

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDXL Chapter 28



Chapter 28 – Wedding Festivities

Translated by BeeDreamer



Xiao Longnu inserted the hairpin and put on the earrings and the jade bracelets on both wrists. Yang Guo had tears streaming down his face; he was overwhelmed by grief. He lifted the Phoenix crown up and walked over to put it on for her from behind. In the mirror, Xiao Longnu saw him lifting his sleeve to wipe away his tears. When he faced her again, his face appeared to be joyful.

Yang Guo wrapped his right empty sleeve around Xiao Longnu's waist to support her body and gently said: "Gu Gu, let's go!" Xiao Longnu gave him a sweet smile, softly saying: "This time I can die by your side. In my heart... in my heart I'm very happy." Then

something came to her mind so she said: “Guo Da Xia [great hero Guo]’s daughter cut off your arm. She didn’t mean you well. Later on who will take good care of you?” Her heart sank when she thought about this so she softly added: “You’ll be lonely by yourself, you...won’t have anyone to keep you company..”

Yang Guo saw her life about to extinguish, he was overwhelmed by grief. Suddenly he remembered something: “That day we were here at Mount Zhongnan, she asked me if I was willing to make her my wife. At that time I was so shocked I couldn’t answer and that led to many miserable and catastrophic events afterwards. We don’t have much time left; I have to let her know my heartfelt feelings.” So he said it out loud: “What do I care if you are my master? What do I care about a reputation? We will just do as we please and damn people if they can’t take it! In life or in death, neither of us will ever be sad again, nor will we be alone and lonely. From now on, you are not my master, you are not my Gu Gu [auntie], you are my wife!”

Xiao Longnu’s heart was filled with joy. She gazed at his face and softly said: “Are you really speaking from your heart? Or are you just saying sweet words to make me happy?”

Yang Guo replied: “Of course this is what I feel in my heart. My arm got chopped off and you are feeling sorrier for me than I am for myself; when you come across any hardship, I feel just the same.”

Xiao Longnu softly said: “That’s right. In this world, except you and me caring for each other, there’s no one else.”

The several hundred Taoists at Chongyang Palace were students of spiritual ways who let go their previous lives to become priests. Suddenly hearing the two people speaking tender words of love and care, they found themselves in a difficult situation – the old priests were quite embarrassed while the young ones unavoidably felt their worldly desires stirred up. They looked at each other in dismay and some couldn’t help blushing. The Sage of Tranquility Sun Bu’Er shouted: “You two get out of here quickly. Chongyang Palace is a holy place, you shouldn’t be here talking improperly like this!”

Yang Guo turned a deaf ear and only gazed into Xiao Longnu’s eyes. Then he said: “In those years the late master Chongyang and our Gu Mu sect’s [the ancient tomb sect] Ancestor Grandma should have been married. We don’t know what strange grudges broke them apart in the end. Today before him we’ll bow to heaven and earth and become man and wife, letting our Ancestor Grandma vent her anger.” He originally didn’t think very highly of Wang Chongyang. But then he started learning from the work that

Wang Chongyang left engraved at Gu Mu [the ancient tomb], and the more he practiced, the more he admired him. He even secretly felt like he was Wang Chongyang's successor in a way. Xiao Longnu let out a sigh and quietly said: "Guo'er, you are very good to me."

During those years Wang Chongyang and Lin Chaoying were deeply in love. Quanzhen's Five Masters all knew about it. They respected their master for cutting all his emotional ties with a proverbial sword like a true hero; but when they thought about how the supreme martial arts master Lin Chaoying, whose beauty was unrivalled, locked herself up inside Gu Mu for the rest of her life, they all sighed. When Yang Guo brought up this matter, the young Taoists didn't understand while the old masters trembled in their hearts.

Sun Bu'Er shouted: "Our late master had great wisdom. He let go of the secular world and started our sect, cutting himself off from all worldly pains. How could an infant like you, who was born after his time, pry into his business? If you have the gall to be this outrageous and talk rubbish again, don't blame my heartless sword!" That day at the Da Sheng Guan heroes' banquet, Yang Guo rejected Sun Bu'Er's offered sword, embarrassing her at the scene. Even though she was a Taoist priestess, her mind was far less generous than Qiu Chuji, Wang Chuyi and others. She was the revered elder of the Quanzhen sect and was insulted by a youngster of her disciples' generation; she naturally took it to heart. Also being a woman living and practicing Taoism with a group of male Taoists, she became even stricter. As she heard Yang Guo's declaration, determining to bow to heaven and earth [get married] before the sacred portrait of her sect's founding master, her rising anger became difficult to suppress. Now seeing the Yang-Long couple totally ignoring her words, her sword immediately came out of its sheath with a 'shua' sound.

Yang Guo gave her a cold look and thought: "You, old priestess, by yourself, are surely not my match. But if I fought with you, the rest of the Quanzhen sect couldn't just stand by. But I have to marry Gu Gu immediately. If we don't do it right now and leave the Chongyang Palace and if by chance her injuries don't heal, won't I be giving her grief at her end? You scolded me for 'being outrageous.' Humph, I, Yang Guo, will show you outrageous. I already said we would be married before the portrait of Founding Master Chongyang and I will do as I said." He scanned the area and saw only half of the Taoists holding a sword in their hands. He then said: "Sun Dao Zhang [Taoist Elder Sun], you are set on forcing us to leave, is that it?"

Sun Bu'Er sternly said: "Leave now! From now on, the ties between the Quanzhen sect and Gu Mu sect are completely severed. There will be no more connection between us

for all eternity and it is best we not meet again!”

Yang Guo let out a deep sigh and shook his head. Then he turned around, walking two steps towards the small trail that led to Gu Mu and slowly putting the sword back onto his back. His right sleeve flared out while he used his left arm to support Xiao Longnu. He secretly channeled air into his abdomen. Suddenly he lifted his head towards the sky and gave out a roar so loud that it shook the tree branches in the woods. Hearing this ear-shattering roar, the Taoists were startled.

And even before he finished his roar, he let go of Xiao Longnu and leapt backwards. In a flash, his left hand sealed both ‘ “Returning Orthodox” (Hui Zong) and “Sustaining Waterway” (Zhi Gou) points on Sun Bu’Er’s right wrist. As Xiao Longnu’s body, now without support, was about to collapse, Yang Guo quickly dragged Sun Bu’Er along with him to prop Xiao Longnu’s body back up. His jumping back and forth was lightning fast, like the movement of a fleeing rabbit. Before any of the Taoists had a chance to blink their eyes, Sun Bu’Er had already fallen into Yang Guo’s clutches and nothing could be done about it. Qiu Chuji and Sun Bu’Er had long fought powerful enemies. In the beginning, they were guarding themselves against Yang Guo’s swift attack but then they saw him put away his weapon and head out towards the small trail to the outside, with his only arm supporting Xiao Longnu. Naturally, they concluded that he’d decided to give up. They hadn’t expected that he would use his roar to distract the enemy and that his actions — using his left hand to support Xiao Longnu instead of his shirt sleeve and putting away the sword — were actually a strategy designed to fool them so he could capture Sun Bu’Er. Numerous Taoists shouted and raised their swords. But as Sun Bu’Er was held captive, nobody dared to move forward to attack.

Yang Guo said in a low voice: “Sun Dao Zhang [Taoist Elder Sun], I have made a great social blunder. Please turn around and keep us company during the ritual.” While still holding Sun Bu’Er’s wrist, he slowly led Xiao Longnu to the back of the hall of the Chongyang Palace. The Taoists followed them, their faces filled with anger, yet they didn’t know what else to do.

The three of them entered the hall through a side door and walked along the winding corridor until they arrived at the back of the hall. Yang Guo turned around and in a clear voice he said: “Everybody please stand outside. You may not enter the hall, not even one step. We’ve already decided that we would sacrifice our lives. If we fight, Sun Dao Zhang [Taoist Elder Sun] and the two of us will have the same fate.”

Wang Chuyi quietly said: “Qiu Shi Ge [Apprentice Brother Qiu], how do we handle this?” Qiu Chuji then replied: “Nothing for the moment, we’ll wait for the right opportu-

nity. It looks like he wouldn't dare to harm Sun Shi Mei [Apprentice Sister Sun]." These Quanzhen masters had roamed the martial world for their entire lives, their names are renowned. They hadn't expected that in their sunset years they would be controlled by a mere boy. They were undoubtedly angry but also couldn't help chuckling.

Yang Guo pulled out a prayer mat for Sun Bu'Er to sit down on and then said: "Pardon!" while sealing the "Big Spine" (Da Chui) and "Divine Hall" (Shen Tang) pressure points on her back, which left her unable to walk. As he saw the Taoists standing outside as they were told, not daring to enter, he helped Xiao Longnu stand in front of the portrait of Wang Chongyang, shoulder-to-shoulder with him.

Before their eyes was a portrait of a Taoist holding a long sword and showing a graceful disposition. He wouldn't be more than thirty years old. On the side of the portrait were three words "The Living Dead." The writing was sparse but the man in the middle of the painting exuded a heroic air, his elegance unparalleled. When Yang Guo came to learn martial skills at the Chongyang Palace as a boy, he was familiar with this painting, knowing that this was a portrait of the founding master. But now he remembered quite vividly that there was also a portrait of Wang Chongyang at Gu Mu. Even though this one was a front portrait and the one at Gu Mu was a back view, the art strokes were no different so he said: "This painting was also done by our Ancestor Grandma." Xiao Longnu nodded, giving him a sweet smile and softly saying: "The two of us get married before the portrait of Master Chongyang but the picture was drawn by our Ancestor Grandma, this is really very good."

With his foot, Yang Guo placed two prayer mats side by side in front of the portrait and then said in a loud voice: "Disciple Yang Guo and the disciple named Long are here to marry in front of Founding Master Chongyang. At this place the Taoists of the Quanzhen sect all bear witness." Having said that, he knelt down on a prayer mat but saw Xiao Longnu still standing, not kneeling down, so he said: "We are bowing to heaven and earth right now, you also have to kneel down!" Xiao Longnu hesitated, her eyes red and her tears flowing. Yang Guo softly asked: "What's wrong? You don't like us to get married at this place?"

Xiao Longnu's voice broke: "No, it's not that!" She paused and then said: "I'm not pure and I'm also dying. Why should you... Why should you have to be this good to me?" Having said this, tears flooded down her cheeks.

Yang Guo got up again and used his sleeve to wipe away her tears. He smiled and said: "Why do you still not understand my heart?" Xiao Longnu lifted her head to look at him and he softly continued: "I really wish we two could live to be 100 years old so I could

take good care of you and return your love and affection. But if I can't, if God should only give us one day, then for one day we'd be man and wife. Even if for only a few hours, then for a few hours we'd also be man and wife." Xiao Longnu saw the sincere expression on his face and the infinite affection in his eyes, her heart fluttered, not quite knowing how to cherish him the way he deserved. Her sorrowful face slowly revealed a dimply smile, her tears stopped, and her expression was that of boundless joy. Then she gracefully knelt down on the prayer mat.

