

## Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

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## SDXL Chapter 39



### Chapter 39 – Battle of Xiangyang

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*Galloping towards the high platform, the group came to a stop outside the range of the enemy archers. Two people could be seen standing on the platform. One, dressed in a yellow monk's robe, was none other than Jinlun Fawang. The other, a young girl who was tied to a wooden pole, was Guo Xiang.*

The group proceeded south and inquired about Fawang (Golden Wheel Monk) and Guo Xiang along the way. Soon news came from everywhere saying the North and South Mongolian Armies are besieging Xiangyang, engaging the Song soldiers at the foot of the city several times, with both sides suffering many losses. The situation there was

grave and urgent. Huang Rong was worried and said, “The Mongols are attacking Xiangyang, we must get there fast. Let’s ignore Xiang’er’s safety temporarily.” The group agreed unanimously.

The elders Huang Yaoshi, Yideng and Zhou Botong did not bother about worldly affairs, but Xiangyang’s fate was extremely important, besides everyone was putting in their best to defend it, so they could not ignore the situation.

They did not meet any delays on their journey and so they reached the outskirts of Xiangyang in a day. They found the battle trumpets sounding continuously and the flags waving, the swords were like a forest and horses were running frantically about. The city was like a speck in the desert as the Mongol Armies surrounded it. When they saw this, they were shocked and dismayed. Huang Rong said, “The enemy is mighty. We must wait till evening before attempting to get in.” They then hid in the nearby forest and apart from Zhou Botong who was smiling mischievously, the rest looked grim.

At the second watch, Huang Rong led the way and charged through the enemy camps. Although their martial arts were powerful, the Mongol camps were vast, one coming after the other. They were only halfway through when the patrols spotted them. The soldiers sounded the alarm and three hundred squads surrounded them. The rest of the camps, however, did not stir and were still calm.

Zhou Botong grabbed two long spears and tried to open a way out while Huang Yaoshi and Yideng held a shield each guarding the rear and blocking the troops. The four women were in the middle and the group pushed their way out anxiously. They were still in the camp and so the enemy did not fire arrows at them for fear of hitting their own horses and losing a valuable war asset. However when they reached the open plains the archers fired relentlessly, causing Zhou Botong, Yideng and the others, to have a hard time fending them off. The seven people moved and fought at the same time but the enemy troop numbers became larger and larger, with dozens of spears piercing towards them. Zhou Botong, Huang Yaoshi and the rest unleashed their mighty palm power and smashed many spears and killed many soldiers. But the Mongols were much superior in numbers and they fought fiercely, forcing the group into a dangerous situation.

Zhou Botong laughed, “Old Heretic Huang, looks like our three old lives are going to be lost here, but you must think of a way to get these four beauties safely out of here.” Yinggu spat, “What rubbish! How can an old woman like me be a beauty? If we are to die, we die together; let’s just save these three beauties.”

Huang Rong was secretly shocked, “The Old Urchin looks like he’s not afraid of the earth or the sky and never says a serious word. Today we’re heavily surrounded and he thinks of sacrificing his life, it looks like this situation is indeed dire!” The enemy gathered together like ants from all directions and apart from fighting to the last man, she also could not think of any way out.

After charging through several more camps Huang Rong saw two large black tents on the left and since she had accompanied Genghis Khan on his western expedition, she knew the tents were used to store the grain. She snatched a torch and dashed to the tents. The soldiers shouted and chased her. She ran forwards quickly and darted into a tent, and set everything on fire. Soon the tents were ablaze and she rushed out and re-joined her party.

The tents contained many flammable objects and the fire caused many small explosions within. Zhou Botong found this interesting and threw his spear aside and snatched two torches and ran around setting everything in sight on fire. He unwittingly set a stable on fire causing the horses to neigh unceasingly, throwing the camp into chaos.

