

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDXL Chapter 23



Chapter 23 – Sibling Rivalry

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The eagle was very big, yet uglier even than one's wildest imagination. Sparse feathers covered the eagle's entire body as if most of its feathers had been pulled off by somebody. The giant eagle had a big lump of skin, as red as blood, occupied the top of its head. The eagle strode about in big steps with its two extremely thick legs. There were probably thousands of bird species in the world, but Yang Guo had never seen any bird of prey as imposing and grand as this one.

It was past midnight, something woke Yang Guo. Chirrupings from an eagle came from the northwest. The chirrupings were somewhat croaked, bleak yet intense and lofty. Feeling

very curious, he leapt off the rope bed gently and sought the direction of the sounds. The chirrups would sometimes rise and sometimes stop, but they were much louder than the chirrups of the two eagles on the Peach-Blossom Island. The path in front of him descended as he went forth and soon he found himself in a valley. The chirrups weren't far from where he was. He crept forward on tiptoes and then quietly pushed aside the bushes in front of him. After a quick peek, he was astonished.

Right in front of Yang Guo's eyes stood a giant eagle. Taller than a human, yet uglier even than one's wildest imagination. Sparse feathers covered the eagle's entire body as if most of its feathers had been pulled off by somebody. The feathers were of a darkish yellow color, which made the eagle appear dirty. It did look somewhat similar to the two eagles on Peach-Blossom Island, but its ugliness made the difference as vast as from heaven to earth. The giant eagle had a hooked beak, and the big lump of skin, as red as blood, occupied the top of its head. There were probably thousands of bird species in the world, but Yang Guo had never seen any bird of prey as imposing and grand as this one. The eagle strode about in big steps with its two extremely thick legs. Sometimes it would extend its two short wings, so short that one would wonder if the eagle was capable of flying. But the way it walked, with its head held high, certainly showed great power and grandeur.

After some more chirrups from the eagle, rustling sounds came from nearby, and suddenly, under the vivid moonlight, four poisonous snakes in bright colors shot at the ugly eagle like four arrows. The ugly eagle turned its head back and forth swiftly, and with four precise pecks, killed the four snakes instantly. The accuracy of the pecks and the speed it displayed were almost in match with first-class elite fighters in the Martial World.

Yang Guo was shocked by the magnificent skills the eagle had put on display. Immediately, his belittling thoughts turned into surprise and admiration. The ugly eagle opened its giant mouth and soon swallowed the four snakes.

"If I can catch this ugly eagle and put him next to Guo Fu's two eagles, I am sure this eagle would not be inferior to her's," Yang Guo muttered to himself quietly.

As he was pondering hard as to how to trap the eagle, a sudden stench caught his attention. Something poisonous and big must be close by.

The ugly eagle raised its head and chirped three times as if sending a signal of challenge to the hidden enemy. A loud whistling sound echoed as a giant serpent, as thick as the diameter of a bowl, and a triangle shaped head, emerged, hanging down from a

big tree. And within a fraction of a second, the giant serpent had launched its attack viciously on the eagle. The ugly eagle didn't yield, but lunged forward instead. Thrusting its beak out, in a flash, the eagle had taken the poisonous giant serpent's right eye out. The eagle's neck looked short and thick, and it seemed as if it would have a hard time turning its head around, but the eagle shot the beak out and then retracted it back at lightning speed. Yang Guo couldn't even tell how the eagle had blinded the giant serpent even though he had sharp eyes.

The giant poisonous serpent apparently experienced excruciating pain from losing its right eye. It opened its giant mouth wide and then clamped the huge jaws down hard, biting onto the big red lump on the ugly eagle's head. Yang Guo was astounded. He couldn't help but utter a cry of shock.

Excited by the success, the giant poisonous serpent let itself fall from the tree, and then wrapped its over-twenty-foot-long body around the ugly eagle tightly. It seemed that the ugly eagle was not going to get out alive this time. Not wishing to see the eagle die from the poisonous serpent's attack, Yang Guo sprang forward with his sword and hacked the blade toward the serpent's body. Suddenly, the eagle swung its right wing swiftly and smacked Yang Guo's right arm with tremendous force. Yang Guo was taken by complete surprise. His "Gentleman Sword" flew out of his grip and traveled dozens of feet in the air before falling back down to the ground. Dumbfounded, Yang Guo stared at the ongoing fight and saw the eagle pecking continuously at the serpent's back. Every peck would end up with blood spurting out of the wound like a small fountain.

"I guess you must be certain about your victory and don't want any help from me then!" Yang Guo thought.

The poisonous serpent squeezed tighter and tighter with its giant body. The ugly eagle's feathers almost stood up as it struggled to get out of its grip. Seeing that the eagle seemed to be losing the battle, Yang Guo picked up a large rock and smacked the serpent's body with it again and again. Feeling the pain, the giant serpent let lose its grip slightly and the ugly eagle suddenly reached out its beak and blinded the serpent's left eye with a swift peck. The giant serpent opened its jaws wide and bit madly. Because both of its eyes were taken out, the bites were vicious but aimless. Its huge and poisonous fangs only struck thin air. The ugly eagle grabbed the serpent's neck with its talons and pressed it against the ground with all its weight. Meanwhile, its sharp beak never stopped pecking down hard on the serpent's head again and again. The serpent twisted and turned and slapped the ground hard with its giant body, trying to get out of the grip, but the eagle seemed to have endless strength and kept the serpent's head un-

der his talons. After a long while, the serpent finally stopped twitching and lay still, dead.

The ugly eagle raised its head high and let out three loud chirps. Then it turned its head toward Yang Guo and chirruped in a much softer tone, as if it was calling out to him. Hearing the friendly chirrups from the eagle, Yang Guo walked slowly near the eagle. “Brother Eagle, your strength is incredible! It’s very impressive!” he cheered.

The ugly eagle answered with some more soft chirrups. Slowly, it walked next to Yang Guo and then patted him on the shoulder gently with its left wing. Seeing how smart and unusual the eagle was, Yang Guo was very pleased, so he also patted the eagle gently on its back.

The ugly eagle let out some more chirrups in low pitches. Holding the corner of Yang Guo’s shirt in its beak, the eagle pulled a couple of times before letting lose its grip and started walking away in big strides. Yang Guo knew the eagle wanted him to follow, so he tagged along. The ugly eagle’s legs moved so swiftly that its speed was no slower than a galloping horse. Yang Guo had to use his Qing-Gong techniques in order to keep up with it. He couldn’t help feeling very impressed inwardly. The path the eagle took descended lower and lower. Soon, Yang Guo found himself inside a deep valley. After walking continuously for another good while, they came to the entrance of a big cave. The ugly eagle nodded its head three times with three chirrups as if it was saluting toward the cave. Then it turned its head to stare at Yang Guo.

“There must be some kind of a hermit Master who lives in the cave. Then of course the giant eagle must be a tamed pet of his. I must show my respect,” Yang Guo thought to himself. So he knelt down in front of the cave and kowtowed.

“Yang Guo hereby shows his respect to a Senior Master. Please forgive me for disturbing your peace,” he said and then waited. But no one answered from inside the cave.

The eagle pulled Yang Guo’s shirt again and then walked inside the cave. Yang Guo stared at the dark cave in front of him, not knowing if there was really an elite Kung Fu Master inside or some kind of goblins or demons. Feeling a bit uneasy and anxious, he decided to give no thoughts to his own safety and followed it in.

The cave was actually not deep at all. Only about thirty feet into the cave, they had already reached the end. Other than a table and a bench made out of stones, there was nothing inside the cave. The ugly eagle chirped again, signaling toward a corner of the

cave. Casting a glance toward the corner, Yang Guo saw a pile of rocks and stones of all shapes and sizes jumbled together. It looked like a grave.

“This must be the grave of a lofty hermit. Too bad the eagle doesn’t know how to speak and can’t tell me more about him,” Yang Guo thought aloud.

He looked up and then something caught his attention. The rock wall seemed to have some words written on it. But thick dust and moss almost covered the entire rock wall, and it was hard to tell what words they were in the dark. Lighting a dry stick, Yang Guo wiped the moss off with his hand, and not to his surprise, three lines of words appeared. The strokes of the words were thin but were carved into the rock wall very deeply. It seemed that the words were carved using a very sharp blade. The three lines said:

“Having roamed the martial world for more than thirty years, I have killed all my villainous foes and defeated all heroic champions. There’s no one who can be my equal under the same sky. Without any other challengers, I could only retreat to this deep valley, living a hermit’s life in seclusion, with only an eagle as my companion. Alas, throughout my life I searched for a match in vain. Unbearable loneliness is my destiny.” The signature at the bottom was, “Demonic Swordsman Dugu Seeking-A-Loss.”

