

7 Killers – Chapter 6

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Chapter 6 – A dragon amongst men

Part 1

A long time passed. His whole body had begun to grow numb, and his hands were ice cold. It was at that time that he suddenly heard the sound of footsteps.

The footsteps were very light, and the person seemed to be walking very slowly. He could feel their every step in his tingling muscles.

Who was this person?

Was it Madam Lovesickness, or Tang Qing?

Whoever it was, they certainly would not be bringing good times with them.

The sky was bright.

The early morning sun shone in through the door, casting the shadow of the person into the restaurant. It was very long, and it seemed to be in the shape of a woman.

After a while, he was able to see the person's feet.

The shoes were soft and decorated with green flowers. The feet were dainty and delicate.

Liu Changjie sighed. He knew who the person was.

"Since when did you start lying on tables this way?" Her voice was general quite pleasant, but now it carried a mocking tone, as acidic as an unripe plum. "Is it because your ass is swollen from being spanked?"

Liu Changjie could only laugh bitterly.

The voice continued, "I remember you were always the type to brag until you're blue in the face. But how come it's your ass that's black and blue instead of your face?" [1]

He laughed. "Even if my ass was twice as swollen as it is now, it still wouldn't be as big as yours."

"Look, pal," she laughed, "at a time like this you still dare to be obstinate? Aren't you worried I'll punch your face until it's black and blue?" [2]

"I know you couldn't bear to," he smiled. "Don't forget that I'm your husband."

As it turns out, the woman was Hu Yue'er.

She crouched down, took hold of his chin, and stared into his eyes.

"My poor little husband, who was it that beat you up this way? Tell me."

"You're getting ready to go vent your anger on her for me?"

"I'm getting ready to go thank her." Hu Yue'er suddenly twisted his nose. "Thank her for teaching you a lesson, you disobedient bastard."

He laughed. "When a wife wants to curse her husband, she can say anything she wants, but she shouldn't use the word bastard. After all, it implies bad things about the wife."

She bit her lip. "If I really was mad," she said hatefully, "I could turn you into a cuckold if I wanted to." [3]

She seemed to be getting angrier and angrier. She twisted his ear violently. "When you left, did you wear extra thick clothes? Answer me!"

"I didn't."

"Did you go ask for the super sharp sword?"

"I didn't."

"Did you take care of Tang Qing first?"

"I didn't."

"Did you do anything according to plan?"

"I didn't."

She bared her teeth. "Other people thought things through so carefully for you, why do you always ignore everyone?"

"Because ever since I was young, I've never been an obedient kid. When people tell me I can't do something, that's exactly what I want to do."

She laughed coldly. "You think you're so amazing, don't you? That nobody else can compare to you."

"It doesn't matter," he smiled. "What you wanted me to do here, I did."

"You still dare to talk this way?"

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Why don't you go find a mirror and have a look at your ass?"

"Somebody spanking your ass is one thing," he said steadily. "Accomplishing a mission is something else."

"Correct. You had the duck in your hand ready to eat, but sadly it flew away." [4]

"It didn't fly away."

"It didn't?"

"The only thing that flew away were some feathers. I still have the skin and bones."

Hu Yue'er seemed shocked. "Are you saying that woman took away an empty box?"

He smiled. "The only thing inside was a pair of old, stinky socks."

She seemed thoroughly surprised. She couldn't help but chuckle, and then lightly kiss Liu Changjie's face. "I knew you were an amazing man," she said sweetly. "I knew I wouldn't pick my husband incorrectly."

He sighed. "It seems like a man does need to live up to expectations," he said quietly, "otherwise he might really become a cuckold." [5]

Part 2

Sunlight shone in through the small window, onto Liu Changjie's chest. Hu Yue'er's face also lay on his chest.

A bare chest might not seem like much, but it carried a certain kind of charm.

Just like his personality.

He carried a strange type of charm that made it difficult for people to judge how powerful he truly was.

Hu Yue'er gently stroked his chest, and in a voice as low as a dream said, "Do you want more?"

He didn't shake his head; he simply lacked the energy to move.

Hu Yue'er bit down on her lip. "In these few days away from me, you definitely were with other women."

"No, I wasn't." Liu Changjie really didn't feel like speaking, but this kind of accusation couldn't go unanswered.

She wasn't convinced. "If you weren't, then how come someone wanted to spank your ass?"

He sighed. "If I was, how could she possibly be willing to spank me?"

She still wasn't convinced. "You didn't make any moves on Madam Lovesickness?"

"No."

She laughed. "Only a ghost would believe you."

"Why don't you believe me?"

