

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDXL Chapter 12



Chapter 12 – The Heroes' Feast

Translated by Noodles



Yang Guo said, “Miss Guo, please tell your parents that I’ve gone.” Guo Fu was shocked and said, “You’re fine, so why are you leaving?” Yang Guo gave a dull laugh and said, “There’s no reason, originally I came here for no real reason, and now that I’ve been here I feel I should go.”

The next morning, while Yang Guo was eating breakfast in the hall, Guo Fu signaled him to the courtyard. The Wu brothers were at the side looking a bit troubled. Yang Guo was amused and went over to Guo Fu and asked, “You’re looking for me?”

Guo Fu laughed and said, “Yes, come with me outside, I want to ask what you’ve done in the last few years.” Yang Guo exhaled deeply, thinking that it wasn’t easy to explain, even if he spoke for three days and nights he would not have finished, and how could he reveal these things to her?

The two of them walked shoulder to shoulder to the main door, Yang Guo slightly turned his head and saw the two Wu brothers following. Guo Fu had noticed a long time ago and pretended that she didn’t see them and talked to Yang Guo. Yang Guo picked some insignificant events to talk about, he pushed and pulled making Guo Fu laugh. She knew that Yang Guo was keeping things from her but she still felt amused by his words. The two slowly walked to a Willow tree. Suddenly they heard a neigh; a skinny and scabby horse came hurrying over to Yang Guo, rubbing against him in an affectionate manner.

When the Wu brothers saw such an ugly horse, they couldn’t hold themselves back and burst out laughing. They went over to the two. Wu Xiuwen laughed and said, “That precious horse is very special, only someone with your ability could one find a horse like that. When are you going to find me one like that?”

Wu Dunru said seriously, “That is a Da Shi Guo’s (Great Master Guo’s) priceless treasure, how could you buy it?”

Guo Fu looked at Yang Guo and then at the ugly horse, when she saw the two had the same dirty and pitiful appearance, she couldn’t resist laughing. Yang Guo laughed and said, “I’m ugly, my horse is ugly, we’re a match. The horses that the Wu brothers ride must be very spirited horses.”

Wu Xiuwen said, “The horses that we ride are only a bit better than yours. Sister Fu’s red horse, now that is a precious horse. You’ve seen it before when you were on Peach Blossom Island.”

Yang Guo said, “So Uncle Guo gave the red horse to a girl.”

The four of them chatted as they walked. Guo Fu suddenly pointed to the west and said, “Look, mother’s teaching stick techniques again.” Yang Guo turned his head and saw Huang Rong with an old beggar walking towards the mountainside, the two of them holding a stick in their hands.

Wu Xiuwen said, “Elder Lu is so dumb, he’s been practicing the “Dog Beating Stick Technique” for so long but he still hasn’t managed to learn it.”

When Yang Guo heard the words “Dog Beating Stick Technique” his heart trembled but he didn’t show any signs of it, he turned around and looked away, pretending to appreciate the scenery. He heard Guo Fu say, “The “Dog Beating Stick Technique” is the treasure of the Beggar Clan; my mother said that the mastery and ingenuity of the stances are unbeatable. It has the most powerful stances in the world of weapons; you can’t just learn it in ten days or a fortnight. You said he’s dumb, are you very clever?”

Wu Dunru sighed and said, “It’s a pity that apart from the Chief of the Beggar Clan, no one is allowed to learn it.”

Guo Fu said, “If you become the Chief of the Beggar Clan in the future, Chief Lu will impart it to you. Even my father does not know this skill, there’s no need to cry.”

Wu Dunru said, “How can I be the Chief of the Beggar Clan? Sister Fu, why did Master’s wife select Elder Lu to replace her?”

Guo Fu said, “Over the last few years, my mother just held the title. The running of the clan is all done by Elder Lu Youjiao. All the many bothersome things that go on in the clan give my mother a headache. She said why is it necessary to have the name and not do anything; so why not pass the position on to Elder Lu and make it official. Once Elder Lu learns the “Dog Beating Stick Technique”, my mother will pass on the position to him officially.”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Sister Fu, how exactly do you use the “Dog Beating Stick Technique”? Have you seen it before?”

Guo Fu said, “I haven’t seen it. Ah, I have seen it!” She picked up a branch off the ground and lightly attacked his shoulder and laughed, “It’s like this.”

Wu Xiuwen called out, “Fine, just see if I’ll let you go now you’ve called me a dog.” He stretched out his hand to grab her. Guo Fu laughed and jumped away. Wu Xiuwen chased after her. The two ran around a few times and returned to their original places.

Guo Fu laughed and said, “Little Brother Wu, don’t get angry. I’ve got an idea.”

Wu Xiuwen said, “Fine, tell me.”

Guo Fu said, “We’ll watch in secret, we can see exactly how special the “Dog Beating Technique” is.” Wu Xiuwen clapped his hand in agreement.

But Wu Dunru shook his head and said, “If Master’s wife finds out we are secretly trying to learn the skill she will lecture us severely.”

Guo Fu said, “We are just going to watch, we’re not trying to learn it in secret. Anyway, an ingenious and masterly kung fu such as this, how could you learn it after just a few glances? Big brother Wu, so do you count as someone who’s amazing?” After this put down, he just smiled slightly. Guo Fu continued, “Last night when we were in the study eavesdropping, did my mother shout at anyone? You’re just a little chicken. Little Brother Wu, let’s go.”

Wu Dunru said, “Fine, fine, your reasoning does make some sense; I’ll go with you.”

Guo Fu said, “Is it possible that you don’t want to watch one of the world’s best skills? It doesn’t matter if you don’t go, once I’ve learned it I’ll come back and beat you with it.” As she said this she raised her stick and waved it at him.

The three of them had heard about the “Dog Beating Stick Technique” a long time ago and were fascinated by it but they had never seen what it looked like. Guo Jing once discussed martial arts with them; he told them how years ago on Mount Jun Huang Rong used the technique at the Beggar Clan’s gathering to beat everyone there and claimed the position of the Chief of the Beggar Clan. The three of them listened enchanted. Right now Guo Fu was encouraging them to take a look, though Wu Dunru spoke out against it, in his heart there wasn’t anything he wanted to do more. He pretended to be coerced into it and all he’s doing is listening to Guo Fu’s suggestion; if they are found out then his Master’s wife can’t blame him.

Guo Fu said, “Brother Yang, you come as well.” Yang Guo was gazing at the faraway mountains as if he was absorbed in thought and didn’t hear what they said. Guo Fu called out again and Yang Guo turned his head around, his face looked lost, he asked, “Fine, fine, follow you where?”

Guo Fu said, “Don’t ask; just follow me.”

Wu Dunru said, “Sister Fu, why do you want him to come, he won’t understand; his dumb brain is going to make some noise, how can Master’s wife not notice?”

Guo Fu said, “Relax, I’ll take care of him. You two go first; brother Yang and I will follow. The four of us will make too much noise with our footsteps.” The Wu brothers didn’t want to but they knew they couldn’t defy Guo Fu’s orders. The two of them walked ahead discontentedly.

Guo Fu called out, “We’ll hide in a large tree nearby first; my mother will not notice if we are careful and don’t make any noise.” The Wu brothers nodded in reply and quickened their steps.

Guo Fu glanced at Yang Guo and saw his clothes were extremely ragged and torn, she said, “When we get back I’ll get mother to buy you some new clothes; once you’ve changed, you won’t be as ugly.”

Yang Guo shook his head and said, “I was born ugly; even if I change clothes and tidy myself up I’ll still be ugly.” Guo Fu said fine and didn’t take it to mind; she glanced at the backs of the Wu brothers and gave out a light sigh.

Yang Guo said, “Why are you sighing?”

Guo Fu said, “My mind is really troubled, you wouldn’t understand.”

Yang Guo saw a delicate redness on her face, her eyebrows slightly wrinkled, she really was an extremely beautiful girl. Compared to Lu Wushuang, Wanyan Ping and Yelu Yan, she was more beautiful than they. His heart was moved slightly and said, “I know why you are so troubled.”

Guo Fu said, “That’s strange, how would you know? You really are talking rubbish.”

Yang Guo said, “Fine, if I guess correctly, you can’t deny it.”

Guo Fu placed her little white and tender finger against her right cheek, her pupils glimmered, a smile was on her lips and said, “Fine, take a guess.”

Yang Guo said, “It’s not simple. The Wu brothers both like you, they both try to please you, and it’s hard for you to give up one of them.”

After hearing this, Guo Fu’s heart raced. He knows about this, the Wu brothers know about this, her parents know about this and even Ke Zhen’E knows about this. But it was hard for anyone to mention it; everyone knew in their hearts but no one mentioned a word about it. Now, Yang Guo suddenly mentioned this matter, she couldn’t stop her face from going red; she was happy but sad, she wanted to laugh but also wanted to cry, droplets of tears rolled from her eyes.

Yang Guo said, “You’re thinking ‘Big Brother Wu is courteous and reliable, Little Brother Wu can keep me entertained. The two of them are both handsome, their mar-

tial arts are excellent and they treat me with respect and listen to me. The elder has his good points, the younger has his strong points; I'm just one person, how can I marry two men?"

Guo Fu listened to him startled, after she heard his last sentence, she said, "Your mouth is full of rubbish, who wants to pay attention to what you say?"

From her reaction, Yang Guo knew he had guessed correctly, he quietly repeated, "I'm just one person, how can I marry two men?" After repeating it a few times, Guo Fu still seemed to have something on her mind; it was as if she didn't hear him.

After a while she said, "Brother Yang, tell me, who do you think the better of the brothers?" She asked this quite suddenly. Though she and Yang Guo were childhood friends, there was still some animosity between the two even though they not seen each other for a long time. Now that they're grown up, how can she reveal such things to him? Yang Guo is a lively person, as long as you don't get on the wrong side of him, he will joke with you, laugh with you, in a flash he will make you feel as if you were in a spring breeze, as if you were drinking a beautiful wine. Anyway, Guo Fu had gone over this hundreds and thousands of times in her mind. She felt that both of them had their good points; when it came to playing around and joking, she got on with Wu Xiuwen very well, but when it came to doing something serious Wu Dunru was much better. She was a girl going through puberty; she would alternate from being angry with them, or be pleased with them. She made the brothers fall in love with her; in her heart she was really troubled, she didn't know who to treat better. As she and Yang Guo raised this point she couldn't help herself but ask this question.

Yang Guo laughed and said, "I don't think either of them is good."

Guo Fu was startled and asked, "Why?"

Yang Guo laughed and said, "If those two are good then what chance have I, Yang Guo, got?" He had been used to joking around with Lu Wushuang on the road and he didn't mean what he just said, he was just teasing her when he said it.

Guo Fu was stunned, she was a girl who was used to being pampered and treated well, no one has ever said half an offensive word to her. Right now she didn't know whether or not to be angry; she put on serious face and said, "If you don't want to say, fine, who wants to joke with you? Let's go." As she said this she utilized her lightness kung fu and hurried along the small path to the mountainside.

