

Footsteps were heard in the dark alley, the footsteps of a man in a hurry. At nighttime, this particular town becomes completely empty, as all activities cease when night falls. In this quiet street, the footsteps of a man desperately running away from something can be heard very clearly, as well as his breaths. This man, with braided hair, and of average height, was an ordinary man. He may look ordinary, but his status is anything but, for he is being targeted by a certain organization that sees him as a threat.

Wuhan looked behind him during his run, making sure no one was following him. There was not even a hint of someone following him, yet he can feel the presence of an assassin. His eyes see nothing, but his ears picked up the subtle footwork of a master of stealth, and the footsteps grew louder, signaling Wuhan's approaching doom.

He stopped running when a man dressed as a ninja landed before him, wielding a blade of steel. Wuhan, startled, yet expecting his arrival, took a cautious step back. "Who the hell are you?" he demanded to know. But the answer instinctively came to him. "You're from the Assassin Lodge, aren't you?"

The ninja, upon hearing the name, dashed towards Wuhan and stabbed him.
Schleb

Wuhan stepped back and leaned against the wall, with one hand over his fatal wound. "Ugh...you..."

"You chose the wrong person to become enemies with."

"Y-You're associated with Lord Dumai..." Wuhan quickly made a run for it.

The ninja threw his sword forward, and it ended up inside of Wuhan's back.
Schleb It pierced his vital organ, and without uttering another sound, Wuhan fell and shut his eyes forever.

An officer came into the office, presenting his superior with a piece of paper. "Sir, we have a new case. A man has been murdered on Yuan Street. He was killed approximately five hours ago at midnight."

"Hmmm? Do we have an identity?" asked the senior officer.

"The victim's is Wuhan. He was stabbed in the stomach by a sword. Judging by the incision, it was done by a professional. This is more than a simple grudge between two men."

"Did you say his name is Wuhan?" asked the senior.

"Yes, sir." replied the officer.

"Wuhan is an enemy of Lord Dumai, one of the wealthiest families in this city. And rumors from the crime world say that he is a financial supporter of the **Assassin Lodge**."

The officer's face grew pale. "The Assassin Lodge?"

“Lord Dumai is considered highly influential in the crime world. Because of his relationship with the Lodge, he has very few enemies. Rumor has it that all his enemies have been targeted and killed by members of the Assassin Lodge.”

“Sir, I did not know that.”

“Needless to say, we will not be investigating this crime any further. Consider this case closed.” The senior officer put his stamp on the official paper, thus abandoning the investigation. He has been in the force for quite some time now, and being experienced as he is, he knows that this is the best choice to make if he values his own life.

■ DEMON SLAYER ■

The Assassin Lodge

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Summary

In a certain area of the MeiXing Forest, two carriages came by, accompanied by a group of guards. These carriages contained very important personnel from the Shen Kingdom who are on a highly classified mission.

In the first carriage, we have two female swordsmen. Li Cheng, who was sitting there with her arms crossed, is one with a long, complicated history. She is one who has long black hair, tied to a pony tail, and the face of someone innocent yet vicious. She wears a black ninja suit, and a red belt around her waist which holds her primary weapon, a sword.

Li can be said to be the loner of the group, often wandering on her own and

doing things her way. Very rarely does she work in a team, and when she does, she has an ulterior motive. Though seemingly cold-blooded on the outside, she is actually a very caring person, but it is something she will not admit, not even to herself. It is up to those close to her to get her to open her heart.

The woman sitting across from her is Xiao Ye, a girl who was blind for most of her life due to an incident during her childhood. Robbers broke into her house, attacked her brother and blinded her. Her brother, Jiang Ye, in order to save money for her, resorted to stealing money, and eventually had to flee the city. Later on the siblings were reunited, but he died protecting Xiao from a storm of arrows.

Despite being a fighter, her eyes were that of a normal woman, someone who is generally kind and worries about the well being of others. Her bright, blue eyes, are always radiant with life – and to think that those eyes have been in darkness for over ten years. Xiao wears plain, commoner's clothing, which reflects how she sees herself – as a regular person. She has long, black hair, which she ties up sometimes.

Although disabled, she is very brave and self-sufficient, and learned how to survive through her own efforts. She dons the name of “Blind Prodigy” and uses the Walking Crane, which she learned from her master, Taishi. Although she is calm most of the time, and has much leadership potential, she carries a lot of pain and grief inside of her, due to her brother's death, which she keeps to herself. If she can dig deep and face the pain and grief, a world of possibilities awaits her.

Inside the second carriage, Celina Ce was sleeping quietly, leaning upon the shoulder of the man she trusts the most, Alex Cheng. Celina, modest as she is, always thought of herself as an ordinary female, yet her identity is anything but. She is a woman of exceptional beauty, one who can look good without any makeup whatsoever. Her hair was black, silky, and long, and tied up to the shape of a pony tail. She was wearing a white qipao (china dress). It is simple yet elegant, as it is something that she wears frequently, in contrast to other females of royalty, who wear much more elaborate clothing.

Unlike other high class women, she is not one who decorates herself just to look good, or indulge herself in luxuries. As a matter of fact, she prefers a modest lifestyle, much like the times when she was a dancer at the theatre. Her personality can be said to be the quintessential model of a perfect wife, being a prime example of femininity. She is shy and timid around others, especially men. She never feels comfortable in a group setting and prefers to sit down one on one with those who matter to her. Celina is very selective of whom she trusts and opens up to, and she holds those people very dear to her heart, and will do anything to protect them if they are threatened in any way.

Although she has no confidence in herself, she can prove to be very brave when on the battlefield. As her Master Fa says, once she wields a sword, she is a very different person. Although timid and reserved, she will truly open her heart and blossom when the time is right.

The shoulder of whom she is resting upon is none other than that of Alex Cheng, a man of a few words, but one with a lot of passion in his heart. He had long, silver hair which partially covers his eyes. His hair style has been the same since he was a kid, he has never changed it, for he is not one about looks. From his appearance, he may not seem like a strong character, but his eyes contain a certain level of intensity about them.

Cheng is much more serious than most people, and does not take things lightly. However, he does have a playful side which he lets out when he feels safe and comfortable. He only trusts a few and is polite to strangers. That is why people often see him as distant and aloof, but the truth is far from it, if they only understood his true nature.

Much like his counterpart, Cheng does care about power and rank as much as he does discipline and honor. He is more disciplined than most, and that is how he was able to go from average swordsman to master swordsman in a short period of time. He trains nearly every day, practicing the moves and principles of his late masters Genzo and Death Messenger. He may don the title of hero, but he is capable of much greater things. If he has the proper authority...and if the time is right...he can change the world.

"Celina."

She heard the voice in her sleep, but did not react to it.

"Celina."

This time, she heard it louder and opened her eyes.

"We're here, Celina."

She removed her head from his shoulder.

"Look." said Alex, removing his window curtain, revealing the greenery outside.

Celina peered out the window on her side and her facial expression changed completely when she saw the beauty of nature. Her eyes were lit up, and she was smiling as she stared at the red cherry blossoms falling off the sakura trees. It is at noon time when the forest is most vibrant, the trees thriving in the sunlight, giving everything a colorful glow.

"Look at the cherry blossoms." said Alex.

