

## Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

---

## SDXL Chapter 38



### **Chapter 38 – Life and Death Are Boundless**

*Translated by Foxs with excerpt by Athena*



*Suddenly he jumped up and ran toward the Heartbreaking Cliff. He stood in front of the carved letters, and loudly shouted, “This is your own handwriting. Why didn’t you keep your promise?” His voice was very loud, it echoed on the surrounding mountains, “Why didn’t you keep your promise? Why didn’t you keep your promise?...you keep your promise?...keep your promise?”*

When Guo Xiang saw Jinlun Fawang ruthlessly kill the Long Beard Ghost and the Big Head Ghost her heart was filled with sorrow; yet she knew it would be impossible to

get away from his vicious hands, so she said, “Quickly kill me, what are you waiting for?”

Fawang laughed, “Killing a cute girl like you is too easy. But I have killed two men, and that’s enough for today. I’ll deal with you after a few days. For now just follow me.” Guo Xiang knew fighting him would be futile, she thought she’d better follow him and wait for a good opportunity to escape. So she just made faces at him, stuck her tongue out and unhurriedly mounted the horse.

Fawang was very pleased, he silently thought, “The Emperor wanted to have Guo Jing’s life at all costs, but has never been able to succeed. Today I caught Guo Jing’s beloved daughter; he could be forced to surrender. If Guo Jing is not willing to surrender, we will just torture the girl below the city wall; that way Guo Jing’s mind will be disturbed so that Xiangyang’s defenses will be weakened.”

That evening they stopped by an empty house along their way. The people had left the area early on; all the villages were desolate. They were fortunate to find a house with its four walls intact. Jinlun Fawang gave his dried biscuits to Guo Xiang, and then let the girl sleep inside a room while he sat meditating in the main hall.

Guo Xiang was tossing and turning; how could she sleep well? Around midnight she heard Fawang’s snore, she took a peek and saw him sitting against the wall. She was delighted. Carefully she opened the window and snuck out. She then tore her robe into four pieces, with which she wrapped her horse’s hoofs. Then she walked her horse carefully away. After about half a ‘li’ (about ¼ km) she did not see Fawang following, so she mounted the horse and galloped to the northwest. She thought that when Fawang awoke; he would think Guo Xiang was running south, back to Xiangyang. The horse ran for about an hour then slowed down because of fatigue. She often looked back, still no Fawang in sight. She kept moving for about fifty or sixty li, and only then did she feel relieved.

Guo Xiang arrived at a little pathway going up a small hill. She followed that path going higher and higher. The path was turning in front of her, when, out of the blue, she heard somebody snoring very loudly like the rumble of thunder. She saw somebody was sleeping across the path in front of her and she almost fell off the horse’s back! It was Jinlun Fawang, with his baldhead and yellow robe. She turned her horse around and galloped downhill as fast as her horse could carry her, this time toward the southeast. She looked back and saw Fawang was still sleeping soundly.

A moment later she got to a small forest, with a lot of trees. Again, she was shocked! A man was hanging by his feet from a tree branch. Who else if not Jinlun Fawang? By now she was enraged. Jinlun Fawang was looking at her and laughed mockingly.

“If you want to capture me, just do it! Why would you play a crazy game like this?” she said. She charged her horse toward him, and suddenly swung her whip toward the monk’s face. Her horse leaped forward at the same time so that they passed the monk. Then she tried to pull her whip back, but she felt a strong force pulling her in the opposite direction; her body was lifted up from the saddle. When the whip was lashing toward Fawang, the monk opened his mouth and bit it, he then pulled the whip and Guo Xiang was pulled towards him.

Airborne, Guo Xiang did not panic; she saw Fawang stoop to snatch her, and deliberately let go of the whip so that she fell down. Fawang was shocked, he thought she was too weak to hold on to the whip and that’s why she fell. Immediately he jumped down and readied himself to catch her. “Watch out!” he said.

“Aiyo!” Guo Xiang pretended to be hurt. Her body was only two feet away from the monk. Suddenly she exerted her energy and threw both hands toward the monk’s chest in rapid succession. ‘Bang! Bang!’ Fawang fell down and looked to her like he’d fainted. Even though Fawang’s skill was high, he had not expected Guo Xiang would launch a sneak attack like that.

Guo Xiang was delighted; it was better than what she had expected. Quickly she lifted up a big rock to smash his baldhead. But she had never killed anybody in her life before. True, this monk had killed two of her friends, but still she did not have a heart to kill him. Finally she put the stone down, and thrust her fingers out to seal Fawang’s acupoints: ‘heavenly support’ [tian ding] on his neck, and ‘body pillar’ [shen zhu] on his back. Then she sealed ‘divine grace’ [shen feng] on his chest, ‘crystal cold abyss’ [qing leng yuan] on his arm, ‘windy city’ [feng shi] on his leg and few others. In one breath her hands moved rapidly, sealing a total of thirteen acupoints. She was not satisfied yet. She lifted four heavy stones, of about a dozen jins each, and placed them on top of Fawang’s body.

“Wicked man...Oh, wicked man!” she said, “Today your Miss does not want to kill you, but remember that you should repent and not hurt anybody anymore.” Then she mounted her horse ready to leave.

Jinlun Fawang suddenly opened up his eyes, looked at her and laughed, “Little Miss, you have a very kind heart,” he said, “This old monk likes you very much!”

While he was still talking, the four stones on his body suddenly flew up and fell crashing down with a loud noise, while the monk himself leaped up. Somehow he managed to unseal his own thirteen accupoints. Guo Xiang was so startled that she froze.

Fawang indeed was hit by Guo Xiang, but he wasn't injured. The martial arts level between them was like heaven and earth. Fawang only pretended to fall down and faint. He was curious as to what Guo Xiang would do to him. He let his accupoints be sealed and even let Guo Xiang place big stones on his body. He thought, "This child has a kind heart, much better than my two disciples. She is perfect." Right then and there he decided to take Guo Xiang as his disciple.

Jinlun Fawang had three disciples. His first disciple was well versed in martial arts and literature. He was very talented and Fawang had intended to make him his successor. It's a pity he died very young. His second disciple, Da'erba, was naïve and simple; his talent was just average. His third disciple was Prince Hou Dou; he had an ill character and moreover, he betrayed his master and martial brother. Fawang was disappointed. He had reached the pinnacle of martial arts. He was a monk, therefore, no children. The only way he could pass on his skill was by taking on disciples. If not, in a hundred years, wouldn't his exquisite martial arts vanish? Therefore, seeing Guo Xiang was talented and kind hearted, he immediately made a decision to take her as his successor. He did not care if Guo Xiang was his enemy's daughter. Wasn't she still young and innocent? He was certain that eventually he would be able to shape her character. Because of this thought he gave up his original plan of torturing Guo Xiang and disturbing Guo Jing's mind.

Guo Xiang stared at the monk. His eyes rolled, his mouth shut. She dismounted her horse and came near him.

"Old Monk," she said, "your skill is very high, it's a pity you have a wicked heart."

"If you admire my skill," said the monk, laughing, "take me as your master. I'll teach you everything I know."

"Pfft!" Guo Xiang snickered, "Why would I learn a Monk's skill? I don't want to be a nun!"

Fawang laughed. "How could learning my skills make you a nun?" he said, "You have sealed my accupoints, I unsealed them myself. You put stones on me, those stones flew up. You have run away riding a horse, but I could sleep in front of your horse! Don't you think all those skills are worth learning?"

Guo Xiang knew the monk was highly skilled, but she also knew he was ruthless. How could she take him as her master? Besides, she was busy looking for Yang Guo. She didn't want to waste any time chitchatting with the monk. So she shook her head.

"Even if you have a higher skill, I still don't want to take a wicked man like you as my master!" she honestly said.

"Uh, how would you know I am a wicked man?" asked Fawang.

"You easily killed the Long Beard Ghost and Big Head Ghost! They were not even your enemies, why did you kill them?"

Fawang laughed. "Don't take me wrong!" he said, "I was just helping you to get a horse. They were the ones who attacked me first! Didn't you see? If my skill was low, wouldn't I be dead at their hands? A monk has to have a benevolent heart; he would not kill if the situation were not pressing ..."

"Hmm!" Guo Xiang snickered. She didn't want to believe him. "What kind a person are you? If you were a good person, you would let me go."

"Didn't I let you go?" the monk countered. "You had a horse and you were free to go to the east or west. I was just sleeping on the road! I didn't even touch you!"

"If that's the case, then let me go looking for Brother Yang. Don't you say another word!" she said.

"Oh, I can't do that!" Fawang shook his head. "You have to take me as your master; you'll have to be under my tutelage for twenty years. After that, you are free to look for anybody you wish."

Guo Xiang was upset. "Old Monk, you don't have any manners! I don't want to take you as my master! Why do you force me?"

"You are the one who doesn't have any manners!" said the monk. "Where in the world could you find a highly skilled master like me? Although other people begged and kowtowed to me three hundred times, I did not take them as disciples. On the other hand, you have found a very good opportunity, a once in a thousand years opportunity, but you refused it. Aren't you the eccentric one?"

“Shameless! You are shameless!” Guo Xiang stuck her tongue out and put her fingers on her cheeks. “Who said you are a highly skilled master? You can’t even overcome me, a teenage girl. What’s wrong with you? Can you defeat my father and mother? Can you defeat my grandfather, the Old Master Huang? Let’s not talk about father or mother or grandfather, you can’t even defeat my Brother Yang Guo! Huh!”