Yang Guo felt there was no point to this and thought, “Why am I mixing with these three? I’d rather be far away and be on my own!” He turned around and slowly walked away, thinking, “The Wu brothers think that girl is a goddess, they’re afraid that she won’t marry them. If they really marry her, and spend everyday with such a pretty yet bullying girl, they will definitely experience more pain than joy, huh; crazy people like them are very funny.”

Guo Fu hurried for a while and assumed that Yang Guo would go after her and apologize; but after stopping for a while there was no trace of Yang Guo. She had a thought and said, “That person does not know martial arts, of course he won’t be able to catch up. She turned around and returned to see that he had actually gone in the opposite direction. She thought this was strange and went over to Yang Guo. She asked, “Why aren’t you coming?”

Yang Guo said, “Miss Guo, please tell your parents that I’ve gone.”

Guo Fu was shocked and said, “You’re fine, so why are you leaving?”

Yang Guo gave a dull laugh and said, “There’s no reason, originally I came here for no real reason, and now that I’ve been here I feel I should go.”

Guo Fu has always like crowded atmospheres; although she didn’t think very highly of Yang Guo, listening to him joking felt fresher and newer than listening to the Wu brothers. She really didn’t want him to leave, she said, “Brother Yang, we haven’t seen each other a long time, I have many things to say to you. Anyway, tonight is the ‘Heroes Feast, all the heroes from all over the world will be gathering here, why don’t you want to experience this?”

Yang Guo said, “I’m not a hero, if I’m actually there, won’t I just become an object of ridicule in front of all the heroes?”

Guo Fu said, “That makes sense.” She pondered for a while and said, “There are many people in the Lu Manor who don’t know martial arts, just eat and drink with the servants.”

When Yang heard this he was very angry, he thought, “Little Bitch, you class me with nobodies.” His face didn’t show any signs of anger; he laughed and said, “That’s a pretty good idea.” He had wanted to leave but now had a change of heart, he decided he was going to do something that would embarrass and disgrace her. Guo Fu was used to being pampered and cared for. She wasn’t wise and didn’t understand worldly matters;

she didn't have any ill intent in her words and didn't know that she had deeply offended someone.

She saw that Yang Guo had changed his mind, she laughed and said, "Let's go, if we're late and mother gets there first, we won't be able to peek." She hurried ahead with Yang Guo following behind, he appeared out of breath and his footsteps seemed heavy showing that he was extremely clumsy and inept. They easily arrived in time at the place where Huang Rong normally taught Lu Youjiao the stick techniques. They saw the Wu brothers in a tree looking out. Guo Fu leapt up on the branch and then reached out her hand to Yang Guo pulling him up. When Yang Guo held her soft and warm hand, he couldn't stop his heart from stirring but immediately thought, "Even if you were ten times as beautiful, you can't compare with my Gu Gu."

Guo Fu quietly asked, "My mother hasn't arrived yet?"

Wu Xiuwen pointed to the west and quietly replied, "Elder Lu is practicing over there, Master and Master's wife went away to talk about something."

The only person that Guo Fu is afraid of is her father, when she heard that he was here she felt slightly uneasy. But when she saw Lu Youjiao holding a bamboo stick pointing to the east and stirring to the west, she forgot her fear and quietly said, "That's the "Dog Beating Stick Technique"?"

Wu Dunru said, "Most likely. Master's wife was teaching him when Master came over and said he had something to discuss with her, he led her to the side while Elder Lu practiced by himself."

Guo Fu watched a few stances and felt that it was sluggish and didn't see anything special about it, she said, "Elder Lu hasn't learned it yet, and it isn't nice to watch, let's go."

Yang Guo saw that the stances that Elder Lu was using were identical to the ones that Hong Qigong taught him on top of Mount Hua, he chuckled in his heart, "That girl doesn't know anything."

The Wu brothers always followed Guo Fu's orders, they were about to jump down when they heard footsteps below; the Guo couple were walking over. They heard Guo Jing say, "Of course a decision about Fu'er's future can't be decided so lightly and suddenly. But Guo'er is young; it is unavoidable that young people will get into trouble. That business with the Quanzhen sect doesn't seem to be all his fault."

Huang Rong said, “I don’t care about him causing trouble at Quanzhen. You are respecting the long friendship between the families of Yang and Guo, as you should. But Yang Guo is very crafty, the more I look at him the more he looks like his father, how can I relax and allow Fu’er to get married to him?” When Yang Guo, Guo Fu and the Wu brothers heard this, they all were shocked. The four of them knew that the Guo and Yang families had some ties but they didn’t know that the previous generations had such deep ties. They could never have guessed that Guo Jing wanted to betroth his daughter to Yang Guo. That sentence affects all four of them, they all listened carefully, their hearts all racing.

Guo Jing said, “Brother Yang Kang was unfortunate that he ended up in the Jin palace and fell in with the wrong crowd. That’s how he ended up like he did, in the end he died without a full corpse. (a soul?) Had he been in the care of Uncle Yang Tiexin, he would never have ended up like that.”

Huang Rong sighed as she remembered the frightening events of that night at Jiaying’s Iron Spear Temple, her heart froze and she quietly said, “You could say that.”

Yang Guo does not fully understand his background, he knew that his father died earlier by someone’s hand but his own mother never revealed how he died or who killed him. Now he heard Guo Jing talking about his father and mentioned ‘ended up in the Jin palace and fell in with the wrong crowd’ and ‘died without a full corpse’, his body quivered as if he was struck by lightning, his face turned grey. Guo Fu glanced at him and saw that he was looking like he was in a trance; she was frightened and worried that he would suddenly fall and drop to his death.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong sat down on a rock with their backs to the tree. Guo Jing lightly stroked Huang Rong’s arm and warmly said, “Since you’ve been carrying our second child, your body has not been feeling well; quickly pass on all the responsibilities of the Beggar Clan to Lu Youjiao so you can rest properly.”

Guo Fu was delighted, “So mother’s having a baby, it’ll be great to have a little brother. How come mother never told me about this?”

Huang Rong said, “I don’t worry about the matters of the Beggar Clan that much. What I’m worried about is Fu’er’s future.”

Guo Jing said, “Since the Quanzhen won’t take in Guo’er, I’ll teach him myself. He’s a very clever boy, once he’s learned all my skills in the future, the brotherly vow between his father and I won’t have been in vain.” Yang Guo now knew that Guo Jing was his

father's sworn brother, the words 'Uncle Guo' had a real meaning behind it, when he heard Guo Jing treating him with love in his words he was touched, tears almost rolled from of his eyes.

Huang Rong said, "That's what I'm afraid of, in case he's too clever for his own good. That's why I taught him to study and didn't teach him any martial arts. I hoped that he would become a deep, understanding and righteous man, even if he didn't know any martial arts. I would have happily betrothed Fu'er to him in that case."

Guo Jing said, "You have always planned everything to the last detail. This idea would have been good but with Fu'er's temper and martial arts, wouldn't having her to marry a weak scholar be a bit harsh for her? Tell me, how could she respect him? In my opinion such a couple would not get on well with each other."

Huang Rong laughed and said, "You're shameless! So the reason why we are such a good couple is because you have better martial arts than me. Hero Guo, come, come, come, let's have a duel."

Guo Jing laughed and said, "Fine, Chief Huang, give me your best." A light sound was heard as Huang Rong lightly patted on Guo Jing's shoulder.

After a while Huang Rong sighed and said, "Ah... this matter is complicated, even with Guo'er to one side, how can you separate the two Wu brothers? In your opinion, who is better?" Guo Fu and the Wu brother's hearts naturally jumped. This wasn't related to Yang Guo but he wanted to hear Guo Jing's opinion of the two.

He heard Guo Jing go 'hmm' and didn't say anything for a while, in the end he said, "I can't give my opinions on them on small matters. Only when a person is faced with an important matter will they show their real character." His voice became soft and said, "Fu'er is still young, we can still wait a few years. It could be that by then everything will have sorted itself out and we won't have to worry about it. There's no need to exert your self too much when teaching Lu Youjiao the stick techniques. In the last few days I've noticed that you don't seem to look well, I'm worried. I'll go and find Guo'er and talk to him." After he said this he got up and walked to the road.

Huang Rong sat on the rock and evened her breathing for a while before she instructed Lu Youjiao to come over and perform the techniques. Lu Youjiao displayed all thirty-six strokes of the technique, but Lu Youjiao had yet to understand the formulae. Huang Rong kept her patience and explained everything more clearly to him. The stances of the "Dog Beating Stick Techniques" are of course ingenious and masterly, and the for-

mulae behind it extremely clever and ingenious, otherwise how could a little bamboo stick become the treasure of the Beggar Clan? Even with Ouyang Feng's great skills he had to think deep and hard for a long while; how could the opponent overcome a stance or half a move? Huang Rong had used a month's time to teach Lu Youjiao the stances. Now she recited the formulae and the principles behind the changes a few times, and told him to remember this. When it comes to understanding and being able to use the skill, it depends on the person's ability and intelligence. The Master cannot teach the disciple this.

Guo Fu and the Wu brothers did not understand the stick techniques, they didn't have a clue as to what was going on. What the 'seal' point was like, how the 'coil' aim was meant to be, how the eighteenth change transforms into the nineteenth change and how the nineteenth change can be altered into the twentieth change. The three of them wanted to leap down from the tree but were afraid that Huang Rong would discover them; they hoped that she would go through it quickly and then leave with Lu Youjiao. But who could have guessed that Huang Rong had decided to hand over the position of Chief to Lu Youjiao today before the 'Heroes Feast'. She decided she would impart all the formulae to him now, if he didn't understand it she would slowly go over it with him later on. According to the rules of the clan, when he takes over the position he must have learned the "Dog Beating Stick Technique"; this is why that she spoke almost non-stop for around two hours. However, Lu Youjiao wasn't the most gifted and he was now old, his memory is fading, how could he remember all this in just a short time? Huang Rong kept on going, passage after passage; it was hard for him to remember everything. Huang Rong had met Guo Jing when she was fifteen and was used to being around someone who was slow and not the most gifted. She was angry about Lu Youjiao's poor memory. The rules of the clan states that the formulae to the technique must be passed on down orally and must not be written down. Otherwise writing it down and letting him slowly memorize it would have saved a lot of effort and energy.

That day on the peak of Mount Hua after both Hong Qigong and Ouyang Feng had suffered internal injuries in their duel, Hong Qigong had taught Yang Guo every stance and every change so that he could perform it for Ouyang Feng. But he didn't teach him a single word of the formulae that are needed when fighting an enemy. Hong Qigong thought that without the formulae, the techniques would be useless to him. This doesn't really go against the rules of the clan and at the time he wasn't fighting Ouyang Feng for real, so there was no need to pass on the formulae to the technique. Who could have guessed that Yang Guo would now hear the whole thing in its entirety? He was over a hundred times more gifted than Lu Youjiao; after just three recitations he was able to remember the whole thing without forgetting a word, but Lu Youjiao still wasn't able to remember as he recited it ambiguously.