"If you really weren't with any women," she said regretfully, "then how come right now you're like a rooster that just got beat in a cockfight, completely useless?"

He laughed. "Who do you think I am, some kind of superman?" [6] He let out a sigh. "I also get tired sometimes and need sleep."

It looked like she was finally somewhat convinced. "Why aren't you sleeping, then?"

"With you here at my side, how could I sleep?"

She sat up, her eyes widening. "Are you trying to make me leave?"

"That's not what I meant," he replied. "Although, you really should go." In a soft voice, he continued, "When he finds out that the box Kong Lanjun took back is empty, Dragon Fifth will definitely come looking for me."

"He can find this place?"

"He can find any place."

She seemed to hesitate, starting to get the feeling that this small tavern wasn't a safe place after all.

"Okay, I'll go back," she said, finally agreeing with him. "But you..."

"I'll just wait here obediently," he said, "and bring back good news as soon as I can."

"Are you confident you can handle Dragon Fifth?"

"I'm not." He laughed. "But, I also wasn't confident that I could handle Madam Lovesickness."

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Hu Yue'er finally left.

Before departing, she had twisted his ear and warned him three times in a row: "If I hear anything about you messing around with other women, I will beat your ass until you have eight butt-cheeks."

When a woman falls in love with a man, she can't help but turn herself into a rope, fastened around the man's ankle.

Now, Liu Changjie could finally breathe easily. He really wasn't a superman, and he definitely needed some sleep.

And finally, he did.

When he awoke, it was dark outside the small window. Evening had arrived.

A breeze blew in through the window, carrying the fragrance of wine.

The fragrance was that of authentic Red Daughter wine. This type of small tavern wouldn't carry this type of wine. [7]

Liu Changjie's eyes flickered. "Whoever is outside drinking, I don't care who you are, come on in! And don't forget to bring that wine in with you." [8]

And suddenly someone was knocking on the door.

"The door is unlocked. Just push it open."

The door slowly opened and a person entered, carrying a copper pot in one hand and two drinking bowls in another. It was the man who had gone looking for Duqi and the others.

"I am Wu Bu'ke," he said humbly. He smiled. "I came especially to pay a visit. I knew your Excellency was resting, so I could only wait outside warming the wine."

Liu Changjie looked at him. "Did Dragon Fifth send you?" he said coolly.

Wu Bu'ke smiled and nodded. "The Young Master is respectfully waiting for Mister Liu's arrival."

"Sadly I can't even stand up right now, let alone go meet him."

Wu Bu'ke smiled. "The young master is aware that Mister Liu was offended by someone. Therefore he sent along something special so your majesty could vent his anger."

"Oh? What is it? Where is it?"

Wu Bu'ke turned his head and made a beckoning motion toward the door. A woman slowly walked in, as beautiful as a peacock, carrying a wooden plank in her hand.

It was Kong Lanjun.

Her peacock-like arrogance was gone, and now she looked like a defeated chicken.

She walked in with head lowered, handed the wooden plank to Liu Changjie, and quietly said, "I used this plank to beat you, thirty times. Now you ... you might as well return the favor."

He looked at her, and let out a long sigh. "Young Master Dragon Fifth really deserves to be called a dragon among men," he said quietly. "Otherwise, he wouldn't have so many people willing to devote their lives to him."

Part 3

Soft lamplight filled the elegant room. On top of the small red-brick oven was a copper pot, from which emanated the fragrance of wine.

Standing there heating the wine was the green-robed middle-aged man with white stockings.

Dragon Fifth lay on a leopard skin blanket, which was spread on a short, narrow bed. His eyes were closed peacefully.

The weather was warm, and the small oven burned brightly, but as for these two people, there was not an ounce of warmth to be felt between the two of them.

It was only the two of them in the room, waiting for Liu Changjie.

On the table were spread out several delicate appetizers [9], and there was a chair for Liu Changjie.

Was there anyone else under heaven who could sit down to eat and drink with Dragon Fifth?

There was a knock at the door, and then Meng Fei entered. The elegant room was obviously located within his manor.

"He's here."

"Ask him in." Dragon Fifth's eyes were still shut. "Alone."

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As soon as Liu Changjie entered, Meng Fei shut the door.

The green-robed man, middle-aged man was so focused on heating the wine that he didn't even spare a glance for Liu Changjie.

But Dragon Fifth had already sat up, a strange expression on his pale-white face.

"You didn't do any more work than necessary." He smiled. "In martial arts and in women both, you didn't do any more work than necessary."

He obviously hadn't finished his thought, so Liu Changjie waited for him to continue.

