

## Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

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## SDXL Chapter 33



### Chapter 33 – Tales in the Night

*Translated by Hugh (aka IcyFox)*



*As the three siblings of Guo Fu, Guo Xiang and Guo Polu sat warming themselves by the fire in an inn at the Fengling Ferry Crossing, they heard the other guests talking about the various gallant and righteous acts of the Eagle Hero. By and by, Guo Xiang's thoughts turned to distant things, and she began to harbor the hope of meeting this Great Eagle Hero.*

The Song Emperor Li Zong celebrated the start of the year, the ninth year after Mengke (or Meng-ge) became the Mongolian Khan. In the early February spring on the tumultuous north bank of the Yellow River's Fenglingdu area, the donkeys and the horses

called out mixed with the sounds of people and carts. The weather was cold then warm, the Yellow River had just thawed, but the north wind blew on this day and it started snowing, freezing the river's water. The water surface did not permit the movement of boats while the carts could not travel on the ice, forcing many visitors heading south to be stranded in the Fenglingdu area. They would be unable to continue their journeys. Although the Fenglingdu area has several inns, travelers arrived from the north continuously and in less than half a day, the inns were already fully occupied and the travelers who arrived later had no place to stay.

In the town the biggest inn was the "An Du Old Inn", occupying a location supposedly bringing good luck. In this inn the guest-quarters were spacious, all travelers who could not find any accommodations came here, and therefore the inn was particularly crowded. The innkeeper tried his best to arrange matters and so each room was packed with three to four individuals. Around twenty people who were waiting to get a room had to sit in a circle in the great hall. The inn assistants moved the furniture and lighted a fire. Outside, the north wind howled, the cold wind together with the snow managed to enter through a crack in a door, causing the fire to flicker continuously. It looked like the many visitors still would not be able to continue their journey the next day and they were full of worries.

The sky became darker, the snow got heavier and heavier. Suddenly horses' hoofs were heard. Three riders anxiously rushed up and stopped at the inn entrance. In the hall an old guest frowned, saying, "Yet another visitor has come."

A female voice said, "Innkeeper, prepare two good spacious and clean rooms."

The innkeeper greeted her with a smile and said, "Sorry, the inn is already fully occupied. I really cannot prepare rooms for you."

That female said, "OK, then one room will do."

The innkeeper said, "Really sorry, honored guest, but the inn must also please others and now visitors really have filled the inn's rooms."

That female swung her horse whip, making a "Pa!" sound and scolded, "Rubbish! You run the inn, but will not prepare rooms, what kind of inn is this? Can't you ask someone to give way? I'll pay you more." After saying that, she then rushed into the hall.

The crowd saw this female figure become clearer and she looked around 30 years old, with a peach colored cheeks, elegant appearance and wearing an expensive blue col-

ored fur-lined coat. The neckband revealed smooth skin; all the clothing looked quite expensive. Behind this young woman was a male and female of around fifteen or sixteen years old. The male had thick eyebrows and big eyes, and had a straightforward facial expression. The female was lively looking, elegant and beautiful. The two youths wore light green satin fur-lined coats. Around the young girl's neck hung a string of pearls, with each one around the size of a small finger nail and showing a light halo. The many guests saw these three people's imposing manner and although they had chatted all day they stopped talking and stared silently at the three people.

The inn assistant bowed with a smile, saying, "Madam, look, these guests cannot find any accommodations. If you three do not mind the discomfort, I will let everybody occupy this space and keep warm by the fire, comfortably passing the night. If the river melts tomorrow, you can cross the river."

The young woman got impatient, but it looked like this was reality, so she frowned wordlessly. A middle-aged woman sitting near the fire said, "Madam, sit here, keep warm by the fire, get rid of the cold air then talk about this again." The beautiful woman said: "Good, many thanks to you." A male guest to the side of that middle-aged woman hurriedly moved away, giving up his place.

The three people sat down, and soon the inn assistant delivered their meals. The food was sumptuous, with chicken and pork, and a big pot of wine. That beautiful young woman's alcohol capacity was very good, having drunk bowl after bowl. The youth and the refined young girl also accompanied her in drinking; the three of them addressed each other as brother and sister. The youth looked older than the refined girl, but called her "elder sister".

The people sat in a circle around the fire, listening to the wind whistling outside, none feeling sleepy at the moment.

A man with a Shanxi accent said, "This weather really is unfavorable; it changes rapidly. God doesn't allow man to have even one good day."

A short person with a Hubei accent said, "You can't blame Heaven and Earth; we have in here a fire to keep warm, food to eat, what else do you want? If you have lived in the besieged city of Xiangyang, even the world's most bitter places will seem a cozy nest."

That beautiful young woman upon hearing "besieged city of Xiangyang", exchanged glances with her brother and sister.

A visitor with a Guangdong accent asked, “Excuse me, elderly friend, that besieged city of Xiangyang – how is life there?”

The Hubei visitor said, “The Mongolians’ cruelty, of which all of you know, need not be mentioned. The year the Mongolians’ 100,000-strong army attacked Xiangyang fiercely, the garrison was controlled by Governor Lu, a stupid and incompetent person. Fortunately the heroic couple Mr. and Mrs. Guo bravely repelled the enemy forces...” The young woman, upon hearing “heroic couple Mr. and Mrs. Guo”, started paying attention. Listening to that Hubei visitor continue, “Xiangyang City’s hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians also defended the city with their lives and none cowered from their duty. A small-time merchant like me, though only able to move earth and stones, also helped to defend the city. This old arrow scar on my face was caused by a Mongolian’s arrow.” The people looked at his face simultaneously, saw that under his left eye there really was a teacup-size arrow scar and could not help but respect him.

That Guangdong guest said, “Our great Song has much land and many people; if everybody acts like the old friend here, even if the Mongolians were ten times fiercer, they couldn’t conquer our lands.”

The Hubei man said, “Yes. Look, the Mongolian army has been attacking Xiangyang for more than ten years, but can’t take the city, while other cities fall easily. I heard dozens of countries in the western region got destroyed by the Mongolians, while our Xiangyang, throughout, stood erect like a mountain. The Mongolian prince Khubilai Khan personally directed the combat, but also could not overcome our Xiangyang people.” After saying that, he greatly felt satisfied.

The Guangdong guest said: “The common people will fight the Mongolians with their lives; if the Mongolians come to Guangdong, our Guangdong men will also fight them with all our might.”

The Hubei man said, “Even if we don’t go all out with the Mongolians, we will still die. The Mongolians cannot take Xiangyang, so they seized the Han people outside the city, tied them up next to each other and beheaded them near the city. Even some four or five year-old or six or seven year-old children were tied up, then pulled by horses in circles under the city wall, and usually in less than half a circle, the children would die. We could hear the children crying loudly from the top of the city wall, and it hurts the heart greatly. The Mongolians use such cruel methods, trying to frighten us into surrendering, but the more vicious they are, the harder we defend the city. That year all of Xiangyang’s grain was eaten, the water supply used up, we even had to drink the water

condensed on tree bark, but the Mongolians could never force their way in. Afterwards the Mongolians gave up and withdrew the army.”

The Guangdong man said, “After more than ten years fighting, if Xiangyang didn’t persevere unyieldingly, I fear half of the great Song Empire would have already disappeared.”

Many people asked about Xiangyang’s defense situation, and the Hubei man talked dramatically, praising Guo Jing and Huang Rong like deities, so the people called out their approval unceasingly.

A visitor with a Sichuan accent suddenly sighed, “Actually good officials who can defend a city are numerous, but the Imperial Court is treacherous, often allowing disloyal subjects to enjoy riches and honor, while the loyal ministers die unjustly. The previous dynasty’s General Yue need not be mentioned. For instance, our Sichuan has several loyal ministers who were killed by the Imperial Court.”

The Hubei man said, “Who were they? I must ask.” The Sichuan man said, “The Mongolians attacked Sichuan for more than 10 years and we all depended on Marshal Yu to defend us. The entire Sichuan population treated him like a living Buddha. Who knew that the Emperor believed the words of his disloyal subject Ding Daquan who said Marshal Yu was too powerful and dangerous. The emperor bestowed poisoned wine upon him and compelled him to commit suicide; replacing him with an incompetent and deceitful jerk as Marshal. Then when the Mongolians attacked again, the northern Sichuan province could not defend itself. The soldiers were Marshal Yu’s former subordinates, so everyone fought to the death. But the new Marshal could only polish up his superiors so as soon as we went to war, he deployed the troops hopelessly and naturally we could not defend ourselves. Ding Daquan and Chen Dafang, the deceitful duo, both shielded that useless Marshal, and instead maligned the brave and unyielding General Wang Weizhong. They accused him of collaborating with the enemy, resulting in his entire family in Beijing being captured and General Wang beheaded.” Saying this, his voice had a sobbing note, and many people sighed simultaneously.

The Guangdong visitor said indignantly, “Our country’s affairs are all thrown into disarray by these disloyal subjects. I heard the Imperial Court has three dogs, so this disloyal subject Ding Daquan must be one of them.”

A fair youth was listening silently, but he said, “Correct, the Imperial Court’s disloyal subjects Ding Daquan, Chen Dafang and Hu Dachang are the top three dogs. The Linan people added a dot to their ‘Da’ character, changing them to Ding Qianquan, Chen

Quanfang and Hu Quanchang.” (Playing with the Chinese characters) Hearing this, the group of people laughed heartily.

The Sichuan man said, “From your voice, you must be from the capital Linan.”

The youth said, “Exactly.”

The Sichuan man said, “Then have you heard of the matter concerning General Wang Weizhong’s punishment?”

The youth said, “I saw with my own eyes. Before dying General Wang’s manner did not change and he fiercely shouted that Ding Daquan and Chen Dafang will bring disaster on the nation and the people. But moreover there is also a different matter.” The numerous people asked, “What different matter?”

The youth said, “General Wang’s death was caused by Chen Dafang’s plotting. When General Wang was tied up and he was being moved to the execution ground, he shouted loudly in the street, saying that he will definitely voice his grievances to the Jade Emperor (the Emperor of Heaven). The third day after General Wang’s death, that Chen Dafang was killed in his own home; his severed head was actually displayed above the Linan east gate’s bell tower, suspended on a long bamboo pole. Neither apes nor monkeys could reach this place, let alone a person; if it wasn’t the Jade Emperor, then who could have done it?” Many people expressed admiration. The youth said, “This matter is known throughout Linan and was not made up by me. If you people go to Linan, you will know as soon as you ask.”