"Wow." she said, smiling like a schoolgirl. "They are pretty." She had set her eyes on such a sight before. This area in the MeiXing forest is famous for its visual stimulation, and passer-bys often stay here for hours to stare at the works of nature. At noontime, the trees and the grass are greener than usual.

The palace had nice scenery and many high quality plants, but that is all artificial. These cherry blossoms are completely natural, and they flow where the wind tells them to go. Due to their extreme beauty and short life spans, cherry blossoms are symbolic for the fragile nature of life. It is a sign of good fortune and also an emblem of love, affection, and the start of spring.

For a moment there, Celina thought she was looking at a canvas of nature. Perhaps it is that she just woke up, or perhaps it is the first time she laid eyes on

such a forest, but no matter the reason, this is an experience that she will never forget. Just being able to experience this, she was glad that she made the decision to come here in the first place.

Celina kneeled before the eunuchs' presence.

"Are you certain that you want to be the ambassador of Shen?" asked Lord Yu.

"Yes, I am ready for this mission." she replied without looking up.

"You do realize the level of risk that this mission requires?" said Lord Sima, the most skeptical out of the three eunuchs. "You are to go to the city of **Tai Peng** to visit Duke Jinan. You are to create the terms of the peace treaty with the Duke and come up with the first draft of the treaty. In essence, you are responsible for creating peace between the Shen Kingdom and the Shu Kingdom."

"I understand the importance of this mission, and I promise I will do my best."

"It is also very risky for you to go since you will have to travel through the wilderness to reach the city." Sima replied.

Yu: "Rest assured, Lord Sima, that is what the bodyguards are for. We have already assigned some of our strongest to protect her. Plus, Lady Ce is to travel with the Demon Slayer, so she is in good hands. What is important is her willingness to accept this mission and her ability to negotiate."

Gaohai: "I do not question your ability. However, you are too timid in front of other people. The future of our kingdoms is at stake here."

Celina: "Ever since becoming a concubine I have never left the palace...only recently have I been able to leave the palace and see what the outside world is like. When I do leave the palace, I always have other people with me, and it is always within the capital. I realize that there's a whole world outside of Yi Ling...and I've always been too afraid to explore the unknown. But I feel this is my chance to step outside of Yi Ling and visit new places, and experience new things...and I truly want to accomplish something...so I do not feel like deadweight here. If you allow me to go, I promise I will not disappoint you, fellow lords."

Her speech seemed to have changed everyone's impression of her.

"Your motives are sincere." said Lord Yu. "Why not give her another chance?"

Sima: "Mmmm. Considering that no one else is willing to do this...and you that you are willing, I will grant you permission."

Gaohai: "Very well. If Lord Yu and Sima believe in you, then so shall I." He too,

like Sima, was moved by her sincere speech, as it shows that she has a pure heart, and thus, no ulterior motives for taking on this job. Lord Yu has always believed in her, and now, he can see why.

Yu: "Lady Ce, you are the first female ambassador in the kingdom, even the whole country. I truly believe that great things await you if you believe in

yourself."

Celina's serious face became a big, appreciative smile. "Thank you very much. I will not disappoint you!"

Celina went to the bridge where Alex was waiting.

"Ah Lady Ce," said Alex. "What news do you have?"

"They accepted me for the mission."

"Congratulations, ambassador."

She chuckles. "Thanks."

"I'm surprised that you volunteered yourself for this mission. You usually don't like to travel?"

"I just wanted to help the kingdom in anyway I can. You know...you do not have to go with me. I know you have other obligations to attend to."

"Non-sense. Why would I let you go to such a risky mission by yourself? I would not feel right if the most important person to me were to visit another kingdom without my companionship."

Upon hearing that she started to blush. "I'll be honored if you go with me, Alex...I mean, Captain Cheng."

They both looked at each other and smiled. Within the confines of the palace, they need to address each other properly and put on an act in order to avoid suspicion. They'd prefer not to pretend, but they must follow the rules no matter what. Being able to interact with each other is enough for them...for now.

Meanwhile, Xiao is waiting by the lake for her friend to show up.

"There you are." said she without turning around. "You're going to travel with your brother. What a rare occasion."

"I have my reasons." said Li, jumping out of a tree. "Your ears are as sharp as usual."

"Of course." Xiao replied nonchalantly. "And I suppose your reason is more than just accompanying Alex because you're worried about him?"

"Of course not. He is a swordsman in his own right, he can take care of himself, no matter where he is. And you are going to the Shu Kingdom because the Council has a branch there."

"We have lost contact with them several years ago." Xiao explains. "Our modes of communication changes all the time and we update our passwords frequently to keep the security level high. Communication between cities is hard, but between kingdoms is extremely hard."

"So you're going there to essentially restore communication?"

"Correct." Xiao replied. "That is my job, as the leader of the Heaven's Council."

The soldiers continued to march on, walking side by side with the carriages. Each carriage was tied to two horses, each driven by one soldier. Xiao and Li were

both awake and avoided eye contact the whole time as they sat across each other. "I hope you do not find this trip boring." said Xiao. "I know you are used to running and jumping around."

"It is fine." Li replied, "Whichever way gets me there faster." Suddenly, something got her attention and struck her like a thunder bolt, and her eyes opened.

There was activity about the trees. Ninjas jumped from branch to branch stealthily. They were so quiet that their footsteps blend into the sounds of nature.

"I don't feel comfortable in this area." Li said. "I am not sure what it is, but we need to leave this place quick."

"This is the safest area in the forest." Xiao replied. "You need to relax yourself. You are way too tense all the time."

"Perhaps I do. But being cautious all the time has kept me alive."

"Certainly. But we have the protection of soldiers, so you can relax and loosen up."

"Alright." Li closed her eyes, trying to sleep again.

As they marched on, the soldier pulled the reins, making the horses stop. "What's wrong?" asked a foot soldier.

"I think I saw something in the trees." said the worried one.

"What was it?"

"It could be someone watching us."

"It could be just an animal. Don't be such a coward. Let's go."

The soldier on the horse continued to move, still unconvinced that they are completely safe.

[B] Contents

Little did they know, the soldier was right to worry, for there were a group of ninjas waiting to ambush this group. *Doosh doosh* Their leader, a young ninja wearing a mask, gave a hand signal, and all the ninjas stopped and remained still. Then he made another signal, and one of the ninjas loaded an arrow into a bow and aimed at the target. When he had a lock on, he let it go. *Twang*

Li suddenly opened her eyes, sensing something again. This time, Xiao felt it as well.

The arrow struck the neck of the soldier who was riding the horse. *Schleb* He died falling off the horse, and everyone became alarmed. "We're under attack!" said the leader. "Protect the ambassador!"

All the soldiers drew their swords and circled the carriage.

"What's happening?" asked Celina.

Alex peered outside the window. "What was that commotion?"

"It's nothing, stay inside!" yelled a soldier.

Ninjas leapt out of trees and ran out of bushes and attacked the group. *Clang clang clang* In an instant, the area became a battlefield, filled with the

sounds of metal clashing, and screams of the soldiers.

Slish A soldier was stabbed in the stomach, and the ninja kicked the dying man away. Him and his partners approached the carriage from two directions. They inched their way closer and closer, preparing to kill whoever is inside.