Guo Jing heard some confusion in the camp to the west of the city and he rushed to the city wall. He saw a few people rushing out from a burning camp and knew they were creating trouble for the enemy so he quickly dispatched the Wu brothers with two thousand men to meet the party.

The Wu brothers had not gone a mile when they saw Huang Yaoshi supporting Lu Wushuang and Yideng supporting Zhou Botong. The seven people rode on five horses galloping quickly. The Wu brothers did not go forward to attack the enemy but ordered the men to get into formation, holding the enemy back. They then ordered the flank to come forward and support the party while everyone retreated back into the city.

Guo Jing was waiting at the top of the city wall and saw it was his father-in-law, wife, Reverend Yideng, Zhou Botong and company. He was delighted and quickly went forth to receive them. He saw that Lu Wushuang had been hit by an arrow in the waist; three arrows were lodged in Zhou Botong’s back and his eyebrows were scorched by fire. The two people were badly injured. Cheng Ying and Yinggu also suffered arrow wounds but their condition was not so serious. Yideng and Huang Yaoshi had deep medical knowledge but when they examined Zhou Botong and Lu Wushuang, they frowned and remained silent.

Zhou Botong laughed, “Emperor Duan, don’t fret, this Old Urchin won’t die so easily. You should spend more effort treating that beauty Lu Wushuang.” He had always made monkey faces at Huang Yaoshi but he respected Yideng and was perhaps even fearful of him. Yideng had become a monk many years ago but Zhou Botong still addressed him as ‘Emperor Duan’. Huang Yaoshi and Yideng saw that he had a high tolerance to pain so they smiled and stopped worrying. Lu Wushuang, however, was still unconscious.

The following day at the crack of dawn the war drums were sounded and battle chants shouted. The Mongolians had attacked. The Xiangyang troops acted according to Governor Lu Wenhuan and the Defense General’s orders and defended the four city gates. Guo Jing and Huang Rong ascended the city walls and saw that the Mongol troops were spread across the mountains and plains, seemingly endless. The Mongol armies had attacked Xiangyang many times, but this time the campaign involved the largest military force ever. Fortunately Guo Jing had spent some time in the Mongol armed forces before and was well-versed in their techniques of capturing a city, so he was well-prepared. No matter how the enemy deployed their archers, firearms, battering rams or scaling ladders, the troops were positioned in such a way that they could counter them all. By sundown the Mongols had already lost 1000 troops but they continued to fight fiercely.

Apart from the myriads of soldiers (1 myriad = ten thousand) in Xiangyang, the population amounted to one-hundred thousand. Everyone knew that once this city fell all would be lost. So everybody resolutely defended the city; even the old and weak carried the stones and rocks used to repel the enemy. The city resounded with the fighting sounds and the arrows flew overhead like locusts.

Guo Jing wielded a long sword and commanded the troops at the top of the city wall with Huang Rong by his side. The sky was red with the sunset and the scenery was a sight to behold. However at the foot of the city the enemy soldiers swarmed forward and their faces could be seen. Guo Jing stood his ground at the top exuding a heroic aura and his heart was filled with the deep and sincere love for his wife. On this day the mighty enemy was pounding the city and it was uncertain if they could be driven back again. Huang Rong thought, “Brother Jing and I have been married for 30 years; most of our time was spent in this city. The two of us have been defending against the enemy for so long, even if all our blood is splashed on this wall it would not be in vain.” She looked at Guo Jing and noticed that his hair had turned a shade whiter and she thought, “Every time the enemy attacks, Brother Jing will have a few dozen more strands of white hair.”

Suddenly they heard the Mongols call out together, “May Your Majesty live ten thousand years!” The voices resonated throughout the area. A large banner was hoisted and a metal chariot with a green umbrella came forward together with a large entourage. It was the Great Khan Mengke himself coming to lead the battle.

