left portion of the piece.

“There’s a bathhouse over here, look!” Yi-hsuan said excitedly.

“There are people fighting and kids peeing here. That’s so funny!” Tsung-yuan laughed.

“So, would you say this is an imitation?” Yi-hsuan asked, tilting her head as she studied the painting.

“The Qing Court Version might not be the original, but it showcases masterful technique and vibrant colors. The principles of perspective are applied to depict every road and building. This has also allowed later people to gain a better understanding of the urban life and splendid street sights in the Qing and Ming dynasties. It should definitely be considered a historically significant painting,” explained Ye-ting.

The gallery was dimly lit, with only soft light shining on

works inside glass-fronted cabinets.

The glass barrier separated the visitors from the ancient artifacts, creating a boundary between the paintings and reality.

“I’d love to be able to go inside! It’d be so awesome to cross that arch bridge,” said Tzu-shan, seemingly enthralled by the painting.

“That’s right, Ye-ting,” Tsung-yuan chimed in. “We don’t come here every day. Could you please take us into the painting?”

“Right now? This gallery is full of people. We’ll cause a panic if we all vanish suddenly,” replied Ye-ting, glowering at Tsung-yuan.

“I can help with that. Tzu-yi unintentionally taught me some magic when he entered my body before. I can distract everyone with magic and make them look away so we can disappear unnoticed,” Yi-hsuan said enthusiastically.

“Is Tzu-yi still around? How can you still use magic?” asked Tzu-shan with an inquiring look. Everyone turned their eyes to Yi-hsuan.

“Tzu-yi is gone for good. You’ve nothing to worry about,” answered Yi-hsuan coolly, her expression resolute. “Magic, in any form, is a power or tool. Those who wield it with a twisted mind will cause harm. But we only mean good, we can rely on its help.”

Ya-ching nodded, smiling in response.

“You said it. I agree with you!” Tzu-shan replied with a thumbs up.

“I also believe in you!” said Tsung-yuan, and gave Yi-hsuan’s shoulder a pat.

“So? Should I cast the spell?” asked Yi-hsuan while looking at everyone with nearly uncontainable excitement.

“I guess... Alright then, let’s head into the painting, but let’s not stay too long,” said Ye-ting.

“Relax, we’ll be gone for just five minutes,” Yi-hsuan replied with a wink.

“Where should we go first?” asked Tzu-shan. Everyone’s gaze centered on the arch bridge in the painting.

After some thought, Ye-ting added, “It’ll be hard to move inside the painting with what we’re wearing now. Let’s change clothes first.”

The kids looked down at their outfits, then nodded their heads in agreement.

Yi-hsuan turned her eyes to Ye-ting in silent understanding. Swinging her right hand, a light breeze blew by everyone. This magic differed from their own powers, but it was gentle, nothing ominous.

The five kids clasped their hands together. Ye-ting’s magical strength was felt strongly by the rest. In the blink of an eye, they were transported to a long, bustling street.

## 2

The children's outfits and the decorations on the street were identical to what they had seen in the painting. However, unlike the static, two-dimensional artwork, everything here was alive—three-dimensional and in motion. They could hear voices, the clatter of horses' hooves, and the lively calls of merchants. The air was filled with the mingling scents of fresh food, burning wood from eateries, and the earthy smell of muddy roads.

“Whoa! It's so cool in here,” Tsung-yuan exclaimed enthusiastically.

“That store over there,” said Ye-ting, pointing to a business across the street. “Last time we were here, the Painting Fairy took us there to change clothes.”

The other children looked across and saw a row of houses on the other side. The buildings were simple yet symmetrical, arranged in a picturesque sequence. Two shops shared one shopfront. The larger shop on the right had a vertical signboard that read “Old Paint Shop.”

The left one was only half its size, with a small sign on top saying “Apparel.”

“Make way, coming through!” called a hoarse voice. The five children, about to cross the street, stopped in their tracks as an ox-drawn cart rumbled past in front of them.

Two men were sitting in the cart, carrying many bags and boxes and looking like travelers. One of the men rode on an ox, wielding a riding crop to goad the front pair of oxen forward.

The children were slow to move out of the way as an ox cart trundled past, eliciting a furious look from the man with the riding crop. Yet everything was so new and exciting they hardly noticed or cared.

Ye-ting took the lead, guiding the group to the apparel store. The tiny place had a fabric curtain hanging from the door frame. The window next to the entrance had no covering, revealing a counter inside the shop and a short-necked middle-aged man behind it. He looked like the owner, and he held a piece of clothing as he spoke to a long-bearded man.

“I'll make it tighter here,” said the owner while pointing at the piece of clothing. As he noticed Ye-ting approaching the others, he waved his hand in a welcoming manner.

“We're back, Mr. Lin,” Yi-hsuan proclaimed to him smiling.

“Wow, you're very welcome. I see you brought some people this time. Are these your friends?” Mr. Lin asked curiously. The man with a short beard also checked them head