Suddenly, the carriage's doors popped open and it hit the ninjas in the face. *Crash* Li and Xiao jumped out from their sides, and slashed any ninjas within their reachable distance.

Though trained assassins, they were no match for the dynamic duo. Li's superb speed and aggressive attacks proved to be more than the ninjas can handle. *Slish slash* Bearing the Legendary Ice Sword, and using the Heaven's Wrath Style, anyone who came close to her became lamb for the slaughter.

Cling clang Two ninjas were knocked out by Xiao. Her form and stance proved superior to the ninja's attacks, as she attacks and defends with constantly shifting speeds. No matter what attacks the ninjas used, she was able to counter them. Bearing the Legendary Thunder Sword, and using the Walking Crane style, Xiao was a powerhouse on the battlefield.

By now, the soldiers were disorganized and scattered throughout the fight scene. *Schleb* One of them was stabbed through the stomach, and collapsed to his death.

Ninjas approached the second carriage, the one that contains our two very important characters. One of them threw shurikens into the window, but there were no screams or any reactions whatsoever. Whether they are dead or alive inside is unknown. The enemies waited anxiously, slowly approaching the carriage.

Pop The roof of the carriage came off, and Celina jumped out, did a few somersaults and landed on the ground. The ninjas quickly moved away from where she landed. Suddenly, Alex Cheng leaped out, and slashed a ninja just before landing on his feet. *Thud*

The ninjas screamed and charged forward. Celina, wielding two swords, began to slash them while moving in circular motions. No one could even come near her, for her style was designed to take on multiple opponents at once. *Slish! Slash* They could not predict her moves, with her high and low attacks, and superior speed. Despite her gentle nature, when she uses the Dance of the Sword style, she is a force to be reckoned with.

Alex may be surrounded, but his opponents hesitated to attack, as they saw the serious look in his eyes. But one ninja grew tired of waiting, and charged at him. *Slish* Alex stabbed him in the stomach, effectively finishing him off. The other ninjas all charged at once. Alex's sword began to grow flames and he waited for the enemy to come to him, all the while keeping an emotionless face. In his mind, he is going to finish off this entire group in less than a minute.

With all the chaos, no one noticed a little girl watching the fight from a

distance away. She was wearing a hood and thus her face was covered. But instead of being scared, she seemed to be interested in what was happening.

Slash The ninjas were dealt a deadly blow from the Fire Sword, being cut by metal and receiving a burning sensation at the same time. The other ninjas cautioned themselves, seeing the moves that Alex just pulled.

"Tell me, who are you people?" he demanded to know.

"Just what I expected...the rumors are true." said the voice of Cha Ling. He revealed himself by stepping out of the group of the ninjas.

Alex was at first taken aback by how young this ninja was. He was a boy of possibly sixteen years, no older than nineteen. He wore a purple uniform, one that consists of short sleeves. His shorts were up to mid-thigh, and there were nets at the bottom for easier perspiration. This type of uniform is common amongst ninjas.

"Who are you?" Alex asked him.

"All I can tell you is that this is your unlucky day...to be targeted by us."

"I guess I have no choice but to beat the answer out of you."

Cha Ling smiled. "Hmph. You can do that, if you don't die in the process." The young ninja drew his sword and he clashed into Alex's sword. *Clang*

In the confusion, the royal guards have been killed, and the heroes were on their own. Grossly outnumbered, Li comes up with an escape plan. "We can't keep this up. There's too many of them."

"Do you have any ideas?" Xiao asked

"Hmm."

Judging by Li's reply, she did not have a plan, and Xiao put her confidence in her ally.

Cha Ling unleashed a flurry of attacks while Alex went on the defensive. (He is no ordinary boy...with these skills. Who is he?) *Clang* Alex jumped back to keep the distance. He was working up a sweat, and he disliked the situation. If he lets his guard down, any of the ninjas can attack him by surprise.

"I see that you are not going to surrender peacefully." said Cha Ling. "Then forgive me, because I have to eliminate you. These are my orders."

"Your orders? From who?"

"There is no point speaking to the dead!"

Cha charged forward. *Whoosh*

Li jumped and threw smoke bombs on the ground. *poof* The entire battlefield was covered with smoke. Cha was distracted by the smoke and stopped his attack. This gave Alex the chance to escape. Cha Ling coughed. "So the enemy knows these kinds of tricks? They must be trained in the ninjitsu arts."

"This way!" Li yelled. Alex followed the sound of his sister's voice, running through the smoke and hoping that he does not run into the enemy. Celina was

directly behind him, covering her face from the smoke.

The enemy was confused and lost sight of their targets. The heroes ran out of the smoke and regrouped, and they continued to run until they deemed it safe. They did not know which direction to go to, rather, they just went wherever their feet took them, safety is the priority.

When he finally caught his breath, Alex spoke: "Is everyone alright?"

"We are fine." Li replied.

"Celina?"

"I'm fine, don't worry about me." replied she.

"Who were they?" asked Xiao. It was a question that everyone wanted to ask, but none had the answer to.

"They were no ordinary bandits." said Alex. "They managed to take out all of our guards, and we are the only ones remaining. They were highly trained professional swordsmen."

"You are right." Li replied. "They are highly trained...but they are not swordsmen. They are assassins."

"Assassins? Are you saying that...they are after my life?" asked Celina.

"Your identity is supposed to be a secret, is it not?" asked Xiao. "Who else would know that the ambassador is in the carriage, other than Duke Jinan?"

Alex suddenly came up with an answer. "Could it be that the Duke himself ordered these swordsmen to kill us?"

"But that makes no sense." Celin replied, a little dazed. "Does he wish to start a war between our kingdoms?"

"I know who they are." said Li. Those words attracted everyone's undivided attention.

"Who are they?" Xiao inquired.

Li begins to explain. "I am not 100% certain...but there are rumors about this kingdom...that there exists a group of criminals who are very powerful and who have a lot of influence in this area. In fact they are so powerful that not even the Shu imperials have the ability to undermine them...the **Assassin Lodge**."

"The Assassin Lodge?"

"They are also called 'the society' by some. They are a group of assassins whose intentions are unknown. It is said that once you are targeted by the society, you are marked for death, because they never miss their target. Alex, you were right, the ones who attacked us were trained professionals. But they were not swordsmen, they were assassins."

Xiao: "Impossible...how can such an organization exist?"

Celina: "It is very possible...the existence of the Council of Heaven is against the law, yet they continue to meet in secret. So it is not surprising that something like Assassin Lodge can exist."

Xiao: "That is true. But still, what did we do to become their target?"

Li: "Their intentions and objectives are a complete mystery...but all the

rumors say that you are unlucky enough to be their target, you may as well dig your own grave...because escape is impossible. They will find you...no matter where you are or what you do."

Alex: "We've managed to escape, and they will come back for us again. We have to find shelter until we reach the next town."

Xiao: "Agreed. The next town should be not that far away. I'd say a day to a day and a half the most."

Alex: "We are going to need food in the meantime."

Li: "I say we all split up and meet back here. Does **two ke** sound good?"

Everyone nodded and went about their own way. Alex asked Celina to go with him, since she was not used to the wilderness like they were. But he had selfish reasons for taking her along. Back in the city, they never spend enough time together, because it is forbidden for a former concubine to have relations with another man. But here in the wilderness, there are no such things as rules and traditions.