When Huang Rong became pregnant for the second time, she became careless one day while meditating and disturbed the chi of the fetus; because of this she has become very weak. Today she had taught for over half a day and had become very tired, she sat on the rock and rested, she closed her eyes for a while and then called out, “Fu’er, Ru’er, Wen’er, Guo’er, come down at once!”

The four of them were shocked and thought, “So she knew we were here long ago!”

Guo Fu said, “Mother, you really are great, nothing can be kept from you.” As she said this she used a stance of “The Forest Sends a Sparrow” and lightly leapt down in front of her. The Wu brothers followed while Yang Guo climbed down slowly.

Huang Rong gave a ‘heng’ sound and said, “You wanted to steal a look with your kung fu? If I couldn’t even notice you little rascals, I’m afraid that when that I’m traveling around Jianghu I’d be ambushed in half a day.”

Guo Fu felt embarrassed by her mother’s comments but knew that her mother was lenient and wasn’t afraid of being scolded by her. She laughed and said, “Mother, I brought these three along to take a look at the world famous “Dog Beating Stick Technique”, but who knew that when Elder Lu uses it, the skill doesn’t look good at all. Mother, perform the skill for us.”

Huang Rong laughed and took the bamboo stick from Lu Youjiao’s hand, she said, “Fine, watch out, I’m going to trip a little puppy.”

Guo Fu concentrated on her lower body, as soon as the bamboo stick comes towards her, she will immediately jump and avoid the trip. Huang Rong’s bamboo stick flashed across, Guo Fu quickly leapt up, her legs were half way away from the ground when the bamboo stick came across and skillfully and lightly tripped her up. Guo Fu got up and called out, “I’m not taking about that! It was my fault.”

Huang Rong laughed and said, “Fine, you chose what you want to do.”

Guo Fu steadied herself in the Mount Posture and stood solidly, she had another thought and then said, “Big brother Wu and little brother Wu, come to my side and get into the Mount Posture as well.” The Wu brothers did as they were told and stood solidly. Guo Fu stretched out her arm and hooked it around the Wu brothers’ arms combining the strength of the three, as solid as Mount Tai. She said, “Mother, I’m not afraid of you, only father’s “Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms” can push us.”

Huang Rong gave a slight smile and waved the stick across the three's faces, a strong gust of wind rushed upon them. The three of them all moved backwards to avoid it, the Mount Posture of the lower body loosened as a result. Huang Rong's bamboo stick returned and used the 'turn' formulae, the stick brushed across the three's legs, the three of them could not stand steady and all fell down at the same time. At least the three's kung fu had a good foundation, their bodies had just touched the ground slightly and they up immediately. Guo Fu called out, "Mother, that's just trickery; I'm not taking about that either."

Huang Rong laughed and said, "Just now I passed on the eight formulae to Lu Youjiao, 'trip', 'chop', 'coil', 'poke', 'stir', 'lead', 'seal' and 'turn'; which one uses reckless strength? You said this is trickery, that's correct, in the martial arts, ninety percent of it is used to trick someone, as long as you've tricked a skilled fighter, you've won. Only your father's "Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms" type of martial arts uses real kung fu to battle and doesn't use any sort of trickery. But how many people in the world can reach such a stage?"

These words made Yang Guo nod in secret, he remembered the formulae that Huang Rong had recited and combined it with the stances that Hong Qigong taught him, the ingenuity and mastery behind it really was boundless. Though Guo Fu and the others understood what Huang Rong said, they didn't appreciate the meaning behind it. Huang Rong continued, "The "Dog Beating Stick Technique" is Wulin's most unique kung fu, it forms a branch on its own, and does not involve any other sect's kung fu. If you just learn the stances but don't know the formulae to accompany it, it is useless. Even if you are extremely clever it will be very difficult to come up with formulae to accompany the stances. But if you just know the formulae without me personally teaching you the stances, and only know the eight words 'trip', 'chop', 'coil', 'poke', 'stir', 'lead', 'seal' and 'turn', the result is the same. Because of this I'm not afraid of letting you four rascals eavesdrop. If I teach any sort of kung fu, without my permission, you must not eavesdrop or practice in secret ever, understand?"

Guo Fu agreed and laughed, "Mother, why should I try to practice your kung fu in secret? Could it be that you have other skills that you dare not teach me?"

Huang Rong used the bamboo stick to lightly hit Guo Fu's behind, she laughed, "Go and play with your two Wu brothers. Guo'er, I want to speak with you. Elder Lu, take your time, if you can't remember it all I'll teach you again tomorrow." Lu Youjiao, Guo Fu and the Wu brothers went on their way back to the Lu Manor, only Yang Guo remained.

Yang Guo's heart raced, he was afraid that Huang Rong knew that he had secretly learned the "Dog Beating Stick Technique" and now wanted to take his life. Huang Rong saw the frightened expression on Yang Guo's face; she took his hand and told him to sit down on the rock. She softly said, "Guo'er, there are many things that I don't understand about you, if I ask you, I know you won't tell me. But I can't blame you. When I was young I was extremely eccentric, your Uncle Guo had to tolerate me in everything I did." As she got up to this point, she lightly sighed and then a smile came across her face as she remembered the times when she vented her anger when she was younger. She continued, "I didn't teach you martial arts because I wanted what's best for you, who could've known that this caused you to suffer many hardships instead. Your Uncle Guo loves and adores me; of course I will do my best to repay his love. He has great faith in you and hopes that you will become a great man. I will do my best to help you so his wish can be granted. Guo'er, don't ever disappoint him, please!"

Yang Guo has never heard Huang Rong speak to him like this before, soft, gentle and sincere, he saw her eyes were filled with love and he couldn't stop himself from being moved, hot blood rose to his chest and he groaned. Huang Rong stroked his hair and softly said, "Guo'er, I won't keep anything from you anymore. In the past I didn't like your father, which is why I have always disliked you. But from now on, I will treat you well; once my body has recovered I will teach you all the martial arts I know. Uncle Guo said he will do the same thing as well."

Yang Guo was feeling sadder, he cried even louder and choked, "Auntie Guo, there are many things that I've kept from you, I'll...I'll... I'll tell you everything."

Huang Rong stroked his hair and said, "Today I'm very tired, it won't be too late if you tell me in a few days, all you've got to do is be a good child and I'll be happy. When the Beggar Clan's meeting is on, come and take a look."

Yang Guo thought that important news such as the passing away of Hong Qigong needed to be revealed at the meeting, he wiped his tears and kept on nodding.

The two of them spoke with their true feelings under the tree and managed to scatter away the mutual dislike that they used to have for each other. As they finished, Yang Guo's tears turned into a smile, he remembered the faith and love that Guo Jing had in his words to him, this is the first time he had felt so warm and affectionate since he and Xiao Longnu split up.

After speaking for a while, Huang Rong felt a slight pain in her stomach; she slowly got up and said, "Let's go." She held his hand and they slowly walked.

Yang Guo thought that he should tell her the news of the Hong Qigong's death and said, "Auntie Guo, I have something very important I have to tell you."

Huang Rong just felt the chi in her 'dan tian' was uncomfortable and not fluent; she frowned and said, "Tell me tomorrow, I'm... I'm not feeling well."

Yang Guo saw that she was pale and couldn't help from worrying, he felt her hand was slightly cold, he became bold and secretly circulated his chi and sent a warm energy from his hand into her. When he and Xiao Longnu were practicing the "Jade Heart Manual" on Mount Zhongnan, he had become very fluent in this technique of passing energy through the palms. But he was afraid that his and Huang Rong's internal energy would clash with each other so at the start he only sent a little; afterwards when he felt no resistance, he started to increase the energy. Huang Rong felt the internal energy that he was passing on was soft and concentrated; it was very different to the internal energies of the Quanzhen sect. It was soft and fluid, it wasn't below the skilled fighters of Quanzhen, her body had a use for it and in a short while she felt the opposing chi and her blood flow became more fluid and comfortable, her cheeks glowed, she was surprised, "Where did the child learn this advanced internal energy?" She smiled at him.

Just as she was about to ask him, Guo Fu called out from afar, "Mother, mother, guess who's here?"

Huang Rong laughed and said, "Today all the heroes of the world are gathered here, how do I know who's here?" She suddenly had a thought and said happily, "Ah, it's the Wu's Martial Uncles; I haven't seen them for many years."

Guo Fu said, "Mother, you are really clever, how did you get it in one guess?"

Huang Rong smiled and said, "What's hard about that? The Wu brothers never leave your side, since they're not following, it must be because their relatives have arrived." Yang Guo has always been assured of his intelligence but when he saw that Huang Rong predicted things like a god, he couldn't stop himself from being startled and in awe of her.

Huang Rong continued, "Fu'er, congratulations, you can learn another advanced martial art but I'm afraid that you might not be able to learn it."

Guo Fu asked, "What kung fu?"

Yang Guo blurted out, “The “Solitary Yang Finger”!”

Guo Fu ignored him and said, “What do you know? Mother, what kung fu is it?”

Huang Rong laughed and said, “Hasn’t brother Yang mentioned it?”

Guo Fu said, “Ai... so mother told you.” Yang Guo and Huang Rong both smiled and didn’t say anything. Huang Rong thought, “Guo’er is very intelligent, he’s ten times cleverer than the Wu brothers. And there’s no need to mention Fu’er. He knows that the “Solitary Yang Finger” is Reverend Yideng’s skill, the Wu brothers’ Martial Uncles are here, and they will pity the Wu brothers because of their parents and will definitely teach them the “Solitary Yang Finger”. The brothers are always trying to please Fu’er, whatever they learn will be passed onto her.”

Guo Fu was surprised, “Why did mother tell Yang Guo first, could it be that she wants to betroth me to that little beggar?” When she thought about this, she gave Yang Guo a look and put on a silly face.

Reverend Yideng of Dali has four disciples: ‘Fisherman, Woodsman, Farmer, and Scholar’. The Wu brothers’ father Wu Santong is the third disciple, Farmer. Ever since the battle with Li Mochou where he was wounded, he hadn’t been seen since. The ones that have arrived for the ‘Heroes Feast’ today are the Fisherman, Si Shuiyuyin and the Scholar, Zhu Ziliu. Whenever Huang Rong and Zhu Ziliu meet, they start to battle with their wits. They haven’t seen each other for over ten years and as soon as they saw each other, they were at it again. After the greetings, Si Shuiyuyin and Zhu Ziliu found a room and they indeed did start to teach the “Solitary Yang Finger” to the Wu brothers.

That morning, the Lu Manor was filled with countless heroes and good men; though the Lu Manor was large, there were people everywhere. After lunch, the members of the Beggar Clan assembled in the forest outside the Lu Manor. The ceremony of the old Chief passing the position to a new one is the grandest ceremony in the Beggar Clan. All the members from the east, south, west and north no matter what rank gathered here. The heroes that were invited to the Lu Manor were also invited to watch the ceremony.