Yang Guo read the three lines back and forth. Astonishment and deep admiration filled his heart. He could clearly feel the sadness and loneliness behind the words. Because there was no match for him in the entire world, this lofty Master had come to live a hermit’s life in seclusion in this deep valley. His understanding of martial arts must have reached the ultimate level. His title was “Demonic Swordsman,” then his skills in sword arts must have been miraculous. And his name was “Seeking-A-Loss,” then he must have traveled all over the world looking for someone who could defeat him, but all his efforts were in vain and he eventually passed away in great disappointment. His imagination filled his mind with thoughts of how the Sword Master had roamed the martial world; Yang Guo was lost in thought.

A long while passed before Yang Guo finally got hold of himself again. Holding the burning stick, he searched around in the cave, but failed to find anything else related to the sword Master. The grave made out of a pile of rocks and stones didn’t have any sign or tombstone on it. He figured that after the sword Master passed away, it must have been the Divine Eagle that had picked all the rocks and stones and piled them on top of the Sword Master’s dead body. Feeling his admiration growing larger and larger, Yang Guo couldn’t help but kneel in front of the grave and kowtow. The Divine Eagle seemed

to be pleased to see him show great respect towards the grave and gently patted him on the shoulder a couple of times.

“The sword Master Dugu had called the eagle a companion. Then even though the eagle is an animal, it really is a Senior of mine. It would be very appropriate if I call him Brother Eagle,” Yang Guo thought to himself. So he said, “Brother Eagle, it must be fate that has brought us together. I need to leave now. Would you like to go with me or would you rather stay here guarding Sword Master Dugu’s grave?”

The divine eagle answered with some chirrups. Yang Guo couldn’t understand what the eagle had said, but seeing that the eagle stayed by the side of the grave, he thought, “The many Senior Masters I’ve met in the martial world never mentioned somebody named Dugu Seeking-A-Loss. He must have been someone who existed sixty or seventy years ago. The Divine Eagle had lived here for a long time and became attached to it. Of course he would rather stay than leaving with me.” He put his arms around the Divine Eagle’s neck and stroked its feathers gently. Then he walked out of the cave.

Throughout his life, other than the intimate relationship he had with Xiao Longnu, he didn’t have any other closer friends. Now he met the Divine Eagle; although the eagle was only an animal, he really felt a close relationship, and was reluctant to part with him. After every couple of steps, he would turn and cast a glance back. And every time he turned around, the Divine Eagle would also answer with a loud chirp. Although the two of them were soon hundreds of feet apart, the Divine Eagle could still see him clearly in the dark and chirped every time Yang Guo turned his head back. Suddenly, Yang Guo’s heart burned with indignation. He shouted out loud, “Brother Eagle, I don’t have much life left in me. After I take care of the business regarding Uncle Guo’s baby daughter and after I bid my farewell to my aunty, I will come back here. If I get to be buried next to Great Hero Dugu, then my life wouldn’t have been a waste of time after all.” He bowed and then headed out in big strides.

He was worried about the safety of Guo Jing’s daughter so he gathered his sword and hurried back to the cave. As soon as he got back to the cave, Li Mochou said, “Where have you been? There’s some kind of damn annoying ghost around here.”

Yang Guo said, “What ghosts?” As soon as he finished, he could hear a distant cry.

Yang Guo was taken aback by this and said quietly, “Martial Uncle Li, look after the baby, I’ll take care of this.”

The cries were getting closer and closer until distinct words could be made out, “What a tragic life I lead...what a tragic life I lead! My wife has been killed and now my own two sons are trying to kill each other.” Under the starlight, Yang Guo could see a large, scruffy man stumbling around, sobbing with his hands over his face. He could not see his face clearly.

Li Mochou said, “So it’s a madman. Send him away; don’t let him wake the baby.”

The man continued to sob, “I only have two sons and yet these two sons of mine have decided to fight with each other, what is there left for me to live for?” He gave out a long sorrowful howl.

Yang Guo remembered something and thought, “Could it be him?” He walked out of the cave slowly and said, “Is that senior Wu?”

This person had come all the way out here in the middle of the night because he wanted to let all his emotions out; he had not expected that anyone would be out here as well. As soon as he heard Yang Guo’s voice, he immediately controlled himself and shouted, “Who are you? What are you doing sneaking around here?”

Yang Guo said, “My name is Yang Guo. Is Senior’s surname Wu with first name Santong?”

This person was indeed Wu Santong. After being injured by Li Mochou’s silver needles in Jiaxing, he fell unconscious. By the time he came round, he saw his wife crouching above him and she was sucking the poison from the wound above his left eye. He was shocked and said, “Sanliang, the venom of this poison is lethal, how can you suck it out?” He quickly pushed her away. Wu Sanliang spat out a mouthful of blood on the ground and smiled, “The blood has now become red again; you should be alright.”

Wu Santong saw that her cheeks were purple and was extremely alarmed. He trembled, “Sanliang, you... you...”

Wu Sanliang knew that by saving her husband, she would die immediately afterwards; she stroked the heads of her two sons and said, “I know that you have been unhappy for as long as we’ve been married. It’s too late to correct the mistake now; all I’m asking is that you take care of our children and watch them grow into men, teach them brotherly love and friendship...” She could no longer finish her words.

After this shock, his madness came back on him once more. As he watched his two sons crying over the body of their dead mother, his mind became blank and he left them as they were. He roamed the realm in this state of confusion for many years, but as time went on, his mind became clearer. After the Heroes' Feast, Sishui Yuyin left with a few friends of the Jianghu world and as they conversed, talk of a particular character whose description matched his martial brother Wu Santong came up. He went in search of this man and eventually came across his martial brother.

When he heard that his two sons were at Xiangyang, Wu Santong was filled with joy and immediately made his way there. He arrived just after the great battle with Fawang. Guo Jing was still injured and Huang Rong had just given birth. After meeting with Zhu Ziliu and Guo Fu, he found out that his two sons were actually fighting with each other outside the city. Memories of his wife's last request came back to him and he was filled with sorrow. He immediately left the city to look for them. He passed a run down temple and heard the clashing of weapons from within. After taking a peak inside, he saw Wu Dunru and Wu Xiuwen in battle with each other. At first, he wasn't able to recognize his now grown up sons but soon after seeing the two using a sword in their right hands and the "Solitary Yang Finger" with the left to seal the other's pressure points, he knew they were his sons and immediately jumped in and ordered them to stop.

The two were of course delighted to be reunited with their father but as soon as the name Guo Fu came up, the tension between the two flared up once again. No matter what Wu Santong said or tried to stop the fighting over Guo Fu, nothing worked. The two of them did not dare to argue in front of their father but whenever he was out of sight, the two bickered once more. They then arranged a meeting that night to have a duel to decide this matter once and for all. Wu Santong had overheard them and decided to get to their meeting place first to stop them. The more he thought about this situation the more depressed he got and he could no longer help himself and had to let it all out. Just at this time, a young man popped out from a cave, his natural reaction was one of wariness and he shouted, "Who are you? How do you know my name?"

After hearing that this man was indeed Wu Santong, Yang Guo replied, "Uncle Wu, my name is Yang Guo, I used to live on Peach Blossom Island with your sons in Hero Guo's residence; I have always admired Uncle Wu's name."

Wu Santong nodded and said, "What are you doing here? Ah, that's it, Dunru and Xiuwen have arranged to duel here and you've come to officiate. Huh, you're supposedly a friend to them, why haven't you tried to stop them? Instead, you're here to egg them on, what kind of friend are you?" By now, his voice was becoming shouts and

yells as he vented all his anger on Yang Guo. He cursed as he advanced forward with a raised palm, wanting to teach this troublemaker of a youngster a lesson.

Yang Guo knew what he wanted to do by his body language and thought there wasn't a need to get into a fight with him, so he took two steps back and smiled, "I didn't know that the Wu's had arranged a duel here, you cannot accuse me falsely."

Wu Santong shouted, "You are still trying to deny it? If you didn't know about this then why the hell are you here? Of all the places you could be, why have you turned up in this particular place?"

Yang Guo thought what an unreasonable fellow but this meeting was indeed quite a coincidence; he was lost for words as he searched for a reply.