As Li was walking down a certain path, she saw a little girl in the middle of the road. She was wearing a hood and ragged cape, so most of her body and face were concealed. Only her mouth was seen, and judging by how she looks, she was exhausted. There were dirt marks on her cape, indicating signs of a struggle. Curious, Li watched while doing nothing. The girl collapsed on the ground before her, and Li quickly went to her aid. "Hey!"

She lifted her head up, removing the hood, and upon closer inspection, she was a mere child of no younger than 12 years, and no older than 15 years. She had an adorable face that no parent could resist and she had long orange hair. Li brushed the ragged cloth aside and discovered that she was carrying weapons – a sword, a kodachi, and daggers – something that a child should not be holding.

Although it is not part of her objective, Li felt compelled to help this young girl out, be it the innocent face, or the fact that she cannot ignore a child in need, she decided to bring the orange haired girl back to the group.

As per the agreement, everyone returned within two ke. Li was the last to come back, and everyone was surprised to see her carrying a child on her back.

"Li?" said Xiao. "Who's that?"

"I don't know." Li said, lowering herself and putting the girl on the ground. "I found her lying there unconscious."

Celina checked her pulse. "She is fine. There are no external injuries or signs of bleeding. She is just exhausted."

"Was she by herself?" Alex inquired.

"Yes."

"Good question." said Xiao. "Don't you find it unusual for a girl her age to be here...in the forest...alone?"

Celina said: "Whatever the reason may be, I am sure there is a good

explanation. We will not know the truth until we ask her."

The girl moaned a little and proceeded to open her eyes. Seeing a group of strangers, she became frightened.

"You're awake." said Li. "I found you unconscious in the middle of the road."

The girl looked at Li. "You...saved...me? Thank you."

"It's dangerous for a young girl like you to travel alone. Were you with anybody?" Alex inquired.

"No. I was by myself." she replied.

"What were you doing here?"

Celina bent down to her level. "We shouldn't ask her too many questions, you must be overwhelmed. We mean no harm. Li here was kind enough to bring you back here. We cannot ignore someone who is in need."

The orange haired girl seems to respond positively to Celina.

"My name is Celina Ce."

"And I am Alex."

"I'm Li Cheng."

"And I am Xiao Ye."

The girl looked at everyone and proceeded to introduce herself. "My name is **Pei Ting Ling**."

"Nice to meet you, Pei." said Celina. "Can you tell us what happened back there?"

The girl was staring at the ground, hugging her own legs. "It was them...they are trying to kill me and my brother."

"Who?" Alex asked.

"The Assassin Lodge."

Everyone had a reaction to that name. "Weren't they the same people who went after us?" Xiao exclaimed. "What did they want with you?"

"I don't know." Pei replied.

Xiao did not accept her answer. Judging from the girl's body language, she was hiding something from them. "What do you mean you don't know? The Assassin Lodge doesn't kill people for no reason."

"I don't know!" Pei screamed, grabbing her head in anguish.

"Now, now." Celina said, walking between the two. "She's tired. She needs some rest. We can save the questions for later."

"Does that mean...I can join you?"

Celina nodded, and then turned to the others for their approval. Alex smiled and said: "That's fine with me. The more the merrier."

"I don't have a problem with it." Xiao said.

Then everyone turned to Li. She was hesitant to answer, but upon looking at Pei's child-like eyes, that were practically begging her, she obliged. "Fine."

"It's settled, then." Alex concluded. "You are one of us now."

"Thanks, everyone." Pei replied.

"Now that you are one of us, can you tell us everything you know?" Celina inquired.

The girl seemed to trust Celina's kind hearted nature, and nodded. "My brother and I are on the run from them. He stole something important from the Assassin Lodge, and ever since that day, he has been targeted. We feared for our safety, so we ran from town to town...until got separated. My brother said he did not want me involved...so he told me to go ahead."

"So that's how you ended up in this forest?" Alex asked.

"We've been running from their assassins for a whole month now...and it feels like years...we knew the police couldn't help us. We were on our own."

"What was it that your brother stole from them?"

"I don't know..." Pei replied.

"It must've been pretty important for them to come after you like that." Li said. "This explains why you are carrying so many weapons."

"Ever since I have been separated from my brother, I feared for my safety. He was always there for me...but now he's not here...he might even be..." Pei hid her face behind her knees.

"Now, now." Celina said, interrupting the conversation. "I am sure your brother is doing fine."

"We should get moving." Xiao said. "We cannot stay in one place for too long."

The group continued to be on the move, now with extra member by their side. "So, how old are you?" Li asked out of curiosity.

"This year I'm 15 years old." Pei replied.

"Wow, fifteen." Alex said. "I couldn't tell at all. You look much younger than that."

"My brother is only two years older than me. But he knows a lot more about the world than I do. He's **always been there** by my side until recently."

"It must be tough to be traveling on your own." Xiao said. "Especially for a young girl like yourself. It's not safe to go through the wilderness alone."

While they continued to talk, Li's sensitive ears picked up vibrations from a distance. She looked from side to side, searching for the source of the vibrations. The footsteps grew louder and louder, and these people did not attempt to hide at all.

"Everyone, quiet." Li said.

"What is it?" asked Alex.

Xiao also picked up on the footsteps. "We're being approached by a group."

"How many you think there are?" Li asked.

"Maybe ten. No, twenty."

Celina grew worried, seeing the serious looks on their faces. "Is it the Assassin Lodge?"

"No." Li replied. "Their movements are different. The assassins move with

stealth and subtleness, but these footsteps are not subtle at all. They are loud and deliberate. Probably bandits."

"Bandits?" Alex repeated. "I want to avoid as much fighting as possible. We should try to escape them."

Everyone nodded in unison, and they ran for it. Li grabbed Pei's hand and dragged her up to speed. The group stopped running when two bandits appeared in front of them. They were both muscular men with mustaches, along with a greedy smile.

"Going somewhere?" said Wuya, the leader.

More bandits came out of the trees and the heroes became surrounded in no time.

They all carried broad swords, and were bickering and laughing since they outnumber their opponents.

"What do you want?" Alex asked.

"What do we want, you ask?" the leader tauntingly repeated. "Well you see we don't get that many visitors in the forest these days. And judging by your outfits, you're high ranking, aren't ya? And that means you have a lot of money."

"Forget about it!" Li said. "You thieves aren't going to get what you want."

The leader snickered. "Ooh you got a sharp tongue, young lady. Tell ya what, give us all the money you got, as well as they ladies. And we'll spare your lives."

Alex shut his eyes and smiled. "I've made bad deals before, but this one sticks out like a sore thumb."

"Well you had your chance." said the bandit leader. "Get them!"

The bandits screamed and charged, and the heroes drew their weapons and braced themselves for battle. In a chaotic scene such as this, it is everyone for themselves. Swords clashed and only the sound that echoed was the sound of metal clashing. *Clang clang*

Wuya watched in amusement, with his arms crossed in an arrogant manner. This is going to be an easy job, he thought. They have three woman, a girl, and only one man, so what can they possibly do?

Slash Xiao just hit two guys in the thighs, and they fell down and screamed in pain. The Lightning Sword became charged up with electricity, and she takes a mighty swing, creating a wave of electricity that hurls forward. *Zap!* One guy was hit by the wave, and he was completely fried. The other bandits were not scared, but they continued to attack in their barbaric manner.