“Who said that?” shouted Fawang. “Who said I couldn’t defeat that kid Yang Guo?”

“Everybody in the world did!” answered Guo Xiang. “Just a few days ago we had a Heroes Summit at Xiangyang. Everybody said that even three Jinlun Fawangs could not possibly defeat the one-armed Eagle Hero Yang Guo!”

Actually, Guo Xiang was just rambling on to provoke Fawang’s anger. The Heroes Summit only discussed the defense of Xiangyang and strategies to fight the Mongolians. Even if someone did actually mention Fawang and Yang Guo, how would she know? She wasn’t even in attendance. But her words were right on Fawang’s sore spot; the fact was, that more than ten years ago, Fawang was defeated by Yang Guo. Therefore, Fawang was livid!

“If Yang Guo were here,” he said loud and angry, “I would give him a lesson in the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’. I want him to suffer very badly, so that the world will know who is better, Yang Guo or me.”

“You know Yang Guo is not here, therefore you dare to boast!” said Guo Xiang, provokingly. “Do you have the guts to find him and fight? Your skill, the ‘Snake and Pig Clumsy Technique’... ”

“That’s the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’!” Fawang cut her off. He was so upset his ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’ became ‘Snake and Pig Clumsy Technique’ ... Of course he was furious.

“If you can beat Brother Yang Guo, then it is ‘Dragon and Elephant’,” said Guo Xiang. “Otherwise, if you are beaten in just one stance, you are no more than ‘Snake and Pig’! If you can defeat Brother Yang Guo, you won’t have to force me, I will come and beg you to be my master ... Only I know for sure that you are afraid to go and find Brother Yang. So let’s not waste our breath here! I am sure you will run with your tail between your legs as soon as you see even his shadow!”

Fawang was not stupid. He knew the girl was just trying to inflame his anger, but he was a proud man. The only disgrace in his life was his defeat by Yang Guo. Now that he

had mastered the tenth level of the 'Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique', fighting Yang Guo was at the top of his list. Therefore, hearing Guo Xiang, he said with confidence, "When I told you I knew where he was, I was just deceiving you. Too bad I don't know his whereabouts. If I did, I would certainly find him. I will beat him and make him kowtow to me begging for mercy!"

Guo Xiang clapped her hands, she laughed mockingly. "O monk, a liar monk!" she shouted. "You are boasting yourself as a valiant man with unmatched in skills; but as soon as you see Yang Guo come from the east, you will certainly run to the west!"

"Pei!" Fawang spat, seething with anger.

"Even though I have no idea where Brother Yang Guo is right now, I do know where he will be in about a month," said Guo Xiang.

"Where will he be?" asked Fawang.

"Why would I tell you? You are scared of him anyway! Forget it! It will only cause nightmares and your heart will be troubled."

Fawang was so angry that he gnashed his teeth. "Tell me ... tell me!" he barked.

"He is going to the Passionless Valley!" Guo Xiang explained. "He is going to the Broken Heart Cliff! He will meet with Xiao Longnu, his wife. One Yang Guo will scare the hell out of you; if he is with Xiao Longnu ... hey ... hey ... Ah old monk, why do you want to go to the Broken Heart Cliff just to be beaten to death?"

For more than ten years Fawang had trained his new skill, the 'Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique'. He wanted to test this new skill against the 'Jade Maiden Sword Technique' of the Yang-Long couple. He felt that his training was complete, at least enough to fight the couple. He had sworn not to set his foot on the central plains again if he could not defeat the couple. Therefore, Guo Xiang's speech was again on target. Out of anger he laughed.

"All right, fine. Let us leave for the Passionless Valley right now," he said, "but what if I can defeat both Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu?"

"If you really are any good, why wouldn't I take you as my master?" countered the girl. "Only thing is, the Passionless Valley is so remote and difficult to find ..."



“Don’t you worry!” laughed Fawang. “I know that place, I’ve been there. It’s still early; you follow me to the camp. I have some business to attend to. I’ll take you to the Passionless Valley afterward.”

Hearing this, Guo Xiang was relieved. She thought, “I was afraid you wouldn’t want to go. Now that you want to, why should I be worried? O monk, you may be arrogant, you may be highly skilled, but just wait till you meet Brother Yang!” Thus she followed the monk to the Mongolian camp without hesitation.

Fawang was determined to take Guo Xiang as his disciple; he wanted her to inherit all his skills. And since he had to win her heart first, he treated Guo Xiang with utmost courtesy and respect. It is difficult to find a good master in the martial world; but it is equally difficult to find a talented disciple. Along the way Fawang found out that Guo Xiang was really smart and talented, therefore, he was more and more delighted.

Guo Xiang often chided him for killing the Long Beard Ghost and the Big Head Ghost; but Fawang wasn’t unhappy, on the contrary, he praised her for having a benevolent heart, unlike his own ruthless Hou Dou.

Fawang took Guo Xiang to the Mongolian camp, the one where Khubilai – the Emperor’s cousin, was. It was the southern camp; while the one Yang Guo investigated was the northern one – where the Mengke Khan was. The two officials who were overheard by Ke Zhen’E spoke in general term, while Ke Zhen’E himself was not aware that there were two different camps. Thus Yang Guo’s search was in vain.

Actually Fawang and Guo Xiang left for the Passionless Valley not too long after Yang Guo, but because Yang Guo was in haste, the distance between them was more than a hundred li. This made Yang Guo arrive at the Passionless Valley a few days earlier than they did.

o0o

In Xiangyang, Guo Jing and Huang Rong were so worried about their daughter. They have dispatched dozens of Beggar Clan disciples to try to find her. They came back in a few days with a unanimous report: no trace of Guo Xiang.

After about ten days, Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang arrived in Xiangyang. They brought news from Ke Zhen’E that Guo Xiang was captured and brought to the Mongolian camp. Guo Jing and Huang Rong were very shocked! That night Huang Rong and Cheng Ying went to the enemy’s camp. But just like Yang Guo, they did not find any-

thing. On the third night they were sighted; which resulted in a battle with the Mongolian officers. They were surrounded by more than forty soldiers, but with their swords' help, they would escape and get back home to Xiangyang.

Huang Rong was baffled. She believed Guo Xiang was not inside the Mongolian camp. But since there was no other news, she became more worried than ever. She discussed this situation with Guo Jing. They decided since there was no sign of Mongolian troop movement yet, that Huang Rong should go and search for Guo Xiang. She would take their two white eagles, with the intention of using them as couriers later on.

Lu Wushuang and Cheng Ying immediately expressed their intentions of coming along with Huang Rong. She quickly agreed, since they would be valuable helpers. They came out of Xiangyang, went around the enemy's camp, and went northwest. Their destination was Fenglingdu. Huang Rong thought, "This time Xiang'er's intention is to find Yang Guo, and since they first met around a ferry crossing in Tongguan, perhaps we will find some clues around that place."

This journey took place in the winter. They proceeded slowly because they needed to ask people along the way about Guo Xiang. It was already toward the end of the second month when they finally arrived at Fenglingdu; the ice had already melted. There again they asked lots of people that might have seen Guo Xiang: the peddlers, cart drivers, restaurant workers, and anybody who would possibly see somebody fitting Guo Xiang's description. But so far the result was negative.

"Shi Jie (older martial sister), don't you worry," Cheng Ying tried to console Huang Rong. "Xiang'er is a very lucky girl. Just remember the day she was born; she was fought over by Jinlun Fawang and Li Mochou, both were the epitome of evil. Didn't somebody say that if someone survives a grave danger, one would be lucky all one's life? She was in grave danger then, and she survived. So I believe she will survive now."

Huang Rong sighed, but didn't say anything.

The three of them left Fenglingdu and headed out of town. The sun was shining, the weather was getting warmer, and they could feel the southerly breeze. Spring was coming. Cheng Ying was trying to entertain Huang Rong. She pointed to a flower bush and said, "Shi Jie, here in the north the spring comes much later. Just look at these peach blossom buds. Aren't they already blooming on the Peach Blossom Island? I think they may even have sprouted some fruits already." She picked a peach blossom, played with it and softly singing, "I ask the flower, but I have no answer. Why do flowers fall? Why

do they bloom? A third part for the spring, the other third float on the water, and the rest fall back to the earth ...”

Huang Rong gazed at Miss Cheng. She was beautiful, just like Huang Rong always remembered her. She recalled how Cheng Ying lived a quiet life and couldn't help but feeling sad for her. She was still daydreaming when suddenly her ears caught a buzzing noise. It was a big honey bee. It flew around the peach blossom in Cheng Ying's hand, and then landed on another flower, gathering nectar. That bee was gray and bigger than average bees. Suddenly a thought flashed in her mind.

“This bee looks like Xiao Longnu's Jade Bees. How come it is here?” she asked no one in particular.

“You are right,” said Wushuang. “Let us follow this bee. See where the beehive is ...”

That bee flew around the flower bushes, and finally flew toward the northwest. The three of them used their lightness kungfu to follow. The bee flew and landed on some other flowers along the way. Not too long afterwards they saw two other bees. Near dusk they arrived at a very beautiful valley. The trees were green and the mountains looked purple. It was a captivating scene. Toward the hillside there hung seven or eight beehives made of wood. Those three bees flew into one of the hives.