When Wu Santong saw his hesitation, he was convinced that Yang Guo was up to no good. When he was younger, love wasn't kind to him and because of this, every time he saw a handsome young man, he would feel a bit of revulsion towards them. He thought, "This kid might not even know who my sons are, he must be up to no good sneaking around here like this." He did not give it any more thought as his anger took over. He raised his right palm and struck downwards towards Yang Guo's shoulder. Yang Guo shifted his body leaving the palm striking thin air but Wu Santong immediately followed with an elbow. Yang Guo saw that his stances were very powerful so he did not dare to take it easy; he slanted his body and moved his feet, avoiding another stance.

Wu Santong called out, "Not bad kid, your lightness kung fu is pretty good. Now raise your sword and attack!"

At this time, the baby in the cave suddenly woke up and started to cry. Yang Guo thought, "Martial Uncle Li killed his wife, if the two see each other, it'll surely get ugly. If those two fight, each stance will be a fatal strike; it will not be easy for me to protect the baby in that situation." So he smiled, "Uncle Wu, how can junior exchange stances with a person of your stature? But since you've got it in your mind that I'm up to no good then I'm left with no choice. How about this, I'll let you have three stances to attack. If you don't kill me within these three stances, then you'll have to leave this place. Agreed?"

Wu Santong was furious and shouted, "You arrogant punk, I held back on that last palm and have yet to use my best skills, how dare you look down on me?"

His right index finger suddenly stretched out and used the “Solitary Yang Finger”. He had trained this skill for many years and had profound internal energy. Yang Guo saw his index finger moving around and though it was coming at him at a fairly slow speed, all the major pressure points of his upper body were covered within the finger’s range leaving him guessing which pressure point was being targeted. As he was trying to figure it out, he realized all nine of his major pressure points were being threatened. He immediately flicked out his index finger and used Huang Yaoshi’s “Divine Release of the Flicking Finger”.

The “Divine Release of the Flicking Finger” and the “Solitary Yang Finger” have been famous in the Jianghu world for years. Both have their virtues, but Yang Guo’s internal energy was shallow. He’d learned it in a very short space of time and had yet to train it diligently. How could it match the years that Wu Santong put into his skill? As soon as the two fingers touched, Yang Guo’s right arm trembled and his whole body got hot. He staggered back five or six paces and had to hold himself up with a tree stump to keep from falling over.

Wu Santong said, “This kid has indeed lived on Peach Blossom Island.” Out of respect for Huang Yaoshi and out of admiration for his martial arts talent that could actually block this attack at such a young age, he called out, “The second finger is coming, if you can’t take it then don’t force yourself to, I won’t take your life.” As he said this, he advanced forward a few more steps and once again stretched out his finger; this time, Yang Guo’s abdomen was targeted.

This time, even more major pressure points were targeted; the twelve major pressure points of the surging channel, the ‘Free Gate’, ‘Open Valley’, low to mid ‘Pillar’, ‘Fourfold Fullness’, the ‘Pubic Bone’, ‘Meeting of Yin’, all of these places were under the threat of the finger. Yang Guo saw that the incoming force of the finger was extremely quick, if he tried to use the “Divine Release of the Flicking Finger” again, his finger would probably break. His innards will be at risk as well so he immediately used the stance “Clearing of the Zither’s Heart”; a light swooshing sound was produced as he unsheathed the Gentleman Sword and protected the area two inches away from his abdomen. Wu Santong quickly took his finger back from the threat of the blade and sent out a third finger. This attack came out like lightning and the finger aimed for the spot between Yang Guo’s eyes. He thought that Yang Guo surely would not be able to block this attack with his sword. Yang Guo knew that it would be difficult to neutralize such a fast attack so he quickly used a move from the “Nine Yin Manual”. He crouched down and darted forward between Wu Santong’s legs. Though this move was swift and agile, it looked quite pathetic and using it makes the user lose face; but luckily for Yang Guo, he was a junior so there wasn’t much shame in using it.

Before Wu Santong could say 'Damn', he felt Yang Guo patting him on his shoulder before hearing him say, "Uncle, that third finger was very powerful."

With this shock, he lowered his hands and moved away before saying with gloominess, "Well, it looks there really are heroes amongst the young; there's no more use for an old man like me anymore."

Yang Guo quickly sheathed his sword and bowed to him. He said, "That last stance was extremely unsightly, if that were a real duel, it would be a loss for me."

Wu Santong felt a bit better and sighed, "There's no need for that, if you had attacked me from behind, I'd have no chance of surviving. It was a very clever move, an old and dumb man such as I can't compete with smart youngsters such as you..." Before he could finish, the sounds of footsteps could be heard; there were two people coming towards them. Yang Guo tugged at Wu Santong's sleeve and the two hid behind a bush. The footsteps were gradually becoming louder and louder; the two people that had come were indeed Wu Dunru and Wu Xiuwen.

Wu Xiuwen stopped and took a look around before saying, "Brother, it's wide open here, let's pick this spot."

Wu Dunru said, "Fine!" He didn't like talking much. Swoosh; he drew his sword.

However Wu Xiuwen did not draw his sword, he said, "Brother, if I can't beat you today, and even if you don't kill me, I won't be able to live. Remember the three major tasks you have to do; get revenge for our mother's death, look after father and love and protect sister Fu."

When Wu Santong heard these words, tear rolled from his eyes.

Wu Dunru said, "We all know this, why talk? If you beat me, the same applies." He raised his sword and took an open stance.

Wu Xiuwen still did not draw his sword and took a few steps forward before saying, "Brother, we lost our mother when we were young and our father left us; we have always relied on each other and never argued, but now that it's come to this; you don't blame me do you?"

Wu Dunru said, "Brother, it's fate, none of us decided this."

Wu Xiuwen said, “No matter who lives or who dies, this secret can never be revealed to prevent grief for father and sister Fu.” Wu Dunru nodded and held his brother’s left hand. The brothers looked at each other in silence.

When Wu Santong heard how deep their brotherly bond was, he was deeply comforted. He was about to jump out to stop them from doing anything stupid, when suddenly, they both called out, “Let’s start!” Both jumped backwards at the same time. Wu Xiuwen stretched out his hand and unsheathed his sword; three swift strokes were unleashed. Wu Dunru parried the first two strokes and blocked the third before replying with two stances of his own, both of them aimed to strike Wu Xiuwen down. Wu Santong’s heart jumped when he saw this but Wu Xiuwen moved his body and leaped to the side, easily avoiding the attacks.

Sounds of clashing weapons echoed throughout the valley as the two brothers fought a duel to the death. Wu Santong was worried but also sad at the same time; he loved his sons with his life and loved them equally. With the two fighting so viciously it was as if they were fighting their sworn enemies; one of them would come to harm sooner or later. If he came out now and told them to stop, the two would stop the fight; but if things don’t end today, then it will continue on tomorrow and he can’t always be there to watch over them. The more he watched the greater the pain he felt as he thought about how tragic his life was, tears again fell from his eyes.

When they were younger Yang Guo did not get on with the Wu brothers, and after meeting again, there was still some animosity. He was a stubborn fellow and wasn’t the most forgiving. When he first saw the Wu brothers fighting, he had hoped that something would happen to them; but after seeing the anguish that Wu Santong was suffering, he thought about the little time that he had left and his compassionate side surfaced. “I haven’t done much good in my life; after I die, Gu Gu will obviously be upset but apart from her, only Cheng Ying, Lu Wushuang and Gongsun Lu’E will remember me. Why don’t I do something good today and let this old man remember my virtues?” He made his mind up and whispered in Wu Santong’s ears, “Uncle Wu, I have a plan to stop your sons from fighting.”

Wu Santong turned his tearful face around and gratitude filled eyes looked back at him. However, he was not sure how Yang Guo was going to stop his sons from fighting.

Yang Guo said quietly, “I hope that uncle will not be offended when your sons are humbled.”

Wu Santong could not express his thanks and just held Yang Guo's hands tightly. Wu Santong did not experience much love when he was younger, his marriage was arranged by his parents and because of his struggles with love, he was unable to find peace. After his wife sacrificed her life for him, he began to appreciate his wife more and the feelings that he had for He Yuanjun gradually faded. The only thing that he cared about now was his sons; if he could keep them safe from harm, he would gladly trade his own life for them. Hearing these words from Yang Guo in such a desperate situation as this was like suddenly meeting the Goddess of Mercy in times of difficulty.

When Yang Guo saw his expression, he couldn't stop his heart from aching as he thought, "If my father was still alive, he would definitely love me as much as Wu Santong loved his sons." He whispered, "Don't let them know you are here otherwise my plan won't work."

