

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDXL Chapter 16



Chapter 16 – Avenging a Father's Death

Translated by Noodles



A cool breeze blew and pieces of Li Mochou's clothing flew away, her arms, shoulders, chest and legs were revealed. She wasn't able to control her embarrassment; she wanted to turn around and run away when suddenly her back felt cool, a large piece of cloth flew away from her back.

Yang Guo and Lu Wushuang were both shocked and pleased to hear that blacksmith Feng was actually Cheng Ying's apprentice brother. Being Huang Yaoshi's disciple, his martial arts can't be that bad, unexpectedly they suddenly had another strong helper in this danger.

Li Mochou chuckled, “You’ve been expelled by your Master yet you still can’t let go, isn’t that extremely stupid? Today I’m going to kill three kids and a mad woman; you better just stand aside and take in the atmosphere.”

Feng Mofeng said slowly, “Though I’ve learned martial arts, I have never fought anyone before in my life and my left leg is crippled, I can’t really fight.”

Li Mochou said, “Yes, that’s the best thing for you, you can’t afford to throw your life away.”

Feng Mofeng shook his head and said, “I cannot allow you to harm a single hair of my apprentice sister’s head, since these people are friends of hers you better find somewhere else to do evil.”

Li Mochou’s murderous intent was stirred and she laughed, “The four of you fighting me at once, that’s great.” She stood up.

Feng Mofeng was unmoved and kept on striking the metal with his hammer, he was like a character from an opera following prompts from a gong, he struck the metal and then followed it with a few words. He said, “I left my school over thirty years ago, my martial arts have gone rusty long ago, I need to think hard about them.”

Li Mochou laughed and said, “Half my life I’ve roamed Jianghu but I’ve never seen a person like you who grabs the feet of Buddha and prepares for battle at the last minute. Today my eyes have been opened. Feng Mofeng, have you really never fought anyone before in your life?”

Feng Mofeng said, “I never offend others, when others beat me and insult me I don’t do anything, so of course my hands have never been raised against anyone.”

Li Mochou chuckled and said, “Ha-ha, old ‘Heretic’ Huang actually picked a bunch of face losing crap to be his disciples.”

Feng Mofeng said, “Please don’t speak ill of my merciful Master like that.”

Li Mochou gave a wry laugh and said, “He abandoned you as a Master long ago yet you still merciful Master this, merciful that, you’re not afraid of making people laugh.”

Feng Mofeng continued to strike down with his hammer and said, “I have no one in this world, the only loved one I have is my merciful Master, if I don’t respect him, love him,

who should I think about? Little apprentice sister, is Master well?”

Cheng Ying said, “Master is very well.” Feng Mofeng’s face lit up with joy. When Li Mochou saw his feelings, she thought, “Old ‘Heretic’ Huang is a good Master, and indeed there is something great about him. He beat his disciple into this state yet this person still remains loyal to him.”

The metal that was being forged was now gradually getting colder, Feng Mofeng again used his tongs to place the metal into the furnace but he was preoccupied and actually sent the hammer in his right hand into the furnace instead. Li Mochou laughed and said, “Blacksmith Feng, just slowly think about your Master’s martial arts, there’s no need to lose your mind as well.” Feng Mofeng didn’t reply and stared at the flaming furnace in deep thought, after a while, he sent the crutch under his left arm into the furnace.

Yang Guo and Lu Wushuang both said, “That’s your crutch!”

Cheng Ying also called out, “Apprentice brother!”

Feng Mofeng still did not reply and gazed into the furnace. The crutch didn’t burn in the furnace, instead it gradually became red; the crutch was actually made of metal. After another while, the hammer also became red but his hands weren’t burned as he held onto the handle of the hammer and crutch. Li Mochou’s disdain turned into precaution, she knew that this rough looking man must have qualities that excel. She was afraid that he would suddenly attack and she would fall victim to him so she urgently waved her fly whisk about to protect her front’s fatal areas and leapt outside, calling out, “Blacksmith Feng, let’s just get it over with!”

Feng Mofeng responded and exited the shop, his movements were swift and light, it didn’t look like he was crippled. He placed his red crutch into the ground and said, “Angelic Priestess”, please don’t insult my Master and please stop troubling my apprentice sister. And spare the bitter life of this old blacksmith!”

Li Mochou was again greatly surprised and thought “Why is he begging just before he’s about to fight?” She said, “I will spare you only; if you are afraid then don’t intervene.”

Feng Mofeng clenched his teeth and said, “Fine, then kill me first!” As he said this, he trembled; he was afraid but was also emotional.

Li Mochou raised her fly whisk and struck down towards his head. Feng Mofeng quickly leapt away, his dodging was very sharp but his arms trembled, he actually was afraid to counterattack. Li Mochou attacked three times in a row but each time, Feng Mofeng avoided the attacks with great movements yet he still did not counterattack. Yang Guo and the others were standing to the side watching; when the time came they will go and help. They saw that Li Mochou's attacks were gradually intensifying and Feng Mofeng really looked like someone who has never fought before. In accordance with his peaceful nature, he didn't make an attack with his red hammer.

Yang Guo thought that this isn't good, though this person's martial arts are strong, he didn't have any intent to fight, and he must be stirred so he said loudly, "Li Mochou, why did you insult Island Master Huang by calling him heartless, unrighteous and wicked?"

Li Mochou thought, "When did I insult him?" She sped up her attacks and did not reply.

Yang Guo continued, "You said that Island Master Huang seduced other's daughters and wives, captured other's sons and brothers, did you see that with your own eyes? You said he lied to friends, betrayed his benefactors, did those things really happen? Why did you spread all these things over the world of Jianghu and tarnish Island Master Huang's name?"

Cheng Ying was startled and didn't understand, Feng Mofeng's fury erupted when he heard this, his valor stirred and he attacked with his hammer and crutch at the same time. His left leg was on the ground, assuming the form "Golden Cockerel Standing Alone", it was like he was nailed to the ground, sturdy and still; the hammer and crutch produced a fierce gust of blazing air, heading straight towards Li Mochou. Li Mochou saw that the incoming force was ferocious, she didn't dare to meet it front on and leapt out of the way, looking for a gap to attack him.

Yang Guo carried on, "Li Mochou, you said that Island Master Huang is a liar and a shameless scoundrel. I say that you're the shameless one!"

Feng Mofeng was becoming angrier and angrier as he heard this, the hammer and crutch swept and lunged forward with unstoppable force, at first his stances looked rather rusty but as he fought on, they became more and more fluid. The two's internal energy weren't that far apart but Li Mochou had roamed Jianghu for many years and had been in hundreds of battles; her experience was far greater than his. After about twenty or thirty stances, Li Mochou knew that Feng Mofeng's internal energy wasn't weak but he lacked experience and had one good leg only. After a while, she knew that

he would lose so she decided to wait until his anger disperses and then counterattack. Indeed, after another ten or so moves Feng Mofeng's anger gradually disappeared, his will faded and he began to slip away. Li Mochou was thrilled and attacked with her fly whisk towards his chest.

Feng Mofeng swept his hammer across to block. The fly whisk curved its way around and wrapped around the hammer's head; this was the special stance that Li Mochou used to take the opponent's weapon. All she needed to do was trap the weapon and pull; the hammer would then leave Feng Mofeng's hand. But as she did this, 'chi' 'chi' 'chi' sounds were heard, smoke rose, everyone smelt an unpleasant smell; the hairs of the fly whisk were burned off.

Instead of taking the opponent's weapon, Li Mochou had lost her own, she remained calm and threw the handle of the fly whisk away and changed her attack to her "Divine Five Poison Palm". Though this palm technique was powerful, one has to be very close to the opponent to use it. Feng Mofeng had a hammer in his right hand and a crutch in his left, he was using it swiftly and forcefully with gusts of wind generated, he was now able to do as he wished. However in between the two images, smoke kept on rising up; Li Mochou's gown was being burned by the hot hammer and crutch, piece by piece her gown was getting burned. She was furious, she was definitely going to gain victory but the old blacksmith had an advantage in his weaponry. She could not take it at all and wanted to strike him with a palm to vent her anger.

This was the first time that Feng Mofeng fought somebody, if he had been held back and on the receiving end of a beating, he would have retreated; but now he had the upper hand, the stances of the hammer and crutch were coming out with extreme mastery. Li Mochou was almost struck by the hammer and crutch a few times in her quest to land a palm on him, if it wasn't for her speed, her palm would have been burned. Suddenly Feng Mofeng called out, "I don't want to fight; I don't want to fight, look at you, what decency have you left?" With his single good leg he leapt back five feet.

Li Mochou was stunned, a cool breeze blew and pieces of her clothing flew away, her arms, shoulders, chest and legs were revealed. She was a virgin, she wasn't able to control her embarrassment; she wanted to turn around and run away when suddenly her back felt cool, a large piece of cloth flew away from her back.

Yang Guo saw that she was in a wretched state, he tore off his belt and took off his gown; he circulated his internal energy and shot it over to her. The gown was like a person hugging her. Li Mochou quickly put her arms in the sleeves of the gown and buttoned it up. She has seen countless battles in her life but right now she was fright-

ened and embarrassed. Her face was red one moment, white the next, she didn't know whether or not to keep on fighting. She thought, "If I fight him again, this gown will be burned off again, I can only swallow my anger and do something about it later."

She nodded at Yang Guo, thanking him for giving her the gown. She then turned her head towards Feng Mofeng and said, "These crafty weapons are indeed the evil skills of old 'Heretic' Huang. To tell the truth, if it was a battle with proper martial arts alone, could you beat me? If old 'Heretic' Huang's disciples fought fairly and squarely one on one with me, could they beat me?"

Feng Mofeng said with ease, "If you didn't lose your weapon, after a while, you'd be able to beat me."

Li Mochou said arrogantly, "It's good that you know it. My words on that piece of paper about the disciples of Peach Blossom Island winning by numbers aren't wrong."

Feng Mofeng lowered his head and pondered, after a while he said, "That is not correct! If my apprentice brothers and sister Qu, Chen, Mei, and Lu were here, any one of them would be stronger than you. I don't even need to mention my highly skilled apprentice brothers Qu and Chen; you wouldn't be able to beat my apprentice sister Mei Chaofeng who's also a woman like you."