On the other side of the hill they saw three thatched huts. There were two small foxes playing around in front of the house, their eyes gazed toward the visitors. About that time the middle door swung open, and out came an old man with a very healthy countenance, his face so fresh like that of a young boy.

Seeing this old man, Huang Rong was thrilled. “Old Urchin, look who's here! Look here!”

That old man was indeed Zhou Botong. He lifted his head, laughing heartily and started running toward Huang Rong. But after only a few steps he stopped abruptly. He blushed, turned around and ran fast to the house; ‘bang!’ he slammed the door shut!

Huang Rong was surprised; she had no idea why he behaved peculiarly. She came to the door and banged it. “Old Urchin... Old Urchin!” she called, “There are guests coming from afar, why are you hiding?” Huang Rong kept banging the door, but Botong shouted, “No! I am not going to open the door!”

“Are you sure?” Huang Rong chuckled. “I am going to light a fire, I am going to burn your dog house down to ashes!”

Huang Rong was just shutting her mouth up when suddenly the door on the left opened, out came a smiling monk who said, “To this remote hill and quiet forest came honorable guests. The old monk welcomes you!”

Huang Rong turned around and saw Reverend Yideng was smiling sweetly, his hands clasped in respect. Quickly she came over and bowed to him.

“Ah, turns out the Venerable Monk and Old Urchin are neighbors!” she said, chuckling. “It really is beyond my expectations! But why did Old Urchin close his door and refuse to welcome his guests?”

Reverend Yideng laughed. “Don’t mind him!” he said, “Please come into my hut, I will serve you tea.”

Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang came and paid their respects, expressing their gratitude they went inside the Reverend’s hut.

Yideng immediately served them tea. Huang Rong asked of his well-being since the last time they met.

“Madam Guo, can you guess who lives in the other hut?” he asked, smiling.

Huang Rong thought for a moment. She wondered why the Old Urchin’s behavior was so strange. Then she laughed and recited this poem, ‘In the deepest of dawn’s cold, when the green spring grass ripples, standing face to face taking a bath wearing red clothes.’ Good! Very good!” The ‘In the deepest of dawn’s cold’ was part of ‘si zhang ji’ [four looms/weaving machines] poem written by Concubine Liu Yinggu many years ago.

Reverend Yideng laughed heartily. His heart was free; he did not concern himself with past matters. He clapped his hands and said, “Madam Guo is very smart, I did not expect you to guess correctly!” And then he walked to the door and called, “Yinggu, Yinggu, come over here, come meet our old friends!”

A moment later, Yinggu came over with a wooden tray in her hands, full with green fruits and honey.

Huang Rong and her company quickly bowed in respect, and then the five of them sat and talked happily. Didn't old acquaintances gather together?

Huang Rong was very happy. For a long, long time, the three were involved with love, hatred and revenge. But now Zhou Botong, Reverend Yideng and Yinggu had set aside their differences, opened their hearts and made peace with each other. They spent their sunset years living together in this beautiful valley, the 'Hundred-Flower Valley' [wan hua gu]. They became beekeepers, did some gardening, and even worked a rice field. But the Old Urchin was embarrassed, that was the reason he hid himself. Still, he could not resist listening to their conversation. He eavesdropped from his room. He heard Huang Rong's narration of the Heroes Summit at Xiangyang, the festivities, everything, until she came to the part where Prince Hou Dou's disguise was uncovered. She deliberately changed the subject and continued. Zhou Botong could not resist hearing everything. He opened his door and came barging in.

"And then what?" he asked impatiently, "Did Hou Dou run away?"

They laughed. The conversation became more and more animated!

That night the guests slept in Yinggu's hut. The next morning Huang Rong woke up early and went outside; she saw Zhou Botong was dancing around like crazy, a big bee in his hand.

"Hey, Old Urchin, what are you doing?" Huang Rong asked, chuckling. "You look extremely happy."

"Hey, Little Huang Rong, my skill is getting better by the day," came the answer, "Will you or won't you admire me?"

Huang Rong knew this old man very well; his two traits were: first, he loved to fool around; second, he was crazy about martial arts. After living alone in this remote area for more than ten years, it could be that he had improved his martial arts considerably, or it could be that he had invented some new and weird stances. She remembered his 'Mutual Hands Combat technique', 'Dividing One's Mind', 'Left Hand Fighting the Right Hand.' Hence she was laughing before she even answered his question.

"If you are talking about martial arts, I have always admired you since I was a child," she said. [Zhou Botong was held captive on Peach Blossom Island when Huang Rong was a baby,– see LOCH] "I admit inferiority. Why did you even mention it? I wonder what new and wonderful stances you have invented these past few years?"

But Botong shook his head. “Oh no... No!” he declined, “It was little Yang Guo who is crazy about martial arts these past few years. He has invented the ‘Melancholy Sad Palms’ [An Ran Xiao Hun Zhang], which put me to shame. Therefore, let’s not talk about martial arts.”

Secretly, Huang Rong was very impressed. “This kid Yang Guo is amazing,” she thought, “First it was Guo Xiang, a mere child. Now it is the Old Urchin, a veteran. Everybody praises him. I wonder what kind of kung fu “An Ran Xiao Hun Zhang” is?” Then she asked, “Well, you just said that your skill is getting better by the day. What kind of skill is that?”

Zhou Botong lifted up his hand – with the bee in it, high in the air. He looked so proud.

“This is my skill: keeping bees!” he said.

“Those bees were given to you by Xiao Longnu. What’s so special about it?” Huang Rong asked.

“This is the amazing part,” said the Old Urchin. “The Jade Bees given to me by Xiao Longnu were valuable creatures. After I took care of them, they become even more valuable, very rare, and second to none! This is amazing! How could Xiao Longnu be compared to me?”

Huang Rong laughed a big laugh! “Oh Old Urchin, you have become more shameless than ever!” she said. “This time you blew your own horn really loud. Your ego is unrivalled, very rare indeed! Now, THAT is second to none!”

Zhou Botong was not angry, he even chuckled. “Oh Little Huang Rong, let me ask you this: Human beings are the most intelligent creature; we can tattoo our own body, making pictures of dragons, tigers, or leopards. We can even tattoo a whole book, ‘Peace and Security under the Heaven’ [tian xia tai ping]. However, other than human beings; among the birds or the beasts or the bugs, are there any tattoos?”

“Yes, there are,” answered Huang Rong. “Tigers have stripes, leopards have spots, butterflies and snakes could be decorated with beautiful patterns.”

“But answer this,” continued Botong, “on the bugs, have you ever seen characters?”

“Are you talking about natural bugs?” Huang Rong asked. “If so, then the answer is no.”

“Good! Now let me show you this!” And he stretched his arm toward Huang Rong.

Huang Rong looked at the bee carefully. She saw that on the bee’s wings there were indeed characters! She looked closer, wanted to know what they said. There were three characters on the right wing, ‘Qing Valley’s bottom’ [Qing Gu Di] and another set of three characters on the left wing, ‘I am at Jue’ [Wo Cay Jue]. The characters were the size of a grain of rice, yet they were very clear. They looked like they were made with needles.

Huang Rong was amazed, she muttered, “Qing Gu Di, Wo Cay Jue, Qing Gu Di, Wo Cay Jue ... This obviously was not natural, someone must have written it. Considering the Old Urchin’s character, he would not have a patience to write these letters ... A moment later she said, “You said this is very rare, second to none. But I am sure you have asked Yinggu to tattoo these six characters! How could you fool me?”

Zhou Botong blushed. “You go and ask Yinggu!” he challenged. “You ask if it was she who tattooed the bee!”

“Don’t you think she will conspire with you and lie to me?” Huang Rong asked. “If you said the sun rises from the west, she would certainly say the same thing.”

“That’s a fact!” said the Old Urchin, “The sun indeed rises from the west. Who said it was from the east?” Even though he said that, his face turned redder. He was embarrassed, shy, and irritated at the same time. He let the bee go and grabbed Huang Rong’s hand.

“Come! Come! Come!” he said, “I will let you see it with your own eyes.”

He pulled Huang Rong to the side of the hill where a beehive was hung, separated from the other beehives. He stretched his arm into the beehive and caught two bees.

“Now, see this!” he said, showing the Jade Bees to her.

Huang Rong strained her eyes. She found both bees had the three-character sets on their wings. The characters also read, ‘Qing Gu Di’ on the right wing and ‘Wo Cay Jue’ on the left wing. She was more amazed. “This is really peculiar,” she thought. “I need to get to the bottom of this ...” So she said, “Old Urchin, please catch a few more bees for me!”

Zhou Botong caught four bees, two had characters just like the other, and the other two didn't have any. He showed them to Huang Rong who was silent and did not say that Yinggu tattooed the bees again.

"Now, what else do you have to say?" he asked, laughing heartily. "Today you see the Old Urchin's amazing skill!"

Huang Rong did not reply, she kept murmuring, "Qing Gu Di, Wo Cay Jue, Qing Gu Di, Wo Cay Jue ..." She was still pondering the sentence when suddenly a thought came to her mind, "Ah, it is: 'I am at the bottom of Passionless [Jue Qing] Valley' [Wo Cay Jue Qing Gu Di]. Who is at the bottom of the Passionless Valley? Could it be Xiang'er?" Her heart was beating faster. She turned her head to look at Zhou Botong, and said, "Old Urchin, these Jade Bees were not yours. They flew in from somewhere else!"