The duel between the Wu brothers was becoming more and more heated. Both of them were using the "Yue Maiden Swordplay". This skill belonged to Han Xiaoying of the Seven Freaks of Jiangnan. The two had practiced and trained this swordplay countless times over the years but this time, it was not a sparring session; it was a life and death duel where one mistake would be fatal.

Yang Guo watched them for a while and thought, "Uncle Guo's martial arts reign supreme but it appears that his students have not absorbed these skills. With the Wu brother's martial arts talents plainly ordinary, I don't think they have learned even twenty percent of Uncle Guo's martial arts." He suddenly laughed out loud and slowly walked out.

The Wu Brothers leapt back in shock and pointed their swords in the direction of the laugh. When they saw that it was Yang Guo, they both shouted at the same time, "What are you doing here?"

Yang Guo laughed, "What are you doing here?"

Wu Xiuwen gave a laugh and said, "We both felt bored tonight so we've come out here to practice our swordplay."

Yang Guo thought, "Little Wu is pretty alert, he's acting as if nothing was happening." He chuckled, "Practicing so hard that you don't have a care for your life? How hard working you two are."

Wu Dunru yelled, "Go, this is none of your business."

Yang Guo chuckled, “If you guys were really just working hard practicing, of course it wouldn’t be my business. But between every stance you are unleashing, you are filled of thoughts for my sister Fu, if this is none of my business then whose business is it?”

Yang Guo’s words of ‘my sister Fu’ pierced the brothers’ hearts, leaving their bodies shaking and swords quivering.

Wu Xiuwen roared, “What the hell are you saying?”

Yang Guo said, “Isn’t Sister Fu Uncle and Auntie Guo’s daughter? Don’t the parents arrange a marriage? Uncle Guo betrothed her to me a long time ago; you guys know about this but yet here you are, fighting over my fiancée, what kind of person do you take me for?”

His tone was becoming more and more serious as he said this and he left the brothers speechless. They both knew that Guo Jing had always wanted to marry his daughter to him but Huang Rong and Guo Fu had always disliked Yang Guo. When the two’s thoughts were revealed by Yang Guo, they could only glance at each other and didn’t know how to reply.

Wu Xiuwen was again alert in urgent times and chuckled, “Huh, betrothed? Only you would say a thing like that! Has there been an agreement between the matchmakers? Has the engagement been stamped down on paper?”

Yang Guo replied, “Okay, so both of you brothers have had the permission of your parents and the agreement from your matchmakers I take it.”

Custom was extremely important during this time; marriages must have the agreement of parents and the matchmakers. The two brothers had assumed that after one of them loses, only the winner will go back to Guo Fu leaving with her with no choice. She’ll definitely agree to the proposal leaving just the task of convincing the Guo couple to agree. They were not prepared for this meddling from Yang Guo.

Wu Xiuwen took a second to think before replying, “It might be true that Master wants to betroth sister Fu to you. But Master wife has planned to betroth her to one of us. The three of us are in the same boat, none of us can truly say their claim is right, it looks like sister Fu’s future is going to be complicated.”

Yang Guo laughed at the sky.

Wu Xiuwen snapped when he saw that Yang Guo was laughing loudly non-stop without saying anything and said, “What are you laughing at? Are my words wrong?”

Yang Guo laughed, “Wrong, so wrong. Uncle Guo loves me, Auntie Guo loves me even more, how can you two compete with me?”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Huh, who’s going to believe your words?”

Yang Guo laughed, “Why should I lie? Auntie Guo long ago agreed to this marriage, otherwise, why would I risk my life to save them if they weren’t my in-laws? It’s all because of sister Fu. Tell me, has your Master wife ever promised you they’ll betroth their daughter to you?”

The two brothers looked at each other with alarm, their Master wife has indeed not said a single word about this matter, not even hinted that she’ll say something about it; could it be that she has indeed agreed to betroth her daughter to this punk? The two brothers were having a duel to the death with each other; but with this sudden appearance of a common enemy, they both moved closer towards one another.

Yang Guo had heard their conversation with Guo Fu earlier on and wanted to make the two jealous so he smiled, “Sister Fu said to me; ‘Those two brothers are annoying me to death’, and she couldn’t discourage you guys so she said that she liked both of you. Tell me, is there a virtuous girl who’ll say she loves two people at once? My sister Fu is more than virtuous, so of course she’d never do a thing like this. Let me make it clear for you; when she says that she likes both of you, she’s actually saying that she doesn’t like either.” He then impersonated Guo Fu’s voice on that night and said, “Little brother Wu, you’ve told me a thousand times, a million times how you feel about me, I already know. Don’t you know how hard it is for me? You are always weird like this, what do you want to say to me?”

The brothers’ faces turned red. Those words were said by each of them to Guo Fu with no one else around; if she didn’t tell Yang Guo, how would he know about it? The two of them felt their hearts’ breaking, both thinking that Guo Fu has refused all along to agree to marry them because of this.

When Yang Guo saw their faces, he knew that his plan had worked, he put on a serious face and said, “Look, sister Fu is my fiancée, we’re going to stay married for years to come, we’ll have sons, daughters, grand children and all...” At this point, a long quiet sigh came from behind; it was Xiao Longnu’s voice.

Yang Guo called out, “Gu Gu!” But there was no reply; he immediately thought that Li Mochou had made this sigh and that person cannot meet the Wu family at all so he said loudly, “If you two continue to act like this, people will only laugh at you. In respect of my in-laws, I’ll forget about this matter. You two better go back to Xiangyang and help my in-laws guard the city.” He was actually calling the Guo couple his in-laws.

The Wu brothers were now despondent and were now holding each other’s arms. Wu Xiuwen said gloomily, “Fine, brother Yang, I wish you and apprentice sister Fu... a long and prosperous life. We’ll leave this place for somewhere else; we’ll disappear from the world.” The two of them turned to leave.

Yang Guo was feeling pleased with himself; the two brothers were still as angry as ever at him but now they’ll hate Guo Fu. The two brothers’ relationship will now be stronger than ever after this; their father’s wishes will at least be fulfilled.

Wu Santong was listening from the bushes and when he heard that Yang Guo had convinced his sons to stop fighting, he was overwhelmed with delight; as he saw his sons walking away, he couldn’t stop himself from calling out, “Wen’er, Ru’er, let’s leave together.”

The two brothers were slightly startled when they heard their father’s voice and both replied, “Father.”

Wu Santong bowed deeply to Yang Guo and said, “Brother Yang, I will never forget your kindness.”

Yang Guo frowned; how could he say this in front of the brothers? By the time he wanted to say something to throw them off the scent, Wu Xiuwen had become suspicious and said, “Brother, that punk’s words may not be the truth.”

Wu Dunru may not be as articulate as his brother, but he was just as alert; he looked at his father and then nodded to his brother.

Wu Santong had saw that he had made a mess of things and quickly said, “It’s not what you think, I did not get brother Yang to stop you fighting.”

At first, the Wu brothers were just suspicious, but after hearing their father trying to cover up his words, they both immediately thought about how Yang Guo and Guo Fu had never gotten on with each other. He and Xiao Longnu were deeply in love, so the things that he had just said were most probably lies.

Wu Xiuwen said, “Brother, we’ll go back to Xiangyang and ask sister Fu about this.”

Wu Dunru replied, “Yes! We can’t be deceived by other people’s lies.”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Father, come with us as well. Master and Master wife are your old friends, you should go see them.”

Wu Santong replied, “I... I...” He became flustered as he tried to decide what to do. He wanted to use his authority to order his sons to stop fighting but was afraid that they’ll just agree to please him and then go off fighting as soon as his back was turned.

Yang Guo said coldly, “Little brother Wu, how can you say the words ‘sister Fu’? From now on, not only can’t you say it, you’re not allowed to even think it.”

Wu Xiuwen yelled, “What, this from the world’s most unreasonable person? I have said the words ‘sister Fu’ for years now; not only do I want to say it today, I want to say it tomorrow. Sister Fu, sister Fu, my sister Fu...” Suddenly, smack! Yang Guo slapped his left cheek.

Wu Xiuwen leaped back two steps and held up his sword. He lowered his voice and said, “Fine, the one named Yang, it’s been a few years since we’ve had a fight.”

Wu Santong shouted, “Wen’er, why start a fight?”

Yang Guo turned to him and said with a serious face, “Uncle Wu, who exactly are you trying to help?” Logically, he would of course help his son, but it was clear to see that Yang Guo was trying to help him stop his sons from fighting, his mouth froze.

Yang Guo said, “How about this, go and sit over there. I won’t hurt them and more likely than not, they won’t be able to harm me; just watch the show.”