Li Mochou chuckled and said, "All those people are dead and can't prove anything, why are you talking about them? Old 'Heretic' Huang's martial arts aren't all that good. I wanted to test out his daughter Mrs. Guo's martial arts but I don't think there's a need to now." She turned around and was about to leave.

Yang Guo had a thought in his mind and said, "Wait!"

Li Mochou's brows raised and she said, "What?"

Yang Guo said, "You're wrong about Island Master Huang's martial arts being so-so. I heard of swordplay from him, called the "Jade Flute Swordplay", it can neutralize your fly whisk techniques." He picked up an iron rod and drew on the ground. He explained, "Your attacks from the front are indeed swift and powerful but if his sword cuts down from this direction, you will not be able to take back your attack. If you counterattack, the sword will attack quickly from this direction. If you sweep the fly whisk and attack the pressure points, then he'll use a tiger claw form and grab your whisk's tips, turn his sword around and use the handle to strike the 'virtuous' pressure point on your shoulder. Can you imagine that?"

That stance was indeed unimaginably strange but it was also ingenious. Brushing the pressure points in front of her were one of Li Mochou's fly whisk technique's lethal stances, the stance that Yang Guo described left her with no reply, in such a case she could only throw down her fly whisk and admit defeat. Yang Guo made another comparison and said, "When it comes to your "Divine Five Poison Palm", Island Master Huang will use his fingernail to neutralize your palm. When your palm arrives, he will use the "Divine Release of the Flicking Finger", his fingernail flicking against your palm; how can your palm not be crippled as a result? All he needs to do is to immediately cut off his fingernail and the palm's poison won't spread to his body." He continued and described over ten other different stances that could neutralize her martial arts.

These words turned Li Mochou's face grey, every word of his was reasonable and logical, the stances that he described were ingenious; she wouldn't be able to fend them off.

Yang Guo said, "Island Master Huang was angry at your words; he has the status of being a great Master and cannot fight you personally so he passed these techniques to me so I could take care of you. But I thought about how my Master and you are still apprentice sisters. Today I give you a warning about the power of Island Master Huang, next time you see his disciples, you better run as far away as possible."

Li Mochou was silent for a while and then said, "I give up...I give up!" She turned around and ran away; in a flash her image disappeared behind the hills, her speed was really something rarely seen in the world of Jianghu.

In reality, although Huang Yaoshi did pass these techniques to Yang Guo, to be able to reach a state where he could use it to neutralize and defeat an enemy requires years of practice. Yang Guo's description of these techniques was enough to intimidate and overawe her and from now on she would never dare to say one derisive word about Huang Yaoshi.

In the vicinity of Li Mochou, Lu Wushuang's heart would jump at the sound of her voice; when she saw that Li Mochou had gone, it was like a heavy load had been removed from her. She clapped and laughed, saying, "Sha Dan! You're pretty good with words; you could even scare away my Master."

Cheng Ying had seen Yang Guo throw away the gown she had personally made to Li Mochou. It was a pressing situation then and that was that; but she saw that underneath the new gown, he was still wearing the torn and ragged old one. She knew that

Xiao Longnu must have made it; he was attached to familiar things and would never forget about things of old. Her heart ached a little but she pretended she didn't care. Then, the four of them returned to the shop to take a look at Sha Gu. Just as they entered the sudden clamor of men and neighing of horses could be heard from beyond the hills; the four of them turned around.

Yang Guo said, "I'll go take a look." He leapt on his horse and galloped around the hill and arrived at the main road. He saw dust and dirt flying up everywhere; it was a division of Mongolian soldiers heading south, they had iron bows and long sabers, their force like a crashing wave. Yang Guo has never seen an army marching before, he watched with a thumping heart, stunned.

Two soldiers raised their long sabers and shouted, "Barbarian, what are you looking at?" They rushed over. Yang Guo turned his horse around and galloped away, the two Mongolian soldiers raised their bows and shot an arrow towards his back. Yang Guo turned his head back and caught them but felt the great force behind the arrows. If he didn't know martial arts, these arrows would have pierced his chest. The two soldiers were frightened when they saw his abilities and reined in their horses, not daring to continue pursuing him. Yang Guo returned to the blacksmiths and told them what he saw.

Feng Mofeng sighed, "The Mongolian army are indeed heading south. The Chinese citizens are going to suffer!"

Yang Guo said, "The Song army will not be able to defend against the archery techniques of the Mongolian army; this is going to be a great disaster."

Feng Mofeng said, "This is just the time for a brave and heroic young man like Master Yang; why don't you return south and join the army and help fight off the invaders?"

Yang Guo was taken aback, he said, "No, I have to go north to find my Gu Gu. The Mongolian army's power is vast; I'm just one person, what use would I be?"

Feng Mofeng shook his head and said, "Though the force of one person is small, the force of many is strong. If everyone thought like you, who'd come out to defend the country against invaders?"

Yang Guo knew that his words were right, but now, there was nothing more important to him than finding his Gu Gu. He had wandered around Jianghu ever since he was small; he had suffered the abuse of officials. He saw that the Mongolians were indeed

violent and ruthless, but the Song Emperor may not be a good person himself. There was no need for him to help the emperor. He just gave a wry smile and didn't reply. Feng Mofeng gathered his hammer, tongs and air bellows and hung them across his back; he turned to Cheng Ying and said, "Apprentice Sister, when you see Master please tell him that disciple Feng Mofeng will never forget his teachings. Today I'm going to join the Mongolian army and I'm going to kill one or two of these generals who are invading my land. Apprentice sister, take care. I'm extremely delighted at seeing a disciple of Master's." He supported himself on his crutch and left, not even turning his head again; he didn't take another look at Yang Guo.

Yang Guo looked at Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang, he said, "It was unexpected that we would meet such a person like him here."

Lu Wushuang favored Yang Guo in her heart and said, "Cousin, apart from you, the people under the tutelage of your Master are either mad or crazy."

Cheng Ying smiled and said mildly, "Everyone has their own will, you can't force them. You said he was mad and crazy; he in turn might be calling us heartless. Anyway, don't I possess a touch of madness and craziness myself?"

Yang Guo's heart jumped when he heard this, she looked different and he couldn't tell whether her words were meant to be ambiguous. Suddenly a thumping sound was heard as Sha Gu fell from her bench. The three of them were alarmed and quickly put her up on a bed; her face was red and her eyes stared ahead blankly, the poison from the "Divine Five Poison Palm" was flaring up again.

Cheng Ying fed her some medicine while Yang Guo helped her sooth her pressure points. Sha Gu looked at him startled, her face was full of fear as she called out, "Brother Yang, don't look for me for revenge, it wasn't me who killed you."

Cheng Ying said softly, "Sister, don't be scared, he isn't..."

Yang Guo suddenly thought, "She's not fully conscious at the moment, I can force her to reveal the truth." He turned his hands and grabbed onto her wrists and said with a severe tone, "Who killed me? If you don't tell me then I'll take my revenge on you."

Sha Gu begged, "Brother Yang, it's not me."

Yang Guo said angrily, "You're not telling me! Fine, I'll strangle you to death!" He stretched his hands around her throat. Sha Gu gave out a piercing scream. How would

Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang know what Yang Guo was doing, they both called out to stop him, one called out, “Brother Yang”, the other called out, “Sha Dan!” One said, “Don’t frighten her further”, the other said, “Why are you mucking around at a time like this?”

Yang Guo didn’t take any notice; he closed his hands slightly tighter, the expression of an evil spirit was on his face; he clenched his teeth and said, “I’m brother Yang’s evil ghost. I died a horrible death, do you know that?”

Sha Gu said, “I know, after you died, crows ate your flesh.”

Yang Guo’s heart felt as if a knife was plunged into his heart, he knew that his father had died under someone else’s hands but he didn’t know that after he died, his body was actually eaten by crows and wasn’t buried, he called out, “Who killed me? Tell me, tell me.”

Sha Gu strained out, “It was you who hit Auntie, Auntie had poison needles on her body, you died.”

Yang Guo yelled loudly, “Who is this Auntie?”

Sha Gu couldn’t breathe with Yang Guo holding her throat and wanted to faint, she said quietly, “Auntie is auntie.”

Yang Guo said, “What’s Auntie’s surname? What’s her name?”

Sha Gu said, “I... I... don’t know, let me go!”

Lu Wushuang saw that the situation was becoming urgent; she went over to pull away Yang Guo’s hands. Right now, Yang Guo was like a madman, he waved out with all his strength, how could Lu Wushuang defend herself? She was thrown away and crashed into a wall painfully. Cheng Ying saw that the usually peaceful, warm and graceful Yang Guo was now like a mad tiger, she was so frightened that her limbs went limp.

Yang Guo thought, “If today I can’t get the name of the person who killed my father, I’ll immediately throw up blood and die.” He asked, “Is Auntie’s surname Qu? Is Auntie’s name Mei?” He thought that since Sha Gu’s surname was Qu, her auntie’s surname would most probably be Qu, or perhaps it could have been Mei Chaofeng.

Sha Gu struggled with all her strength, though she has practiced martial arts for a longer time than Yang Guo, her martial arts couldn't compare to his. The pressure points on her wrist were being held and she couldn't break free, she could only say urgently, "Go and find Auntie for revenge, don't... don't look for me!"

Yang Guo said, "Where's your Auntie?"

Sha Gu said, "Me and Grandpa left! She's with a man on the island."

Yang Guo's spine chilled when he heard these words, he quivered, "What does your Auntie call your Grandpa?"

Sha Gu said, "Father, what else?"

Yang Guo's face went grey but he was afraid he was wrong and asked, "Your Auntie's man is called Guo Jing, isn't he?"

Sha Gu said, "I don't know. Auntie just calls him 'brother Jing, brother Jing (Jing ge ge)!' She copied the way Huang Rong called Guo Jing; suddenly her legs flailed about and squealed, "Help, help! Ghost... ghost..."