Again the Old Urchin blushed. "Ah, this is weird!" he shouted, "How did you know that?"

"Why wouldn't I know?" answered Huang Rong. "These few bees have been flying in for some time now."

"Actually, they have been flying here for a few years," said Botong, "but I never suspected it and never examined their wings. It was just a few months ago that I found out about it."

"Is that true it has been a few years?" Huang Rong asked, thinking hard.

"That's correct! Why would I lie to you?"

Huang Rong was quiet while she walked back to the house. She wanted to see Reverend Yideng, Yinggu, Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang to discuss these extraordinary bees, which she believed must have come from the Passionless Valley. They agreed that something unusual must have been happening in that valley. Because she was continually thinking about her daughter, she asked Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang to accompany her to the valley.

"We have nothing to do here, let us go together," Reverend Yideng said. "Your daughter and I met the other day. She was really sweet. The Old Monk likes her very much."

"Thank you," said Huang Rong, who was saddened by his remark. She thought, "Looks like Reverend Yideng thinks Xiang'er is in trouble, maybe grave danger; if not, I don't



think he would be willing to leave this peaceful and quiet place to go with us.”

Zhou Botong loved action; how could he be left behind? He offered to come along and even persuaded Yinggu to come too.

Huang Rong was comforted. She had three more highly skilled companions. With six people, she believed not many things or enemies would hinder their endeavor to find Guo Xiang. Even if she faced a formidable enemy, Huang Rong believed they would be able to help her.

And so six people and two eagles started the journey to the Passionless Valley.

o0o

In the meantime, Yang Guo realized the appointed meeting time Xiao Longnu had promised him was drawing near. He didn't dare slow down; he made the trip day and night, only stopping for meals and short rests along the way. He arrived at the Passionless Valley on the second day of the third month. He was five days early from his sixteen-year appointment with Xiao Longnu.

The Passionless Valley was quiet; nobody was around. The magnificent building complex built by the Gongsun family, was reduced to ruins. In the sixteen years since they parted Yang Guo had visited the valley several times. He used to stay for a few days, wishing the Nan Hai Shen Ni would show mercy and let Xiao Longnu meet him earlier. Every time he came it was with enthusiasm; he left the valley dejected.

Now he saw the forest was thick, but the hills were empty, without any trace of Xiao Longnu. He immediately went to the Broken Heart Cliff, crossed the stone bridge to the message carved by Xiao Longnu's sword on the stone. He lovingly traced the letters with his fingers, and cleaned out the moss at the same time. Afterward he would slowly read the letter, 'Xiao Longnu addresses my husband Yang-lang, please treasure this, and begs that you fulfill this reunion'. His heart was shaken.

For a whole day he kept looking at the characters. That night, he spent the night sleeping on a rope tied between two trees. The next day he looked around the valley where the Passionless Flowers used to be. He and Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang had destroyed them. The flowers were completely gone; instead, he found out that the flower, which he named Dragon Lady Flower [Long Nu Hua], had spread to other places. He picked a bouquet of these flowers and placed them in front of the characters at the Broken Heart Cliff.

He spent the next few days pacing around. He hadn't even slept during the last two days. Today was the seventh day of the third month. He stayed close to the Broken Heart Cliff, and never left even a half-step. He waited from morning till noon, from noon till late afternoon. Every time a breeze came, or a flower or a leaf fell down, his heart jumped. He would leap up and look everywhere. Where was Xiao Longnu?

Ever since he talked to Huang Yaoshi, Yang Guo had realized that the 'Divine Nun of the South Sea' [Nan Hai Shen Ni] of the 'Great Wisdom Island' [Da Zhi Dao] existed only in Huang Rong's imagination. However, looking at the letter his hope was rekindled. He recognized his wife's handwriting, and he was hoping Xiao Longnu would eventually show up.

The sun was slowly sinking beyond the mountains in the west. Yang Guo's heart was sinking too. When the sun was half-way down the mountain, he cried. He quickly ran toward higher ground. There he saw the full circle of the sun, and he felt relieved. When the sun was completely set, the day would be over ...

Though Yang Guo had climbed to the highest peak, the sun still slowly moved downward, looking like it was being swallowed by the earth. After a while he couldn't see anything but the empty world and the cold breeze that came with the night. He stood silently for about an hour. Afterward the moon slowly rose until it was high above him. He still stood there, unmoving ... like a carved stone statue. Slowly the night was spent but Xiao Longnu was still nowhere to be seen.

Very soon it was dawn. The sun rose again. Another day had begun. The birds were starting to sing, the gentle morning breeze brought the sweet fragrance of the flowers around him. It was a beautiful spring morning. But Yang Guo was oblivious, his heart frozen. He heard a voice in his head, "You fool! She passed away sixteen years ago. She knew she was injured beyond help. She knew you wouldn't want to live alone. So she killed herself and tricked you into waiting for sixteen years. You stupid fool, she loved you dearly; how would you not know her intention all this time?"

Like a dead man, Yang Guo slowly walked down the peak. He had not had any food nor drink for more than 24 hours. His mouth was dry. He went to a small creek, kneeled down to drink some water. When he saw his reflection in the water, he saw the hair on the side of his head had turned white. He was only thirty-six years old, at the prime of his years. It was untimely for him to have white hair. He also saw his face was dirty. He almost couldn't recognize himself. He pulled away three strands of his hair; two of the three had turned white.

Yang Guo was very miserable. A poem came into his mind, 'For ten years life and death are boundless, immeasurable, unforgettable. Lonely graves a thousand li apart, unspeakable desolation. Unfulfilled desire to meet, slowly turns to dust. The hair on the temples white as frost.' It was the lamentation of Su Dongpo. Yang Guo spent most of his life learning martial arts; his literary skill was limited. Occasionally he would stop by a small wine shop in Jiangnan where he saw this poem hanging on the wall. He felt this poem carried a deep feeling similar to his own; so oftentimes he would read it aloud and unintentionally memorized the poem. He said in his heart, "He thought a ten-year separation was boundless, I have been parted with Long'er for sixteen years. He still had his lonely grave, he knew where his beloved wife's bones were buried; yet I don't even know where my wife's bones are buried." And then his mind drifted to the second half of that poem, the part where the writer remembered his deceased wife in his dreams at night, 'In a quiet night a dream came flooding back. A small window of a country home, showing beautiful hair adornments. Face to face yet invisible, only a thousand drops of tears! Year after year dealing with a broken heart. Bright moonlit night, on a small hill nearby.' He couldn't help but drowning in sorrows. "I ... I have not slept for three whole days and nights ... certainly not a single dream would come to me," he said to himself.

Suddenly he jumped up and ran toward the Broken Heart Cliff. He stood in front of the carved letters, and loudly shouted, "Sixteen years later, meet at this place, the love between husband and wife is profoundly deep, never fail this promise.' Xiao Longnu! Xiao Longnu! This is your own handwriting. Why didn't you keep your promise?"

His voice was very loud, like a lion or a tiger's roar; it echoed from the surrounding mountains, "Why didn't you keep your promise? Why didn't you keep your promise?... you keep your promise?...keep your promise?"

Yang Guo had always had a strong character, but this time he was deeply downhearted.

"If Long'er died sixteen years ago, my life this past sixteen years was in vain," he thought. He looked into the gorge below the Broken Heart Cliff. A thick fog always covered the bottom all year long. He was never able to penetrate the fog to see the bottom of the gorge. When he threw the half-pill away it took a while for the pill to reach the bottom. He lifted up his head and called very loudly, so that the Dragon Lady Flowers around him were blown away. Then he softly said, "You disappeared without any trace. I have looked for you everywhere, yet there is no sign of you. I just realized it today, that you must have jumped down into this bottomless gorge! You have been there for sixteen years, weren't you afraid you would be lonely?"

Like a vision he could see clearly in his mind: Xiao Longnu – her white dress gently swaying in the wind, came near him. Then he heard her voice seemingly from below him, “Yang-lang, Yang-lang, let not your heart be sad. Don’t be sad ...!” (Yang-lang means my dear husband.)

Suddenly, Yang Guo jumped down into the bottomless gorge ...

o0o

Guo Xiang followed Jinlun Fawang to the Passionless Valley. Their minds and emotions were a world apart. Fawang was a strange man. When he hated someone, he would be like venomous snake or scorpion; but when he liked someone, he could be extremely loving and kind. He was determined to take the girl as his disciple, his successor; therefore, he tended to every single one of her needs. He treated her like Guo Xiang was his most beloved daughter. But Guo Xiang maintained an aloofness towards him. She continually reminded him how the Long Beard Ghost and the Big Head Ghost died by his hands. She was being difficult with Fawang. Fawang was a highly respected man even when he was still in Tibet; moreover, he held the Fawang [Imperial Priest] position of the Mongolian Empire now. Even Khubilai – the fourth prince, had always showed the utmost respect for him. Guo Xiang was only a teenage girl, but she kept making derogatory remarks to him. Didn’t she mention that he was inferior to Yang Guo, and that he killed people too easily? Fawang was confounded; he didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

Finally, they arrived at the Passionless Valley one day. They were startled by a distant cry, “Why didn’t you keep your promise?” That was Yang Guo’s cry of anguish, anger, desperation, and suffering.

Guo Xiang strained her ears. She thought the voice came from all directions. She was shocked!