Yang Guo then also knelt down. The two people bowed down before the portrait and thought: "Even though our lives have been miserable, we have a time like this now – we are really most fortunate. Even if the pains of the past should cut our lives short, it wouldn't be something to worry about at all." Both of them exchanged a smile and, on the prayer mats, lowered their heads.

In a low voice Yang Guo spoke his vow: "Disciple Yang Guo and the Disciple named Long truly love each other and forever will not change. Throughout our lives, we will be husband and wife."

Xiao Longnu also said in the same tone: "May Master bless us. Throughout our lives, let us be husband and wife."

Sun Bu'Er was sitting on a prayer mat. Even though her body couldn't move, she clearly heard everything the two people said. She looked at them and then understood. Even though the two people's action was preposterous, it actually stemmed from their guileless nature. She couldn't help thinking back to the days when she was young and newly married to Ma Yu. Originally she was very angry but by the time the Yang-Long couple stood up, the expression on her face had already turned gentle.

Yang Guo thought: "This time the two of us have become man and wife. Even if I am to die right way, I have no regrets." As his original worry about the Taoists breaking in to stop them vanished, he turned to Xiao Longnu and joked: "I am a rebellious disciple of the Quanzhen sect. Throughout the martial world, they all knew about it. Now you are also a rebellious disciple."

Xiao Longnu said: "That's right. My master ordered me neither to accept a male disciple, nor to get married but I didn't comply. The many disasters that have fallen upon us were actually to pay for our crimes."

Yang Guo brightly said: "One must rebel to the end. Master Wang and our Ancestor Grandma were heroes, one hundred times greater than us, but they didn't dare to get

married. If the two of them in the afterworld know, they can't say we were afraid to do it!"

Then this time there was a 'ka la' violent sound coming from the roof, tiles flying about and the rafter breaking. The force was astonishing. The roof actually cracked by the weight of a gigantic bell, which was falling straight down on the top of Sun Bu'Er's head...

As Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu were boldly bowing to heaven and earth in the hall, the old and young Taoists of the Quanzhen sect couldn't suppress their anger. Liu Chuxuan pondered for a while and then came up with a plan. He bent down and whispered it into the ears of the other three masters, Qiu Chuji, Wang Chuyi and Hao Datong. The three of them nodded again and again and then said something to a disciple at the door in a low voice. Taking advantage of the situation while the Yang-Long couple was kneeling down inside, they took down a heavy copper bell from in front of the hall, which weighed over a thousand catties. The four of them together would hold the bell, fly up to the top of the hall, and find the right location to smash it down with great force. The bell would make a big hole in the roof before falling down to where Sun Bu'Er was sitting below. With the four masters' martial skills, even though the bell was very heavy, it would drop down with less than inches of error, trapping Sun Bu'Er inside so Yang Guo couldn't harm her. As the many Taoists closed in on him, how would the two people be able to fight them off?

Seeing the gigantic bell dropping, Yang Guo instantly understood the ploy. He immediately drew out his black iron sword and sent out with it a thundering force. A 'dang' sound echoed as the sword tip made contact with the copper bell. Even though this bell weighed a thousand catties, the force from this sword was strangely fierce and hit the side of the bell. The bell was then bumped off course by a couple of feet. If dropped, Sun Bu'Er's body would be crushed beneath.

Liu Chuxuan and the other masters who were looking down through the hole at the top of the hall realized the situation and cried out in alarm, their hearts aching. Nobody could have expected that this boy's sword would have such a divine power. They now saw with their own eyes that Sun Bu'Er would be wretchedly crushed by the large bell, with flesh and blood splattering. Liu Chuxuan shut both eyes, not daring to look, but then heard Qiu Chuji calling out: "Many thanks for your mercy!" Liu Chuxuan then opened his eyes in surprise, only to see the large bell unexpectedly covering Sun Bu'Er's body. There was no trace of crushed limbs at the side of the bell, and not even a part of her Taoist robe was seen.

As Yang Guo saw his sword pushing the bell off course, which would definitely violently kill Sun Bu'Er on the spot, he suddenly thought: "Today is our husband and wife's happy day, why bother taking someone's life? This old Taoist priestess only has a bad temperament and doesn't possess any real evil intent." Once thought, he acted. His right sleeve flared out, pushing the prayer mat that Sun Bu'Er was sitting on and sending her right under the bell.

The Liu-Qiu-Wang-Hao four masters at the top of the hall were pleasantly surprised and thought of Yang Guo as enemy no longer. But the numerous disciples below had earlier received their orders. As soon as the large bell was dropped, they were to rush in to attack. Also as they were outside, they didn't see that the bell's supposed location was changed. Only hearing a loud noise and seeing dust flying, they all cried out and ran into the hall to attack with their long swords.

Yang Guo then put his black iron sword back onto his back. He used his arm to carry Xiao Longnu and leapt out the back of the palace hall.

Qiu Chuji called out: "Disciples, be careful. You may not take these two people's lives!" His voice was loud. Even among the noisy battle cries of hundreds of people, each person still heard it clearly. The numerous disciples ran out the back of the hall, their voices echoed: "Capture the treacherous scoundrel!" "The scoundrel violated our founding master's painting, don't let him go!" "Quick... Quick, they went out the eastern side!" "The great master ordered, don't take their lives!"

Before Liu Chuxuan jumped to the top of the hall, he had ordered twenty-one strong men to hide in the courtyard at the back of the palace hall. Yang Guo was just about to open the screen door when he saw the sword reflections in the courtyard, and knew there were men waiting to block them. He thought: "It would be better to leap out through the hole in the roof of the hall. Although there are four big masters there, those people actually won't dare kill me." He carried Xiao Longnu and quickly leapt back inside.

Xiao Longnu held on to Yang Guo's neck with both hands and softly said: "Anyway, we are now married. Our ultimate wish in this world has been granted. If we get out, it's wonderful but if we don't, it still doesn't matter."

Yang Guo said: "You are right!" Then his right leg flew up, following quickly by his left leg. A 'peng' 'peng' sound followed as two priests were kicked out of the hall. Unlike the Cave of the Jade Void area which was much wider, the palace hall was packed with the Taoist priests, who now blocked them with the "Big Dipper Formation" [Bei Dou Zhen

Fa]. Yang Guo's left arm was carrying Xiao Longnu so he could only use his legs to injure the enemy and couldn't break out of the heavy encirclement. He darkly thought: "These dumb Taoist priests can't spread a complete formation. If only I had my arm free, how would you be able to stop the two of us?" Then another 'peng' sound was heard as a priest was kicked, his body flying out and crashing into two other priests.

In between this chaos, an old man with white beard and hair suddenly ran into the palace hall. Trailing behind him was a swarm of honeybees. It was the Old Urchin Zhou Botong. When he first arrived behind the palace hall, the disciples there didn't pay him any attention, but then the honeybees that followed him started to sting. These bees were not just any ordinary honeybees but indeed were the Jade Bees that Xiao Longnu kept and tamed at the Ancient Tomb. The Quanzhen Taoists who were stung immediately felt the itchy pain that was difficult to endure. Some couldn't bear it and rolled down on the ground, crying out. This of course added another commotion to the situation.

Zhou Botong was originally on his way to Xiangyang city to help Guo Jing; but then he stole Xiao Longnu's Jade Bee honey. Afraid to run into her, he decided not to go to Xiangyang but instead came to Mount Zhongnan to find Zhao Zhijing and to investigate how come he dared to plot his Martial Grandpa's [Master of Masters] death. Along the way he played with the Jade Bee honey and mulled over ways to direct the bees. Playing with the common bees on the road was easy but once he reached Mount Zhongnan, suddenly it all became a disaster. The Jade Bees on the mountain sensed the smell of the Jade Bee honey, many of them buzzed out. Since the Jade Bees were used to Xiao Longnu's hand signals and whistles, Zhou Botong naturally couldn't direct them and also couldn't drive them away. And more than that, they wouldn't let him rest. The Old Urchin saw the situation was not very funny so he speedily ran to the Chongyang Palace, thinking to find a place to avoid the bees. It just so happened that there was also a commotion at the palace, and actually much noisier.

Seeing Xiao Longnu and Yang Guo in the palace hall, Zhou Botong was delightedly surprised. He quickly threw Xiao Longnu the Jade Bee honey and called out: "Can't soothe them anymore. I can't deal with these grandparents of bees. Good Guniang [good Miss] quickly come and save my life." Yang Guo's shirt sleeve flared out, catching the bottle. Xiao Longnu let out a small smile and stretched her hand out to take it.

By now the palace hall was filled with buzzing bees. Qiu Chuji and others jumped down to greet and kowtow to their Martial Uncle. Hao Datong shouted out: "Quickly go get torches!" Some of the many disciples were covering their faces with shirt sleeves while others were wielding their sword to strike the bees. Several went to get torches as told.

Zhou Botong paid no attention to Qiu Chuji and others. The Jade Bees had stung him twice on his forehead, which was now swollen with two big lumps. Right now he only wanted to find a secure hiding place where a bee couldn't sneak in. Seeing a large bell on the floor, his heart was filled with delight. He quickly used his energy to lift it up, only to see that there was someone inside. He didn't even look to see who that was, saying: "Excuse me. Excuse me. Let me get in." He pushed Sun Bu'Er out and let himself in. Then he released his hands and a 'teng' sound was heard as the heavy bell fell back down. He was very pleased with himself and thought: "No matter how you thousands and thousands of bees pursue, you can't sting me, the Old Urchin, anymore!"

Yang Guo said in a low voice: "You direct the bees to form a swarm then we can break out of here." Xiao Longnu was now Yang Guo's wife. Hearing his words had an authoritative tone, she felt sweetly comfortable in her heart and thought: "This is good. At last, he doesn't think of me as his master anymore but really as his wife." So she immediately said "All right!" in a soft and obedient tone. Then she lifted the honey bottle, waved it a few times, and whistled repeatedly. The Jade Bees flew back to their keeper and formed a swarm but Xiao Longnu continuously waved her hand and whistled. The large swarm of Jade Bees broke into two rows, one making way in the front and the other guarding the back, so the Yang-Long couple could find their way out.

Qiu Chuji and others were pleasantly surprised by Zhou Botong's visit and found it very funny. Seeing that the Yang-Long couple had retreated to the back of the palace hall, they ordered their disciples not to pursue. Wang Chuyi unsealed Sun Bu'Er's pressure points while Qiu Chuji went over to lift the large bell. Zhou Botong, hiding inside the bell, didn't know the situation outside. Suddenly he felt that someone outside was lifting it up, he cried out loudly: "Can't soothe them anymore!" His arms stretched out, pushing the side of the bell and shouting: "Come down!" Qiu Chuji couldn't match Zhou Botong's profound internal energy. A 'dang' sound was heard as the bell, which was already half a foot from the floor, came down once again. Qiu Chuji laughed and then said: "Zhou Shi Shu [Martial Uncle Zhou] is joking again. Come. We all will fight with him!"

