

## Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

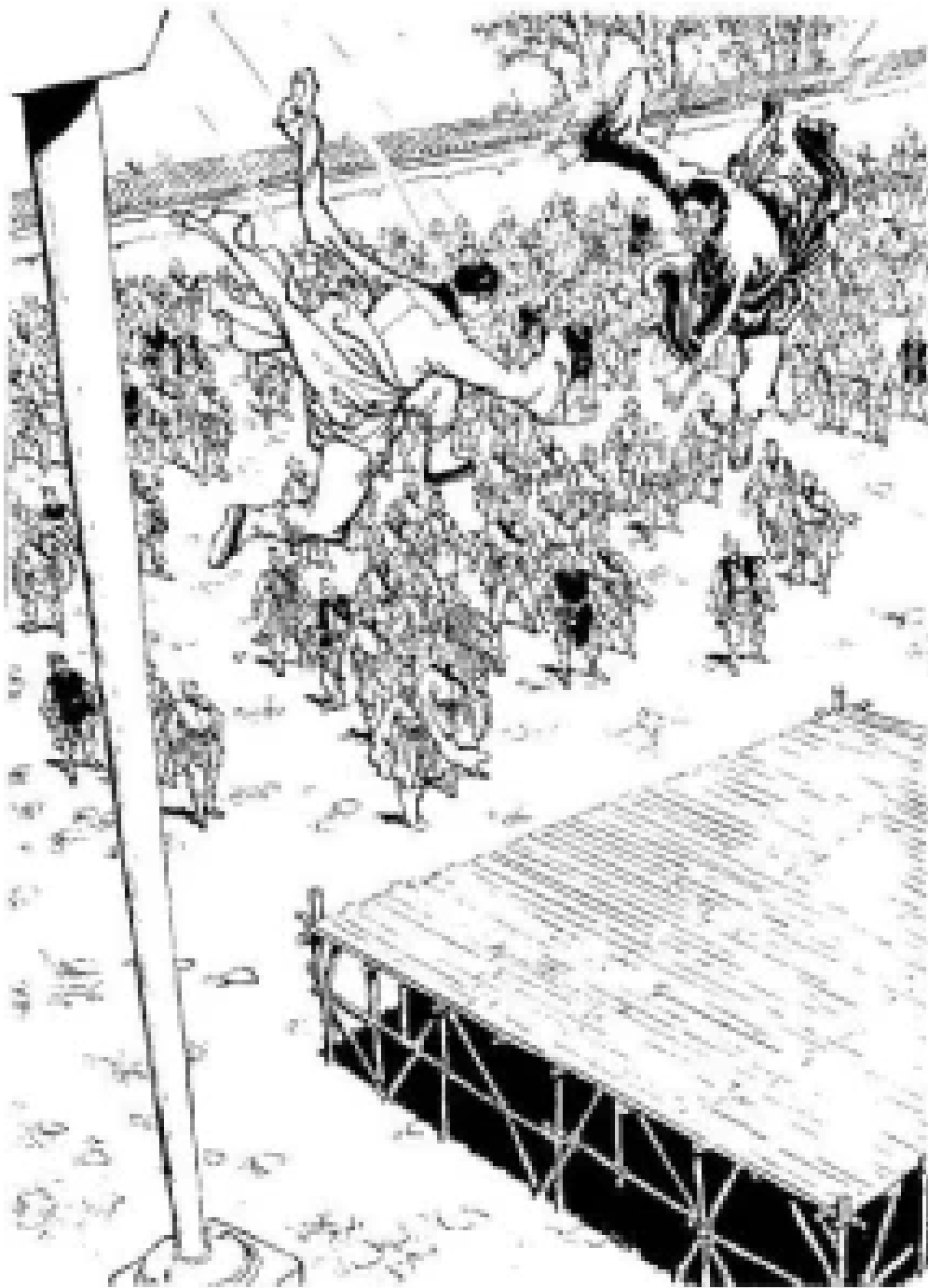
---

## SDXL Chapter 37



### **Chapter 37 – Gratitude and Grudges Over Three Generations**

*Translated by Hugh (aka IcyFox) with excerpts by Athena*



*Under the moonlight, the two people descended gracefully, with their clothes floating in the wind. One was wearing a refined green robe while the other was a one-armed man wearing a blue shirt. It was indeed Yang Guo and Huang Yao Shi. Huang Yao Shi took Yang Guo's hand and the two people landed on the stage.*

The monk's shoulder hit the ground then he stood up, appearing to be very agile. His face was red with fury and he shouted some words that seemed unintelligible. Guo Jing and Huang Rong knew he was the Golden Wheel Monk's (Jinlun Fawang) second disciple Da'erba and did not know how Master Tan Hua and Old Master Zhao captured him.

Guo Xiang thought there would be some amusing toy in the sack but saw a rough-looking monk instead, so she was somewhat disappointed and said, “I don’t like this monk that Big Brother has given me. Where is he? Why is he still not here?”

One of those who came to deliver the third present had spent some time in Tibet and understood Tibetan, so he whispered a few words to Da’erba. His face changed and he stared at He Shiwo. The man, Qingling Zi (Green Spirit Sage), said a few more words in Tibetan to him, then handed Da’erba his golden rod which had been taken away when he was captured by the eight experts.

Da’erba raised his rod with a shout and jumped onto the stage.

The man laughed and told Guo Xiang, “Miss Guo, this monk can do magic tricks, the Eagle Hero told me to conjure a few tricks for you.” Guo Xiang was happy and clapped her hands, saying, “Oh OK, I was starting to wonder why Big Brother spent such a great effort to bring the monk here.”

Da’erba shouted a few grunts at He Shiwo. He Shiwo said, “What the hell are you yelling about? I don’t understand the words that are coming out of your mouth!” Da’erba stepped forward fiercely and smashed the rod towards his head. He Shiwo quickly avoided the blow. Da’erba spun his rod and attacked swiftly. He Shiwo was fighting single-handedly and was pushed back by Da’erba’s heavy assault.

The Beggar Clan members saw this monk was so fierce and his face full of hatred so they quickly rushed forward. Elder Liang said, “Big Monk, don’t cause any trouble here. He’s the future Beggar Clan leader.” But Da’erba ignored him and kept on spinning his rod, causing golden flashes and gusts of wind together with heavy crashing sounds.

Several Beggar Clan members could not control themselves and jumped towards the stage, attempting to stop the fight. However the eight experts, Shi brothers and Xishan Ghosts surrounded the stage and prevented anyone from accessing the stage. Although the Beggar Clan had many people, they were held back and could not get onto the stage. Amidst the confusion Qingling Zi turned around, went up on the stage and took away He Shiwo’s metal staff. He Shiwo was shocked and tried to snatch it back but was blocked by Da’erba’s rod and could not advance a single step.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong could not guess why Yang Guo sent these people here to create trouble, but since the first two presents he gave Guo Xiang were beneficial to Xiangyang, they guessed this third present would not mean any harm. The Guo couple stood aside and watched silently.

Although Yelu Qi was beaten by He Shiwo, he was eager to continue his mother-in-law's great service to the Beggar Clan, so when he saw He Shiwo panicking under Da'erba's attacks, he shouted, "Brother He, don't panic, I'm going to help you!" He jumped towards the stage. A person shouted fiercely, "Nobody's allowed on the stage!" Then the person blocked his way. Yelu Qi stretched his hand out to grab him but that person caught his hand instead with a strange move and such great internal strength that he could not move. Yelu Qi was shocked and saw that it was the third of the Shi brothers Shi Shugang. Yelu Qi exchanged a few moves but still could not force him to retreat, so he thought, "This person is a small fry and under the Eagle Hero's command, yet he is so remarkable. Because the Eagle Hero is able to command all these experts, he must be a really great man." Qingling Zi raised the iron staff and shouted, "Ladies and gentlemen, please take a look at this." He chopped down on the rod's middle with his hand and the rod broke – it was actually hollow. He pulled one end off and took out a bright green bamboo rod.

The Beggar Clan members were momentarily stunned and speechless, then all cried out together, "The leader's "Dog Beating Stick"!" The Shi Brothers and other experts stepped aside. Everyone was wondering, "Why was the "Dog Beating Stick" concealed in the iron staff? How did He Shiwo get his hands on it? Why did he not reveal it?"

The people were all waiting for Qingling Zi to explain everything but he wordlessly stepped down from the stage and handed the "Dog Beating Stick" respectfully with both hands to Guo Xiang. Guo Xiang saw the rod and thought about Lu Youjiao and became sad; she received the rod then handed it to Huang Rong. Da'erba's rod moves became more intense and He Shiwo had to evade the dangerous stances with his agility. When the Beggar Clan members saw the "Dog Beating Stick", they knew the experts must have a good reason for bringing Da'erba here to deal with He Shiwo, so none of them pushed their way up on stage.

In less than ten moves, He Shiwo looked like he would die under the golden rod, then Huang Rong suddenly thought, "He Shiwo used a weapon to hurt Qi'er, so the weapon must be concealed in his sleeve. Yet at this critical juncture, why doesn't he use his weapon?" Da'erba swept his rod on the stage and He Shiwo leapt up and evaded it. Da'erba flipped his rod and brought it upwards. He Shiwo was in midair and could not evade this attack. Suddenly a clash of weapons was heard and He Shiwo leaped aside with a short weapon in his hand. Da'erba was seething with anger and cursed him and increased the intensity of his rod attacks. However, with a weapon in He Shiwo's hand, his martial skills increased and his strokes became masterful. Although his weapon was short, he was able to fend off Da'erba. Zhu Ziliu saw this and suddenly remem-

bered something, saying, “Madam Guo, I know who he is. But I still don’t understand something.”

Huang Rong laughed, “That it was pasted on with glue, honey and flour.” Yelu Qi, Guo Fu and Guo Xiang were standing next to Huang Rong and heard their conversation but did not understand what on Earth they were talking about.