The Sichuan man said, “This brother’s story is indeed good. However the one who killed Chen Dafang, certainly wasn’t a deity or god, but actually was a great hero.”

The youth shook his head and said, “That Chen Dafang was a high official in the Imperial Court and had many soldiers. He was guarded closely; how could the average man kill him? Also, to hang this disloyal subject’s severed head above the bell tower, one must have wings; only then can one have that ability.”

The Sichuan man said, “A chivalrous hero with such extraordinary abilities must still exist in the world after all. But if I didn’t witness this myself, I might also find it unbelievable.”

The youth curiously asked, “You saw how he hung up Chen Dafang’s severed head on the high bamboo pole with your own eyes? How did you see that?”

The Sichuan man hesitated for a while and said, “General Wang Weizhong has a son; when General Wang was arrested the son escaped outside Linan. The Imperial Court’s disloyal subjects wanted to nip the problem in the bud, so they sent the army to pursue and capture him. General Wang’s son was also a military officer; although he has some martial arts, he actually was overwhelmed by sheer numbers and knew that he was about to be caught. But a savior came and empty-handedly thrashed dozens of soldiers soundly. Young General Wang then told his savior how his father fought bravely for the country but was framed by the disloyal subjects. That chivalrous hero rushed the same night to Linan, wanting to rescue General Wang, but was late by two days and General Wang was already dead. That chivalrous hero swelled with anger and that very evening he severed Chen Dafang’s head. Although that bell tower is out of reach of apes and monkeys, that chivalrous hero had only to jump gently and reached it in one attempt.”

The Guangdong man asked, “Who is this hero? What’s his appearance like?”

The Sichuan man said, “I did not know this hero’s name, I only saw that he was short a right arm, his facial expression...his facial expression was also very unusual. He rode a horse and led another horse with a huge strange-looking bird riding on it...” He had not finished talking when a man with a straightforward facial expression loudly said, “Correct! This must be the world-famous ‘Eagle Hero’!”

The Sichuan person asked, “He is called the ‘Eagle Hero’?”

The other man said, “This chivalrous hero valiantly upholds justice, defends the good against evil, but is never willing to reveal his name. Our friends in Jianghu (the pugilistic world) always see him and a queer bird together, so they gave him the nickname the “Chivalrous Eagle Hero” (Shen Diao Da Xia). He said he was not fit to be called a “Chivalrous Hero” (da xia), so they only called him the “Eagle Hero”. But based on his actions, what’s wrong with calling him “Chivalrous Hero”? If he isn’t a hero, then who is?”

The beautiful young woman suddenly said, “You are a chivalrous hero, I am also a chivalrous hero, humph, there are rather too many chivalrous heroes.”

That Sichuan person imposingly said, “Madam said that? Although I don’t understand Jianghu matters, the Eagle Hero rushed Linan from Jiangxi for four consecutive days and nights, without sleeping or resting, in order to save the life of General Wang. He didn’t even know General Wang, but because of the General’s utter loyalty in serving the country and being framed by the disloyal traitor, he acted boldly without regard for



his own safety. He braved much danger to seek justice for General Wang's orphan, so should you call him a chivalrous hero?"

The young woman made a 'humph' sound and was about to argue, but the refined young girl beside her said, "Elder sister, judging from what this gentleman did, of course one should call him a "Chivalrous Hero"." Her words were clear; upon hearing this, nobody else could say anything as pleasant to hear.

The young woman said, "What do you know?" Turning her head to that Sichuan man, she said, "How do you know it so well? Is this not hearsay? In Jianghu news, around 90% is not accurate."

That Sichuan person hesitated for a while before saying, "My surname is Wang; General Wang Weizhong was my father. My life was saved by the Eagle Hero. I am a fugitive and the Imperial Court has issued a warrant for my arrest, and wants my head. But this involves my savior's reputation, so I do not dare fear death and keep this matter from coming to light."

The people were shocked to hear him say that. The Guangdong man curled his thumb upwards, saying "Young General Wang, you are a good man. Anyone who dares to inform the government authorities of your whereabouts may have a white knife entering him, a red knife coming out." Many people loudly praised this. The beautiful woman heard him say this and could not argue.

The refined young girl looked at the flickering fire and was lost in thought, gently mumbling, "Eagle Hero, Eagle Hero... .." Turning her head to young General Wang, she said, "Uncle Wang, the Eagle Hero has such excellent martial arts, how could he lose an arm?" The beautiful woman's face changed greatly, the lips moved slightly, wanting to speak, but she controlled the impulse.

Young General Wang shook his head saying, "I didn't even get to ask his name, how could I ask about his life story?"

The beautiful young woman made a 'humph' sound, saying "Of course you don't know."

The Linan youth said, "The Eagle Hero killed the traitor which young General Wang witnessed with his own eyes, then naturally it was not the deities who did it. But that traitor Ding Daquan's face turned green in one night, so it must be due to heaven's punishment."

The Guangdong man said, “How did his face turn green in one night? This is really strange.”

The Linan youth said, “Formerly the people of Linan called Ding Daquan as Ding Qianquan, but now he is called “Ding Qingpi” (Ding Green Skin). His originally fair skin suddenly turned green in a night, and it didn’t go away. All the wise doctors were not able to treat him. I heard the Emperor also once asked about it but that disloyal official said that he wholeheartedly served the Emperor and his anxiety over national affairs caused him to lose much sleep, so his complexion turned green. But in Linan everyone said this deceitful scoundrel brings disasters on the nation and the people, so the Jade Emperor turned his face green.”

The Guangdong man smiled shaking his head, saying, “Indeed this is very strange.”

The man with the straightforward face suddenly laughed loudly, patted his leg and called out, “This was also the work of the Eagle Hero, heh-heh, this makes me happy.” People quickly asked, “What, the Eagle Hero did this too?” That guy only laughed and said, “Ha-ha, this is funny.” The Guangdong guest desired to know the details and ordered the servant to bring two catties of wine and invited that guy to drink.

He drank a big bowl of wine and was satisfied and happy, loudly saying, “This matter is not a cock and bull story; I also have a bit of credit. That evening the Eagle Hero suddenly arrived in Linan; he called me to lead some followers and we tied up the Linan Qian Tang Xian Yamen (Something like a District Court) officers, removed their clothes and let us play the roles of the officers. Everybody was pleasantly surprised, as we did not know why the Eagle Hero gave such instructions, but we wanted to play along and so we acted accordingly. Soon the Eagle Hero arrived at the Qian Tang Xian Yamen, he put on the magistrate’s costume, sat the hall, banged the wooden block and shouted, ‘Bring that scum Ding Daquan here!’” Saying this, his saliva splattered and he drank a big mouthful of wine.

The Guangdong guest said, “Friend what did you work as in Linan at that time?”

The man returned his gaze and said, “What job? I drank a lot, ate a lot, had much money but I was a businessman without capital.” (Hinting he was involved in shady activities.) The Guangdong visitor was startled and did not dare ask again.

The man also said, “At that time when I heard ‘Ding Daquan’, I got a shock, carefully thinking ‘The dog Ding Daquan is currently the Prime Minister, how did the Eagle Hero bring him here?’ The Eagle Hero hit the wooden block again, and then two burly men

actually brought a man dressed in official court dress before him. A year earlier Ding Daquan went to a Taoist temple to burn incense and obtain blessings and I saw him outside the temple. Now when I looked again, it was really Ding Daquan. His whole body trembled, not knowing whether to kneel or not. Our brothers kicked his knees, he fell over and knelt down, ha-ha, the Eagle Hero asked, 'Ding Daquan, are you aware of the charges against you?' Ding Daquan said 'I don't know.' The Eagle Hero shouted, 'You engage in corrupt practices for your own personal gain, caused the deaths of loyal men, cruelly harm the common people, collaborate with the enemy who invade the country; all these are heinous crimes – quickly, confess now!' Ding Daquan said, 'Who are you? You insult the Prime Minister; do you not know the law?' The Eagle Hero said, 'Do YOU not know the law? Officers, hit him forty times then we shall talk again!' Everybody already hated this scum, so this time we hit doubly hard, but we only hit this scoundrel several times before he begged for mercy again and again. The Eagle Hero asked several questions and he answered willingly, not daring to act stubbornly. The Eagle Hero brought a pen and paper and demanded he write a confession. He hesitated slightly so the Eagle Hero commanded us to hit his buttocks and slap his mouth."

The refined young girl smiled and said quietly, "Interesting!"

The man drank another huge mouthful of wine, saying with a smile, "Yes. This is very interesting. That Ding Daquan had never been hit before so he had no choice but to write the confession, but he suffered from the beatings so he wrote extremely slowly. The Eagle Hero had to urge him on repeatedly but he was not willing to write any faster. Soon the Sun rose, outside the Yamen the sounds of people got louder, and a large troop of soldiers arrived, probably because the matter had leaked out. The Eagle Hero got angry and shouted, 'Behead him!' and cast a glance at me. I knew the Eagle Hero would not easily take someone's life, so I drew out my broad sword and brushed Ding Daquan's neck, then when I chopped the sword down, I turned it in midair, chopping his neck with the flat of the sword. But this scared the living daylights out of Ding Daquan, causing his complexion to turn green suddenly and he fainted. The Eagle Hero laughed heartily, calling us to put back the Yamen's officer's clothes and sneak off through the side door and return home. Afterwards he went out to the soldiers and so we never fought with them, and everybody withdrew safely. I heard the following day the Eagle Hero personally sneaked into the Imperial Palace, and handed Ding Daquan's confession to the Emperor. But we do not know how, but that Ding Daquan managed to sweet talk the Emperor into believing him and allowing him to continue as Prime Minister."

Young General Wang sighed, "If the Emperor was not stupid, then disloyal subjects could not do evil. When Qin Hui was gone, Han Tuo Zhou came; when Han Tuo Zhou has

gone, Shi Miyuan came; now Shi Miyuan has gone, Ding Daquan comes. We saw Jia Sidao in power and saw how this brought disaster upon the nation and the people. Oh, since the disloyal subjects are numerous, our great Song Empire may not last long.”

The other man said, “Only if we ask the Eagle Hero to be Prime Minister can we repel the Mongolians and restore peace throughout the country.”

The beautiful woman said, “Humph is he qualified to be the Prime Minister?”

The man got angry, “If he’s not are you?”

The young woman became furious and shouted, “Who the hell are you; how dare you be impolite to me?”