So Qiu Chuji, Wang Chuyi, Liu Chuxuan and Hao Datong each held out a hand and pushed against the outside of the bell. Qiu Chuji shouted: "Lift!" Between the four great forces the bell was raised three feet from the floor but the underside of the bell was empty, not even a shadow inside, and nobody knew where Zhou Botong had disappeared to. The four people cried out 'Ah!' in surprise. Suddenly a shadow flashed and Zhou Botong was standing beside the bell, laughing his head off. This was because Zhou Botong had glued his hands and feet to the inside of the heavy bell so when it was lifted, people outside naturally couldn't see him.

Qiu Chuji and the others stepped forward to kowtow to him. Zhou Botong frantically waved his hand, calling out: “Enough, enough. No more kowtows, you good boys get up!” By now Qiu Chuji and the others already had white beards and hair but Zhou Botong still called them ‘Good boys.’

Many people were about to start small talk when Zhou Botong caught a glimpse of Zhao Zhijing slyly sneaking off. He gave out a loud shout, jumped forward to hold him, and scolded: “You cow-nosed thief, still thinking to run away?” His left hand shot out towards the large bell and lifted it, two feet from the ground, while the right hand tossed Zhao Zhijing underneath. Then he let loose his left hand and the large bell came down, all the while repeatedly scolding: “Cow-nosed thief, cow-nosed thief.” At this time in the palace hall, except for him, everybody else was a Taoist. His loud scolding “Cow-nosed thief” was the same as scolding all Wang Chongyang’s disciples and followers. Qiu Chuji and the others knew their Martial Uncle’s temper and did not think to disobey. They couldn’t help but smile at each other.

Wang Chuyi asked: “Shi Shu [Martial Uncle], what did Zhao Zhijing do to offend the Old Master? This disciple will definitely punish him heavily.”

Zhou Botong said: “Hey, hey, this little cow-nosed thief led me to steal a flag that was put in a cave but before that he hid these very big colorful most deadly poisonous spiders there,. Luckily that small Miss, hmm, where’s that small Miss? Where are all the bees?” He talked without order and Wang Chuyi couldn’t quite understand yet but then saw him look around trying to find Xiao Longnu.

At this time ten disciples rushed in and reported that the Yang-Long couple had retreated to the Sacred Scripture Chamber on the back side of the mountain. The following disciples didn’t dare to use torches to fight off the bees for fear that they might burn the Taoist scriptures. Qiu Chuji and others were startled. The Sacred Scripture Chamber was the Quanzhen Sect’s sacred place as it stored the Taoist scriptures of the past dynasties and the work of Wang Chongyang and his seven disciples. There were several secret documents of the sect hidden there. If something happened, it would be a great loss. Qiu Chuji said: “We’ll go and take a look. Yang Guo has shown mercy and spared Sun Shi Mei [Apprentice Sister Sun]. We could definitely turn an enemy into a friend.”

Sun Bu’Er said: “You are right!” Then everybody rushed out to the Sacred Scripture Chamber at the back of the mountain.

At the door Wang Chuyi saw Zhao Zhijing trapped inside the bell, he thought: “Zhou Shi Shu’s [Martial Uncle Zhou] affairs are quite silly. This matter might not necessarily be

Zhao Zhijing's fault. We'll investigate this in details when we come back." For fear that there would be no air inside the bell and Zhao Zhijing would be suffocated to death, he used his energy to lift the bell up a few inches, kicked up a brick, and placed it under the bell. He left the crack a few inches wide so air could ventilate it and then went out to catch up with other people.

In front of the sacred scripture chamber, several hundred disciples were shouting loudly but nobody dared to go upstairs. In a loud and clear voice, Qiu Chuji called out: "The Yang-Long couple, we'll let bygones be bygones. How about we stop fighting and become friends?" He waited for a while and no sound from the chamber could be heard. Qiu Chuji said again: "Long Guniang [Miss Long] has been injured. Please come out and we'll try to treat the injury together. Our sect's disciples won't dare to be disrespectful to the two of you. Qiu Chuji roamed Jiang Hu for several decades and has never broken a promise to anyone." Half a day passed and there was still no sound.

Liu Chuxuan pondered the situation and said: "They are already gone!" Qiu Chuji asked: "How?" Liu Chuxuan said: "Look at the bees. They are flying scattered." He took a torch from one of the disciples and rushed inside the chamber.

Qiu Chuji and the others stepped into the chamber but only saw the four walls of books and not a single person. There was also that bottle of Jade Bee honey on the writing desk. As if he had found a treasure, Zhou Botong snatched it and put it away in his chest. Many people turned the chamber upside down but didn't find any books missing. They only saw a pile of books on the floor and the wooden chest that used to house them was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly Hao Datong called out: "They left from here!" The people followed Hao Datong's voice to the window in the back of the chamber and saw a rope tied to a wooden pole, with its other end tied to a tree on the cliff on the opposite side. Between the Sacred Scripture Chamber and the cliff was a deep ravine, with no way to pass through it. They didn't expect that Yang Guo would actually have such lightness Kung Fu and could carry Xiao Longnu and also across the valley on a rope.

As Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu bowed to heaven and earth at the Chongyang Palace, everybody in the Quanzhen sect felt badly violated. But this time seeing how the two people had retreated, the Quanzhen Five Masters smiled at one another and actually turned soft in their hearts. Sun Bu'Er was originally the most resentful but at the palace hall she witnessed how the two of them were idealistic and sincere. On top of that, Yang Guo had spared her own life at a critical moment. She couldn't help feeling a loss and fell silent.

The Quanzhen five masters and Zhou Botong went back to the palace hall and inquired about the Mongolian Prince's imperial decrees, the fights of the two disciples Zhao and Yin, Xiao Longnu's sudden attack, and so on. They went over each report one by one. With tears in his eyes, Qiu Chuji said: "Zhibing's disgracing someone was truly abominable but he did defend our sect with loyalty and patriotism, pledging to fight to death rather than surrendering to the Mongols. That has great merit."

Wang Chuyi said: "Zhibing naturally had flaws but he also tried to uphold justice. We should still recognize him as a Zhang Jiao [Jiao chief]." Liu Chuxuan, Hao Datong, and others also agreed.

Qiu Chuji said again: "If it was not for Long Guniang [Miss Long] arriving in time to block the enemy, our sect would have been annihilated. Long Guniang is really our sect's great benefactor. From now on we not only cannot be disrespectful to them as husband and wife, we would also have to repay the debt of gratitude. Ai, we did injure her, not knowing... not knowing..." Thinking about how Xiao Longnu was heavily injured, he deeply blamed himself.

Qiu Chuji and the others were busy investigating the past events and cleaning up damage while Zhou Botong didn't pay attention to these matters in the slightest, he was playing with that bottle of Jade Bee honey in his hand. Several times he thought about opening the bottle to tempt the bees but always feared the outcome, and of not being able to get away. At this time a disciple stepped in and reported that five disciples were stung by the Jade Bees and that their itchy pains were difficult to endure and so asked the master to help. Hao Datong thought about the year Sun Po Po (Grandma Sun) broke into the palace to give them the honey so he said: "Long Guniang [Miss Long] must have left this bottle of Jade Bee honey for us to treat the injured. Shi Shu [Martial Uncle], please give the Jade Bee honey to the five disciples, and let them take a little."

Zhou Botong stretched out both hands and his palms were empty. He said, "Don't know how but I suddenly can't find it." Hao Datong had obviously seen him playing with the bottle in his hand so it couldn't possibly be suddenly missing. He decided that Zhou Botong was not willing to hand it over but Zhou Botong was an elder so it was not very convenient to say much.

He couldn't help but feel awkward. Zhou Botong then gave his sleeves a brush and patted his body several times. He said, "I didn't hide it. Don't suspect me being so mean that I don't want to give it to you. Do you want me to take off all my clothes for you to take a good look?" Zhou Botong had always been naughty and only wanted to play, not distinguishing between big, small or urgent matters, and this didn't change with old

age. In his mind, these little cow noses [Taoists] were stung by the bees. At most they would be in immense pain for half a day so it was hardly a life or death worry.

This bottle of Jade Bee honey couldn't be given to anyone. Then he heard Hao Datong speaking so he passed the bottle up his shirt sleeve and let it slide down from his chest to his belly. He shrank his belly a bit so the bottle could go down his pants and from there the bottle slowly dropped to his foot and gently fell down to the floor. His internal energy was so profound that the muscles in his whole body could all be manipulated. That small bottle was sent to the floor and surprisingly didn't even make a sound.

Wang Chuyi thought, "Martial Uncle didn't want to hand over the bottle but only wanted to play with people. If I say something, there is no way I could change his mind. I should just take care of other business first and when his temper is improved, I will get the bottle from him. For now let's heavily punish the treacherous disciple Zhijing. If not for Zhao Zhibing's willingness to die rather than to surrender, wouldn't our sect's long-built reputation have already been destroyed by this treacherous disciple's hand?" Having thought this, he said out loud, "Hao Shi Di [Apprentice Brother Hao], it won't hurt if we postpone the matter of treating the injured. We must quickly deal with this treacherous disciple Zhijing first!"

The Quanzhen five masters were apprentice brothers for several decades so they all knew about Wang Chuyi's straight and unselfish character. Even though Zhijing was his Taoist disciple, he had committed an atrocious crime. Wang Chuyi wouldn't think to protect him. Everybody thought, "This perfidious disciple sold out his sect for personal glory and harmed his own sect brothers in the process. He cannot be forgiven."

Suddenly they heard a faint sound coming from under the bell, "Martial Grandpa Zhou, if you save my life, I'll give you the bee honey; otherwise I'll just eat it all before I die!" Zhou Botong was alarmed and quickly moved forward a step. Sure enough that bottle of Jade Bee honey was gone without a trace. Zhou Botong had earlier stood by the bell, with Zhao Zhijing beneath it. That small bottle happened to fall right in front of him. Upon hearing that Hao Datong couldn't get the Jade Bee honey from Zhou Botong, he immediately stretched out his hand through the crack and grabbed it.

Now he used this small bottle to bargain for his life. He himself knew that this attempt could be in vain but he was desperate and therefore must fight for his life to the bitter end. As Zhou Botong heard Zhao Zhijing's words, he was extremely worried and cried out, "Hey, hey, you definitely can't eat the bee honey. Wait, let's talk about it."

Zhao Zhijing then replied: "Then you must agree to save my life."

The Quanzhen five masters were startled, fearing that if this Martial Uncle were to agree to this demand, they wouldn't be able to punish Zhao Zhijing. Qiu Chuji hurriedly said, "Shi Shu [Martial Uncle], this person has committed a really heinous crime, we cannot spare him no matter what."