He was a lot younger than Wu Santong but as he said this, Wu Santong couldn’t stop himself from complying with his instructions and he sat down on a rock.

Yang Guo unsheathed his Gentleman Sword and chopped a large Pine tree at his side in two. He pushed out his left palm and toppled the top half of the tree. The sword left a straight and smooth cut. When the brothers saw how fine a weapon his sword was, they couldn’t help but to look at each other in shock.

Yang Guo returned the sword in its sheath and laughed, “Do you think you are worthy of fighting against this sword?” He casually stretched out his hand and snapped a branch. He removed the leaves and left himself with a three-foot long wooden rod. He said to them, “I know that you don’t believe that my mother-in-law favors me. How about this, I’ll use this wooden rod and you two use your swords against me at the same time. You can use the martial arts that my father and mother-in-law taught you, or you can use the “Solitary Yang Finger” that your Martial Uncle Zhu taught you. I however, will only use the martial arts that my mother-in-law has taught me; if I use a stance from another sect’s martial arts then that means I’ve lost.”

The brothers had been worried about how good his martial arts were; they had seen him in action twice against Jinlun Fawang and the stances that he had used were completely new to them. But with Yang Guo referring to Guo Jing and Huang Rong as his in-laws as if he had already married Guo Fu, how could they not get angry? Also, Yang Guo was being too arrogant and insulting towards them. Two against one with a wooden rod against swords and limiting himself to using only martial arts that Huang Rong had taught him. With these advantages, if they don’t win then it would be a disgrace.

Wu Dunru felt that this wasn’t fair and shook his head. He was about to say something when Wu Xiuwen said, “Fine, you were the one who made the rules; it wasn’t we brothers who asked for it. Should you happen to use a stance of the Quanzhen or Ancient Tomb martial arts what then?” He was thinking that although this punk’s martial arts were good, it was only because he had learned the advanced techniques of the Quanzhen and the Ancient Tomb. When we were living on Peach Blossom Island, we beat the hell out of you and you had to run away, how good were you then? He said these words so that the two of them could fight him together.

Yang Guo said, “We are fighting today not because of old grudges or today’s feud, we are fighting because of sister Fu. If I lose, just one word or glance at her then I’m a worthless and shameless scoundrel.” These words were meant to force the brothers to say the same thing.

Wu Xiuwen could only say, “If we lose, then we too won’t see sister Fu again.”

Yang Guo faced Wu Dunru and said, “What about you?”

Wu Dunru said angrily, “My brother and I share the same view, what else am I going to say?”

Yang Guo laughed, “Fine, if you lose today and you don’t keep to your promise, then you are a worthless, shameless scoundrel, yes?”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Correct. The same applies to you. Let’s start!” He stretched his sword forward and aimed for Yang Guo’s leg. Wu Dunru attacked at the same time but he came in from the left. Within a stance, the two had moved themselves into the pincer position.

Yang Guo leapt forward and called out, “You brothers are pretty powerful when you fight together.”

Wu Dunru attacked again and Yang Guo raised his wooden rod but he did not counter-attack, instead he just moved left and right and said, “A wife is like a piece of clothing, brothers are like limbs, if a piece of clothing is torn it can be mended but if limbs snap, there’s no return! Have you heard this poem before?”

Wu Xiuwen shouted, “What are you babbling on about? Why aren’t you showing us the martial arts that Master wife taught you?” Wu Dunru did not say a word as he fought harder.

Yang Guo said, “Fine, you better watch out, here comes the masterful martial arts that my mother-in-law personally taught me!” He then aimed his wooden rod downwards and used the ‘trip’ codex from the “Dog Beating Stick Technique”. At the same time, he stretched out his left index finger and pretended to go for Wu Dunru’s pressure point. Wu Dunru leapt back to avoid this attack. Wu Xiuwen called out as he was tripped.

When Wu Dunru saw that his brother was in trouble, he raised his sword and quickly attacked Yang Guo.

Yang Guo said, “That’s right, brothers should share the same fortune.” The wooden rod became a blur and within the blink of an eye, the rod was behind him and poked him on the behind. The wooden rod appeared to turn around in a clumsy fashion but the position it came from was one that the opponent had no chance of guessing. The “Dog Beating Stick Technique” is mystifying and unpredictable, not even a ghost or god can guess where it’ll end up. Though Wu Dunru didn’t feel much from this attack, he had already lost a stance to him and on the inside; he was starting to get worried.

Wu Xiuwen leapt up from the ground and called out, “That’s the “Dog Beating Stick Technique”, when did Master wife teach you that? You only learned a few stances when we watched in secret as Master wife was teaching Lu Youjiao, how does that count?”

Yang Guo stretched out his wooden rod and tripped him up once again, this time throwing him forwards. Wu Dunru slashed across to protect his brother.

Yang Guo waited until Wu Xiuwen picked himself up from the ground before laughing, “We both watched at the same time yet how come I know how to use it but you don’t? My mother-in-law was only teaching Lu Youjiao the codex that time, she taught me the stances personally. Even my sister Fu doesn’t know how to use it, how would you know?”

Wu Xiuwen didn’t know that Yang Guo had learned the techniques from Hong Qigong during the battle between Hong Qigong and Ouyang Feng. Wu Xiuwen was thinking what Yang Guo said was most probably true, otherwise how come he was able to use the technique after just once listening to the codex, while he himself couldn’t even understand a single point but he still argued, “That’s because each one’s character is different. Only the Beggar Clan Leader can use the stick technique, we only accidentally overheard it, without Master wife’s permission, how can we learn it in secret? Only shameless scoundrels would hold onto what they’ve heard. You’re shameless; others will mock you.”

Yang Guo laughed out loud. The wooden rod made two noises as it poked the backs of the two brothers. The brothers leapt away with red faces. Yang Guo laughed, “Since I haven’t got any evidence at the moment and though I may have used the “Dog Beating Stick Technique” to defeat you, you guys will not accept defeat. Fine, I’ll let you experience another martial art that my mother-in-law taught me.” He looked at big Wu and then at little Wu before asking, “My mother-in-law’s martial arts, who taught them to her?”

Wu Xiuwen said angrily, “Mother in-law this, father in-law that, you’re shameless, we’re not going to speak to you anymore.”

Yang Guo let out a laugh and said, “Why are you so bad tempered? Fine, let me ask you, before your Master wife entered the tutelage of Hong Qigong, who taught her martial arts?”

Wu Xiuwen said, “My Master wife is the daughter of Lord Huang of Peach Blossom Island, her martial arts were taught by Lord Huang, who doesn’t know about this?”

Yang Guo said, “That’s right. You guys have lived on Peach Blossom Island for many years; do you know what the greatest skills of Lord Huang are?”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Lord Huang’s knowledge is vast and wide, he’s versed in all, you can’t distinguish what a great skill is and a great skill isn’t.”

Yang Guo said, “You are right there. When it comes to swordplay, what technique does Lord Huang use?”

Wu Xiuwen, “Why the questions when you are already know the answer? Lord Huang’s “Jade Flute Swordplay” is peerless in the world of Wulin, it is famed throughout the land, and everyone in the world of Jianghu knows this.”

Yang Guo said, “Have you ever seen Lord Huang before?”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Lord Huang is drifting through the lands, he is in one place one moment and gone the next, even Master and Master wife cannot find him, what chance have we juniors of meeting him?”

Yang Guo said, “Have you seen senior’s “Jade Flute Swordplay” before?”

Wu Xiuwen gave out a cold laugh and said, “One year when it was Lord Huang’s birthday, Master wife dedicated a feast in his honour and after the feast, she performed the swordplay once. My brother and I along with sister Fu saw it with our very own eyes. By that time, brother Yang was in the tutelage of Quanzhen sect.”

Yang Guo smiled, “That’s right. Later on, my mother-in-law...my mother-in-law taught me the “Jade Flute Swordplay” in secret.”

The Wu brothers looked at each other in disbelief, they were thinking that although that Yang Guo had entered Huang Rong’s tutelage, all she had taught him was reading and writing, she did not teach him any martial arts. It was because of this that he was not a match for them in the fight they had on the island. They had heard from Grandpa Ke that the final push that he did on Wu Xiuwen was Ouyang Feng’s “Toad Stance”. The “Jade Flute Swordplay” is complicated and ingenious, even though Guo Fu was Huang Rong’s daughter, she was not taught it even to this day. Since Yang Guo returned from Mount Zhongnan, the meetings that he had with Huang Rong were brief, even if their Master wife wanted to teach him this swordplay, she may not have found time to.