Over the last ten years or so, Lu Youjiao had helped Huang Rong in running all the matters of the clan; he was just, he did things boldly and accepted the consequences, the members from the ‘dirty’ clothed and ‘clean’ clothed factions all respected him. Elder Jian of the ‘clean’ clothed faction had passed away, Elder Liang has been incapacitated by illness and Elder Peng had revolted and left. There wasn’t anyone that could challenge for the position of chief; this is why this year’s ceremony proceeded smoothly.

Huang Rong acted accordingly to the clan's rules, after passing on the clan's historic treasure, the Dog Beating Stick, to Lu Youjiao, she and the rest of the members spat on him to complete the procession. His face and body was covered in spittle.

Yang Guo saw that this procession was extremely strange. He was just about to go and tell them the news of Hong Qigong's death when suddenly an old beggar leapt up onto a rock and said loudly, "Chief Hong Lao has an order, he told me to tell everyone." When the clan members heard this they all gave a cheer. They hadn't had any news from Hong Qigong for over ten years, they all missed him, now they heard that he had news, they all called out in joy. An old beggar in the crowd called out, "Blessings to Elder Hong Lao!" The crowd all cheered, their voices really shook the earth. Cheer followed after cheer, and only after a while did it cease.

Yang Guo saw that everyone was moved, some even had tears on their faces, he thought, "If a man can achieve respect like this, his life will not be in vain. Look at all these people's joy, how can I tell them that Hong Qigong has passed away? Never mind the fact that I'm a nobody; if I tell them such news they might not believe me. Once they hear this there'll be chaos, this isn't good news anyway, why spoil things for them?" He continued his thought, "If they asked 'how did Hong Qigong die', I can't keep the fact that he was dueling with Godfather from them. The Wu brothers know that I've learned the "Toad Stance" from Godfather, what reason have they got not to tell everyone this? There are many beggars here and it would be unavoidable for some of them to be suspicious that I might have helped my Godfather kill Chief Hong Lao. I'll have no way to argue against hundreds of mouths. After the meeting I will explain everything carefully to Auntie Guo and allow her to tell them the news." He thought that it was fortunate for him that the old beggar dashed out and allowed him time to think, if he blurted it out, he would have caused himself a lot of trouble. He heard the old Beggar say, "Half a year ago, I was on the Guangnandong road in the Shao province and met Elder Hong Lao in Xingjun, and drank wine with him. He's very healthy and his appetite is great; his drinking ability is the same as before and it's still the only one of its kind."

The crowd of beggars all cheered with delight again; within the cheers were sounds of laughter. That old beggar interrupted and continued, "Over the last few years, Chief Hong Lao has killed many unscrupulous officials and evil scoundrels who have terrorized our citizens. He said he had heard news that there are five evil bastards called the 'Five Clowns of the Tibetan Border' who are following the orders of the Mongols. They have done many evil things in places like Chuandong and Huguang, he said that he was going to take a look himself and if it is true, of course he's going to take their lives."

A middle-aged beggar got up and said, “The ‘Five Clowns of the Tibetan Border’, they caused trouble a while back, but they move without a trace, our brothers in Chuandong were not able to find them. Recently, there has been no news of them; Chief Hong Lao must have sorted out this problem.” The beggars and heroes who watched the ceremony all applauded.

Yang Guo was gloomy, “How would you people know that after Chief Hong Lao and my Godfather made the ‘Five Clowns of the Tibetan Border’ into invalids, the two of them left the world not long after.”

The old beggar continued, “Chief Hong Lao said, ‘Right now the world is in a mess, the Mongols are slowly invading southwards, eating into our Song land. Those in our clan must have loyalty in our hearts, swear to kill our enemies and defend against aggressors with all our might.’ All the beggars agreed and their spirits soared. The beggar said, “The government is in a mess, corrupt ministers hold the power, and we can’t expect some rotten officials to protect the people and defend the land. They’ll never be able to do this. The foreign aggressors are getting closer, everyone must have the will to protect our country, and Chief Hong Lao ordered me to tell all of our brothers to remember the word ‘loyalty’.”

All the beggar clan members responded; they all called out, “We swear to follow Chief Hong Lao’s orders.”

Yang Guo had never been taught much since he was young and didn’t know how important the word ‘loyalty’ is; he saw the beggars all trembling with justice and righteousness, and he couldn’t stop himself from being touched. He felt that his making fools out of the Beggar Clan members before was wrong.

After the meeting, the clan’s matters were discussed; there was no need for the outsiders to listen and they took their leave.

When evening came, the Lu Manor was filled with lanterns and candles, all glowing brilliantly. There were over two hundred tables all together in the main hall, side halls, back and front halls, and the courtyard; over half of the world’s heroes attended this feast. This ‘Heroes Feast’ is an exceptional event, a once in a lifetime event; if the host didn’t have so many acquaintances who all respected him, it would be difficult for anyone to invite so many heroes of the Wulin world. Guo Jing and Huang Rong accompanied the main guests and sat in the main hall. Huang Rong arranged a place for Yang Guo and he sat at the table next to hers. Guo Fu and the Wu brothers sat quite a distance away.

Guo Fu was surprised at first and thought, “That person doesn’t know martial arts, why did mother give him such a good seat?” She had a sudden thought, and couldn’t stop herself from being alarmed, “Oh no, crap! Father said he was going to betroth me to him, could it be that mother is listening to father?” The more she thought about it the more frightened she became; she remembered how she saw her mother holding Yang Guo’s hand while walking, looking very close. She also thought about how her father and mother respected each other, if her father wants to do this, mother would not disagree. She was worried and angry, she thought, “How can I get married to that little beggar?” She wanted to cry.

Wu Xiuwen happened to speak at this time, “Sister Fu, look at where that punk named Yang is sitting. He counts as a hero?”

Guo Fu forced out, “If you’ve any skill then drive him away!”

The Wu brothers had originally just looked down on him but after hearing Guo Jing saying that he wanted to betroth Guo Fu to him, they made him their enemy.

Wu Xiuwen heard what Guo Fu said and thought, “Why don’t I insult and embarrass him? He’ll be humiliated in front of all these heroes. Master’s wife has always favored those with a strong character, when the one named Yang trips up in public, Master’s wife will not want him to be her son-in-law.” He had just learned the “Solitary Yang Finger” from his Martial Uncle, now was a good time to test it, he said, “Since he wants to pretend that he is a hero, I’ll let him show off and then make him lose face.” He stood up and poured two cups of wine; he went over to Yang Guo and said, “Brother Yang, you must be proud of yourself regarding these last few years. I give you a toast.”

When Yang Guo saw Wu Xiuwen coming towards him, he had seen him glancing over at Guo Fu incessantly and his face had a sly look, showing that he didn’t have any good intentions. He thought, “He’s come over here to give a toast, he must be up to something. But he wouldn’t dare put poison in the wine.” So he stood up and received the wine, he said, “Thank you.” He drank the wine in one gulp.

Just at this moment, Wu Xiuwen stretched out his index finger and touched Yang Guo’s waist. He turned his body to block the view of others, he had sealed Yang Guo’s ‘Laughing Waist’ pressure point, according to his Marshal Uncle, if you use the “Solitary Yang Finger” to seal an enemy’s ‘Laughing Waist’ pressure point, the opponent will laugh and call out. If the pressure point is unsealed, the opponent will keep on laughing without stopping.

Yang Guo had already put his body on guard, how could he fall for the surprise attack? With Yang Guo's present skills, he would never be ambushed by his opponent's surprise attack. With Yang Guo's temper, normally he would not take this ill intent and would definitely counterattack fiercely. If he hadn't caught Wu Xiuwen out then he would have sealed Wu Xiuwen's 'Laughing Waist' pressure point instead. But after having that conversation with Huang Rong, he was feeling happy and relaxed, he thought, "Although there is some animosity between us, you are still Uncle and Auntie Guo's disciple, I won't mess around with you." He secretly circulated the internal energy that Ouyang Feng had taught him, in a flash all his bodies' veins circulated the opposite way, all his pressure points changed places, but because he wasn't upside down and he didn't have much experience with this type of kung fu. After one inhalation and one exhalation, his body reverted back to normal; he needed to circulate his internal energy again to reverse his veins. But this short period of time it was enough to render Wu Xiuwen's attack useless.

Wu Xiuwen saw that after touching his pressure point, Yang Guo had a little smile on his face, he was still sitting in his original position and there was no reaction from him. He was surprised and returned to his table. He quietly said, "Brother, how come the kung fu that Martial Uncle taught us doesn't work?" Wu Xiuwen told him what had just happened.

Wu Dunru chuckled and said, "Your stance must have been wrong or you've pointed to the wrong place."

Wu Xiuwen quickly said, "What's wrong? Take a look." He raised his finger and then pointed to his brother's waist; the appearance, stance and strength were exactly the same as the method that his Martial Uncle taught him.

Guo Fu's lips pursed and she said, "I thought that the 'Solitary Yang Finger' was something amazing, huh! It doesn't look like its much use." She knew that the Wu brothers had learned the "Solitary Yang Finger" but she herself didn't know it. She knows that they will definitely teach her eventually, she still had a feeling of unhappiness in her.

Wu Dunru stood up and poured two cups of wine, he went over to Yang Guo and said, "Brother Yang, me and my brother haven't seen you for many years, now we meet again, junior also presents a toast to you."

Yang Guo laughed in his heart and thought, "Your little brother has already shown his skills, let's see what other great skills you have as the elder brother." He was holding up

a piece of beef with his chopstick and didn't put it down; he stretched out his left arm to take the cup and laughed, "Thank you."

Wu Dunru didn't try to hide it, he stretched out his right arm, his sleeve carried a gust of wind, he stretched out his finger to seal the pressure point on Yang Guo's waist. Yang Guo saw that the finger was coming in fiercely, his kung fu of reversing his veins was limited and he was afraid that he would not be able to block this attack. He dropped his arm and used the slab of beef to protect his 'Laughing Waist' pressure point. This move started second but arrived first, Wu Dunru did not notice this, and his finger went forward and pierced the slab of beef. Yang Guo placed his chopsticks down and said, "After drinking wine, it would be best to follow it with a slab of beef." Wu Dunru raised his hand and saw his five fingers holding onto a large piece of beef, its juice dripping everywhere, he couldn't hold onto it but couldn't fling it away, he gave a furious stare at Yang Guo and scurried back to his seat. Guo Fu saw that he was holding a piece of beef, it was very strange and she asked, "What's that?"

Wu Dunru's face turned red, he couldn't reply. Just at this time, the Beggar Clan's new chief Lu Youjiao raised a cup and stood up. He gave a toast to all the heroes and then clearly said, "Our clan's Chief Hong Lao has passed on an order, and he said that the Mongols are invading south and commanded all our clan members to defend our country against them with our lives. All the heroes of the world are gathered here today, everyone here has loyalty in their hearts, we need to discuss the situation and come up with a plan that will drive the Mongols away, never to come back to the land of the Song."

After he finished, all the heroes stood up, a word here and there, everyone had the same thought. Most of the heroes that attended this feast are patriots, when they saw that their country was close to danger, they all were worried, and now someone has raised this issue, all the loyal and patriotic heroes responded.