Zhou Botong crouched down on the ground and spoke into the bell, "Hey, hey, you definitely cannot eat the bee honey!"

Liu Chuxuan then added, "Shi Shu [Martial Uncle], pay him no mind! If you want the bee honey, it's really not difficult. Today we've already explained and settled the animosity with Long Guniang. We can now go to Gu Mu and ask her for several bottles. Long Guniang has already given you the first one so giving you another ten is really not a problem!"

Zhou Botong then shook his head and said, "Maybe not, maybe not!" In his mind he thought, "Do you think she gave me this bottle of the bee honey? It was me who stole it. She left the Sacred Scripture Chamber in a hurry so she didn't take it with her. If I asked her again to give me the honey, she might not agree. And even if she did agree, I'd still have to let you take it away to cure people, how would there be anything left for me in the end?"

Then he heard the gentle hum of five or six Jade Bees that flew into the hall from the courtyard through the hole in the roof. The hall doors were closed so the bees hit the window and couldn't find their way out. Zhou Botong came up with an idea and said, "Zhao Zhijing, I'm afraid what you took isn't the Jade Bee honey."

Zhao Zhijing hurriedly replied, "Yes, yes, it is. Why shouldn't it be?"

Zhou Botong then said, "Good, you open the bottle and let me smell it first. If it isn't the bee honey, there's no need to talk any more nonsense."

Zhao Zhijing quickly opened the bottle and said, "You smell it, isn't it the bee honey?"

Zhou Botong deeply inhaled the air and said, "Hmm, Hmm, it doesn't smell like it. Let me sniff again a few more times."

Zhao Zhijing clasped both hands tightly over the bottle for fear that Zhou Botong would lift the bell up and snatch it from him. At the same time he said, "You sniff this sweet scent, sniff this sweet scent!" The scent of the Jade Bee honey was incomparably sweet. As soon as the bottle was opened, the palace hall was filled with the strong fragrance.

Zhou Botong sneezed and laughed. He said, “I’ve got a cold and my nose is not very effective!” and at the same time turned to Qiu Chuji, giving him a wink.

Zhao Zhijing also guessed right that Zhou Botong was using a delaying tactic so he said: “If you even touch the bell, I will eat all the bee honey.” But by this time, several Jade Bees had already sensed the honey smell and flew to the bell.

Zhou Botong wielded his sleeves and shouted, “Go in and sting him!” The Jade Bees of course didn’t listen to Zhou Botong but the scent coming out from beneath the bell was growing more and more intense. With zeng-zeng hums, they all buzzed in through the crack at the bottom of the bell.

The people then heard Zhao Zhijing’s frantic shouts. With the poignant smell of the honey, a Jade Bee flew in and stung him, causing the bottle to drop and shatter. Zhou Botong went mad and shouted, “Stinky Cow nose [Taoist], why couldn’t you hold the bottle firmly?” As he was about to go lift up the bell more Jade Bees from the courtyard crazily buzzed into the bell. Zhou Botong had suffered the Jade Bee stings so he didn’t dare to get near. He saw numerous bees filling the large space inside the bell. Zhao Zhijing’s body was covered with the sticky syrup and no matter how he moved his hands or his head, he couldn’t avoid the bees and got stung who-know-how-many hundred times all over his body. The people heard him shouting out crazily for a moment and then came an eerie silence. He must have died from the great amount of poison.

Zhou Botong then grabbed Liu Chuxuan’s robe and said: “Good, Chuxuan, now you go ask Long Guniang to give me many, many bottles of the bee honey.” Liu Chuxuan frowned, feeling quite miserable. Earlier he tried to stop Zhou Botong from being rash and agreeing to Zhao Zhijing’s demand so he spoke out quite carelessly. As a matter of fact, the Quanzhen Five Masters had used the “Big Dipper Formation” and all their combined forces to injure Xiao Longnu. It was still not certain that she would ever recover, how could it be “animosity explained and settled” four words as he said? Right now Zhou Botong was holding his chest so he could only let out a painful smile and said: “Don’t worry, Shi Shu [Martial Uncle], Chuxuan is leaving!” Then he turned towards the back of the mountain and walked to Gu Mu.

Qiu Chuji and others knew that this matter was indeed deadly. If Xiao Longnu was alright, everything would be fine. But if she died from the severe injury, nobody knew how many Quanzhen disciples would be killed by Yang Guo’s hand. Everybody then said in one voice: “Let us all go together.”

The woods outside Gu Mu was the area Wang Chongyang himself had forbidden his disciples to go, not even one step. Many people heeded their late master's instruction so they stopped at the edge of the woods. Qiu Chuji summoned air into his abdomen and clearly announced: "Yang Xiao Xia [Young Hero Yang], is Long Guniang's injury alright? Here we've got several wonder pills to treat the injury. Please come out and take them." Zhou Botong said in a low voice: "Yes, Yes! I want the bee honey. Come out and trade for them!" Half a day passed and still there was no reply. After Qiu Chuji used his energy to call the couple, the woods fell into a bleak silence. He looked into the woods but only saw the shady clouds circling around, all the tree branches above, and thorny bushes below.

Liu Chuxuan and Hao Datong walked along the edge of the woods but saw no sign of people passing through the area. It looked like Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu didn't come back to Gu Mu but went away from Mount Zhongnan. They felt both happy and worried at the same time and decided to return to the Chongyang Palace. The Quanzhen people were glad that the Yang-Long couple had gone far away but worried that if Xiao Longnu didn't recover, the sect would have big trouble ahead. On the other hand, the Old Urchin Zhou Botong was worried that he wouldn't get the Jade Bee honey but also quite happy that he didn't have to meet Xiao Longnu and could avoid exposing his crime of stealing the bee honey in the first place.

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Even though the Quanzhen Five Masters had lived on Mount Zhongnan for several decades, they couldn't have guessed how Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu came back to Gu Mu.

Shielded by the Jade Bees, the Yang-Long couple rushed to the back of the courtyard and then saw a small building on the side of the mountain. Yang Guo knew it was the Sacred Scripture Chamber of the Chongyang Palace so he carried Xiao Longnu inside. They let out a gasp of air and then heard the sounds of many people shouting. Dozens of Taoists were pursuing them but they were afraid of the Jade Bees and dared not come too close.

Yang Guo settled Xiao Longnu in a chair, looked around, and contemplated the situation. Then he saw that in the back of the Sacred Scripture Chamber was a mountain creek which was 30 to 40 feet below. Even though the gorge was deep, the good thing was that it wasn't too wide. On the side of his body, he always carried a long rope for tying between two big trees to make a bed. Now he tied one end to a pillar of the Sacred Scripture Chamber and then leapt down while pulling the rope. He swam across the

mountain stream and then straightened the rope. He then tied its other end to a big tree before using his lightness Kung Fu to walk on the rope back to the chamber.

When he was back at Xiao Longnu's side, he softly asked her, "Shall we go over there?"

Xiao Longnu said, "You said we should go there; then I'd go there with you."

Yang Guo laughed and said, "That is called "Marry a chicken, act like a chicken; marry a dog, act like a dog!" [Chinese saying: A woman must follow and comply with her husband's wishes]. Then he paused and asked again, "In your heart, do you really want to go over there?" Xiao Longnu let out a gentle sigh and her facial expression changed. Yang Guo knew she most wanted to go home to Gu Mu but they could only get inside at great expense. While hesitating, they heard the shouting from outside the chamber and knew that they couldn't delay getting out of there much longer.

While he could read her mind, Xiao Longnu also understood him just as well. So she softly said, "I don't really have to go back to Gu Mu. You don't have to worry about me." Then she smiled, "As long as I can be with you, any place is just as good."

Yang Guo now thought, "This is her first wish after we got married and it might be her last wish in life as well. If I couldn't do this for her, how would I deserve to be her husband?" He looked in all directions. Hearing the sounds of people outside, his heart was in chaos. Then towards the west side of the chamber he caught a glimpse of a wooden trunk stacked on a bookshelf. His heart leapt and he said, "That's it!" He rushed there and saw that the trunk had a copper lock on it. He ripped it apart and opened the lid. The inside of the trunk was filled with books so he lifted up the trunk and turned it upside down, sending the books down on the floor. The trunk itself was made from Camphor wood about an inch thick and was very sturdy. Then he traced his hand along the shelves and found an oilcloth that was used to protect the precious books from rain leaks. He put two pieces of large oilcloth inside the trunk and then, with a rope, dropped the trunk down to the mountain creek below. He came back to carry Xiao Longnu and said with a smile, "Let us go home."

Xiao Longnu was very happy and smiled back. She said, "Your ideas are really good."

Yang Guo was afraid that she would worry so to comfort her he said, "This sword is very powerful. If a mountain rock blocks the trunk under the water, the sword will cut it open. I'll go fast; you, inside the box, don't have to worry."

Xiao Longnu smiled and said; "Only one thing is not good."

Yang Guo was startled and said, “What is it?”

Xiao Longnu then replied, “I won’t be able to see you for a while.”

Down at the mountain creek, Yang Guo remembered that he left Guo Xiang in the cave so he said, “We’ll bring Uncle Guo’s girl with us too, what do you say?”

Xiao Longnu was stunned and so her voice trembled as she said, “Really? You’ve brought Hero Guo...Hero Guo’s daughter?”

Yang Guo saw her changed expression, immediately realizing that she thought he’d brought Guo Fu with him. He bent down and gently kissed her face, softly saying, “It is that month-old baby. She can’t cut off anyone’s arm!” This time Xiao Longnu blushed profusely and hid her face in Yang Guo’s embrace, not daring to lift up her head.

After a while, she softly said, “We’d better go bring her back to the tomb with us. On a wild mountain like this, leaving her for another while could cost her small life.”

Yang Guo then thought about how they were delayed at the Chongyang Palace until now, not knowing how Guo Xiang was doing in the cave. Frightened, he immediately put Xiao Longnu in the trunk, carried it on his shoulder, and rushed out. As they reached the front of the cave but still didn’t hear any crying sound, he got even more worried. He pulled out the thorns that he earlier piled in front of the cave entrance and saw that Guo Xiang was sleeping comfortably, her cheeks still red like they were painted with rouge. The two were overjoyed. Xiao Longnu stretched out her hand and said “Let me carry her.” Yang Guo put Guo Xiang in her embrace and then put the wooden trunk back on his shoulder again.

By this time all the Taoists were gathering at the Chongyang Palace so they didn’t run into anybody along the way. Passing a pumpkin field, Yang Guo picked six or seven pumpkins that the Taoists grew. He put them in the trunk and laughingly said, “This will be enough for us to eat for a week.” And after a short while, they reached the bank of the mountain creek. He lowered his head to kiss Xiao Longnu’s cheek and gently closed the trunk lid. He then wrapped it tightly with the two pieces of oilcloth. After putting the trunk under water, he breathed in deeply and dove away with the trunk behind him.