“That was Brother Yang!” she shouted. “That was Brother Yang! Let’s go and see!” And she leaped forward, running toward the cliff.

Jinlun Fawang followed not too far behind. He perked up. Didn’t the girl say that he would face his archenemy? From his backpack he took out his five wheels: golden, silver, copper, iron and lead. He held them tight. Yes, he had mastered the tenth level of the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’, but he also remembered that in the past sixteen years, Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu certainly had not wasted their time. Therefore, he did not dare to underestimate them.

When Guo Xiang arrived at the Broken Heart Cliff, she saw Yang Guo standing still with red flowers twirling around him. She was afraid of the gorge. She realized her own level of martial arts and did not dare to come closer. All she could do was call, “Brother Yang, here I am!”

Yang Guo did not respond, he didn't even seem to hear her. Guo Xiang was confused; she thought the man looked so extraordinary.

“Brother Yang!” she called again. “I still have one of your golden needles! Listen to me, you cannot commit suicide ...”

Having said that she ran toward the bridge. But just as she was halfway there, she suddenly saw Yang Guo jump down into the gorge! She was really shocked! Whether it was from her intention to help, or out of her love toward him, she kicked the ground and also jumped down into the gorge ...

Jinlun Fawang was about seven or eight ‘zhang’s [about 21 to 24 meters] behind her. He saw something amiss; he exerted his energy to his feet and flew like an arrow toward her. He wanted to grab her. However, he was still one step behind the girl. Guo Xiang’s body had already plummeted down into the bottomless gorge. Fawang was a truly skilled martial artist, and he had guts! Without hesitation he moved swiftly with the ‘Hanging a Golden Hook’ technique [dao gua jin gou], leaped forward and reached. It was an extremely dangerous move, because he could be falling down the gorge as well. He managed to grab the end of Guo Xiang’s robe, but it ripped and the girl’s body kept falling down into the mist below ...

“Ah ...!” he sighed. His hand still holding tight a piece of Guo Xiang’s clothes, his eyes stared blankly into the bottomless gorge. He stood there for quite a while until his ears heard someone’s calling, “Hey, Bald Monk! What are you doing up there?” He turned his body around to see who was calling him.

There on the hill in front of him stood six people. The one in front was an old man, but had a ruddy face. He was Zhou Botong. Next to him were three ladies, one of whom he knew as Huang Rong. The other two were Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang. Behind them were an elderly couple, one old monk with white hair and beard; the other was a lady in black. He didn’t know either Reverend Yideng or Yinggu. But he was a third part scared because he remembered Zhou Botong and recalled his high skill. He also knew Huang Rong’s level of martial arts. She was the Eastern Heretic’s daughter and the Northern Beggar’s disciple. He knew his martial arts were comparable to these Central

Plains' experts, yet he was saddened by Guo Xiang's death. He didn't have any keenness to fight. Thus he only said, "Miss Guo Xiang has fallen into this gorge ..."

Hearing him, the six were very shocked, especially Huang Rong. "Is...is it true?" she asked, her voice quivered.

"Why would I lie to you?" answered Jinlun Fawang. "Isn't this a piece of her clothing?" Then he waved the piece of cloth in his hand.

Huang Rong stared hard, and she recognized her daughter's clothes. Her body was trembling, her mouth tightly shut.

Zhou Botong was raging mad. "Stinky Monk!" he barked, "Why did you kill her? Oh, you are so ruthless!"

"It wasn't me," Fawang answered meekly.

"Why would somebody jump down into the gorge without any reason?" shouted Botong. "You must have pushed her! Or you made her jump!"

Fawang shook his head. "No, I didn't do either," he countered, "I wanted to take her as my disciple, I wanted to make her my successor! Why would I do her any harm ...?"

"Phooey!" Botong spat. "That was a really nice old fart! Her grandfather is the Old Master Huang! Her father is Guo Jing! Her mother is this little Huang Rong! Which of these three is not superior to you, Stinky Monk? Why in the world would she take you as her master and inherit your stinky skills? Even if I, the Old Urchin, have mastered only some 'Three Legged Cat' techniques, those techniques are far superior to your junk copper and rusty iron wheels!"

They were quite a distance apart, but the old man's spit had reached Fawang, forcing him to elude it. That spit shot past like a bullet. Fawang was very impressed.

Botong was delighted with Fawang's silence. He shouted again, "Didn't she refuse to take you as her master? Weren't you determined to take her as your disciple? Yes or no?"

Fawang nodded his head. How could he answer otherwise?

"There! You see?" Botong shouted again, "You pushed her into the gorge!"

Fawang was startled, and then he heaved a sigh. “I didn’t push her,” he said, “I don’t even know why she wanted to kill herself ...”

Huang Rong meanwhile, was able to calm herself. She gritted her teeth, lifted up her staff and ran toward Jinlun Fawang. She surrounded the monk with ‘sealing’ techniques. Her staff floated around Fawang’s body, surrounding him from every direction. Huang Rong was driven by anger at her daughter’s death, her attacks were deadly.

Although Fawang’s martial arts skill was higher than Huang Rong’s, the stick technique was exquisite; he did not dare to parry the attacks head-on. Moreover, Botong was standing by, ready to assist Huang Rong. To make matters worse, they were fighting on very narrow ground. Fawang stepped about three feet back, then he kicked his left foot and with a loud whistling sound he jumped over Huang Rong’s head.

Huang Rong attacked upward, but her stick was parried by Fawang’s silver wheel. Both weapons collided with a loud noise. After taking a deep breath Huang Rong turned around only to see Zhou Botong had started to fight the monk.

Fawang put his wheels back into his bag. It was because Zhou Botong was barehanded. As a sect leader, he must maintain his pride. The opponent was barehanded; he couldn’t wield a weapon.

Huang Rong ran back and as soon as he was within reach, she thrust her stick for another attack.

After mastering the tenth level of the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity’, this would be the first time Fawang had an opportunity to test out this new skill against other experts. He saw Zhou Botong raise his fists and attack, so he too raised his fists wanting to fight Zhou Botong’s fists head on. Before they actually exchanged blows, Zhou Botong could hear a series of light popping sounds coming from Fawang’s hands.

Zhou Botong was startled and did not dare to receive the blow straight on. Zhou Botong bent his elbow a bit and used his ‘Vacant Fists’ skill.

The blow by Fawang had as much power as 1000 jin-(1 jin is 1/2 kilogram/1lb). One could not say it was comparable to the strength of dragons or elephants but it was impossible for mere flesh and bone to receive such a blow. But when he intercepted the fist of Zhou Botong, it felt empty and vacant like there was no strength in it at all. He was somewhat shocked and used his left palm to strike out again.

Zhou Botong felt that his opponent's power was incredible; he had never experienced something like this before. Zhou Botong loved martial arts and whenever he met someone who had a special skill he would challenge that individual to a duel. He had encountered numerous martial artists in his life; but even he had never heard of, or seen, such strong power as released by Fawang. He did not know what skill Fawang used, so he used his seventy-two stance 'Vacant Fists' to battle him. He used void to intercept solid and nothingness to block solidity. By doing so, he rendered the awesome power of Fawang useless; but it was also impossible for him to wound his adversary.

Fawang had attacked with several stances now, yet it seems his stances could not even tickle his opponent. He became frustrated that his dexterity, which he trained for many years, had not helped him to gain the upper hand.

At this point he noticed a whooshing wind from behind; it was Huang Rong who used her bamboo stick to attack his 'ling tai' [soul platform] accupoint. He raised his hand to block that attack and with one blow he had broken the bamboo stick into two halves. The remaining energy released by that blow sent the dust flying upwards and grit to surge around.

Huang Rong was stunned and leapt aside, she thought, "This awful monk was quite formidable sixteen years ago, but now he seems to be even more powerful. That palm of his was both strange and incredible, what kind of martial arts could that be?"

Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang saw that Huang Rong was in an unfavorable situation, they both attacked Fawang from two sides. One was using a jade flute and the other a sword. Huang Rong called out, "Be careful!" As soon as she finished, there were two cracking sounds. Both flute and sword were broken.

Fawang was saddened by the tragic death of Guo Xiang; he had no intentions of harming anyone else now. He yelled, "Out of my way!" And he did not pursue Lu Wushuang and Cheng Ying.

Suddenly a black figure appeared and Yinggu was standing next to him and had started to attack him; Fawang moved out his palm wanting to strike her on the waist. Yinggu's martial arts skill was inferior to Huang Rong's, but she was trained in the 'Loach Maneuvers' [ni qiu gong]; therefore, she was very good at evading and dodging. When she noticed an incredible force coming towards her, she made two turns and three shuns and cleverly avoided that blow. Fawang did not know that her martial arts had not yet reached the level of a first rate martial arts expert, but somehow she strangely managed to avoid two of his fist attacks. He was quite shocked to see this; furthermore



he felt that his incredible skill was unable to overcome the two opponents now. He was becoming frightened and did not want to engage in any further combat. He quickly moved away from Yinggu. Yinggu had put in everything she had to evade those two blows and was happy to see Fawang turning away from her. She did not dare attack again. Zhou Botong yelled, “Don’t run!” and he gave chase.