Guo Fu asked, “Uncle Zhu, who did you say was who?”

Zhu Ziliu said, “I’m talking about the He Shiwo who injured your husband.”

Guo Fu said, “What? He’s not He Shiwo? Then who is he?”

Zhu Ziliu said, “Look carefully, what weapon is he using?”

Guo Fu stared for a while then said, “This short weapon is less than a foot, and it’s not sharp like those pens used to seal accupoints.”

Huang Rong said, “Think carefully. He’d rather not use his weapon and risk discovery, thus putting his life on the line fighting the monk. Why doesn’t he use his weapon? Why did he extinguish the torches before using his weapon?”

Guo Fu said, “This person is sly and crafty, what’s wrong with that?”

Guo Xiang said, “He knows someone in the crowd will recognize his weapon techniques, so he doesn’t want to reveal it.”

Zhu Ziliu praised, “Ah ha, Miss Guo is indeed clever.”

Guo Fu heard him praise her sister and was not happy so she said, “What about not revealing the truth? Isn’t he standing on the stage? Everyone can see that.”

Guo Xiang thought about what her mother just said and replied, “Ah, his ugly face is actually a disguise made of flour. This face is really repulsive, after glancing once I don’t want to see it anymore.”

Huang Rong said, “The more repulsive he disguises himself, the more he can conceal his identity because no one wants to stare at an ugly face for long. If there are any changes to his disguise no one would notice them. Ah, it’s really not easy keeping up such a disguise for so many years.”

Zhu Ziliu said, “His face may be false, but his decades worth of martial arts can’t be faked.”

Guo Fu said, “If this He Shiwo is fake, then who’s he? Sister, since you’re so clever, tell us who he is.”

Guo Xiang said, “I’m not that clever, so I don’t know.”

Zhu Ziliu smiled, “Elder Miss Guo has seen him before, and at that time the younger Miss Guo wasn’t even born yet. Seventeen years ago, at the Da Sheng ‘Heroes’ Meet, someone exchanged a few hundred moves with me, who was that?”

Guo Fu said, “Hou Du? No, it can’t be him. He uses a fan. Although this weapon looks like it, this weapon only has the skeleton but not the surface.”

Zhu Ziliu said, “I fought such an intense battle with him before, it was the only time in my life I experienced such great danger, how could I possibly forget his stances? If he isn’t Hou Du then I must be blind.”

Guo Fu looked at He Shiwo again and saw that he was agile and his strokes lethal. It really appeared to be like the Hou Du at the ‘Heroes’ Meet years ago, but she still had many doubts. She asked, “If he’s really Hou Du, then this monk is his martial brother, can it be he doesn’t recognize him so that’s why they’re fighting?”

Huang Rong said, “It’s precisely because he recognizes him that they’re fighting. That year at Chongyang Palace, Yang Guo used his sword to pin down Da’erba and Hou Du. Hou Du didn’t want to risk his life so he deserted Da’erba and his master. He ran away. This incident was witnessed by the whole the Quanzhen Sect, you must have heard of that too.”

Guo Fu said, “Hmmm, no wonder Da’erba hates him so much.”

When Guo Xiang heard “Yang Guo used his sword to pin down Da’erba and Hou Du” she thought of how great he was and was awe-struck.

Guo Fu asked, “Why did he become a beggar? How did the “Dog Beating Stick” end up with him?”

Huang Rong said, “Isn’t that easy? Hou Du betrayed his master, so he’s afraid his master and martial brother will find him, hence he disguised his face and joined the Beggar

Clan. Without revealing who he is, he slowly rose to be a 5th grade member over the past 10-over years. Since no one in the Beggar Clan was suspicious of him, Fawang wasn't able to find him. But this scoundrel wouldn't be content with hiding here all his life so he was waiting for an opportunity to do something big. When Leader Lu was patrolling outside the city, he waited there and ambushed him, revealing his identity and a message for the beggars to bring back, which was to tell everyone Leader Lu was killed by Hou Du. After he snatched the "Dog Beating Stick", he hid it inside his hollow metal staff. When the Beggar Clan elected a leader, he could raise the matter of finding the "Dog Beating Stick". Since the Stick is a very significant icon of the Beggar Clan, who can oppose him? Ah, this scoundrel Hou Du is a really brilliant schemer to think of this plan."

Zhu Ziliu laughed, "But with you around Madam Guo, he can't hide anything from us."

Huang Rong didn't laugh and said, "Hou Du hid himself in the Beggar Clan without revealing his identity and was able to fool me. But by trying to vie for the Beggar Clan Leader's position, he's really looking down on me."

Zhu Ziliu said, "Yang Guo is really wonderful; he actually was able to discover Hou Du's scheme, recover the "Dog Beating Stick", reveal his identity and give the younger Miss Guo this present. He's very capable."

Guo Fu said, "Humph, he happened to find out, there's nothing great about that."

Guo Xiang thought, "That day Big Brother was outside the Yang Tai Fu Temple and saw me mourning Uncle Lu. He knew I was great pals with Uncle Lu so he put in a lot of effort to help me avenge him; this present is no small thing, his efforts..." Then she suddenly thought of something and said, "Although Hou Du became an ugly beggar in the Beggar Clan, he still uses his true identity to cause trouble outside. Third Uncle Shi of the Shi brothers was injured by him before and must have wanted to settle this matter with him and so tracked him down."

Huang Rong said, "Correct. Hou Du leaves a trail behind in Jianghu time and again, but no one would expect the Beggar Clan's He Shiwo and Hou Du to be the same person. 'He Shiwo', look at his fake name – he regards himself as his own master. When someone thinks too highly of himself, he will inevitably fail one day."

Guo Fu said, "Mother, then why does this He Shiwo say he wants to kill Hou Du? Isn't that silly?"

Huang Rong said, “This is just a sham to remove any doubts.”

Guo Fu said, “Since Yang... Brother Yang already knew He Shiwo is Hou Du, he should have said it long ago and not allowed him to injure Brother Qi.”

Huang Rong laughed, “Yang Guo is not God; how would he know that Qi’er would get injured?”

Guo Xiang said, “But Sister is a Goddess, so she let Brother-in-law don the Soft Armour.” Guo Fu glared at her, but she felt kind of proud inside.

As they were talking, the fight between Da’erba and Hou Du got even fiercer. The two had the same master so they were familiar with each other’s martial arts – Da’erba was superior in strength but Hou Du was superior in agility. After another hundred moves, there was still no clear victor. Suddenly Da’erba shouted and threw his 50-jin rod towards Hou Du and it flew swiftly and fiercely. Hou Du was shocked as he has never seen Da’erba use such a move before. He thought, “He has not won after so long, has he gone crazy?” and quickly jumped aside. Da’erba rushed up and hit the rod with his palms and it changed directions, following closely behind Hou Du. Hou Du was greatly surprised, then he realized that Da’erba had followed their master for over 10 years and must have learned some advanced martial arts. This rod move was derived from Fawang’s Five-Wheel techniques and when Hou Du saw the ferocity of the rod coming towards him and knew he could not take the blow. He slid away, causing the rod to miss his head by two inches.

Da’erba was spinning the rod even more rapidly, causing the torches to flicker under the great gusts of wind. Hou Du was jumping around on the darkly-lit stage and was in danger many times. The spectators all stared at this violent battle and could not take their eyes off it. Da’erba threw the rod eighteen times then he shouted, using both hands to shoot his rod like an arrow. Hou Du could not evade this and the rod hit him squarely in the chest with a bang. He slowly collapsed onto the stage and remained motionless.

Da’erba took his rod and called out thrice, and then he sat down in front of Hou Du and mumbled the “Reincarnation Chant”. Then he jumped off the stage and presented his weapon to Qingling Zi. Qingling Zi did not accept the weapon but said, “Congratulations. You have rid your sect of a scum. The Eagle Hero will spare you and wants you to return to Tibet, and never set foot in the Central Plains again.” Da’erba said, “Thanks to the Eagle Hero. I shall follow his instructions.” He bowed and went off.



Guo Fu saw Hou Du lying motionlessly on the stage with his hideous face and could not believe it was fake, so she drew her sword and jumped onto the stage, saying, “Let’s see what this traitor really looks like.” She then used her sword’s tip to poke his nose.

Suddenly Hou Du shouted and leapt up, forcefully striking his palms downwards. Actually after being hit by the golden rod, he was fatally injured but he did not die immediately. He purposely remained motionless, waiting for Da’erba to come forward and examine him so that he could execute a fatal move and cause Da’erba to die with him. However Da’erba just chanted some prayers and left immediately. Then Guo Fu came forward instead. Hou Du pretended to come back to life and stunned her to reduce her resistance. Her Soft Armour was with Yelu Qi so it seemed death was imminent. Guo Jing, Huang Rong and Yelu Qi jumped onto the stage but it seemed too late...

Then two ‘peng’ sounds were heard and two projectiles flew through the air side by side and pierced Hou Du’s chest. The projectiles were small and seemed like pebbles but the force behind them was mighty. Hou Du leaned back and collapsed backwards, throwing up a pool of blood. He was dead. The people were shocked and looked in the direction where the projectiles had come from but only saw the pale moon and the starry night. The night was still and the projectiles seemed to have been launched from on top one of the two flag poles erected in front of the stage.

When Huang Rong heard the projectiles hurtling through the air, she knew that apart from her father’s ‘Divine Flicking Finger’ [Dan Zi Shen Tong], no one else had this skill. The two flag poles were more than ten yards apart, how could the projectiles come from the two flag poles at the same time? Surprised, she did not think clearly, so she said, “Father, is that you?”

An old voice from atop one of the flag poles laughed, “My friend Yang Guo, let’s go down!” The voice atop the other flag pole replied, “Yes!” and the two people jumped down together.