He had trained his internal power in a wild mountain flood so diving to the bottom of this small mountain creek didn’t strain him in the least. The bottom of the creek was rugged with high and low terrain. There were muddy rocks blocking the waterway so

the wooden trunk couldn't easily pass through. Yang Guo used his sword to hack them apart and make way. Afraid that Xiao Longnu would be suffocated inside the trunk, he went as fast as he could. In only minutes, they emerged from water, arriving at the underground tunnel below Gu Mu.

He pulled off the oilcloth and opened the trunk lid. Xiao Longnu was in a dazed state as a result of her heavy injury. Guo Xiang let out a loud healthy cry. She had been feeding on leopard's milk for over a month so she was actually very strong and healthy. Xiao Longnu smiled faintly and softly said, "We are finally home!" She couldn't support herself by this time so she closed her eyes. Yang Guo didn't lift her body up but took the whole wooden trunk back to the living quarter inside Gu Mu.

Inside, the tables and chairs were overturned and the beds were crooked. This was the result of that day's evil fight with Li Mochou and her disciple before they departed. Yang Guo looked at the stone chamber and the many things he'd used since he was small; his heart felt something beyond description, a mix of happiness and pain. He was expressionless for a moment. Suddenly he felt a drop of water on the back of his hand so he turned his head and saw Xiao Longnu, supporting herself with a chair, standing there with tears slowly flowing from her eyes.

Today the couple had started their family. They finally fulfilled their long time wish and returned home. From now to the afterlife, the bitterness, agony, and worry were all gone but deep down in their hearts they couldn't restrain their sorrow. The two people both knew that Xiao Longnu was seriously injured. With the injuries from both Fawang's golden wheel and the Quanzhen Five Masters' strike, how would her delicate body be able to endure?

In their young lives, the two people had always been lonely and miserable and never really experienced true happiness. Suddenly they came to realize their biggest wish and then immediately had to say good-bye!

Yang Guo stayed expressionless for a long time. Then he went into Sun Po Po [Grandma Sun]'s bedroom and arranged the bedding on the chilled jade bed. Then he helped Xiao Longnu up so she could rest comfortably. All the old food that was stored at Gu Mu had long ago spoiled but the Jade Bee honey at the altar indeed could not go bad. He poured out half a cup of the syrup and mixed it with fresh water. He fed it to Xiao Longnu and baby Guo Xiang. Then he himself drank a bowl of it.

Then he thought, "I've got to lift up my spirits to make her happy. Even my heart is filled with grief and sorrow; I can't let it show on my face." Having thought that, he

went to look for two of the thickest candles and wrapped them with red cloth. He put them on a table and said with a smile, “This is our wedding party!”

With the two red candles, the stone chamber immediately became festive. Xiao Longnu was sitting on the bed. When she saw her own body stained with blood and dirt, she said with a small smile, “I look terrible like this, how would I resemble a bride!” Then she suddenly remembered something and said, “Guo’er, could you please go to Ancestor Grandma’s bedroom and bring me that gold work box?”

Even though Yang Guo had lived inside Gu Mu for several years, he never dared enter Lin Chaoying’s room or played with her stuff. This time he heard Xiao Longnu speaking to him like this, he said with a laugh, “You have to be this polite when you talk to your husband.” He walked over to the headboard of the bed where several boxes were stacked and lifted out the one at the bottom. This box was really not heavy and had no lock. The outside work was red and gold with an exquisite design.

Xiao Longnu said, “Sun Po Po [Grandma Sun] told me that stored in this box were Ancestor Grandma’s wedding items. She didn’t get married and so these things didn’t get used.”

“Hmm,” Yang Guo groaned. He looked at this beautifully designed box but felt that amid happiness always was infinite misery. He put down the box on top of the chilled jade bed and opened the lid to see that lying inside were a pearl-inlaid Phoenix crown, a red robe embroidered in gold and female clothing made from red satin. All the items were made from the best materials and even though they had been in the box for several decades, they still looked like new. Xiao Longnu said, “Take them out and let me take a look.”

Yang Guo took each item out of the box. Underneath the clothing were a small vanity box inlaid with pearl and gold and a carved jade jewelry box. There was rouge powder and half a bottle of scented oil inside the vanity box. And as soon as the jewelry box was opened, the two of them were wide-eyed, seeing a pearl hairpin, jade bracelets, and gemmed earrings. All items were exquisite, flashing and sparkling. The Yang-Long couple had rarely seen gem stones before so they didn’t know how precious these adorning items were. They only saw the elegant inlay work and beautiful design, indicating that these pieces had been created with the most painstaking efforts.

Xiao Longnu said with a smile, “Should I dress up as a bride?” Yang Guo then replied, “Today you are exhausted. You should rest first and tomorrow you can dress up.” Xiao Longnu shook her head, saying, “No, today is the day we got married. I love being a

bride. On that day at the Passionless Valley, that Gongsun person wanted to marry me, I didn't get dressed up!"

Yang Guo said with a laugh, "You called that getting married? That was the senile Gongsun's delusion!"

Xiao Longnu picked up the rouge and the honey water. She looked into the mirror, planning to dress up. In her entire life, this would be the first time she put cosmetic powder on her face. Her facial complexion was originally pale and really didn't need any cosmetics. But this time she was seriously injured and had no color left on her face. She lightly smeared rouge on both cheeks and it added to her beauty tremendously. She paused for a while and then picked up a comb to work on her hair. Then she sighed and said, "I have to make a hair bun but I can't do it. Guo'er, can you do it?"

Yang Guo then said, "No, I can't either! Without it, you are even more beautiful."

Xiao Longnu said with a smile, "Really?" and laid down the comb. She inserted the hairpin and put on the earrings and the jade bracelets on both wrists. Under the red candlelight, her beauty was unparalleled. She was overjoyed as she turned around, wanting to hear praise from Yang Guo.

As soon as she turned her head, she saw Yang Guo's tears streaming down his face. He was overwhelmed by grief. Xiao Longnu gritted her teeth and pretended not to see him crying. With a smile she said, "Would you say I look good?"

With a choking sound, Yang Guo replied, "Most beautiful! Let me bring you the Phoenix crown!" He lifted the crown up and walked over to put it on for her from behind. In the mirror, Xiao Longnu saw him lifting his sleeve to wipe away his tears. When he faced her again, his face appeared to be joyful. He then said with a smile, "Later, should I call you 'Niang Zi'[Madame] or should I still call you 'Gu Gu'?"

In her heart, Xiao Longnu thought, "Why 'later'? Is that to say the two of us still have a 'later'?" But she put on her happiest expression and laughingly said, "Calling me Gu Gu again is definitely not good. As for calling me 'Madame,' that sounds like an old lady!"

Yang Guo then said, "What were you called when you were a child? Today you can let me hear it."

Xiao Longnu replied, "I don't have a childhood name. Master just called me Long'er."

Yang Guo said: “Alright, then you call me Guo’er and I will call you Long’er. The two of us are equal and no one gets the worst of it. Wait till we have a baby, we will say: hey, baby’s father! And hey, baby’s mother! And when the baby is grown and gets married..”

Hearing him talking nonsense like this, Xiao Longnu could no longer grit her teeth to smile. Finally, her resistance broke and she let out a sobbing sound. She bent down on the box and started crying. Yang Guo scrambled forward and brought her into his arm. He softly said, “Long’er, you are not well, I’m also not well. There’s no need to pay attention to whatever will happen in the future. Today you are not dead. I’m also not dead. The two of us should be very happy now. Nobody is allowed to think about tomorrow.” Xiao Longnu lifted her head and smiled with tears in her eyes. Then she nodded.

Yang Guo said, “Look at this beautiful dress with a Phoenix design, I’ll help you put it on!” He supported her body and put on the dress embroidered in red and gold for her. Xiao Longnu’s tears dried up and she repaired her rouge make-up while sitting by the red candles with a smile.

At this time baby Guo Xiang was sleeping by the head of the bed. Then she opened her small eyes with great curiosity. It seemed like in her tiny heart she felt that the dressed up Xiao Longnu was really very pretty.

Xiao Longnu said, “I’ve dressed up nicely. It’s a pity there is no bridegroom’s outfit in the trunk. You must feel slightly out of place.”

Yang Guo then said “Let me take a look again. It seems like there are some more pretty items in there.” As he said that, he moved various scattered items out of the trunk and put them on the bed. Xiao Longnu saw him taking out a gold flower so she stuck it into his hair. Yang Guo said with a smile, “Not bad, there is a little more.” Then he looked at the bottom of the trunk and found a pack of letters bound by a red ribbon. The ribbon color already faded and the envelopes were so old they turned deep yellow. Yang Guo picked them up and said, “There are letters in here.”

Xiao Longnu said, “Let’s see what kind of letters they are.”

Yang Guo then untied the ribbon and saw that on the envelopes was written “To be opened only by Miss Lin Chaoying” and that there were the words ‘Ji Ji’ on the left corner. All the twenty letters were addressed in the same way. Yang Guo knew that Wang Chongyang’s given name before becoming a Taoist was Wang ‘Ji Ji’ so he laughed and

said, “These are love letters Founding Master Chongyang wrote to our Ancestor Grandma. Can we read them?”

Since childhood, Xiao Longnu had revered her Ancestor Grandma as if she was a divine being so she quickly said, “No, we cannot read!”

Still smiling, Yang Guo tied up the bunch of letters with the ribbon and said, “Old sister Sun and the others were so old-fashioned. Seeing us bowing to heaven and earth before Founding Master Chongyang’s portrait, they all got upset and accused us of committing a blasphemy. I didn’t believe for a minute that in those years Master Chongyang and our Ancestor Grandma didn’t have a relationship. If we took these letters there for them to take a look, those old cow noses’ reactions would be quite interesting.” While saying that, he was looking at Xiao Longnu and couldn’t help feeling sorry for Lin Chaoying. He thought, “Ancestor Grandma lived alone inside Gu Mu. She must have more than once tried on the wedding dress. The two of us are much luckier than she was.”

Then Xiao Longnu said, “That’s right, we are more fortunate than Ancestor Grandma. Why should you still be unhappy?”

Yang Guo said, “All right!” Suddenly he was startled and said with a laugh, “I didn’t say it but you really could guess what I was thinking.”

Xiao Longnu curved her lips into a smile and retorted, “If I didn’t know what you were thinking, how would I deserve to be your wife?” Yang Guo sat down on the side of the bed and gently extended his left arm to hug her. In their hearts, the two of them were happy beyond words and hoped that a moment like this would last forever. They sat there in each other’s embrace and, for a long time, nobody said a word.

After a while, they both eyed that bunch of letters. And when they looked at each other, they laughed with mischievous glints in their eyes. Knowing perfectly well that they shouldn’t read their deceased master’s personal letters but, of course, they couldn’t bear the curiosity in their hearts.