The guy picked an iron rod from the fire; she grabbed a few sticks of firewood and struck his rod. The guy’s arm trembled and he felt half his body go numb so he let go of the hot rod, which fell onto the floor causing sparks from the fire to fly and scorch strands of his beard. People called out in alarm. Although the man is hot-tempered, he tasted her martial arts, suffered a loss and did not dare act rashly. He only stroked his burnt beard, not even wanting to drink the wine anymore.

The refined young girl said, “Others have been talking about the Eagle Hero and it was all going fine, why do you not like to hear it?” Turning her head to the man she gave a sweet smile, saying “Uncle, please do not be offended.” That man was originally filled with anger, but seeing her sweet smile, his anger dissipated immediately and his large mouth also smiled; he wanted to say something polite but did not know what to say.

The young girl said, “Uncle, how did you get to know the Eagle Hero?” The man looked at the young woman, hesitated and did not speak. The young girl said, “Just agree not to offend my elder sister and that will do. How old is the Eagle Hero? Are his looks good?” She did not wait for the man to reply and turned her head to the woman saying, “Elder sister, I wonder how his Divine Eagle compares with our pair of eagles?”

The young woman said, “Compare with our pair of eagles? In all this world, which eagle or eagles can hold a candle to our pair of eagles?”

The young girl said, “Not necessarily true. Father often said, ‘A person who studies military theories must know that superior parties always exist and so one cannot be complacent.’ If that applies to humans, then it applies to our eagles too, so more magnificent birds should exist.”

The young woman said “At your young age, what do you understand? When we went out, our parents told you to listen to me, have you not remembered?”

The young girl said with a smile, “That also depends on whether what you say is right. Younger brother am I right or is elder sister right?”

The youth next to her is big and sturdy, but actually looked very naive, so he hesitated for a while then said, “I don’t know. Father said we should listen to elder sister, and told you not to talk back to elder sister.”

The young woman looked very pleased and said, “Isn’t that so?”

The young girl saw that her younger brother was helping her elder sister, but she was not angry and said with a smile, “You don’t understand anything either.” Turning her head to the straightforward man she said, “Uncle, continue the Eagle Hero’s story, please.”

The man said, “OK, since the lady wants to hear, I shall speak; although I, whose surname is Song, have poor skills, I am an honest man. What I say is true and definitely doesn’t contain half a word of lies, if the lady does not believe me, then there’s no need to listen.”

The young girl took the wine pot and poured out a bowl of wine for him, then said with a smile, “Why would I not believe you? Come on, quickly start talking!” She also called out, “Waiter, bring ten catties of wine again and cut 20 catties of beef, my elder sister requests all of you to drink merrily and drive out the cold air.” The servant repeatedly agreed and relayed the order. The many travelers smiled from ear to ear, expressing their gratitude with one voice. Before long, three waiters brought the wine and meat.

The young woman calmly said “Even if I wanted to provide a treat, I would not invite people who utter rubbish. Waiter, the bill for the wine and meat money should not be charged to my account.”

The servant gawked, looked from the young woman to the young girl, not knowing what to do. The young girl took off a golden hairpin from her hair and gave it to the servant, saying, “This hairpin is made of real gold, it’s worth several taels (a unit of currency) of silver. Take it away and exchange it for money. And bring another ten catties of wine and 20 catties of mutton.”

The young woman got angry, “Younger sister, must you be spiteful with me? Even a pearl on this hairpin alone is worth more than 100 taels of silver; you bothered and begged Uncle Zhu for it, but now you casually use it to treat people to a drink. When you return to Xiangyang, if Mother asks about it how will you answer?”

The young girl stuck out her tongue and said with a smile, “I shall say it fell on the road, and I could not find it.”

The woman said “I will not lie for you.”

The young girl used her chopsticks to grasp a piece of beef and put it in her mouth. She then said, “After all, we have already eaten, how can I take it back now? Everybody, please eat, there is no need to be polite.”

The people saw the two arguing and all found it interesting, but they liked the young girl’s naïve character, so even those who did not drink carried the liquor bowls to those who drank the wine, helping the young girl secretly. The young woman spitefully closed her eyes and used her hands to cover her ears.

The young girl said with a smile, “Uncle Song, my elder sister is sleeping, it’s OK if you speak loudly; you won’t wake her.” The young woman opened her eyes widely, getting angry, “When did I sleep?” The young girl then said, “That’s even better, even if we talk loudly we won’t disturb you.”

The young woman said loudly, “Xiang’er, let me tell you, if you anger me, I will not allow you to follow us around tomorrow.” The young girl said, “It’s alright, I can travel together with Younger brother.” The woman said “Younger brother will come with me.” The young girl said, “Younger brother, say, who will you follow?”

The youth was caught in a fix, if he helped his big sister, his other sister would be upset, if he helped his other sister, his big sister would be angry, so he said, “Mother said, the three of us must always travel together and not be separated.”

The young woman stared at her younger sister and snapped, “If I had known that you would become so disobedient, I would not have been anxious to find you back when you got kidnapped by the thugs when you were small.”

The young girl heard her say that, causing her heart to soften, so she hugged the young woman’s shoulders, begging, “Good elder sister, please don’t be angry, it’s my fault.”

The young woman was angry and paid no attention to her. The young girl then said, “If

you don't smile, I will tickle you." That young woman turned her head away instead. The young girl suddenly extended her right hand and poked at the young woman's armpit from behind. The young woman did not counter the move but swept her left hand backwards. The young girl used her left hand to block and her right hand continued to move forwards. The young woman sank her right elbow slightly, pressing down on her sister's arm. The young girl then circled her palm and avoided the elbow, executing the graceful move beautifully. In that short moment, the two people exchanged seven or eight moves, all originating from the ingenious "Subtle Hand Arresting Technique". Although the young girl did not manage to tickle her elder sister's armpit, the young woman also could not catch her sister's arm.

Suddenly a person in a corner softly said, "Good skills!" Both sisters stopped and looked at that corner and saw a person curled up into a ball, the head buried between the knees sleeping soundly. The sisters sat on a pile of firewood looking at him resting in such a position without moving at all. The other people were unable to see his face, so it looked like this comment was not made by him.

The youth said, "Big sister, elder sister, Father warned us not to reveal our martial arts casually."

The young girl smiled, "Young old man, you are right." She turned her head to the straightforward man and said, "Uncle Song, sorry, we sisters were busy arguing and forgot to listen to your story, please continue."

The man named Song said, "I'm not spinning a yarn, this is the absolute truth and nothing but the truth."

The young girl said, "Uncle Song, what you say is naturally true."

The man drank the wine, saying with a smile, "I've consumed much of the lady's wine and meat, how can I not tell all? If I had not lost all my money last night due to three confounded dice, I would really repay the lady. You keep addressing me as Uncle, how can I disappoint you? How did I get to know the Eagle Hero? It was similar to young General Wang; it was also the Eagle Hero who saved my life. But this time he actually didn't use his Wugong (martial arts), he used money to buy my life back." The young girl said with a smile, "Well, this is curious; he used money to buy your life? Eh, how much is it worth?"

That man laughed aloud and said, "My worthless body actually cost more than beef and pork because the Eagle Hero unexpectedly forked out 2,000 taels of silver for it. More

than five years ago, I tried to uphold justice in Shandong and I killed a crook. Since murder carries the death penalty, I was sentenced to death so there was nothing for me to say. Who knew several days later, the Licheng county magistrate interrogated the local evil tyrant and later brought me forward for a torture session accusing me of crimes that local tyrant committed, murder, extortion, rape; all the blame was pushed onto me and the tyrant was acquitted. Afterwards the Prison Warden told me that the tyrant bribed the County Magistrate with 1,000 taels of silver, so the County Magistrate transferred all his capital charges to me. A capital offence is punished with death; ten capital offences were also punished with death, so I was made a scapegoat. When I heard such injustice, I shouted loudly in my cell, scolding the corrupt official, but what use was that?”

“After several days, the corrupt official called for a retrial and that local tyrant was also kneeling next to me. I shouted, ‘You corrupted dog, you accepted bribes and distorted justice, you will not have a peaceful death!’ That corrupt official grinned, ‘Song Wu, you do not have to speak thus, I investigated closely and found that you were sentenced unjustly. That crook was not killed by you but by this tyrant!’ After saying that, he ordered the Yamen attendants to hit him hard, and used the bamboo torture method (something like squeezing the fingers between bamboo sticks) on him, forcing him to confess that he killed that crook and pushed the blame on me. I wasn’t able to figure this out; that crook was obviously killed by me, how could this charge be transferred to someone else?”

The young girl heard this and smiled, saying, “This magistrate must be really blind.”

Song Wu said, “He was definitely not blind; when I got home, my mother told me after I was sentenced to death, my mother bitterly wept daily on the street. One day she happened to meet the Eagle Hero passing through who asked her what was wrong. The Eagle Hero asked around and discovered the truth; he said he had a matter at hand and didn’t have the time to find this corrupt official to settle the score, so he gave my mother 2,000 taels of silver to buy my life. After three months, everyone in the town said the County Magistrate, late one night, was robbed of 4,000 taels of silver and got into a fit of anger. He was so mad he coughed up blood ever since. I knew this surely must be the Eagle Hero’s doing, so I didn’t dare continue living there and moved to Jiangnan. After more than a year, some people told me, a great master with a missing arm was by the seashore with a big queer bird and he was looking blankly into the sea, and had been doing so for the past few days. I hastily hurried up to him and kowtowed to him as an expression of gratitude.”



The young woman suddenly said, “Thank him for what? He paid 2,000 taels of silver but stole 4,000 taels of silver; so he made a profit of 2,000 taels of silver. How could this Yang scum do business in such an unscrupulous manner?” The young girl said, “Yang? The Eagle Hero is named Yang?” The young woman said, “I don’t know, I didn’t say his name is Yang.” The young girl said, “I clearly heard you say so.” The woman said, “Surely you heard wrongly.”

The young girl said, “OK. I won’t argue with you. Even if the Eagle Hero gained 2,000 taels of silver, it must also have been used for helping the poor and needy people. He is a generous and chivalrous hero, how would he use the money for his own personal gain?” Many people cheered with one voice, all saying, “The lady is right!”

The young girl asked, “Uncle Song, why did the Eagle Hero stare at the sea? Is he waiting for someone?” Song Wu shook his head, “I don’t know, I didn’t dare to ask about this.”

The young girl took up two pieces of firewood and threw them into the fire, looking at the dark flame turn bright red, gently saying, “Although Eagle Hero is ever eager to help the distressed; perhaps he actually has a problem of his own? Otherwise why does he always stare at the sea?”

