

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDXL Chapter 19



Chapter 19 – The Old Woman Underground

Translated by Noodles



Yang Guo grabbed the rope with both hands and climbed up it; he looked down and saw that Lu'E and her mother had become two small black images in the indistinct evening light.

Falling hundreds of feet like this on to solid ground could only result in death; but as soon as Yang Guo felt himself splashing into water, he was delighted; he knew that his life was not in danger. The current was strong and he had plunged deep into the water; he felt himself sinking downwards without end as if the water was depthless. He held his breath and waited until he slowed down before he swam upwards with his right

hand while holding Lu'E in his left hand. As soon as he reached the surface he took a breath and a sudden stench filled his nose; at the same time, the water on his left was breaking in waves, as if some large aquatic animal was coming towards them to attack.

A thought went through his mind, "That scoundrel trapped us down here, how can it be something good?" With his right hand he chopped a fierce palm towards the left side. A loud sound was heard as he struck a large solid object; a fierce turbulent wave followed. Yang Guo used the force from his palm to move to the right with Gongsun Lu'E.

He wasn't a great swimmer; the reason why he was able to last so long underwater was because he used his internal energy to hold his breath. It was pitch black; all he heard was urgent splashing sounds from behind and to the left of him. He sent his right hand out and suddenly brushed against a cold and coarse object. It appeared to be the scales of that creature, he was shocked, "Could it be that there's such a thing as a Venom Dragon in this world?" He used the force in his hand and soared upwards with the strange creature forced under water by him. He took a deep breath, since he planned to dive underwater once again; but his right foot actually landed on solid ground. He wasn't prepared for this and the impact on his leg was all wrong; his right leg was in great pain.

But he was too happy to care about the pain in his leg; he stretched out his hand to examine the surroundings and found a rock face by the pool. He was afraid that the strange creature would continue its attack so he quickly climbed to higher ground. Once he sat down, he became calmer. Gongsun Lu'E had swallowed a few mouthfuls of water and she was half conscious. Yang Guo rested her on his lap and let her throw up the water. Then he heard scraping sounds on the rocks and a stench that was gradually becoming stronger and stronger; a few of the strange creatures from the pool had climbed out.

Gongsun Lu'E sat up and hugged Yang Guo's neck; alarmed she said, "What's that?"

Yang Guo said, "Don't be afraid; hide behind me."

Gongsun Lu'E didn't move, she just held him tighter and quivered, "Crocodiles, crocodiles!"

When Yang Guo was living on Peach Blossom Island, he had seen countless crocodiles on the island; he knew that they were extremely vicious and violent, much more than the tigers and wolves of the land. One day, he, Guo Fu and the Wu brothers saw them but they didn't try to annoy them and kept their distance from them. Today unexpect-

edly, he had come across some crocodiles in this underground pool. He listened carefully and from the sounds, he could tell that there were three crocodiles getting closer step by step.

Gongsun Lu'E whispered, "Brother Yang, who would have thought that you and I would die in such a place?" Her voice was full of joy and comfort.

Yang Guo laughed, "Even if we are going to die, we first need to kill a few crocodiles before doing anything else."

At that time, the first crocodile was already within ten feet of Yang Guo's leg; Lu'E called out, "Hit it quickly!"

Yang Guo said; "Just a little longer." He stretched out his right foot and hung it down by his side; the crocodile advanced a few feet and opened its mouth, biting viciously at his leg. Yang Guo pulled his leg back and sent out a kick, striking the crocodile squarely in the jaw. The crocodile somersaulted in the air and landed back in the pool. The pool splashed and the other crocodiles in it clamored; but the other two crocodiles kept on advancing.

Though Yang Guo was poisoned by the Passion Flowers, his martial arts had not been affected in any way; the kick he just performed had a force of hundreds of kilos behind it. After he kicked the crocodile his foot ached slightly. However, the crocodile that he kicked was still moving freely after it landed back in the pool. He thought, "I can't do anything to all these crocodiles empty-handed; if I continue like this me and Miss Gongsun will eventually end up in their stomachs. I must think of something else; how can I kill all these crocodiles?" He stretched out his hand in search of a large rock to use as a weapon; but there wasn't anything on the rock face, not even a speck of sand. He heard the other two crocodiles getting closer and quickly asked, "Have you got a sword with you?"

Gongsun Lu'E said, "With me?" She remembered how she took off her gown and dress; all she was wearing now was her underwear. Now, she was in the arms of Yang Guo; she immediately became embarrassed and her body flushed with heat. But deep in her heart, there was a sweet feeling of joy.

Yang Guo was just worried about being attacked by the crocodiles at the moment; he did not notice anything wrong with her. He heard the two crocodiles were now within ten feet of him, and there were another two behind him. It would be of no use to send out a palm and knock them back into the pool; after a short while they would come

back again. It would just be a waste of effort; so he gathered energy and waited for the crocodiles to get within three feet of him before sending out both palms, striking the crocodiles on the head. The crocodiles weren't that swift in turning and they couldn't move out the way when the palms arrived. But their skin was thick; they were just knocked unconscious and slipped back into the pool. Just at that time, the other two crocodiles behind him arrived; Yang Guo kicked one off the rock face with his left foot. The kick was very heavy; he could not hold Gongsun Lu'E steady and she slanted to the side, slipping downwards off the rock face.

Gongsun Lu'E called out in shock; her right hand braced against the rock face and she circulated her internal energy to leap back up. Yang Guo stretched out a hand to grab her and pulled her back up. This setback allowed the other crocodile to press close to him; it opened its jaws and bit down towards Yang Guo's shoulders. There wasn't enough time to punch or kick it away, he could only move out of its way. As soon as its jaws close, it might actually bite down on Lu'E. With this danger in mind he quickly sent out both hands; one pulled the upper jaw and the other pulled the lower; he circulated his internal energy and gave a shout, a cracking sound was heard as the jaws of the crocodile snapped and it immediately died.

Though Yang Guo had killed this vicious crocodile, his back had broken out in a cold sweat.

Lu'E said, "Are you hurt?"

Yang Guo heard her voice was gentle and concerned; his heart was moved slightly and he said, "No." But the force he had just used was too ferocious and his arms ached.

Lu'E observed that the crocodile was not moving and was lying there on the rock dead; she was in awe of Yang Guo and said, "How did you kill that crocodile empty-handed? And how can you see so clearly in this darkness?"

Yang Guo said, "I've lived with my Gu Gu for many years in the ancient tomb; all I need is the faintest light and I'll be able to see things." When he mentioned living in the tomb with his Gu Gu, he couldn't stop himself from letting out a sigh. Suddenly an excruciating pain broke out in his body. It was extremely difficult to endure, and he hollered and shouted and at the same time, he kicked the dead crocodile back into the pool.

Two crocodiles were climbing up onto the rock face just at that time; when they heard his inhuman calls, they were so frightened that they slipped back into the water.

Gongsun Lu'E quickly held his arm and with her other hand, brushed across his forehead gently, hoping that she would be able to lessen his pain.

Yang Guo knew that even if he hadn't fallen into this dangerous situation, he would not live for more than a couple of days because of the poison; he had heard the Valley Master say that the pain would keep on increasing over the next thirty-six days before he finally died. The pain was so unbearable that even if he endured it a few more times, he'd eventually give in to the pain and kill himself. But when he dies, Gongsun Lu'E will have no one to protect her; that would be terrible for her and he thought, "The reason she's in this danger is because of me. No matter what pain I'm in I must endure it; hopefully the Valley Master will still have some love for his daughter and will come to save her." As he thought about this, his thoughts of Xiao Longnu disappeared for the time being and the pain lessened; he said, "Miss Gongsun, don't be afraid, I think that your father will come for you. He hates me only and has always loved you; he must be feeling very regretful right now."

Gongsun Lu'E cried, "When my mother was alive, father really did love me. But after mother died, he became cold towards me. However, I know that... I know that in his heart he doesn't hate me." She stopped for a while and thought of many strange and hard-to-explain things; she said, "Brother Yang, I've suddenly thought of something; my father has always been afraid of me."

Yang Guo said surprised, "He's afraid of you? That's strange."

Lu'E said, "I just feel that whenever my father sees me he doesn't seem to be at ease; it's like he's got something hidden in his heart and is afraid that I will find out about it. Over the past few years, he's been avoiding me and doesn't want to see me."

She had noticed that her father's expression had been strange; though she wondered about this, she reached the same conclusion every time; the reason he's changed is because he was deeply hurt by her mother's passing away. But this time, falling into the crocodile pit was definitely her father's plan. He had moved the pill cauldrons in the pill room to activate the collapsing floor. If her father hated Yang Guo and wanted to kill him, all he had to do was keep the antidote for the Passion Flower poison away from him and he would have little chance of living. Now that Yang Guo had fallen into the crocodile pit, the chance of him escaping death was next to none; so why did her father push her into the crocodile pit as well? What fatherly love was there in that push? This wasn't a slip due to anger, he had planned this. The more she thought about it, the sadder she became because it was becoming clearer and clearer to her. There were many words and actions of her father that she did not understand and just used the

reason ‘eccentric behavior’ to explain it all. Right now, as she thought, it appeared that the word ‘fear’ was more apt. Her father fearing her was something that she could never have conceived.

The crocodile pool broke out in a thrashing roar as all the crocodiles fought over the dead crocodile; they’d stopped climbing up onto the rock face for the time being.

Yang Guo saw that she was deep in thought and asked, “Maybe your father has some kind of hidden secret and you’ve somehow stumbled upon it by accident?”

Lu’E shook her head and said, “No. My father’s actions are honorable; he is very fair, and everyone in the valley had great respect for him. His treatment of you really is wrong; but he has never done such uncharacteristic things like this before.”

Yang Guo did not know about the past affairs of the Passionless Valley and so it was hard for him to help her guess what the reasons were behind all this.

The crocodile pool was deep underground and was cold like an ice cave; the two were wet and felt the effects even more. Yang Guo had trained on the Chilled Jade Bed and took no notice of such insignificant coldness; but Gongsun Lu’E kept on shivering and searching for warmth in Yang Guo’s arms. Yang Guo knew that this girl would be feeling frightened and sad right now; as he watched the struggle in the crocodile pool he wanted to make her laugh. The crocodiles were opening their mouths and showing vicious teeth, looking extremely terrifying, so he laughed, “Miss Gongsun, we’re going to die together today; when you reincarnate in the next life, what do you want to reincarnate as? Whatever happens, I don’t want to change into one of these unsightly crocodiles.”

Gongsun Lu’E smiled a little and said, “Then you should change into a narcissus flower; it’s beautiful and fragrant, and it’s something that everyone loves.”

Yang Guo laughed, “The only types of people who are worthy of changing into those kind of flowers are people like you. If it’s me, I’ll get changed into some ugly daisy or chrysanthemum.”

Lu’E laughed, “If the Yan Luo Wang (ruler of hell) tells you to change into a Passion Flower, would you?”

Yang Guo was silent and did not reply. He was feeling great resentment and thought, “With Gu Gu’s and my “Pure Heart of the Jade Maiden Sword”, that scoundrel is not our

match. At the time he was on his back foot he was about to lose. But things had to happen this way. Gu Gu had been pierced by the Passion Flower in the sword room. When we were about to use swordplay which requires the users to be as one and to be filled with love to make use of its power, the poison prevented it. This is fate; I can't do anything about it. I wonder how Gu Gu is right now?" As soon as he thought about Xiao Longnu again, his body broke out in pain all over.