Yang Guo said, “We’ll just read one letter. Is that alright? We definitely won’t read more.” With a smile Xiao Longnu said, “I want to read too. So, okay, we’ll just read one.” Delighted, Yang Guo reached out to get the letters and untied the ribbon. Xiao Longnu added, “But if the letter is filled with heartaches, you don’t have to read it out loud to me.” Yang Guo paused slightly and then said, “All right!” But in his heart he knew that the relationship between the Wang-Lin couple didn’t end well and was afraid that there

would be more misery than happiness in the letters. In that case, it would be better not to read them. Then Xiao Longnu said, “You don’t have to worry about it beforehand. Perhaps there are only convoluted speeches in there.”

Yang Guo picked up the first letter and read, “Dear Ying Mei [Sister Ying]: The other day my division and the enemy crossed swords at the Hill of the Evil Storm. We were ambushed and suffered a small loss. Four hundred men.. ..” As he read on, the letter was filled with the story of the battles between his army and the Jin. He looked through several other letters, they all talked about military affairs and there was nothing on personal relationships.

Yang Guo sighed and said, “Founding Master Chongyang was indeed a real Han hero. His whole heart was devoted to defending the country and since this was the case, our Ancestor Grandma couldn’t be blamed for being estranged.” Xiao Longnu said, “No, Ancestor Grandma was very delighted to receive these letters.” Puzzled, Yang Guo asked, “How do you know?” Xiao Longnu said, “Of course I don’t know. I can only guess what went on inside her mind. You see, every single letter talked about how very urgent and difficult those battle situations were but master Chongyang, even in distress, still didn’t forget to write to our Ancestor Grandma. Wouldn’t you say she was always on his mind?” Yang Guo nodded and said, “Yes, it was indeed so.” And then he picked up the letter again.

That letter described a desperate situation. Wang Chongyang’s army was overwhelmed by many enemies and they were repeatedly defeated with little hope of support. At the end of the letter, he asked about Lin Chaoying’s injured condition and even though he used only a few words, his deep concerns were quite evident. Yang Guo said, “Hmm, during those years our Ancestor Grandma was injured but later she was well again. Your wound condition can slowly heal too. After a year or so, you can be recovered.”

Xiao Longnu weakly smiled. She herself knew that her injury this time was far from normal. If an injury this heavy could be cured, that would be like having an immortal walking the earth. But to say it out loud right now wouldn’t help light up the situation. Even if Yang Guo’s suggestion couldn’t convince her, it would make him feel better. So she said, “Slow treatment is good. What’s the rush? And these letters don’t really talk about private matters, you can read on!”

Yang Guo read another letter, which was filled with words of grief and anger. It talked about the army’s defeat and how Wang Chongyang had to risk everything to break out of a heavy encirclement. But even his retreat was a disaster with ultimate deaths and casualties; at the end of the letter he said he was going to gather troops again for an-

other battle. From that point on every letter all talked about military defeats and setbacks. The Jin power at the North river was very strong and Wang Chongyang obviously already knew that the matters were gravely serious. The letter was full of desperate and disheartening messages.

Yang Guo said, “These letters are very depressing. Let’s not read anymore! Eh, what’s this?” Suddenly there was excitement in his voice and the hand that held the letter slightly trembled. He read aloud, “There, at the most northern and bitterly cold area, is a stone called Chilled Jade [Han Yu]. It can control all illnesses and cure incurable diseases and should help my sister [Lin Chaoying]. Long’er, do you think this...this is the Chilled Jade Bed?”

As Xiao Longnu saw the happy expression on his face, her voice shook, “You... You said the Chilled Jade Bed could heal my injury?” Yang Guo replied, “I don’t know but Master Chongyang said so. It must have a basis. You see, the Chilled Jade Bed was provided by him, wasn’t it? Our Ancestor Grandma slept on this bed, didn’t she? And her severe injury finally healed, right?”

He hurriedly unfolded every letter to look for a way to treat injuries but, apart from that one letter, the two words “Chilled Jade” were not mentioned again anywhere. Yang Guo finally tied up the many letters with the ribbon and put them back in the box. Blankly, he pondered, “This Chilled Jade Bed is this strange. There must be a reason. But how do I find out a way to treat Long’er’s injury? Hmm, let me figure out the way... let me figure out the way...”

Xiao Longnu smiled and asked, “You look lost in thought, what’s on your mind?”

Yang Guo then replied, “I’m trying to figure out a way to use the Chilled Jade Bed to treat your injury. Do I grind the stone for you to take as medicine or do I use any medicine to complement it somehow?” If he didn’t know that the Chilled Jade Bed could treat all injuries, that would be the end of story but now that he’d read the six words “control all illnesses, cure incurable diseases” and couldn’t figure out how to use the Chilled Jade Bed, his heart was on fire. Dismally Xiao Longnu said, “Do you remember Sun Po Po? She took care of both our Ancestor Grandma and my master for many years. Still when she was injured by the Taoist named Hao, she... she died of a severe injury.” Originally Yang Guo was full of hope. Now hearing her words, he felt as if he was suddenly drenched with cold water.

Xiao Longnu stretched out her hand to stroke his hair gently. With a gentle voice she said, “Guo’er, you don’t have to worry so much about my injury. Why should you put

yourself through agony again?”

Yang Guo was completely disheartened but after a while, he asked, “How did my Shi Zu [Martial Grandma –referring to her master] get injured?” Even though Yang Guo had lived at Gu Mu for many years, he actually never heard Xiao Longnu talk about how her master passed away.

Xiao Longnu said, “My master isolated herself inside Gu Mu and rarely went outside. Then there was this one year my Shi Jie [apprentice sister] went out and caused trouble. She fled back to Mount Zhongnan so my master had to leave the tomb to help. Then unexpectedly she fell into an enemy trap. Even though my master lost the fight, she could still bring back Shi Jie. That should have been the end of it. But then she bickered with that evil person. Nobody would have expected that he would want a yard after getting an inch. Shortly after the fight, he was outside Gu Mu, issuing a challenge, and then broke into the tomb. My master couldn’t fend him off and almost had to drop the dragon stone to die together with him inside. Fortunately, at a critical moment, she threw out a golden needle. That evil person was caught off guard and got hit. The itchy pain was difficult to bear and my master used that opportunity to strike his pressure points. Seeing him unable to move, she didn’t expect that Shi Jie would sneak up to unseal the pressure points. In the end that evil person attacked her and that was when she got struck by his poison hand.”

Yang Guo asked, “Who was that evil person? His martial skills were even above my Martial Grandma. He must have been a high master of her generation.”

Xiao Longnu said, “Master didn’t tell me. She said that my heart shouldn’t be filled with any love or hate feelings and that if she told me who that evil person was, I wouldn’t forget him and would later go seek revenge.”

Yang Guo sighed and said, “Hmmm, Shi Zu [Martial Grandma] was really a good person!”

Xiao Longnu smiled and said, “If master could see me today being married to a good son-in-law like this, she would be quite delighted.”

With a laugh, Yang Guo said, “That might not be the case. She wouldn’t let you marry anyone.”

Xiao Longnu sighed, “My master was really the kindest. Even though at first she wouldn’t allow it, afterwards, seeing my heart, she would have relented. She... she

would certainly have liked you.” Xiao Longnu was recalling her master’s kindness and was lost in thought for a long time. Then she said, “After master was injured, she moved to another room on the opposite side far away from the Chilled Jade Bed. She said our Gu Mu sect’s martial style and cold air induced and subdued each other, therefore the Chilled Jade Bed wonderfully helped us practicing our martial skills. But after injury, we should not be exposed to the cold air.”

Yang Guo made a “hmm” sound while pondering how internal energy circulated through vital organs. To use internal energy according to the Jade Maiden Manual, the pure Yin air would flow through body pulses, causing the inner body to be extremely cold and sending out heat steams to the outside of the body. When practicing, clothing had to be removed so the heat steams could be smoothly dispersed without any obstruction. And the internally injured could not use the cold air from the Chilled Jade Bed. He contemplated, “But what did Master Wang Chongyang mean by “control all illnesses, cure incurable diseases? This induce and subdue principle must be missing some important details.” Then he saw Xiao Longnu’s eyelids drooping, indicating that she was exhausted. He said, “You should rest, I’m sitting right here to keep you company.”

Xiao Longnu quickly opened her eyes wide and said, “No, I’m not tired. Tonight, we won’t sleep.” With her heavy injury, she was afraid that once she slept, she wouldn’t wake up again. Then she said, “You keep on talking to me. Hmm, are you tired?”

Yang Guo shook his head and said with a tiny smile, “You don’t want to sleep then don’t. Just close your eyes and keep your mind awake.”

Xiao Longnu said, “All right!” She slowly closed her eyelids and said in a low voice, “My master once said, there was one thing that till the day she died she still couldn’t figure out. Guo’er, you are very smart, you can think about it.” Yang Guo said, “What is it?” Xiao Longnu then said, “Master hit that evil person’s pressure point but she didn’t know why Shi Jie [Apprentice Sister] would help him unseal it.” Yang Guo was deep in thought for a while and then felt Xiao Longnu’s body resting against his. Her breaths were shallow. She already fell asleep.

Yang Guo gazed at her face, his heart filled with apprehension. Time passed. A candle flame flickered and then went out by itself.

He suddenly remembered a vertical couplet in a small room at the Peach Blossom Island:

“Silkworms will not stop spitting their threads until they die; the candle has burned to ashes when tears dry up.”

Missing his wife, Huang Yaoshi wrote these two lines of a Tang poem and hung them outside the study where she used to embroider. At that time, Yang Guo saw them but paid no attention. He was just too young to understand. Now he slowly absorbed the true meaning of the lines and his heart was breaking. Suddenly before his eyes, another candle was flickering its last light. He thought, “These two candles are just like Long’er and I. One has burned out and the other is about to be extinguished.”

He was deep in thought for a while and then heard Xiao Longnu quietly murmur, “I’m not going to die. Guo’er... I’m not going to die. The two of us will live for many, many, many years.”

Yang Guo said, “That’s right. You can’t die. You’ll slowly improve and then you’ll be well. How does your chest feel?” Xiao Longnu didn’t reply. She was just talking in her sleep.

Yang Guo stretched out his hand to brush her forehead but felt it was burning. He was both worried and sad. He thought, “Li Mochou did all kinds of evil things but she is now alive and well. Long’er has never caused anyone harm. How come her life is cut short? Oh God, Oh God, you open your eyes but don’t see?”

In his entire life, he was never a prisoner of fear and he always acted as he pleased. But right now, facing a hopeless situation, he couldn’t do anything. He gently put Xiao Longnu’s body to the side and knelt down on the ground. He secretly prayed, “So long as God has mercy and let her injured body recover, I will... I will...” To redeem Xiao Longnu’s life, how would there be anything he was not willing to do?

While he was praying, Xiao Longnu suddenly said, “It was Ouyang Feng. Sun Po Po [Grandma Sun] said it was Ouyang Feng! Guo’er, Guo’er, where are you?” She called out in alarm and lifted her body up. Yang Guo quickly sat down by the bed, grabbed her hand, and said, “I’m here.” In her sleep, Xiao Longnu felt her body without support so she immediately woke up. Seeing now that Yang Guo was still right by her and hadn’t gone anywhere, she was greatly consoled.