Yang Guo swept his wooden rod lightly and called out, “Watch out, this stance is called “The Flute’s Notion to a Dragon”!” Using the rod as a sword, the rod suddenly straightened and thud, the rod struck Wu Dunru on the right side of his chest. If the wooden rod were a sharp sword, the sword would have gone through him taking his life.

Wu Xiuwen was alert and quickly attacked with his sword, attacking Yang Guo's right side but he was still too slow, Yang Guo's wooden rod had turned around and suddenly pierced towards his right side. This stance started second but finished first, Wu Xiuwen's wrist would have been struck by the rod before his sword reached his opponent. If that happened he would surely be disarmed. He quickly changed his stance, pulling his waist in and taking his sword back, as he kicked out with his left leg. However, Yang Guo's rod was now going towards Wu Dunru's shoulder; the rod moved and so did Yang Guo, displaying attack and defense at the same time, avoiding Wu Xiuwen's kick without dodging. Wu Xiuwen's kick hit thin air while Wu Dunru's situation became dire; he used his sword and defended tightly to avoid any more blows to his body.

Within a few more stances, both brothers were struggling; even if they defended with their lives it wouldn't be enough, how would they even have time to try to cut the wooden rod?

Yang Guo called out the stances, "The Clear Tone Away from the Mountain", "Gold Ringing and Jade Resonating", "The Long Call of the Phoenix Song", "The Sound Across the Stage", "The Flowing of the Boat's Song" The wooden rod attacked continuously, graceful and flowing with every stance an offensive one; before the Wu brothers could neutralize a stance, out came a second, a third and so on. He pierced and slashed with the wooden rod and forced the Wu brothers to defend together and they did not dare to take a step away from each other. When the Wu brothers saw Huang Rong performing the swordplay, they didn't ponder much on it and thought that this handsome and graceful swordplay was only used for show. How would they know that it could be used in such ingenious ways? The stances that Yang Guo called out were the same as the ones that Huang Rong had called out when she was performing the swordplay. With their swords under someone's control and struggling to respond, their spirits were dampened further and both of them were now convinced that Huang Rong had taught Yang Guo this "Jade Flute Swordplay". How would they know that Yang Guo had spent many days with Huang Yaoshi and had his personal tutoring of the "Jade Flute Swordplay" and the "Divine Release of the Flicking Finger"?

When Yang Guo saw their miserable expressions, he felt slightly bad about it but he remembered that he must see this through to the end. If he didn't convince them once and for all to not see Guo Fu ever again, these brothers would definitely fight over her again until one of them lost their life.

What medicine is there that doesn't taste bitter? For good to come out of this, there must be a little suffering. He hurried his swordplay and kept on pressing relentlessly.

The brothers became more and more alarmed as they fought on but with the rod like a blur threatening all their vitals, they could only clench their teeth and defend with all they had.

The “Yue Maiden Swordplay” that the Wu brothers had learned was actually itself a powerful swordplay but the two had yet to reach a high level of proficiency with it; when Guo Jing taught them he wasn’t too good with his words so he wasn’t able to pass on the more intricate and subtle points of the swordplay to them. As a result, if the Wu brothers fought your average Wulin fighter, the brothers would prove more than a match for them; but under the rod of Yang Guo, there were endless weaknesses. Yang Guo’s “Jade Flute Swordplay” had yet to be perfected as well but his martial arts were a lot better than the Wu brothers. Plus, the Wu brothers were in an emotional state and so their stances were even more flawed.

Yang Guo did not use his fatal stances and instead, slowly transferred his internal energy into the rod. After fighting for a while, the two brothers felt that their opponent’s rod was exuding a strong sucking force, causing their swords to twist and turn. One sword aimed towards the opponent but the tip of the sword turned in the opposite direction to where it was meant to go. The force that the rod emitted got stronger and stronger until it forced the brothers to fight each other. One stance of Wu Dunru’s that aimed for Yang Guo almost struck his own brother and Wu Xiuwen himself almost slashed Wu Dunru; Wu Dunru had to use all his strength to block the attack.

Yang Guo gave a long laugh and said, “There’s more to the “Jade Flute Swordplay” than this, you better be careful!” ‘Dang’, the wooden rod met with Wu Dunru’s sword. The rod had met with the face of the sword and remained completely intact. Wu Dunru felt an extremely powerful sucking force pulling outwards almost forcing the sword out of his hands. He had to quickly transfer his energy to the sword to snatch it back. Yang Guo’s wooden rod followed his force and trapped Wu Xiuwen’s sword as well. Yang Guo then pushed downwards and forced the swords to the ground. The brothers pulled loose; Yang Guo stepped forward onto the swords tips and raised the wooden rod towards them, lightly touching their throats. Yang Guo laughed, “Well?”

If the wooden rod were a sharp sword, the brothers’ throats would have been cut open. And even with the wooden rod, if Yang Guo had put a bit more force behind the attack, the brothers would surely suffer a serious injury. The brothers’ faces were ash grey and they kept silent in misery. Yang Guo raised his left foot and leapt back three paces. He watched the brothers’ wretched expressions. Memories of the insult of being beaten up by the two filled his mind, now that he’s gotten his own back today; a look of satisfaction came over his face.

The brothers no longer had any suspicions and were now convinced that Yang Guo had indeed received teaching of great skills from Huang Rong. But the brothers have been in love with Guo Fu ever since they were young; to end it like this in a single fight and to not ever see her again was something they were not prepared to do. Also, in the sword fight, the opponent had gotten the initiative straight away and they were forced onto the back foot; they had not even used ten percent of what their Master had taught them and there was no chance for them to use their newly learned “Solitary Yang Finger”.

Wu Xiuwen shouted, “Brother, if we leave it like this, what point is there in living on? Let’s just fight to the death!”

Wu Dunru’s heart stirred and he called out, “Yes!”

The two of them lifted their swords and attacked; they no longer cared about defending themselves and attacked with every stance.

This change in approach was indeed impressive, by just attacking and not defending, they were going to try to take Yang Guo’s life even if it meant dying by his hand in the process. Yang Guo pointed at their vitals but the two ignored it, using a sword in their right hand and unleashing the “Solitary Yang Finger” with their left, they used all their best skills as they tried to kill their opponent.

Yang Guo laughed, “Good, this is more like it!” He threw away his wooden rod and moved around within the blades. The brothers fought more and more viciously as they went on but still they were unable to harm him.

Wu Santong watched from the side with mixed feelings; he hoped that Yang Guo would win so his sons would forget about Guo Fu but he also hoped that his sons would be able to defeat Yang Guo as they delivered their dangerous strokes. Suddenly, he heard Yang Guo give a crisp whistle and then saw him flicking the swords with his finger; ‘dang’, ‘dang’, the two swords flew towards the sky. Yang Guo caught the swords in his hands and laughed, “This “Divine Release of the Flicking Finger” was also taught to me by my mother-in-law!”

Now that it’s got to this stage, the brothers knew that continued fighting would just result in further embarrassment for them. Yang Guo flipped the swords around and shot the swords towards them. He bowed and said, “My apologies.”

Wu Xiuwen replied miserably, “Fine, I’ll never see sister Fu again.” He then held his sword across and moved the blade towards his throat. Wu Dunru’s feelings were the same as his brother and he too held his sword across his neck to kill himself.

Yang Guo was shocked to see this and quickly flew across to them; two ‘dang’ sounds were heard as he flicked their swords away with his finger once again. The handles of the sword flipped outwards and swords collided, ‘dong’; and the swords broke in two. As this happened, Wu Santong had leaped out and quickly grabbed his sons around the neck from behind, he yelled, “The two of you are giving up your own lives for a woman, you don’t deserve to be called a man.”

Wu Xiuwen lifted his head and said forlornly, “Father... didn’t you... didn’t a woman cause a life of unhappiness for you as well? I...” Before he could finish, he saw the remnants of tears on his father’s face under the starlight showing he was extremely hurt by their actions. Fighting with his brother like this had caused his father great pain and as he thought about this, he called out. Wu Santong loosened his grip and hugged him. His left hand hugged Wu Dunru and the three of them were held in a mutual embrace. Wu Dunru thought about how he had given his heart to Guo Fu but she and Yang Guo had already become a couple. Even their Master wife had kept it from him and his brother that she had picked him out to be her son in-law and taught him her greatest skills. It appeared that everyone had treated them falsely and only fatherly and brotherly love between them is real; he hugged his father and couldn’t stop himself from crying.