What doubts did Yang Guo have now? All the suffering and bitterness of the past rushed to the surface and he thought, "If father wasn't killed, my mother wouldn't have been in pain all the time and die so early like that. I wouldn't have endured all the pain and suffering I've been through." He continued, "When I was on Peach Blossom Island, the Guo couple were not at ease with me, they were a bit too polite, they seemed to be covering up something and didn't treat me like the Wu brothers. Telling them how things are, shouting at them when needed. I felt something then but how would I know that it was because they carried the guilt of killing my father. It's because of this that they didn't want to teach me martial arts and sent me to the Quanzhen sect to suffer." His anger and fear stirred throughout him, his limbs became limp. Sha Gu called out loudly and leapt up from the bed.

Cheng Ying went over to Yang Guo and said softly, "Sister Sha has always been a bit crazy, you know about this. She's even worse after suffering this injury, don't believe her whatever you do." But in her heart she believed that the words of Sha Gu were true, and she knew that consoling him like this would be no use. But her heart couldn't endure seeing his face full of anger, despair, bitterness and sorrow.

Yang Guo did not take in any of these words; he stood there stunned for a while before calling out. He got on his horse, kicked with his legs and the horse galloped forward, in a flash it had gone over a hundred feet. Faint calls of 'Sha Dan!' and 'Brother Yang!' were heard behind him but he ignored them. The only thought in his mind was, "I need to take revenge, I need to take revenge!"

He galloped in a single stretch for two hours and had gone tens of li. Suddenly he felt a pain on his lips; he lifted his hand and felt them. His hand was covered in blood; in his anger and pain, he had bitten down and actually pierced his lower lip. He thought, "Auntie Guo has always treated me badly, but recently she suddenly began to treat me well, but it was all fake. I don't care about this but Uncle Guo... Uncle Guo..." He had always revered Guo Jing; he felt that his actions and martial arts were one of a kind, and he had always treated him exceedingly well. Now he knew that this was one big lie; he felt that this person was even more cunning than Huang Rong. Anger and resentment filled him, almost bursting out of his chest.

When he thought about the pain he was in; he got off the horse, covered his head and began to cry. This release of sorrow was extremely distressing; it was like all of the world's pain and troubles had all amassed in him. He had never seen his father and had never heard anyone talk about him; not even his own mother. But ever since he was little, he had the image of the perfect father in his mind; there wasn't another who was as kind as him. Yet this hero was killed by a devious trick of Guo Jing and Huang Rong.

He cried for a while before hearing the sounds of horses; four horses galloped from the north, the riders all Mongolian warriors. The first rider was holding a long spear; on the spear was a child that was two or three years of age. He was laughing as he galloped along. The baby was still alive; it was giving out a weak cry. The four warriors were a little surprised when they saw Yang Guo in the middle of the road but a ragged clothed young Han like him could be found everywhere so they didn't take any notice. One of them called out, "Move out of the way, move out of the way." As he said this, he thrust his spear forward.

Yang Guo was deep in the middle of his troubles right now; without thinking he pulled the spearhead forward and dragged the warrior down. He turned his hand and swept the spear; the warrior went flying over ten feet away, his skull was crushed and he died. When the remaining three warriors saw his valor, they called out, turned around and galloped away. A 'pai' sound was heard as the baby fell onto the ground.

Yang Guo ran up to it and saw that it was a Han child; it was healthy, chubby, and very cute. The pierce to its stomach wouldn't kill it right away but it would be difficult for it to recover and live. It was calling out 'a' 'a' 'a', as if it was calling out for its mother. Yang Guo was overwhelmed with sorrow and grief and sympathy stirred in his heart. He picked up the barely alive baby and tears flowed again; he saw that its pain was unbearable so he lightly gave it a palm and stopped its pain. He used the Mongolian warrior's spear to dig a hole so he could bury the baby.

He dug ten or so times before he heard the thunderous noise of horses and horns; a group of Mongolian soldiers were rushing towards him. Yang Guo's left hand held the dead baby; his right extended the spear as he got on the horse. The skinny horse was actually an experienced battle horse; when it saw it was about to go into battle, its spirit soared; it neighed and charged towards the Mongolian soldiers. Yang Guo's hand raised, the spear descended, he turned over three or four soldiers in one go, but he saw that countless soldiers were coming; he turned the horse around, went onto the wild lands and rode away. Arrows rained down behind him like locusts; he swung the spear and deflected the arrows away. The skinny horse was extremely fast; in a short while it had left the Mongolian soldiers behind but it didn't stop; it continued galloping away like the wind into the wild lands.

After another while, Yang Guo saw that the sky was beginning to get dark; he looked around and saw that long grass and strange rocks were everywhere. Dusk was covering the area; it was quiet without any sounds of people, and there wasn't even a crow or sparrow about. He got off the horse with the baby still held in his hands. The face still looked alive but covered in extreme suffering; pain filled his heart, he thought, "The parents of this child must have loved it very much; now that he's dead, his parents must be feeling great pain. I don't know how many people have died by the hands of these vicious and violent Mongolian soldiers as they head south."

The more he thought about it, the more difficult he found to endure; he dug a hole by a large tree and buried the child. He then thought about the words of Sha Gu again, "When this child died, it had me to bury it, but my father's body was eaten by crows. You killed him, what harm is there in burying him? You really are evil! If I don't take revenge, Yang Guo isn't a human!"

That night he slept in a tree. The next morning he rode the horse and let the horse go as it pleased; sometimes he thought about going back to the tomb to see Xiao Longnu, and at others he would think about how he must kill Guo Jing and Huang Rong first, no matter what, to avenge his father. When he felt hungry, he would pluck wild fruits to eat.

On the fourth day, he saw someone faraway, leaping up to a tree to pick some wild fruits. Yang Guo rode closer and saw that it was the disciple of Jinlun Fawang, Da'erba. Every time he jumped, he could only pick one fruit; eventually he became impatient and attacked the tree a few times. The tree gave a 'craack' as it broke; he then plucked the wild fruits from the tree and placed them in his pockets.

Yang Guo thought, "Could it be that Jinlun Fawang is nearby?"

He and Jinlun Fawang originally didn't have any ties; but now he had recognized Guo Jing and Huang Rong as his father's killers. He regretted helping Guo Jing and Huang Rong in opposing Fawang; he quietly followed Da'erba to see where he was going. He saw him moving like he was flying, straight towards the mountains. Yang Guo got off the horse and followed from a distance behind. Da'erba headed into a forest; the further he went, the higher he got. Yang Guo followed him up to the peak of a mountain.

At the top of the mountain was a small exposed hut. Jinlun Fawang was sitting in the middle of the hut, meditating with his eyes closed and eyebrows drooping down. Da'erba put the wild fruits down on the floor and turned around; his face changed as he suddenly saw Yang Guo approaching. He called out, "Senior apprentice brother, you've come to cause further harm to Master?" He dashed forward to Yang Guo and stretched out his arm to twist the front of his garment. His martial arts are better than Yang Guo's, but he was affected by the perilous situation that his Master was in and in his fear he lost control of his state of mind. This stance was a mess and broke one of the rules of martial arts; Yang Guo grabbed his arm in return and tossed him away.

Da'erba had always thought that Yang Guo was the reincarnation of his senior apprentice brother and now he was thrown on the ground by him; he rolled over a few times, picked himself up and then leapt in front of Yang Guo.

Yang Guo thought that he was going to raise his hands again so he took a step backwards, he didn't know that Da'erba would suddenly fall down to his knees and kowtow, "Senior apprentice brother, please remember your relationship with Master in your previous life. Master has a serious injury and is now trying to recuperate, if you disturb him, then... then..." His voice croaked as he reached this point and tears flowed.

Though Yang Guo did not understand his Tibetan, from his emotional state and Jinlun Fawang's distressed look, he more or less understood. He quickly helped him up and said, "Relax, I'm not going to harm your Master."

Da'erba saw that his face was gentle and peaceful; he was pleased. Although he didn't understand his words, his wariness started to go away.

Right at this time, Jinlun Fawang opened his eyes; he was shocked when he saw Yang Guo. He was concentrating on circulating his chi and didn't hear the words of Da'erba and Yang Guo. Suddenly he saw the enemy in front of him; he gave a sigh and said slowly, "I have practiced martial arts for many years but I still have yet to find a way to break through the echelon barrier, I didn't know that today I would die in the central plains." When he suffered that blow from the rock, he had suffered serious internal injuries; in the past few days he had built a hut on the top of the mountain so he could recuperate. It was unexpected that Yang Guo would actually find his way here. He wasn't able to use even one ounce of strength at the moment; he immediately ordered Da'erba to force Yang Guo away. But in the middle of their battle his state of mind would be disturbed and it would be difficult to recover from this serious injury.

How would he know that Yang Guo would bow; then say, "I have not come here to do any harm to the Reverend, please don't be wary."

Jinlun Fawang shook his head and was about to say something when he felt a severe pain in his chest; he quickly closed his eyes and circulated his chi. Yang Guo went inside the hut and stretched out his right hand, placing it on the 'To Yang' pressure point. This pressure point is just below the seventh vertebrae and is one of the major pressure point that regulates the veins and arteries.

Da'erba was shocked when he saw this; he sent out a fist towards Yang Guo. Yang Guo shook his left hand and made a signal with his eyes.

Da'erba saw that nothing was wrong with his Master, a slight smile was forming on his face and he took back his fist.

Yang Guo's internal energy was not deep and he didn't know anything about Tibetan internal energy; when he felt a Fawang's internal chi stirring, he circulated his internal energy and sent chi to him to help him clear upwards the 'Spirit Stage', 'Divine Route', 'Body Pillar' and 'Chest Route'; then clearing the downwards 'Withdrawing Muscle', 'Central Hinge', 'Central Spine' and the 'Suspending Hinge' pressure points. These were up to Fawang; he could only help him protect his veins and arteries.

Though Da'erba's martial arts were strong, all he'd learned were external martial arts and couldn't help his Master to recuperate. In the past few days he could only worry anxiously.

Since Jinlun Fawang now had no worries, his chi ran through his body and he used all his strength to heal the injuries in his chest and lower abdomen; after two hours the pain had lessened and his face was red. He opened his eyes and nodded to thank Yang Guo; he joined his palms and said, “Master Yang, why are you suddenly helping me?”

Yang Guo did not hide anything from him; he told him how he recently found out that Guo Jing and Huang Rong killed his father, and how he decided to go and take revenge. He explained how he accidentally bumped into Da'erba and followed him here.