A silver bearded old man stood up, his voice was like a bell as he said, "There's a saying, 'A snake without a head will not move', we have loyalty in our hearts but without a leader we will not be able to accomplish our goals. Today, most of the world's heroes are here; we need to elect a worthy, revered and respected hero who will take charge and lead us."

A lot of them shouted out, someone called out, "Let the Senior take charge!" "There is no need to elect someone else!"

The old man laughed and said, “What sort of class does a rotten old man such as I belong to? The great fighters of Wulin have always been Eastern Heretic, Western Poison, Southern Emperor, Northern Beggar and Central Divinity. Central Divinity Elder Chongyang had passed away long ago, Eastern Heretic Island Master Huang does as he pleases by himself, Western Poison does not belong to our group; Southern Emperor is far away in Dali and is not a Song citizen. Only Northern Beggar senior Hong Lao can be the Chancellor of all the heroes here.” Hong Qigong is one of Wulin’s most eminent men, everyone agreed to this and started to clap, no one had any other suggestions.

A voice from the crowd said, “Of course Chief Hong Lao can be the Chancellor of the heroes here. Apart from him, is there another who is as skilled, as revered and has the ability to take on such an important position?”

The voice was clear; everyone looked in the direction of the voice but didn’t see anyone. Actually, it was a very short person who had spoke out and was covered by the others around him. Someone asked, “Who said that?” The short man leaped on the table. He was about three feet tall, over forty years of age; his face exuded a serious air. A few of the crowd knew that he was a good man of Jiangxi, ‘Short Lion’ Lei Meng. The crowd wanted to laugh but when they saw his fierce eyes, they swallowed their laughter.

They heard him continue, “But Chief Hong Lao goes and comes as he pleases; over the last ten years he has only shown himself once. But when we discuss the important matter of defending against the enemy, but have no way to call on him, what should we do then?”

Everyone thought, “What he said does make sense.”

Lei Meng said, “Everything we are doing today is for protecting our country, not for ourselves. We will elect a Vice Chancellor; since Chancellor Hong Lao is roaming around the lands, we will follow the Vice Chancellor’s orders.”

In the midst of shouts and applause, someone called out, “Guo Jing Hero Guo!” Someone else called out, “Chief Lu is the best candidate.” Another person said, “The previous Beggar Clan chief is wise and clever, and she is the disciple of Chief Hong Lao, I elect Chief Huang.” Someone called out, “Let the present Master Lu...” Another one called out, “The Quanzhen sect leader Ma Yu. The “Eternal Spring” Elder Qiu...” Everyone discussed this. In this chaos, four people quickly entered the main hall; it was Hao Datong, Sun Bu’Er, Zhao Zhijing and Yin Zhiping.

When Yang Guo saw they had returned he thought, “Huh, you want to go another round with me?” Guo Jing and Lu Guanying were delighted; they left their table to meet them. The Quanzhen sect is famous for its orthodox martial arts, if there were not any skilled fighters from Quanzhen attending today’s ‘Heroes Feast’, of course their reputation will be tarnished. Hao Datong whispered into Guo Jing’s ear, “There is an enemy coming to cause trouble, be careful. We have come back especially to bring this news.”

Guo Jing pondered, the “Blithe Elder” Hao Datong is one of the skilled fighters of Quanzhen, there aren’t many people in the world of Jianghu with better skills than him; he trembled slightly as he said these words, the enemy must be extremely powerful, he quietly asked, “Ouyang Feng?”

Hao Datong said, “No, it is the Mongol that I’ve suffered from before.”

Guo Jing searched his mind and nodded, “Its Prince Huo Dou?” Before Hao Datong could reply, the sound of a horn blowing was heard outside.

Lu Guanying called out, “Greet the guest!” As soon as he finished, tens of people short and tall stood at the front of the hall.

There many heroes that were eating and drinking happily in the hall and all were slightly surprised when they saw these people suddenly enter, but they assumed that these people had come to attend the ‘Heroes Feast’. They didn’t see anyone they knew and didn’t take much notice.

Guo Jing passed on this news to Huang Rong, the both of them stood up and along with the Lu couple, they went out to meet the visitors. Guo Jing knew the elegant and prosperous looking Mongolian Prince Huo Dou; the sharp faced and skinny Tibetan monk was Huo Dou’s apprentice brother Da’erba. Guo Jing had met the two before; though the two were extremely good fighters, their skills were below his, there was no need for him to be alarmed. He the saw the two standing away from each other, a person in a red gown walked forward; the person was extremely tall and skinny. It was a Tibetan monk who looked like a bamboo tree; there was a groove on his head, like a plate. Guo Jing and Huang Rong glanced at each other. Huang Yaoshi had told them about the martial arts of the secret school of western Tibet before. When one has reached an extremely high level, the person’s head will have a groove. This person has a very deep groove; could it be that this person’s skills are extremely high? How come they had never heard about such a highly skilled fighter from the Western Tibet Jianghu world? The both of them were on guard. They bowed to greet the visitors at the same time.

Guo Jing said, “Everyone has come from afar, come in and have a few drinks.” He knew that they were the enemy and didn’t use any fake pleasantries. Lu Guanying ordered his servants to set up another table. The Wu brothers have always helped their Master and Master’s wife in general affairs. They directed the servants and arranged for a table to be placed at the best position. They kept on apologizing to the guests as they did this and asked them to move their seats.

Guo Fu saw Yang Guo was sitting there comfortably without moving; she didn’t like this one bit and thought, “You count as a hero? When all the world’s heroes die, it still won’t be your turn.” She made a signal to Wu Xiuwen with her eyes and then mouthed in the direction of Yang Guo. Wu Xiuwen understood, he went over to Yang Guo and said, “Brother Yang, you need to move your seat a little.” He didn’t wait for his reaction and instructed the servants to move his cup and chopsticks to the table in the furthest corner in the room. Yang Guo’s temper started to flare up, but he didn’t say anything and just chuckled to himself.

Prince Huo Dou said to the tall Tibetan monk, “Master, I’ll introduce you to the two most famous heroes in the central plains.”

Guo Jing was alarmed, “So he’s the Mongolian Prince’s master.”

The monk nodded, his eyes seemed to be open but also appeared to be closed. Prince Huo Dou said, “That person has been Mongolia’s Western Levy Right General Guo Jing... Hero Guo, and that is Mrs. Guo, she is the Beggar Clan’s Chief Huang.”

When the monk heard the words ‘Mongolia’s Western Levy Right General’ he suddenly opened his eyes and looked around, He took a look at Guo Jing’s face and then his eyes half closed again, he didn’t take the Beggar Clan’s Chief to heart.

Prince Huo Dou said clearly, “This is my mentor, the holy monk of Western Tibet; everyone calls him Jinlun Fawang. The reigning Mongolian Queen has assigned him the title of the First Protector of Mongolia.” Those words were said very clearly; all the heroes that were present heard everything he said. The crowd was stunned and looked at each other thinking, “We are here discussing the Mongols invading the South, where on earth did this Protector of Mongolia come from?”

Yang Guo was even more alarmed, he remembered how Hong Qigong and his Godfather praised the kung fu the ‘Five Clowns of the Tibetan Border’, calling it terrific. They told them to tell their Grandmaster to come down and have a duel. Right now both Jinlun Fawang and the master of the ‘Five Clowns of the Tibetan Border’ Da’erba

are here, while his Godfather and Hong Qigong have both passed away, he was sad. He knew that this tall and skinny Tibetan monk must be extraordinary.

Guo Jing didn't know how to confront these people, he just said calmly, "You have come from afar, please have a few drinks."

After three rounds of wine, Prince Huo Dou stood up and opened his fan, revealing a delicate and beautiful peony flower; he said with a clear voice, "We have not received a 'Heroes' invitation but we have come here to attend the 'Heroes Feast'. We are uninvited guests, but when I considered all the worthy and admirable people that would be gathered here, I had to take the risk. The gathering of the world's heroes is a rare event. In my opinion, a chancellor needs to be elected who will organize the Wulin world in the interests of the worlds' heroes, what does everyone think?"

'Short Lion' Lei Meng said loudly, "What you said is not wrong. We have already elected the Beggar Clan's Chief Hong Lao as our chancellor, now we are in the middle of the electing a vice chancellor, what are your views?"

Huo Dou chuckled, "Hong Qigong had passed away a long time ago. By electing a spirit as a chancellor, do you treat us all as dead people?" As he said this, all the heroes made a clamor, the Beggar Clan members were especially angry, all were shouting.

Huo Dou said, "Fine, if Hong Qigong isn't dead, then please invite him here."

Lu Youjiao raised the Dog Beating Stick twice and said, "Chief Hong Lao is roaming the world; he never stays in one place. How can you see him so easily?"

Huo Dou chuckled, "Without mentioning the fact that it isn't clear whether Hong Qigong is alive or dead, and even if he was alive and were sitting here, with his martial arts and virtue, how could he compare with my master Jinlun Fawang?" All the heroes of the world listened. "Apart from my master Jinlun Fawang; there isn't a second person who can take the position of the Chancellor of Wulin."

When the crowd heard these words, they all knew the reason these people had come here. They knew that the 'Heroes Feast' would not be in the best interests of Mongolia and so came here to compete for the place of Wulin's Chancellor. If Jinlun Fawang manages to take the place of Chancellor by virtue of his kung fu, the heroes of the central plains will of course ignore his orders. But the Han defensive force against the Mongols would have been severely weakened.

Everyone knew that Huang Rong was wise and ingenious; they all turned their heads and looked at her, thinking, “Even if these people’s kung fu was a lot stronger, they will never be a match for the few thousands of us that are here. Whether it is one on one or a mass brawl, we won’t lose. Everyone just listen to Chief Huang’s instructions.”

Huang Rong knew that today’s matters would not be settled unless martial arts were used. A mass brawl will of course result in victory but the opposition will not be convinced. She said clearly, “Right now, all the heroes here have elected Hong Qigong to be the Chancellor of Wulin. This Mongolian gentleman has another suggestion and wants to elect a person that no one here has heard of or seen; someone called Jinlun Fawang. If Hong Qigong were here, then they both could show their divine skills and duel to a result, but senior is roaming the world and enjoying life. Killing Mongols and getting rid of our country’s traitors, he didn’t predict that today you would come here by your own choice. He isn’t here to greet you; when he hears of this news later on, he would definitely regret his absence. Luckily, Hong Qigong and Jinlun Fawang both have disciples, why don’t we let the disciples represent their masters in this exchange?”

Most of the heroes of the central plains knew that Guo Jing’s skills were terrifyingly good and now in the prime of his life, he could be said to be the world’s number one fighter. Even if Hong Qigong came out right now, he might not be stronger than him. If he fights with the disciple of Jinlun Fawang, victory is certain, there is no way for him lose. Everyone called out and shouted loudly, shaking the tiles of the roof. When those in the side halls and back hall heard this news, they all rushed over. The front and back courtyard, the entrances to the room were full of people, everyone calling out to help enforce this suggestion. The numbers on Jinlun Fawang’s side were small, their voices could not compete.