Huang Yaoshi taught Yang Guo the Divine Flicking Finger to counter Li Mochou years ago. Under the moonlight, the two people descended gracefully, with their clothes floating in the wind. One was wearing a refined green robe while the other was a one-armed man wearing a blue shirt. It was indeed Yang Guo and Huang Yaoshi. Huang Yaoshi took Yang Guo’s hand and the two people landed on the stage. The people thought they were witnessing the Celestial Generals descending from the heavens.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong quickly jumped up on the stage and bowed to Huang Yaoshi. Then Yang Guo bowed to Guo Jing and Huang Rong, saying, “Nephew Yang Guo kow-

tows to Uncle and Aunt Guo.”

Guo Jing quickly raised him and laughed, “Guo’er, your three presents, ah, are really... really...” He was very grateful and could not find any words to express his gratitude.

Guo Fu was afraid her father wanted her to thank Yang Guo for saving her life so she quickly said to Huang Yaoshi, “Grandfather, fortunately you used your “Divine Flicking Finger” and saved me from that scoundrel’s palms.”

Yang Guo jumped off the stage and walked over to Guo Xiang, laughing, “Sister, I’m late.”

Guo Xiang felt her heart beating rapidly and her face turned red so she softly said, “You spent so much effort to get me the three presents, it was really... really a lot of trouble.”

Yang Guo smiled, “It was nothing. Since it’s your birthday we merely added to the fun.” He then waved his hand.

The Big Head Ghost said, “Bring everything up.” Then several people also repeated, “Bring everything up.” The message was then relayed outside.

After a while a group of people came in with lanterns, baskets and planks. They then put the planks together and started nailing, forming a wooden stage. More and more people came in but they moved in an orderly way and worked silently.

When the people saw Yang Guo’s presents they all respected and admired him deeply. They also thought he brought those people here for some major purpose. However, before long the stage was completed and some people started drumming and donning opera costumes and performing “The Eight Immortals Celebrate a Birthday”. Following that several people entered from the west and started singing “Man Chuang Hu”, a song from the story of Guo Ziyi celebrating his birthday with his seven sons and eight sons-in-law. At the same time some people lit firecrackers and some did conjuring tricks, turning the whole event into a grand celebration. The performers were famous troupes from Henan and Huguang. Everyone was in a festive mood and were dancing and cheering all over the field. By this time the Shi brothers had quietly left with their animals and the Xishan Ghosts, Qingling Zi and the group of experts followed suit.

Guo Xiang saw that Yang Guo had arranged the matter down to the last detail and she was moved to tears, remaining speechless for a while.

Guo Fu remembered their conversation at the Yang Tai Fu Temple, and now a young hero actually came to celebrate her birthday; she was secretly seething with anger. She just took Huang Yaoshi's arm and bombarded him with questions, pretending she did not see anything.

Guo Jing felt the way Yang Guo celebrated his daughter's birthday was making a mountain out of a mole-hill but he was broadminded. Moreover, Yang Guo helped Xiangyang and the Beggar Clan accomplish three great feats in one day so Guo Jing just let him do whatever he wanted, only shaking his head with a smile.

Huang Rong asked her father, "Father, did you arrange with Guo'er to hide on top of the flag poles?"

Huang Yaoshi laughed, "No, no! One day I was at a lake admiring the moon when I heard some people whispering that some "Eagle Hero" would be visiting Xiangyang and that his martial arts were excellent and his character strange. I was worried he wanted to harm my good daughter and son-in-law so I came here secretly. So this Eagle Hero is Yang Guo. If I'd known earlier I needn't have worried so much."

Huang Rong knew her father liked to roam Jianghu but was always thinking of her, so she laughed, "Father, don't go away again, let us be reunited."

Huang Yaoshi did not answer and waved to Guo Xiang, laughing, "Little girl, come over here and let Grandfather take a look at you." Guo Xiang had never met him before so she quickly stepped forward to bow to him. Huang Yaoshi took her hand and closely examined her face, saying sadly, "What a great resemblance." Huang Rong knew he was thinking of his late wife, so he was saying that Guo Xiang looked like her grandmother. She was afraid to stir his emotions so she did not say anything.

Guo Fu laughed, "Of course! You're the Old Eastern Heretic and she's the Little Eastern Heretic..."

Guo Jing scolded, "Fu'er, you have no respect for your grandfather!" Huang Yaoshi was however delighted and said, "Xiang'er, are you the 'Little Eastern Heretic'?" Guo Xiang blushed and said, "At first it was only Sister who called me that, later on everyone called me that."

At this time the four Elders of the Beggar Clan crowded around Yang Guo and thanked him profusely, thinking, "He's rendered such a great service to Xiangyang, recovered the "Dog Beating Stick", exposed Hou Du's devious plan, avenged Leader Lu. If he's will-

ing to be the next Leader that would be splendid.” Elder Liang said, “Hero Yang, our late leader passed away tragically...”

Yang Guo had already guessed what they were up to and quickly interrupted, “Master Yelu is proficient in both martial arts and literature, he’s heroic and compassionate and he is a great friend of mine. If he becomes the new Leader, he will be able to continue the great legacy of Leaders Hong, Huang and Lu.”

Huang Yaoshi briefly asked about Guo Xiang’s martial arts and turned his head to get Yang Guo over to talk to him. When he turned around, he saw Yang Guo already walking out of the place so he said, “My friend Yang Guo, I’m off too!” He waved his sleeves and in the blink of an eye he had caught up with Yang Guo. The two of them swiftly disappeared into the darkness.

Huang Rong had something urgent to tell her Father but because there were too many people around it was not convenient to speak. Who would have thought he would suddenly leave, she was shocked and quickly gave chase.

However Huang Yaoshi and Yang Guo moved extremely fast and Huang Rong could not catch up. Huang Rong said, “Father, Guo’er, how about leaving after a few days?” Huang Yaoshi’s distant voice said, “We both have wild characters and are uncomfortable with restrictions, just let us be.” The last few words seemed to be almost a hundred meters away. Huang Rong, secretly groaning since she could not catch up, had to go back. Back at the field, drumming noises filled the night.

The four Elders of the Beggar Clan held a discussion. Firstly, before Hou Du came and messed things up, Yelu Qi had already been elected the Leader. Secondly, the Beggar Clan owed great debt of gratitude to Yang Guo, so since even he nominated Yelu Qi, then the affair was settled. The four Elders informed Huang Rong and ascended the stage and proclaimed Yelu Qi the new Beggar Clan Leader.

The Beggar Clan members all carried out their tradition and spat on Yelu Qi. They then clapped and cheered.

Guo Xiang noticed that this time Yang Guo only said a few words to her and left shortly after meeting her. She felt rather disappointed inside, and then she saw her sister standing next to Yelu Qi and receiving congratulations from the Beggar Clan members. She felt even worse so she turned around and headed home. She had not gone a few steps when Huang Rong caught up with her and held her hand, gently saying, “Xiang’er, what is it? Are you unhappy?” Guo Xiang said, “No, I’m extremely delighted.”

After saying this she lowered her head and tears welled up in her eyes, and then fell to the ground. Huang Rong could not understand her daughter's heart so she mentioned some interesting stories to make her happy.

The two people slowly went home. Huang Rong accompanied her back to her room and asked, "Xiang'er, are you tired?"

Guo Xiang said, "I'm alright. Mother, you've been up all night, you should rest."

Huang Rong pulled her close and sat shoulder-to-shoulder on the bed and fondled her hair, saying, "Xiang'er, I've never mentioned the matter of your brother Yang Guo to you before. This is a long story, so if you're not tired, I'll tell it to you." That caught Guo Xiang's attention and she said, "Mother, tell me."

Huang Rong said, "I should start from his grandfather." Then she told her how Guo Xiaotian and Yang Tiexin became sworn brothers, how they swore their children even before birth, how Yang Kang acknowledged the enemy as his father and lost his life, why Yang Guo lived on Peach Blossom Island when young, why Guo Fu chopped off his arm and how he and Xiao Longnu separated at the Passionless Valley. She told the entire story to her.

Huang Rong then sighed and said, "At first I was suspicious of him and was afraid nothing good would come out of you knowing him. Ah, in terms of trusting people I'm way behind your father. Your brother Yang Guo did three great things tonight so instead of being evil, he's far from it. We really owe him a debt of gratitude."

Guo Xiang curiously asked, "Mother, why would he be evil?"

Huang Rong said, "At first I thought wrongly, I thought he bore a deep hatred for our Guo family and wanted to take revenge on you."

Guo Xiang shook her head, "How could that be? If he wanted to kill me it would be all too easy. At Feng Lingdu, all he needed was his little finger to kill me."

Huang Rong said, "You're still young. You don't know about all these things yet. If he wanted you to suffer and make us worried and depressed, it would be ten times more terrible than killing a person. Ah, there's no need to say more, now I know he won't. But I'm still worried over something."

Guo Xiang said, “Mother, what’s there to worry about? I think brother Yang won’t take past matters to heart. He will be reunited with Sister-in-law soon and he’d be so happy he’d forget everything.”

Huang Rong said, “That’s exactly what I’m worried about; he may not get to see Xiao Longnu.”

Guo Xiang was shocked and said, “What? How could that be? Brother Yang personally told me Sister-in-law was badly injured and was taken away by the Divine Nun of the South Sea [Nan Hai Shen Ni] for treatment and arranged to meet again 16 years later. The couple has deep feelings for each other, why wouldn’t they meet after waiting for so long?”

Huang Rong frowned and only said, “Hmmmmmm.” Guo Xiang said, “Brother Yang told me she carved several words on the ‘Broken Heart Cliff’ which said, ‘sixteen years later, meet at this place, the love between (us) husband and wife is profoundly deep, never fail this promise’ Could the words be false?”