"In fact, you were able to handle a woman that I was incapable of handling."

Liu Changjie maintained his silence.

He wasn't sure what Dragon Fifth was getting at. And when it came to this aspect of dealing with women, a man normally wouldn't be quick to reveal the details.

Dragon Fifth continued, "To trick Qiu Hengbo and Kong Lanjun is not easy, but you did it."

Liu Changjie finally laughed. "I did it for you."

Dragon Fifth looked at him, and then finally smiled broadly. "It seems you're not only intelligent, you're also very cautious."

Liu Changjie let out a breath. "I must be cautious."

"The hare is in hand, you're worried I'm going to throw you in the cooking pot?"

Liu Changjie replied, "'Put away the bow once the birds are all killed, kill the hounds for food once all the hares are bagged.' I understand the meaning of the saying."

"But you're not just a hound for hunting rabbits, you're a person who can accomplish things. I often have use for people like you." [10]

Liu Changjie let out a soft breath. "Thank you very much."

"Sit."

"I'd rather stay standing."

Dragon Fifth laughed again. "It seems Kong Lanjun didn't hold anything back."

Liu Changjie laughed bitterly.

"Do you want the hands she used to deliver the beating?" asked Dragon Fifth.

"I do."

"It's an easy matter," he replied coolly. "I can have her two hands put in a box and delivered immediately."

"But, I'd rather have her hands attached to her body."

He smiled. "That's also easy. When you leave, you can take her with you."

Liu Changjie shook his head. "I like to eat eggs, but it doesn't mean I want to carry a hen around with me."

Dragon Fifth laughed for the second time. "Well then I'll tell you where the chicken coop is. If you want to eat an egg, you can go there any time."

Liu Changjie laughed bitterly. "Sadly, this particular egg is not only picky, it's also sitting on a wooden plank." [11]

Dragon Fifth laughed for the third time, heartily.

It seemed he was in a very good mood this day; he had laughed more times than any other day before.

When Dragon Fifth finished laughing, Liu Changjie slowly said, "I think you forgot to ask me about something."

"There's no need to ask. I know you succeeded in your task."

"That was the correct box?"

Dragon Fifth stared at him. "It was."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure."

They both had strange expressions in their eyes. It seemed as if the question Liu Changjie had asked was superfluous.

Dragon Fifth generally did not like people who spoke superfluously, and yet he didn't seem to be annoyed.

Liu Changjie laughed. "If it was the correct box, then what was inside the box must also be correct."

From within his robe he pulled out a bundle, wrapped in purple satin. The bundle was tied up and sealed with an ingenious knot. "This is what I took from the box. The original seal hasn't been touched."

"I can tell that she personally tied this Lovesick knot."

A Lovesick knot that has been tied well is not easy to untie.

Dragon Fifth extended two fingers, and with a light twisting motion, untied the knot.

He smiled. "If you want to untie a Lovesick knot, this is the only method you can use."

"I have another method," said Liu Changjie.

"Oh, what?"

"A blade."

No matter how tangled the Lovesick not, one slice of a blade would definitely open it.

Dragon Fifth laughed for the fourth time. "Your method is definitely the most direct and thorough."

"That is the only type I use."

Dragon Fifth smiled. "If the method is effective, then one type is enough."

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Inside the bundle was a small pile of silk cotton. Wrapped inside the silk cotton was an emerald-green bottle made from jasper.

Dragon Fifth's eyes shone, and a strange flush filled his pale, white face.

Obtaining this bottle had not been easy.

The price he had paid to get it was extremely high.

His hand trembled involuntarily as he stretched it out.

Who would ever have imagined that Liu Changjie's hand would shoot out like lightning and grab the bottle, then throw it as hard as he could toward the ground. There was a "peng" sound as the bottle smashed into countless pieces. Scarlett-colored medicine oozed out onto the ground like fresh blood.

Meng Fei's face went yellow in fear. [12]

Dragon Fifth's face was filled with shock. "What is the meaning of this?" he shouted.

"Nothing special," said Liu Changjie calmly. "It's just that, finding an employer as good as you isn't easy, so I don't want you to die."

"What are you talking about?" Dragon Fifth said furiously. "I don't understand."

"You should be able to figure it out."

"I can see that the medicine is real. I can smell it too."

The liquid medicine was scarlet and diaphanous, and as soon as the bottle shattered, its fragrant odor had filled the air.

"It might not be fake, but there is definitely poison mixed in."

"How the hell could you tell that?"

"Based on two things."

"Tell me."

"Everything went much too smoothly. It was too easy."

"That's not enough of a reason."