When Gongsun Lu'E heard him stay silent, she knew that she shouldn't have mentioned the Passion Flower; she quickly changed the subject and said, "Brother Yang, you're able to see the crocodiles while all I see in front of me is darkness."

Yang Guo laughed, "The crocodiles are extremely ugly, it's better not to see them." He patted her on the back gently to console her; but as soon as he touched her, he felt something cold, smooth and soft. Then he remembered how she undressed herself in front of her father in the pill room. She only had on her underwear; her shoulders and neck were uncovered. Yang Guo was slightly alarmed and quickly pulled back his hand. Lu'E thought about how he could see things in the dark; her semi clothed self would be seen clearly by him and she couldn't stop herself from calling out 'Oh no!' She automatically moved away a little.

Yang Guo sat a little distance away from her and took off his gown to cover her with. As he took it off, not only did he think about Xiao Longnu, but he also thought about Cheng Ying who made a gown for him and Lu Wushuang who was willing to die for him. He blamed himself for letting down the kindness of all these beautiful girls, and he felt guilt for not being able to repay them. He couldn't stop himself from letting out a long sigh.

Gongsun Lu'E straightened the gown and tied the belt around herself. Suddenly she felt a small package in the gown's pockets; she took it out and handed it over to Yang Guo, saying, "What's this? Do you need it?"

Yang Guo took it in his hands and felt that it was fairly heavy; he said, "What is this?"

Lu'E laughed, "I found it in your pockets, why are you asking me about it?"

Yang Guo looked at it and saw that it was a small package covered in rough cloth; he had never seen it before and immediately opened it. There was a sudden light in front of his eyes; four objects were within that package. One of them was a little dagger; on the handle was a pearl of the size of a long yan stone. It glimmered and sparkled, the

light shining on Gongsun Lu'E's graceful face; he thought, "People say that pearls are lights of the night, it appears that this isn't a lie."

Lu'E suddenly screamed, "Yi!" She stretched out her hand towards the package and picked up a small emerald colored jar; she called out, "This is the Passionless Pill."

Yang Guo was shocked and delighted; he asked, "This is the medicine that cures the poison of the Passion Flowers?"

Lu'E shook the jar a few times and felt that something was in the jar. She said with delight, "Yes, I was looking for this in the pill room for half a day; when did you take it? How did you take it? How come you haven't taken it yet? You don't know that this is the Passionless Pill, right?" In her delight, her questions were non-stop, not allowing Yang Guo any time to reply.

Yang Guo scratched his head and said, "I don't know anything about this, this... this jar of medicine; how did it get into my pockets? This really is strange."

In the light of the pearl on the dagger, Lu'E could see clearly what other things were in the package. Besides the dagger and the emerald colored jar of the Passionless Pill, there was a square piece of sheep skin about seven or eight inches in length and half of a Spirit Fungus (Lingzhi). A thought went through her mind and she said, "This piece of Spirit Fungus was the piece that was broken off by the Old Urchin."

Yang Guo said, "The Old Urchin?"

Lu'E said, "Yes. I'm in charge of the fungi room and this is the fungus from the 'Hundred Jade Plate'. The Old Urchin turned the sword, pill, fungi and library rooms upside down. He destroyed books and stole swords; he kicked over the cauldrons and ripped up the fungi; this is all the handiwork of the Old Urchin."

Yang Guo suddenly understood and said, "Yes, yes."

Lu'E quickly asked, "What?"

Yang Guo said, "This package was placed on me by Senior Zhou Lao." He now knew that Zhou Botong had the intention of aiding him; because of this, he changed his naming of 'Old Urchin' to 'Senior Zhou Lao'.

It also became clear to Lu'E, she said, "So he gave it to you."

Yang Guo said, “I didn’t even know that he gave it to me. This Wulin Senior does as he pleases in the world; his movements are mysterious. When he took my mask and scissors I didn’t notice it; when he put this package on me I felt nothing. My abilities are not even half as good as his.”

Lu'E nodded and said, “Yes, father said that he stole things from the valley and said that he must be captured but... but he took off all his clothes in front of so many people and showed that there was nothing on him.”

Yang Guo laughed, “He had hidden the package on me before that and actually managed to deceive the Valley Master by taking off his clothes.”

Lu'E opened the emerald colored jar and covered it with her left hand, shaking the contents into the palm of her hand. A square looking pill came out of the jar onto her palm; the pill was extremely dark and its smell was overpowering. Most pills are round so one can easily swallow it; but if it was from a slab of medicine, it will be long and flat.

Yang Guo had never seen a square pill before; he took the pill from Lu'E and examined it closely.

Lu'E shook the jar a few times again and patted the jar into her palm a few times before saying, “That’s it, there’s only one pill; take it now, it’ll be terrible if it falls into the pool.”

Yang Guo was about to put the pill in his mouth when he heard her say ‘there’s only one pill’, he was stunned and asked, “Only one? Has your father got any more?”

Lu'E said, “That’s why it is so precious; because there is only one pill. Otherwise why would my father get so angry?”

Yang Guo was shocked and quivered, “My Gu Gu has this poison as well; how will your father save her?”

Lu'E sighed, “I once heard from my senior apprentice brother that there were originally many Passionless Pills in the pill room; but for some reason, there was only one left. This pill is extremely hard to produce; there was no way to gather all the precious herbs and medicine to make any more. Because of this, my senior apprentice brother warned us that we must be extremely careful of the Passion Flower; if it’s a little pierce from it, one will recover from it after a few days; if that happens it’s not too serious. But

if the poison is deep, it will be difficult for the Valley Master to act because one pill can only save one person.”

Yang Guo kept on saying ‘Oh no’ and then said, “How come your father hasn’t come to save you yet?”

Lu’E immediately knew what he was thinking and saw him placing the pill back into the jar; she let out a light sigh and said, “Brother Yang, how can my father feel no shame in light of your love for Miss Long? You’re hoping that I’ll be able to take the pill back up and save Miss Long’s life.”

Yang Guo showed a little smile as his thoughts were revealed, he said, “Of course I hoped that such a kind girl as you will leave this dangerous place safely; but I also hope that my Gu Gu’s life can be saved. Even if I cure my Passion Flower poison, I won’t last long if I stay down here in this crocodile pit. Of course saving my Gu Gu is more important.” He thought, “Gu Gu’s beauty is unparalleled; it’s normal that someone like the Valley Master would want to marry her. But when Gu Gu refused to marry him, he lured her to the sword room to harm her. He really is evil; now he knows that the only Passionless Pill has been taken away, there is no way to cure the Passion Flower poison in Gu Gu. She just has thirty six days to live and all he’s concerned about is making her submit to him; even the crocodiles in this pit have more heart than him.”

Lu’E knew that no matter how hard she tries to persuade him to take the pill it will be of no use; she regretted telling him that there was only one pill so she said, “This Spirit Fungus can’t cure poisons but it can strengthen one’s body, eat it quickly.”

Yang Guo said, “Yes.” He broke the piece of Spirit Fungus into two; he put one piece into his mouth and put the other piece in front of Lu’E’s mouth, he said, “We don’t know when your father will let you go, so eat this piece to help protect yourself against this cold.”

Lu’E saw that he was concerned for her and couldn’t bear to refuse, so she opened her mouth.

This Spirit Fungus had been grown for hundreds of years; not long after the two ate it, they felt an extremely comfortable warmth throughout their bodies, a boost in their energy and they felt sharper.

Lu’E suddenly said, “Father must have known that Zhou Botong had stolen the Passionless Pill. He was lying to Miss Long when he said he was going to cure you; and

when he was forcing me to hand over the Passionless Pill, he was acting then as well.”

Yang Guo had thought about this awhile ago but he didn't want to make her sadder so he kept quiet about it. When he heard her realizing this on her own he said, “When your father let's you out, you need to be extremely careful; the best thing for you to do is leave the valley as quickly as possible.”

Lu'E sighed, “You don't know my father; since he's pushed me down here into this crocodile pit he will never change his mind and rescue me. He was already worried about me; after this event, how can he allow me to live? Brother Yang, will you let me die with you?”

Yang Guo was about to say a few words to comfort her when he suddenly heard another crocodile climbing onto the rock face, its front foot stepping onto sheepskin from the package. Yang Guo had a thought, “That sheepskin looked kind of strange.” He picked up the dagger and stabbed it between the eyes of the crocodile; a ‘pu’ sound was heard as it went straight through. The dagger that he was holding was actually extremely sharp and was capable of chopping gold and cutting jade. The crocodile struggled a little bit before falling back into the pool on its back, dead. Yang Guo said with delight, “Now that we've got this dagger, those crocodiles in the pool have run out of luck.”

He picked up the sheepskin with his left hand and brought the dagger over, using the faint light from the pearl to carefully study it. The sheepskin was coarse on one side and there was nothing odd about it; but turning it over revealed drawings of many buildings, rooms, rocks and the like.

Yang Guo looked at it for a while but didn't find anything strange about it, he said, “This sheepskin is of no use to us.”

Lu'E had been looking over his shoulder all along and suddenly said, “That's a map of our Narcissus Manor of the Passionless Valley. Look, that's the brook that led you here, that's the main hall, that's the sword room, that's the fungi room and that's the pill room...” She pointed to the map as she said this.

Yang Guo suddenly called out and said, “Look, look.” He pointed to a drawing of water underneath the pill room.

Lu'E said, “That's the crocodile pool. Ah... there's a passageway here.”

The two could see that there was a passageway drawn next to the crocodile pool and their spirits rose. Yang Guo matched the map to the crocodile pool and said, “If the map’s right, after passing through the passageway there’ll definitely be an exit. But...”

Lu’E interrupted, “But what’s strange is that the passageway is going downwards; this crocodile pool is already deep underground; where will the passageway lead if it keeps on going further down?” The passageway on the map finished at the edge of the sheep-skin, they didn’t know where it leads.

Yang Guo said, “Has your father or senior apprentice brother ever mentioned this crocodile pool before?”

Lu’E shook her head and said, “I only learned today that there were so many terrifying things hidden underneath the pill room; even senior apprentice brother may not know about it. But... but to keep all these crocodiles alive will require regular feeding, why does father...” She trembled all over as she thought about how evil her father was.

Yang Guo took a look around and noticed a dark circular shape behind the rock face; it appeared to be the entrance to a tunnel but it was too faraway. He wasn’t really sure; he thought, “Even if that is the passageway, I don’t know what other kinds of vicious creatures might be lurking around in there. If we come across them it might be even more dangerous for us than the situation we are in now. Even so, we can’t sit here and wait for death; we’re going to die anyway, so we might as well take the risk in trying to find a way out. All I want is for Miss Gongsun to get out of this danger and pass the antidote on to Gu Gu.” So he passed the dagger into the hands of Lu’E and said, “I’ll go take a look; be careful of the crocodiles.” His right foot touched the rock face and he flew away into the pool. Lu’E called out in alarm. Yang Guo’s right foot landed on the stomach of the dead crocodile and used it to leap forward; he then landed on the back of a crocodile with his left foot. The crocodile sank into the water while Yang Guo leapt to the other shore; he pressed his body against the rock and searched the surface with his hand. He called out, “There’s a large cave over here!”

Gongsun Lu’E’s lightness kung fu was not anywhere as good as his; she didn’t dare to leap over to the cave like he did. Yang Guo thought that if he went back to carry her on his back, their weight will increase. Not only will their leaping be inconvenienced, they will not be able to use the crocodiles as supports. But since it had come to this he had to risk it and called out, “Miss Gongsun, soak your gown and throw it over to me.”