Fawang was about to turn around to parry any attack that came his way; but then he heard a light sound coming towards him. A luxuriant but gentle energy force was surging towards his face. Reverend Yideng had used his renowned “Solitary Yang Finger” to block Jinlun Fawang. Fawang had not considered this monk to be an expert; little did he realize that the energy released from his index finger was that powerful. Reverend Yideng’s level of the “Solitary Yang Finger” had reached the level of ultimate proficiency and perfection, the divine energy released was pure, gentle but also abundant and forceful; impossible to block.

Fawang was shocked and moved aside to avoid that blast; he immediately returned with a palm attack. Reverend Yideng saw that his palm was extremely fierce and aggressive and did not dare to block it; he glided away a few steps.

One was an enlightened, eminent Buddhist monk from the south; the other was an extraordinary Buddhist virtuoso from the west; each had just exchanged one stance and did not dare to underestimate his adversary.

Zhou Botong enjoyed his one-on-one duel with the Fawang, but when Reverend Yideng joined the battle he felt it was uninteresting. So he stood aside and observed the battle.

At first there was only one meter or so in between Reverend Yideng and Fawang; but soon, after dodging palm blasts and evading finger fire, the gap between them gradually became wider. They were now standing about four meters apart from each other and used their internal strengths to battle each other from afar.

Huang Rong was observing from the side and saw that the condensation emitted from Reverend Yideng’s head was becoming denser and denser. She knew that he kept gathering his internal power and feared that, because of his old age, he would not be able to withstand Fawang.

She was devastated by the death of her beloved daughter and wished to step in and help but knew the two of them were battling each other with internal energy and could not intervene now. She did not know what to do at this point, and then she suddenly heard her eagles shrieking. She whistled to them and pointed at Fawang.

The pair of white eagles called loudly and dove towards the head of Fawang. If it was the Divine Eagle of Yang Guo, Fawang might be a bit afraid. Even though these two white eagles were grand, they were still ordinary birds, Fawang was not afraid of mere birds. He was still battling Reverend Yideng with everything he had and could not divert his attention to something else. Suddenly a pair of white eagles dove towards him; he could only use his left palm to strike out at the eagles. Two forceful palm energies surged towards the eagles. The eagles could not cope with such force and immediately flew up higher. Nonetheless because of this diversion Reverend Yideng immediately gained the upper hand. Fawang struck out a few times with his left palm bringing the battle to a draw again.

The eagles heard the repeated commands from Huang Rong, but their enemy's power was too strong and could only resort to creating a diversion. They would cry out loudly and make diving attacks at Fawang, but when they were a few centimeters away from him they would withdraw the attacks. They could avoid his palms but they could not injure him. They only managed to disturb the concentration of Fawang.

When experts are in battle, their concentration must be at its peak. That was the only way their internal strengths could be fully utilized. The palm energies released by Fawang were superior to Reverend Yideng's but when it came to self cultivation he was very much inferior to the Reverend. Furthermore he was intensely saddened by the lost of Guo Xiang, which affected his state of mind and now the eagles kept pestering him adding more frustration to his spirits.

Because of his frustration, his palm energies were affected. Reverend Yideng smiled and made a step forward. Huang Rong saw Reverend Yideng advancing; she raised her voice and called out, "Guo Jing, Yang Guo! You're here too? Let us capture him together!"

Guo Jing was her husband; she would never call out his full name, but her intention was to frighten Fawang. If she called out 'Brother Jing', Fawang would probably think 'Who is that?' And the effect of her trick would not be so effective.

Her trick worked and Fawang panicked when he heard the names Guo Jing and Yang Guo; he thought, "Those two experts are here too. I will not live to see another day."

At this point, Reverend Yideng made half a step forward again. In mid-air the eagles saw an advantage and the female eagle screeched and dove towards the face of Fawang. Her claws were aimed for his eyes. Fawang cursed, "Hellish bird!" and raised his left palm to hit the eagle.

The female eagle broke off her attack when she was about four meters away from Fawang, it was only meant to be another diversion. The male eagle silently came in from the side and when Fawang noticed, his right claw had almost grabbed his bald-head. Fawang was both angry and shocked; he whisked his palm hitting the eagle on its breast. By this time the male eagle had seized Fawang's Buddhist hat and was flying away. The whisked palm of Fawang was incredible and the eagle could not withstand it. The male eagle made somersault in mid-air and fell into the deep gorge.

Huang Rong, Cheng Ying, Lu Wushuang and Yinggu called out with shock.

Zhou Botong became angry and yelled, "Damn monk! The Old Urchin will disregard Wulin traditions today and fight you too." He raised his fist and attacked Fawang from the back.

The female eagle heard the shriek of the male eagle and did not see it flying up from the gorge; she too dove towards the chasm and did not fly back up immediately.

Fawang was attacked from both sides and was afraid now. Although he had high martial arts skills, how could he withstand the combined attacks of two great martial arts masters? He lost his appetite for the fight and took out his golden and silver wheels to block the 'Solitary Yang Finger' and 'Vacant Fists'. He leaned to the left and leapt up towards the left and he gained access to the plains area of the valley. Zhou Botong yelled and gave chase.

Fawang had gone through a lot to escape and was running as fast as possible; he knew if he was detained by Zhou Botong, he would have to fight at least another few hundred stances to determine a victor. Furthermore, if the old monk took advantage of the situation, he would surely perish here in this valley. Ahead was a thick forest and he was running towards it, when suddenly a light sound was heading towards him; it was a small stone.

He was still a hundred paces or so away from the forest, but he did not know who shot that little stone towards him. The energy was incredible, although it was only a small stone the whooshing sound emitted by it was very loud. It was aimed directly at his face. Fawang raised his silver wheel and blocked the stone. It broke into dozens small pieces and scattered around; but two of them hit him on the face. He was not injured, but he certainly felt the pain.

He thought, "That small rock was shot from afar and shook my wheel. This person's internal strength is not inferior to the Old Urchin and the old monk, how is it possible

that another such expert exists?”

While he was stunned for a minute, an old man in a long green robe walked out of the forest. He looked very suave and distinguished. Zhou Botong was happy to see him and shouted, “Old Heretic Huang! This damn monk is responsible for the death of your granddaughter. Let us capture him together.”

The distinguished old man was the Master of the Peach Blossom Island, Huang Yaoshi. After he and Yang Guo went their separate ways he decided to wander around in the north. One particular day he saw the two white eagles at a small village; he knew either his daughter or grandchildren were around. So he decided to follow them, but he did not wish to be seen by his daughter and followed them from afar. When he saw that both Reverend Yideng and Zhou Botong could not defeat this monk, he was quite surprised. He thought that this monk was a worthy adversary and decided to intervene as well.

Jinlun Fawang struck his wheels together creating a loud ‘dang’ sound, similar to the cry of a dragon. He said, “I take it you are the Eastern Heretic Huang Yaoshi?”

Huang Yaoshi nodded and said, “Yes, I am, Reverend. What can I do for you?”

Fawang said, “Even back in Tibet we have heard that only the Eastern Heretic, Western Poison, Southern Emperor, Northern Beggar and Central Divinity were all-powerful in the Central Plains. It pleases me to see that you live up to your reputation. I would like to ask where the other four great masters are.”

Huang Yaoshi replied, “The Central Divinity, Northern Beggar and Western Poison have passed away many years ago. This Reverend Yideng here is the Southern Emperor and Brother Zhou is the younger martial arts brother of the Central Divinity.”

Zhou Botong came fast. He said, “If my martial arts brother was still alive, would you be able to withstand even ten of his stances?”

Reverend Yideng also came fast. Together with the Eastern Heretic, they formed a triangle surrounding Fawang. Fawang looked at Yideng; then at Botong; and finally at the Eastern Heretic. He sighed and threw his five wheels to the ground.

“If it were a one-on-one combat, I wouldn’t budge a single inch to any one of you,” he said wryly.

“You are right!” answered Zhou Botong, “But right now we are not having a competition on top of Mount Hua to fight over the title ‘The Number One Valiant Man under the Heaven’! Who would want to fight you one-on-one? Hey, Stinky Monk, you have done too many wicked deeds. You decide your own fate!”

“I have seen two out of the top five experts of the central plains,” said Fawang. “If I could die by your hands, I would not have any regrets. Only my highest skill: the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’ will not have an heir. I am the last one ...”

Having finished his speech he lifted up his hand to smash his own head.

Zhou Botong was startled to hear the name ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’, without hesitation he jumped forward and blocked the monk’s hand. “Hold on!” he shouted.

“I, the old monk, can be killed, but not insulted!” said Fawang valiantly. “What do you want?”

“You regret the ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’ would not have any heirs,” he said, “Why don’t you teach it to me, then you kill yourself afterward. That way it wouldn’t be lost, would it?”

Before Fawang answered, they heard flapping wings followed by the female eagle flying up from the gorge, her mate on her back. Both birds were wet, which indicated water at the bottom of the chasm; maybe a well or a creek. The male eagle’s feathers were in disarray, but he was still breathing. His claws still held tightly Jinlun Fawang’s Buddhist cap.

As soon as the female eagle placed her mate on the ground, she flew back into the gorge. After a while she reappeared with Guo Xiang on her back.

Huang Rong was shocked, but happy. “Xiang’er! Xiang’er!” she called, and ran toward the bird. She took Guo Xiang off the bird’s back.

Fawang stood astounded to see Guo Xiang was all right. Zhou Botong still held his hand, but he had also seen what the female eagle had done. He looked at Reverend Yideng on his right and Huang Yaoshi on his left, made faces to them and winked.