"The Madam Lovesickness that I met, she was an imposter."

"You've never seen her before, how could you know whether she is real or not?"

"Because her skin was too rough. A woman who rubs honey oil over her body every day could not possibly have skin that rough."

"So these are your two reasons?"

"A reasonable deduction could be made from one point, let alone two."

Dragon Fifth suddenly closed his eyes, unable to make any more refutations. Because at this exact moment, the diaphanous medicine suddenly began changing color from scarlet into sickening, deathly black.

Some poisons only take effect when exposed to the air.

At this point, anyone could see that the medicine in the bottle had been mixed with poison, deadly poison.

Dragon Fifth's face was ashen. He stared at Liu Changjie for a long time, before finally saying, "In my entire life, I've never said 'thank you.'"

"I believe you."

"But right now, I have no choice but to thank you."

"And I have no choice but to accept."

"But I still don't fully understand..."

Liu Changjie interrupted him, "You should be able to understand. Qiu Hengbo knew that you were sending me, so she set you up. She let me succeed on purpose, in order to deliver the bottle of poisoned medicine to kill you."

Dragon Fifth's expression changed. "She ... she wants to kill me? But why?"

Liu Changjie sighed. "Who can possibly understand the thinking of a woman?"

Dragon Fifth closed his eyes, appearing to be exhausted. Sorrow can be very exhausting.

"You forgot to ask me something else," said Liu Changjie.

Dragon Fifth laughed bitterly. "My thoughts are troubled. Just say what you want to say."

"The fact that you sent me on this mission... Is it true that only the four of us in this room knew about it?"

"That's correct."

"Then how did Madam Lovesickness find out?"

Dragon Fifth's eyes shot open, filled with an expression as sharp as a sword. And the tip of that sword pointed at Meng Fei's face.

Meng Fei looked sick to his stomach.

"When you beat me up," said Liu Changjie, "everyone thought that I hated your guts. Only Meng Fei knew what was going on behind the scenes."

"It wasn't Meng Fei," said Dragon Fifth suddenly.

"How do you know?"

"If there is Dragon Fifth, there is Meng Fei. He is alive today only because of me. My death wouldn't benefit him in any way."

Liu Changjie was lost in thought for a while. Finally he nodded. "I can believe that. He should know that this world will never have another Dragon Fifth in it."

Meng Fei knelt, tears streaming down his face.

They were tears of gratitude, gratitude for Dragon Fifth's faith in him.

Liu Changjie slowly continued. "If it wasn't Meng Fei, then who was it?"

Dragon Fifth, didn't respond, nor did he ask any further questions.

The two men's gazes were already fixed on the face of the green-robed man with white stockings.

The fire in the stove was weakening. The wine was already warm.

The green-robed man with white stockings was taking the wine from the large copper pot and slowly pouring it into a wine jug.

His hand was stable, not even a drop spilled out.

His face was completely devoid of emotion.

Liu Changjie had never in his life seen someone as calm and collected.

He couldn't help but admire him.

Dragon Fifth looked at him, an expression of sorrow on his face. It appeared to be for the man.

Liu Changjie let out a long sigh. "At first I wasn't willing to suspect you, but now I have no choice.

The green-robed man put the wine jug onto the table, not even glancing at Liu Changjie. [13]

"But other than Dragon Fifth, Meng Fei and myself, no one know the secret but you."

It seemed as if the green-robed man didn't hear a word. He tested the temperature of the wine and then began pouring it into wine cups.

Not a drop of wine spilled out.

Liu Changjie continued, "The carriage driver knew I was working for Dragon Fifth because he was your man. Perhaps he learned the secret while passing your message to Madam Lovesickness. You couldn't deliver the message yourself because you're always with Dragon Fifth, and could never find an opportunity."

The two wine cups were full.

The green robed man put down the wine jug, his face still completely devoid of expression.

"That day you suddenly appeared at the farm house was because you wanted all along to silence the witness, so you were keeping an eye on him. His sudden greediness just gave you a good opportunity to kill him."

The green-robed man didn't say a word, as if he felt it was beneath him to offer any explanation.

"I thought about it a lot," continued Liu Changjie. "And there really is no one other than you who could have revealed the secret."

He let out another long sigh. "But I never imagined that someone like you would betray a friend."

"He's not a friend," said Dragon Fifth suddenly.

"He's not?"

"No."

"Is he a benefactor?"

"Not that either."

Liu Changjie didn't understand. "If he's neither, then why is he following you around like a slave?"

"Do you know who he is?"

"I can't say for sure."

"Well, there's no harm in taking a guess."