Huang Rong said, “The words are genuine, but I’m afraid Xiao Longnu loved Yang Guo too much so he won’t be able to see her again.”

Guo Xiang did not know what in Heaven’s name Huang Rong was talking about and stared at her expectantly. Huang Rong said, “sixteen years ago, your Brother Yang and his wife were seriously injured; Brother Yang’s injuries could be treated while Xiao Longnu’s poison attacked her major accupoints. He saw that she wouldn’t likely survive and didn’t want to accept treatment.” When she said this, her voice became soft and gentle and continued, “Ah, you’re still young, you won’t understand.”

Guo Xiang was lost in thought for a while then said, “Mother, if I were Sister-in-law, I’d pretend I’m alright and let him take the medicine to recover.”

Huang Rong was surprised; she had never expected her daughter to be so thoughtful of others at such a young age, so she said, “Correct, I’m afraid Xiao Longnu did just that and left Yang Guo. She earnestly said ‘the love between (us) husband and wife is profoundly deep, never fail this promise’ and said ‘please treasure this, beg that you fulfill this reunion’. When I saw ‘please treasure this’, I guessed Xiao Longnu disappeared suddenly to make your Brother Yang patiently and quietly wait for her for sixteen years. Ah, she thought after sixteen years, your Brother Yang would slowly forget her. Although he’d be disappointed, he wouldn’t want to commit suicide.”

Guo Xiang said, “Then what about the Divine Nun of the South Sea?” Huang Rong said, “I made that up. There’s really no such person.” Guo Xiang was shocked and stammered, “No... no such person?”

Huang Rong said, “That day at the Passionless Valley, I saw Yang Guo was so miserable that I could not help but make something up to console him and make him wait for the past sixteen years. I said the Divine Nun of the South Sea lived on Wisdom Island, but actually there’s no such island. I also said she taught your grandfather some palm strokes to reduce his suspicions. This Yang Guo is so intelligent, if I didn’t make it sound realistic, how would he believe me? If he didn’t, then Xiao Longnu’s efforts would be wasted.”

Guo Xiang said, “So you’re saying Sister-in-law is already dead? This whole thing was just to fool him?”

Huang Rong quickly said, “No, no! Maybe Xiao Longnu is still alive and will meet him when the time comes; if so that’d be wonderful. She’s the only disciple of the Ancient Tomb Sect, the founder Lin Chaoying was extremely knowledgeable and had profound martial arts and internal energy, so she might have left some incredible skill for Xiao Longnu to use to save her life.”

Guo Xiang thought for a while then said, “Yeah, I think so too, Sister-in-law is such a kind person and Brother Yang loves her so much, she wouldn’t die so easily. But if he doesn’t get to meet her, won’t he go crazy?”

Huang Rong said, “Today, when your grandfather came, I was thinking of asking him to cover up for us, but I was unable to do so.”

Guo Xiang became worried and said, “Now Brother Yang and Grandfather are together, he’d surely ask about the Divine Nun of the South Sea. Grandfather doesn’t know what’s going on and he’d surely let the cat out of the bag. That’ll be terrible.”

Huang Rong said, “If Xiao Longnu could be reunited with him, which would require a lot of luck, then everything would be fine. But if he doesn’t get to see Xiao Longnu, then I really don’t know what he’d do. He’d hate me deeply for lying to him and making him wait in loneliness for sixteen years.”

Guo Xiang said, “Mother, don’t worry, it was for his own good. You saved his life.”

Huang Rong said, “Besides the deep friendship of the Guo and Yang families for the past three generations, Guo’er himself has saved your father, mother and sister numerous times. Today he did so much for Xiangyang, we are truly grateful and we can never repay him. Ah, Guo’er has been lonely almost all his life. He’s already past thirty but the only happy moments he had only made up a few days.”

Guo Xiang thought, “If Brother really can’t meet Sister-in-law, he might really go crazy.”

Huang Rong said, “Your Brother Yang is of good character, but he has gone through much hardship when young so he’s rather eccentric, but his conduct is extraordinary.”

Guo Xiang tried to smile and said, “He, Grandfather and I are all heretic people.”

Huang Rong said, “Correct, he’s a good man but he has a heretic aura. If Xiao Longnu has unfortunately passed away, you must never ever meet him again.”

Guo Xiang never expected Huang Rong to say that so she quickly asked, “Why...Why not?”

Huang Rong held her hand and said, “If they get to meet, of course you can roam around with them or visit their home. Even if you follow them to the edge of the world I wouldn’t be worried. But if he doesn’t get to meet her; Xiang’er, you don’t know him well enough, if he goes crazy he’s capable of anything.”

Guo Xiang said, “Mother, if he doesn’t see her, he’d be sad and depressed, so we should console him.”

Huang Rong shook her head, saying, “He doesn’t listen to others.”

Guo Xiang thought for a while then said, “Mother, after sixteen years, do you think he would commit suicide in his sorrow?”

Huang Rong was quiet for a long while then replied, “I can guess what most people are thinking but I couldn’t read your Brother Yang’s thoughts since he was young. It’s precisely because I can’t guess what he’d do that I won’t allow you to meet again; unless of course he’s reunited with Xiao Longnu. Then that’s a different story.” Guo Xiang was lost in thought and did not respond.

Huang Rong said, “Xiang’er, Mother is doing this for your own good. If you don’t listen to me, it might be too late when you regret it.” She saw her daughter frowning and her



eyes turn red, so she said gently, “Xiang’er, let me tell you something else. It’s about your Brother Yang’s father Yang Kang.” So she then talked about how Yang Tiexin took Mu Nianci as his god daughter and how she sparred to find a husband, how she gave birth to Yang Guo and finally how she died of depression. Then she said, “Sister Mu Nianci’s character and beauty were flawless, such a good girl is hard to come by, but she was tormented by her affairs of the heart and suffered such a sad fate.”

Guo Xiang said, “Mother, she didn’t have any choice. She loved Uncle Yang, so no matter what he did she still loved him.”

Huang Rong stared at her and thought, “She’s so young, how does she know so much?” She saw that she was exhausted and her eyes could hardly stay open so she helped her get out of her clothes and tucked her into bed, saying, “Quickly close your eyes! I’ll watch you sleep then leave.” Guo Xiang closed her eyes and since she had not slept for the whole night she was really tired so she sank into a deep sleep soon after.

Huang Rong looked at her sweet and refined face she thought, “Among my three children, I worry about you the most. But among the three of you, I really can’t say who I pity the most.” She then returned to her room and slept.

The next evening, the Wu brothers sent back fast horses with the report that all the supplies at Nanyang had been destroyed; the gun powder had exploded and killed many Mongolian soldiers. After the loss, the Mongolians had withdrawn 100 li (50 km) and did not stir from their camp. When Xiangyang heard this message, everyone cheered with joy and kept talking about the Eagle Hero. Some exaggerated the story and made Yang Guo seem like a deity and excitedly talked about how he exterminated the vanguard forces and burned Nanyang. All of them talked as if they saw everything with their own eyes.

That night the Guo couple was invited by Lu Wenhuan to discuss the military situation so they reached home very late. The next morning Yelu Qi, Guo Fu and Guo Polu went to pay their respects but after a long while, Guo Xiang still had not turned up. Huang Rong got worried and instructed a maid to check her room to see if she’s ill. After a while, the maid came back with Guo Xiang’s maid saying, “The lady did not go to bed last night.”

Huang Rong was shocked and asked, “Then why didn’t you say so last night?” Guo Xiang’s maid Xiao Bangtou said, “Madam returned very late last night, so I didn’t dare disturb you; I thought the lady would return after a while, I didn’t know she’d still be missing until now.”

Huang Rong quickly went to Guo Xiang's room and saw that she had not taken any spare clothes, weapons or money and was very curious. Then she saw a white slip of paper half-concealed under her pillow. Huang Rong knew something was wrong and she groaned inwardly then she picked up the slip of paper which said:

“Dear Father and Mother,

I'm going to convince Brother Yang not to commit suicide. When I've done that, I'll return immediately.

Signed,  
Xiang.”

Huang Rong stood there motionless and thought, “This kid is really naïve. Given Yang Guo's character, apart from Xiao Longnu, he listens to no one. If he did, he wouldn't be Yang Guo.” She wanted to quickly find her daughter but the Mongolians were slowly closing in on Xiangyang on two fronts and they could attack any time, so she could not attend to her daughter's private affairs. After discussing it with Guo Jing, she wrote several letters to some capable Beggar Clan members who would split up to look for Guo Xiang and bring her back.

That day after Guo Xiang heard her mother's stories, she had several nightmares shortly after falling asleep, dreaming that Yang Guo slit his throat with a sword, then dreaming that Yang Guo jumped off a high cliff and ended up in a bloody mess. After that she awoke in cold sweat so she sat up and thought carefully, “Brother gave me three golden needles and promised to do three things for me. I have one left, so I'll use it to get him not to commit suicide. He's a hero and won't go back on his words, so I must find him.” So she left a short note and set off immediately.

However she hadn't the slightest idea where Yang Guo and Huang Yaoshi could have gone so she walked rather aimlessly for around 30 li (15km) and became famished, so she tried to look for a food stall. But all the people around the city had fled even before the Mongolians had arrived so the whole place was lifeless like a ghost town. Guo Xiang had never gone out alone before, so she never expected to get into this mess. She sat down on a stone and folded her arms, becoming frustrated.

After sitting down for a while, she thought, “Since there's no food stalls, I'll pick some wild fruits.” She walked around but there was not even a single fruit tree for a few li. Just as she felt helpless, she suddenly heard a horse galloping. When the horse past her, she saw a tall and skinny yellow-robed monk mounted on the horse. The horse was very swift and was gone in the blink of an eye. But after going a few dozen meters, the

horse turned around and returned. The horse stopped in front of Guo Xiang and the monk asked, “Lady, who’re you? Why are you here alone?”