A middle-aged woman sitting in a western corner suddenly said, “I have a younger female cousin who has seen the Eagle Hero before. She also once saw the Eagle Hero blankly looking at the sea with a strange expression, and so she personally asked him about it. The Eagle Hero replied, ‘My beloved wife is at the other end of the sea, so we can’t meet.’ The people all said “Ohh” at the same time.

The refined young girl said, “So he has a wife, why did she end up at the other end of the sea? He has such excellent abilities, why doesn’t he cross the sea to look for her?”

The middle-aged woman said, “My younger female cousin also asked him that. He said, “The Sea is so vast, I don’t know how we can meet.”

The young girl gently sighed, “I expected that such a character would have such a personality, so it’s actually true.” She also asked, “Is your younger female cousin very pretty? In her heart she secretly likes the Eagle Hero, is it not so?”

The beautiful young woman shouted clearly, “Younger sister, are you fantasizing again?”

The middle-aged woman said, “My younger female cousin may be considered to be beautiful. The Eagle Hero killed her father in order to save her mother. Whether or not my younger female cousin secretly liked the Eagle Hero, nobody knows. She has since married an honest farmer. The Eagle Hero gave her a great sum of money and now her life is pretty good.”

The young girl said, “The Eagle Hero killed her father in order to save her mother? How strange!”

The beautiful woman said “This person has a very strange temperament, when he’s good he saves lives, when he’s wicked he murders people. Yes, he was like that since he was young.”

That young girl curiously asked “He was like that since he was young? How do you know?”

The woman said, “I just know.”

The young girl persistently asked about the matter but the young woman refused to say. The young girl said, “Fine, since you won’t say, then I don’t want to hear. Even if you did say, I may not believe you.” She turned her head to the middle-aged woman and said, “Madam, please tell me about your younger female cousin’s story.”

The woman said, “Alright. My younger female cousin and I have an age gap of seventeen years, and her mother is my aunt...” The young girl said with a smile, “And her father is your uncle.” That woman replied with a smile, “Oh, I’m droning non-stop again, causing the lady to be impatient. My uncle is from Henan; in that year the Mongolians invaded our lands and captured my uncle to work as a slave. My aunt led my cousin, begging for food along the way, and went to Shandong from Henan. Then they went to Shanxi from Shandong, looking for my uncle’s whereabouts.”

Young General Wang sighed, “Traveling thousands of li to find her husband; that is really rare.”

The woman said, “But because my aunt and my cousin’s appearance is good, traveling on the road is doubly hard. The two of them spread their faces with black mud to prevent evil men from seeing colour and coming up with ideas...” (Meaning lusting after them...as if you didn’t know!)

The young girl said, “Seeing colour and coming up with ideas?” Half of the people sitting around the fire started laughing.

The beautiful young woman hurriedly said, “Younger sister, if you don’t understand then don’t talk nonsense, you’re a big lady, and people will laugh at you.”

The young girl muttered, “I don’t understand, that’s why I ask; if I understood, why would I ask?”

The middle-aged woman smiled and said, “These are awful words, if the lady doesn’t understand it’s better for her. Mmm, my aunt and cousin searched for four years and heaven helped them; they finally found my uncle in Hubei, serving as a Mongolian official’s slave. This official is very evil. When my aunt saw my uncle, he had just massaged the Mongolian official’s left leg. My aunt was extremely grieved and begged the Mongolian official to allow him to return home. The Mongolian official was not willing to agree, saying he bought this lackey for 100 taels of silver, so unless my aunt has 500 taels of silver to redeem his freedom, the official would rather kill him than set him free. My aunt didn’t even have 50 taels of silver, how could she find 500 taels of silver? She thought for a long time, finally deciding not to be concerned about face and so she and her daughter sold their flesh...”

Again the young lady did not understand, but her previous question caused much laughter, so now she did not dare to ask again, and continued to listen to the woman. The woman said, “After several years like this, the mother and daughter only had a little savings, but to raise 500 taels of silver, was easier said than done. Fortunately their clients knew about their plight, so they often paid more than necessary. The mother and daughter suffered great humiliation, and on this New Year’s Eve, they finally raised the 500 taels of silver. They went to the Mongolian official’s residence, thinking that the whole family can finally be reunited and have a happy new year.”

The young girl heard this and was happy for the mother and daughter. Then she heard the woman say, “That Mongolian official received the 500 taels of silver, and then called my uncle to come out, letting the family meet. My uncle’s family kowtowed (kneel and bow) to that Mongolian official and bade him farewell. Who knew that when the Mongolian official saw my cousin, he suddenly had evil intentions, saying, ‘Good, you are here to redeem this slave, nothing could be better, now hand over 500 taels of silver!’” My aunt was shocked, she had already given the Mongolian official 500 taels of silver, and how could she hand over the money again? The Mongolian official’s face changed, shouting, ‘I am a high Mongolian official, would I cheat for my slave’s money?’ My aunt was afraid and sad, so she immediately cried loudly in the main hall,

and then that Mongolian official said, “Fine. Today is New Year’s Eve, I shall show mercy and let your family be reunited, but I fear when this lackey is gone he will not return, so you must leave your girl behind. ‘My aunt knew he harbored evil intentions; how would she be willing to comply? That Mongolian official shouted for his attendants who then threw my uncle and aunt out of his office.”

“My aunt wasn’t willing to give up her daughter and shouted in front of the Mongolian official’s office. The common people knew perfectly well that she has been wronged, but Hubei was not part of the great Song territory. Mongolian soldiers killed the Han people like trampling on ants, so who dared to say a word about fairness? But my uncle said, ‘Since the Mongolian official has taken a liking for our girl, that is a fortune others cannot have, so why do you cry?’ He actually behaved like a slave since he has been a lackey for a long time. He then asked where that 500 taels of silver came from. In the beginning my aunt was not willing to say, but was questioned persistently and she finally said it. My uncle got angry, saying my aunt had ruined his reputation by not following the traditional woman’s ethics. He became depressed, then did such a despicable act as to write a divorce paper immediately and has since divorced my aunt.” The people sighed with one voice; all saying her aunt really has had such an unfortunate life.

The middle-aged woman said, “My aunt toiled through untold hardships for seven or eight years but reached such a wretched state that she did not want to live. Then she went to the woods and loosened her belt to hang herself. But heaven is just and fair; just then the Eagle Hero passed by and rescued her. He found out the whole story and his face flushed with anger. That very evening he entered into the Mongolian official’s office and saw the Mongolian official trying to coerce my cousin and my uncle unexpectedly urging my cousin to submit. He was saying that since she has been in that kind of job all these years, she isn’t a decent girl anymore and didn’t have to respect her chastity. The Eagle Hero killed my uncle with one punch and gripped that Mongolian official and threw him into the Huaihe River, thus saving my cousin. He said my aunt sold her flesh to save her husband so she deserved much more respect than the common chaste ladies. He also said the people he hates most are ungrateful people, so he would never spare people like my uncle.”

The young girl heard this and started to day-dream, casually lifting the wine bowl and drank a big mouthful then gently said, “So many of you were able to meet the Eagle Hero, but I do not have such luck. If I can just see him once and listen to him to say a few words, I...I would be overjoyed.”

The young woman loudly said, “This person’s martial arts are good, but compared with Father, he is way behind. A young girl like you doesn’t know anything. When others exaggerate such matters; you immediately proclaim how great this person is. Actually you have seen this person, and he also carried you before.”

The young girl blushed and said, “You are my elder sister, yet you speak so frivolously, who would believe you?”

The woman said “If you don’t believe it that’s up to you. That, whatever, Eagle Hero is named Yang Guo, and lived on our Peach Blossom Island (Tao Hua Dao) in his childhood. His arm was ... Eh...Mmm... he carried you the day you were born.”

This beautiful young woman is Guo Fu, the young girl is her younger sister Guo Xiang and the youth is Guo Xiang’s twin brother Guo Polu. More than ten years ago, Guo Fu had married Yelu Qi and now Guo Xiang and Guo Polu have also grown up. The three of them were carrying out an assignment for their parents which was: to proceed to Jinyang and invite Quanzhen’s senior priest Qiu Chuji, styled Chang Chunji (Everlasting Spring), to preside over the heroes’ congress in Xiangyang. On this day the three siblings were on their way to Jinyang, but they were held up here as the cold had frozen Fenglingdu’s part of the Yellow River mouth, so they listened to the many people talk throughout the night.

Guo Xiang’s face had a happy expression and she mumbled to herself, “He carried me the day I was born...” She turned her head to Guo Fu and said, “Elder sister, the Eagle Hero really lived in our Peach Blossom Island (Tao Hua Dao) in his childhood? How is it I’ve never heard our parents mention this before?”

Guo Fu said “What do you know? Our parents have never mentioned many things to you before.”

Actually Yang Guo losing his arm and Xiao Longnu getting poisoned were all caused by Guo Fu acting rashly. Whenever this matter was mentioned, Guo Jing would get very angry. Although his daughter had gotten married, he would still scold her fiercely, not giving any face to his daughter or son-in-law. Therefore everyone in the Guo family stopped talking about this matter, so Guo Xiang and Guo Polu never heard of Yang Guo’s affairs.

Guo Xiang said “Since he and our family have such deep ties, why hasn’t he visited us? Hey, he must surely be attending the “Heroes Congress” on the fifteenth of March in Xiangyang.”

Guo Fu said, “This person does things strangely and has such an arrogant character, most probably he won’t come.”

Guo Xiang said, “Elder sister, it would be good if we think of how to deliver an invitation to him.” Turning her head to Song Wu, she said, “Uncle Song Wu, can you think of a way to forward a letter to the Eagle Hero?”

Song Wu shook his head saying, “The Eagle Hero wanders around the country, not having any definite destination. If he has any matters requiring our assistance, he would just pass the word down. If we try to look for him, even a lifetime may not be enough.”

Guo Xiang was very disappointed. She’d listened to the various people talking about how Yang Guo saved Wang Weizhong’s only child, executed Chen Dafang, interrogated Ding Daquan, redeemed Song Wu, killed the father to save the mother and all sorts of chivalrous and magnanimous acts and could not help but daydream. Listening to her elder sister say he carried her when she was young, her heart was on fire and she wished she would be able to see him once. But then she heard he would most probably not participate in the “Heroes Congress” and could not help but sigh, saying, “At the “Heroes” meeting not everyone would necessarily be a hero, but a genuine hero who is so outstanding actually may not go.”