"In the past, there was an amazing young hero. He made his first kill at the age of nine. At seventeen he was already making a name for himself in the martial world. By twenty he was famous. He was the leader of the Seven Sword Schools' Kongtong Sect, his sword skill was very high, and he was unequalled in his time. He was called 'Best Blade under Heaven.'"

"You're right. He is Qin Huhua."

Liu Changjie let out a breath. "But it seems he's changed."

"You don't understand why one of the most talented and popular heroes of the past would now be following me around like a slave?"

"I don't. I don't see how anyone could understand."

"In the world, there is only one type of person that could make him change in this way."

"What type of person."

"An enemy."

Shocked, Liu Changjie said, "He is your enemy?"

Dragon Fifth nodded.

Liu Changjie was even more confused.

"In his entire life, he was only defeated three times, and those three times were all by my hand. He swore an oath to kill me, but he knew that there was no way that he would ever be able to defeat me."

"Because you are still young, whereas his martial arts have already passed their peak."

"And also because each time I defeated him, I used a completely different technique, so there was no way for him to figure out my martial arts."

"Therefore, the only way for him to figure out a way to defeat you would be to follow you around constantly and study you, hope to discover a weakness."

"That's correct."

"So you allowed him to follow you!"

Dragon Fifth laughed. "There really is nothing more exciting or delightful than this kind of thing."

Other than a threat to his life, there really were very few things in the world that Dragon Fifth found exciting.

"Of course, there was a condition," said Dragon Fifth.

"That he be your slave?"

Dragon Fifth nodded. With a smile, he said, "Getting Qin Huhua to be your slave is something no one could imagine possible, don't you think?"

"And so you think the arrangement is delightful."

"Not to mention that until he's confident enough to make another move, he will do everything he can to protect me. He doesn't want me to die under anyone's hands but his own."

Liu Changjie sighed. "You really shouldn't have let him in on the secret about Madam Lovesickness."

"I don't have any secrets from him, because I trust him. He isn't the kind of villain who reveals confidential matters."

Not many people completely trust their friends. To find someone who will completely trust an enemy is even more inconceivable.

"Dragon Fifth is worthy of his name," said Liu Changjie, "but this sadly, this time he really made a mistake in judging character."

Dragon Fifth sighed and then laughed bitterly. "Everyone makes mistakes. Perhaps I overestimated him, and underestimated you."

Liu Changjie laughed coolly. "It seems he also underestimated me."

"He thinks that the only person in the world worth paying attention to is me."

Qin Huhua raised his head and stared at Dragon Fifth. Even though there was no expression on his face, within his eyes shone forth a fearful, cutting look. Speaking very slowly, he said, "Do you believe him?"

"I have no choice."

“Very well.”

“Are you ready to make your move?”

“I’ve been studying you carefully for four years, your every act and every move. I haven’t let anything slip.”

“I know.”

“You’re a difficult person to understand. You rarely give people opportunities to see you, and rarely take action.”

“If you usually don’t take action, people will be shocked when you do. When you don’t take action, you are as quiet as a lone mountain. When you do take action, it is fast as a meteor.” [14]

Qin Huhua stood there quietly, himself looking as unshakable as a mountain. Slowly, he said, “When I was young, I revealed too much about my abilities. And yes, my martial arts really are past their peak. If I can’t defeat you right now, there will be fewer and fewer opportunities later.”

“So you were already prepared to make your move?”

“Correct.”

“Good. Very good.”

Qin Huhua continued, “This is my fourth battle with you, and it will be the last. Having been able to fight with you four times, regardless of who wins or who loses, I am able to die without regret.”

Dragon Fifth sighed again. “I originally had no intention of killing you, but this time ...”

“If I’m defeated this time, I have no intention of going on living.”

“Very well. Go get your sword.”

“My technique has changed. You already know me so well, there’s no way I could defeat you with a sword.”

“What will you use?”

“In my hands, anything under heaven can be turned into a deadly weapon.”

Laughing heartily, Dragon Fifth said, “Being able to fight with you these four times has really been one of the greatest pleasures in my life.”

His laughter suddenly ceased.

The room was filled with a deathly silence. Even the sound of breathing could not be heard.

The wind blew on the chrysanthemums and ginkgo plants outside the window. The chrysanthemums were silent, but it seemed like the ginkgo plants were sighing.

The clear autumn weather suddenly seemed to be filled with the harsh cold of winter.

Qin Huhua stared at Dragon Fifth. His pupils constricted, and the veins on his forehead bulged. It seemed he was gathering all the power in his body, in preparation for an all-out attack. [15]

Anyone could see that when he made his move, it would be heaven-shaking.