Jinlun Fawang knew that this young man was crafty; in ten words it was difficult for him to believe one of them. But today, killing him would have been as easy as turning his palm, but instead of killing him, Yang Guo actually helped him to recuperate. He really did not have any ill intent towards him and he said, “So Master Yang has such heavy matters on him. But the Guo couple's martial arts are extremely high, I'm afraid that it would be difficult for Master Yang to take revenge.”

Yang Guo was silent, after a while he said, “Fine, then both father and son will die at their hands!”

Fawang said, “At first, I thought I was invincible and just by my power alone, I could hold down the heroes of the central plains and take the position of the Chancellor of Wulin. But the warriors of the central plains do not follow the rules of fighting one on one, and they all came at once; I can only make another plan. When I've recovered, I'm going to need to invite many skilled fighters to assist me. Once my forces are large, the central plains martial artists can't use numbers to overcome me and everyone can compete fairly. Have you got intentions of joining my side?”

Yang Guo was about to agree but he thought about the killings by the Mongolian soldiers and said, “I cannot help Mongolia.”

Fawang shook his head and said, “If you want to kill the Guo couple by yourself, it would be almost impossible.”

Yang Guo thought for a while and said, “Fine, I'll help you get the position of the Chancellor of Wulin, you help me to take my revenge.”

Jinlun Fawang stretched out his palm and said, “That's settled, we'll exchange palms to seal this deal.”

The two of them exchanged three palms to set this deal.

Yang Guo said, "I'm just going to help you to take the position of the Chancellor of Wulin, I cannot help you in your quest to help the Mongols attack Jiangnan and kill its citizens."

Jinlun Fawang laughed and said, "Everyone has their will, one cannot force them. Brother Yang, don't mind me commenting, but your martial arts have many styles; learning martial arts from many schools is of course good, but it would be unavoidable that your martial arts won't be refined. What is your most proficient skill? What martial arts are you planning to use against the Guo couple?"

Those words froze Yang Guo's tongue; it was hard for him to reply. Yang Guo has had extraordinary encounters in his life and his character was also covetous; Quanzhen, Ouyang Feng, Ancient Tomb, the Nine Yin, Hong Qigong and Huang Yaoshi, he had learned numerous martial arts from these schools. All the martial arts of these schools are ingenious and Masterly, but they all need a lifetime of difficult work to reach the upper level of these skills. He took a bit here and a bit there, but none of his martial arts had actually reached a great level.

When he meets second rate fighters, the martial arts he uses are all flowery and fancy, causing confusion to opponents; but when he meets a first rate martial artist, he will eventually be proved inferior. He can't even compare to Jinlun Fawang's disciples Da'erba and Huo Dou. He lowered his head and pondered about it; these words by Jinlun Fawang were a real warning to him and showed up the weakness in the foundations of his martial arts.

He had another thought, "Since I've decided to stay with Gu Gu forever, how can I have relationships everywhere? Cheng Ying, Wifey and there's also Wanyan Ping. I don't have any real feelings for them, how can I treat them improperly like this? Being greedy is really not a good thing." He continued thinking, "No matter if it's Hong Qigong, Huang Yaoshi, Ouyang Feng or even the Quanzhen Seven Masters and Jinlun Fawang, every one of them is a famous Master. They just practiced the martial arts of their own school; they understand other sect's and school's martial arts but they don't practice them. They just make themselves aware of them. In that case, what school of martial arts should I concentrate on?"

Based on his background, he should concentrate on the "Jade Heart Manual" of the Ancient Tomb sect; but then he thinks about the Mastery and ingenuity of Hong Qigong's "Dog Beating Stick Technique", the subtlety of Huang Yaoshi's "Jade Flute Swordplay"; if he ignores all of them, isn't that a pity? There's godfather's "Toad Stance" and "Reversal of the Veins". There are the martial arts of the "Nine Yin Manual" as well.

Any one of them is enough to make your name in the world. It was difficult to learn them, how can I just give them up like that?”

He left the hut and walked around the peak, thinking bitterly; it was extremely troubling. He thought for half a day when suddenly his mind lit up, “Why don’t I take the best of all these schools and form my own? The martial arts of the world were all formed by someone; if others can do this, could it be that I can’t?” His eyes lit up as he thought about it. He thought from morning to midday, from midday to night and didn’t eat or drink. All the martial arts he had seen in his life were floating around in his mind, clashing with each other. He had seen Ouyang Feng and Hong Qigong compete martial arts verbally and he himself frightened away Li Mochou by using words from his mouth; but right now, the martial arts competing in his mind were even more rapid and spectacular than describing them verbally. Eventually he involuntarily started to wave out fists and kicks. At first, it could be distinguished that this stance was from Hong Qigong, the other was Ouyang Feng but eventually everything became muddled up, he couldn’t hold on any longer and fainted.

Da’erba watched from afar, he saw that he was acting crazy, pointing out his hand and sweeping his legs, he didn’t understand what it was all about. Suddenly he saw him falling onto the ground, he wanted to go over there and help him but Jinlun Fawang laughed and said; “Don’t disturb his thoughts. It’s a pity that your intelligence is mediocre and you can’t grasp the meanings within.”

Yang Guo slept for half a night and continued with his thoughts the next morning. In seven days, he fell unconscious five times. He thought he wanted to invent his own school of martial arts, but how easy is that? With his present abilities it would be almost impossible to succeed. This isn’t something that can be achieved in ten days or two weeks. But after studying for several days, he suddenly understood. Since he couldn’t combine all these martial arts together, there was no need to force the issue. He realized that all martial arts were at his fingertips; later on when he meets an enemy, he’ll use whichever is needed. There was no need to think about the source of the martial art and this wasn’t far off from his intentions of forming his own school. Once he understood this point, he was immediately filled with comfort.

In the past few days, Jinlun Fawang has been self-recuperating; his injury was now almost fully recovered and he can move as freely as usual. Today, he saw Yang Guo’s expression was now at ease and calm, and knew that he had advanced another level in his martial arts. He said, “Little brother Yang, I’ll take you to see someone. This person is a great hero, an extremely open minded person, once you see him you’ll definitely be in awe.”

Yang Guo said, “Who?”

Jinlun Fawang said, “The Mongolian Prince Khubilai. He is the grandson of Genghis Khan and the fourth son of Prince Tolui.”

After seeing the unrestrained violence of the Mongolian soldiers, Yang Guo hated Mongolians; he frowned and said, “I’m anxious to avenge my father, I don’t need to see that Mongolian prince.”

Jinlun Fawang laughed and said, “I agreed to help you, how can I break my word? But I was summoned here by Khubilai; I need to go and see him. His camp is not far from here; it’s within one day’s travel.”

Yang Guo had no choice but to agree; he alone was not a match for Guo Jing and Huang Rong whether it came to a battle of wits or strength. Without Jinlun Fawang’s help, it would be difficult for him to take revenge; he could only go along with him.

Jinlun Fawang was the First Protector of Mongolia and the Mongolian soldiers revered him. When they saw him, they immediately went and told the news to their prince. Mongolians have always lived in tents; though they’ve entered a city, they weren’t used to living in palaces. Because of this, Khubilai stayed in the tents of the encampment.

Fawang took him along to the royal tent. Yang Guo saw that this tent was twice as large as a normal Mongolian tent but the arrangement within was very simple and crude. A twenty-five or six year old man was sitting down reading. When this person saw the two enter, he quickly got up to meet them and laughed, “I haven’t seen the Protector for many days, I have been thinking about you.”

Jinlun Fawang said, “Your highness, I’ll introduce you to a young hero. Though this brother Yang is young, he is an extraordinary personality.”

Yang Guo knew that this Khubilai is Genghis Khan’s grandson; if he didn’t have a noble appearance then at least he should have a powerful air around him. How would he know that this person was just a Han speaking, modest and mild young man; he was rather surprised.

Khubilai studied Yang Guo. He pulled on Fawang with his left hand and then said to his servant, “Quickly bring some wine, I want to have a drink with this brother.”

The servant brought in three bowls of Mongolian milk wine. Khubilai took a bowl and drank it all in one go. Fawang did the same. Yang Guo rarely drank wine, but now that the host has shown his hospitality, it wouldn't be appropriate to reject it; so he took the wine and drank it all in one go. He felt the wine was extremely harsh and rather sour.

Khubilai laughed, "Little brother, how beautiful is this wine?"

Yang Guo said, "This wine is harsh and sour, it's like a knife going into your mouth; the taste isn't great but this is something that a true man drinks."

Khubilai was pleased and called for more wine; each of them drank three bowls. Yang Guo's internal energy was profound enough; he maintained his composure as he drank.

Khubilai said with joy; "Protector, where did you find this talented young man? My Mongolia is really fortunate."

Jinlun Fawang then revealed Yang Guo's history to him; he played up Yang Guo with his words, describing him as if he was one of the eminent figures of the central plains. When Yang Guo heard how Jinlun Fawang described him, he couldn't help but feel a little proud.

Khubilai was ordered to take the Song land and has stayed in the central plains for a while now. He liked Han culture, his companion was Confucius; he read books and studied scriptures. He employed skilled martial artists, made acquaintances with them, planning to go south and attack the Song.

If it were another person who saw such a young man like Yang Guo, it would be difficult for them to accept Fawang's words. But Khubilai was a wise and supremely magnanimous and he also had believed Jinlun Fawang without question; he was delighted and ordered a feast.

In a short while a feast was set up, wine and food which included both Han and Mongolian dishes, the bowls overflowed.

Khubilai said to his servant, "Invite the heroes from the Virtuous Guesthouse." The servant complied and exited the tent.

Khubilai said, "Some able people have been made guests here in the past few days; it really is my country's luck to have these people. But the thing is, that they cannot compare with Fawang and gentleman Yang."

In the middle of this, the servant returned with the guests; the tent door opened and in came four people.

The first one that came in was tall and skinny, his face was pale, and he looked like a corpse. Khubilai introduced him to Fawang and Yang Guo, he was Xiangxi's Xiaoxiang Zi.

The second person was extremely short and dark; he was a skilled fighter from Tian Zhu (India), Nimoxing.