Guo Xiang saw his piercing eyes and she shuddered. At the Black Dragon Marsh she met Reverend Yideng, so she thought, “Reverend Yideng is kind and benevolent; this monk should also be a good person.” She answered, “I’m named Guo, and I’m looking for someone.”

The monk asked, “Who?”

Guo Xiang shook her head and smiled, “You’re such a busybody, and I’m not talking to you.”

The monk said, “What does that person look like, maybe I’ve met him before and can tell you where he is.”

Guo Xiang thought this was not a bad idea and said, “You might not know him. He’s a one-armed young man. He might be with a large eagle or he might be alone.” That monk was actually Jinlun Fawang (Golden Wheel Monk) and he realized she was talking about Yang Guo. His heart missed a beat but he appeared normal, saying, “Ah, you’re looking for someone named Yang Guo, right?”

Guo Xiang was delighted and said, “Yeah, you know him?”

Fawang laughed, “How would I not know him? He’s my friend. We knew each other even before you were born.”

Guo Xiang blushed slightly, then asked: “Big monk, what is your religious name?”

Fawang said, “I’m Zhu Mu Lang Ma.” Zhu Mu Lang Ma (Chomolungma/Mount Everest) is the tallest mountain in Tibet and it’s peak reached the clouds, so Fawang was trying to say his martial arts were unmatched in the world.

Guo Xiang said, “What a long and messy name.”

Fawang said, “It’s Zhu Mu Lang Ma.”

Guo Xiang said, “OK, Reverend Zhu Mu Lang Ma, where is my brother?”

Fawang said, “Your brother?”

Guo Xiang said, “Yeah, Yang Guo.”

Fawang said, “You call Yang Guo your brother? But you’re Guo, right?”

Guo Xiang said, “We’re sworn siblings, he lived in my home when he was young.”

Fawang said, “I also have a sworn brother, we’ve known each other for many years, his martial arts are excellent and he is very well-known, his name is Guo Jing, do you know him?”

Guo Xiang thought, “I sneaked out, if he’s one of Father’s friends he might want to take me home, so I’d better not tell him.” So she said, “You’re talking about Hero Guo? He’s an elder in my family. You want to meet him?”

Fawang was clever and alert, how could he miss Guo Xiang’s change in expression? He sighed, “He’s my savior, we’ve not met for more than twenty years, and then I heard a rumour that he had passed away. I’m very sad, so I came here to pay my respects. Ah, heaven must be blind to make a hero’s life so short.” When he said this, tears started to fall. His internal strength is very strong and he can control his entire body’s functions, so he could cry at will.

Guo Xiang saw him crying tragically, although she knew her father was not dead, she was still concerned about her father and her feelings were affected by him, so she said, “Big monk, don’t worry, Hero Guo isn’t dead.”

Fawang said, “You’re talking nonsense. He’s really dead. What does a girl like you know?”

Guo Xiang said, “I just came out from Xiangyang, of course I’d know. I just saw Hero Guo yesterday.”

Fawang faced the sky, laughing, “Ah, you’re Hero Guo’s daughter.” Then he shook his head and said, “No, no, his daughter is Guo Fu, I know her too, she’s around thirty-five this year, she’s not as young as you.”

Guo Xiang couldn’t resist and said, “She’s my elder sister. I’m Guo Xiang.”

Fawang was delighted and thought, “I’m really in luck today. Such an opportunity is hard to come by.” Then he said, “Oh OK, so Hero Guo’s not dead.”

Guo Xiang saw his happy expression and thought he was happy about her father, so she thought he was a nice person and said, “Of course he’s not dead. If my father died, I’d die crying over him.”

Fawang said, “OK, OK, I believe you. I’m not going to Xiangyang just yet. Please help me tell Hero Guo and Chief Huang that I send my regards to them.”

However Guo Xiang was persistent in asking about Yang Guo, so as he was leaving she stopped him as he mounted the horse.

Guo Xiang said, “Hey big monk, why are you so unreasonable?”

Fawang said, “How so?”

Guo Xiang said, “I told you about my father yet you did not tell me anything about Yang Guo. So where is he?”

Fawang said, “Ah, yesterday at the valley north of Nanyang he was training his sword strokes. He might not have left yet, you can go find him.”

Guo Xiang frowned, saying, “There’re many valleys. Which is it? Please tell me clearly.”

Fawang thought for a while then said, “OK! I’m going north anyway, so I’ll take you there.”

Guo Xiang said, “Thanks a lot.”

Fawang took his horse over and said, “Miss, please ride the horse, I’ll walk.”

Guo Xiang said, “That’s not such a good idea.”

Fawang laughed, “This horse has four legs but it might not run faster than my two legs.”

Guo Xiang was about to mount the horse then she said, “Oh yes, I’m very hungry, do you have anything to eat?” Fawang took a bag from his back and Guo Xiang ate two biscuits from it, then she rode the horse.

Fawang flipped his sleeves and followed behind. Guo Xiang thought about what he said so she took the reins and said, “Big monk, I’ll be waiting for you out front.” Before she

finished speaking, the horse started galloping and charged forward.

This horse was very swift and Guo Xiang felt the wind in her face and saw the trees flash past her. She turned her head around and laughed, “Big monk, can you catch up?” Then she was slightly surprised as there was no trace of him behind. Then suddenly his voice came from the forest in front, saying, “Miss Guo, my horse is not very fast, you must whip it harder.”

Guo Xiang was extremely curious, wondering how he had gotten in front. When the horse caught up, she saw the monk taking huge strides forward. Guo Xiang whipped the horse and it moved faster, but it always remained several meters behind, not able to catch up. By this time they had already reached the main road north of Xiangyang. The horse was kicking up a lot of dust while Fawang did not stir any sand or dirt and moved like the wind.

Guo Xiang was in awe of him and thought, “If he didn’t have this level of martial arts he wouldn’t be worthy of Father’s sworn brotherhood.” She respectfully said, “Big Monk, you’re an elder, you should ride the horse, I’ll follow slowly behind.” Fawang laughed, “Why should we waste time? Don’t you want to find your brother sooner?” By this time the horse was losing its speed and was lagging further behind Fawang.

Now two horses appeared up in front in the distance. Fawang said, “Let’s capture those two horses and ride them alternately so that we can move faster.” After a while the horses came closer and Fawang stretched out his hands, saying, “Get down and walk!”

The horses were shocked and neighed, stopping immediately. The riders however had good riding skills and did not fall from the horses. One of them angrily said, “Who’re you? Do you want to die?” He lashed out with his whip.

Guo Xiang happily said, “Big Head Ghost, Long Beard Ghost, don’t fight, we’re all friends!” The two riders were the Big Head Ghost and Long Beard Ghost of the Xishan Ghosts.

Then Fawang grabbed the whip and tried to seize it. However although the Big Head Ghost was small-sized, he had great strength and the whip was made of tough leather, so it did not snap even under Fawang’s force of a few hundred jin. Fawang said, “Not bad!” and increased his strength, pulling the Big Head Ghost off his horse.

The Big Head Ghost got angry and threw down his whip and charged forward, wanting to fight with Fawang. The Long Beard Ghost said, “Brother, wait!” Then he said, “Miss

Guo, why are you together with the Golden Wheel Monk?” Many years ago Yang Guo had gone to the Passionless Valley with Fawang, so the Long Beard Ghost (Fan Yiweng) recognized him.

Guo Xiang laughed, “You’re mistaken, he’s Reverend Zhu Mu Lang Ma, a good friend of my father. The Golden Wheel Monk is my father’s enemy, so how could this be?”

Fan Yiweng asked, “Where did you meet him?”

Guo Xiang said, “I bumped into him not long ago. He said my father is dead, isn’t that silly? He wants to bring me to see Big Brother now.”

The Big Head Ghost said, “Quickly get over here. This monk is a bad person.”

Guo Xiang became doubtful and asked, “Is he fooling me?”

The Big Head Ghost said, “The Eagle Hero is in the south, why is he taking you north?”

Fawang smiled and said, “These two midgets are talking garbage.” He suddenly brought up his palms and struck them on the head.

For the past decade, Fawang had been training his “Dragon/Elephant Moving Skill” (Long Xiang Ban Lao Gong) and he had reached an unprecedented level in this fearsome skill. The “Dragon/Elephant Moving Skill” has thirteen levels; the first being very easy and even an idiot could master it within two years with some guidance. The second is more difficult than the first and requires about three to four years. The third level is even more difficult than the second and needs seven to eight years. So the difficulty level increases exponentially for each new level. For the fifth level alone, it usually requires more than thirty years to master. This profound skill was created by some obscure monk but no one has actually passed the tenth level. This skill is so profound that it is nearly impossible to complete all thirteen levels unless one could live to a thousand years old. The creator himself only mastered it to the eighth level and could make no more progress as he had reached a dangerous obstacle which he could not overcome. During the Northern Song Dynasty, a monk who mastered the ninth level trained without rest and managed to reach the tenth level, but in his excitement he lost control (what some might call a ‘fire deviation’) and became insane, dancing crazily for seven days and nights before severing his arteries and dying.

This Golden Wheel Monk, however, is a prodigy and through his hard work and intelligence, he managed to break through the obstacle at the ninth level and reached the

tenth level. This is an unprecedented achievement and no one will likely reach this level again. According to the description of the “Dragon/Elephant Moving Skill”, each palm thrust out is equivalent to the force generated by ten dragons and ten elephants. He knew he might not be able to reach the next level but he felt he did not have any opponents under the sky so he thought it was unnecessary to master the eleventh level. That year when he was defeated by Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu’s swords, it was the biggest defeat and insult in his whole life, so he trained relentlessly and now when the Khan is preparing to invade the south, he took this opportunity to come south and seek the Yang-Long couple for a re-match, hoping to avenge his bitter defeat.