But no one would have expected that he would use two fingers to pick up a chopstick, which he casually stabbed toward Dragon Fifth.

He had filled himself with the power to fight a tiger, but this move looked like it wasn’t strong enough to poke through a piece of paper.

Dragon Fifth’s expression was grim. The chopstick was light, but he knew that in reality it was heavier than Mount Tai.

He, too, picked up a chopstick, and pointed it out at a slanting angle.

There was a table between the two of them, so Dragon Fifth didn’t stand up.

The chopsticks in their hands danced back and forth, faster and faster. It looked almost like some type of child’s game.

But Liu Changjie could see that this was no game.

The variations in the movements of the chopsticks were ingenious, almost impossible to describe. It was as if an entire ocean had been placed into a millet seed. The tangible became intangible; within every variation there were countless more variations. Every stab seemed to contain the power to crack gold and stone.

In the eyes of others, this battle might not seem very dangerous, but as he watched, Liu Changjie felt shaken to the core.

Qin Huhua really did deserve the title “Best Blade under Heaven.”

And Dragon Fifth really was an extraordinary talent, the type of person the martial world might not see again in a hundred years. His ability was shocking, and he clearly was unparalleled.

Suddenly, the two swiftly moving chopsticks connected and stopped moving.

The expressions on their faces grew more and more grim. A short time passed. Sweat beaded on their foreheads.

Liu Changjie noticed that the small bed Dragon Fifth was sitting on had begun to sink down, and Qin Huhua’s two feet were slowly being embedded into the stone floor.

The two men were clearly using all the power in their bodies. The fearful level of this power was beyond imagination.

Yet the chopsticks in their hands did not snap.

Ivory chopsticks like this should snap, but instead, they appeared to be softening.

The chopstick in Qin Huhua’s hand suddenly began to bend like a noodle. Sweat dripped off his face. Suddenly, he let go of the chopstick, and his entire body flew backward into the wall with a bang.

His body knocked a huge hole into the brick wall, after which he fell to the ground, blood oozing from his mouth. His breathing had stopped.

Dragon Fifth immediately laid back down in the bed, closing his eyes. His pale face exuded exhaustion and weakness.

At this exact moment, Liu Changjie made his move.

His empty palm suddenly dropped down like lightning, seizing Dragon Fifth’s wrist.

Dragon Fifth’s expression changed, but he didn’t open his eyes.

Meng Fei’s face paled, and he tried to leap out through the hole in the wall. But there was someone outside. A fist smashed into Meng Fei’s face, knocking him to the ground.

The fist was quick and fierce. Not many people could knock down Meng Fei with a single fist.

It was “Mighty Lion” Lan Tianmeng. [16, 17]

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Dragon Fifth’s pale face was completely devoid of color.

Liu Changjie grasped his wrist, and as fast as lightning sealed thirteen of his acupuncture points.

Dragon Fifth’s eyes were still closed. He sighed lightly. “So, it turns out I not only underestimated you, I also misjudged your character.”

“Everyone makes mistakes. You are just a person.”

“Did I make a mistake in laying the blame on Qin Huhua?”

“That was probably your biggest mistake.”

“You knew who he was, and you knew he wouldn’t let me fall into anyone else’s hands. So to take action against me, you first needed to borrow my hands to get rid of him.”

“I was a little worried about how to deal with him, but what I was worried about most was you.”

“So you wanted to borrow his hands to make me use up my power.”

"When the sandpiper and the clam fight each other, it's the fisherman who benefits. I just used the old 'kill two birds with one stone' method.

"The poison in the bottle, was that also you?"

"Actually, no."

"You've been plotting against me. Why would you save me?"

"Because I don't like being used by other people. And even more than that, I don't like being Qiu Hengbo's tool. I wanted to use my own two hands to capture the divine dragon."

"Are you one of Qiu Hengbo's subordinates?"

"No."

"You seek revenge?"

"No."

"Then what do you want?"

"I was sent by 'Power of Hu' Patriarch Hu. To bring you to justice."

"What crime did I commit?"

"Don't you know?"

Dragon Fifth sighed. His eyes were closed, and he also closed his mouth.

Liu Changjie said, "The chief constables in the southern seven provinces and the northern six all want to make a move against you. But they know that dealing with you is not an easy matter. Even I wasn't very confident. I had to get you to trust me, so that's why I saved you."

"You've said enough," said Dragon Fifth coldly.

"You don't want to hear any more?"

Dragon Fifth laughed.

"It seems," said Liu Changjie, "you're not inclined to even look at me right now."