Alex and Celina stood back to back, staring at the circle of bandits. One of them charged at them, and Alex slashed him away. Another bandit charged, and Celina slashed him in the stomach.

Everyone was able to hold their own, but the same cannot be said for Li. She found it difficult to fight while protecting Pei. "Stay behind me. Don't get separated!"

"Got it!" Pei replied.

One of the bandits, a particularly muscular one, attacked Li. *Clang* He advanced as Li retreated, and Pei was hiding behind her. *Cling* Li kicked the bandit in the stomach. *Whack*

But it was not over. There were two more bandits baring their swords. "Heh heh. Just give up and we'll give you a painless death."

"I'm not going to let you hurt Pei Ling!" Li said.

Upon hearing this, Pei was quite surprised. She looked up at Li's serious face. Why is this woman protecting her, since they met only recently? Could she actually be a good person?

Li's sword began to glow white, and the bandits winced from the brightness. "Stand back."

Pei obeyed and stood back. The bandits became angry and attacked. Li used the Ice Wave, effectively knocking them unconscious.

Another bandit appeared and ran into her, and they pushed their blades against one another. As Pei was watching, a bandit snuck behind her with a wicked smile.

Li pushed the bandit away and slashed him with an airbreaker. She turned around and saw someone behind Pei. "Pei watch out!"

Pei quickly turned around, and the bandit was already about to chop her. Li's eyes widened, thinking that she was about to be killed. "No!"

He swings the sword down and it was close to her head. *Clang* His blade was intercepted by Pei's blade, surprising Li. The bandit was bewildered that this little girl could counter his attack, despite having skinny arms. "Why you little..."

She pushed the brute's blade away and stabbed him in the stomach. The blade went through his kidney, so death was imminent for him. The other bandits, seeing Pei's skill, decided to attack her.

"Watch out!" shouted Li.

"I'll be fine." Pei replied, and charged into the bandits. *Slash Slash* They were killed within moments, and their blood splattered on her face.

Wuya, upon seeing Pei's face, became worried. All the excitement and confidence he had faded away in an instant. (That girl...it can't be...can it be her?) His mouth was wide open, and he was sweating nervously. (What is she doing here? But that means these people are...)

Suddenly, Wuya whistled with two fingers in his mouth. "Everyone, retreat!"

The bandits who surrounded Alex and Celina withdrew into the bushes. "Retreat!" Wuya screamed, raising his blade to the air.

The bandits who were fighting Xiao stopped, and ran into the bushes. Within moments, all the bandits ran off. They came as quickly as they left, leaving the heroes confused.

"That was dangerous." Alex said.

"Thank goodness it's over." Xiao commented. "They completely outnumbered us."

"The thing I don't get is, why did they retreat? They had the advantage." Li asked.

"They probably recognized my face." Alex replied.

"The Demon Slayer is famous even in this kingdom, apparently." said Xiao.

"Indeed." said Celina. "Everyone knows that the Demon Slayer is not someone you should mess with."

Although a humble person, Alex enjoyed the compliments. "Ohh, you flatter me."

"It's true though."

Everyone laughed except for Li. She thought that the bandits retreated for a different reason, a reason that she does not know. It could have something to do with Pei Ling, but that is just a hunch. She displayed an unusual level of talent for someone her age, to be able to fend off the bandits with a sword. Whoever Pei Ting Ling is, this girl is more than meets the eye.

[C] Contents

The bandit gang was resting and chatting amongst each other. One of them, however, was unhappy with his boss's decision. "Boss, why'd you order a retreat? We had them right where we wanted!"

Wuya looked up at him. "Trust me, there are some fights not worth fighting."

"Boss, I don't know what you mean."

"Listen...we were better off not messing with those people. It would have costed us our lives...all of our lives." Wuya replied.

"Whadayya mean?"

"That girl who was with them...she's one of them...I'm sure of it." He flashed back to a recent event that he could never forget.

One day, when Wuya was scouting the area, he heard a commotion, and hid behind the bushes. He saw a young man lying on the ground, crawling backwards and fearing for his life. A girl in a ninja outfit stood there, wielding a sword. She looked young and innocent, but her cold blooded eyes indicated anything but that.

"No, wait! Don't kill me, please!" yelled the young ninja.

The girl stabbed him in the chest in cold blood, and blood splattered on her face. She then twisted the blade while still inside his chest, in order to finish the kill. The young man coughed blood, and died seconds later.

As Wuya stared at the female assassin's face, covered in blood, he could not help but tremble at the sight. As a bandit, he himself has killed countless people, yet he felt an irrational fear watching this murder scene. The girl's eyes darted to the side, and Wuya, fearing that she may have seen him, quickly withdrew from the bushes.

"You mean...that girl is from...the Assassin Lodge?" said the bandit.

Upon hearing that name, all the bandits grumbled and showed expressions

of fear and discomfort.

"Yes," Wuya said. "It was just one look, but I am certain that girl is in the Assassin Lodge. It's better for us not to interfere."

"Now I see why you had us withdraw, boss." said the bandit. "It was a wise choice not to get involved with them."

As it is almost evening, the group must prepare to rest for the night. Alex volunteered to bring food for everyone, and Celina and Xiao were in charge of the bonfire and sleeping arrangements. Li and Pei had no assignments, so they had free time to do what they wanted.

Alex put some fruits on top of a pile of leaves, as bait for any small animals. He waited in the bush patiently until the prey comes. Luckily for him, a small boar approached the fruits, sniffing it nonstop.

"There it is." Alex said to himself. "This is going to be tonight's dinner." He waited for the boar to be close, enough, and then jumped out. *Whoosh*

The boar quickly ran away, dodging Alex's knife. "Hey come back!" he shouted.

The boar continued to run, and Alex chased it. "Come back here!"

As Alex struggled with his job, Celina and Xiao did their job with ease. All they had to do was collect firewood. "I think this one can be used too." Celina said, bending over and picking up a log. She was already carrying a bunch of branches under her arm. As she picked up this log, she lost her grip on the branches and almost dropped them.

Xiao quickly went to help her. "Here, let me get that."

"Thanks."

"You're not used to the wilderness. In fact, this is your first time outside of society, isn't it?"

"Yes...it's a new experience for me." Celina replied.

"It must be hard for you. You used to be a concubine after all. I imagine they must've spoiled you." Xiao said.

"No, it's fine. I volunteered for this job. I knew the risks. I don't want to live inside a sheltered cage my whole life."

"You must have your reasons for doing so." said Xiao, relating to her. "Me, I am using this as an opportunity to see other cities and experience new things. Back when I was blind, I could never leave my neighborhood."

They began walking back to the campsite. "I just feel bad for the girl."

"You mean Pei?" Xiao asked.

Celina nodded.

"Something's not right about her."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean...the way she showed up...don't you think it's strange? This forest is so big, yet we managed to find her. What are the chances of that happening?"

"I know what you mean. But maybe it's fate. We do have a common enemy, the Assassin Lodge."

"Yes, but something about her identity bugs me." Xiao murmured.

"Huh?"