Yang Guo said, “Don’t worry. In this lifetime, I’ll never leave you. And in the future, when we leave Gu Mu, I will never leave your side even for a bit.”

Xiao Longnu said, “In the outside world, sure enough there are so many good places to go. But when we get outside, I’ll still be afraid.”

Yang Guo said, “Today we don’t have to fear anything. We’ll wait for a few months for your body to recover, and then we’ll head south. I’ve heard that Lingnan [a place in South China] is warm like spring all year round. The flowers bloom and don’t wither and the leaves always stay green. We’ll put down our swords. We’ll grow plants and raise small chickens and ducks. We’ll live under the southern sun for the rest of our lives and have many, many boys and girls. Do you think these are good ideas?”

Xiao Longnu daydreamed and gently said, “We’ll put down our swords forever. That’s wonderful! Nobody hurts us and we don’t need to hurt others. We’ll grow things on a farm and we’ll keep chickens and ducks.. .. Oh, only if I don’t die...”

For the moment, the two hearts flew to a far-away Southern place, which was blessed with spring breezes and morning sun. They could smell the rich flower fragrances and they could hear the sounds of small chickens clucking and ducks...

No longer being able to support her head, Xiao Longnu’s mind was about to slip into a blur. But she was determined not to sleep so she said, “I don’t want to sleep. You keep talking to me.”

Yang Guo said, “Just now in your sleep you said something about Ouyang Feng. What was the matter?”

Xiao Longnu then said, “I said Ouyang Feng? What about him?”

Yang Guo added, “You also said Sun Po Po [Grandma Sun] decided that it was him.”

As Xiao Longnu heard him saying that, she immediately recalled something and said, “Oh! Sun Po Po said the man who injured my master had to be West Poison Ouyang Feng. She said in the world there were only very few people who could have hurt my master. And Ouyang Feng was the only bad person among those people. Until her death, my master never said that evil person’s name. Sun Po Po asked her ‘Is it Ouyang Feng, is it Ouyang Feng?’ but my master shook her head, smiled, and then passed away. Isn’t that Ouyang Feng your adoptive father? His martial skills were really high; no wonder my master couldn’t defeat him.”

Yang Guo sighed and said, “My adoptive father has died. Martial Grandma and Sun Po Po have died. Master Chongyang and Ancestor Grandma have died. Hatred, love, and

death were all written off by God. It was like my Martial Grandma could see the future so she was not willing to say my adoptive father's name..." But suddenly he shouted, "Oh...that must be it!"

Xiao Longnu asked, "What have you figured out?"

Yang Guo replied, "Li Mochou didn't unseal my adoptive father's pressure point that Martial Grandma hit. Actually, it was because Martial Grandma didn't hit the mark in the first place!"

Xiao Longnu said, "She didn't hit the mark? That was not possible. My master's accu-point sealing skill was really remarkable."

Yang Guo said, "My adoptive father had two of the world's strange martial skills. In his whole body, the vital energy could circulate against the normal flow. The opposite circulation shifted all his pressure points so sealing the pressure point actually meant missing the point."

Xiao Longnu said, "There is something that strange?"

Yang Guo said "Let me try it for you to see." Having said that, he flipped up-side down and used his hand to prop himself up on the floor, his head down and legs up in the air. Then he quickly spun himself, making a few rounds, and then breathed in a few times. Suddenly he jumped up and bumped his head into a pointed corner of the table in front of the bed. Xiao Longnu cried out, "Ai yo, be careful!" only to see the "Hundred Meetings" point [Bai Hui] on his head hit the corner of the stone table hard. This "Hundred Meetings" point was right on top of the brain, where the vertical line from the front to the back of the head and the horizontal line from the left ear to the right ear intersect, and hence the name "hundred meetings point." This was a vital pressure point, which controlled all the veins. Doctors usually compared it to the North Star, as in the saying "Bai Hui [Hundred Meetings] is sky, Xuan Ji [Jade Pearl -chest] is man, and Yong Quan [Bubbling Spring -legs] is earth," which was to say that these "three big pressure points" were the most critical in a human body. Knowing this, Yang Guo bumped it right into a table corner and then turned around to stand erect. With a laugh he said, "You see, as the energy flew in the opposite direction, my Hundred Meetings point changed its position!" Xiao Longnu clucked her tongue in approval and said, "How very strange. And he came up with that!"

Hitting himself this time, even though Yang Guo didn't seal his pressure point, he used quite a bit of force and his brain couldn't help becoming confused. In his daze, he

seemed to have figured out something important all of a sudden but couldn't quite say what it was. Xiao Longnu saw him looking dazed and disoriented so she said with a smile, "Dumb kid, a gentle demonstration would have been enough. Nobody told you to crash into the table so hard. Does it hurt?" Yang Guo didn't reply just waved his hand for her to stop talking. He concentrated on his thoughts but felt like there was a fuzzy shadow flashing in his brain, barring him from getting a clear picture. It seemed he needed to recall something from the past, yet it was also like he'd suddenly discovered something new. He wished he could have just taken it out from his brain, stopped that moving shadow, put that thought before his eyes and clearly look at it.

He thought for a while. Still he couldn't grasp the main points and couldn't give up thinking either. He grabbed his head. Quite vexed, he asked Xiao Longnu, "Long'er, I've figured out an extremely important matter but I don't know what. Do you know?" When a person got his thoughts mixed up like entangled threads and he himself didn't have a clue, asking another person what he was thinking was quite ridiculous. But for the two of them who had lived together for a long time and understood each other very well, their guesses would be correct most of the times. Xiao Longnu said, "This is a very important matter?" Yang Guo replied, "Yes." Xiao Longnu asked, "Is it related to my injury? Delighted, Yang Guo said, "Good, very good! What matter is that? What have I figured out?"

With a chuckle, Xiao Longnu said, "You just talked about your adoptive father Ouyang Feng. You said he could direct vital energy to circulate in the opposite direction. Is this related to my injured condition? I'm not the person he injured..."

Yang Guo suddenly jumped up and shouted out loudly, "Got it!"

These two words "Got it!" were brightly loud. The doors of the stone chambers inside Gu Mu were not closed so each and every word spoken echoed back, "Got it, Got it..." Yang Guo grabbed Xiao Longnu's right arm and repeatedly cried out, "You could be saved! You could be saved! You could be saved!" He couldn't restrain his happiness; nor could he really find words to express it. Seeing him all excited, Xiao Longnu was infected with this joyous feeling. She sat up.

Yang Guo said, "Long'er, you listen to my words. Right now you are seriously injured so you can't use our sect's Jade Maiden skills. And this makes it difficult for you to recover from the injury. But if you can circulate your vital energy against the flow to heal yourself, the Chilled Jade Bed will precisely be a marvelous aid."

Xiao Longnu had yet to understand. She mumbled, “Vital energy against the flow... the Chilled Jade Bed...”

Happily, Yang Guo said, “Would you say this is fate? You’ve practiced the Jade Maiden skill, which was good enough. On top of that we have the Chilled Jade Bed.”

Xiao Longnu became confused so she said, “I still don’t quite understand.”

Yang Guo then explained, “The Jade Maiden skills follow the Yin energy but the reverse flow skills are pure Yang. When I talked about my adoptive father’s reverse energy flow skills, I vaguely felt that your injured condition could be healed. Then I hit my head and, afterwards, recalled what Master Chongyang mentioned in his letter about the Chilled Jade. And it all became clear.”

Xiao Longnu said, “So is that to say our Ancestor Grandma, who used the Chilled Jade Bed to treat her injury, could reverse the energy flow as well?”

Yang Guo said, “That’s not likely. Our Ancestor Grandma would definitely not know this reverse energy flow technique. But I suspect that she was injured by the Yin’s soft internal energy. Your injury, on the other hand, was caused by the opposite force of the hard Yang.” Xiao Longnu smiled and nodded. Then with a joyful feeling, she put her mind at ease.

Yang Guo said, “We’d better not wait. Let us do it now.” He then went into the firewood room and took out a bunch of firewood. He lit them up in the corner of the stone room. Then he taught Xiao Longnu the most basic elements of the reverse energy flow skills and helped her sit up on the Chilled Jade Bed. He sat by the fire. As he used his left hand to press against Xiao Longnu’s right palm, he said, “I’ll push this heat through each of your pressure points and you use your internal energy to circulate it against the normal flow. We’ll do it one point at a time and when the heat comes back to the Chilled Jade Bed, your injured condition should improve a little bit.” With a smile Xiao Longnu said, “Do I have to get down and spin myself just like you did?” Yang Guo said, “Nah, that’s not necessary. Spinning is for shifting pressure points. It’s only good when fighting enemies. We are slowly healing your injury; sitting down here is just as good.”

Xiao Longnu stretched her hand to hold his left palm and with a smile she said, “Come to think of it, that Guo Guniang wasn’t too mean. She didn’t cut off both of your arms.” The two people had been through so many near death incidents that the matter of missing an arm became trivial. And Xiao Longnu was even joking about it. Yang Guo also laughed and retorted, “If both of my arms got cut off, I’d still have two feet. Only that

using my soles to help you circulate the energy would be hilariously smelly and not quite elegant.” Xiao Longnu scoffed and then silently recited the principle of reverse energy flow. After a while, she said, “I’ve got it!”

Yang Guo saw that the fire was burning too intense so he got up to slow it down. And just when they were about to begin circulating the energy, he suddenly called out, “Ai yo! I almost missed one important detail! Xiao Longnu said, “What is it?” Yang Guo pointed to Guo Xiang who was sleeping at the foot of the bed and said, “At a critical moment, if this little devil cries out, it will be quite a disaster!” Xiao Longnu then murmured, “Very dangerous!” When one was circulating and cultivating energy, the most evil taboo was a disturbed mind. Quite some time ago, Xiao Longnu and Yang Guo were practicing their Jade Maiden skills and were discovered by Yin Zhiping and Zhao Zhijing. Xiao Longnu’s anger caused her to spit up blood and she almost died. In addition to that, at that time her body was normally healthy. Today she was heavily injured, how would she be able to withstand any bit of distraction?

Yang Guo mixed half a bowl of the bee honey, picked up Guo Xiang, and fed her before moving her to a distant stone chamber. He shut two doors between them so even if she cried out, they wouldn’t hear her. Then he came back to stay by the chilled jade bed and said, “To clear the thirty six major pressure points your body, I think at best it will take ten days and at worst about half a month. Originally it should have taken many, many days because it’s hard to avoid distraction. But our Gu Mu is completely isolated from the outside world, making it the best place on earth for recovery. Even the most remote wild mountain or valley won’t be as good because there will always be the sound of birds or the smell of flowers to disturb one’s mind.”