Lan Tianmeng suddenly spoke up. "Actually, the person he doesn't want to look at is me, not you."

"Correct," said Dragon Fifth. "Villains like you who forget what is right at the sight of profit... I'm afraid one more glance will pollute my eyes."

Lan Tianmeng sighed. "You're wrong. I'm not going against you for money. I'm going against you for the sake of justice." [18]

"You're also one of Power of Hu's men?"

Lan Tianmeng nodded. Turning to face Liu Changjie, he said, "You didn't know either, did you?"

Liu Changjie didn't

"But," continued Lan Tianmeng, "I knew about you a long time ago."

"From the very beginning?"

"Before you came, Power of Hu had already instructed me to take care of you."

Liu Changjie laughed bitterly. "You took care of me very well."

Lan Tianmeng sighed. "When I beat you up that night, I was a little too hard on you. But, I was acting against my emotions, because I definitely couldn't let him suspect you. I think you can understand my predicament."

"Of course I understand."

Lan Tianmeng's face widened with a smile. "I knew you wouldn't blame me."

"I don't blame you." He smiled and stretched out a hand. "We're family, and all of this is part of our duty. Even if you beat me harder, it wouldn't matter. We're still friends."

Lan Tianmeng laughed heartily. "Ok. Let's be friends."

Laughing, he extended his hand and gripped Liu Changjie's.

And then his laughter died. His face distorted. He could hear the sound of bones being shattered.

At this exact moment, Liu Changjie twisted his wrist, breaking it, and then smashed a fist into bridge of his nose.

It wasn't that Lan Tianmeng didn't see the fist coming, it was that Liu Changjie's technique was too ingenious, and his speed incredible.

After receiving Liu Changjie's iron-fisted strike, the lion-like old man fell down onto his back.

Liu Changjie didn't stop. Fists descended like rain onto his chest and sides. He smiled. "You hit me, I didn't blame you. If I hit you, you shouldn't blame me. If I beat you a little harder than you beat me, I know you won't take it to heart."

Lan Tianmeng couldn't open his mouth.

He bit his teeth together, unwilling to call out. When he had beaten Liu Changjie, Liu Changjie had also been unwilling to call out for mercy.

Even though Dragon Fifth's eyes were still closed, a small smile crept onto his face.

He was not only Lan Tianmeng's friend, but also his benefactor. And yet Lan Tianmeng had betrayed him.

Forgetting what is right at the sight of profit, biting the hand that feeds you. People who do these things deserve punishment.

And Lan Tianmeng was receiving his.

Though the fists beating Lan Tianmeng were Liu Changjie's, they might as well have been Dragon Fifth's.

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The only thing to be heard in the room was the sound wheezing.

By the time Liu Changjie finished, Lan Tianmeng was no longer a mighty lion, but a beaten stray dog.

"What you owe me, I've taken back." Liu Changjie stroked his fist, a strange expression flickering in his eyes. "What I owe, it's time to give back."

"What do you owe?" asked Dragon Fifth.

"No one can live alone in the world," said Liu Changjie coolly. "If you want to live, you have to accept the good grace of others."

"Oh?"

"It's the same with even you. If you want to eat, you need others to plant crops. When you are born, the hands of others than deliver you. Without the good grace of others, you wouldn't be alive, not even for a day."

"So, everyone owes a debt to someone."

Liu Changjie nodded.

"And can you repay your debt?"

"This debt is not easy to pay back. But as long as you're alive, if you can do something to help the world, then the debt can be considered paid."

Dragon Fifth laughed coldly.

"Did you know," asked Liu Changjie suddenly, "Power of Hu has wanted to meet you for a very long time?"

"I've wanted to meet him, too," laughed Dragon Fifth. "For a long time."

Liu Changjie sighed. "You both are not easy people to meet. To arrange a meeting has been difficult."

He sighed again. He sighed because his heart was filled with complicated emotions.

Dragon Fifth closed his eyes again. "I knew for a long time that we would meet eventually, but I never imagined it would be like this."

"There are many things in the world that we can't imagine."

He suddenly lifted up Dragon Fifth. "Even you can't imagine them. Because, you're not a divine dragon, you're just a person, that's all."

(1) Okay, this is one of those clever Chinese plays on words that can't be translated into English. She uses an expression in Chinese, 打肿脸充胖子, that means to go beyond your means to try to impress others. However, the characters that make up the expression literally translate as "to hit your own face until it is swollen," the idea meaning to make your face puffy so that you look more imposing to others. Then she asks him why his butt is swollen and not his face. It's pretty clever, but doesn't translate well. If you translate the actual meaning of the phrase, then the joke doesn't make sense. If you translate the phrase literally, it also doesn't make sense. I tried to translate it in a similarly idiomatic and sarcastic way.