One of the last two was a strongly built eight foot tall person with a foolish laugh on his face and blank eyes. The other was high nosed deep eyed with crooked hair and a yellow beard; he was a Hu (from northern and western China) but he was wearing Han clothes. He wore pearls around his neck and jade bracelets on his wrists, a rich air surrounded him. Khubilai introduced them separately. The Han was from Huijiang; his name is Ma Guangzuo. The Hu was a merchant, his family traded treasures in Kaifeng, Cheung An Tai Yuan, his Chinese name was Yin Kexi.

When Nimoxing and Xiaoxiang Zi heard that Jinlun Fawang was the 'First Protector of Mongolia' they examined him coldly, their faces showed disrespect. When they saw the young Yang Guo, they thought that he was Fawang's disciple or grand disciple and didn't even give him another look.

After three rounds of wine, Nimoxing could endure it no longer and said, "Your highness, the lands of Mongolia are vast, this monk is the 'First Protector of Mongolia', his martial arts must be extremely good. I want to experience his skills."

Khubilai gave a subtle smile and didn't reply.

Xiaoxiang Zi followed on, "Brother Nimoxing is from India, Tibetan martial arts originates from India, could there such a thing as getting green from blue in this world? I don't really believe it."

Jinlun Fawang saw Nimoxing's eyes light up; Xiaoxiang Zi's face was exuding a green air; Fawang knew that these two people's internal energy was profound. Yin Kexi was laughing, using all his strength to produce an extremely uncultured and plain air; the more this person tries to show that he is unable, the greater the ability this person is likely to have. Fawang could not take him lightly; but he had no worries about the Han, Ma Guangzuo. He gave a wry laugh and said, "I was given the position of Protector be-

cause of the kindness of the Khan and the Fourth Prince. Originally I did not dare to accept this position.”

Xiaoxiang Zi said, “Then you should give it up for a person more worthy.” He glanced over at Nimoxing as he chuckled wryly.

Jinlun Fawang stretched out his chopsticks and picked up a piece of beef, he laughed, “This is the fattest piece of beef on the plate. I originally didn’t want to eat it but I just happened to stretch out my chopsticks and happened to pick this piece; I just accept it as fate. If you are interested, you can pick it yourself.” He hung the piece of beef over the plate, waiting for each one of them to come and take it.

Ma Guangzuo did not understand the meaning behind Jinlun Fawang’s words; he was talking about a piece of beef, but in reality he was referring to the position of the ‘First Protector of Mongolia’. When Ma Guangzuo saw him offering the piece of beef, he stretched out his chopsticks to catch it. His chopsticks were about to touch the beef when Fawang suddenly swept out one of his chopsticks and lightly touched his chopsticks. Ma Guangzuo felt his arm tremble with great intensity; he couldn’t hold on to them and the pair of chopsticks fell onto the table. Fawang’s chopstick returned in time to keep hold of the piece of beef. The others looked at each other startled.

Ma Guangzuo still did not understand, he picked up the chopsticks and held onto them tightly with his five fingers, he thought, “This time you won’t be able to knock it away...” He stretched his chopsticks towards the piece of beef.

Fawang did the same thing again, sweeping out one chopstick. This time, Ma Guangzuo was holding them tightly, indeed Fawang could not knock them out of his hands but a ‘ka la’ sound was heard, the chopsticks broke into four pieces as if a knife had sliced through them and two pieces of chopsticks dropped onto the table.

Ma Guangzuo was furious; he called out and threw himself forward to battle Fawang.

Khubilai laughed, “There’s no need to get angry warrior Ma, if you want to duel, there’s time to do this after we’ve eaten.”

Ma Guangzuo was afraid of his highness; he returned to his seat and pointed to Fawang, shouting, “What witchcraft did you use to break my chopsticks?”

Jinlun Fawang laughed, still holding out the piece of beef in front of him.

At first, Nimoxing did not have any respect for Jinlun Fawang, but after seeing how profound his internal energy was, he did not dare to continue looking down on him. He was an Indian; when he ate he did not use chopsticks, he just stretched out his hand and said, "I want to eat this piece of beef that the big Han couldn't take." His five fingers came out suddenly like a metal claw towards the beef. Fawang swept out his right chopstick, it moved like lightning as he attacked the pressure points on his palm, arm, wrist and the tip of his middle finger.

Nimoxing's palm quickly turned and chopped down at Fawang's wrist. Fawang's arm didn't move, he turned his chopstick around and struck out swiftly again, Nimoxing felt the chopstick striking him on the hand and quickly took his arm back. Fawang's chopstick twisted back into its original position, still holding onto the piece of beef.

His attack of the pressure points were extremely swift; he made many attacks and returned the chopstick into position before the piece of beef slipped away. Yang Guo and the others could see what had happened. The two had exchange many stances in just a short period of time. Fawang's attacks with the chopstick were indeed fast but Nimoxing's martial arts were also excellent, he was able to take back his hand in an extremely critical situation.

Xiaoxiang Zi called out, "Good skill!"

Khubilai knew that the two were using advanced martial arts to test each other but he couldn't see what type of martial arts they were using. Ma Guangzuo's eyes were wide open; he looked at them, puzzled.

Yin Kexi laughed and said, "Everyone's too polite! You're offering it to the others, but don't want to eat it yourself, nor do you want anybody else to. Everything will be cold by the time you've finished." He then slowly stretched out his chopsticks, the emerald and jade bracelets collided with each other noisily. Before his chopsticks touched the beef, Fawang's chopsticks were forced to tremble slightly by his internal energy; he was getting in the first attack, keeping Fawang's chopsticks in check. Fawang moved his chopsticks forward and allowed him to take the piece of beef. When his internal energy reaches his chopstick, he attacked his arm.

Yin Kexi urgently circulated his internal energy and counterattacked. How would he know that Fawang's internal energy would suddenly withdraw? The beef was initially held by him but his internal energy moved it forward and Fawang once again got hold of the piece of beef.

Fawang laughed, “Brother Yin is too polite by offering it to me.” This time he used cleverness to win. Yin Kexi fell into the trap and at the same time found out that the opponent’s internal energy far exceeded his own. Luckily he hadn’t embarrassed himself yet; he gave a wry laugh and picked up a small piece of beef from the plate. He said, “The only things I love in life are treasures and precious objects, I don’t really like fatty meat; I better just eat a small piece.” He placed the small piece of beef in his mouth and then slowly chewed.

Jinlun Fawang thought, “This Hu merchant is broad-minded.” He turned to Xiaoxiang Zi and said, “Since you offered it to me so modestly, I will accept.” He slowly took the chopsticks back half a foot. He guessed that Xiaoxiang Zi’s internal energy wasn’t weak and so didn’t dare to be careless, by taking it back half a foot, if he needed to circulate his internal energy it will be half a foot closer and half a foot further away from his enemy.

Xiaoxiang Zi chuckled and slowly raised his chopsticks; suddenly he sent them forward and caught the piece of beef. He used the force to take it back and he managed to pull it back half a foot.

Jinlun Fawang did not predict that the opponent’s movements would be so quick; he quickly circulated his internal energy and pulled back. The piece of beef moved back towards him inch by inch.

Xiaoxiang Zi stood up and placed his left hand on the table. The table made ‘ka la’ noises under this force but he still could not stop the force that Fawang produced in taking back the piece of beef.

Fawang looked at ease whereas drops of sweat poured from the forehead of Xiaoxiang Zi, the result was clear.

Suddenly a loud call by someone faraway could be heard, “Guo Jing, brother Guo, where are you? Quickly come out Guo Jing, the punk named Guo!”

At first the call came from the east but then it came from the west. There was a distance of a couple of li between the calls from the east and west and it appeared as if there were two people calling out from the east and west. But the voice was the same and there was no pause between the calls from the east and west. This person’s movements were extremely fast and the internal energy behind the calls was profound; this was something that was little seen in the world.

Everyone looked at each other startled. Xiaoxiang Zi loosened his chopsticks and sat back down in his seat.

Jinlun Fawang laughed and said, “Thank you, thank you!” He was about to place the piece of beef in his mouth when suddenly the tent door opened, someone flashed across and stretched out their hand and snatched Fawang’s beef and then took a large bite out of it.

This shocked everyone; they all stood up and looked to see who this person was. It was an old man with white hair, a white beard and a smiling red face. He sat down on the rug and started chewing the beef noisily. Jinlun Fawang thought back on the movements of this man when he took his piece of beef; the more he thought about, the more shocked he was.

The guards outside the tent who failed to stop this man all called out, “Stop the assassin!” Four spears were thrust towards the man’s chest. The old man stretched out his left hand and grabbed all the spearheads at once; he turned to Yang Guo and said, “Little brother, I’m really hungry, pass over some more beef to me.”

The four Mongolian soldiers pushed forward with all their strength but they couldn’t move an inch; the four then tried to pull back but again it was to no avail. As they strained with red faces, the spearheads seemed as if they were trapped under an iron mountain, they were not even able to pull them back half an inch.

Yang Guo thought this guy was entertaining and picked up the plate of beef, he threw it easily to him and said, “Help your self!”

The old man caught it with his right hand and placed it against his chest; suddenly a piece of meat from the plate jumped up and flew into his mouth as if it were alive. This entertained Khubilai, he thought the old man was performing magic and gave out a cheer. But Jinlun Fawang and the others knew that the old man had circulated internal energy through his palm into the plate, forcing the piece of meat upwards.

An ordinary person could force a piece of meat to jump if they tap the plate, but they would definitely knock everything up at once sending the juices everywhere. It would be impossible for them to knock them up piece by piece; the palm power of this old man had reached a stage where he could do as he pleased. Everyone else at the feast knew that they would not be able to do it themselves; fear and respect sprang up in their hearts.

The old man chewed and swallowed; as soon as one piece went down another piece jumped up. In a short while he had completely cleared the plate. His right hand waved out and sent the plate flying out in an arc towards Yang Guo and Yin Kexi. The two of them had already seen how good this man's martial arts were; they were afraid that he had used some kind of strange move in throwing the plate and didn't dare to stretch out their hand to catch it. The two quickly moved out of the way. The plate flew steadily through the air and landed on the table, knocking into a plate of roast lamb. The plate of roast lamb flew towards the old man while the empty plate stopped dead after a couple of turns.