Lu’E did not know what he was going to do but did as she was told; she took off her gown and gave it a quick soak in the pool then hurriedly pulled it back up. She made

two knots in the gown, forming a ball; she called out, “Its coming!” She circulated her internal energy and shot it over.

Yang Guo caught it and untied the gown. He found a place to secure his footing and used his left hand to grab tightly onto a piece of jutting rock. His right hand swung the wet gown and he said, “Listen carefully.”

He swung the wet gown forward and waved it about, a ‘pai’ sound was heard as he struck the mouth of the cave. He struck it three times in a row and asked, “Can you tell where the cave is?”

Lu'E had listened and could tell where it was, she said, “Yes.”

Yang Guo said, “Jump forward and grab the gown, I'll pull you over.”

Lu'E opened her eyes wide and tried to see but all she saw was darkness; she was really frightened and said, “I... I can't...”

Yang Guo said, “There's no need to be scared. If you miss the gown and fall into the pool, I'll dive in immediately to save you. We were afraid of the crocodiles when we first came here; but now we've got this dagger which can slice metal like butter, what have we got to fear?”

He then sent the gown forward.

Gongsun Lu'E clenched her teeth and pushed out with her feet against the rock face; her body flew up into the air and she heard the noise from the flapping gown and stretched out her hands towards it. Her right hand grabbed the lower half of the gown but her left hand grabbed thin air. As soon as Yang Guo felt his arm go heavy, he immediately swung the gown towards the cave. He was afraid that she would slip so he quickly leapt over to her and lightly grabbed her waist, holding her steadily by the cave entrance.

Gongsun Lu'E was delighted and called out; “Brother Yang that was a great idea.”

Yang Guo laughed, “We don't know what kind of vicious beasts are hiding in this passageway; we'll just let fate decide.” He then bent his body and went into the cave.

Lu'E handed the dagger to Yang Guo and said, “You take it.” Yang Guo gave her the gown and she covered her body with it.

The cave was extremely narrow; the two of them could only go through it on their hands and knees. The dampness from the crocodile pool caused the cave floor to be damp and slippery and the stench was extremely unpleasant.

Yang Guo crawled along and laughed, "This morning we were enjoying the beauty of the Passion Flowers; flowers were everywhere, birds were singing and we were surrounded by fragrant scents. After just a few hours the scenery has changed to this; I really have caused you great trouble."

Lu'E said, "How can it be blamed on you?"

After crawling along for a while, the passageway gradually became higher and they were able to walk along it. They walked for a very long time but still they did not reach the end. The ground became flatter and flatter.

Yang Guo laughed, "Looks like our bitter experience is turning to joy; we're slowly reaching safety."

Lu'E sighed and said, "Brother Yang, I know you're not feeling in the best of spirits, but you don't have to try to cheer me up..." Before she finished her words, there was a sudden laugh from the left up ahead, "Ha-ha, ha-ha, ha-ha!"

What they heard just now was definitely laughter but it sounded sad; within the 'ha-ha ha-ha' sound there was mourning and sorrow. Yang Guo and Gongsun Lu'E had never heard a sound like this. It didn't sound like calls or laughter. There was also the fact that they were deep down in a cave in complete darkness and weren't prepared for such a noise. This was much more frightening than coming upon some kind of vicious beast. Though Yang Guo was brave, he couldn't stop himself from jumping; his head bumped into the roof of the cave painfully.

Gongsun Lu'E was so scared that she broke out in a cold sweat with goose bumps all over and hugged his legs.

The two of them didn't know what to do; they didn't dare to advance or retreat.

Lu'E whispered, "Is it a ghost?" She said these words very quietly; but after these words the same voice called out, "Yes, I'm a ghost, I'm a ghost, ha-ha, ha-ha!"

Yang Guo thought, "Since they called themselves a ghost, this person isn't one." So he said loudly, "I am Yang Guo, and along with me is Miss Gongsun. The two of us have

run into some danger and we're just trying to find a way to escape it; we have no ill intentions..."

That person interrupted, "Miss Gongsun? What Miss Gongsun?"

Yang Guo said, "The daughter of Valley Master Gongsun, Gongsun Lu'E." No further sound came; it was as if that person had suddenly disappeared without a trace.

When that person was howling out with their cry that wasn't a cry and a laugh that wasn't a laugh, the two of them were extremely frightened. But they were even more frightened after this sudden silence in the darkness; the two of them clung to each other, not daring to make a single move.

After a long time, the person suddenly shouted out, "What Valley Master Gongsun; is it Gongsun Zhi?" The words were filled with anger but they could now clearly tell it was a woman's voice.

Gongsun Lu'E plucked up her courage and said, "My father's name is indeed Zhi, does Old Senior know my father?"

The person chuckled coldly and said, "Do I know him? Ha-ha, do I know him?" Lu'E did not dare to interrupt and just kept silent.

After a while, the person shouted, "What's your name?"

Lu'E said, "Junior's name is Lu'E, the Lu (green) as in red and green, E (calyx) as in the calyx of a flower."

The person gave a heng' grunt and asked, "What is your birth date?"

Lu'E was afraid that this person was asking for her birth date because she wanted to use witchcraft to harm her; she whispered in Yang Guo's ear, "Should I say it?"

Before Yang Guo could reply, the person chuckled and said, "You're eighteen this year, your birthday is on the third day of the second month, and you were born at the 'Xu' hour (7-9 p.m.), correct?"

Gongsun Lu'E was shocked and called out, "You... you... how do you know?" Suddenly she was filled with an indescribable feeling; she knew that this person would not harm her and she brushed past Yang Guo hurrying forward. After turning two bends, her

eyes were suddenly dazzled by the light; before her she saw a half clothed granny sitting on her knees on the floor, her face full of anger and with a great presence.

Lu'E gasped and stood there stunned. Yang Guo was afraid that she was in danger and quickly hurried after her.

He saw that the old granny was sitting a natural grotto; there was a large ten foot wide hole in the roof which allowed sunlight in that came from over a thousand feet above. Most likely she accidentally fell down into the hole and couldn't get out. This grotto was deep underground; even if one called and shouted, a passer by may not hear them. What really was extraordinary was that she was actually still alive after falling from so high. He saw many date trees in the places where the sunlight reached; could it be that she somehow landed on the trees just right, saving her life in the process? He saw that she only had tree bark and leaves to cover herself up with; she must have been trapped in this grotto for years. So long that her clothes have all been worn to shreds.

The granny ignored Yang Guo completely and just looked up and down at Lu'E; suddenly she gave a bleak laugh and said, "Miss, you have grown up beautifully."

Lu'E returned the compliment with a smile and went forward to greet her, "How do you do Old Senior."

The granny faced the sky and laughed with her neither cry nor laughter howl; she said, "Old Senior? Ha-ha, I'm great; I'm great, ha-ha, ha-ha!" After she said this, anger filled her face.

Lu'E did not know how she offended her by saying these respectful words; she was very frightened and looked back at Yang Guo for help.

Yang Guo knew that it would be unavoidable for the granny to lose her mind after being stuck down here for such a long time; he shook his head towards Lu'E and smiled a little, trying to say that there was no need to treat her seriously. He studied the terrain, trying to think of a plan to get out. Though the hole in the roof of the grotto was high, with his lightness kung fu, it might not be an impossible task if he took the risk.

But Lu'E was just concentrating on the granny; she saw that most of her hair had fallen out and was almost completely bald; her face was full of wrinkles but her eyes were still full of vigor. The granny was looking at Lu'E without blinking too; the two of them stared at each other, ignoring Yang Guo.

After looking at her for a while, the granny said, “You’ve got a red birthmark on your waist on the left side, haven’t you?”

Lu'E was shocked and thought, “Even father may not know about my red birthmark; how does this granny know about this? She also knows my birthday and time; it looks like this granny has a deep tie with my family.” So she said softly, “Granny, you must know my father and my dead mother, isn’t that right?”

The granny was startled and said, “Your dead mother? Ha-ha, of course I know her.” Her tone suddenly became stern and shouted, “Have you got a birthmark on your waist? Quickly let me take a look. If you’re lying I’m going to kill you right where you’re standing.”

Lu'E turned her head and looked at Yang Guo, her face blushing. Yang Guo quickly turned away and kept his back towards her. Lu'E took off her gown and uncovered her white gleaming waist. Indeed there was a red thumb size birthmark on her waist; the red and white contrasted each other, like a red plum in the middle of a field of snow, looking extremely adorable.

The granny just took one look and she trembled all over; her eyes were filled with tears and she opened her arms, calling out, “My precious, mother has been thinking about you bitterly.”

Lu'E looked at her expression and suddenly her natural instincts were stirred, she threw herself on her and cried, “Mother, mother!”

Yang Guo was startled when he heard one of them call out ‘my precious’ and the other call out ‘mother’; he turned around and saw the two hugging each other tightly. Lu'E was shaking while the granny was in tears; Yang Guo thought, “Could it be that this granny is actually Miss Gongsun’s mother?”

The granny’s eyebrows suddenly rose and her face was filled with an air of death, just like Valley Master Gongsun when he fought. Yang Guo silently called out, “No!” He was afraid that the granny would harm Lu'E and dashed forward. But all she did was push Lu'E lightly away on her shoulders and shout, “Stand up, I’m going to question you.”

Lu'E was startled; she moved away from her and called out; “Mother!”

The granny said sternly, “Why did Gongsun Zhi send you here? He wanted you to come here to lie to me with your sweet talk, didn’t he?”

Lu'E shook her head and said, "Mother, you're actually still alive, mother!" Her face was filled with both joy and sadness, showing a daughter's love; how can this be faked?

The granny kept on asking sternly, "Gongsun Zhi said I was dead, didn't he?"

Lu'E said, "I have been filled with sadness over the years; I thought that I was a child without a mother. But my mother had actually been alive all this time; I'm really overwhelmed with joy today."

The granny pointed to Yang Guo and said, "Who's he? Why did you bring him here?"

Lu'E said, "Mother, listen to me." She then told her how Yang Guo entered the valley, how he contracted the Passion Flower poison, how the two fell down into the crocodile pool; she told it all from the beginning. But she kept the matter of Valley Master Gongsun marrying Xiao Longnu from her in case her mother would be disturbed by this and break out in a jealous rage.

Whenever Lu'E was unclear on something, the granny would ask her carefully about it. Apart from the matter about Xiao Longnu, Lu'E did not keep anything from her. The more the granny heard, the more peaceful she became; her expression towards Yang Guo was also getting more and more pleasant. When Lu'E described how Yang Guo killed crocodiles and how he protected her, the granny kept on calling out, "Good, good! Little kid, looks like my daughter hasn't picked you without good reason."

Lu'E's face went red and she lowered her head.

Yang Guo knew that it wasn't conveniently to explain all the intricacies within all these events right now so he said, "Auntie Gongsun, we first need to come up with an escape plan; how do we get out?"

The granny's face sank and shouted, "What Auntie Gongsun? Don't ever say the words Auntie Gongsun again. Don't think that because I look frail I can't do anything; if I want to kill you it'll be as easy as turning my palm."

A sudden 'bo' sound was heard as something came out of her mouth, a 'zheng' sound was heard as it knocked Yang Guo's dagger to the ground.