Xiao Longnu smiled and said, “My injury was caused by the Quanzhen Taoists but it was their founding master who gave us the tomb chamber and the Chilled Jade Bed for me to rest and recover in. So their merits and crimes actually cancelled out each other.”

Then Yang Guo said, “What about that Jinlun Fawang? We can’t let him get away with it.”

Xiao Longnu sighed and said, “So long as I can live, what else do you have to be unhappy about?”

Yang Guo held her hand and said, “You are right. This time after you’ve recovered, we’ll never fight with people again. God is so kind to us. Hmmm...”

Xiao Longnu gently said, “We’ll go south to become farmers and we’ll raise a lot of chickens and ducks...” As she was saying that, she felt the heat energy passing into her body. With a trembling heart, she used the reverse energy flow technique that Yang Guo taught her to circulate that energy.

This healing method of using the reverse energy flow technique and the Chilled Jade Bed to complement each other was really strange but the result was also very effective. Years ago, Reverend Yi Deng had used the “Divine One Yang Finger” to cure Huang Rong’s injury by circulating energy and clearing all her pressure points in pretty much the same way. The difference was that using the One Yang Finger to cure an illness ravenously consumed a lot of Reverend Yi Deng’s internal energy but hence lead to a quick recovery. Yang Guo’s method would take many days to see results. And more than that, for a non-martial person who was heavily injured, a master of the One Yang Finger would use his profound internal energy to help the injured circulate the Yang energy and thus bring him back to health. In Xiao Longnu’s case, she didn’t have a very deep internal energy foundation but she and Yang Guo were from the same sect, yet could use different techniques. Not even Ouyang Feng coming back from the grave or Huang Yaoshi arriving could create a harmony between the helper and the helped like this. And nor would they be able to help Xiao Longnu to reverse her energy flow without innumerable difficulties.

Three times a day, Yang Guo would go out to feed Guo Xiang with honey and boiled pumpkin. Other than that he rarely left Xiao Longnu’s side. To clear major pressure points, sometimes it would take four or five hours during which their hands could not be separated. At the time Guo Jing was injured, Huang Rong spent seven days and seven nights helping him cure the injuries. Compared to Guo Jing’s sturdy body, Xiao Longnu’s was far more delicate and so her injury was many times more serious.

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That day at the outskirts of the woods, Huang Rong used her “Orchid Brushing Accupoint” skills to defeat Li Mochou. Then she looked everywhere but still couldn’t find her baby Guo Xiang. She was filled with anxiety and sorrow. As she came out of the forest, she shouted at Li Mochou, “What kind of tricks did you use? Where did you hide my baby?”

Surprised, Li Mochou said, “Isn’t the little girl tucked behind the thorn fence?”

Huang Rong was so worried that she almost broke down in tears. She shook her head and replied, “She’s disappeared.”

Li Mochou had been fostering Guo Xiang for many days and was quite attached to her. Suddenly hearing that she was missing, her heart skipped a beat. She quickly said, “Must be either Yang Guo or Jinlun Fawang.”

Huang Rong then asked, “How do you know?”

Then Li Mochou told her about her fight with Yang Guo and Fawang over the baby outside the walls of Xiangyang. As she talked about the dangers, Huang Rong couldn't keep her indifferent appearance. Seeing Li Mochou's worried expression, Huang Rong was then convinced that she didn't know where Guo Xiang was and so she stretched out her hand to unseal the “Jade Pearl” pressure point [Xuan Ji] on her chest. With Huang Rong's technique, Li Mochou could move round but she wouldn't be able to hurt anyone for a twelve-hour period.

With a forced smile, Li Mochou straightened up her body and brushed away the dirt. She said, “If it was Yang Guo who took her, she wouldn't be harmed. I'm only afraid that Fawang snatched her.” Huang Rong asked again, “Why is that?” Li Mochou replied, “Yang Guo was extremely good with the little baby girl. He quickly protected her from harm. That was why I blindly thought she was his daughter.” Having realized what she just said, she suddenly shut up for fear that Huang Rong would get angry again.

But really Huang Rong's mind was occupied by another matter. She was thinking about how Yang Guo and Li Mochou battled with Jinlun Fawang to protect Guo Xiang, while she herself and Guo Fu wrongly accused him of abominable crimes, and how Guo Fu had cut off his arm. Deep down in her heart was a grim regret. She blamed herself, “Alas, Guo'er has saved Jing Ge Ge [Brother Jing]. He's saved me. He's saved Fu'er. And this time he's saved Xiang'er... First impressions always stuck in my heart. I thought about his terribly evil father and then concluded that the son had to be like the father. I've never trusted him... Occasionally I treated him nicely and then I'd suspect him of doing something again. Rong'er... Rong'er... You've prided yourself on being intelligent. You've spoken of confidentiality and righteousness. You are really nothing like Jing Ge Ge [Brother Jing].”

Seeing tears brimming in her eyes, Li Mochou thought she was worried about her daughter's safety. So she urged, “Guo Fu Ren [Madame Guo], your daughter is only a month old. She's gone through quite a catastrophe but not even a single hair on her head is damaged. She was born as pretty as a doll [jade snow]. Even a she-devil, who killed people without batting an eye like me, likes her very much. She must have been born with a lucky life... the life that will change misfortune into fortune. And for all that, you can be at peace. Let the two of us go look for her together.”

Huang Rong wiped away the tears with her shirt sleeve and thought that what Li Mochou said was quite right. She also thought, “Honesty is the best way. Later on, I’ll let people think badly of me but I won’t think badly of people.” Then she stretched out her hand to unseal Li Mochou’s “Jade Pearl” point [Xuan Ji] again and said, “Li Dao Zhang [Sister Li] is willing to go find my daughter with me, I’m very grateful. But if you have an important matter to attend to, I can see you later.”

Li Mochou said, “What important matter? The most important thing is to find this little baby. You wait a minute!” Having said that, she rushed to the big hole inside a big tree and untied a rope on a leopard’s foot. Then she slapped its behind and said, “Off you go.” That leopard let out a low roar and quickly disappeared into the long grass. Puzzled, Huang Rong asked, “What did the leopard do?” With a laugh, Li Mochou said, “That was your daughter’s ‘wet-nurse’.”

Huang Rong smiled faintly and the two people headed back into town. Then they saw Guo Fu standing at the road that led into town. She was waiting impatiently for her mother.

Seeing Huang Rong, Guo Fu jumped up with joy and called out, “Ma [Mother], little sister was...” She cut herself off in mid-sentence when she unexpectedly saw that standing behind her mother was Li Mochou and she couldn’t help being frightened. She prepared herself to fight. In past times, she’d heard Wu Di Xiong [The Wu Brothers] say that Li Mochou killed their mother, so in her heart this was the most evil person on earth.

Huang Rong said, “Li Dao Zhang [Sister Li] is helping us search for your little sister. What did you say about your sister just now?”

Guo Fu replied, “Mei Mei [Sister] was kidnapped by Yang Guo. And he also snatched my little red horse. You look at this sword.” Having said that, she raised a bent sword to show her mother and said, “He used his empty shirt sleeve to strike it. The sword hit the corner of a wall and it turned out like this.”

Huang Rong and Li Mochou asked at the same time, “Using his shirt sleeve?”

Guo Fu replied, “Yes, it was really weird! Who would have thought he’d learned a devil Kung fu.”

Huang Rong and Li Mochou looked at each other in amazement. The two of them naturally knew that a person with extremely profound internal energy could definitely turn

silk into a stick, or use a soft material to strike a hard object. However, even if such a renowned and talented master could be found, he would still need thirty or forty years of practice to reach that level. At a very young age, Yang Guo surprisingly had reached this high stage. And this was extremely rare. As Huang Rong heard that her daughter was taken by Yang Guo, she felt quite relieved. Li Mochou, on the other hand, thought to herself, “This boy’s marvelous Kung Fu must be the result of learning from my master’s Jade Heart Manual. Right now I have Guo Fu Ren [Madame Guo] with me. If I help her get her daughter back, she will help me snatch the manual. I’m the first disciple of the sect. Even though Shi Mei [Apprentice Sister] was Master’s favorite, she’d already broken the sect’s rule. How could I let the manual fall into a man’s hand?” And with this thought, she felt herself quite righteous.

Huang Rong had tracked down Yang Guo’s direction and said, “Fu’er, you don’t have to go back to the Peach Blossom Island anymore. We’ll go find Yang Da Ge [Big Brother Yang] together.”

Guo Fu was very pleased, and said, “Okay, Okay!” But then when she thought that she would have to see Yang Guo, her face turned completely pale.

Huang Rong’s face was grim and she said, “When you see him again; don’t ask him if he’s forgiven you. You have to sincerely take the blame and apologize.”

In her heart, Guo Fu didn’t want to submit so she said, “Why do I have to do it? Isn’t he the one kidnapping Mei Mei [Sister]?”

Huang Rong simply rephrased Li Mochou’s words and said, “If he really had an evil intention, do you think your sister would still live today? Also, if he didn’t just hit your sword but rather aimed at your small head, don’t you think right now this would be quite a pretty scene?”

Hearing her mother’s words, Guo Fu still couldn’t help but shiver inside. She secretly thought, “Is that to say he’s really shown mercy?” But since she had been spoiled since she was little she still argued, “He’s snatched my sister away; naturally he is on his way to the Passionless Valley!”

Huang Rong shook her head and said, “No, he would definitely go back to Mount Zhongnan.”

Guo Fu pursed her lips and said, “Ma, you are actually helping him! If he really had a good intention, why wouldn’t he bring Mei Mei back to us in Xiangyang? For what rea-

son would he have to take her to Mount Zhongnan?”

Huang Rong sighed and said, “You and Yang Da Ge [Big Brother Yang] grew up together. For all that you still don’t understand his character! He’s always been arrogant and he’s never taken kindly to insults. You cut off his arm. He could have taken your life but he didn’t have the heart to. But for this matter, he also wouldn’t back down. He took your sister away to make us worry. When time passes and his anger disappears, he’ll just bring your sister back to us. Have you understood? You accused him of stealing your little sister so he simply did it to show you that he could!”

Huang Rong returned to the small restaurant that they just visited. She borrowed stationary and penned a short letter. Then she gave the store partner two silver coins for him to deliver the letter to Guo Jing in Xiangyang.

That man said, “Guo Da Xia [Hero Guo] protects our borders and keeps our mind at ease. He really is our people’s Buddha. If we little people can help in anyway, we’ll not hesitate.” He was not willing to take the money. He picked up the letter and happily left. Guo Fu saw that many people revered her father like this; she was very pleased in her heart.

The three people bought mules and set out toward Mount Zhongnan. Guo Fu didn’t like Li Mochou and they rarely talked on the way. When she bumped into Li Mochou by chance and couldn’t avoid talking, her expression would turn cold. They started traveling in the morning and stopped at night to rest. The journey was smooth. But this afternoon, while the three of them rode in a line, they saw someone speeding her horse towards them.