Years ago, Huo Dou had been defeated by Guo Jing in one stance. He thought that Guo Jing was a disciple of Quanzhen’s sect; after that he looked into who he was and found out about his background. His apprentice brother Da’erba and he were afraid that even if the two of them went up at once, they would most probably lose to this disciple of Hong Qigong, Hero Guo. But if they didn’t follow Huang Rong’s suggestion, they would not be able to challenge for the position of Wulin’s Chancellor. This change of events really was unexpected and they couldn’t think of a way to respond.

Jinlun Fawang said, “Fine, Huo Dou, go ahead and compete with the disciple of Hong Qigong.” Those words were extremely heavy, he said this all in one breath without a need to breathe in again. He had always lived in Western Tibet and thought that with Huo Dou’s martial arts, he would have little competition in the central plains. The only people that he wouldn’t be able to beat are the likes of seniors such as Northern Beggar,

Eastern Heretic, and Western Poison. He didn't know that he had lost to Guo Jing before.

Huo Dou agreed but then quietly said, "Master, that disciple of Hong Qigong is amazing, this disciple is afraid that he will not be able to achieve victory. I do not want to tarnish Master's name."

Jinlun Fawang's face sank, and said, "Could it be that you can't beat someone else's disciple? Go now."

Hou Dou was in a very embarrassing situation; he had kept the matter of losing to Guo Jing away from his master. Right now he didn't dare to tell him about it in this final moment. He knew that his master has the ability to go through heaven and penetrate earth; he had no match under heaven. He thought that all that they had to do was to hurry to the 'Heroes Feast' and the position of Wulin's Chancellor will be in their hands. How could he have guessed that he would have to fight with Guo Jing? In this urgent situation, a fat man dressed in the clothes of a Mongolian official went over to him and whispered a few words into his ear. As soon as Huo Dou heard this he was delighted, he stood up and opened his fan, fluttering it a few times before he said clearly, "I have heard that the Beggar Clan has a treasured martial art, its called the "Dog Beating Stick Technique" or something; it is Chief Hong Lao's most powerful skill. Little Prince is brazen; I'll rely on my fan to break this skill. If I break this skill, then it appears the martial arts of Hong Qigong are merely mediocre!"

At first, when Huang Rong saw someone whispering into Huo Dou's ear, she didn't take it to heart; suddenly she heard him mentioning the "Dog Beating Stick Technique". In just a few words he had placed their most powerful fighter Guo Jing to one side; who exactly came up with this plan? She took a look at that Mongolian and then it became clear; she recognized that it was one of four elders of the Beggar Clan Elder Peng. So he has gone over to the Mongols; he is now wearing Mongolian clothes and has grown a beard. His hat hung down, covering his eyes and if she hadn't studied him carefully, she would not have been able to recognize him. Only he would know that the "Dog Beating Stick Technique" is passed on from chief to chief only; though Guo Jing's skills are high, he doesn't know this set of kung fu. These words were deliberately aimed to challenge Huang Rong and Lu Youjiao.

Lu Youjiao had just started to learn the "Dog Beating Stick Technique", his understanding is limited and may not be able to use it; she herself will have to fight.

Guo Jing knew that his wife's "Dog Beating Stick Technique" is ingenious; it would be able to beat Huo Dou. But in the past few months, her baby's chi had moved, her body was not in tune, she cannot fight with someone else; so he got out of his seat and stood between the tables and said, "Chief Hong Lao has never used his "Dog Beating Stick Technique", come and experience his "Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms".

Jinlun Fawang's eyes half opened and half closed, he saw Guo Jing moving out of his seat and standing up, he had an extraordinary air about him. He couldn't stop himself from being secretly alarmed, "This person really is extraordinary."

Huo Dou laughed and said, "At Chongyang Palace in Mount Zhongnan, we met once before; that day, you said that you are under the tutelage of Ma Yu, Qiu Chu Ji and the other Taoists; why are you now calling yourself a disciple of Hong Qigong's?"

Guo Jing was about to reply when Huo Dou continued, "A person having many masters is a common thing. Today, it is an exchange of kung fu between Jinlun Fawang and Hong Qigong; though your kung fu is great, your skills come from a variety of schools, you cannot show Hong Qigong's real abilities."

His argument made some sense; Guo Jing was clumsy with words and had no way to rebuke.

The crowd all called out, "If you've got guts, then fight with hero Guo, if you haven't scurry away with your tail hanging behind you." "Hero Guo is Hong Qigong's disciple, if he doesn't qualify, then who can represent Hong Qigong?" "First suffer under the "Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms", you'll still have time to experience the "Dog Beating Stick Technique".

Huo Dou laughed towards the sky, as he laughed he circulated his internal energy, 'ha' 'ha' 'ha' 'ha', 'he' 'he' 'he' 'he'; he drowned out the clamor made by the heroes; his voice shaking the flames of the candles in the hall. The heroes looked at each other, their faces losing color, they thought, "Who would have thought that such a young man, who looks like a well to do person, have such strong internal energy." In a flash, it had become quiet.

Huo Dou said to Jinlun Fawang, "Master, we have allowed ourselves to be wronged by these people. At first, when we heard that today is the 'Heroes Feast', we rushed to attend from thousands of li away, but who knew that these people are cowards. Let's go quickly, if you unluckily become the Chancellor of these people, it'll make our people

say that you are in the same league as these people, won't that tarnish your great name?"

The heroes all knew that he was trying to anger them, wanting to force Huang Rong to come out and battle; but his words were extremely infuriating, it really was difficult for anyone to endure them.

In the midst of these shouts and calls from the crowd, Lu Youjiao showed his bamboo stick and walked forward, standing between the tables. He said, "I am the newly appointed Beggar Clan Chief Lu Youjiao, I have only learnt less than ten percent of the "Dog Beating Stick Technique", I actually shouldn't use it. But if you insist on tasting the pain of the "Dog Beating Stick Technique", I'll beat you with a few stances."

Lu Youjiao's martial arts was already profound, though he hadn't learned all of the "Dog Beating Stick Technique", it had improved his martial arts a significant level. He saw that Huo Dou was around thirty years of age; he thought that even with a great teacher, his internal energy will not be profound. He saw that Huang Rong wasn't well, whether he wins or loses, he couldn't let her take the risk.

Huo Dou just wanted to ensure that he would not have to fight Guo Jing; he wasn't afraid of anyone else and immediately held his hand and bowed, he said, "Chief Lu, nice to meet you. There's no one better to exchange moves with than you."

Huang Rong was secretly anxious, but she remembered that Lu Youjiao was the newly appointed chief; since he had made the challenge she couldn't stop him. Otherwise she will question Lu Youjiao's clout and show that her power is above the chief's; she had to allow him to fight for a while and then decide what to do afterwards.

The managers of the Lu Manor instructed the servants to move the tables, creating seven or eight tables' worth of space and added more red candles, lighting up the centre of the hall as if it were daytime.

Huo Dou called out, "Ready!" As he said this his fan swept across, a gust of wind threw itself towards Lu Youjiao, carrying a slight fragrance. Lu Youjiao was afraid that the wind carried poison and quickly darted out of the way of the wind. Huo Dou's fan waved out, a 'ca' sound was heard; the fan folded and formed an eight-inch long pressure point sealing stick, and was thrust towards the enemy's side. Lu Youjiao's bamboo stick went forward, he ignored the threat of having his pressure point sealed and used the 'coil' formulae to trip and lift. The "Dog Beating Stick Technique" really was extremely ingenious, its direction is extremely difficult to predict; Huo Dou lightly leapt

up to avoid this but he couldn't have guessed that the stick would suddenly flip up fiercely and would hit his lower leg. He stumbled, leaped forward three steps and stopped himself from falling down.

The watching heroes all cheered and called out, "The dog's been hit!" "This will teach you the power of the "Dog Beating Stick Technique"!"

Huo Dou's face turned red immediately after this, he gracefully turned around and threw out a left palm. Lu Youjiao kicked out his left leg and swept with bamboo stick, the stick was in a flying dance, it kept on changing without stop.

Huo Dou was secretly alarmed, "The "Dog Beating Stick Technique" does live up to its name!" He concentrated and used all his strength with the fan in his right hand and palm with his left. Lu Youjiao has yet to complete the final stage of the stick technique, he had victory in his grasp many times but in the end it was a waste of his efforts. Guo Jing and Huang Rong watched from the side and kept on saying to themselves, "What a pity!"

After another ten stances or so, the weaknesses in Lu Youjiao's "Dog Beating Stick Technique" began to show themselves. Yang Guo saw every stance clearly and couldn't stop himself from frowning. Luckily the "Dog Beating Stick Technique" name is famous, and as soon as it was used, Huo Dou was struck in the lower leg. Huo Dou was worried and didn't dare get too close, otherwise Lu Youjiao would have lost long ago. Huang Rong saw that something was wrong and was about to call out and tell Lu Youjiao to come back when Lu Youjiao suddenly used a stance of "Hitting the Dog's Back from the Side", the bamboo stick flashed across and struck Huo Dou's left cheek. But his stance was too heavy; the lightness of the skill was lost. Huo Dou suddenly stretched out his hand and held the bamboo stick in his hand, he had no more worries and suddenly threw out a palm that struck Lu Youjiao in the chest and then followed it by a sweep, a 'ka la' sound was heard as Lu Youjiao's leg was broken. He spat out a pool of blood as he fell forwards. Two seven band members dashed forward to support him. When everyone saw how ruthless Huo Dou was, they were extremely angry and they all shouted and cursed.

Huo Dou displayed the gem green jade bamboo stick; he was proud of himself and said, "The Beggar Clan's treasure is the Dog Beating Stick, so it's nothing more than this." He wanted to insult the central plain's largest heroic clan. He held the Dog Beating Stick in his two hands and wanted to snap it in half.

Suddenly a green image flashed, an elegant and beautiful young woman stood in front of him, she said, “Wait!” It was Huang Rong.

Huo Dou saw that her movements were extremely fast and was in shock, all he could say was, “You...” Her left hand swept across and her right hand scoured across his eyes. Huo Dou quickly stretched his arm out but by that time, Huang Rong had already snatched the Dog Beating Stick back. This stance of snatching the stick back is called, “Snatching the Stick from the Dog’s Mouth” and is one of the extremely advanced stances of the “Dog Beating Stick Technique”. Years ago at the Mount Jun Beggar Clan gathering, Huang Rong used this technique to snatch the Dog Beating Stick away from Yang Kang three times. The changes of this stance are extremely mysterious; when snatching the stick in a hundred ways there would be one hundred successes, even a stronger opponent cannot avoid this.

All the heroes cheered. Huang Rong returned to her seat with the Dog Beating Stick by her side, leaving Huo Dou in the middle of the room in an embarrassing situation. Though his martial arts were profound, he couldn’t explain how Huang Rong snatched the stick away, he thought, “Could it be that this woman knows how to perform illusions?” He heard the onlookers ridiculing him; he glanced at his master and saw his face was not pleased. He thought that such a beautiful woman must have limited abilities so he called out, “Chief Huang, I have handed the Dog Beating Stick back to you, please come and exchange a few moves. You won’t dare turn this invitation down will you?” As soon as he said this, indeed there were people who thought that it wasn’t Huang Rong who had snatched back the Dog Beating Stick, but it was Huo Dou who handed it back to her so they can duel. Only people with high martial arts could see that it was Huang Rong who had used force to take the Dog Beating Stick back.