Yang Guo felt his arm tremble severely; his five fingers couldn't hold on and the 'dang' sound heard was the dagger striking the floor. Yang Guo leapt backwards in shock; he saw that there was a date stone by the dagger, spinning around on the floor. He was

still in shock as he thought, “With the force that I grip the dagger with, even if it was Jinlun Fawang’s golden wheel, Da’erba’s golden rod or Valley Master Gongsun’s jagged saber, they wouldn’t be able to knock the dagger out of my hands. Though I wasn’t prepared, this granny just spat out a date stone from her mouth to do this; this person’s martial arts really are awesome.”

Lu’E saw his face change color and she quickly said, “Brother Yang, my mother won’t harm you.” She went over to him and tugged his hand; she turned to her mother and said, “Mother, tell him how to greet you. He doesn’t know yet.”

The granny laughed and said, “Fine, this old woman’s name will never change; the people of Jianghu call me the ‘Iron Palm Lotus Qiu Qianchi’. What should you call me? Haha, shouldn’t you be kowtowing to me and calling me ‘mother-in-law’?”

Lu’E quickly said, “Mother, don’t you know, there’s nothing between brother Yang and I, he... he just has good intentions towards me and nothing else.”

Qiu Qianchi said angrily, “Nothing else? Nothing between you? Where are your clothes? Why have you only got underwear on? Why are you covered by his gown?” She suddenly pitched her voice up and screamed, “If the one named Yang is thinking about being shameless like that Gongsun Zhi I’m going to make sure that he dies without a *complete corpse. [*Refers to hacking the body apart.] The one named Yang, are you going to marry my daughter?”

Yang Guo saw that she spoke madly and was impervious to reason; how could she force him to marry her daughter after just speaking a few words? But if he bluntly refuses, it would be extremely embarrassing for Lu’E. There’s also the fact that this granny’s martial arts are extremely high and her character extremely weird; if he said any words that were just slightly displeasing, she would kill him immediately. He saw that the most important thing right now was for the three of them to get out of this place so he said, “Please relax Old Senior; Yang Guo is not a man without a conscience; I will never dare to forget the kindness that Lu’E has shown me.” These words were extremely agreeable; though he didn’t agree to marry Lu’E, the words pleased the ears of Qiu Qianchi; she nodded, “You’d better not.”

Gongsun Lu’E of course knew what Yang Guo meant by this; as she looked at Yang Guo, there was a look of disappointment in her eyes and she lowered her head. A while passed before she said to Qiu Qianchi, “Mother, how did you get down here? Why did father say that you were dead and let me stay saddened for all these years? If I’d known you were here, I would have risked my life to come and find you.” She saw that

her mother was unclothed; if she let her mother wear Yang Guo's gown then she would be insufficiently dressed; so she tore the back and front of the gown and draped it over her mother's shoulders.

Yang Guo was saddened when he saw what a state the gown that Xiao Longnu had made for him had fallen into; it stirred the Passion Flower's poison and his body broke out with unbearable pain once again.

When Qiu Qianchi saw this, her face moved slightly and her right hand searched for something on her person; but after a thought, her hand came out empty handed.

From her mother's expression and actions, Lu'E had an inkling of her mother's thoughts; she pleaded, "Mother, can you cure the Passion Flower's poison that brother Yang has in him?"

Qiu Qianchi said in a subdued manner, "I have my own troubles being trapped down here; if others can't save me, how can I save others?"

Lu'E said anxiously, "Mother, if you save brother Yang, he will definitely help you. Even if you can't save him, brother Yang will do all he can to help you. Isn't that right brother Yang?"

Yang Guo did not have a good opinion of Qiu Qianchi but he should help her on behalf of Lu'E; so he said, "Of course. Senior has been down here for so long, you must be very familiar with the layout and terrain of this place; can Senior tell me one or two things about it?"

Qiu Qianchi gave a long sigh and said, "Though this place is deep in the ground, it's not that difficult to get out." She looked at Yang Guo and said, "You must be thinking that if it's not hard, how come I'm still down here? Ai... The tendons in my arms and legs were destroyed long ago, and all my martial arts went with it."

Yang Guo had noticed a while ago that there was something different about the movements of her arms and legs. But Lu'E was shocked when she heard this, she asked, "You did this by falling from up above?"

Qiu Qianchi said gloomily; "No! A person did this to me."

Lu'E was even more shocked by this and quivered, "Mother, who did this to you? We must take revenge against that person."

Qiu Qianchi chuckled, “Revenge? Will you be able to do it? The person who destroyed my tendons is Gongsun Zhi.”

Ever since Lu'E found out that she was her mother, she had a feeling that something like this had happened; but when she heard this with her own ears, she trembled all over and asked, “Why... why?”

Qiu Qianchi glanced coldly at Yang Guo and said, “It's because I killed someone, a young beautiful girl; huh, it's because I killed Gongsun Zhi's beloved.” When she reached this point, her teeth chattered as she bit down. Lu'E was frightened and moved back a little away from her mother while getting closer to Yang Guo. The grotto became silent.

Qiu Qianchi said suddenly, “Are you hungry? There are only dates for food in this grotto.” After she said this, she got on all fours and crawled forward like a wild beast; her movements were very swift. Lu'E and Yang Guo both felt awful when they saw this sight. But Qiu Qianchi had been crawling like this for years and didn't think anything of it. Lu'E was about to dash forward to help her when she saw that she had already reached the base of a large date tree.

Years ago, a date seed must have been blown down into the grotto by the wind and sprouted down here, growing and blossoming and slowly flourishing; and from that one seed, fifty or sixty trees eventually grew. If a date seed had not been blown down here or if it had fallen onto infertile ground, Yang Guo and Lu'E would have come across upon a pile of bones. Who could think that this pile of bones would be an eminent member of Wulin? And Lu'E would never know that this was actually her mother.

Qiu Qianchi gathered a date stone from the floor and placed it into her mouth; she raised her head and spat out, the date stone shot upwards for tens of feet and struck a branch; the branch swayed and tens of dates rained downwards from the branch.

Yang Guo nodded and thought, “So after her tendons were ruined she managed to learn this great date stone spitting skill. The saying ‘heaven never seals off all its exits’ isn't a lie.” His spirits were roused as he thought about this.

Lu'E picked up the dates from the floor and divided them up for her mother and Yang Guo to eat; she ate a few her self as well. In the middle of this underground grotto, she was serving her mother and acting just like a little hostess.

Qiu Qianchi has endured one of the most tragic experience in anyone's life; hate had been gathered up in her heart over the last ten years. Even if she wasn't a hot tempered person and was a peaceful, kind natured woman, she would still have changed into this unreasonable person. But a mother's love is a natural instinct; when she saw the daughter she had been thinking about night and day had grown into such a beautiful girl, her temper was calmed. The warmth of her love towards her daughter was gradually stirred and she asked, "What has Gongsun Zhi been saying about me?"

Lu'E said, "Father has never talked about mother. When I was little I asked if I looked like my mother. What illness did mother die of? Father would suddenly break out in a temper and scold me for a while, telling me not to bring this up ever again. A few years later I asked him again and once again, he shouted at me."

Qiu Qianchi said, "What were you thinking?"

Tears formed in Lu'E's eyes and she said, "I thought that my mother must have been a beautiful, gentle woman and father loved you deeply. Whenever other people mentioned you he would be extremely upset and sad; from then on I didn't dare to ask him about you again."

Qiu Qianchi chuckled and said, "You must be extremely disappointed; your mother isn't a beautiful and gentle woman but a vicious, cruel and ugly old hag. If you knew about this, I think you would rather not see me."

Lu'E stretched out her arms to hug her around the neck and said tenderly, "Mother, you're how I imagined you would be." She turned to Yang Guo and asked, "Brother Yang, my mother is beautiful, isn't she? She treats me well and she treats you well, right?" Her words were filled with sincerity; in her heart, she looked upon her mother as the greatest woman in the world.

Yang Guo thought, "She might have been beautiful when she was younger but how can you say that she's beautiful now? You're right when you said that she treats you well but she might not have any good intentions in her heart towards me." But since Lu'E asked like this, he could only reply, "Yes, you're right." His tone was not anywhere near as sincere as Lu'E's; Qiu Qianchi knew it straight away when she heard it, she thought, "Heaven has pitied me and has given me the chance to see my daughter again; though she is filled with respect and love for me now, it would be difficult to ensure that it will be like this forever. I need to tell her about all the bitterness and wrong that I've suffered." So she said, "E'er, you asked, how did I get here? Why Gongsun Zhi said that I'd died? Sit down, I'll tell you all about it."

Qiu Qianchi said slowly, “Gongsun Zhi’s ancestors were officials in the Tang court. Later on, because they wanted to avoid the troubles of the court, they decided to reside here in this secluded valley. His ancestors worked as military officials and his family’s martial arts can be classed as a respectable skill; but his real advanced martial arts were taught to him by me.” Yang Guo and Lu’E both felt rather surprised by this.

Qiu Qianchi said proudly, “You two are still young, of course you wouldn’t understand the principles within them. The Iron Palm Clan Chief, the ‘Iron Palm Water Floater’ Qiu Qianren is my brother. Yang Guo, tell Lu’E about the Iron Palm Clan.”

Yang Guo was startled and asked, “The Iron Palm Clan? I’m not very knowledgeable; I really don’t know what the Iron Palm Clan is.”

Qiu Qianchi scolded him, “Little punk, you dare tell lies in front of me! The Iron Palm Clan is famous throughout the world. Along with the Beggar Clan, we’re classed as the world’s two greatest clans; how can you not know?”

Yang Guo said, “Junior has heard of the Beggar Clan before but the Iron Palm Clan...”

Qiu Qianchi was exasperated and scolded, “Ha-ha, you’ve practiced martial arts and you don’t even know anything about the Iron Palm Clan...”

Lu’E saw that her mother’s face had reddened with anger; she interrupted and tried to persuade her, “Mother, brother Yang is not even twenty yet; he has studied with his Master deep in the mountains ever since he was young; of course there are things about the Wulin that he doesn’t know.”

Qiu Qianchi ignored her and kept on grumbling.

Twenty years ago, the Iron Palm Clan was indeed very famous; but at the second Mount Hua competition, the Iron Palm Chief Iron Palm Water Floater Qiu Qianren entered religion and the tutelage of the Reverend Yideng. The Iron Palm Clan dispersed immediately after that. When the Iron Palm Clan was dispersing, Yang Guo had just been born and no one had ever mentioned the clan to him before, so naturally he wouldn’t know anything about it. His mother Mu Nianci had actually lost her virtue to his father Yang Kang on Iron Palm Peak; his mother became pregnant and Yang Guo was conceived.

Now as Qiu Qianchi talked about this, his eyes stared, not knowing how to reply. Qiu Qianchi had been in the Passionless Valley for almost thirty years; she has not heard about the changes in the Wulin world. She just knew that the Iron Palm Clan had been

famous for hundreds of years, so they must be flourishing even more at the present time. But now she heard that Yang Guo hadn't even heard of the three words 'Iron Palm Clan' before; of course she would break out in a thunderous rage.

Yang Guo was being insulted and cursed at for no reason at all; at first he forced himself to take it; but as it went on, the insults were beginning to go too far. He was starting to get angry and was about to answer back when, just as he was going to open his mouth, he saw Lu'E staring at him. Her eyes were filled with tenderness and her face was looking apologetic. Yang Guo's heart softened and his face showed a helpless expression; he was beginning to feel contented as he thought, "The worse your mother treats me the better you treat me. The old bat's words just brush past the ears, while the beauty's warmth goes to my heart." His brain became active as his heart relaxed; suddenly he thought, "Miss Wanyan Ping's martial arts appeared to be of the same school as Gongsun Zhi; she also said that she practiced the 'Iron Palm'; she must have some kind of connection with the Iron Palm Clan."