Suddenly a “Po” sound was heard and a person from the corner somersaulted and stood up. It was actually the person who was rolled into a ball and sleeping soundly. The people heard the rumbling sound, caused by that person speaking. He said, “If the lady wants to meet the Eagle Hero it’s not difficult; tonight I shall take you to see him.” When the people heard him they were startled, and then when they saw his appearance, they were even more surprised. His height was less than four feet, his body was really skinny, but his head was huge. His arms were long, hands and feet were big, larger than the ordinary person’s. In fact, even if they were on an ordinary person they wouldn’t fit. All this on his small body, it was very weird.

Guo Xiang was filled with great happiness and said, “Excellent, but I am unknown to the Eagle Hero, rashly seeking an audience may trespass on his patience; I don’t know if he will see me.”

The dwarf loudly said, “If you do not see him today, I fear you may never see him in future.”

Guo Xiang curiously asked, “Why?”

Guo Fu stood up, saying to the dwarf, “What is your great name?”

The dwarf laughed coldly, “I am such an ugly person; how can there be another on this Earth? Since you don’t know, go home and ask your father and mother.”

At this time, a distant voice slowly and softly said, “In Xishan are a group of ghosts; he is the ninth out of ten and his is called Big Head Ghost! (Da Tou Gui) If you don’t find out now, then when will you?” This voice was rather incoherent, worn out and had a ghostly tone, but everybody heard every word clearly.

That big headed dwarf was shocked, made a loud noise and a “Peng” sound was heard, the flames became dark and the dwarf disappeared without a trace. The people were startled, and saw the front door had a large hole, made by the dwarf when he exited. Breaking down a door was not unheard of, but this person dashing through a door was really uncommon.

Guo Polu said, “Big sister, this dwarf has such good skills!” Guo Fu had followed her parents for a long time, and saw much of the pugilistic world, but their parents never mentioned this dwarf before, so she was struck dumb for quite a while.

But Guo Xiang said, “Among Father’s teachers, the Jiangnan Seven Freaks, there was a short guy named Grandpa Ma Wangshen. Third brother, you called him a dwarf, if Father knew he might not be too happy. You should call him Senior.” Guo Jing never forgot the Jiangnan Seven Freaks’ kindness, and was very respectful towards them and treated any blind person or dwarf kindly, teaching the children to do that too.

Before Guo Polu could reply, a “Hu” sound was suddenly heard and the big headed dwarf stood in front of him, with wind and snow blowing in through the broken door, causing sparks from the fire to fly about. Guo Fu feared that the dwarf would injure her brother and sister so she rushed forward and blocked him from Guo Xiang and Guo Polu.

The dwarf poked his big head towards the side of Guo Fu’s waist and said to Guo Xiang, “Young lady, if you want to see the Eagle Hero, follow me.”

Guo Xiang said, “Alright! Elder sister, Younger brother, let’s go together.”

Guo Fu said, “What’s so good to see about the Eagle Hero? Don’t go. We don’t even know this person well.”

Guo Xiang said, "I'll just go for a while and return, you guys wait here for me."

Song Wu suddenly stood up and said, "Lady, do not go. This person is... .. is one of the... .. Ghosts of Xishan...If you go... .. something unfortunate might happen to you."

The dwarf grinned cunningly, saying, "You know the Xishan Ghosts? You know we are bad people?" His left palm suddenly struck out, hitting Song Wu on his shoulder. A "peng" sound was heard, Song Wu flew backwards and hit the wall and immediately fainted.

Guo Fu got angry and loudly said, "Sir, please leave! My younger sister is naive, how could she go along with you and create trouble in the middle of the night?" She turned her head and fiercely shouted at her younger sister, "Stop this foolishness. You are not going!"

At this moment, that distant voice was heard again, saying, "The ninth of the ten Xishan Ghosts, Big Head Ghost, our spirits are restless, we have been waiting for a long time!" This voice sounded a li away, yet seemed very close, causing much confusion and everybody to be terrified.

Guo Xiang made up her mind resolutely, "Tonight, even if I meet evil spirits and ghosts, I must still meet the Eagle Hero." She said, "Senior, please lead me there!" Upon saying that, her legs made a leap and she dashed through the broken door.

Guo Fu anxiously called, "What are you doing?" She put out her hand to grab her younger sister's arm but missed, so she leaped quickly, and pursued her through the door.

Who knew that when her body was about to pass through the door, the hole swiftly disappeared; Guo Fu immediately stopped her body in midair. Her dash was blocked and she had to land her feet onto the floor, her toes less than one foot from the door. She looked carefully, nearly calling out in alarm. Actually, the dwarf was using his body to block the door, the distance between them was only several inches and the tip of his nose nearly bumped into her chest; how would she not be startled? She hurriedly leapt back when a gust of cold wind blew at her body and the big headed dwarf was gone. Guo Fu called loudly, "Younger sister, come back!" She leapt out, only hearing a distant rumbling laughter, but Guo Xiang's shadow was nowhere to be seen.

The dwarf made Guo Fu retreat in fear, he'd turned around and leapt into the snow saying: "Good! The lady is very courageous." Holding Guo Xiang's hand, he jumped for-



ward. He utilized a rather uncommon qing gong (lightness skill), like a big frog, jumping forward continuously, and although he was short, each leap covered a great distance.

Guo Xiang's wrist was being pulled by him and she felt like a metal circlet was round her wrist and it felt rather painful. Her heart was thumping madly and she did not know where this dwarf would take her. Since childhood Guo Jing and Huang Rong taught her martial arts personally, so her wugong (martial arts) had quite a strong foundation, but she found it difficult to keep pace with the dwarf's leaps. Later on she was actually being dragged by him, forcing them to jump and land together.

After jumping like this for a little while, someone behind a mountain suddenly said, "Big Head Ghost, why are you so late? Ha-ha, you even brought a beautiful girl along!" The dwarf said, "She is Guo Jing and Huang Rong's daughter, she wanted to meet the Eagle Hero, so I then led her here." That person gawked, saying, "Guo Jing and Huang Rong's daughter?" Another person behind the mountain eerily said, "Hurry up, let's get going!" The voice became distorted, and dozens of horses appeared from behind the mountain ridge.

The heavy snow still did not stop, and the white snow created a shiny reflection. Guo Xiang saw nine strange people mounted on the horses, but most of the horses had no riders. The dwarf pulled two horses forwards and gave the reins of one to Guo Xiang with himself mounting another horse, shouting, "Let's move!" He whistled, and the horses neighed and galloped towards the northwest.

When Guo Xiang looked at the nine people, she saw two females, one of whom was a senile appearing old woman while the other was dressed in scarlet from head to toe. She looked like she was on fire and appeared to be even more glaring in the snow's reflection. The other seven people's appearances could not be seen clearly. Guo Xiang thought carefully, "From what I heard, the Xishan Ghosts consist of ten people. At present there are exactly ten people, so this group of people must be the Xishan Ghosts. Uncle Song Wu only warned me about getting into trouble with them and that person knocked him out with one palm; this really looks ominous. They said they will take me to meet the Eagle Hero, so they shouldn't be deceiving me. They must already be acquainted with the Eagle Hero, so they can't be that evil."

In a short while they'd already covered ten li, then the first person made a "de er" sound and the horses stopped at once. He led the horse up a small hill and then turned around. Guo Xiang saw his appearance and found it startling yet funny – this person was also a dwarf, his upper body was less than two feet, but his beard was actually

three feet long, hanging over the horse. His face had wrinkles, his double eyebrows tightly knit and his face was filled with worry.

She heard him say, "From here to Mapingyi is less than 3 li. The Jianghu (pugilistic world) people say that the Eagle Hero's martial arts are superb, we must discuss this in advance and not spoil the Xishan Ghosts' reputation."

The old woman said, "Then we request Eldest brother to issue an order."

The long bearded man said, "Should we fight with him on chariots or surround him?"

Guo Xiang was shocked and thought, "From his tone, they must be enemies of the Eagle Hero."

The old man said, "What are the Eagle Hero's abilities like? Seventh brother, please explain clearly."

A burly man with a body like an iron tower said, "Although I have seen him, I never fought with him, I saw... I saw... that he has some sort of demonic aura."

The red clothed woman said, "Seventh brother, how did you become enemies with the Eagle Hero? Now is the time to explain clearly so that before everybody starts fighting, we would know what's going on. You always stammer and stutter and you usually fail to reveal the whole truth."

The man got angry, saying, "We Xishan Ghosts will live and die together; since this person dares to come forward to find us, do we cower away?"

A tall and skinny person with a gloomy voice said, "Who said anything about cowering away? But even if Ninth sister didn't ask, I would ask. We have not offended him. Why did he want to expel the Xishan Ghost from Xishan?"

The man got angry and said, "Everybody, look, he cut off my ears. If you won't help me get back at him, what kind of good brothers and sisters are you?" As he said this he took off his felt hat. Under the bright reflection of the snow, everyone plainly saw his head missing both ears. The Xishan Ghosts got angry and started cursing and swearing with thunderous rage, all wanting to fight the Eagle Hero to the death.

The red clothed woman said, "Seventh brother, why did he cut off your ears? What offense did you commit? You were harassing decent women again, is it not so?"

A person with a laughing face got angry and said, “Even if Seventh brother harasses decent women; other people have no right to interfere.” This person was born with a really unusual face; although he was angry, the smile on his face did not disappear. Guo Xiang looked carefully and saw that the corners of his mouth curled upwards with both eyes squinting, so even if he was sobbing sadly, it would seem like he was smiling from ear to ear.

The man said, “No, no! On that day my wife and four concubines were quarrelling over some small matter and things were about to turn violent. This, so called, Eagle Hero passed by and saw this; he was such a busybody and unexpectedly persuaded my wives to stop. My third wife had no shame and smiled at him...”

The red clothed woman said, “Ah ha, I know, Seventh brother got jealous and forbade her to smile.”

The man said, “Get jealous? I don’t need other people to poke their noses into my affairs. I punched my concubine’s three front teeth and told the broken-armed scum to scram.”

When Guo Xiang heard this she could not bear it and said, “He gave you well-intentioned advice, why did you speak so impolitely? You were wrong there.” The ten people turned their heads to look at her and could not believe this young girl dared to act so boldly.

The man got really angry and shouted, “Little twit, how do you dare to tell me what to do! Fifth brother, is this cutie your girl?”