He had used a stream of "Tai Chi Energy", according to the continuous intent of Tai Chi. Uninterrupted, if it were shot outwards towards an open space, the plate would circle around. It is not difficult to use this force. There were a fair number of people who were skilled in using the variations of this force, but what was difficult was using the right amount of energy to get the most benefit. Skillfully sending the plate onto the table, stopping the empty plate dead and sending a plateful of food to his hand was such a skill.

The old man laughed out loud extremely proud of himself; he circulated internal energy into his hands and a piece of roast lamb jumped from the plate into his mouth. He finished the plate shortly. The four soldiers that were still in his hands were looking pitiful, they could not take back their spears but they didn't dare to let go. The rules of the Mongolian army were strict; abandoning a weapon in battle was an offence that led to execution. There was that, and the fact that they were responsible for the safety of Khubilai; they could only use all their strength and try to struggle free.

The old man saw that they were at a loss and was becoming more and more pleased. He suddenly shouted, "Change, change, change, two of you kowtow, two of you face the sky! One...two...three!" On three, their arms shook and the spears snapped. The forces from his fingers were directed in two directions, on two of the spears he circulated energy to push away, on the other two he circulated energy to pull. An 'ai yo' sound was heard as two soldiers fell and kowtowed and the other two fell backwards facing the sky.

The old man clapped and sang, "Little precious, the harder you fall, the taller you grow!" This was a song that adults sing to console children after they've fallen.

Yin Kexi suddenly got up and asked, "Senior is named Zhou?"

The old man laughed, "Yep, ha-ha, do you know me?"

Yin Kexi folded his fists and said, “So it’s the Old Urchin Zhou Botong, Senior Zhou Lao.”

Xiaoxiang Zi had heard of him before but Jinlun Fawang and Nimoxing had not heard of Zhou Botong before. They saw his martial arts were profound but his actions were rather mischievous and childish; indeed, the title ‘Old Urchin’ is not in vain. Everyone’s wariness disappeared slightly as their faces showed a smile.

Jinlun Fawang said, “Forgive me for not knowing this Senior of Wulin. How about a seat? Our highness is eager to meet great people, he will be extremely happy at meeting such an eminent person today.”

Khubilai saluted with his hands and said, “That is correct; please have a seat Mr. Zhou.”

Zhou Botong shook his head and said, “I’m full, I don’t need to eat anymore. Where’s Guo Jing, is he around?”

Huang Yaoshi had told Yang Guo about how Zhou Botong and Guo Jing became sworn brothers, immediately he replied coldly, “Why are you looking for him?”

Zhou Botong had always been childlike and loved making acquaintances with young people; he was pleased when he saw that Yang Guo was young and he was even more pleased when he heard him say ‘you’ and not something like ‘Mr. Zhou’ or ‘old Senior’. He said, “Guo Jing is my sworn brother, do you know him? He loved being around Mongols ever since he was young; because of this, when I saw this camp I came over to see whether he’s here or not.”

Yang Guo frowned and said, “Why are you looking for Guo Jing?”

Zhou Botong had no worries, how would he know to conceal his thoughts, he just casually replied, “He sent a letter to me, telling me to attend the ‘Heroes Feast’. I had a few games on the road as I rushed from faraway; when I got there I was a couple of days late, the feast had finished, I was damn disappointed.”

Yang Guo said, “Didn’t he leave a letter for you?”

Zhou Botong eyes rolled over and said, “Why are you asking all the questions? Do you know Guo Jing or not?”

Yang Guo said, “How wouldn’t I know them? Mrs. Guo is called Huang Rong, isn’t she? Their daughter is called Guo Fu, isn’t that right?”

Zhou Botong clapped his hands and said, “Wrong, wrong! That Huang Rong is a little girl herself, what daughter?”

Yang Guo was startled but then immediately understood, he asked, “When was the last time you saw them?”

Zhou Botong counted with his fingers, each finger was counted twice, he said, “At least twenty years.”

Yang Guo laughed, “Is she still a little girl after twenty years? Wouldn’t she have a child in these twenty years?”

Zhou Botong laughed, his beard fluttering about, he said, “You’re right! You’re right! Is their daughter pretty?”

Yang Guo said, “Their daughter looks a lot like Mrs. Guo, a little like Guo Jing, just what you’d think.”

Zhou Botong laughed, “That’s great, if a girl has dense brows and big eyes with a dark oval face like my brother Guo, of course that girl won’t be pretty.”

Yang Guo knew that he wasn’t wary anymore and continued, “Huang Rong’s father is Island Master Huang Yaoshi, he and I are great friends, do you know him?”

Zhou Botong was shocked and said, “You little kid, how can you call old ‘Heretic’ Huang as brother? Who’s your Master?”

Yang Guo said, “My Master’s abilities are extraordinary, I’m afraid if I tell you that I’ll scare you silly.”

Zhou Botong laughed, “I can’t be scared silly any more.” He waved out his right hand and sent the empty plate flying towards him with a tremendous force.

Yang Guo knew that Zhou Botong was the Martial Uncle of Ma Yu and Qiu Chuji and the others. He saw that his arm didn’t bend as he threw the plate, he was using his fingers alone; this was a technique of the Quanzhen. He had no fear of Quanzhen martial arts; he stretched out his left index finger and pushed against the bottom of the plate, the plate spun around on his finger. This delighted Zhou Botong whereas Xiaoxiang Zi, Yin Kexi, Nimoxing and the others looked at each other startled.

When Xiaoxiang Zi first saw the young Yang Guo in his ragged clothes, he didn't give him another look but right now he was thinking, "With the force that plate was coming in with, I wouldn't dare to stretch out my hand to catch it never mind just relying on a single finger. If the force used to catch it were just slightly out of place, the plate would snap a wrist. Who exactly is this young man?"

Zhou Botong called out; "Great!" He could see that he was using a Quanzhen technique and asked, "Do you know Ma Yu and Qiu Chuji?"

Yang Guo said, "How wouldn't I know those two old goats?"

Zhou Botong was delighted. Though he didn't have any grudges with Qiu Chuji and the others, he felt that their rules were annoying, they were too prudent; there was some feeling of looking down on them. The person he respects most in his life, apart from his apprentice brother Wang Chongyang, is the carefree Nine Fingered Wondrous Beggar Hong Qigong. He didn't think too much of Huang Yaoshi's heretical nature and Huang Rong's cleverness. When he heard Yang Guo calling Ma Yu and Qiu Chuji 'old goats', it was music to his ears, he asked, "How are Hao Datong and the others?"

Yang Guo's anger erupted as soon as he heard the name 'Hao Datong', he insulted, "That old goat is a damn fool, and one day I'll make him suffer."

Zhou Botong was getting more and more happy as he listened, he asked, "How are you going to make him suffer?"

Yang Guo said, "I'll catch him, tie him up and then let him lie in a cesspit for half a day."

Zhou Botong was delighted and quietly said, "Once you've caught him, don't throw him in the cesspit straight away, first let me know and allow me to take a peek from aside."

He had no ill intent towards Hao Datong, it was just that he loved evil shows; when others are causing trouble and being mischievous; of course he had to join in.

Yang Guo laughed, "Fine, I'll remember to tell you. But why peek? You're afraid of the Quanzhen goats?"

Zhou Botong sighed and said, "I'm Hao Datong's Martial Uncle! If he sees me, he'll naturally call to me for help. It'll be a bit embarrassing if I don't save him but if I do, I won't be able to watch a good show."

Yang Guo thought to himself, “This person’s martial arts are excellent and his character is pretty interesting but he’s still from Quanzhen and he is the sworn brother of Guo Jing. A man must be ruthless; I need to think of a way to get rid of him.”

How would Zhou Botong know that Yang Guo was starting to have ill thoughts about him? He asked, “When are you going to catch Hao Datong?”

Yang Guo said, “I’m about to go. If you want to take in the atmosphere then come along.”

Zhou Botong was delighted, he clapped his hands and stood up but suddenly he became depressed and said, “I can’t, I need to go to Xiangyang.”

Yang Guo said, “What’s so much fun in Xiangyang? Just don’t go.”

Zhou Botong said, “Brother Guo left a letter for me at the Lu Manor; it said that the Mongolian army is invading south and will definitely attack Xiangyang. He’s leading the heroes of the central plains to Xiangyang to help, he told me to give a hand as well. I haven’t seen him on my travels so I better go to Xiangyang.”

Khubilai and Jinlun Fawang looked at each other and both thought, “So the warriors of the central plains have rushed to Xiangyang to protect the city.”

Just at this point, the tent opened and in came a monk. He was about forty years old and looked elegant; his expression looked like that of a scholar. He went to Khubilai and the two exchanged whispers. The monk was a Han, his given name Zicong, and was a counsel of Khubilai’s. His original name was Liu Kang and he was an official in Xianya and became a monk later on. He was very knowledgeable and did things very thoroughly; Khubilai had a great deal of trust in him. He had received some news from a guard that an important person has arrived in the camp and needs to be received immediately.

Zhou Botong stroked his stomach and said, “Hey monk, move over a little, I’m talking to that little brother. Hey, little brother, what’s your name?”

Yang Guo said, “My surname is Yang, first name Guo.”

Zhou Botong said, “Who’s your Master?”

Yang Guo said, “My Master is a girl, her beauty is unparalleled and her martial arts are excellent, she doesn’t allow others to mention her name.”

Zhou Botong shivered and remembered his old lover Yinggu; he didn’t dare to ask anymore and stood up. He waved his sleeves around to get rid of the dust on his clothes; the tent was filled with dust and dirt as a result.

Zicong could hold on no longer and sneezed twice. Zhou Botong was joyous and waved out with even more strength; suddenly he laughed out loud and said, “I’m going now!” His left hand waved out and the four broken spearheads shot towards Xiaoxiang Zi, Nimoxing, Yin Kexi and Ma Guangzuo. As the spearheads flew through the air, ‘wu’ ‘wu’ sounds were made; they were moving extremely quickly and the targets were close; in a flash the spearheads were right before the very eyes of the four.

Xiaoxiang Zi and the others were shocked; they could not dodge out of the way in time and could only circulate their internal energy to catch them. However, when they stretched out their hands to catch them, they caught thin air; a ‘pu’ sound was heard as the four spearheads flew into the floor.