The Mongols saw that their Khan was here personally and their morale was raised by leaps and bounds. The red flag was waved and the soldiers at the foot of the city split into formations of twenty thousand men attacking the north gate. These troops were the Khan’s personal guards and were very highly trained and they were fresh and without battle fatigue. They all wanted to prove themselves to the Khan. Several hundred scaling ladders were placed against the city walls and the troops ascended like ants.

Guo Jing waved his arms, shouting, “Brothers, today we shall let the Khan see the might of the heroes of Great Song!” His shout was generated by his chi and everyone could hear him clearly amidst the din. The Song troops had battled for a day and were getting tired, but when they heard Guo Jing shouting, their weary senses were jerked into attention and they thought, “The Mongols have oppressed us long enough, today we shall show their Khan what we’re made of!” Everyone gave their best to the life and death battle.

The Mongol soldiers’ bodies were piling higher at the foot of the city wall and the troops at the back became mad with rage, stepping on the bodies to assault the city. The Khan’s attendants rode back and forth to relay the orders and deployed troops forward. Dusk was approaching and thousands of torches were lit, throwing so much light that it seemed like day.

When Governor Lu Wenhuan saw this situation, he saw that the city could hardly be defended. He timidly ran up to Guo Jing and Huang Rong stammering, “Hero... Hero Guo, we can’t defend anymore, let’s... let’s leave the city and retreat south!”

Guo Jing sternly said, “How can the Governor say that? Xiangyang exists and we exist; Xiangyang falls and we fall!”

Huang Rong saw that the situation was precarious and if Lu Wenhuan suddenly gave the order to retreat, the troops would be thrown into confusion and Xiangyang would be overrun. She shouted, “If you dare to say anything about retreating I’ll bore three holes through your body!” Lu Wenhuan’s guards came up to block her but she swept across with her leg and the guards fell backwards.

Guo Jing shouted, “Let’s go up and repulse the enemy together! If we don’t fight to the death, how can we consider ourselves true men?” The soldiers all respected Guo Jing; hearing him shout with determination, they agreed and grabbed their weapons, sprinting to the edge of the walls to fight the oncoming enemy troops. General Wang Jian hollered, “We must defend the city tenaciously, the Mongols can’t hold on any more!”

A Mongol officer shouted, “Everyone listen – The Khan has decreed that the first man up the city wall shall be the Lord of Xiangyang!” The Mongol troops cheered and the whole body of soldiers rushed forward without regard for their lives. Meanwhile an officer came forward with a red flag bearing the decree. Guo Jing grabbed a metal bow and shot an arrow which flashed through the air. The officer was hit and he immediately fell off his horse. The Mongolians called out in surprise and their morale was deflated. Before long, another battalion arrived at the foot of the city.

Yelu Qi took a long spear and ran to Guo Jing, saying, “Father- and Mother-in-law, the Mongolians are still not withdrawing, I would like to get out of the city and engage them.”

Guo Jing said, “Yes! Take four thousand soldiers with you. But be careful.” Yelu Qi turned around and descended from the wall. Before long the battle drums were sounded and Yelu Qi together with one thousand Beggar Clan members and three thousand soldiers charged out of the city in full battle gear.

At the north gate the Mongol troops were in a desperate situation; when they saw the oncoming Song troops charging towards them, they fled immediately. Yelu Qi’s regiment pursued them. Suddenly the Mongolian troops fired three canon shots and twenty thousand soldiers surged forward and surrounded Yelu Qi’s four thousand troops.

The three thousand soldiers had good training and good martial arts and were very brave. Together with the one thousand Beggar Clan members, they were not intimidated even though they were surrounded. Guo Jing, Huang Rong, Lu Wenhuan and Wang Jian were watching the ongoing battle below but saw that the Song battalion’s formation was still orderly even though they were fighting one against five. In the darkness the weapons flashed under the torches’ light and it seemed like a hundred thousand silver ants dancing. It was a bloody battle!

The Mongol armies were now using twenty thousand troops to hold down Yelu Qi’s four thousand troops and another ten thousand soldiers to scale the city wall.