Yang Guo had always been an impetuous fellow. On this occasion his intentions were good, but he had caused the Wu brothers great humiliation. As he watched the father and sons in their loving embrace, he felt great satisfaction in his heart. Although he hasn’t long to live, he has at least done one good deed before he died.

Wu Santong said, “Stupid boys, why should a man worry about not having a wife? Since that Guo girl doesn’t love you why should you keep her in your hearts? We have a great mission that we need to take care of...what is it?”

Wu Xiuwen raised his head and said, “To avenge mother’s death.”

Wu Santong shouted, “Yes! We have to kill that Scarlet Serpent Deity Li Mochou even if we have to go to the ends of the earth.”

Yang Guo was alarmed and thought, “I have to lure these three away, if Martial Uncle Li sees them there will be trouble.”

Just as he was thinking this, he heard Li Mochou say coldly from the cave, “Why go to the ends of the earth? Li Mochou has been waiting here a long time.” She came out from the cave with the baby in her left hand and her fly whisk in her right, her gown was fluttering in the wind as she exuded a graceful aura.

The Wu family could not have guessed that this demoness would appear right here right now; Wu Santong roared as he threw himself forward. Wu Dunru and Wu Xiuwen picked up their broken swords and attacked in a pincer formation.

Yang Guo called out, “Please stop everyone, and listen to what I’ve got to say.”

Wu Santong called out, “Brother Yang, we’ll talk after this demoness is dead.” As he said this, his left palm and right finger had unleashed three deadly stances. The Wu brothers’ swords may have been broken but in close combat the broken blades acted like a dagger and they still packed a considerable punch.

Yang Guo knew that they had a blood feud between them and his words alone would not stop them, he was just worried about the safety of the baby and he called out, “Martial Uncle Li, pass the baby to me.”

Wu Santong was shocked when he heard this and leapt back two paces. He asked, “Why did you call her Martial Uncle Li?”

Li Mochou laughed, “Good Martial Nephew, you attack him from behind while I hold the baby.”

After taking three of Wu Santong’s stances, she felt that his internal energy had made great improvements; he was a completely different opponent to the one she faced in Jiaxing all those years ago. With the Wu brothers, who were no weaklings, attacking her without regard for their lives, it would be difficult to fend them all off. She deliberately called Yang Guo her ‘good Martial Nephew’ to distract the three of them.

Wu Santong did indeed fall for her trick and shouted, “Dun’er, Wen’er, you be careful of that one named Yang, I’ll take care of this witch myself.”

Yang Guo kept his hands by his side and moved away. He said, “I’m not helping anyone but you must not harm the baby.”

Wu Santong relaxed when he saw that Yang Guo had moved away and increased the power of his palms as he moved forwards.

Li Mochou defended with her fly whisk and then said, “Young Masters Wu, what I saw just now showed me that you are the sentimental kind, you are not like other vile heartless men. Because of this, I will spare your lives today; now leave!”

Wu Xiuwen replied angrily, “You evil, despicable bitch, what do you know about sentimentality?” He then advanced forward and attacked with vicious stances.

Li Mochou said with fury, “You don’t know what’s good for you fool!” The fly whisk turned around from in to out, forming a circle as it was whipped out. The fly whisk collided with Wu Xiuwen’s sword and he felt a throbbing pain in his chest, almost forcing him to drop his sword. Wu Santong chopped a palm forward and Li Mochou turned her fly whisk back to defend. Wu Xiuwen had avoided danger for now.

Yang Guo moved behind Li Mochou slowly so that as soon as there was a slight opening in her stances, he could dive in straight away and rescue the baby. But the Wu’s were fighting extremely hard, forcing Li Mochou to defend her entire body with her fly whisk. He could not find a single opening. Yang Guo watched as the Wu’s fought without restraint and there was no intent to avoid the baby in their attacks. If something happened, how would he face the Guo couple? He called out loudly, “Martial Uncle Li, pass the baby to me!” He advanced forward while sending a palm out to knock the fly whisk aside and tried to snatch the baby away.

Li Mochou was completely surrounded with enemies to the left and right, in front and behind, so she had no time to struggle with him but she also was not willing to give up the baby as easily as that. She yelled, “You dare try to snatch her away? If I just squeeze my arm, what do you think is going to happen to her?” Yang Guo was taken aback by this, how could he continue his advance?

With Li Mochou slightly distracted, Wu Santong threw out a fierce left palm that had a finger coming behind it; the index finger of his right hand had sealed a pressure point on her waist. Li Mochou immediately felt half her body going numb, forcing her to stumble and almost fall. But she moved with her momentum and threw out a kick that disarmed Wu Dunru and then she swept down viciously with her fly whisk at Wu Xiuwen. Wu Santong quickly pulled Wu Xiuwen back and allowed him to avoid this fatal strike. Li Mochou’s injuries were not light and she motioned her fly whisk about as she escaped back into the cave.

Wu Santong was delighted with this and he called out, “That evil witch has taken a blow from my finger; it’s going to be difficult for her to escape from us today.” The Wu brothers held their broken swords out and wanted to advance into the cave.

Wu Santong called out, “Wait, be careful of her poisonous needles, we’ll wait here and think of a plan to...” Before he finished, a roar came from within the cave and a leopard leapt out.

The Wu’s were shocked by the sudden appearance of this beast, and in their shock, came a flurry of silver light; silver needles had suddenly been shot out from beneath the leopard. They could have predicted that this was going to happen but luckily for Wu Santong, his study of martial arts was deep, his reactions swift and agile, and he was able to leap away from this danger. But he heard his sons crying out, giving him the fright of his life. He watched as Li Mochou clung beneath the leopard, with her fly whisk tucked behind her neck, the baby in her left hand and gripping the leopard with her right hand and legs. She gave a cackle as the leopard leapt away and escaped into the mountain brook.

Even Yang Guo was shocked by this sudden turn of events; he watched as the leopard ran away and quickly began to chase after it as he called out, “Martial Uncle Li...”

Wu Santong was worried to death as he saw his sons lying on the ground unable to get up, he called out, “I’m going to kill you today.” He reached out to grab Yang Guo.

Yang Guo was taken by surprise and was caught by him, he said quickly, “Let me go! I need to get the baby back!”

Wu Santong said, “Fine, let’s all die here today.”

Yang Guo quickly used the “Little Trapping Hand Technique” to try to release his fingers. Wu Santong was extremely restless and anxious and his mind was slightly unclear; however his martial arts were completely unaffected. He held onto Yang Guo’s waist with his left hand and he too used the “Little Trapping Hand” with his right hand against Yang Guo.

Yang Guo saw that Li Mochou and the leopard were out of sight, he was not going to catch up with them any time soon and sighed, “Why are you holding onto me? The most important thing right now is to tend to their wounds.”

Wu Santong said with joy, “Yes, yes, can you cure the poison from the needles?” He released Yang Guo from his grasp.

Yang Guo examined the Wu brothers and saw that Wu Dunru had been struck by a needle in his left shoulder, Wu Xiuwen a needle in his right leg. By now, the poison had

taken effect and their breathing was now shallow as they lay there unconscious.

Yang Guo tore a piece of cloth from Wu Dunru and removed the needles.

Wu Santong quickly asked, “Have you got the antidote? Have you?”

Yang Guo saw that it would be difficult to save them from the poison and sadly shook his head.

Wu Santong loved his sons deeply and he was full of pain. He remembered how his wife died from sucking the poison from him; suddenly he threw himself onto Wu Xiuwen and moved his lips towards the wound.

Yang Guo was alarmed by this and called out, “You can’t do this!” He sealed his ‘Great Shuttle’ pressure point with his finger.

Wu Santong was not prepared for this and immediately fell down. He couldn’t move and tears rolled down from his eyes as he watched his sons.

Something popped into Yang Guo’s head, “In five days time, the Passion Flower poison in me will take effect. There is not much difference between whether I live five days more or five days less. The Wu brothers are not outstanding characters but this Uncle Wu is one who loves with all his heart, and just like me, he has had a life of misery. So be it, I’ll give up my five days so their family can be reunited and his wishes fulfilled.” He placed his lips on Wu Xiuwen’s wound and sucked the venom out. After spitting out a few mouthfuls of the poison, he tended to Wu Dunru’s wound.

Wu Santong watched from the side with indescribable gratefulness, he cursed the fact that his pressure point was sealed and could not join him in extracting the poison. Yang Guo took turns on each of the wounds and after a while, he noticed the bitter taste had gradually become slightly salty. He felt himself getting dizzy and knew that he was poisoned deeply, but he forced himself to suck a few more mouthfuls and after spitting the poison out, his eyes went blank and he fell unconscious.