He closed his eyes and recalled that when Wanyan Ping fought Yelu Qi, he could remember about seventy or eight percent of it. When he fought Gongsun Zhi just a few hours ago, his attacks and form were even clearer in his mind and he called out, "Ah, I remember."

Qiu Qianchi said, "What?"

Yang Guo said, "Three years ago I saw an extraordinary Wulin Senior battle eighteen men from the world of Jianghu; he fought them all empty handed. In the end he seriously injured nine of them and killed the other nine. I heard this great person say that he was from the Iron Palm Clan."

Qiu Qianchi asked quickly, "What did this person look like?"

Yang Guo made it up as he went along and said, "This person was bald and was around sixty years of age, his face glowed and he was tall, he wore a green gown and said he said his surname was Qiu..."

Qiu Qianchi suddenly shouted, "Bullshit! My two brothers are not bald, they are not tall and they have never worn green before. You saw that I'm tall and bald so you said they're bald as well?"

Yang Guo thought, "Crap!" But his face remained unmoved and he laughed, "There's no need to rush me; I didn't say this person was your brother. Could it be that everyone

who's named Qiu is your brother?"

Qiu Qianchi could say nothing after this rebuttal and asked, "What were his martial arts like?"

Yang Guo stood up and performed a few fists of Wanyan Ping's mixed up with the form and palms of Gongsun Zhi; eventually he became more and more fluid in his actions and the grotto was filled with elegant palms and powerful punches. Though his stances were slightly wrong, it was somewhat better than the original palm techniques of Wanyan Ping. His natural movements covered up all the places that were out of form with Wanyan Ping's techniques. His hand and leg movements were tight and complete and whenever he sent out a palm, he would deliberately put extra effort in it to make it more vicious.

Qiu Qianchi watched with great joy, she called out, "E'er, E'er, that's the martial arts of our Iron Clan Palm, watch carefully."

Yang Guo performed these stances with Qiu Qianchi pointing out the stances and explaining the lethal aspects of them from the side.

Yang Guo was amused and thought, "If I carry on any longer she'll see through me." He then stopped and said, "At this point, the Wulin senior had won and there wasn't a need to carry on."

Qiu Qianchi was delighted and said, "You've remembered a lot of the stances wrongly, your hand movements are incorrect as well; but to perform it as you did is really something that is difficult to do. What was the name of this Wulin Senior? What did he say to you?"

Yang Guo said, "This extraordinary person's movements were like a divine dragon. After he won he flew away. I just heard from the remaining nine injured men and they were blaming themselves saying, how could we give trouble to Master Qiu of the Iron Palm Clan? Weren't we signing our own death warrants?"

Qiu Qianchi said with delight, "That's right, the one named Qiu is most probably a disciple of my brother." Qiu Qianchi loved martial arts; but for the last ten years she hadn't been able to move her arms and legs freely. Now, as she saw Yang Guo perform her clan's martial arts, she was thrilled and was itching to have a go. She then started to lecture the two about her clan's palm techniques and lightness kung fu.

Yang Guo was anxious to get out as quickly as possible so he could deliver the antidote to Xiao Longnu. Though what he heard was advanced and refined martial arts that would benefit him, when he thought about the suffering of Xiao Longnu, how could he keep a frame of mind for learning martial arts? He then signaled to Lu'E with his eyes.

Lu'E understood and said, "Mother, why did you teach father martial arts?"

Qiu Qianchi said angrily, "Call him Gongsun Zhi! Why father this and that?"

Lu'E said, "Yes. Mother, please go on."

Qiu Qianchi said, with hate in her voice; "Huh!" After a while she continued, "This happened twenty years ago. My two brothers got into an argument..."

Lu'E interrupted, "I've got two uncles?"

Qiu Qianchi said, "Don't you know?" Her tone became stern with a hint of scolding.

Lu'E thought, "How would I know?" She replied, "No, no one's ever told me before."

Qiu Qianchi sighed and said, "You... you really don't know anything. Pitiful... pitiful!" After a while she continued, "Your uncles are twins, your older uncle is called Qiu Qianzhang, your second uncle is Qiu Qianren. Their voices, figure and faces were the same, but the two's characters and fate were very different. Second brother's martial arts are extremely high but first brother's martial arts were very ordinary. Second brother taught me martial arts but first brother and I were a lot closer to each other. Second brother was the chief of the Iron Palm Clan; he had many clan matters to deal with and was busy with his own martial arts, so we saw very little of each other. When he taught me martial arts, he was strict and didn't say much to me. But first brother was very close to me; he would say, sister this and sister that. Later on when the two argued, I sided with first brother."

Lu'E said, "Mother, what did the two uncles argued about?"

Qiu Qianchi's face suddenly showed a hint of a smile and said, "This matter is not serious but not too insignificant either; it's just that my second brother was too obstinate. When second brother became the chief of the Iron Palm Clan, his name 'Iron Palm Water Floater Qiu Qianren' was famous throughout the world of the Wulin. Very few knew my elder brother's name. Whenever my elder brother went out, he would sometimes borrow my second brother's name for convenience. The two of them looked the

same and were real brothers, so what's so bad about borrowing his name? But second brother didn't see it this way; he would argue about this all the time, saying elder brother was a swindler and trickster. My elder brother had a good temper; whenever second brother scolded him he would just laugh and apologize. One time, second brother went too far. I couldn't do anything and so added a few words to help first brother. This brought trouble onto me and we argued. I left the Iron Palm Peak in anger and never returned."

"I roamed Jianghu by myself. One time, I was pursuing a scoundrel and came to the Passionless Valley by accident. This was punishment for the bad deeds in my last life and I met Gongsun Zhi... this evil... this evil scoundrel. We eventually got married. I was older than him by a few years and my martial arts were a lot stronger than his. After we got married not only did I teach him martial arts, I looked after his everyday needs; he didn't have to do anything in the valley. His family's martial arts have its ingenious aspects but there were too many holes in them. It was me who thought about it carefully and helped him improve it. One time, a strong enemy attacked; if it wasn't for me driving them away, this Passionless Valley would have been flattened long ago. Who could have predicted that this scoundrel would repay these deeds with ingratitude? After he grew his wings he forgot about where all his martial arts came from, and who saved him in his time of danger." She then spurted out a load of insults and curses with the insults becoming eviler as it went on.

Lu'E blushed when she heard this; she felt that insulting her husband like this in front of Yang Guo was a bit embarrassing. She kept on calling out, "Mother, mother!" But how could she stop her? Yang Guo loved it; he hated Gongsun Zhi too and enjoyed these insults immensely. He couldn't stop himself from adding a few words to stir Qiu Qianchi's mood further. If it wasn't for Lu'E, he too would have opened his mouth and insulted him as well.

Qiu Qianchi exhausted her insults until nothing new could be added; she had repeated everything she said and had to stop. She continued, "That year I was pregnant with you and it was unavoidable that my character would become a bit more anxious and worried. Who knew that while it seemed like he treated me the same on the outside, he was having an affair with a maid behind my back. After you were born, he still carried on with this maid. I didn't know anything; I thought that after we had this beautiful daughter, he would treat me better. I was deceived by them for a few years. One day I accidentally stumbled across them and heard them discussing about leaving the valley together and never returning."

“I was hiding behind a tree and heard that scoundrel say that he was worried about how high my martial arts were and the further they went the better; how I was too controlling and didn’t give him any freedom. He said he only felt alive when he was with that bitch maid. I had always thought his feelings for me were real, but when I heard this I was so angry that I almost fainted. I wanted to dash forward and kill the two right there and then. Although he was heartless, I still looked back fondly upon the many years of us being a husband and wife. He was originally a good person, this must be the fault of that seducing bitch using her charms on him. I held my anger and stood behind the tree, listening carefully.”

“I heard them say that two days later I’ll be meditating for seven days and nights without leaving the room. They would take this chance to leave the valley, and by the time I’ve found out seven days later, they’ll be long gone. I shivered when I heard this; heaven must have pitied me to give me this chance to see through their plans. Otherwise, where on earth would I be able to find them seven days later?” By this point, her teeth were chattering with fury.

Lu’E asked, “What was the young maid called? Was she beautiful?”

Qiu Qianchi said, “Crap! Beautiful my arse! This maid seduced him through her words; whatever the bastard said she agreed with and she would sweet talk him saying that he was the greatest man on this earth, that he was a great hero. Huh, that bitch was called Rou’er. That Gongsun Zhi with his sinful ancestors, what stance or form of his that I don’t know? He’s a great hero? He’s not even worthy to be a follower of my big brother; if he tried to pour wine for my second brother he would be kicked out on his butt.”

By this point, Yang Guo was beginning to feel a little sympathy for Gongsun Zhi, he thought, “It must be because you were too controlling and that your looking down on him was what forced him to finally fight back.”

Lu’E was afraid that her mother would break out in another bout of non stop cursing, so she asked quickly, “Mother, what happened then?”

Qiu Qianchi said, “The two animals had decided that in the morning on the third day, they’ll meet there again and leave together. They said that in the two upcoming days they’ll need to be extremely careful and not leave any clues as to what they were doing in case I found out. The two then continued on with talking rubbish. The bitch looked at the bastard captivated, as if she were looking at someone more important than the Emperor; revering him more than gods and goddesses. That bastard felt proud of himself; he kept on praising himself and then hugged and touched that slut. Their shame-

less actions almost angered me to death right there and then. Early on the third day, I pretended to meditate in the meditation chamber while Gongsun Zhi came over and peeked in a few times through the window. I waited for him to leave and then utilized my lightness kung fu and rushed to their meeting place. That bitch had arrived there before him. Without saying a word I grabbed her and tossed her into a Passion Flower thicket....” Yang Guo and Lu’E both gasped.

Qiu Qianchi glanced at them and continued, “After a while Gongsun Zhi arrived; there is no need to describe the panicky state he was in when he saw Rou’er rolling about and crying out in pain in the Passion Flowers. I leaped out from behind the tree and held him with my two hands then threw him down into the thicket as well. The valley has an antidote to the Passion Flower poison that had been passed down from generation to generation; it is called the Passionless Pill. Gongsun Zhi struggled and picked himself up; he then helped that slut off the ground and rushed to the pill room, wanting to get the Passionless Pill to cure their poison. Ha-ha, guess what they saw?”

Lu’E said, “Mother, what did they see?”

Yang Guo thought, “You must have destroyed all the Passionless Pills; what else could it be?”

Qiu Qianchi did indeed say, “Ha-ha, when he got to the room, he saw a bowl filled with frosty arsenic water and hundreds of Passionless Pills soaking in the bowl. If he wanted to take the Passionless Pill he would have to take in the poison of the frosty arsenic water; if he didn’t take it, he would still die. The method of producing the Passionless Pill is a family secret. It is extremely difficult to get all the precious herbs and medicines to produce them. To make a batch of Passionless Pills requires the spring dew and autumn frost; it will take three years to make. He then rushed to the meditation chamber and begged on his knees for their lives. He knew that I would muse over on our marriage and wouldn’t destroy all the pills, keeping some just in case. He struck himself across the face many times; he cried and swore that if I spared the two them he would send Rou’er away and never see her again. And he said he would never dare to do such a thing again.”