"Uh nevermind. Maybe I'm reading too much into it. Let's go back." Xiao dropped the topic, knowing Celina did not like her accusing Pei. She could tell that everyone believes in Pei Ling. On the surface she may be a normal girl in distress, but she is definitely hiding something. Xiao Ye's "Mind's Eye" allows her to read people thoroughly, and usually she is right. Who exactly is Pei Ling?

"Come here you!" Alex shouted at the frightened boar. All it did was squeal and run away. But it was too quick for Alex, its little legs can run faster than any human can keep up with. However, it was slowing down, and this is the opportune time to catch it. "I've got you now..."

The boar turned around to stare at its hunter, and squealed. Alex steadily went up to it, taking careful footsteps as to not frighten it. Once he got close enough, he leaped forward. The boar ran away, and Alex grabbed nothing but the dirt in front of him *Doosh*

He completely missed his prey, and now he has dirt all over his face and clothes. "You sure are a fast one, aren't ya?" he said, as if praising the boar.

Li Cheng, as usual, prefers to train alone. Being around other people is a hindrance to her training. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, channeling the energy in her body. Then she slashed her sword across the leaves, making them fly up. As they slowly fell down, she slashed the leaves. At her level of skill, she could identify each leaflet and cut it in half with no problem. *Slish Slice* Within two seconds, she cut all leaves and left out not a single one.

To perform such a feat, one must have a focused mind free of distractions. But one uncut leaf fell to the ground. She always does it perfectly, but today, her mind was clouded with questions. The most pertinent one being the identity of the girl named Pei Ling.

How can a girl of fifteen years be able to fend off bandits and display such a high level of swordcraft? Even the way she appeared is a mystery. Pei carries weapons that an ordinary girl would not have access to. She claims that she and her brother are being targeted by the Assassin Lodge, but what would she have that they want?

The Ice Sword was glowing, and Li took a mighty swing forward. *Froom* Part of the tree became encased in ice. The more Li thought about it, the more frustrated she became. Just who exactly is Pei?

The girl in question was sitting atop a tree branch, her back leaning against the trunk, polishing her sword. As she wiped the blade thoroughly with the cloth, she saw her own reflection on the blade. She stared deeply into her own eyes,

wondering to herself if this is the right thing to do. No, it has to be. The only right thing to do is her mission, nothing else. Pei reflects back on why she is here in the first place.

Pei and her brother were practicing their swordcraft indoors. Since they were brother and sister, they know each other's style very well, and adjusted their speed and tempo to each other. Their practice was a playful one, they were not serious like the other children. Since there was nothing else to do in this society, training became their playtime.

Suddenly, an adult came into the picture, and Pei Ling and Cha Ling stopped and paid attention to him. "You have a new assignment." said he.

"Commander Laos." Cha Ling and Pei kneeled before him.

Laos, a senior commander of the Assassin Lodge, is an elderly man, but despite his age, his body is quite fit and said to be in tip top shape. He has long white hair, with a two strands sticking out in front, and a pony tail in the back. He dons a black uniform with black boots, and a sheath under his belt.

Out of all the commanders, Laos holds the most authority, but he is a power-hungry and ruthless, and will stop at nothing to punish those who break the rules. Thus, no one dares disobey him.

"This just came in from the headmaster." said Laos. "The Kingdom of Shen is sending in a female ambassador to our kingdom, which means she will be crossing through our territory. You are to retrieve the ambassador but do not kill her. Everyone else I do not care about. Understood?"

"Yes commander." they both responded.

"Listen Pei, this is the plan." said Cha Ling. "The ambassador is likely to accompanied by someone very skilled, called the Demon Slayer. That's why your job is to infiltrate the group. You're going to join as one of them and gain their trust. When the time is right we will attack and assassinate them all. It's going to be dangerous for you. Can you handle it?"

Pei nodded. "Leave it to me."

At this point, Alex was still chasing the boar, and he was very tired and frustrated. "So you won't go down without a fight, eh? That's admirable. However...if I don't catch you...we won't be able to eat tonight. We can't have that, can we?"

The boar growled. Alex took out his sword. "Sorry, but you leave me now choie!" The sword grew flames, and Alex swings his sword at the creature, who screamed one final time before meeting its demise.

As Pei continued to polish her sword, Li called out to her. "Pei Ling! Pei Ling! Dinner is ready!"

"Coming!" Pei leaped down from the tree branch and landed on her feet

perfectly, like an olympic athlete.

It was already dark and crickets can be heard. As Li and Pei came to the bonfire, they immediately felt the warmth. "Boy I am famished." said Li. "What are we having tonight?"

"We're having that." Xiao said, pointing to the cooked animal over the fire. "Alex killed it for us."

"Oh?" Li said, a bit surprised. "I didn't know Alex could hunt too."

"Actually I'm not very good at it. I just got lucky this time." he replied humbly.

"In any case, thanks to you we have dinner tonight." replied Celina, always looking on the positive side.

As everyone was settling down Pei sat by herself in front of the bonfire, warming her hands. Over the past few hours, she has been observing this group of people, and she was surprised at how nice they were. More so than that, everyone seems to be skilled at swordcraft, amongst other skills they have not revealed yet.

Pei was just getting to know the group, but she must never become too comfortable. Her job is to gain their trust and make them drop their guard. No matter how nice they are, she must never befriend them. Her mission is the priority and it's the only thing that matters.

As everyone began to eat, they were chatting and having a good time. But the conversation was bland and slow. Xiao then had an interesting suggestion. "Hey everyone, I have an idea. Let's share an embarrassing story."

"An embarrassing story?" Celina asked, a little startled.

"Yes." Xiao replied enthusiastically. "We've been allies for a long time now, but we know so little about each other. I think this makes a good fire place conversation, don't you think?"

"I don't know about that." Celina replied meekly, looking at the ground.

"Interesting idea." Alex said. "Let's do it."

Celina looked at Alex in disbelief. "You too?"

"Why not? It won't hurt."

"So, who's going to start?" asked Xiao.

"Well you suggested it." Li replied. "It's only natural you share first."

"Very well then." said Xiao. "It happened a few years ago..."

In her blind days, Xiao Ye worked as a doll maker. But because of the economic conditions, job stability was rare, and she had to find a new job constantly. It was tough for a blind person to travel around the city, but she had little choice. How else is a blind girl supposed to make a living?

One day, she came upon a particular building to apply for a job. Little did she know, she went to the wrong address and went into a brothel. As she entered the building, she was greeted by the madame.

"May I help you miss?" asked she.

"Yes. I am here to apply for work." Xiao replied earnestly.

"You want to work here?" the madame asked.

"Yes. My name is Xiao Ye."

"Are you blind?"

"Yes, but I assure you I have the skills and qualifications to do the job. I will not disappoint you." Xiao replied.

"Well we've never had a blind girl before. But I suppose you do have the body that men will like."

"Excuse me?" Xiao replied, a bit startled.

"You said you want to work here, don't you?"

"Yes, but...wait a minute. Isn't this 320 Abby Street?"

"No, 320 is across the street."

"What? That means I'm in the wrong place. This is--"

"Miss, this is a brothel."

Upon hearing that fact, Xiao became embarrassed and red-faced. "I'm in a brothel?"

"My my. It must be tough for a blind girl to travel by herself." said the madame.

The other people who heard the conversation laughed out loud. Xiao bowed and apologized profusely for her mistake, and went on her way.

Upon hearing the story, Celina blushed. But Alex burst into laughter. "Ha ha ha ha!"