Eastern Heretic and Southern Emperor saw his expression and immediately moved in unison. As a result, Fawang's right side and left breast were struck by their powerful fingers. It didn't matter if Fawang was a tough man, because his attackers were experts. One was 'Divine Flicking Finger' [Tan Zi Shen Tong] expert, while the other was 'Solitary Yang Finger' [Yi Yang Zi] expert. The Mongolian monk uttered an 'unh' sound and staggered. Zhou Botong added a punch to the 'zhi yang' [positive end] accupoint on his back, he laughed and said, "Go down!" Fawang's knees gave out and he fell, sitting down on the ground.

The three experts saw this and were secretly impressed. "This monk is really strong, he was hit three times, yet he did not collapse to the ground, he only sat down ..."

Afterward the three of them came to Guo Xiang. They were trying to comfort her.

"Mother, he's down there ..." said the girl to her mother, "He's down there ... go help him, please ..." Guo Xiang only managed to utter those words before she fainted. Yideng immediately checked her pulse. "She is all right!" he said, "She is just in shock." Then he slowly massaged the girl's wrist. Not too long after, Guo Xiang slowly regained her consciousness.

"Where is Big Brother?" she asked. "Is he up here?"

"Is Yang Guo in the gorge below?" asked Huang Rong. Guo Xiang nodded. "He is!" she said, lowering her head; and then added in her heart, "If he is not down there, why would I jump down?"

"Is there any water down there?" Huang Rong asked again, seeing her daughter's wet clothes. Guo Xiang nodded her head, and then closed her eyes. She was still too weak to say anything, only her finger pointed to the gorge.

"Yang Guo is down there, only the eagle can help him," said Huang Rong. Then she whistled, calling her bird, but strangely after she had whistled several times the bird did not respond. Huang Rong felt strange; the birds have always obeyed her commands for dozens of years. Why didn't it respond this time? It had never happened before. Once again she whistled, loud and long.

Suddenly the bird flew up high into the clouds. She flew in circles emanating a sad cry. And then she dove down very fast. Huang Rong was shocked. "Not good!" she cried in her heart. Then she called, "Hey, Eagle!"

Her calling was in vain; the bird continued diving down and smashed onto a mountain rock. Her head was smashed, her wings broken, she died instantly.

Everybody was stunned. They ran toward the birds only to find the male eagle's body was cold; he too was dead. No wonder his mate was disconsolate and wanted to die too. They all uttered a long sad sigh.

Huang Rong was the most upset; those two birds were her companions since she and the birds were young. She shed tears involuntarily.

Observing all this, Li Mochou's song echoed in Lu Wushuang's mind:

*'O mortals, what is love? That binds beyond life on earth?  
To all corners, in pair we fly... braving summer and winter, by and by...  
Union is bliss, parting is woe, agony is boundless, for a lovelorn soul, sweetheart...  
Give me word, trail of clouds drifting forward...  
And mountains capped with snow, whither shall my lonesome shadow go?'*

When she was a young girl, Lu Wushuang followed her master – Li Mochou, everywhere. Oftentimes, in the dead of the night, when she thought she was dreaming, she heard her master sing this song. She did not know the true meaning of love then, but now she saw it with her own eyes. She thought, "If the female eagle were still alive, she would be flying alone through the clouds and over snow-capped mountains. She was alone, her shadow solitary; how could she live any longer?" Without her realizing it, tears welled up her eyes.

"Shi Fu, Shi Jie," said Cheng Ying. "Brother Yang is inside the gorge below, how can we rescue him?"

Huang Rong wiped her tears. "Xiang'er, tell me the exact condition of the gorge's bottom," she asked, "What was happening to you?"

Guo Xiang was already feeling better. "As soon as I plummeted down into the gorge, I hit the water at the bottom," she answered, "I was shocked and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls. I don't know how, but I was immediately pushed back up to the surface. And then Big Brother, Yang Da Ge, pulled my hair, he lifted me up ..."

Hearing this Huang Rong was relieved. "Was there a big rock or something else where you could set your feet on?" she asked.

“There was a big tree right next to the water.”

“Hmm ...” said her mother. “Why did you fall down?”

“That was also the first question Brother Yang asked me when he pulled me up,” answered the girl. “I took my golden needle out, I gave it to him and I said, ‘I come to ask you to take care of yourself, don’t be shortsighted’. He looked at me without blinking. Not too long after the male eagle fell into the water, followed by his mate. The female eagle took her mate up, then she came back to rescue me. Brother Yang told me to go up, he didn’t say anything else. He lifted me up on the eagle’s back. Mother, tell the bird to go back down and rescue Brother Yang ...”

Huang Rong didn’t want to tell her daughter that the birds were dead. She took off her coat and wrapped it around her daughter’s body.

“I believe Yang Guo is not in grave danger right now,” she said, turning to her companions, “Let us make a long rope to rescue him.”

That was a great idea. Everybody scattered to gather tree bark and braided it into a rope.

All except for Jinlun Fawang – whose accupoints were sealed, and Guo Xiang – who was too tired, worked hard. Cheng Ying, Lu Wushuang and Yinggu braided, while Yideng, Zhou Botong, Huang Yaoshi and Huang Rong gathered tree bark. They were not skilled at making rope; therefore, when the sky darkened all they had was a little over a hundred ‘zhang’s [around 300 meters] of rope.

Even though she felt the rope was not long enough, Cheng Ying put it into the gorge anyway. She tied one end to a rock and the other end to a tree stump and threw the rock into the gorge. The rope slid down, penetrating the thick fog below and vanished from their sight.

These seven people worked hard all night long without taking any rest. The next morning Guo Xiang was strong enough to help. Huang Rong asked her how she got captured by Fawang to help pass the time.

The rope was getting longer and longer. They did not hear anything from Yang Guo down below. Huang Yaoshi was restless; he took out his jade flute and played a song. The sound of the flute echoed and flowed down into the gorge. Usually, as soon as Yang



Guo heard the flute, he would whistle in response. When the song ended the gorge was still quiet, still no response, and only a thin mist rising up.

Huang Rong thought hard. She chopped a piece of wood, and carved this letter: “Are you all right? Please respond.” Then she threw the wood into the ravine.

They waited some more, still nothing ... They looked at each other with anxiety in their eyes.

“Even though this gorge is deep, I believe our rope has reached its bottom,” said Cheng Ying. “Let me go down and take a look.”

“Let me!” Zhou Botong did not wait for an answer. Immediately he grabbed the end of the rope and climbed down, agile as a monkey, and disappeared into the fog below. About an hour later he reappeared, his hair and beard was covered with moss. He shook his head.

“Not a single shadow or footprint was there, let alone Yang Guo? No ‘niu guo’ [a live ox], no ‘ma guo’ [a live horse] either [play on words: ‘guo’ of ‘Yang Guo’ also means ‘live’],” he said. They looked at Guo Xiang and were perplexed.

Guo Xiang was almost crying, “I am sure Brother Yang was down there, where could he go?” said the girl. “He was sitting next to the big tree by the water.”

Cheng Ying didn’t say anything; she grabbed the rope and start climbing down. Lu Wushuang followed suit. And then Yinggu, Zhou Botong, Huang Yaoshi and Yideng did the same. They were worried about Yang Guo, but they were also curious.

“You have not recovered Xiang’er, don’t come down,” Huang Rong counseled her daughter. “Don’t make your mother worry about you. If your Brother Yang is down there, we certainly will rescue him, won’t we?”

Guo Xiang was anxious, but she agreed with her mother. Tears welled up in her eyes.

Huang Rong looked at Jinlun Fawang, she thought, “He has been sealed for more than twelve hours. He is highly skilled, perhaps he has managed to unseal some of his accupoints ...” Thus she came to him and sealed some more of his accupoints: ‘ling tai’ [soul platform] on his back, ‘ju que’ [gigantic imperial city] just below his chest, ‘qing ling yuan’ [clear and cold abyss] on his two arms. Only then did she slide down the rope.

Huang Rong held the rope loosely and let her body fall down fast; then tightened her grip to slow her fall. She did that several times and a short while later arrived at the bottom, and sure enough, she saw a body of water like a pond or a spring. Huang Yaoshi and the others were standing on the shore. She looked around but there was no Yang Guo. On her left she saw several big trees, where about thirty beehives were hung. The Jade Bees were flying around.

“Brother Zhou, could you catch a bee for us to look at, please?” she said to the Old Urchin. “Let’s see if it has characters on its wings.” Botong complied, he caught a bee. “No characters here,” he said.

Huang Rong looked around. All she could see were rock walls a few hundred meters high. There was no way out. There were only those few peculiar looking trees; she didn’t know what kind of trees they were. She looked up, and all she could see was thick fog covering the gorge, she couldn’t even see the sun. She was thinking hard when suddenly Botong shouted, “Here! This one has characters on it.”

Madam Guo quickly looked, and sure enough, she saw the same letters on this one, ‘I am at the Passionless Valley’s bottom’. This made her think some more, she believed the answer must be in the water below. Among the seven people, her water skill was the best. She made up her mind. She tucked her clothes up, took a ‘Nine Flower Jade Dew Pill’, put it in her mouth to repel any venomous bugs or snake bites, and jumped into the water.