“As I heard him beg, his mouth kept on talking about Rou’er. I was angry and took out a Passionless Pill and put it on the table. I said, ‘There is only one Passionless Pill left. Only one of you can live. You know that it would be of no use if you each take half. You decide whether you want to save her or save yourself.’ He immediately took the pill with him and hurried to the pill room. I followed after him. By that time, the bitch was in unbearable pain and was rolling about on the floor.

Gongsun Zhi said, 'Rou'er, go in peace. I'll follow you in death.' He then drew out a sword.

When Rou'er saw how loving he was, she was extremely touched and said, 'Good, good. We'll be a husband and wife in the underworld.' Gongsun Zhi pierced her chest with the sword and killed her.

"I was outside the pill room looking in through the window and was slightly alarmed, I was afraid that the second move will go for his throat. When he raised the sword, I was about to call out to him to stop; but then I saw him wiping the blood away from his sword on Rou'er's body before putting the sword back into its sheath. He turned to the window and said, 'Sister Chi, I'm willing to repent; I've killed that bitch with my own hands, just spare me.'" He lifted his hand towards his mouth and swallowed the Passionless Pill. This wasn't something that I had expected, but since it had ended this way and he was repenting sincerely, I was very pleased. He then planned a feast to apologize to me. I scolded him for awhile and he kept on saying that he deserved to die and he swore hundreds of poisonous oaths, saying that he would never betray me again."

Yang Guo thought, "You're falling into his trap!" However Lu'E was in tears.

Qiu Qianchi said angrily, "What? You pity that bastard?" Lu'E shook her head and didn't say anything. She was actually crying at her father's cruelty and heartlessness.

Qiu Qianchi continued, "I drank two cups of wine and chuckled; I then took out another Passionless Pill from my pockets and placed it on the table. I laughed, 'You might have acted a bit too fast; I was just testing what kind of person you were. If you had begged for just a little while longer I would have given two pills to you. You would have been able to save the life of that little beauty, wouldn't that have been great?'"

Lu'E quickly asked, "Mother, if he actually did beg you for a little while longer, would you have given him two pills?"

Qiu Qianchi thought for a while and said, "I don't know. At that time, the thought of saving that slut passed through my mind. If I saved her and sent her away, then Gongsun Zhi would have been touched by this and might have actually come back to me, not daring to do such things again. But all he cared about was his life and he quickly killed his own lover. That can't be blamed on me."

“Gongsun Zhi picked up the Passionless Pill and looked at it for a long while before he raised his cup and laughed, ‘Sister Chi, that’s in the past, why bring it up? It’s better to kill that girl and tie things up neatly. Let’s drink.’ I was slightly suspicious when he kept on telling me to drink but I was feeling great and joyful and actually became quite drunk. By the time I woke up, I was already down in this grotto and the tendons in my arms and legs had been destroyed by him. That bastard did not have the guts to see me again. Huh, he must have thought that I’d died long ago.”

When she finished talking about this, her eyes suddenly developed a fierce light and her expression was terrifying. Yang Guo and Lu’E both turned away, not daring to look her in the eye. The three of them didn’t say a single word for a long, long time.

Lu’E took a look around and all saw that the only things in the cave were rocks, hair and grass; she said somberly, “Mother, have you been relying on these dates only for all these years?”

Qiu Qianchi said, “Yes. Do you think that bastard would send me food?”

Lu’E hugged her and cried, “Mother!”

Yang Guo said, “Has Gongsun Zhi ever mentioned an exit to this grotto?”

Qiu Qianchi chuckled, “He never mentioned that there was such a grotto and pool beneath the manor in all the years we were married. If there was another exit, that bastard would not have put me here. He put those crocodiles in the pool afterwards; he was still afraid that that I would somehow manage to get out.”

Yang Guo looked around and saw that indeed there was no other way out apart from the entrance. He lifted his head and looked at the hole in the grotto roof. It was at least a thousand feet off the ground, the tallest tree down there was just forty or fifty feet tall, even if twenty of them were stacked together they would not reach the roof. He thought for a while but couldn’t come up with anything. He then said, “I’ll take a look from the top of the tree.” He then leapt on top of a date tree and saw that there were bumps and grooves higher up the stone walls; it wasn’t like down below where it was all smooth and slippery. He then climbed up along the wall and was getting higher and higher; he was pleased and turned back to Lu’E and called out, “Miss Gongsun, if I can get out I’ll let a rope down and get both of you out.”

He climbed up about six or seven hundred feet; with his outstanding lightness kung fu, he managed to turn all the dangers he met along the way into minor obstacles. But

when he was about seventy or eighty feet away from the entrance, the walls became smooth and slippery without any hand holds and the walls slanted inwards as well. You wouldn't be able to get out unless you were a fly.

Yang Guo took a look around and saw that the opening of the cave was around ten feet wide; more than enough space for someone to pass through. He had a plan and slipped back down to the bottom of the grotto and said, "We can get out! But we'll need a long rope." He then took out the dagger and cut bark off the date trees and tied them into a rope. Gongsun Lu'E was delighted and helped him. Although the two were quick, they had to work for over four hours. The sky was dark before they finished forming an extremely long rope made out of tree bark.

Yang Guo held the rope and tugged it a few times with force; he said, "It won't snap." He then used the dagger to cut off a branch that was around fifteen feet in length and tied one end of the rope to the middle of the branch and wrapped the rope up around it. He then climbed up along the wall again until he neared the top. He then used the "Thousand Kilogram Fall" in his legs to secure his footing and circulated energy into his arms. He shouted out, "Get up!" He threw the tree branch towards the opening of the cave. He used just the right amount of energy and when the branch came back down, it hung across the opening of the cave. Yang Guo pulled the rope to make sure the branch was secure across the opening of the cave. Just two tugs, after which he felt the branch was tight, secure and would be able to take his weight. He called out, "I'm going up!" He grabbed the rope and climbed up it; he looked down and saw that Lu'E and her mother had become two small black images in the indistinct evening light.

He used more strength in his hands and climbed up even quicker; in a short while he had reached the branch that was hanging across the opening of the cave. He bent his arms and a 'hu' sound was heard as he flew out of the cave and landed on the ground.

He took in a few deep breaths and then stood up. He saw that a bright moon had risen in the east above the mountains. He had been trapped down in the pool and grotto for half a day; now as he gained freedom, he felt an indescribable comfort and thought, "Will I feel no boredom at all if I stay in the tomb with Gu Gu? It is clear that the affect of the surroundings depends on one's feelings; if one wants to get out but can't they'll feel troubled in their hearts; but for those who don't want to get out, getting out will create misery." He then lowered the rope.

As soon as Qiu Qianchi saw Yang Guo climb out of the cave, she cursed her daughter, "Stupid girl, how can you let him get out by himself? Why would he still be worried about us once he gets out?"

Lu'E said, "Mother, relax, brother Yang is not that sort of person."

Qiu Qianchi said angrily, "All men are the same; what good men are there?" She then turned her head towards her daughter and looked at her carefully, she said, "Stupid girl, you've been taken advantage of by him haven't you?"

Lu'E's face went red and said, "Mother, what are you trying to say, I don't understand."

Qiu Qianchi was even angrier and said, "If you don't understand then why did your face go red? Let me tell you, when it comes to men you cannot give them one single step, you cannot be careless; can't you see what happened to your mother?" Just as she was beginning to carry on non-stop, Lu'E got up and caught the rope. She tied it around tightly around her mother's waist and smiled, "Look, does brother Yang care about us or not?" She then tugged on the rope signaling to Yang Guo that she had tied her mother in place.

Qiu Qianchi gave a 'heng' grunt and said, "Let me tell you, once we get back up you better make sure you hold onto him tightly and don't give him an inch. Zhang fu, zhang fu (zhang fu=husband, zhang= ten feet), within ten feet they are still your husband but once outside of ten feet, they're not your husband anymore, do you understand? Your grandpa named your mother Qianchi, a thousand (qian) feet (chi) is a hundred zhang, ha-ha, what husband is there outside of a thousand feet?"

Lu'E was amused but sad at the same time; she thought, "Mother's thinking really is wishful; he hasn't got a place for me in his heart." Her eyes went red and she turned her head.

Qiu Qianchi was just about to say something when she felt the rope around her waist tighten and her body lifted upwards slowly into the air. Lu'E looked at her mother and although she knew that Yang Guo would immediately lower the rope to rescue her, she was alone in this grotto all by herself for the time being and started to tremble with fear.

Yang Guo pulled Qiu Qianchi out of the cave and untied the rope from her waist. He lowered the rope down for a second time. Only after wrapping the rope around her waist did Lu'E relax a little; she pulled on the rope and felt it tighten around her waist; her body rose up into the air. She saw that the date trees at the bottom of the cave were getting smaller and smaller, while the stars above her were getting brighter and brighter. Just a few more tens of feet and she would be able to get out of the cave.

Suddenly she heard someone shout out from the opening followed by the rope getting loose and her body fall straight back down. What chance is there of staying alive while dropping hundreds of feet? Lu'E screamed and almost fainted; she felt her body plummeting downwards but could do nothing about it.

Yang Guo was pulling Lu'E up and saw that he was about to bring her out when suddenly he heard footsteps from behind him; someone had actually come to attack him from behind. He was extremely startled by this; he couldn't worry about trying to turn around to fight off the attacker and just pulled the rope as quickly as possible.

He heard the attacker shout; "What are you doing sneaking around here?" The sound of a ferocious wind followed, and an extremely long and heavy weapon was sent out towards his back.

From the sounds of the weapon, Yang Guo knew it was the short man Fan Yiweng; with this danger he could only return his left hand and push the staff away, dispersing the force of this attack. Fan Yiweng couldn't see Yang Guo's face in this darkness but knew that his opponent was highly skilled. He took back his staff and swept the staff out again towards his opponent's waist; he had put all his strength behind this attack and really wanted to break his opponent into two pieces.

Yang Guo was holding up Lu'E along with the fairly weighty long rope with his right hand only, in a little while he would struggle to keep control. When he saw the staff come towards him again, he again sent out his left palm to disperse the attack. He didn't predict that this attack of Fan Yiweng's was so ferocious, when his left palm met the staff his whole body trembled, his right hand couldn't hold on and the rope slipped with Lu'E plummeting downwards.

From the screams of Lu'E, one could tell that she was at the top of the grotto; Qiu Qianchi and Yang Guo both called out. Yang Guo didn't care about defending himself against the staff and sent his left hand forward as he bent to take the rope. But the force that Lu'E was falling down with was extremely high; the weight of Lu'E and the rope along with their plummeting speed created a force of about a thousand kilos. Yang Guo just held the rope for a little while before the force pulled him forwards headfirst towards the entrance of the cave. Though his martial arts were high, he couldn't make a single move right now.

Qiu Qianchi's martial arts had been lost along with the tendons in her arms and legs; she could only watch anxiously from the side as the rope outside the cave became shorter and shorter. Once the rope reaches its end, Yang Guo and Lu'E would fall tragi-

cally to their deaths. The end of the rope flew towards Qiu Qianchi as the rope pulled down quickly with Yang Guo and Lu'E's weight. As it neared its end, Qiu Qianchi had an idea, "You evil bastard, I'm going to take you with us." She made sure of her aim and struck the rope, though there wasn't much force behind the push, she managed to get the direction right and made it wrap around Fan Yiweng's waist tightly a few times.

Fan Yiweng felt the rope around his waist tighten and quickly used the "Thousand Kilogram Fall" to steady himself. But he had both Yang Guo's and Lu'E's weight to contend with along with their plummeting force; it brought him step by step closer towards the cave entrance. Fan Yiweng saw that just another step forward and he too would fall into the cave. With this shock he quickly held the rope with his left hand and braced himself against the cave with his right hand, he gave a shout as he used the cave for support and actually managed to stop the rope.