When Guo Fu heard these words she was extremely angry, in her life she had never seen anyone who dared treat her mother with such disrespect. A ‘shua’ sound was heard as she took out her precious sword. Wu Xiuwen said, “Sister Fu, I’ll help you vent your anger.” Wu Dunru also had the same thought, the two of them leapt into the heart of the main hall at the same time.

One of them said, “My Master’s wife’s body is very precious.”

The other one said, “How can she fight with a ruffian like you.”

The other said, “First experience little Master’s kung fu first before doing anything else.”

Huo Dou saw that the two were young but their movements were steady, they have been taught by famous masters, he thought, “We have come here today to show off our martial arts and break the spirits of the Han martial artists, fighting a few more rounds will be great. But there are many of them and few of us, if we induce a brawl, things would be hard to handle.” So he said, “All the world’s heroes listen, these two little punks want to duel with me, if I do fight then I’m afraid that people will say I’m bullying them. If I don’t I’m afraid that people will think that I’m afraid of them. Let’s do it this way, we will agree to compete for three rounds, whichever side wins two rounds, then the place of Chancellor goes to them. The fight between Elder Lu and me does not count, we will start again. Does everyone agree?” Those words were said with his status in mind, displaying his great generosity.

Guo Jing, Huang Rong and all the special guests discussed this quietly; they felt that it would be difficult to reject this suggestion. Today, apart from Huang Rong who cannot come out and fight, the strongest people here are Guo Jing, Hao Datong and Reverend Yideng’s fourth disciple Zhu Ziliu. Zhu Ziliu is a citizen of Dali but he still had ties to this matter. Dali and Song depended on each other, and in the recent years Dali has suffered the oppression of Mongols; it could be said that they shared the same enemy. Never mind the fact that he had a very good friendship with the Guo couple, he was duty bound to help. They decided that Zhu Ziliu would battle with Huo Dou in the first round, Hao Datong with Da’erba in the second, Guo Jing and Jinlun Fawang in the final round. Whether or not this plan would assure victory was uncertain; suppose Jinlun Fawang’s martial arts are so high that even Guo Jing can’t withstand him. It wouldn’t be inconceivable that they would lose all three rounds, and if that happens they would really have suffered a crushing defeat. Before the decision was definite, Huang Rong suddenly said, “I have a way to guarantee victory.”

Guo Jing was delighted and was just about to ask her when suddenly wind sounds created by weapons could be heard, everyone turned their heads and saw the Wu brothers using their long swords fighting with Huo Dou and his fan. The Guo couple and the disciples of Reverend Yideng Diancang Yuyin and Zhu Ziliu were worried about their safety so all of them concentrated on the battle.

The Wu brothers heard Huo Dou was rude towards them in his words, calling them little punks, these words were heard by everyone, how could they live this down? Never mind the fact that they just saw their Master’s wife snatch the bamboo stick back from him. They thought that although he beat Lu Youjiao, it was because Lu Youjiao’s kung fu wasn’t up to scratch, not because that this person is terrific. They also thought that since they both had been taught great martial arts by Guo Jing, if one of them can’t beat him the two of them will definitely be able to overcome him. They didn’t care about

competing over three or four rounds, they really were like newborn calves that were not afraid of tigers, the brothers signaled with their eyes and thrust out their swords together.

However, though Guo Jing's martial arts were high, he had yet to pass on most of his skills to his disciples. He himself understood the theories of advanced martial arts but when he was passing it on, he wasn't able to express clearly its meanings. The Wu brother's natural endowments were just average to normal, how much could they learn in just a few years? In just a few moves, their long swords were controlled by Hou Dou; they were unable to use them fully. Hou Dou wanted to show off in front of these people, he saw Wu Xiuwen's sword coming in and threw up his left index finger holding up the sword on the flat side, the fan waved across and the base struck the top of the blade, a 'zheng' sound was heard as the sword snapped in two. The Wu brothers were shocked, Wu Xiuwen quickly leapt out of the way, Wu Dunru was afraid that his brother would be hurt so he extended his sword towards Huo Dou's back forcing him to stop his attack. Huo Dou had predicted this move, he didn't turn back and folded his fan sending it backwards. The two weapons met, the fan hitting against the flat side of the sword, Huo Dou twisted his fingers around twice. Only his fingers moved but the Wu Dunru's sword followed the fan in turning around, his joints would definitely twist out of place if he didn't let go. He could only loosen his hand and let go of the sword. He leapt back and saw the sword flying upwards, the sword glimmered in the candlelight before it fell down to the floor.

The Wu brothers were shocked and angry, although they were empty handed they were not afraid. Wu Dunru's left hand hung horizontally in the air, holding the position of a stance of "Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms". Wu Xiuwen's right hand hung down, his left index finger slightly crooked; as soon as the enemy attacks he would use the "Solitary Yang Finger".

Hou Dou saw that these stances looked serious, he was wary and didn't dare to look lightly upon them, he thought, "Winning up to this point is enough, there is no need to refuse something good, asking for more is not in my interests." The "Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms" and "Solitary Yang Finger" are first class skills in the world of martial arts, though the Wu brothers' internal energy was weak, the stances they put out were perfect. When normal people saw it they didn't think much of it, but in the trained eyes of Huo Dou, he knew that it wasn't that simple, he laughed and then bowed with his hands, he said, "Please sit down, we are just trying to find a winner, not fighting to the death." His tone sounded a lot more polite.

The Wu brothers' faces showed signs of embarrassment; they knew that fighting empty handed with him will most probably result in an even more embarrassing defeat. The two of them hung their heads with a gloomy expression and retreated to the side, but not going back to where Guo Fu was. Guo Fu dashed forward and called out, "Wu Brothers, the three of us will go up and fight him again." The crowd looked on. Guo Fu's right hand held her sword and her left hand waved out, she said, "We three, apprentice brother and sister, will go up together."

Guo Jing shouted, "Fu'er, stop making trouble!" Guo Jing was the person that Guo Fu most feared; she could only retreat a few steps and stare angrily at Huo Dou. Huo Dou saw that she was beautiful and desirable, he laughed as he nodded his head. Guo Fu gave him a glance and turned her head away, ignoring him. The Wu brothers were really frightened that Guo Fu would ridicule them, now they saw her shielding them, showing care for them, they felt great comfort in their hearts.

Huo Dou opened his fan and fluttered it a few times and then said, "Of course that last battle does not count. Hero Guo, the three people from our side will be my master, my apprentice brother and I. My kung fu is the weakest; I'll be in the first round. Who have you elected to fight? Whoever wins or loses, it is now not a game."

Guo Jing heard that his wife had a plan for a guaranteed victory; he knew that she was cunning and intelligent and had hundreds of ideas. Though he didn't know what ingenious plan she had in mind he had great confidence in her and said loudly, "Fine, we will decide this over three rounds."

Huo Dou knew that the strongest person on the opposite side was Guo Jing, his master has no match on earth, he will definitely beat him. Though Huang Rong used a strange move to take the stick back, judging from her delicate and apprehensive appearance if she really fought she may not be that strong. The others don't even need any consideration, his eyes swept across the crowd and then said, "If anyone has another suggestion then please express it now. Once victory is decided, then the orders of the Wulin Chancellor must be followed."

The heroes wanted to agree but they had seen him defeat Lu Youjiao and the Wu brothers one after the other sparingly; they didn't know what other abilities he hadn't shown yet, none of them dared to interrupt and all turned their heads towards the Guo couple. Huang Rong said, "You are competing in the first round, your apprentice brother in the second, your master in the third, that's decided and won't change right?"

Huo Dou said, "That is correct."

Huang Rong said quietly to those around her, “Our victory is assured.”

Guo Jing said, “How?”

Huang Rong said quietly, “Now, the king wins when the third class ‘si’ (team of four horses) competes against his first class ‘si’.” After she said this she looked at Zhu Ziliu. Zhu Ziliu laughed as he continued quietly, “Beat the king by using first class ‘si’ against his second class ‘si’; beat the king by using middle class ‘si’ against his third class ‘si’.” The result of these races was that Tain Ji lost the first one but won the last two and received a thousand gold bars from the king.” Guo Jing looked blank; he didn’t understand what they were talking about. Huang Rong whispered into his ear and said, “You’re well versed in military techniques, have you forgotten the ingenious plan of the ancestor of military strategies Sun Bin?”

Guo Jing immediately remembered the times when he read ‘Wu Mu Yi Shu’ (a book containing military strategies) when he was younger; Huang Rong had told him a story; Qi’s general Tain Ji and the King of Qi had a horse race, the stake was a thousand gold bars. Sun Bin taught Tian Ji a method that would guarantee victory; use his third class horses to compete against the King of Qi’s first class horses, use his first class horses against King of Qi’s second class horses, use his second class horses against the king of Qi’s third class horses. The result was two wins and a loss, winning the thousand gold bars. Now, Huang Rong was using this idea.

Huang Rong said, “Apprentice brother Zhu, with your “Solitary Yang Finger”, beating that Mongolian Prince is not a hard thing to do.”

Years ago, Zhu Ziliu had been a lawyer and a governor in Dali; he was an educated and intelligent man. The martial arts of the school of the Mu Li Duan’s rely on one’s understanding. When Zhu Ziliu first entered the tutelage of the Southern Emperor, his kung fu was the worst out of the four disciples ‘Fisherman, Woodsman, Farmer, Scholar’; ten years later he moved up to second place, now his martial arts were much higher than his three older apprentice brothers. Reverend Yideng treated his four disciples equally, he taught them all the same kung fu; in the end it was Zhu Ziliu who had understood the most, especially the “Solitary Yang Finger”, he had refined it to a superb state. Right now his kung fu could not compare with Guo Jing, Ma Yu and Qiu Chu Ji but he was better than Wang Chuyi, Hao Datong and the others.

When Guo Jing heard his wife say this he interrupted, “Asking Taoist Hao to fight Jinlun Fawang may be a bit too risky. If the victory or loss won’t affect the overall result, then I’m afraid during that round the enemy might too be ruthless, it would be difficult to

defend against him.” He spoke frankly and didn’t care that he counted as the first class ‘si’, regarding Hao Datong as the third class ‘si’ may be a bit too impolite.

Hao Datong knew that this duel will affect the fate of the country; this was not the normal duels for fame that occurs frequently in the world of Wulin. If the position of the Chancellor of Wulin is taken by the Mongolian Protector, not only will the Han martial artists lose face, they will also lose their spirit. The goal of uniting together and fighting against the invaders will be unachievable, he said, “There is no need to worry about that, as long as it’ll help my country, losing my life to that Tibetan monk is not important.”

Huang Rong said, “All we need to do is to win the first two matches, then there will be no need for the third match.” Guo Jing was delighted and agreed.