The spearheads were shot out extremely ingeniously, immediate dispatch and withdrawal, as soon as the spearheads were in front of their eyes, and they suddenly twisted around and shot into the floor.

Ma Guangzuo was a simple minded person and just felt that this was amusing, he laughed out loud and said, “You really have got lots of tricks old man.”

But Xiaoxiang Zi and the other two were extremely startled, their faces had changed colour. They all thought about how they missed the spearheads; if the spearhead hadn’t changed direction, they would have shot into their stomachs. With the amount of force behind the spearheads, what chance would they have of surviving?” Zhou Botong was extremely proud of himself for making the four of them looking like a fools, he turned around and was about to leave.

Zicong said, “Mr. Zhou, your amazing abilities are rarely seen in this world; I give you a toast on behalf of his highness,” He handed a cup of wine to him. Zhou Botong drank it in one go. Zicong sent another cup to him and said, “This one is from me!” Again, Zhou Botong drank it down.

Zicong was about to give another cup to him when suddenly Zhou Botong called out, “Oh no, my stomach hurts, I need to crap.” Zhou Botong squatted down and undid his

pants, and was about to crap in the tent.

Fawang and the others were amused and all called out for him to stop. Zhou Botong was startled, he called out, “Something’s wrong with this stomach ache; I don’t need to crap!”

Yang Guo glanced over at Zicong and understood, there was poison in the wine. At the beginning he had some ill intent towards Zhou Botong, wanting to prevent Guo Jing from having a strong ally; but the ill intent he had disappeared immediately. He had no debts and dues with the Old Urchin; he saw that he was childlike and uncomplicated and felt good sentiments towards him. He couldn’t endure it when he saw him fall for the dirty trick. He was about to suggest to him to hold Khubilai as a hostage and force Zicong to hand over the antidote when he suddenly heard Zhou Botong call out, “Strange, strange, so its because I drank too little poisonous wine, that’s why my stomach ached. Monk, quickly pour me another three cups, the more poisonous the better!”

Everyone looked at each other startled. Zicong was afraid that he would lash out before he died, he didn’t dare to go over to him.

Zhou Botong took a large step forward towards the table. Jinlun Fawang stepped in front of Khubilai to protect him; but all he saw was Zhou Botong pulling up his pants with his left hand and reaching for the jug of poisoned wine with his right hand. He then tipped his head backwards and poured all the wine down his throat.

Everyone’s face lost its color.

But Zhou Botong laughed and said, “That’s better. Now my stomach has got too much poison, won’t the Old Urchin turn into the Old Poisonous Animal? I need to fight poison with poison.” Suddenly he opened his mouth and shot out a stream of wine towards Zicong. Jinlun Fawang saw that it was a dangerous situation and quickly picked up a table to block it; an arrow of wine splashed across the table.

Zhou Botong laughed non-stop; he ran to the exit of the tent and suddenly his mischievousness stirred; he grabbed the tent’s support pillar and shook a few times. A ‘kraak’ sound was heard as the pillar snapped. The tent fell down and covered Khubilai, Jinlun Fawang, Yang Guo and the others inside. Zhou Botong was delighted and got on top of the tent, running back and forth, stepping on everyone inside the tent. Jinlun Fawang sent out a palm and struck the sole of his foot. Zhou Botong felt a great surge of internal energy through his foot and couldn’t suppress it, he did a somersault and landed back down, calling out loudly, “Interesting, interesting!” He then left.

Soon, Jinlun Fawang and the others climbed out with Khubilai, and all the guards clamored around to fix the pillar and erect the tent again. Zhou Botong had long gone. Fawang, Xiaoxiang Zi and the others apologized to Khubilai for not protecting him properly and letting him experience this shock. Khubilai didn't punish them one bit and instead praised the abilities of Zhou Botong, saying that it is a great pity that he couldn't make him stay. Fawang and the others had an ashamed expression on their faces.

All the cups and plates were set up once again. Khubilai said, "The Mongolian army has attacked Xiangyang many times before but with no success. This time, the heroes of the central plains have gone there to protect the city; that Zhou Botong has also gone there to help. This is an extremely troublesome situation. I wonder, what great plans do you have?"

Yin Kexi said, "Zhou Botong may have great martial arts but we may not be weaker than him. When your highness attacks the city, it will be soldier against soldier, general against general; the central plains have their heroes but so does the west."

Khubilai said, "Though your words aren't wrong, there's a saying, 'Before a battle, one must plan for victory in the temple; greater planning will lead to victory whereas little planning will not.' Before I attack, I must have a plan to gain victory."

Zicong said, "Your highness's foresight is magnificent..."

Before he finished, a shout could be heard from outside, someone was calling out, "I said that I don't want to go and I mean it; it's of no use if you beg me or anger me." It was Zhou Botong.

What was he doing back here and who was he talking to? Everyone's curiosity was roused and they wanted to go out to take a look.

Khubilai laughed and said, "Everyone, let's take a look, I wonder who the Old Urchin is arguing with."

Everyone took a step outside the tent and saw four people in an arc far away surrounding Zhou Botong. The four people were standing south, west, northwest and north of him, surrounding him but leaving a way out to the east. Zhou Botong stretched out his arm and threw a fist, he called out, "I'm not going, I'm not going."

Yang Guo was surprised, “If he doesn’t want to go, who can force him? Why is there a need for arguing?” He saw that the four people were all wearing a green gown; the colors and clothing looked ancient and wasn’t the clothing of the present time. There were three middle-aged men wearing tall hats; standing in the north western position was a girl, her green belt could be seen fluttering in the wind.

The man standing in the northern position said, “We didn’t have any intentions in troubling you but you kicked over our pill furnace, ripped our spirit fungus, tore our books, and burned our sword room. You must come back with us and explain everything to our Master; otherwise, when our Master blames someone, none of us disciples will face the punishment.”

Zhou Botong put on a smile and said, “Just tell your Master that an old man passed by and accidentally caused all this trouble; won’t that be the end of it?”

The man said, “You insist on refusing to come with us?”

Zhou Botong nodded his head. The man pointed to the east and said, “Good, he’s here.”

Zhou Botong turned around to take a look but didn’t see anyone. The man made a sign with his hands and the four of them suddenly pulled open a large net and covered Zhou Botong from his head downwards. The four’s hand movements were extremely drilled, and extremely strange; even with Zhou Botong’s great abilities he was trapped by the net and had no response, he just bellowed and hollered. The four people swerved around him and tied him up tightly. One of the men put him over his shoulders, the other three held onto their swords, protecting him as they flew to the east.

Yang Guo was worried about Zhou Botong’s safety and thought, “I must save him.” He then followed after them, calling out, “Hey, hey! Where are you taking him?”

How could Jinlun Fawang and the others not want to know what exactly this strange event is all about? They told Khubilai and followed. After a few li, they arrived at a stream. The four people lifted Zhou Botong onto a boat and two of them started to row. The rest of them followed along the shore; after a while they saw a boat in the stream and all immediately leapt in. Ma Guangzuo had great strength and he rowed the boat, soon they were just a few tens of feet behind. But the stream was windy and after a few turns, the boat disappeared. Nimoxing leapt from the boat onto a cliff side and climbed up over a hundred feet in a flash like an ape. He saw the boat in the west rowing along an extremely narrow brook. A thicket of trees covered the entrance to this brook, if one didn’t look from on high, they would not know that the deep valley would have such a

passageway. He leapt back onto the boat and pointed out the directions to them. They quickly turned the boat around and rowed towards the thicket of trees. The entrance was a cave; the ceiling of the cave was only three feet away from the water, and everyone had to lie down before they could row on. After leaving the cave they saw the mountains on either side soared; the sky now looked like a string.

The mountains were green, the water blue, the scenery extremely serene; but it was silent everywhere, exuding a feeling of danger. After another three or four li, the brook suddenly had nine large slabs of stone arising from it, like a shield, blocking the way of the boat.

Ma Guangzuo was the first one to call out, “Damn, there’s no way to row past.”

Xiaoxiang Zi said in a creepy way, “You’ve got the strength of a bull, just throw the boat over.”

Ma Guangzuo angrily said, “I don’t have that kind of strength unless you zombies perform some kind of witchcraft.”

Before the two started arguing, Jinlun Fawang was thinking about the situation, “How did the small boat pass this stone shield?” When he heard the words of the two, he said, “No one can pick up the boat on their own but the six of us together can. Brother Yang, brother Yin and I will be on one side, brother Ni, brother Xiao Xiang and brother Ma will be on the other side, the six of us working together, how about it?”

Everyone agreed and followed his instructions; the six of them stood on two sides and each one found a steady place to stand on the rocks. Luckily the brook was extremely narrow; the boat’s width was at arm’s length.

Fawang called out, “Lift!” Everyone lifted. Yang Guo’s and Yin Kexi’s strength was the weakest out of the six but the other four had the strength of many, especially Ma Guangzuo who had divine strength. The boat left the water and passed over the rocks.

Everyone leapt back into the boat; they wiped their palms and laughed. The six of them originally were wary of each other but after working together, naturally they became a bit friendlier.

Xiaoxiang Zi said, “Although the martial arts among us aren’t anything spectacular, we could be classed as first rate fighters of Wulin. The six of us lifting a boat isn’t really a difficult task but...”

Nimoxing followed on, “The four green people’s martial arts are all over the place, could they lift the boat over the rocks?”

Out of the six, five of them were already secretly surprised. Ma Guangzuo was still thinking about what the words ‘their martial arts are all over the place’ meant.

Nimoxing said, “Their boat is smaller... their numbers are smaller also... The four of them being able to do this... their strength must be... must be incredible.”

Yin Kexi said, “There’s no need to talk about the three men, that girl was a fragile seventeen or eighteen year old teenager, there is no way she could have such skill, there must be something about those rocks. It’s just that we can’t see through just yet.”

Fawang gave a wry laugh and said, “People cannot be judged on appearances alone. Take a look at our brother Yang, he is of a young age but possesses great martial arts, if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, who would have believed it?”

Yang Guo said modestly, “The skills I’ve learned aren’t much, what’s good about my martial arts? But the four people in green were able to catch Zhou Botong; they must have some aspect that they excel at.” His words were modest but he was now talking to these first rate fighters as brother this and brother that.