The big headed dwarf said, “She wants to see the Eagle Hero so I brought her along to take a look, I don’t care about other matters.”

The man said, “Good, then I shall teach her a lesson.” He raised his horse whip and lashed down towards Guo Xiang’s head with a “pa” sound.

Guo Xiang lifted her whip and blocked, the two whips struck each other and interlocked together. The man used his arm to seize the whip and Guo Xiang felt a great force vigorously tugging her whip. She could not hold on any longer and released her whip, causing her palms to be scratched with searing pain. The guy took back his whip, raised it and wanted to lash down again, but the old man shouted, “Seventh brother, it’s getting late, let’s hurry, why do you lower yourself and fight with a child?” The man’s whip was in midair, but he did not strike.

That long-sleeved old man sneered, “The Xishan Ghosts are not afraid of the sky and the earth, even Guo Jing and Huang Rong’s reputation does not scare us. Little girl, if you talk again, I will butcher you immediately.” He leaned forward, saying, “Seventh brother, a true man will get up again if he falls, my long beard was cut off by my enemy several years ago. How were your ears sheared off?”

The man then said, “I told the Eagle Hero to get lost, so he smiled, turned around and walked away. It’s all my third concubine’s fault, she cried out, saying she was forced to marry me and at that time she was not willing. Now she was bullied by my first wife. She added that after I married her, I also married a fourth concubine and did not have a conscience. That Eagle Hero turned around; his expression changed greatly and asked, ‘Is this woman speaking the truth?’ I said, ‘So what if it is? So what if it’s not? My nickname is Fairy Ghost and I kill without blinking, do you know that?’ He said calmly, ‘If you like her, why did you marry someone else after you married her? If you do not like her, why did you marry her at all?’ I laughed loudly and said, ‘At first I liked her, now I’m tired of her. It’s common for a man to have three wives and four concubines. I even want to marry another four.’ He said, ‘You heartless creatures are far too many, how can the world’s females live in peace?’ Suddenly he stepped forward, drew out a dagger from my waist and sliced off my ears. Then he pointed the dagger at my chest, shouting, ‘I’ll dig your heart and liver out to take a look, what colour are they?’ ”

Guo Xiang became delighted, could not bear it and wanted to cheer, but she saw the Xishan Ghosts’ fierce and strange expressions and swallowed the “Good!” she wanted to shout.

The man continued, “Then my concubines knelt down to beg for mercy, they even cried loudly, saying they would rather be killed than me, because if I died, they must commit suicide to accompany the husband, damn, this is really disgusting. Hey, I have really lost face! I angrily shouted, ‘Hurry, just kill me! The Xishan Ghosts will come and haunt you!’ He wrinkled his eyebrows and said to my wives, ‘Why do you still plead for such a heartless scum?’ My five wives only kowtowed. He asked my third concubine, ‘You said you were forced to marry him against your will. If I kill him won’t it be good?’ My concubine said, ‘At that time I wasn’t willing, later on I changed my mind. Please don’t kill him.’ I got angry, saying, ‘Just kill me, there are nine more of us.’ He said, ‘OK! I won’t kill you today. The Xishan Ghosts... so what? On the night at the end of this month, I shall wait at the Horses’ Plains for you. Call all your ghosts together to find me. If you do not dare, the Xishan Ghosts must leave Xishan forever and never come back.’ ”

After they heard him say that, they did not speak for quite a while. Then the old woman said, “What weapons does he use? What school is his Wugong (martial arts) from?”

The man said, “He only has a left arm and he does not carry any weapons. Wugong...I couldn’t tell.”

The woman said, “Eldest brother, this person subdued seventh brother in one stroke, he must be extremely swift and agile and his Wugong must be quite unorthodox. We rely on numbers to win, you take the lead, and I and fifth brother will help from the side, three against one, and butcher him straightaway. Do not allow him to use his skills.”

The long-sleeved old man lowered his head and pondered for a while, and then he raised his head and said, “This Eagle Hero has a good reputation. Over these ten years many people have been defeated by him, he must have some astonishing skills. Today’s fight is no small matter. I and Second sister will launch a sudden frontal attack, Third and Fourth brother will get close to him then attack his lower body, Fifth and Sixth brother will attack from behind, Seventh and Eighth brother will use long weapons to strike his flank, confusing him, Ninth sister will throw concealed projectiles, Tenth brother will discharge poison gas. Since the Xishan Ghosts have sworn brotherhood, the ten of us have never attacked simultaneously, today is the first time, if we can’t butcher him, let us all turn into real ghosts!”

The big headed dwarf said, “Eldest brother, if ten of us attack a single person, we won’t win honorably; if word of this is spread, all the Jianghu heroes will despise us.”

The old woman said, “We shall butcher the Eagle Hero tonight. Apart from this girl, who else knows about this matter?” Once she said this she raised her arm.

The big headed dwarf waved his left sleeve and blocked her from Guo Xiang. Then he took out a fine needle from her sleeve and said, “Elder sister, I brought her along, please don’t take her life.” He turned to Guo Xiang and said, “Young lady, you want to meet the Eagle Hero, you cannot mention this matter to anyone, otherwise you should go back quickly now.”

Guo Xiang was alarmed, afraid and also angry, thinking, “This old woman has such vicious moves; if not for the short uncle saving me, I could have died from her silent needles without a doubt.” So she said, “Alright I will not speak of it.” But she continued, “You have ten brothers, does he have a single helper?”

The big headed dwarf laughed loudly and said, “The Eagle Hero only appeared in Jianghu around ten years ago, but we never heard that he has any assistants. He has this big bird which is unable to speak to accompany him.” He then raised the horse’s

reins, loudly shouting, “Let’s go!” The ten people galloped and the dwarf said to Guo Xiang, “Later, when we start fighting, you must not leave my side.” Guo Xiang nodded, she knew that the Xishan Ghosts were quite cruel and merciless, but this big headed dwarf is looking after her. He prevented his companion from harming her, but his ways were rough; although he spoke in a low voice, the other nine people heard him.

Guo Xiang rode along with the other people. She saw the Xishan Ghosts all had unique skills; no matter how strong the Eagle Hero’s wugong might be, how could he fight ten people alone? She thought, “If father and mother were here it would be good, they wouldn’t stand by and do nothing.”

Just at this time, several tiger roars could be heard in the dark forest in front of them and the horses gave a startled neigh, some standing motionless, some trying to escape. The skinny man waved his horse whip and was the first to rush into the woods.

The old woman scolded, “You lousy animals, you even fear a small cat eating you up?” The group charged forwards and entered the woods. They moved round ten feet when suddenly a person in front fiercely shouted, “Who are these brave people who dare to enter the Beastly Mountain Village at night without permission?”

The Xishan Ghosts stopped their horses, seeing only a person standing on the path, a brave tiger squatting next to him. The horses heard the tiger growling and were alarmed. The long-sleeved old man put his hands together to greet that person, immediately saying, “The Xishan Ghosts entered this place without informing you, pardon our rudeness.”

That person said, “Oh, the Xishan Ghosts? You must be the Long Sleeve Ghost?”

The old man said, “Precisely. We have an important matter at hand and we are rushing to the Horses’ Plains, when we return we will apologize for this.” He knew this character was not very affable but at this moment they needed all their strength to deal with the Eagle Hero, so he hoped not to complicate matters and spoke very politely.

That person said, “Gentlemen, please wait.” He raised his voice and called, “Eldest brother, it’s the Xishan Ghosts going to the Horses’ Plains; they said they will apologize when they return.” The ghosts heard this and were disgruntled, thinking, “We said we would return and apologize, but those are only polite words. Would the Xishan Ghosts really bow down to this person?” The Xishan Ghosts all had outstanding skills, before they became sworn brothers they had already gotten through many troubles, creating much havoc in Shanxi in recent years. The people of Wulin (martial arts world) all

dreaded them. Now the ten people are assembled together and if they had no prior appointment with the Eagle Hero on that night, they would beat this person good and proper just based on his words alone.

They heard a screeching voice deep in the forest saying, “Apologizes are not needed, let them go around the forest.”

When they heard this they got angry immediately. The skinny person with the bamboo staff sneered, “The Xishan Ghosts never take detours!” He raised the horse’s reins and charged straight towards the person standing on the path.

That person raised his left hand and two tigers near him threw themselves forward immediately, causing the skinny man’s horse to be frightened and rear up. The skinny man’s riding skills were really good; he bent down on the saddle, both hands holding a short spear, fiercely thrusting at the two tigers. The tiger on his left leapt aside while the tiger on the right scratched the horse’s belly with its claws; but that tiger gave a roar because it was injured by the spear. The skinny man jumped onto the ground, shouting, “Watch my weapons!” He thrust the spears forth, one high one low, displaying the “Double Dragon Fu Yuan Skill”, but he did not advance forward.

The person coldly said, “You injured my family’s watch-cat, now whether you take the detour or not is not up to you. Wu Changgui (Uncommon Ghost), leave your spears behind!”

When Wu Changgui found that the person knew his nickname, he said, “Who are you, sir? The Beastly Mountain Village was supposed to be in Western Liang, why has it moved to Southern Jin? If you want me to leave my spears, that’s very easy to do.”

The person said, “If our Beastly Mountain Village wants to move, must we report to the Xishan Ghosts? We were tired of living in Western Liang so we moved to Southern Jin to play. My eldest brother, by telling you to take a detour, was being extremely polite. My third brother is sick and doesn’t like outsiders harassing us, do you understand?” When he said this, he suddenly stretched his left hand out and grabbed Wu Changgui’s right spear near the edge.

Wu Changgui never expected him to move so fast, so he thrust his left spear forward and increased his right hand’s strength.

The person extended his right hand and grabbed Wu Changgui’s left spear as well. The two people had great strength, and no one let go of the weapons. A “pa” sound was

made and the two spears snapped.

The Xishan Ghosts shrugged and the long-sleeved old man said, “Sir are you the Eight-Handed Monkey Immortal Shi? Is the Golden Claw Lion King ill? At this moment we have a matter at hand, tomorrow at this time, we shall meet here again.”