Guo Jing saw that Yelu Qi's troops were trapped outside the city and the Mongolians were sending even more reinforcements. Then he ordered the Wu brothers to leave a gap and allow the Mongolians to get onto the city walls. The thousands of Mongol soldiers at the foot of the city thought that they had broken the defenses and they cheered.

Lu Wenhuan's face turned pale and he trembled uncontrollably. He was saying, "Hero Guo, How... how... how can this be good? We should... should..."

Guo Jing did not reply and saw that about five thousand troops had already ascended the city wall then he waved his black command flag. The drums sounded and Zhu Ziliu and Wu Santong suddenly appeared and ambushed the enemy, closing the gap and stopping the enemy's invasion. The five thousand soldiers were trapped inside the city.

At this time some of the Song soldiers were trapped outside the city while the Mongol soldiers were trapped inside. Fierce fighting was still going on at the east, west and south gates and the soldiers were shouting unceasingly.

The Khan was sitting atop a small hill directing the battle himself, and beside him were more than two hundred battle drums, producing deafening noise. A man could hardly hear himself over the din. The dead and the injured were lying everywhere and the blood covered the armour and weapons. The Khan had experienced many battles and conquered many lands even into Europe; many armies flee on sighting his armies. This time, however, he witnessed a crushing setback and he was surprised, thinking, "Everyone says the Southerners are weak and useless, but these people are no weaker than my armies!"

It was the third watch now and the moon and stars were shining brightly, illuminating the Earth. All was calm and still except the thousands of people fighting to the death for this city.

They fought late into the night and the losses on both sides were heavy and victory was still undecided. The Song soldiers occupied an advantageous position while the Mongols were superior in manpower.

Suddenly the soldiers at the front called out and a squad of Song soldiers charged out and rushed to the small hill. The Khan's personal guards all fired a volley of arrows to hinder them. Mengke looked down and saw a Song general carrying two spears and riding a large horse moving swiftly on the battlefield and could not be blocked. The arrows flew towards him like torrents of rain but he blocked all of them. Mengke waved



his left hand and the drumming stopped. He asked around, “This person is so brave and fierce, who is he?”

A white-haired general said, “Your Majesty, that person is Guo Jing. Years ago Genghis Khan made him the Golden Knife Prince Consort (Jing Dao Fu Ma) and he greatly contributed to the western campaign.”

Mengke called out in dismay. “Ah, so it’s him! He really lives up to his reputation!”

Mengke’s generals, hearing him praise Guo Jing so highly, were angered. Four of them yelled out, grabbed their weapons and charged towards him.

Guo Jing saw that these four people were tall and their horses large. Two of them wore white head gear and the other two wore red head gear. Their voices were like rumbling thunder and their horses were swiftly closing in on him. He raised a spear and chopped down, cutting the saber of one of the generals into two and pierced him in the chest with the other spear. Another two thrust out their spears and tried to block Guo Jing’s spears. The last general thrust his Snake Spear towards Guo Jing’s abdomen. All four of them were using long weapons and he could not turn in time to face the last spear, so he released his spears and avoided the spear thrust at his abdomen. He then grabbed the other two generals’ spears and snatched them away like a bolt of lightning. The two generals were well known warriors of the Mongolian armies but how could they resist Guo Jing’s extraordinary strength? They felt their arms go numb and Guo Jing quickly turned the spears around and thrust them towards their chests. The spears could not penetrate the strong armour but the blow caused them to cough up blood and fall from their horses.

\*The white head-gear is the rank insignia of a regimental (the thousand men) commander while the red head-gear is the rank insignia of a battalion (one thousand men) commander.

The last general was very brave and although he saw his three comrades die, he still attacked with his spear. Guo Jing avoided his thrust again and smashed down heavily on his helmet, crushing his skull.