Celina couldn't believe Alex's rude behavior and stared at him. "Alex..."

"But it's funny." Alex replied. "I can't believe you accidentally went into a brothel."

Even Pei Ling was laughing.

Xiao herself was surprisingly not embarrassed about the story. "Everyone makes mistakes."

"Indeed they do." Alex replied. "Since you're generous enough to share first, I'll go next. My story though isn't the best, but...here goes."

This incident happened sometime before the beginning of Demon Slayer. Alex and his best friend at the time, the late Zi Lai, used to hang out at Alex's place. Often times, Zi would sleep over since it's convenient and he did not like his own house. One night, Alex was taking a bath in a barrel of water, he noticed a spider on the ceiling. Alex Cheng is one who has faced many dangers, but he has an innate fear of spiders that no one knows about. When he saw it, he froze in fear.

The spider lowered itself, dangling by its web. Alex panicked as it got closer to him. "Ahhh...help! Help!"

Zi came in and kicked the door open. "What is it?"

"A spider!"

"You've got to be kidding me, right? You are afraid of that tiny spider?"

"Just get rid of it, please!" Alex shouted as if his life was in danger.

"Fine." Zi drew his sword and cut the web. *Slish* The spider fell into the tub of water.

Alex was startled and he stood up. As a result, Zi saw his naked body, and he looked away. "Dude, don't stand up!"

Alex blushed, and quickly sat back down in the tub.

"And that's what happened." Alex concluded.

Celina blushed at the thought of seeing Alex naked. Even the thought of seeing anyone naked would be embarrassing.

Xiao chuckled. "Who would have thought that the great Alex Cheng is afraid of spiders."

"There's nothing funny about that. It's just stupid." Li said.

"Don't be so gloomy, Li." Xiao remarked.

"This whole conversation has gone downhill from the start." she retorted. "Can we afford to be so relaxed, with the situation we are in?"

"It's fine, isn't it?" Xiao replied. "We determined that the enemy is nowhere nearby. So Li, would you like to share next?"

Li looked away. "Count me out."

Celina is hesitant to share, but xiao and alex encourage her.

When she was dancing, she tripped over something and made a fiasco

Li is the last to share. She thinks it's stupid. But alex says, everyone shared, and she must share.

Li took on a job to kill someone named "I P Freely"

Pei feels comfortable talking to them and feels a part of the group and she hadn't had this much fun in a long time. she had so much fun she forgot about her mission in that moment.

everyone's sleeping - xiao, li and pei are in one place, and celina and alex sleep by a tree.

and that's when Cha's team strike.

li senses movement and wakes up and wakes the others up. ninjas attack and they get separated from xiao, li takes pei to a cliff and they can't run further.

alex and celina fight the ninjas, cha ling shows up again and vs. alex

+

Li fights some ninjas, and Pei notices Laos watching them from afar. she tries to attack li from behind and li dodges. Li becomes hostile towards pei and they attack each other.

"I'm sorry, Li, but I am Pei Ting Ling, a member of the Assassin Lodge."

they hit each other a lot. Li uses the ice wave, and knocks Pei over the cliff, clinging onto a branch.

Li decides to save her life, surprising Pei, who bursts into tears.

Laos reveals himself and decides to strike Li when she's unable to fight.

He charges and Xiao blocks him and he jumps away. Xiao and Laos do the stare and they hit each other.

Laos runs away b/c his opponent has the thunder sword

the fight's over. Li makes Pei explain the whole thing. Pei tells her life story ...

flashback scene

When pei was a baby, her brother found her floating on a river

too bad an assassin, laos, kidnaps them and brings them to the society.

there, cha ling had a choice, to join the society, or die with the baby. so he had no choice.

Pei's only 15 and already killed a lot of people. mostly because they don't expect her to be an assassin for someone so young and innocent looking.

Pei shows her tattoo, meaning that the society owns her for life.

Hearing the story Li decides to forgive her if Pei quits and joins them.

Pei: but nobody who is targeted by the society has survived. and those will betray the society will also die...no matter how far they run.

li says she has the ice sword; xiao the thunder sword, and alex the fire sword, and these swords were that of the brotherhood, the swords that can change history.

li says she won't reveal Pei's secret to the others, and Pei is happy she's accepted.

Laos is angry that Pei failed. Cha asks for forgiveness on her behalf, saying that she will get the job done.

The next morning, they walk towards town. An arrow flies at them, and li tells everyone to watch out. She uses smoke bombs, letting escape the barrage of arrows.

After they are safe, they take a breather.

now xiao is seriously suspecting pei ling. how come the enemy knows where they are? and how come the bandits ran away?

xiao says she knows pei is a member of the society. that shocks everyone. she says

she used her mind's eye.

pei admits it, reveals that their actual target is the ambassador (celina) and they don't care about anyone else.

she gets on her knees and asks for forgiveness.

she says if she doesn't do her mission, both her and her brother will die
alex is the first to forgive her. li also forgives her. celina forgives her. and xiao feels compelled to forgive her.

pei is overwhelmed with gratitude and cries like a little baby.

after she's done crying, she reveals the society's secrets. but she doesn't know much.

there are hundreds to thousands of assassins, she does not know the actual number.

they are all trained to kill.

their leader is a man named Xia Chong-qin, a guy with silver hair

he is the top assassin of the lodge, yet pei has never seen him fight
rumor has it that he's a demon

also, he could be the leader of the fallen Red Lotus Sect. they were a rebel army that fought the imperials...and lost.

after the fall of the sect, xia converted his soldiers into assassins, and it also explains how the assassin lodge is so big, they get financial backing from rich & powerful families

the lords of the families give finance to xia,

and the lodge kills enemies of the lords

pei also mentions that there is no way to escape the society, the only way out is death.

alex does not believe that, he asks her to join them.

alex says all they have to do is make it to the next town, and they'll be safe.

pei: assassins are everywhere, even in town they can find you

Cha ling requests that he be in charge of the mission. Laos denies it from him.

Xia, however, lets cha take over the mission.

Cha thanks him and leaves the room.

Laos asks why. the brother and sister can collaborate and betray the society.

Xia already knows that and factors that into the equation.

He knows that cha cares deeply about his sister, but also fears the society, so he won't do anything stupid. If he does care about his sister, then he will do whatever it takes to find her...and accomplish his mission.

Then xia reveals his face.

Lao is pissed that cha ha the mission
A woman comments on his mission. she's Fei Tenten. she's a woman with long hair, heavy lipstick, holds a fan, and wears a blue china dress.
Lao says it's none of her business.
She says she can help him out. Lao says do whatever you want.

the ambassador-noble of shu is still waiting for shen's ambassador to show up but she's a few days late. he worries and sends a search party to the woods.

the gang makes it to the town and rents a hotel. they rent 2 rooms.
in the room they have a meeting.
they are to gather intelligence about the society.

alex and celina are grouped together and they walk down the street, destination is the local magistrate. while walking they say they haven't spent quality time together
then they hear some woman scream

they go and help her. it turns out to be tenten alex beats up the guys.
the woman starts crying and alex comforts her. then she takes out a knife.
celina sees it and grabs her hand.
then tenten hits celina and tries to stab alex.
tenten draws the sword and attacks her.

the henchmen pretend to be knocked out, and now they attack alex

tenten is revealed to use the same style as celina, the dance of the sword
she says that master fa had master, who once came to this kingdom and started teaching dance of the sword, aka dancing blade
they hit a few times.
tenten's training was superior so she beats up celina

a dagger flies at tenten and she dodges, and celina takes that chance to hit her.
fei tenten runs away.