The deeper Huang Rong dived, the colder the water temperature was. She felt the cold creeping into her bones. She opened her eyes underwater, but all she could see was the deep bluish green water. The water felt like ice. She was puzzled, but determined to continue her investigation. She went to the surface for another deep breath, and dived again. She went further this time, and she felt a strong buoyancy force pushing her back up. The deeper she went, the stronger the force was. She exerted her energy but it was no use, she could not reach the bottom no matter what. Except for the cold temperature, the water did not show anything special anyway. Therefore, she went back to the surface in defeat.

All could see she was cold; her lips were blue and her hair white from the frost. They were astonished. Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang promptly gathered sticks and lit a fire for Huang Rong to warm herself up.

In the meantime Guo Xiang was waiting above, she thought very hard, “Why wouldn’t Brother Yang come up? Did my grandfather and mother persuade him to come? What

was the real reason he tried to kill himself? Was it because Xiao Longnu had passed away and they wouldn't see each other anymore?"

While she was lost in thought, she heard Jinlun Fawang groaned, "Aiyo! Aiyo!" "You asked for it!" said Guo Xiang, "Who told you to kill so easily? Hmm..."

Jinlun Fawang did not reply, but he kept making groaning noises while his eyes looking at her begging for mercy. By nature Guo Xiang was kindhearted. She couldn't take it anymore. "Are you really sick?" she asked.

"Your mother has sealed [ling tai] accupoint on my back and [ju que] below my chest. Those sealed accupoints made me suffer like a million ants were biting me," the monk answered, "It is not only so painful but itchy as well. Why didn't your mother seal my 'shan zhong' [heart center] and 'yu zhen' [jade pillow] accupoints?"

Guo Xiang was startled. She understood from learning with her mother, that [shan zhong] and [yu zhen] were two of the vital accupoints. A little injury on these two could cause death.

"My mother does not wish for your death," she said. "You do not thank her, but keep whining incessantly!"

Jinlun Fawang showed a proud look. "If she sealed my [shan zhong] and [yu zhen], she would make my back and chest numb," he said, "She would cause me less pain. I have trained to this high level; I wouldn't be injured that easily. Could it be that she really wishes for my death?"

Guo Xiang did not believe him. "Don't you lie to me!" She countered. "Mother said that if [shan zhong] and [yu zhen] were sealed, you would certainly die! You are only experiencing itchiness and a bit of pain. Take heart. My mother and the others will be here shortly."

Jinlun Fawang did not respond. "Miss Guo," a little later he asked, "How would you say my treatment of you was along the way?"

"Not a single complaint," answered Guo Xiang. "But you have killed the Long Beard Ghost and the Big Head Ghost. You have also caused the death of my two eagles. Even if your treatment of me was a lot better, I still cannot accept what you have done."

“Very well!” shouted the monk, “An eye for an eye! You kill me to avenge the death of your friends and your birds! But remember that I have treated you well along the way; how would you repay me for that?”

“You tell me how I can repay you.”

“You have to seal my [shan zhong] and [yu zhen],” answered the monk. “That way you would lessen my suffering. That way you repay my kindness.”

Guo Xiang shook her head. “You want me to kill you?” she asked, “I will not do that.”

“But I am a man as tough as a mountain!” Fawang insisted, “Even if you seal those accupoints, I will not easily die. Later when your mother is here, I will beg for her mercy. Do you really think I’d like to die?”

Seeing his pitiful condition, Guo Xiang pondered his words. “Very well,” she thought, “I will lessen his suffering.” Then she sealed his [shan zhong] and [yu zhen] accupoints. Fawang immediately felt relieved. “Yes! I feel better,” he said. “Please hit harder.” Guo Xiang complied, she hit harder.

Fawang’s eyebrows twitched, he smiled. He did not show any sign of injury, but his countenance changed from red to white, and from white back to red again.

“OK, please hit even harder now,” he again said. Guo Xiang complied; she hit harder utilizing the technique her parents taught her.

“Good!” finally Fawang shouted. “My chest is not tight anymore! You see, I am not dead, am I?”

Guo Xiang was astonished. “Let me hit your [yu zhen] one more time!” she said. She’d gently hit him then, but she hit him really hard this time.

“Thank you! Thank you!” said Fawang. He immediately closed his eyes. A little while later he suddenly leaped up and said with a loud voice, “OK, let’s go!”

Miss Guo was flabbergasted. “You ... you ...” she stammered.

Fawang’s left hand flew out and grabbed the girl’s arm. “Let’s go!” he said. “Jinlun Fawang’s skill is without equal under the heavens. How could I not know all about this

rudimentary skill?” As soon as he finished talking, he immediately walked forward, dragging Guo Xiang along.

“Liar! Liar!” Guo Xiang shouted; she regretted her actions and thought, “My knowledge is so shallow, I don’t even know this rudimentary technique existed.” How would she know the ‘tui jing zhuan mai, yi gong huan xue’ [transferring blood flow passage, exchanging accupoints position] was not rudimentary at all? Fawang had trained himself in this difficult technique since the time he was still in Tibet. It was not superior to Ouyang Feng’s technique in which he was able to reverse the blood flow in his whole body; but it was not less strange or less difficult to master. When Guo Xiang hit his [shan zhong] and [yu zhen] accupoints, he secretly transferred that energy to unseal the other accupoints.

They were only a few meters away when Fawang suddenly had an evil thought. He saw the end of the rope tied to a tree stump. He thought that if he cut the rope, Zhou Botong, Yideng, Huang Yaoshi, Huang Rong and the others would die in the gorge, since they would have no other way of coming back up. Therefore, he kicked the ground and leaped toward the tree and grabbed the rope, ready to sever it.

Guo Xiang saw his movement; she was shocked. She knew what he was up to. She could not stay silent. Her arm was still held in the monk’s hand. When her other hand was within reach of the monk’s body, she made her move and hit his ‘yuan ye’ [deep pool liquid] accupoint beneath his ribs.

Jinlun Fawang had underestimated the girl and now he had to suffer the consequence. That hit was right on target. He was stunned and immediately felt half of his body stiffened, his strength gone.

With one pull Guo Xiang was able to free herself. She went behind him and threatened, “I am going to push you down smelly monk! I hope you’ll die!”

Fawang was shocked, but he didn’t show it. He laughed a big laugh. He secretly exerted his internal energy to unseal his accupoint. He said, “How could you hurt me with your meager skill?”

Guo Xiang did not know that her hit actually sealed Fawang’s accupoint and that Fawang’s body was stiff. If she pushed, he would certainly fall down. But she was afraid to repeat her past mistake, that if she touched his body one more time the monk would be able to free himself. Didn’t she hit the monk and in the end Fawang was free? Therefore, instead of pushing him, she jumped down and got away from him. She ran

toward the chasm and shouted, “I’d rather die with my mother!” She was going to jump down into the gorge.

Jinlun Fawang was extremely shocked. He breathed in and out deeply, and eventually his sealed accupoint was clear. Abandoning the rope he quickly jumped after the girl.

Guo Xiang kept running between big rocks and among the trees. If she were out on a plain, Fawang would certainly catch up with only two leaps. Right now the monk had to play her game. There were a lot of old trees and big rocks scattered around the Broken Heart Cliff. By running around like this Guo Xiang was able to elude him. It was like they were playing tag. Fawang leaped over the trees and with ‘Wild Duck Descends the Plain [yan luo ping sha] techniques he was able to grab Guo Xiang’s arm once again.

Guo Xiang was shocked; she thought she could get away from him. She struggled in vain; but then she opened her mouth and shouted at the top of her lungs, “Mother!”

Fawang quickly covered her mouth with his free hand. Meanwhile a voice was heard from a distance, it was Lu Wushuang, “Uh, where did little Guo Xiang go?”

“Pity, pity ...” Fawang’s heart turned cold. “I have wasted too much time.” He regretted the fact he failed to cut the rope; he was forced to seal the girl’s mute accupoint and took her away as quickly as he could run. He was so confused that he couldn’t think straight. He only heard Lu Wushuang’s voice. If he attacked her, how could Wushuang fight him? It was just that he had suffered a bitter defeat from Zhou Botong, Reverend Yideng and Huang Yaoshi; so when he heard someone was coming he thought everybody had arrived.

Huang Rong and the rest were still at the gorge’s bottom. They could not find any footprint or traces of blood, in case Yang Guo was injured. Finally they decided to go back up and discuss this matter later. Lu Wushuang was the first to go, followed by Cheng Ying and Yinggu. When Huang Rong showed up, she was startled to hear them calling her daughter, “Little Guo Xiang! Little Guo Xiang! Where are you?” The women were puzzled at seeing neither Guo Xiang nor Jinlun Fawang.

Huang Rong climbed a tall tree to get a good look around. In the meantime Huang Yaoshi together with Reverend Yideng and Zhou Botong arrived. They were perplexed and anxious. They looked around the valley, but could not find anything.

When they reached the valley’s entrance, they saw one of Guo Xiang’s shoes.

“Shi Jie, don’t you worry,” Chen Ying said, “Fawang must have taken Guo Xiang along with him to the south. Guo Xiang left her shoe behind to give us clue. She’s just as smart as her mother.”

Huang Rong believed Cheng Ying was right. She was relieved since Guo Xiang would not be in any immediate danger. Didn’t Fawang want to take Guo Xiang as his disciple, to inherit his ‘Dragon and Elephant Wisdom Dexterity Technique’?



---

Blog at WordPress.com.