He was out for a long, long time. Gradually, he could see the blurry images of many people in front of him. He wanted to see what exactly was happening but as he did so, he found it more difficult to focus and his eyes closed once again. A long time passed before he was able to open his eyes once more and as he did so, he saw the delighted face of Wu Santong in front of him calling out, “Good, finally!” Wu Santong knelt in front of him and kowtowed to him many times. He said, “Brother Yang, you... you

saved... you saved my sons and you've saved my old life." He picked himself up and then threw himself down in front of another person and kowtowed to him. He called out, "Thank you Martial Uncle, thank you Martial Uncle."

Yang Guo looked at the person closely and saw that he was dark faced with a tall nose and deep set eyes; his appearance was similar to that of Nimoxing, and he had short, curly white hair, a man of old age. Yang Guo knew that Wu Santong was a disciple of the Reverend Yideng but he didn't know that he also had an Indian Martial Uncle. He wanted to sit up but found that his strength had escaped him; he looked around and saw that he was lying on a bed. It was the room that he had stayed in while he was in Xiangyang. Now that he knew he was still alive and still had a chance to see Xiao Longnu one more time, he couldn't stop himself from blurting out, "Gu Gu...Gu Gu!"

Someone went over to his bed and gently placed their hand on his forehead. The person said, "Guo'er, you need to rest, your Gu Gu has some other business to attend to outside the city." It was Guo Jing.

Yang Guo saw that he had recovered from his injuries and was greatly relieved but immediately thought, "Uncle Guo's injuries require seven days and nights to heal, could it be that I have been unconscious for this period of time? But why hasn't the Passion Flower poison in me taken effect?" With this shock, his mind went into a daze and he fainted once more.

By the time he woke up again, it was night. There was a red candle in front of the bed and Wu Santong was still watching by his bedside.

Yang Guo smiled, "Uncle Wu, I'm alright, you don't have to worry. The young Masters Wu are fine?"

Wu Santong's eyes were filled with tears and he just nodded, not saying a word.

Yang Guo had never received such gratitude from anyone in his whole life and felt uncomfortable with this so he changed the subject and asked, "How did we get back to Xiangyang?"

Wu Santong wiped his tears with his sleeve and said, "My apprentice brother Zhu received instructions from your Master Miss Long to take the red horse to you in the valley. When he got there, he found the four of us on the ground and quickly rescued us and took us back to the city."

Yang Guo asked with surprise, “How did my Master know that I was in that valley? Why did she have to ask Uncle Zhu to take the horse to me, why not herself?”

Wu Santong shook his head and said, “When I returned to the city, I did not see Miss Long. Apprentice brother Zhu said that though she is of a young age, her martial arts are abundant; it’s a pity that I did not have the chance to greet her. Aiii, look how able the young are.”

Yang Guo was delighted with his sincere praise of Xiao Longnu. According to age, Wu Santong was more than old enough to be Xiao Longnu’s father but he actually used the word ‘greet’ in his sentences, this respect of the Master is due to the debt of the disciple. Yang Guo smiled and said, “My injuries...”

Wu Santong interrupted, “Brother Yang, though helping others in times of need in the world of Wulin is a common practice, your risking your life to save others, including, of all people, my sons who have deeply offended you in the past, no one can match your kindness except my Master...”

Yang Guo kept on shaking his head and told him to stop. Wu Santong ignored him and continued, “If I call you great benefactor, I know you will not agree to it. But if you keep on calling me uncle, you are showing that you do not respect me.”

Yang Guo had always been straightforward and had usually avoided small talk. He had already set his mind on making Xiao Longnu his wife; he didn’t care about custom and tradition so he said, “Fine, I’ll call you brother Wu. But it will be a bit inconvenient to use this greeting in front of your sons.”

Wu Santong said, “What about that greeting? You saved their little lives; they should listen to your every request, even if it means being your slave.”

Yang Guo said, “Brother Wu, there’s no need to thank me. I have already contracted the Passion Flower poison; I wouldn’t have lived long anyway, so saving your sons wasn’t a very important risk.”

Wu Santong said, “Brother Yang, you can’t say that. Even if your poison is incurable, a normal person would still want to live as long as possible.”

Yang Guo smiled and asked, “How long have we been in Xiangyang?”

Wu Santong said, “Today is the seventh day.”

Yang Guo had a look of confusion on his face and said, “Logically, I should be dead by now, how come I’m still alive, that’s strange.”

Wu Santong said with joy, “My martial uncle is a great Indian sage; when it comes to healing wounds and curing poison, he’s probably the world’s best. Years ago when my Master mistakenly took a poison that Mrs. Guo sent, it was he who cured my Master. I’ll go and get him.” He hurriedly left the room.

Joy filled Yang Guo’s heart as he thought, “Could it be that while I was unconscious, that great Indian sage gave me a miracle panacea that purged even my Passion Flower poison? I wonder where Gu Gu is now? If she finds out I don’t have to die, she’ll be filled with joy!” As the sentimental thoughts filled his mind, his head ached and his chest felt as if a hammer had smashed against him, the pain was unbearable and he couldn’t stop himself from crying out. He hasn’t felt such pain since he took half of Qiu Qianchi’s antidote, it must be that the effects of the antidote have now passed while the poison remained; he clutched his chest and clenched his teeth. His head was covered with sweat.

Just as the pain was becoming excruciating, the door suddenly opened and a voice said, “Nanwu Amitufo.” The Indian monk’s arms were folded as he entered. Wu Santong followed and when he saw Yang Guo in distress, he was shocked and asked, “Brother Yang, how are you feeling?” He turned to the Indian monk and said, “Martial uncle, his poison is flaring up, give him the antidote quickly!” The Indian monk did not understand what he was saying and went over to Yang Guo and checked his pulse.

Wu Santong said, “Oh yes!” He quickly went to get Zhu Ziliu. Zhu Ziliu was well versed in Sanskrit and he was the only person who could communicate with the Indian monk. Zhu Ziliu arrived to translate.

Yang Guo gathered his wits and as the pain lessened, he explained to the Indian monk how he contracted this poison.

The Indian monk asked in great detail as to what the Passion Flower looked like and was shocked with what he heard. He said, “The Passion Flower is a species that has been extinct for a long time. According to the scriptures, the Passion Flower once ravaged the lives of many people; the Buddha Wenshu Shili eradicated the flower with his great wisdom. Who would know that some still existed in the central plains? I have never seen this flower before; I really don’t know how to cure this poison.” His face was filled with pity.

After Wu Santong heard Zhu Ziliu's translation, he kept on calling out, "Have mercy Martial Uncle; have mercy!"

The Indian monk folded his arms and recited, "Amitoufu." He closed his eyes and went into deep thought. Silence filled the room; no one dared to make a noise.

After a while, the Indian monk opened his eyes and said, "When Master Yang sucked the poison from my Martial Grandsons, the poison from the 'Soul Freezing Needles' should have killed you. But Master Yang has survived until now. The date for the Passion Flower's poison to activate has passed, yet you are still alive. Could it be that the poisons are fighting each other and allowed Master Yang to reap his rewards for his deeds?"

Zhu Ziliu nodded his head and after translating, Yang Guo too felt that this was a reasonable explanation.

The Indian monk continued, "People say what comes around goes around, Master Yang has saved the lives of others while risking his own, if this saying is true, an antidote will surely exist."

After hearing Zhu Ziliu's translation, Wu Santong leapt with joy and said, "I implore Martial Uncle to come up with an antidote as soon as possible."

The Indian monk said, "I need to visit the Passionless valley."

Yang Guo and the others were shocked. The journey to Passionless Valley was not a short one, getting there and getting back will take a long time.

The Indian monk said, "I need to see the Passionless Valley with my own eyes and test the poison before I can make an antidote. Before I return, Master Yang must refrain from sentimental thoughts; otherwise, the pain will get stronger and stronger each time. If you damage your life line then there will be no return."

Before Yang Guo could reply, Wu Santong said loudly, "Apprentice brother, let's go to the Passionless Valley together and force that old hag to hand over the antidote."

After being poisoned by Huo Dou, Zhu Ziliu was able to receive the antidote thanks to Yang Guo; he had wanted to repay him a long time and said, "Yes, we'll escort Martial Uncle and whether we'll take the antidote by force or whether Martial Uncle can make one himself, we'll get the antidote one way or the other."

The apprentice brothers spoke spiritedly but the Indian monk was looking at Yang Guo with worry on his brows.



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