At that time, Lu'E was just a few tens of feet off the ground; she really was a hairs-breadth away from death. The most powerful force is the force of a falling object, a little stone falling from such a height would have tremendous force in it, by the time Fan Yiweng had exerted all his strength to oppose the falling force, his hands only had two hundred or so kilos to contend with, this was nothing to him. His right hand held the rope and he moved his left hand towards his waist to untie the rope to let his enemy fall when suddenly he felt a subtle pain on his back, a sharp object was pressed against the 'Spirit Stage' pressure point below his sixth vertebrae; a woman's voice shouted, "Quickly pull them up! Damage to the 'Spirit Stage' will lead to ruin of the veins!"

Fan Yiweng was shocked, these words of "damage to the 'Spirit Stage' will lead to ruin of the veins" were the exact words of warning that his Master had told him when teaching him pressure point sealing martial arts. He didn't dare to go against this person's orders and pulled Yang Guo and Lu'E up with his arms. The falling force he had just opposed was extremely ferocious; right now he felt pressure in his chest and a desire to throw up blood. He knew that he had suffered an internal injury and he shouldn't use any force; but his life was in the hands of his enemy, he could only risk his life and comply. He pulled Yang Guo up very easily and then felt his chest widen, his limbs became limp and he threw up blood violently before falling down onto the ground.

The roped slipped once more as he loosened his hand. Qiu Qianchi called out, "Quickly save her!" Yang Guo did not need any prompts; he grabbed the rope and eventually pulled Lu'E up. Lu'E had fainted from shock after being dropped down and pulled up so many times. Yang Guo first sealed the 'Hidden Rabbit' and 'Large Bone' pressure points of Fan Yiweng to stop his arms and legs from moving before waking Lu'E up.

Lu'E regained consciousness slowly; when she opened her eyes she did not know where she was; under the moonlight she saw Yang Guo laughing and looking at her. She threw herself into his arms and called out, "Brother Yang, are we dead? Is this the underworld?"

Yang Guo laughed, "Yep, we're both dead."

Lu'E noticed something was wrong with his tone; there was a hint of teasing behind it and she moved backwards to look at his face clearly. She saw her mother looking at her with her expression that was neither a smile nor a scowl; Lu'E was embarrassed and called out, "Mother!" She stood up.

Yang Guo saw that although Qiu Qianchi had lost her martial arts, she was still able to subdue Fan Yiweng and saved his life as a result. He had much respect for her and asked, "How did Senior subdue that shortie?"

Qiu Qianchi gave a faint smile and raised her hand; there was a sharp stone in it. She taught Gongsun Zhi's pressure point sealing techniques and Fan Yiweng was taught by Gongsun Zhi. The same things were passed from Qiu Qianchi down to Fan Yiweng with no difference in the formulae. She had placed the sharp stone on Fan Yiweng's 'Spirit Stage' pressure point and called out the frightening words of "damage to the 'Spirit Stage' will lead to ruin of the veins"; how could Fan Yiweng not get alarmed? But with the strength in Qiu Qianchi's hand and with such a small stone, how could she cause 'ruin of the veins'?

Right now Yang Guo's thoughts were only about the safety of Xiao Longnu. Since Lu'E and Qiu Qianchi are safe and Fan Yiweng subdued, he said, "You two wait here for a while, I need to deliver this Passionless Pill."

Qiu Qianchi was surprised and said, "What Passionless Pill? You've got a Passionless Pill?"

Yang Guo said, "Yes, please take a look to see whether it's the real thing." He then took out the little jar and removed the square shaped pill from it.

Qiu Qianchi took it from him and sniffed it a few times before saying, "This is it, how did it get into your hands? Since you've got the poison why haven't you taken it yet?"

Yang Guo said, "It's a long story, I'll tell Senior all about it once I've delivered the pill." He took the pill back and was about to go on his way.

Lu'E was sad and concerned for him, she said quietly, "Brother Yang, you must avoid my father, don't let him see you."

Qiu Qianchi shouted, "You still call him father! If you ever call him father again then don't call me mother."

Yang Guo said, "I'm delivering this pill to my Gu Gu to cure her poison; Valley Master Gongsun will not stop me."

Lu'E said, "If he tries to do something evil to you again, what then?"

Yang Guo laughed wryly and said, "Then I'll just deal with it one step at a time."

Qiu Qianchi asked, "You're going to see Gongsun Zhi, aren't you?"

Yang Guo said, "Yes."

Qiu Qianchi said, "Fine, I'll go with you; maybe I'll be able to help."

All Yang Guo wanted to do was to deliver the pill to Xiao Longnu; he hadn't even made a plan yet; when he heard these words of Qiu Qianchi, his mind suddenly lit up. "If that scoundrel's wife is there, how can he marry Gu Gu?" In his delight he suddenly thought, "But there is only one Passionless Pill; though I'll be able to save Gu Gu, death is unavoidable for me." He became depressed as he thought about this.

Lu'E watched the sudden changes on his face, from delight then to distress; she then thought about her parents meeting up again and what kind of trouble that would bring. Her heart was in confusion and turmoil.

But Qiu Qianchi was feeling great, she said, "Lu'E, carry me on your back."

Lu'E said, "Mother, you need to wash first and change your clothes." She was really afraid of what would happen when her parents meet up again and was just hoping to delay things as much as possible.

Qiu Qianchi said angrily, "I'm in rags, I'm dirty all over, whose fault is this? Could it be...?" She suddenly thought about the times when her brother Qiu Qianzhang pretended to be her second brother Qiu Qianren; he had frightened countless members of the world of Wulin by doing this. The tendons in her arms and legs had been destroyed so even if she sees Gongsun Zhi, how is she a match for him? How could she take re-

venge? The only thing she could do is pretend to be her second brother and frighten Gongsun Zhi; she'll then wait for an opportunity to take his life. Luckily he had never seen her second brother before and he must have thought that she had died in the grotto long ago; he would have no suspicions. Another thought went through her mind, "We've been husband and wife for so many years; how will he not recognize me?"

When Yang Guo saw the troubled expression on her face, he was fairly certain of what she was thinking and said, "Senior is afraid that Gongsun Zhi will recognize you, right? I've got something on me that may help." He took out the human skin mask and put it on her; a terrifying face was now seen instead.

Qiu Qianchi was delighted and took the mask, she said, "Lu'E, we'll first go and hide in the forest behind the manor. Go and get me a coarse grass linen gown and get me a large fan, and don't forget." Lu'E nodded and picked up her mother.

Yang Guo took a look around and saw that they were on the peak of a mountain. There were luxuriant forests everywhere; he could see the stone manor. It was a couple of li away.

Qiu Qianchi sighed and said, "This peak is called the Angry Ghost Peak. Stories about the peak have been passed down from generation to generation in this valley, saying that there are ghosts around here. No one dares to come up here. Who could have thought that my return into this world would be by way of this Angry Ghost Peak?"

Yang Guo shouted at Fan Yiweng, "What are you doing here?"

Fan Yiweng showed no fear and shouted, "Just kill me quickly, stop your babbling."

Yang Guo said, "Valley Master Gongsun sent you here?"

Fan Yiweng said angrily, "Yes, Master ordered me to scout the surroundings in case there were evil scoundrels around; master was right, there are people sneaking around who are up to no good." As he talked, he took a look at Qiu Qianchi; he didn't know who this old granny was and why on earth did Miss Gongsun call her mother. Fan Yiweng was older than the Gongsun couple; when Gongsun Zhi took him as a disciple, Qiu Qianchi had already been trapped down in the grotto. Because of this, he didn't recognize her; but from the words of the three, he knew they were plotting something against his Master.

From his words, Qiu Qianchi could tell that he was extremely loyal to Gongsun Zhi; she was furious and said to Yang Guo, “Quickly kill that short man, don’t leave trouble for the future.”

Yang Guo turned around to Fan Yiweng and saw that he showed no fear; he respected the fact that he was a good man and wanted to spare him. Right now he needed help from Qiu Qianchi and couldn’t disobey her. He said, “Miss Gongsun, take your mother and make your way, I’ll follow immediately once I’ve killed him.”

Gongsun Lu’E knew that her senior apprentice brother was a righteous and good man; she couldn’t bear to see him die and said, “Brother Yang, my senior apprentice brother is not a bad person...”

Qiu Qianchi shouted angrily, “Go, go! You don’t listen to anything I say, what use have I got for a daughter like you?”

Lu’E didn’t dare to say anything else and searched for a way down the peak.

Yang Guo went to Fan Yiweng and whispered, “Brother Fan, the pressure points of your arms and legs have been sealed; they will unseal by themselves in twelve hours time. I haven’t got anything against you and I can’t kill you.” He then utilized his lightness kung fu and chased after Lu’E.

Fan Yiweng had closed his eyes and was waiting for his death; there was no way that he could have predicted that Yang Guo would treat him like this. He was stunned and couldn’t say anything; he opened his eyes and watched the three disappear into the darkness.

Yang Guo was anxious to see Xiao Longnu and didn’t like the slow pace of Lu’E so he said, “Senior Qiu, I’ll carry you for a while.”

At first Lu’E was worried about the frosty reception between Yang Guo and her mother; but when she heard that he was willing to carry her, she was delighted and said, “It’s your turn to work a little.”

Qiu Qianchi said, “I carried this beautiful daughter in my womb for nine months and she became yours with just a word, don’t you think that I deserve to be carried by you for a while?”

Yang Guo was startled but felt it was inappropriate to reply; he put her on his back and stirred his chi, then shot down the mountain like an arrow from a bow.

Qiu Qianren was named the 'Iron Palm Water Floater'; his lightness kung fu could be as considered as the best in Wulin. Years ago when he was chased by Zhou Botong for ten thousands of miles, he went from the central plains straight to Xuyu. Even with Zhou Botong's great martial arts he wasn't able to catch up with Qiu Qianren. Qiu Qianchi's martial arts were taught to her personally by her brother; before her martial arts were lost, her lightness kung fu was first class. Now, as she was being carried by Yang Guo, she felt him move as if his feet weren't touching the ground and he was flying along. He was running fast and steadily; she gave him much respect and was surprised, "This little kid's lightness kung fu is completely different to my clan's but it is definitely not below that of the Iron Clan's martial arts; I cannot look down on him." She had felt that her daughter was losing out in not marrying this kid; but her daughter had decided there was nothing she could do. Right now she was beginning to feel that this future son in law was deserving of her daughter.

In a short while Yang Guo reached the bottom of the peak. He turned around to look for Lu'E and saw that she was still somewhere around the middle. After a long while she reached the bottom of the mountain; by that time she was breathing heavily and her forehead was covered with sweat.

The three of them made their way quietly to the back of the manor. Lu'E did not dare to go into the manor and went to a neighboring building to borrow clothes for herself and the gown and fan that her mother wanted. She also borrowed a gown for Yang Guo. Qiu Qianchi wore the human skin mask and put on the gown; her hand held the fan and she let Yang Guo and Lu'E support her as they made their way into the manor.

As they made their way, the three of them were filled with thoughts. Qiu Qianchi had not been back here for over ten years; as she returned to old grounds, she felt a great release. But then she saw that grand red lanterns were hung at the door of the manor; she took a closer look and saw that the doors were decorated for a celebration; drums and music could also be heard from inside the hall.