Now when he struck out with his palms, the Big Head Ghost was struck on his arm and it broke immediately with a snap. Following that he was struck on his forehead and his brain was smashed in without even a sound and he died instantly. Fan Yiweng’s skills were high and when he saw that the palm attacking him was lethal, he used the “Tuo Tian Stance” to block this palm, however it was too strong for him and he felt as though a thousand-jin force had smashed his back, so he saw everything turn black and he collapsed.

Guo Xiang was extremely taken aback and shouted, “They’re my friends! Why did you hit them?”

Fan Yiweng spat out a pool of blood and used his last ounce of strength to get up and pounce on Fawang’s leg, yelling, “Miss, get the hell out of here!” Fawang grabbed his back, wanting to lift him up and smash him down but Fan Yiweng risked his life to protect Guo Xiang, so he grabbed onto Fawang’s leg for all he was worth. Although Fawang was incredibly strong, he could not get rid of him.

Guo Xiang was stunned and furious and immediately knew this monk was a evil man but she did not want to desert Fan Yiweng and escape alone. She placed her hands on her waist and coldly said, “Devil monk, how dare you commit this evil? Let him go, I’ll follow you.” Fan Yiweng yelled, “Just go! Don’t care about...” Before he could say “me” he was dead.

Fawang lifted his body and cast it aside, laughing; “If you want to escape why not use the horse?” Guo Xiang had never hated anyone her whole life, even when Hou Du ambushed and killed Lu Youjiao she just grieved for him but did not hate Hou Du. But now when she saw Fawang being so cruel and brutal she could not help it but hate him and with hatred in her eyes she stared at him. Fawang said, “Miss, aren’t you afraid of me?”

Guo Xiang said, “Scared...Of what? If you want to kill me just do it now!”



Fawang stuck out his thumb and said, “Good. A very brave girl, just like her father.”

Guo Xiang gazed at him with rage in her eyes and wanted to burry her friends but she did not have any tools so she just carried the bodies and placed them on Fan Yiweng’s horse and kicked the horse, saying, “Horse, please take them home.” The horse galloped away.

o0o

That night when Yang Guo and Huang Yaoshi left Xiangyang, they used their Qing gong and ran ten li south; before morning they were near Yicheng. They came to a tea house, ordered some dishes and started eating. Huang Yaoshi told him that Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang had been living in their hometown Jiaying in seclusion with Sha Gu for company. He wanted to take them and roam Jianghu to ease their worries but they did not want to. Yang Guo sadly gave a sigh and reproached himself inwardly.

They drank two cups of wine. Yang Guo said, “Island Master Huang, for these past ten years, I’ve been looking for you to consult you over a matter.”

Huang Yaoshi laughed, “I’m always on the move without a fixed destination, so it was hard for you to find me. But what would you like to ask?” Yang Guo was about to reply when he heard foot steps on the stairs and saw three people coming up.

When Yang Guo and Huang Yaoshi heard the foot steps, they knew the three people’s martial arts were strong and recognized two of them after a glance. One was Xiaoxiang Zi, the other was Yin Kexi, but he did not recognize the third person who had a dark complexion. Yin Kexi and Xiaoxiang Zi had seen Yang Guo too and they stood rooted for a moment, then quickly turned around, wanting to get downstairs.

Yang Guo raised his eyebrows and laughed: “We haven’t seen each other for a while! Why in such a hurry?”

Yin Kexi raised his hands and greeted him with a smile: “How is everything with you, master Yang?”

Xiaoxiang Zi was still angry about the fact that Yang Guo broke his arm at Mount Zhongnan sixteen years ago. Although his internal strength had increased a lot, he knew he was no match for Yang Guo. He did not bother to look at Yang Guo again and turned around and started to descend the stairs.

The man with the dark face was another famous warrior of Khubilai's; together with Yin Kexi and Xiaoxiang Zi they were here to scout the vicinity. When he saw that Xiaoxiang Zi looking angry, he loudly said: "Brother Xiaoxiang, wait! If there is a rogue disturbing our mood let me deal with him." He walked over and tried to use his big hand to toss Yang Guo out of the first floor window.

Yang Guo saw that his palm was coloured purple and knew he was trained in the "Poisonous Sand Palms", he thought: "Why don't I use these three men as an excuse to ask Old Master Huang about the Divine Nun of the South Sea?" He saw that the man's hand was about to touch his shoulder, he put up his palm and slapped the man on the cheek. Huang Yaoshi was shocked: "How very fast!" Just by seeing that slap, he knew that Yang Guo had invented his own style and this style was unique. He heard another two slaps, Xiaoxiang Zi was slapped on his left and right cheek. Yang Guo spared Yin Kexi because he had shown some courtesy.

Huang Yaoshi laughed: "Young brother Yang, your newly invented style is most sophisticated. I would like to see the entire set so as to please my eyes."

Yang Guo said: "I was just about to ask Old Master Huang for some pointers." His body rocked about and he was now displaying his "Melancholic Sad Palms", his long sleeve whisked around and his left palm was pushing forward. Suddenly he used the stance "Entangled by the Web of Love" and following he added the technique, "Hesitating on Returning to the Empty Valley", with these two stances he curled Xiaoxiang Zi, Yin Kexi and the other warrior in his waves of palm energy. The three of them were trapped as though in a tidal force and were swaying back and forth; they were totally submissive to Yang Guo's palm. They were nearly unable to stand upright, let alone trying to break free. In a few moments they were at the mercy of Yang Guo. Huang Yaoshi was holding a cup and sighed: "The ancients were drinking wine while reading the Han History Analects; today I am drinking wine and beholding your martial arts. This kind of lofty skill has surpassed the ancients."

Yang Guo said loudly: "Old Master, please give me a few pointers." He waved his palm and Xiaoxiang Zi was pushed towards Huang Yaoshi. Huang Yaoshi did not dare to be leisurely; he pushed out with his left hand and returned Xiaoxiang back to him. He saw that the black-faced warrior was coming towards him now. He first sipped some wine before using his palm to repel that man back too. Yang Guo carefully examined his stances and saw that although his internal power was strong but his techniques were not extraordinarily exquisite. He thought: "If I don't go all out, I cannot force him to display the martial arts of the Divine Nun of the South Sea." He accumulated his energy in

his pubic region and increased energy to his palms. That way Xiaoxiang Zi, Yin Kexi and the black-faced warrior were pushed to Huang Yaoshi faster and faster.

After returning a few palms Huang Yaoshi felt that the three men came crashing towards him like tidal waves, the second wave fiercer than the first wave. He thought: “This child’s palms become stronger with every stance; he is really one outstanding martial arts master.”

At this point the black-faced warrior soared through the sky, his feet first and head back. He was headed towards the face of Huang Yaoshi who tilted his palm to discharge the coming energy force, his right hand trembled a bit and some wine splattered out of the cup. Following were Yin Kexi and Xiaoxiang Zi who were soaring through the air now; one was directly flying towards him the other diagonally. Huang Yaoshi called out: “Good!” he put down his cup and used his right palm to retaliate.

Yang Guo and Huang Yaoshi were now several zhang (1 zhang is about 4 meters) apart from each other, and were exchanging palms with each other. Xiaoxiang Zi, Yin Kexi and the black-faced warrior became, as it were, rubber balls or other toys at the hands of Yang and Huang. They were entirely in their control and were sent soaring back and forth. Only after displaying half of his “Melancholic Sad Palms”, the “Changing Peach” and “Descending Flower Palms” of Huang Yaoshi were paling in comparison now. When he saw that Yin Kexi was soaring towards him and he figured that his palm energy was not able to resist it. He flicked his finger and a soft splang sound could be heard, a light and delicate energy burst out and countered the energy blast of Yang Guo. He flicked his finger three times and three groups of splangs could be heard; Xiaoxiang Zi, Yin Kexi and the black-faced warrior had fallen on the floor and fainted. His “Divine Flicking Finger” and the “Melancholic Sad Palms” of Yang Guo were evenly well-matched. Neither one was the winner or the loser.

Both of them laughed heartily and sat down at their table again, they were pouring wine and drinking again. Huang Yaoshi said: “Young brother Yang, the power of your newly created palm stances is very forceful. In the entire realm only the “Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms” of my son-in-law, Guo Jing can be compared to it. My “Changing Peach” and “Descending Flower Palms” are one level inferior.”

Yang Guo thanked him repeatedly, then said, “I learned your two great skills “Divine Flicking Finger” and “Jade Flute Swordplay” years ago and when I created this palm skill, I derived some of the essence from your skills. I heard you were once taught by the Divine Nun of the South Sea and learned a palm skill, I would humbly request Elder to display it as an eye-opener for me.”

Huang Yaoshi curiously asked, “Divine Nun of the South Sea? Who’s that? I’ve never heard of such a person.”

Yang Guo’s face turned pale. He stood up and stuttered, “What?! There’s no... no such person as the Divine Nun of the South Sea?”

Huang Yaoshi saw his face change colour and was shocked so he said, “Could it be a young hero who has risen in recent years? This old man is rather ignorant, I’ve never heard of her.”

Yang Guo stood there speechless but his heart was beating wildly, thinking, “Aunt Guo clearly told me Long’er was saved by the Divine Nun of the South Sea, so this whole thing is a lie, this whole thing is a sham to fool me!” He faced the sky and let off a roar which shuddered the whole building, then tears fell to the floor.

Huang Yaoshi said, “If you have any troubles you could tell me, maybe this old man can help you.”

Yang Guo said with a trembling voice, “My heart is in a great turmoil. Please pardon me.” He waved his sleeve and dashed down the stairs, causing some of the planks to break under his force.

Huang Yaoshi wondered what on Earth was going on and mumbled, “Divine Nun of the South Sea? Who could that be?”