Zhu Ziliu laughed and said, “I have an important mission; if I lost to that Mongolian Prince then I’d suffer a lifetime of insults from the world’s heroes.”

Huang Rong said, “There’s no need to be modest, please go ahead.”

Zhu Ziliu went to the middle of the hall and saluted Huo Dou with his hands and said, “In the first match, it will be me who’ll be asking for some advice. My surname is Zhu first names Ziliu; the things that I love most in life are poetry and literature, my kung fu is very coarse. I have come to request some pointers from you.” As he said this he searched himself, from his sleeve he took out a pen, he circled it a few times in the air, looking completely like a scholar.

Huo Dou thought, “These types of people will have profound skills, I cannot take it easy.” He held his fists and returned the greeting and said, “Little Prince requests pointers from senior, please show your weapon.”

Zhu Ziliu said, “Mongolians are a barbaric nation, they have yet to be enlightened, since you want some pointers, then I will point you in the right direction.”

Huo Dou was furious, “You insult my country; then I can’t spare you.” He opened his fan and said, “This is my weapon, are you going to use a saber or a sword?”

Zhu Ziliu wrote the word ‘pen’ in the air and laughed as he said, “In my life I have always been associated with a pen; how would I know how to use other weapons?”

Huo Dou concentrated on his pen, he saw the bamboo tube and the brush head, at the tip of the pen was half an inch of black ink, there was nothing special about it. It was completely different to the 'chun gang' pen that people in Wulin used for sealing pressure points, he was about to ask about it when a girl in white entered from outside.

She stood at the entrance of the hall, her eyes slowly scoured across the crowd; it was as if she was looking for someone. Everyone in the hall was concentrating on Zhu Ziliu and Huo Dou when the girl in white entered; they turned their heads involuntarily and looked at her. They saw her face was pale white as if she was ill; though the light of the candles was like red clouds, her face had no hint of blood in it, showing off her elegance even further, her beauty was incomparable. People use the phrase 'as beautiful as a goddess' to describe a girl's beauty but no one knew how beautiful a goddess was. As soon as these people saw this girl, they couldn't stop the words 'as beautiful as a goddess' from running through their minds. It was as if a light fog, a thin mist, surrounded her body; she appeared real but also looked like an illusion; she was not from this world.

As soon as Yang Guo saw this young girl, he was overjoyed, his chest felt like it had been struck by a metal hammer; he leapt from the corner of the room and hugged her, he called out, "Gu Gu, Gu Gu!" That young girl was Xiao Longnu.

After she left Yang Guo, she circled around the land a few times and then returned to the ancient tomb. Before she was eighteen, living in the ancient tomb was not hard for her, but after she met Yang Guo and experienced many twists and turns, she could never return to the way she was before, not caring about anything.

Every time she sat on the chilled jade bed to practice her martial arts she remembered that Yang Guo had slept on this bed; when she sat at the table eating she remembered the times when she ate with Yang Guo. After practicing kung fu for a little while she would become troubled and impatient, it was difficult to carry on. She spent over a month like this before she could endure it no longer; she decided to look for Yang Guo. She didn't know how she would treat him once she had found him. She didn't know anything about worldly matters, similar to a person from the mountains or wild lands, now something had suddenly changed and was unfamiliar, she was completely at a loss. After she left the mountain, everything that she saw was new to her; how would she know the roads, whenever she saw someone passing by she would ask, "Have you seen Yang Guo?" When she was hungry she would take other people's food because she didn't know that money was needed. She created a lot of trouble along the way. But when people saw that she was innocent and beautiful, they couldn't refrain from making her allowances; no one caused trouble for her. One day she heard two men talking

in a restaurant, they said that the famous heroes of the world will be going to Da Xingguan's 'Heroes Feast' at the Lu Manor. She thought that Yang Guo might be there so she found out how to get there and headed for the Lu manor.

Apart from Hao Datong, Yin Zhiping and Zhao Zhijing, no one amongst the two thousand present knew a thing about her; all they saw was that she was extremely beautiful, everyone's heart felt touched. Sun Bu'Er knew about this person but had never seen her before. Yin Zhiping's face was pale, his body trembled. Zhao Zhijing looked at him and chuckled. Guo Jing and Huang Rong were greatly surprised with how Yang Guo reacted to her. Xiao Longnu said, "Guo'er, indeed you are here, I've finally found you."

Tears flowed from Yang Guo's eyes as he choked, "You... you won't abandon me again will you?"

Xiao Longnu shook her head and said, "I don't know."

Yang Guo said, "Where ever you go I will follow." There were over a thousand people here in the main hall but the two acted as if no one else was there, talking naturally. Xiao Longnu held Yang Guo's hand, she didn't know whether she was happy or sad.

Though Huo Dou's heart was moved when he saw Xiao Longnu, he didn't know that this was the girl whose hand in marriage he was trying to get years ago at Mount Zhongnan. He saw that Yang Guo's garments were ragged and torn but the two of them looked very close, his heart was disgusted and he said, "We are dueling, go and find another place for this!"

Yang Guo was not in the mood to talk to him, he held Xiao Longnu's hand and went over to the side and they sat down shoulder to shoulder on the rock base of a pillar. His heart was bursting with joy. Huo Dou turned around and said to Zhu Ziliu, "Since you are not using a weapon, we'll fight with our fists."

Zhu Ziliu said, "Not so. We Chinese are a polite nation, not like the barbaric Mongols. In a treaty, one uses a pen to communicate; the enemy has a pen but no saber, so who needs a weapon?"

Huo Dou said, "Since it is like this, prepare!" He opened his fan and swept it across. Zhu Ziliu slanted his body, a step to the side and swung his head. His left hand swept lightly across himself, the pen in his right hand went towards Huo Dou's face. Huo Dou moved his head to avoid it; he saw the opponent's movements were light and his stances

strange. He didn't dare to attack, waiting to see through his kung fu clearly before making a decision.

Zhu Ziliu said, "The enemy's pen can sweep away a thousand soldiers, you need to be careful." As he said this the tip of the pen went forward. Huo Dou learned martial arts in Western Tibet, Jinlun Fawang was very knowledgeable, there was nothing he didn't know about the central plains' martial arts. When Huo Dou's training was drawing to a close, he decided to go to the central plains to make his name, and so Jinlun Fawang taught him how to defeat the proudest kung fu of the central plain's most famous sects. How could he know that he would meet up with Zhu Ziliu, the weapon he used was strange, his stances were unimaginably strange, he had never heard of such things. He saw the pen tip stroking across and hooking down; it was as if he was writing but the places where the pen was pointing were the places of the body's main pressure points.

Zhu Ziliu is the number one calligrapher of the northern sky, though he practices martial arts he hadn't stopped studying literature, in the end, the more he practiced his kung fu the further refined it became and eventually the two arts became connected to each other. The "Solitary Yang Finger" and calligraphy became one. This kung fu was his own invention; if the opponent was stronger but didn't have a background in literature, it would be extremely difficult for them to defend against this martial art. From literature and literature on martial arts came a kung fu where both literature and martial arts have reached an extremely advanced state. Luckily, Huo Dou has studied under a Han scholar when he was young, he had read books and recited poems, and was able to defend against this attack. He saw the tip of the pen flashing across, in the calligraphy was the aim of sealing pressure points, in the pressure point sealing was the aim of calligraphy. It was like a silver hook and metal scull, the strokes were swift and powerful and in the midst of this there was a leisurely and elegant air.

Guo Jing wasn't versed in literature, as he watched he thought this kung fu was extraordinary. Huang Rong's father taught her both martial arts and literature, when she saw this excellent kung fu, she couldn't stop herself from admiring and enjoying it. Guo Fu went over to her mother's side and asked, "Mother, he's holding that pen, stroking it here and there, what kind of game is that?"

Huang Rong was concentrating on the battle and just replied, "The Fang Xuan Ling Inscription."

Guo Fu didn't understand and asked, "What Fang Xuan Ling Inscription?" Huang Rong was absorbed in the battle and didn't reply.

The 'Fan Xuan Ling Inscription' is a work written by the Tang minister Chu Sui Liang, and it is also a refined calligraphy style. The people before them have judged Chu's book and likened it to 'a girl from heaven scattering flowers'; the calligraphy style was firm, graceful and elegant, concentrating on creating beauty, every stroke was airy, completely focusing on this aspect. Zhu Ziliu's "Solitary Yang Book Finger" uses a pen as the finger; every stance was measured and cautious, like a pen writing a book.

Though Huo Duo did not understand the intricacies of the "Solitary Yang Finger", at least he had read the 'Fan Xuan Ling Inscription' before, he knew that the horizontal stroke will be followed by a vertical stroke, he defended well, and he didn't show signs of losing. Zhu Ziliu saw that he knew this style of calligraphy; he called out and shouted, "Careful! A cursive calligraphy style is coming." Suddenly he took off his hat and shot it at him, his sleeve flew across the air, and he dashed forward madly, his stances not following the style. He looked as if he were mad, crazy, drunk, as if a spell was put on him, the pen's aim raining down, the finger moving like a dragon and snake. Guo Fu was startled and laughed as she asked, "Mother, has he gone mad?"

Huang Rong said, "If he drank three cups of wine then the pen would be even better." She picked up a wine pot and poured three cups, she called out, "Brother Zhu, drink three cups to further your enjoyment." The cup was in her left hand, the middle finger of her right hand flicked it, and the wine cup flew steadily across to him.

Zhu Ziliu raised his pen and brushed down, forcing Huo Dou to the side as he caught the cup, drinking it in one go. Huang Rong flicked the second and third cup over in the same way. Huo Dou saw the two of them offering wine in the battle, not even noticing that he was there, he wanted to wave his fan and knock the cups out of the air but Huang Rong followed Zhu Ziliu's pen's intent, she flicked out the cups in the gaps. Huo Dou was unable to knock them out of the air. Zhu Ziliu drank the three cups dry and called out, "Thank you. That is very handsome "Divine Flicking Finger" kung fu!"

Huang Rong laughed and said, "Very spirited 'Zi Yan Tie'!"

Zhu Ziliu gave a laugh and thought, "I have always thought that I am clever, but I am still a level below that girl. I have studied this skill diligently for over ten years; just one look and she saw through it."

The work that he was using now was Zhang Xu's 'Tie Yin Tie' of the Tang dynasty. Zhang Xu has been given the title of 'Cao Sheng', the saint of cursive calligraphy. Du Fu's poem 'The Song of the eight drinking Immortals' says; "Zhang Xu's three cups

passes onto Cao Sheng, the hat is removed showing his head in front of the king, the pen descending on the paper like a fog.”

Huang Rong offered him three cups firstly to acknowledge the class of kung fu he was using, secondly, once the influence of wine increases, the calligraphy will be even better, and lastly she wanted to dampen Huo Dou’s spirits. She then saw Zhu Ziliu write ‘The Bold Man Fights for the Road’, on the ‘road’ word, the pen hooked up and brushed across Huo Dou’s clothes. The heroes all laughed as Huo Dou retreated backwards.



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