All the servants were startled when they saw Qiu Qianchi and Yang Guo; but when they saw Lu'E with them, they didn't dare to say anything.

The three went straight into the hall and saw that it was filled with guests; most of them were the neighbors of the Narcissus Manor of the Passionless Valley. Gongsun Zhi was dressed in a groom's outfit and stood on the left. The bride was standing on the

right wearing a Phoenix Hat and red veil; though her face was covered, one could see that she had a fine figure; this was Xiao Longnu.

The firelight in the courtyard flickered. Three loud noises were heard. The person leading the procession sang, “The time has come, the newlyweds bow to the heaven and earth!”

Qiu Qianchi laughed; it made the candlelight flicker and tiles of the house tremble. She said clearly, “If the newlyweds bow to the heaven and earth, what about the wed of old?”

Though the tendons in her arms and legs were snapped, her internal energy was not affected. She had nothing to do in the grotto and practiced bitterly night and day. Her ten years of cultivation was superior to those who’ve cultivated for twenty years. As these words were shouted out, the ears of all the people in the room rang. The room darkened as ten or so candles went out.

Everyone was shocked and all turned their heads. Gongsun Zhi was already shocked when he heard the shout; but when he saw Yang Guo and his daughter safe and sound beside this concealed guest, he was even more startled; he shouted, “Who’s this guest?”

Qiu Qianchi tightened her throat and chuckled, “You and I have a close relationship; are you pretending that you don’t know me?” When she spoke these words she had submerged her chi into her ‘dan tian’; though she didn’t speak loudly, the words reverberated far and wide. Mountains surrounded the Passionless Valley and after a while the echoes came back with repetitions of “You don’t know me? You don’t know me?”

Jinlun Fawang, Yin Kexi and Xiaoxiang Zi and the others were watching the procession from the side; when they heard Qiu Qianchi’s voice, they knew that an eminent person had arrived and everyone looked at each other.

Gongsun Zhi saw this person was wearing a coarse grass linen gown and was holding a fan; the description of his brother in law Qiu Qianren from his wife matched this person and this person’s internal energy was amazing. But the face looked odd; it looked like the face of Zhou Botong when he was disguising himself as Xiaoxiang Zi. There must be something awry here. He prepared himself and said coldly, “I have never met this guest before so isn’t this close relationship a joke?”

Yin Kexi was versed in Wulin affairs; when he saw Qiu Qianchi’s coarse grass linen gown and fan, his mind lit up and asked, “Could it be that Iron Palm Water Floater Qiu

Qianren senior Qiu Lao is here?”

Qiu Qianchi laughed and fluttered her fan a few times before saying, “And I thought that all the people who knew this old and useless man had all died long ago; so there’s one remaining.”

Gongsun Zhi was unmoved and said, “Are you really Qiu Qianren? I’m afraid that it’s just some lying scoundrel.”

Qiu Qianchi was shocked and thought, “This bastard is clever; how does he know that I’m not my brother?” She couldn’t see how he saw through her and just chuckled, not replying.

Yang Guo ignored the games of the couple and dashed over to Xiao Longnu. He held the Passionless Pill in his right hand and lifted the veil across her face with his left hand, he said, “Gu Gu, open your mouth.”

Xiao Longnu’s heart skipped a beat when she saw Yang Guo again; her shock and delight amassed together at once and she said, “You... you are indeed better.” She knew that Gongsun Zhi was an evil and cruel man; she only agreed to marry him because she wanted to save Yang Guo’s life. When Yang Guo suddenly appeared in front of her again, she thought that Gongsun Zhi had kept to his word and cured his poison.

Yang Guo placed the pill in her hand and said, “Quickly swallow!”

Xiao Longnu did not know what it was but did as she was told. After a short while, she felt a cool air penetrating through her ‘dan tian’.

The hall broke out in chaos; when Gongsun Zhi saw that Yang Guo had come here again to cause trouble, he wanted to go up and stop him; but he was worried about the concealed strange guest. He didn’t know whether or not that person really was his brother-in-law Iron Palm Water Floater Qiu Qianren and didn’t dare make a move for the time being.

Yang Guo tore off Xiao Longnu’s Phoenix Hat and red veil; then pulled her to the side and said, “Gu Gu; that scoundrel Valley Master is going to suffer, let’s watch.”

Xiao Longnu was confused and just leaned on Yang Guo; she didn’t know what to say.

Ma Guangzuo felt unspeakable delight when he saw Yang Guo suddenly appearing here again. He went to him and kept on asking questions; the thought of him disturbing the two never entered his mind. Yin Kexi had heard that twenty years ago, Qiu Qianren shook the world of Wulin and was extremely famous. Now he heard the laugh and shout which echoed throughout the valley; his internal energy was extremely high and he wanted to meet him. He stepped forward and bowed, saying “Today is Valley Master Gongsun’s day of celebration; has Senior Qiu Lao come for the celebrations as well?”

Qiu Qianchi pointed to Gongsun Zhi and said, “Do you know who that person is to me?”

Yin Kexi said, “I don’t know, but I would like to know.”

Qiu Qianchi said, “You need to ask him yourself.”

Gongsun Zhi asked again, “Are you really the Iron Palm Water Floater? That’s strange!” He clapped his hands and said to a disciple in green, “Go to the library and bring the box from the shelf on the eastern side to me.”

Lu’E did not know what to do and just pulled a chair over for her mother to sit down in.

Gongsun Zhi was surprised, “How come she and that Yang scum are still alive after falling into the crocodile pool?”

In a short while, the disciple returned with the box and handed it over to Gongsun Zhi. Gongsun Zhi opened it and took out a letter. He said frostily, “Years ago, I received a letter from Qiu Qianren. If you really are Qiu Qianren then this letter is a fake.”

Qiu Qianchi was shocked and thought, “Ever since brother and I argued, we’ve never contacted each other; why did he send a letter to me all of a sudden? What’s in the letter?” She then said loudly, “When did I write a letter to you? That really is a load of bull.”

When Gongsun Zhi heard her accent, he suddenly remembered someone. He was shocked and his back broke out in a cold sweat; but he immediately thought, “It can’t be, it can’t be; she died long ago in that grotto, she’s just a pile of bones now. But who exactly is this person?” He opened the letter and read it out loud: “To Brother Zhi and Sister Chi: Ever since first brother died at the hands of Guo Jing and Huang Rong on Iron Palm Peak...”

When Qiu Qianchi heard this line she was filled with hurt and sorrow; she shouted, “What? Who said my brother is dead?” The sibling love between she and Qiu Qianzhang was extremely deep; when she heard news of his death her whole body shook and her voice changed. Originally she had submerged her chi into her ‘dan tian’ and it was difficult to distinguish whether her voice was a male’s or female. Now, as her feelings were brought out, the words ‘who said my brother is dead’ were said with a female voice.

Gongsun Zhi heard that the person in front of him had a female voice and said ‘my brother’, he was shocked even further; but now he was certain that this person in front of him is definitely not Qiu Qianren, he continued reading:

“...this stupid brother had been extremely shameful in not holding our sibling relationship together and creating this hostility between us; all the blame is on this stupid brother. I pondered in the middle of the night and realized all the countless evil deeds I have done. At the second Mount Hua tournament, Reverend Yideng enlightened this stupid brother; I dropped my knife of slaughter and followed the ways of Buddha. I have just begun my studies; apart from Buddha’s teachings my mind is always on the joyous days of the past with brother and sister. I wish to make up for the things I’ve done before it’s too late. Fate is a hard thing to judge.

From monk Ci’en.”

Qiu Qianchi had been sobbing during all this; by the time Gongsun Zhi finished reading the letter she could hold it in no longer and cried out, “Big brother, second brother, you need to know the suffering I’ve been through.” She took off the mask and shouted, “Gongsun Zhi, do you remember me?” This sentence was shouted out sternly, another seven or eight candles in the hall blew out while the ones that stayed alight flickered.

In the gloomy candlelight, an old woman with a long face and wretched expression could be seen; everyone trembled in fear and no one dared to say anything. The hall was silent and everyone’s heart was pounding.

Suddenly, an old servant who was standing in the corner threw himself forward and called out, “Matron, Matron, you’re not dead.”

Qiu Qianchi nodded and said, “Second Uncle Zhang, you remember me.”

This old servant was extremely loyal; when he saw his Matron alive and well, he was delighted and kept on kowtowing, calling out, “Matron, this really is something to

rejoice.”

Apart from Jinlun Fawang and the others, all the guests were residents of the valley; most of the people over thirty or forty years of age could remember who she was and they all rushed forward with their questions.

Gongsun Zhi shouted loudly, “Stand back!”

The crowd was alarmed and moved back. They saw him pointing to Qiu Qianchi, shouting out, “Witch, why have you returned? You’ve actually still got the face to see me?”

Lu'E had been hoping that her father would admit his mistakes and get back together with her mother. But when her father came out with this, she became emotional and rushed to her father; she knelt down on the floor and called out, “Father! Mother’s not dead, mother’s not dead. Quickly apologize and ask for her forgiveness.”

Gongsun Zhi chuckled, “Ask her for forgiveness? What have I done wrong?”

Lu'E said, “You trapped mother down that grotto and let her stay down there to suffer for over ten years. Father, how could you do that to her?”

Gongsun Zhi chuckled, “It was she who first harmed me; do you know that? She pushed me in the flower thicket and let me endure the suffering of the piercing of thousands and thousands of thorns; do you know that? She placed the antidote in frosty arsenic water, putting me in a situation where if I took it I’d die, if I didn’t I’ll still die; do you know that? She even forced me to... to kill my lover; do you know that?”

Lu'E cried, “I know that, it was Rou’er.”

Gongsun Zhi had not heard this name for over ten years; his face changed as he heard it and he faced the sky, mumbling, “Yes, it was Rou’er, it was Rou’er!” He pointed to Qiu Qianchi and said with revulsion, “It was that evil and cruel witch who forced me to kill Rou’er!” His face was becoming more and more mournful; he quietly called out, “Rou’er... Rou’er...”

Yang Guo felt that sinful couples were not good people. He was poisoned himself and had only a few days to live; he just hoped that he could spend these few days with Xiao Longnu in peace. He didn’t care about which one of the Gongsun couple was wrong or right; he lightly tugged on Xiao Longnu’s sleeve and whispered, “Let’s go.”

Xiao Longnu said, “Is that woman really his wife? Was she really trapped down in a cave by her husband for over ten years?” She could not believe that such an evil person could exist.

Yang Guo said, “That couple is taking revenge on each other.”

Xiao Longnu thought for a while and whispered, “I don’t understand this; could it be that she was the same as me and forced into marrying him?” In her thoughts, if two people aren’t forced into marriage then they’ll be loving and compassionate towards each other; how could they harm each other?

Yang Guo shook his head and said, “There are many bad people in the world, while there’s only a few who’re good; the thoughts of these people are hard to fathom...”

Suddenly Gongsun Zhi shouted, “Move!” His right leg lifted up and Lu’E’s body flew away; she had been kicked by her father.

Her body was flying straight towards Qiu Qianchi’s upper body. Qiu Qianchi could not move her arms and legs; she could only lower her head to avoid her. But Lu’E was coming in too fast; a ‘peng’ sound was heard as she crashed into the shoulders of her mother. Qiu Qianchi fell backwards with the chair, her bald head crashing into the stone pillar behind her. Blood stained the stone pillar and she couldn’t crawl back up. After being kicked by her father, Lu’E was on the floor as well, lying unconscious.