Yang Guo increased his speed and rushed around madly, not eating or sleeping for several days, just charging around like a typhoon. It was only when he became half-dead from fatigue that he thought of Xiao Longnu, not even daring to imagine if he would meet her again. In less than a day he had reached the banks of a large river. Finally he could not take it anymore and just boarded the nearest boat he saw, handed two taels of silver to the boatman and went to sleep without even asking where it was heading.

The boat headed east on the choppy river and stopped every few days to trade goods; it was a trading boat. Yang Guo’s heart was still in disarray and did not care where the boat was taking him to; drinking by day and sighing by night, passing several days in that fashion. The boatman received his money and thought he was just an aimless wanderer and did not bother him.

Then one day a trader on board said the boat was nearing Jiaxing and Lin An. When Yang Guo heard ‘Jiaxing’, he was surprised, thinking, “My father’s death was brought

about by Huang Rong years ago at the Iron Spear Temple in Jiaxing and his body was eaten by the crows, but what happened to his bones? I must be a filial son and bury his remains properly.” He then got off the boat.

At that time it was the start of winter, and although Jiangnan was not as cold as the north, it was still snowing heavily. Yang Guo put on a cape and started walking. In three days he reached Jiaxing. When he reached there it was evening and he went to a restaurant and ordered some dishes, then asked where the Iron Spear Temple was. He then went out into the snow and went straight there. It was still snowing and the north wind did not show any signs of slackening.

Under the snow’s reflection, he saw that this temple has been abandoned for many years and no one tended to its repairs. The door was rotting away and it creaked open when pushed gently. He entered the temple and saw a statue in a bad shape and the place was filled with cobwebs. There was no one around. More than thirty years ago his father died here and he had never seen his father, which made him even sadder.

He looked around the temple and hoped he could find any traces his father had left behind although so many years had passed. He went to the back of the temple and found a grave and a tombstone between two large trees and the tombstone was covered in snow. He brushed the snow away with his sleeve and read the inscription. When he read it he became very angry. It read, “Unfilial Disciple Yang Kang’s Grave” and the sub-heading read, “Inscribed by his Useless Teacher Qiu Chuji”.

Yang Guo was furious thinking, “This old priest Qiu Chuji was really heartless; even after my father is dead he wouldn’t leave him alone. How was my father unfilial? Humph, what’s the bloody use of being filial to that old Cow-nose? If I don’t go to the Quanzhen Sect and kill those people, my anger will never subside.” He lifted his palm and wanted to smash the tombstone.

Before he could strike, he heard footsteps moving fast outside the temple which sounded strange – they sounded like martial arts experts yet sounded like animals. Yang Guo became curious so he did not strike, then he heard the footsteps heading towards the temple. He quickly got back inside and hid behind the statue, trying to see who it was.

The footsteps came right up to the temple but stopped at the entrance, probably fearing an enemy lying in ambush inside. After a while, they stepped in. Yang Guo peeked at them then almost laughed. He saw four men enter the temple; the four men had their

left legs broken, their hands holding a stick and their right legs were clapped in chains; their footsteps made such strange noises because they had to move their feet together.

The leader of the group had a bald and shiny head and only half a left arm. The second person had a lump on his forehead and his left arm stopped at the elbow. The third person was small-sized while the fourth was a huge monk. The four of them looked rather old and were obviously disabled. Yang Guo wondered, "What is their background? Why do they stick together like that and never leave each other?" The leader took out his flint and lit a fire, and then he found a candle and lit it. Yang Guo then saw clearly that apart from the leader, the other three had no eyes in their eye sockets, then he realized, "So these three people depend on the first person to lead the way."

The bald man held the candle and looked around the temple. The four of them moved like crabs, one following the other and the distance between them was never less than three feet. Yang Guo had concealed himself well. Moreover, these people were disabled and only one of them could see, so they did not find him although their ears were sharp and their movements rather agile. The bald man said, "That old man Ke didn't reveal our whereabouts or invite helpers to lie in ambush here."

The third man said, "Correct, he promised not to inform on us. These people are valiant and always keep their word of honour."

The four people sat on the floor together. The second man said, "Shi Ge (Martial Brother), do you think this old man Ke will really come?"

The first man said, "It's quite hard to say, but I think he won't come. Who's so stupid as to come and seek death?"

The third man said, "But this old man Ke was the head of the Jiangnan Seven Freaks. That year he made a bet with that scoundrel priest Qiu and so he went all the way to Mongolia to teach Guo Jing martial arts. This matter is well-known in Jianghu. Everyone says the Jiangnan Seven Freaks never went back on their word. It's because of this that we released him."

Yang Guo heard every word clearly from behind the statue and thought, "So they're waiting for Elder Ke." Then he heard the second man say, "I say he'll definitely come. Brother Peng, why don't we make a bet to see who..." Before he finished talking, they heard footsteps out in the snow which were heavy and light alternately – someone was using a walking staff. Yang Guo knew Ke Zhen'E when he was on Peach Blossom Island, so he knew it was him immediately. The skinny man laughed, "Brother Hou, that old

man Ke is here, you still want to bet?” The man with the lump said, “You scoundrel, are you really not afraid of death?”

A few tapping sounds were heard and the Flying Bat Ke Zhen'E walked in and said, “Ke Zhen'E has kept his word and has come. These are the “Nine Flower Jade Dew Pills”, altogether there are twelve of them, which makes it three for each of you.” He threw a small bottle over to the bald man. He said happily, “Many thanks.” and caught it. Ke Zhen'E said, “This old man has completed his business and is here to die.” He was standing erect proudly in front of them and his beard was floating in the wind.

The man with the lump said, “Shi Ge, he brought us the “Nine Flower Jade Dew Pills” which can treat our internal injuries, moreover we don't have any deep feud with him, let's just let him go.”

The skinny man laughed, “Hey, Brother Hou, don't let the tiger escape back into the wild. Your kindness may cause us to die a horrible death. Although he hasn't revealed our secret, how can we be sure he'd never do it?” He shouted, “Let's act together!” The four people rushed over and surrounded Ke Zhen'E.

The old man said hoarsely, “More than thirty years ago, all of us witnessed Yang Kang's tragic death here, who knew it would happen to you too; this is retribution.”

Ke Zhen'E smashed his walking staff on the floor and said angrily, “That Yang Kang acknowledged a scoundrel as his step-father and betrayed his country for wealth; he was a despicable animal. I, Ke Zhen'E, am a true man who has never let down the sky or the Earth, how can you compare that traitor with me, the Flying Bat? You know you can kill me but you cannot insult me (Ke Sha Bu Ke Ru – A rather common phrase at that time)!”

The skinny man sneered, “You're about to die and you still try to be a hero!” Three of them shot out their palms together and aimed at his head. Ke Zhen'E knew he was not their match and just stood there, not attempting any retaliation or defense.

Suddenly a gust of wind blew over them and a ‘peng’ sound was heard, causing the dust to fly. The four of them knew something was wrong and felt as if they did not hit any flesh. That bald man understood what was going on but Ke Zhen'E had suddenly disappeared and in his position was the statue. The statue's head was smashed and fell into pieces under the four people's combined force.

The bald man was shocked. He turned around and saw a thirty-something year old man with a furious face holding Ke Zhen'E's neck and lifting him high into the air, shouting, "Why did you insult my father?"

Ke Zhen'E asked, "Who're you?"

Yang Guo said, "I'm Yang Guo and Yang Kang was my father. When I was young you didn't treat me badly but why do you slander my late father behind my back?"

Ke Zhen'E coldly said, "There are many men in history, some leave a good reputation for a hundred generations, while some leave behind a stinking name. How can you silence everyone?"

Yang Guo saw that he was very stubborn and became more furious and threw him down hard onto the floor, shouting, "So you're saying my father was despicable and shameless?"

The bald man saw that Yang Guo's martial arts were superb since he could swap a person with a statue without even him knowing. He knew he was not his match and lightly tugged at the chain, wanting the group to sneak out of the temple. Yang Guo darted forward and blocked the exit, saying, "No one's getting out of here alive without giving me an explanation." The four people yelled and threw out a palm each towards him. Yang Guo said, "Good!" He also shot out his left palm and the force of a tornado smashed onto them, causing them to lose their balance and fall backwards, hitting the statue and smashing it. The second man's skills were the weakest and his lump hit right smack into the statue, causing him to black out immediately.

Yang Guo said, "Who are you people? Why are you chained together in this strange manner? And why do you want to meet Ke Zhen'E here?" After being hit by Yang Guo's palm, his chest became congested and his organs seemed to turn upside down, so he sat quietly for a while trying to circulate his chi before talking slowly.

This bald man was Sha Tongtian, the second man was his martial brother the Three Headed Serpent Hou Tonghai, the third man was the Thousand Hand Killer Peng Lianhu, the fourth was the Big Handprint Lama Ling Zi. More than 30 years ago, the Old Urchin Zhou Botong captured them and handed them to Qiu Chuji and Wang Chuyi who imprisoned them in Chongyang Palace, wanting them to repent before releasing them. But their evil characters were hard to change and they tried many ways and means to escape but were recaptured each time. On their third attempt, Hou Tonghai, Peng Lianhu and Ling Zi killed several of the Quanzhen disciples who were their war-



dens. The Quanzhen Taoists punished them by breaking their legs and blinding them. Since only Sha Tongtian had killed no one, he was not blinded. Then sixteen years ago the Mongolians overran Chongyang Palace and they managed to escape. However, since three of them were blind, they had to rely on Sha Tongtian to lead the way, but they were afraid that he would desert them, they had chained themselves up in this manner. At that time Yang Guo only spent a short time at Chongyang Palace and was not in his master's and fellow disciples' good books. He had never been allowed to go near their cell; therefore he had never seen them and did not know their backgrounds.