The masters of the Beastly Mountain Village are five brothers, the eldest being White Forehead Mountain Lord Shi Bowei, the second Caring Eyesight Sage Shi Zhongmeng, the third Golden Claw Lion King Shi Shugang, the fourth Immortal Of Giant Strength Shi Jiqiang, the youngest Eight-Handed Monkey Immortal Shi Mengjie was the one present here. The five brothers inherited the animals from their ancestors. These five people all live unusually and they not only have superb taming skills, they also learned martial arts from the animals’ movements. The brothers had these beasts as companions since childhood, taking the beasts as their masters and learning martial skills. Shi Shugang entered the mountains when he was twenty years old and met an outstanding person, learning advanced internal strength techniques from him. He then went home and taught his brothers. The five people raised many wild animals and improved their wugong tremendously. The Beastly Mountain Village’s reputation gradually became known in Jianghu and the Wulin people called them “Tiger, Leopard, Lion, Elephant and Monkey”. When the Long Sleeve Ghost heard Shi Shugang was sick, he was relieved; he thought no matter how good the Shi brothers were, the Xishan Ghosts would not be afraid. Now that the central pillar of the “Tiger, Leopard, Lion, Elephant and Monkey” Lion King was sick, it would definitely not be a problem to handle them, so he proposed a duel the next evening.

Eight-Handed Monkey Immortal Shi Mengjie said, “Tomorrow night we shall wait outside the forest for you at 11 p.m.” Saying that he put his hands together to salute and shot the broken spear heads into a tree next to the Long Sleeve Ghost.

The Long Sleeve Ghost was startled, thinking, “Why does he not allow us to cut through the forest? What do the Shi brothers have in this forest?” He also put his hands together and saluted, “The Xishan Ghosts bid farewell!” He nudged the horse with his legs and moved forwards. Shi Mengjie said loudly, “Hold! My eldest brother told you to take a detour, didn’t you hear?”

The Long Sleeve Ghost pulled the reins and was about to reply when he heard people in the northeast and northwest of the woods laughing loudly at the same time, then a thick cloud of smoke appeared. A person called out, “What the heck are you doing in the woods? You can’t hide it from our group of ghosts.” Another person said, “You are just meeting your ancestors.” (Making puns with the Chinese words.) Actually the



eighth and tenth ghost had sneaked behind Shi Mengjie and set a fire while he was talking to the Long Sleeve Ghost.

The flame leapt upwards, and then he heard the two ghosts' voices call out in alarm as they wildly dashed back to the group, breathless, their facial expressions bearing great fear. The Long Sleeve Ghost shouted, "What?" One of them said, "Tigers, tigers! 100, 200 of them..."

When Shi Mengjie saw the fire in the forest he got really angry, shouting, "Eldest brother, second brother, this is important, let them go; we can easily find them later."

Suddenly everyone saw a blurred figure; a dog-like creature squirmed through the woods and dashed away in the blink of an eye. It was pretty small, had four long legs, a snow white coat, had a black tail, looked like a dog yet looked like a cat. Shi Mengjie called loudly: "The "Nine-Tailed Fox has emerged!" and started pursuing it, his face looking anxious and panic-stricken.

A fierce voice was heard from the back of the woods, sounding like a lion's or a tiger's roar, yet sounding like someone shouting loudly. When Guo Xiang heard this shout a chill went down her spine. When this sound died down, a hundred beasts roared from all directions, including lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, elephants, monkeys and orang-utans... For a while it was not very clear, and then with a thundering rumble the wild animals rushed out from the forest. Then someone said, "Eldest brother head towards the northeast, second brother go towards the northwest, fourth brother hurry to the southwest... "This voice and the howl were similar.

However Guo Xiang only saw several shadows flashing around, leaving the forest. She knew perfectly well there was danger, but her curiosity took over and she hurriedly chased after them out of the woods. The Big Head Ghost called out, "Miss Guo, don't wander about!" He then pursued her.

Guo Xiang left the woods and saw a strange sight; five people leading a group of wild animals each, moving rapidly in five directions on the snowy plain. These wild animals were all well-trained, not fighting among each other, forming packs, running in an orderly way. Guo Xiang was frightened but also thought this was amusing. The five groups of animals got closer and formed a big circle.

Suddenly a white flash appeared – that dog-like animal squeezed out of the encirclement, zooming in front of Guo Xiang, really moving like lightning. Guo Xiang was startled and bent down to catch it with her hand, but that small animal had already

dashed several feet away. It stood still, suddenly turning its head to look at Guo Xiang with its fiery red eyes, looking like two embers in the dark.

The Shi brothers called out, “The Nine-Tailed Fox! It’s over there!” The groups of animals rushed forward together like a moving mountain.

Guo Xiang rode towards the side to avoid them, but when the horse saw so many wild animals, it got frightened. Its legs became weak, then its legs bent and it knelt down on the ground. Guo Xiang was shocked thinking, “The group of beasts are rushing towards me; they are going to trample me into minced meat!” She leapt away from the horse and dashed off. She still smelled the animals but the groups of beasts rushed by her like the torrents of a river and were far away before long.

By now all the Xishan Ghosts had also gotten out of the forest. The Long Sleeve Ghost said, “No matter how strong the Shi brothers’ Wugong is, we are not afraid, but these many animals are not easy to deal with. Tonight we won’t provoke them so that we’ll still have our strength to deal with the Eagle Hero. Everybody, let’s go!”

The old woman said, “Good, tonight after we kill the Eagle Hero we will burn the lions and roast the tigers tomorrow!” She then raised the reins and started to gallop around the forest.

The fierce roars of the lions and tigers were heard again, the groups of beasts were returning on separate paths. But this time the roars didn’t sound so vicious and the animals were not running very fast. The Long Sleeve Ghost suddenly turned green and called out, “Oh no, hurry, let’s go!” But the wild animals were growling in all directions and soon they were surrounded by the group of beasts. The Long Sleeve Ghost whistled and the ten people leapt off the horses, standing in five positions, each drawing their weapons, silently waiting for the enemy to arrive.

The Big Head Ghost softly said, “Young Lady, leave quickly, you shouldn’t risk your life here.”

Guo Xiang said, “Where’s the Eagle Hero? You agreed to take me to him.”

The Big Head Ghost frowned, “Have you not seen all these wicked beasts?”

Guo Xiang said, “You should try to reason with the animals’ masters, saying you and the Eagle Hero have an appointment, and you shouldn’t delay much longer.”

The Big Head Ghost said, “Humph, the Xishan Ghosts never reason with anyone.”

While saying that, the Shi brothers had led the wild animals back. The five people were all wearing animal skins, standing forty to fifty feet away from the Xishan Ghosts. The fifth brother Shi Mengjie said, “The Beastly Mountain Village and the Xishan Ghosts have no bad blood, why did you set the forest on fire and scare away the Nine-Tailed Fox?”

Guo Xiang heard him say this with deep anger and thought, “That small animal may be cute, but it’s nothing great, why should they kick up such a big fuss? It obviously has only one tail, how could it be called the Nine-Tailed Fox?”

The red-clothed female said, “As for today’s matter, the fault lies with the Shi brothers. This Beastly Mountain Village has been at Ganliang for a long time and suddenly it moved to Shanxi. Now you don’t allow people to pass through on the main road in the middle of the night. With such actions how could you blame others?”

The White Forehead Mountain Lord Shi Bowei shouted, “Since it has come to this stage, what more can be said? The Xishan Ghosts shall not live.” Loudly roaring, he charged unarmed to the Long Sleeve Ghost, his palms imitating tigers’ claws, causing wind to be generated before his palms arrived; even a fierce tiger could not compare to its ferocity.

The Long Sleeve Ghost slipped aside, moving back towards the left. He shouted and swept a long pointed weapon towards Shi Bowei. Shi Bowei stretched his claws out, grasping the end weapon, which was a thick steel rod. Before his palm held firmly, he felt heat shoot through his palms and he hurriedly let it go, the left palm executed an advanced stance to avoid the steel rod. If he were not quick enough his chest would have been pierced by the rod. Shi Bowei was startled, “The Xishan Ghosts’ reputation has risen in recent years, so they actually live up to it.” He did not dare to be careless and drew his weapon with a “chia lang lang” sound – it was pair of double hooks. The right hook weighed 18 catties while the left hook weighed 17 catties; it was a fierce and sharp weapon, with the hooks giving off yellow light. He then fought fiercely with the steel rod.

Now Shi Zhongmeng grasped the rod, fighting one-on-two, sparring with Cui Ming Ghost’s knife and Shang Meng Ghost’s chain spear. Shi Jiqiang and the old woman grappled along a long rope; although his strength was great, it was useless against the old woman’s soft sleeve. He roared again and again, exhibiting his giant’s strength, but was unable to utilize it. Shi Mengjie’s foe was the copper hammer-wielding Big Head Ghost. Shi Mengjie’s pen stances were complex and strange, so the Big Head Ghost found it

hard to defend himself, and then the red clothed woman raised her knife and went forward to help him. On the snowy ground, the ten people were divided into four groups fighting viciously under the heavy snow, unable to decide victory or defeat.

The Xishan Ghosts still had six people not in action yet while the opponents only had the Lion King standing by. They saw him leaning on a lion's body, sickly and without any strength. In this battle the Xishan ghosts fought with numbers, showing the potential for victory, but the Shi brothers only had to whistle and the group of beasts would attack, causing the Xishan Ghosts to go from victory to defeat.

Guo Xiang saw the group of beasts surrounding them and was afraid, she also remembered she wanted see the Eagle Hero, so she said, "Uncle Big Head Ghost, stop fighting, you have more people, even if you win it wouldn't be honorable. You offended them, just apologize!" But who would bother about her?

Ten people fought violently for a long time. The Long Sleeve Ghost and Shi Bowei were on par. The old woman's long rope moved flexibly and had many changes within, forming big and small circles; if Shi Jiqiang lost his focus, he would have been hanged by her rope. Luckily his broadsword made big moves with great ferocity, so the old woman could not afford to be careless. The Big Head Ghost and the Clever Ghost were hard and soft respectively, complementing one another, but Shi Mengjie's moves were quick yet strange, as the saying goes a quick hit counters three slow. The three people were fighting in circles, but Shi Mengjie did not lose the upper hand yet. The Big Head Ghost roared like rumbling thunder while the Clever Ghost chatted in a gloomy tone, dividing the enemy's attention. Shi Mengjie turned a deaf ear to them and just concentrated on their battle.