Everyone had seen with their own eyes Yang Guo catching a plate thrown by Zhou Botong with a single finger; they did not look lightly on him. They all felt his words were reasonable and all started to make their own guesses about this matter.

Out of the six, Yang Guo was the youngest, Jinlun Fawang, Ma Guangzuo and Nimoxing spent most of their lives in the west; Xiaoxiang Zi spent his time along in the mountains and didn’t make acquaintances with anyone. Yin Kexi was the only one who was familiar with the sects, personalities and affairs of the central plains yet he had no clue about who these four people in green were. As they talked, they eventually rowed to the end of the brook. The six of them went ashore and followed the path deep into the valley.

There was only one mountain path so there was no way to go wrong; however the path got steeper and steeper as it went on and became more and more treacherous. The sky darkened and there wasn’t a trace of the people in green.

Just as they were getting anxious, there was firelight from faraway; everyone was pleased and thought, “In a wild valley like this, firelight must mean people; apart from

those people in green; no one would live in a place with such dangerous terrain as this.”

They then increased their speed. They all knew that they were in a dangerous place and each one heightened their defenses. Each one of them had roamed the world of Jianghu by themselves before and had experienced many dangers; now six great fighters were entering the mountain, who on earth could stop them? Though they were wary, they had no fear.

After a while, they reached a wide level open space at the peak of the mountain. They saw an extremely large flaming bonfire. They walked closer a few hundred feet and by the firelight, they saw a large stone building.

Nimoxing called out loudly, “Hey, hey, some guests have arrived! Come out quickly.”

The door of the stone house slowly opened and out came three men and a girl. It was the people in green who had captured Zhou Botong earlier on. The four of them bowed and the leading person asked, “What are our guests’ names?”

The one thing that Yin Kexi excels most at is speaking; he laughed and then told them who the other five were. He then said, “My name is Yin Kexi, I am a Hu merchant. Apart from eating, the only thing I know are treasures, I am not like the others who are all highly skilled with martial arts.”

The person in green said, “Our residence is in an extremely secluded place, we’ve never had visitors before, it is our luck that some guests have arrived. But what brought our guests here?”

Yin Kexi laughed, “We saw the four of you catch the Old Urchin Zhou Botong, we were curious so we came along to take a look. Your residence is an extremely elegant and beautiful place, it has opened our eyes; this really wasn’t a trip in vain.”

The first person in green said, “That old man who messed up our place is named Zhou? He certainly lives up to the name Old Urchin.”

The second person in green said, “Are you with him?”

Fawang replied, “We’ve just met him today, one cannot say that we are friends of his.”

The first person in green said, “That Old Urchin charged into our valley and ran riot.”

Fawang asked, “What did he do? Did he really rip up your books and set the place on fire?”

The person in green replied, “Only that? I was ordered by my Master to guard the pill furnace; I don’t know how the Old Urchin broke into the pill room. He started to talk rubbish with me, saying he was going to tell a story and then telling me to follow him in doing somersaults; he was mad and crazy. The furnace was burning at a critical stage; I couldn’t leave and kick him out so I pretended that I didn’t hear him. He suddenly kicked out and knocked the furnace and the herbs in it over. I don’t know how long it will take to collect all these herbs and medicines again.” He looked angry as he said this.

Yang Guo laughed, “He must have blamed you for ignoring him and that it was your fault, right?”

The girl in green said, “Correct. I was in the fungi room when I heard the clamor in the pill room. I knew something was wrong and was about to leave the room to take a look when the old man dashed in. As soon as he stretched out his hand, he snapped the four hundred year old spirit fungus in two.”

Yang Guo saw that the young girl was about seventeen or eighteen years of age, her skin was extremely white, very soft and delicate, her eyes bright and clear and there was a very small mole by her mouth. She said, “That Old Urchin is an extremely bothersome troublemaker; that spirit fungus had been grown for over four hundred years, it is an extremely valuable object.”

The girl sighed, “My father was going to share it on his wedding day with my step mother but who could have known that it would be ruined by the Old Urchin. My father will of course fly into a rage. After the Old Urchin broke the spirit fungus, he placed it in his pockets and said something about not giving it back to me and laughed. I haven’t done anything to offend him. Why on earth did he come here and cause trouble for me?” As she said this, her eyes became red, feeling that she has been wronged.

Yang Guo thought, “The Old Urchin had no reason to bully this girl, this is wrong.”

Yin Kexi said, “Please can I have your father’s name. We inadvertently came here without permission and don’t even know the owner’s name; our manners are lacking.”

The young girl delayed and didn’t reply.

One of the men in green said, “Without our Master’s permission, we can not reveal it, please forgive us.”

Yang Guo thought, “These people are very secretive; they live here in this secluded place and aren’t willing to reveal their identity to others.” He then asked, “What happened after the Old Urchin stole the spirit fungus?”

The third person in green said, “The one named Zhou wasn’t finished; after wrecking the pill and fungi room, he burst into the library, took a book and started to read. I was assigned to the library and so of course I had to stop him. But he said, ‘these are just lies that they tell to children, what’s so great about this?’ and ripped three books in one go. At that time, senior and second apprentice brother came along with apprentice sister. The four of us together were still unable to stop him.”

Fawang gave a wry laugh and said, “That Old Urchin has an eccentric character but his martial arts are really spectacular; of course it would not be easy to stop him.”

The second man in green said, “After causing trouble in the pill room, fungi room and library, he went for the sword room. He burst into the room and broke out in a temper, saying that there were... there were too many weapons. They’re all over the place and almost cut him. He then set the room alight and burnt all the paintings on the wall. While we urgently tried to put out the fire, he escaped. We all thought that this was a serious matter so we chased after him, caught him and bought him back so our Master can deal with him.”

Yang Guo said, “I don’t know what punishment the Master of this valley will have for him but I hope that he won’t kill him.”

The third man in green said, “My Master’s wedding is not far away, he won’t kill that easily. But if that Old Urchin says something to offend my Master, then it would be his fault if trouble comes to him.”

Yin Kexi laughed, “Why would the Old Urchin deliberately stir up trouble for your Master? He may be mischievous but he doesn’t seem to have a bad temper.”

The girl in green said, “He said that my father is old and he’s still marrying...” The senior apprentice brother suddenly cut her off and said, “That Old Urchin is mad, how believable are his words? Everyone has come from afar and must be hungry; I will serve some food to our guests.”

Ma Guangzuo said loudly, "Great, great!" His face lit up.

The four people in green entered the kitchen and brought out some rice and vegetables and then set up a table. There were four basins, one had plain green vegetables, another had white tofu, one of the others was filled with yellow bean sprouts and the last one was filled with black mushrooms. There wasn't any meat.

Just three months after he was born, Ma Guangzuo would not eat anything without meat. He saw four trays of vegetables in front of him that didn't even have a drop of oil on them, he was extremely disappointed.

The first person in green said, "We do not eat meat here in the valley, forgive us. Please eat." He then bought out a jug and poured out a clear and clean liquid in the bowls in front of them.

Ma Guangzuo thought, "Since there's no meat, I better drink a few bowls of wine." He picked up the bowl and drank, he noticed that it had no taste and it was actually water, he roared, "This Master is damn stingy; there isn't even a drop of wine for us."

The first person in green said, "Our valley forbids alcohol; this is a rule passed down by our ancestors; please forgive us."

The girl in green said, "We have seen the words 'beautiful wine' in books, but we've never experienced what this beautiful wine is. The books say that wine harms the mind, it appears that it isn't anything good."

Fawang, Yin Kexi and the others saw that these four people weren't old but their actions and words were reserved and trite. Ever since they've spoken with these people, they haven't showed a single smile; though their faces weren't hateful, it wasn't interesting to talk to them. In other words, they didn't speak more than half a word to each other; they stopped talking and lowered their heads as they ate. The four people retreated and didn't come forward again.

After they ate, Ma Guangzuo said that they should leave in the night. But the other five saw that there was something about this place, they were curious and wanted to understand it more clearly.

Yin Kexi said, "Brother Ma, since we're here, we need to meet the Master of this valley tomorrow; how could we just leave?"

Ma Guangzuo roared, “There’s no meat or wine, isn’t he trying to torture us? I can’t live half a day like this.”

Xiaoxiang Zi said, “The majority of us are staying; why are you trying to start something?”

Ma Guangzuo has been secretly afraid of his zombie appearance; when he heard him say this, he didn’t dare to speak another word.

That night the six of them slept in the stone building on some straw mats on the floor. They felt that this valley was passionless; even stupidly stricter and more prudish than a Buddhist temple. Though the monks of Buddhist temples are vegetarians, they wouldn’t treat people so coldly; these people didn’t even show half a smile. Yang Guo was used to living in the Ancient Tomb and used to living with the icy cold Xiao Longnu. He was the only one who didn’t think anything of this.

Nimoxing said enraged, “The Old Urchin wrecked and set the building alight, that is something!” When he said this, Ma Guangzuo felt the same way and called out loudly in response.

Nimoxing said, “Brother Jinlun, you’re our brains, what kind of person do you think the Master of this valley is? Is he a bad guy or a good guy? Are we going to be polite to him or are we going to beat the... beat the crap out of him.”

Fawang said, “I’m like all you people here when it comes to trying to fathom what type of person this Valley Master is, it is difficult for us to guess. Tomorrow, we’ll just act accordingly.”

Yin Kexi said quietly, “The martial arts of the four green disciples of this valley aren’t weak, so naturally there will be even better martial artists in this valley. Everyone needs to be careful, just one little slip up and the six of us might die here, that wouldn’t be so good.”

Ma Guangzuo was still complaining about the food and didn’t listen to what Yin Kexi was saying.

Yang Guo said, “If you’re not careful tomorrow, you’ll be caught and trapped here for the rest of your life; you’ll be fed water and rice, vegetables and tofu everyday. When that happens, I’m afraid that even the tapeworm in your stomach would want to die.”

Ma Guangzuo was frightened and quickly said, “Good brother, I’ll listen...I’ll listen.”

That night they didn’t sleep too peacefully as they thought about the danger they were in; only Ma Guangzuo slept well, snoring thunderously and calling out in his dreams, “Come, come! Cheers! This slab of beef is massive!”



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