When they escaped from Chongyang Palace the four of them were disabled so they could not fight the Quanzhen disciples. Although the Quanzhen's base had been destroyed, their strength in Jianghu had not diminished. They came to Jiangnan and lived in a deserted village, passing sixteen years uneventfully. But one day they came out and saw Ke Zhen'E passing along on a small road. Sha Tongtian was afraid he had come for them so they went to confront him. Ke Zhen'E's skills were no match for the four people and he was subdued almost immediately. After interrogating him, they found he was attending to some other matters. Although the four of them had no feud with him, they were afraid he would leak out their secret so they wanted to kill him.

Ke Zhen'E swore that he would make a trip to Jiaxing to attend to a matter then he would return to seek death, promising that if they let him off for the time being he would obtain the "Nine Flower Jade Dew Pills" from Peach Blossom Island to return the favour. After their legs were broken, they would ache and hurt whenever it rained. When they heard he would bring them such an effective treatment, they made him swear an oath not to reveal their whereabouts and not to get help to fight them and finally to meet at the Iron Spear Temple.

When Sha Tongtian finished his story, he said, "Hero Yang, when your father was still alive we were guests in his palace. We never did anything against him until he passed away. We hope that you consider our good ties with him and let us off." Many years ago these four people were outstanding people in Jianghu; even if they were threatened by swords and axes they would never be willing to show any weakness. After being disabled and suffering many years of hardship, they discarded their pride and begged Yang Guo for mercy.

Yang Guo snorted and did not bother with them. Facing Ke Zhen'E he said, "So you went to see Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang? What was it about?"

Ke Zhen'E faced the sky and laughed, "Yang Guo ah Yang Guo, you're really ignorant."

Yang Guo angrily said, “In what way?”

Ke Zhen'E said, “At this stage, I already ignore my old life; even when I was in my prime I have never been intimidated by anyone. No matter how good your martial arts are, you can only frighten people who're afraid of death. The Jiangnan Seven Freaks never submit under interrogation.”

Yang Guo saw that his manner was imposing and gallant and he respected him. He said, “Elder Ke, I'm at fault, pardon me. I was offended because you insulted my father. Elder Ke's name is well-known throughout the world; I have admired you since young and do not dare offend you.”

Ke Zhen'E said, “This is more like it. I heard your character is good and you contributed greatly to Xiangyang, so I regard you as an outstanding person. If you were like your father, by just talking to me you would have insulted me.”

Yang Guo's anger erupted again and he shouted, “What on Earth had my father done? Tell me clearly.” Among all the people Yang Guo knew, there were many who knew about his father but no one wanted to tell him the whole story in order not to offend him. Even if he asked, they just picked some unrelated details and told him those.

Ke Zhen'E bore a deep grudge against his father and he also did not have any regard for his own life, so he did not care if Yang Guo was offended or not. He told Yang Guo the whole story of Guo Jing and Yang Kang and mentioned how Yang Kang collaborated with Ouyang Feng to kill five of the Jiangnan Seven Freaks. He finally told how he died after striking Huang Rong here in this very temple. Then he said, “These people witnessed everything that happened that night. Sha Tongtian, Peng Lianhu, tell us, have I spoken the truth?”

The six people had smashed the statue and shouted loudly, frightening the crows on the roof of the temple. They circled in the air and cawed continuously. Sha Tongtian sighed, “That night there were so many crows as well... My hand was scratched by the elder Master Yang, if not for Brother Peng's quick reaction of cutting off my arm, how could I still be alive today?” Peng Lianhu said, “Old man Ke is more or less correct, but Hero Yang's father treated us with courtesy and he was really... really outstanding and talented.” [Some background information: In ‘The Legend of the Eagle Shooting Heroes’, Yang Kang struck the spot on Huang Rong's Soft Armour which had Ouyang Feng's poison on it. As a result he eventually died from the poison; when he scratched Sha Tongtian the poison was spread to him, so his arm had to be amputated.]

Yang Guo held his head with both hands in grief and indignation – he never expected his father to be such an evil traitor. No matter how great he had become, it was hard to erase his father's bad name. The six people sat there silently while the crows continued cawing.

After a long time, Ke Zhen'E said, "Master Yang, you have contributed greatly at Xiangyang; no matter how many wrongdoings your father committed, you have already made up for him. Even in the Underworld he would be proud of you."

Yang Guo thought back to his relationship with the Guo couple and remembered how Huang Rong did not trust him. Many of the misunderstandings in the past resulted from this. But without his father how would he be here? Still, many of his problems originated from his father, so he gave a long sigh and asked Ke Zhen'E, "Elder Ke, how are Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang?"

Ke Zhen'E said, "They heard about how you burned the supplies at Nanyang and how you annihilated the Mongolian vanguard, so they were delighted. They asked every detail about you and also asked if you had news of Xiao Longnu. They really miss you a lot, but it's a pity I don't know much myself."

Yang Guo said, "I've not seen my two sworn sisters for sixteen years." Suddenly he turned around and told Sha Tongtian, "Elder Ke has promised to give his life to you, he is a man of honour and never goes back on his word. Now you can act. If you gang up on him you can win by numbers and kill him. But if you do that I will kill you dogs to avenge him."

They sat wordlessly for a while. Then Peng Lianhu said, "The four of us are really foolish and we offended old Hero Ke; we beg you two great men to forgive us."

Yang Guo said, "Then remember that now it is you who must keep your word and do not dare kill Elder Ke."

Peng Lianhu said, "Yes, yes. Old Hero Ke is a man of honor, we really admire him."

Yang Guo said, "Then leave quickly. Don't cause me trouble again." The four men bowed together and left the temple. Yang Guo saved Ke Zhen'E's life as well as defended his honor, so he was really grateful. The two men kicked away the broken pieces of the statue and sat down.

Ke Zhen'E said, "Actually I came to Jiaxing because of the younger Miss Guo."

Yang Guo was slightly surprised, asking, “What happened to her?”

Ke Zhen'E sighed but smiled, “Each of Guo Jing's daughters are mischievous in their own way, which really causes a lot of headaches. No one knows why that girl Guo Xiang left Xiangyang without saying a word and no one knows where she is. Her father, in his anxiety, sent out people to find her whereabouts, but so far she can not be traced. Some of them actually came to Peach Blossom Island to look for her. But why would such an active young girl come to Peach Blossom Island to keep this blind old man company? I also became worried and came here to help find her.”

Yang Guo said, “So have you got any news?”

Ke Zhen'E said, “Yesterday I was at Linan and I heard two Mongols saying that Hero Guo's daughter had been captured and imprisoned in the Mongolian Camp...”

Yang Guo exclaimed, “Ah! Is this true?”

Ke Zhen'E said, “The two Mongolian armies have come to attack Xiangyang, yet the Imperial Court's officials still think they can make peace. These two Mongols must be here to fool our officials, so their ranks must be very high. I lived with the Mongolians for many years and although I'm blind my ears are very sharp so I heard it very clearly.”

Yang Guo said, “So this is true?”

Ke Zhen'E said, “Yes! I originally wanted to send poison to those two Mongolians, but reporting the matter to Xiangyang is more urgent so I didn't want to be stuck with this problem. Unfortunately I met those four criminals along the way. I don't really care when I die but the news concerning Guo Xiang must be reported. I requested several days' grace and came to Jiaying to relay the news to Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang. After receiving the news they went north immediately, and so I came to seek death. I never expected that I would keep my promise while those four scum didn't, Ha-ha-ha!”

Yang Guo remained quiet for some time before asking, “Elder Ke, did you happen to overhear where Miss Guo is held? Is her life in danger?”

Ke Zhen'E said, “They didn't mention it; from what I heard it seems like those two Mongols aren't too sure themselves.”

Yang Guo said, “This is really urgent, I must rush there and conduct a rescue operation. Elder Ke, please take your time.”

Ke Zhen'E heard from the Beggar Clan members who came to Peach Blossom Island to look for Guo Xiang and talk about Yang Guo's great deeds at Xiangyang, so he knew that he was exceptionally capable. He said, “With you going, I don't have to worry.”

Yang Guo said, “Elder Ke, I'd like to ask for a favour – please help honor my father and erect a new tombstone which says, ‘My Father Lord Yang Kang's Grave, by his unfilial son Yang Guo’.”

Ke Zhen'E was surprised then he realized what he wanted, saying, “Absolutely right! Although you're unfilial, being unfilial has far surpassed others being filial. I'll definitely do it.”

Yang Guo went back to Jiaxing and bought three good horses and set off towards the north immediately. Throughout the entire journey he kept switching horses to prevent any delays and he reached the Mongolian camp the same day.

The Mongolian Khan was trying to capture Xiangyang but they had suffered two great defeats without knowing why. Furthermore their supplies at Nanyang were burned completely and they lost many soldiers. Their morale was low and they did not know the real situation of the Song soldiers. So they camped in the north of Nanyang and did not stir. Their flags were all over the place and their weapons were displayed for all to see. Yang Guo swept across the camp with his eyes and saw tent after tent, seemingly unending.

Yang Guo waited for nightfall and snuck into the camp to scout around. He only saw that their weapons were neatly arranged and the whole camp was in order; this would be really serious for the Song army. Yang Guo knew there were many great fighters in the camp and he could not fight them all so he was careful not to reveal himself. After sneaking around for half a night he still could not find out where Guo Xiang was held. He managed to capture an advisor who spoke Mandarin and interrogated him, but the advisor claimed he had not even heard of the matter at all.

Yang Guo was still worried and he examined the camp for a few days. Finally he determined that she was not in the camp and thought, “It looks like Uncle Guo has already rescued her or perhaps those two Mongol officials had just heard some rumors.” Then after checking the dates he found that it was nearing his reunion with Xiao Longnu, so he hurriedly headed towards the Passionless Valley.



---

Create a free website or blog at WordPress.com.