On this side the Cui Ming Ghost and the Shang Men Ghost actually could not withstand Shi Zhongmeng's silver rod. His silver rod was short and hollow, and used strange moves. The three people were fighting near the border of the forest. The Shang Men Ghost thrust his spear forward; Shi Zhongmeng aimed his rod at him and thrust directly at the spear, causing the spear to go right through into the hollow rod. The Shang Men Ghost was greatly startled but he was not willing to let go of his weapon. The Tao Zhai Ghost leapt up to help them, swinging his slab towards Shi Zhongmeng's silver rod. Shi Zhongmeng drew his rod back and retreated, allowing the Shang Men Ghost to regain his weapon. The Tao Zhai Ghost's weapon resembled an iron block and it was actually an accounts book cast in iron. The book had five pages and each page could be flipped about, its edges sharper than knives and it made a strange and sharp weapon.

The Xishan Ghosts originally had their respective surnames, but ever since the “Xishan Ghosts” became known, they discarded their real names and used “Ghost” as their nicknames. The ten people all had unusual and strange appearances so the ten brothers said, “The Jianghu heroes call us ghosts, so we shall see if the people are good or the ghosts are fierce?” That Tao Zhai Ghost made himself that iron book because he avenged any minor wrongs, never willing to let off anyone who offends him even slightly. So the martial arts world nicknamed him the “Tao Zhai Ghost (Debt Collecting Ghost)”. He was very pleased with this nickname and cast an iron accounts book, carving the names of those who offended him on the iron pages, and then writing off those names after he has settled the debt.

The silver rod was a unique weapon, but the iron accounts book was actually more unusual, with five iron sheets attacking together, making “dang dang” noise. The Cui Ming, Shang Men and Tao Zhai Ghosts fought Shi Zhongmeng together, gradually gaining an advantage.

Guo Xiang stood at the side, watching the group of ghosts and the Shi brothers fighting non-stop, thinking that their appointment with the Eagle Hero was long overdue. She feared that he’d left after waiting impatiently. She became more and more anxious, but was incapable of stopping the fight.

The hundreds of beasts lay around them, forming a tight circle. The Xishan Ghosts looked around them and saw the bright glitter of eyes everywhere in the darkness and knew that even if they killed all the Shi brothers, it would be difficult to get out of the animals’ siege. The old woman wanted to use her rope and tie down Shi Jiqiang to force the Shi brothers to recall their animals, making a pathway for their exit. But Shi Jiqiang’s martial arts were at the same level as hers, how easy could that be? The Laughing Ghost called out, “Second sister, let me help you.” He drew his weapon from his waist and threw himself towards Shi Jiqiang.

Shi Jiqiang was fighting ferociously when he saw the Laughing Ghost jumping forward, but it suited him and he said, “Great!” He brought his bronze weapon fiercely down on that ghost’s head. The Laughing Ghost leaned aside blocking with his two whips, but the whips snapped with a “Pu” sound. The Laughing Ghost was greatly startled and quickly rolled away. “Peng!” The bronze weapon struck the ground. The Laughing Ghost dipped his hand into his clothes and grasped some poisonous powder. Standing up immediately he flung it towards Shi Jiqiang. Shi Jiqiang suddenly saw a red mist and was hit by it, losing his footing, falling immediately. The old woman cast her rope and lassoed his legs.

Shi Bowei, Shi Zhongmeng and Shi Mengjie saw their brother fall and were startled and angry. If he was captured, they could not rescue him. Guo Xiang called out, “What are you doing? You used trickery to hurt him, what kind of man are you?” She was not helping any party, but when she saw the Laughing Ghost using such a dirty move, she could not bear it and criticized him.

At this time a sudden low roar was heard, the Lion King Shi Shugang stood up slowly, growling lowly, “Put down my fourth brother!”

Shi Jiqiang had passed out. The old woman used her long rope to tie his hands up as well, but was wary of his great strength, fearing that he would suddenly awaken and snap her rope, so she blocked his accupoint and said, “Get your animals to move away then we will release him!” She saw Shi Shugang’s dull eyes and sallow face, walking unsteadily; he was obviously seriously sick, so she paid no attention to him.

Guo Xiang saw Shi Shugang slowly walking towards the ghosts, hands and feet unsteady, meeting the enemy in spite of his illness, just like a real man, so she quickly said, “Hey, you’re sick, don’t fight.” Shi Shugang nodded to her and said, “Thanks.” But he did not stop and continued towards Shi Jiqiang. The Laughing Ghost exchanged glances with the old woman (Hanging Ghost) and they stood forward together, wanting to snare him as well.

They threw themselves onto Shi Shugang, stretching out their hands when Shi Shugang growled fiercely; his left hand smacking the Hanging Ghost’s head, his right hand tugging the Laughing Ghost’s back and the two people felt a great strength suddenly pressing down on them. Their legs gave way and they nearly fell down, so they hurriedly leaped away. Fortunately for them Shi Shugang did not pursue them. Two people looked at each other in amazement and broke out in a cold sweat, not expecting this sick person to be so strong.

Shi Shugang bent down to clear his brother’s accupoint. He pulled gently and snapped the Hanging Ghost’s rope in several places. But Shi Jiqiang was poisoned and did not awake. Shi Shugang frowned and shouted, “Hand over the antidote!” The Laughing Ghost said, “You recall your animals, then I give up the antidote.”

Shi Shugang snorted and walked shakily to the Laughing Ghost. The Laughing Ghost did not dare take him head-on and stepped aside quickly. Shi Shugang was sick and could not chase after him, but continued to walk weakly to him. The four ghosts watching from the side jumped up while the Laughing Ghost also turned around to fight. Shi Shugang struck out with his palm slowly, but his palm strength was really great. The

five ghosts encircled him, punching here and chopping there, but did not dare get closer to him. The Laughing Ghost feared that he would poison his own brothers, so he did not release the poison gas.

Guo Xiang thought, "This man lost to dirty tricks, it's really pitiful!" She grabbed some snow and rubbed on Shi Jiqiang's forehead, and then she put a snowball in his mouth. The poison gas effects were not long-lasting and Shi Jiqiang's body was tough, he felt cold, and slowly awoke. He saw Guo Xiang still picking up snow for him and said, "Many thanks, young lady!" He rolled and stood up, rubbed his eyes and saw the five ghosts besieging Shi Shugang, so he loudly called out, "Third brother step aside!" He stretched out his hand and twisted the Laughing Ghost's neck.

Shi Bowei's hooks and the Long Sleeve Ghost's steel rod were clashing rapidly, and then he saw Shi Jiqiang awake, he felt very happy and cheered loudly. The beasts lying by the side heard this cheer and all stood up immediately, waiting to pounce. Shi Bowei cheered again and the beasts followed with their roars. The Xishan Ghosts have had many battle experiences, but this time they could not help but tremble in fear. Before the beastly roars died away the animals charged towards the Xishan Ghosts.

Guo Xiang shouted "Ah!", and her face turned pale. Shi Shugang stretched out his hand and shoved a tiger pouncing on Guo Xiang away; he took off his skin hat and placed it on Guo Xiang's head. The animals have been trained for a long time, as soon as they saw her put on the skin hat; they left her alone and turned their attention to the ten ghosts. Tigers, wolves, leopards, apes and lions all bit and scratched at the ten ghosts. The Xishan Ghosts furiously killed seven or eight beasts, but the Shi brothers attacked from the side and the beasts kept coming and coming, becoming too many to handle. The ten people were all injured, their clothes tattered and dripping with blood, they were about to lose their lives and could not escape from the animals' clutches.

Guo Xiang saw three lions surrounding the Big Head Ghost, his bronze hammer had fallen to the ground, his right arm trapped in a lion's mouth, relying entirely on his left palm to block the lions. Guo Xiang remembered him defending her before and saw him so distressed, she could not help it and without hesitation, she took off the skin hat and immediately placed it on his head. But his head was too big for the hat, so it looked extremely funny as it kept bouncing around his head. When the Shi brothers trained their animals, they specially made the skin hats for the animals to differentiate between friend and foe, so when they saw the Big Head Ghost put on the hat, they moved away immediately. But now four leopards surrounded Guo Xiang.

Shi Shugang was now trying to snatch away the Long Sleeve Ghost's steel rod to prevent him from injuring too many animals when he heard Guo Xiang calling for help, he turned his head to look and was startled, they were too far apart and he could not go to her rescue. But strangely, the four leopards did not attack Guo Xiang; they only sniffed and walked around her, being very friendly to her. Guo Xiang was shocked speechless, but the four leopards were not harming her. She remembered her mother and sister once told her that she drank leopard's milk when young, so these four leopards must have mistaken her for one of their own. She was pleasantly surprised and bent down to hug the leopards' necks while they licked her hands and cheeks. Guo Xiang felt somewhat itchy and started laughing. Since the Shi brothers started training their animals, they had never seen something like this before and were all greatly surprised.

The Big Head Ghost managed to avoid any trouble with the skin hat, but he saw his brothers and sisters all in a dire situation and did not want to get away alone. Although the Xishan Ghosts were not honorable and usually did heretical things, their loyalty towards one another was very deep, so he grasped the hat immediately and threw it to the red clothed woman, saying, "Ninth sister, you quickly escape." She caught the hat and threw it towards the Long Sleeve Ghost and called out, "Eldest brother, you leave first, just avenge us in future." But he threw the hat to the Laughing Ghost and said, "Tenth brother, it's never too late for revenge, I won't live any much longer anyway." The ten people were actually unwilling to use this life-saving device.

The Laughing Ghost was tying down five wolves and did not throw the hat. However wolves were extremely savage, when they smelled blood, they ignored the hat on the Laughing Ghost and did not want to give up their meal. The Laughing Ghost cursed loudly, but his face was still carrying a happy expression. Then out of nowhere a person with a clear and cold voice said, "The Xishan Ghosts do not keep their word, they made me wait for half a night. So here they are fooling around with animals!"

Guo Xiang felt very happy, saying in her heart, "The Eagle Hero is here!" She lifted her head and saw a person sitting on a big tree's branch with a large headed and magnificently ugly eagle. This person wore a long grey gown, his right sleeve stuffed in his waistband, showing his missing arm. She looked at his face and could not help but feel her goose bumps rising; she saw a sallow complexion and a grotesque face, not looking like a live person. He looked like a zombie. The Xishan Ghosts all looked strange and weird, but definitely were not as ugly as he was.

Before Guo Xiang saw him, her young girl's heart imagined him to be like a suave Confucian scholar, outstandingly handsome, but when she saw him now, she was greatly disappointed and thought, "So there is such an ugly person in the world!" She



could not bear it and looked at him again and saw his pupils glinting, exuding a heroic aura. When the eyes flashed across and gazed at her face, as if they sensed something slightly strange. Guo Xiang felt her heart racing and could not help but lower her head, slowly finding the Eagle Hero not to be so ugly anymore.



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