(2) The clever wordplay continues here, because the word in Chinese for obstinate literally means "to have a hard mouth." Then she threatens to beat another part of his body until it's swollen, and it just so happens to use the same character for mouth. In an attempt to have a similar continuity of wordplay, I'm adjusting the translation a little bit.

(3) Okay, I tried to keep the feeling of the original, but it's literally impossible to translate the wordplay here. She starts by calling him 王八蛋 wang ba dan, which is a pretty common epithet usually translated as bastard. Then he responds by saying, "you shouldn't use the characters 王八 wang ba when cursing your husband." This is clever because 王八 carries the meaning of a man whose wife is cheating on him (a cuckold.) Then she responds by saying, "if I was really mad, I really could give you a green hat to wear." As I'm sure most of you know, in Chinese culture, if a man wears a green hat it implies that his wife is cheating on him.

(4) The literal expression is to have a cooked duck in hand, and then it flies away. It implies that you seem to have an assured victory, and then suddenly and unexpectedly you lose.

(5) Here again he uses the phrase "wear a green hat."

(6) The literal word he uses is "iron man," but in this context I think superman is a better choice.

(7) This is a real type of rice wine called 女儿红 nu'er hong. According to Wikipedia it "originates from Shaoxing, in the eastern coastal province of Zhejiang. It is made of glutinous rice and wheat. This wine evolved from the Shaoxing tradition of burying nu'er hong underground when a daughter was born, and digging it up for the wedding banquet when the daughter was to be married." Here's the link to the Wikipedia article: <http://goo.gl/5gsU7W>

(8) He actually addresses the person as "friend," but I couldn't figure a good way to squeeze that word in as well and have it flow well. The literal translation is, "friend who is outside drinking wine, no matter who you are, please come in all of you, and don't forget to bring in the wine."

(9) Here again is the word 下酒菜, which literally means dishes to be eaten when drinking alcohol. I'm translating it as appetizers.

(10) I think the meaning comes across pretty easily here, even though it's wordplay based on Chinese expressions. It starts out with Dragon Fifth saying something based on the expression 狡兔死，走狗烹 jiao tu si, zou gou peng. It translates literally as "the crafty rabbit is dead, boil the running dog." The idea is that after your hunting dog has captured the rabbit, you can cook it for food. Then Liu Changjie responds with the full expression 飞鸟尽，良弓藏；狡兔死，走狗烹. Apparently this expression comes from Records of the Grand Historian by Sima Qian. They two halves can stand alone: <http://goo.gl/tvnkex> and <http://goo.gl/suWeJB>. The whole exchange is even more clever because 走狗 zou gou is also a common expression to mean flunky or lackey, and has been used repeatedly throughout the story to describe Dragon Fifth's followers.

(11) Clever wordplay based on the expression "to pick a bone out of an egg," which means to find fault in others. What Liu Changjie literally says is, "this egg not only has a bone in it, it also has a wooden plank." I changed it a bit so that it (hopefully) makes sense in English.

(12) I left out a small detail, that Meng Fei is standing by the door. But I couldn't figure out a good way to include it without breaking the flow. As some of you might know, it's easy to change almost anything into an adjective in Chinese, but it doesn't work that way in English. The original actually says, "Standing-by-the-door Meng Fei, suddenly looked sick."

(13) In the original Chinese, he is referred to as the "green-robed, white-stockinged man" or the "green-robed, white-stockinged, middle-aged man." But, repeatedly using so many adjectives sounds kind of silly in English so I'm omitting some of them.

(14) The Chinese contains two cool expressions back to back. My version is a relatively direct translation of the meaning of the phrases. A more literal translation would be, "if one wishes to act, the action will shock people, quietness is like a lofty mountain, action is like a meteor." The first expression is a twist on a set phrase in Chinese with basically the same meaning, except instead of talking about taking action, it's talking about singing.

(15) The original uses an expression that basically means to put all your eggs in one basket.

(16) His nickname here is indeed different from his first introduction, in which he was called "Lion King." This new nickname literally just means "male lion," but that sounds kind of lame in English so I'm taking an alternate meaning of the first

character for this version.

(17) There's an additional line of text I'm leaving out. After introducing Lan Tianmeng, he repeats himself by saying, "this person who knocked down Meng Fei with one punch, is Lan Tianmeng."

(18) Here, he uses an expression that literally means, to place loyalty or righteousness above family.

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