==== part 2 ====

xiao, pei, and li go to a antique store to get info.
xiao pays the owner some money to get info about the assassin lodge
yet the owner refuses to answer
pei says it's useless, they won't tell
xiao asks pei for info, pei says she told them everything.
Except for the location of the headquarters, which is irrelevant.

scene:

alex receives a letter from a dagger saying to meet cha
celina and xiao also receive it in a similar manner
everyone goes except li and pei

cha meets the heroes and explains the shocking truth
pei is the princess of the shu kingdom

about 14 years ago, the king's little brother and his wife were in some mansion.
the red lotus society took this chance to raid the mansion, hoping to kidnap the
prince
the prince's wife was giving birth
and there was a servant child there - he was cha ling
the red lotus group attacked the mansion, forcing the lady and the newborn to flee
the prince stayed behind with his troops, to fight to the end,

the lady was too tired to run, she handed her child, pei to cha, the servant,
entrusting her life to him. cha swore on his life he will bring the baby to safety

but later, they were kidnapped by laos, someone from red lotus

and that's pei ling's story. also, xia chonqqin wants to use pei as a way to bribe the
king

Pei was shocked to hear all this, and reveals herself, and li reveals herself too
cha apologizes for hiding this from her, it's for her own good, pei gets mad and
runs away. li chases her.

pei runs into the forest and cries. li comforts her.
then they're attacked by tenten
li says that she knows the dance of the sword from fighting celina,
tenten then uses dance of the dragon
li knows the weakness of the dragon is the tail, so she hits the tail, but tenten jumps

away, bounces off a tree and slashes li's back,
she announces that she's superior to celina in skill and that her style is very
different
pei is fighting other ninjas and can't help,

the others show up, alex, celina and xiao
lao and some of his crew show up.
someone throws smoke bombs and covers up the area,
everyone's separated in the confusion

alex searches for celina but xiao drags him away,
celina falls off somewhere,
li and pei fend for themselves

alex still wants to find celina, saying that she's rarely left the city, but xiao says to
believe in her. they need to worry about their own survival. then they're ambushed
by assassins.

celina is ambushed by a bunch of assassins. she remembers her master's teachings
and beats them up. she wanders off to the next town and collapses on the road.
some soldiers see her and the duke comes out of the carriage to examine her. he
recognizes her as the ambassador of shen and rescues her.

chongqin is mad that they lost track of the princess, and hits cha's face.
then he yells at laos for interfering with cha's mission
he demands that they find the princess at all costs

Princess of the Shu Kingdom Part 2

chongqin goes to the mountain top and has a flashback when staring at his demon
hand

flashback
chongqin fights some guy to be the leader of red lotus
but he loses because he coughs in the middle of the fight
as a result that guy wins
and some monk mentions that chongqin is superior in skill, but lost because of his
illness, incurable
xia's angry at fate for cursing him with an incurable disease, he will die young, says

doctors
then he happens to meet liu zhang and chu yen one day

liu zhang gives him an offer: his soul for immortality. xia refuses to be a demon,
calling them monsters.
chu yen gets mad, but zhang stops him. then he offers a duel. xia agrees.

zhang shows his superior skills, and xia loses. then he kneels and accepts the
contract.
thus, xia's hand becomes demonic
and ever since that day 50 years ago, he's been half demon/half human

pei and li run away from assassins. li's still injured from fighting tenten and they
run into the edge of a cliff.
li's unable to fight and pei takes over. she shows that she too is a capable assassin.
pei uses the tricks she's learned from training her bro

celina wakes up and finds herself in a strange bed
a female servant comes in, saying she's a servant of the duke
then celina meets the duke.
she says her friends are in danger, and the duke says he will send a search party for
them

chongqin learns that celina's been rescued by the duke, and the princess is still
missing, so he gets impatient. he orders that all assassins look for the princess and
find her at all costs.
a bunch of ninjas running out of the waterfall and jumping through mountains

li and pei come across a river. li uses her ice sword to find the location of alex's fire
sword, and alex is doing the same thing. they both found each other's direction,
and march on.

when they reunite, alex asks if they found celina, no one knows where she is. he's
still mad.
then cha ling shows up.
spies have found celina to be rescued by the duke, so alex is relieved.
he also says that they will never make it to the next town, because nearly all the
assassins in the lodge are after them
their chances of survival are near zero.

but, he says this is their prime chance to attack chonqqin directly, since their hq is unguarded now.

pei doesn't like the idea, and li doesn't like it. but alex likes it, and everyone goes along with it.

the duke goes to some show, with dancers, and one of them is tenten in a veil. she dances with swords and celina recognizes her movements, suddenly tenten jumps on the tables and goes after the duke, and celina blocks it in time.

tenten runs away, and celina chases her, they steal horses and run off town

so cha shows them the location of hq, which is behind a waterfall. alex mentions that's why no one has found it yet.

tenten runs off to the forest, her horse gets hit by an arrow, and she jumps off. she kills the duke's soldiers. only celina's left, and they fight.

they use dance of the dragon as a final move and tenten collapses, in shock, wondering why she lost even though her skills are superior. celina says it's because she has a reason to fight

lao is waiting in hq for them. cha vs. lao
the others go into the room where xia is waiting.
cha comes into the room injured, pei goes for her brother's aid.
xiao fights lao, and alex and li fight xia

xiao and lao jump through the wall.

li jumps out the window, chonqqin chases her, and alex chases him.

alex is knocked out. li's knocked out.
celina shows up and fights, and xia reveals a 2 handed style. he's the one who taught tenten the dance of the sword
celina's defeated.

xiao blindfolds herself and defeats lao with the mind's eye

li uses the shadow puppet technique

but it doesn't work like she wanted it to.
then she uses the ice wave, and knocks xia into a pile of rocks.
chongqin transforms into a full demon, and beats up li with that move
then he beats up xiao.

then it's pei's turn. she says this is her fight, and attacks chongqin bravely
but she too is beaten
alex says she's done her part.
so he steps in and charges up the fire sword.
he slashes xia in the face, thus killing him

they return pei to the duke, who sends her to the king, and the king and queen give
her a big hug,
and now in princess clothes, pei waves goodbye to her friends. the negotiations
have gone well. even though they have to leave they'll be friends forever.



characters:

King Henan

Duke Jinan - the ambassador of Shu Kingdom

Pei Ling - the princess (Princess Peinan)

Cha Ling - the brother

Laos - senior officer in Assassin Lodge, former commander of Red Lotus Sect

Fei Tenten - senior officer in Assassin Lodge, also a dancer

Xia Chongqin - leader of Assassin Lodge, former leader of Red Lotus

Alex Cheng

Celina Ce

Li Cheng

Xiao Ye

Lord Sima

Lord Yu

Lord Gaohai

Bandit leader -

Duke Leinan - Pei Ling's biological father, murdered during Red Lotus rebellion

Princess Laomei - Pei Ling's biological mother, disappeared during Red Lotus rebellion