Everyone saw Guo Jing kill four brave generals within a few seconds and became frightened. Even though they were in front of the Khan’s chariot, they did not dare step forward to fight him; they could only fire arrows hoping to ward him off. Guo Jing’s horse galloped up the small hill but hundreds of spears formed a wall in front of the

Khan so he could not get closer. Suddenly his horse was struck by two arrows and collapsed; the Mongol soldiers cheered and swarmed forward.

However Guo Jing leaped up and pierced a company commander (Bai Fu Zhang) and jumped onto his horse. He swept his spear about forcefully and killed more than ten guards.

He dashed about wildly and the soldiers around him fled. He could kill at will amidst the hundreds of troops and the Mongol soldiers could not handle him. Mengke frowned and commanded, "Whoever kills Guo Jing will be rewarded with ten thousand taels of gold and a triple promotion!"

Guo Jing saw that the situation was dangerous and he realized he could not reach the Khan. He killed a few more troops nearby and quickly shot an arrow towards Mengke. Although the arrow was not shot with great strength, it flashed through the air like a lightning bolt and flew straight towards Mengke. The guards were stunned and two company commanders quickly used their bodies to shield the Khan. The arrow sliced right through the first and lodged in the second's chest. The two of them were stuck together but they did not fall.

When Mengke saw this, his face turned pale. His guards surrounded him and they retreated down the hill.

At this time many Mongol soldiers shouted. A body of Song soldiers charged out and the leader wielded two metal oars and swung them around fiercely; it was the Fisherman (the Secret Fisherman from Si Shui 'si shui yu yin'). Huang Rong saw that Guo Jing was not doing well and was worried. She sent the Fisherman together with 2,000 men as reinforcements. The Mongols saw their Khan retreating, causing their battle formation to crumble.

Huang Rong saw everything clearly and commanded, "Everybody, yell that the Khan is dead!" The soldiers cheered, "The Khan is dead! The Khan is dead!" The Xiangyang troops had fought with the Mongolians for many years so had picked up some Mongolian words; now they were shouting and yelling in Mongolian.

When the Mongol troops heard this, they turned around and saw their Khan's Banner Party retreating hastily. They thought their Khan really was dead, so they discarded their weapons and quickly ran off.

Huang Rong ordered the soldiers to pursue them and opened the north gate. Thirty thousand soldiers charged out of the city. Yelu Qi's four thousand men had decreased to half and the remainder chased the enemy together. The Mongol troops, however, were well-trained and withdrew in a swift and orderly fashion, so the Song troops could not catch up. But the five thousand Mongol soldiers trapped in Xiangyang could not escape and were all killed.

When the enemy had gone, it was already morning. This battle was fought for a whole 24 hours and the sand was stained with blood. The bodies piled up into small mountains. Damaged weapons, broken flags and dead horses littered the battlefield.

The casualty rate was forty thousand for the Mongolians and around twenty-three thousand for the defenders of Xiangyang. This is the worst defeat the Mongolians suffered since the beginning of the southern campaign.

Although the defenders of Xiangyang managed to drive away the enemy forces, Xiangyang was filled with mourning; mothers crying over their sons and wives crying over their husbands.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong did not rest immediately but went to survey the four gates to console and praise the soldiers. They then went to visit Zhou Botong and Lu Wushuang and found that they had largely recovered. Zhou Botong could not tolerate being in bed for too long and he was already pacing around restlessly. When Guo Jing and Huang Rong saw this they laughed. Finally they went back home for a good day's sleep.

The next morning, Guo Jing went to the government office to discuss the military situation with Lu Wenhuan. Suddenly a soldier reported that a Mongolian legion (ten thousand men) was heading towards the north gate. Lu Wenhuan was shocked, "What... they have just left... why are they back? This... this can't be happening!"

Guo Jing immediately went up to the city wall to take a look. The enemy stopped several li (1li/0.5 km) away and did not attack. One thousand workers, after some time, put together a ten storey high wooden tower.

By now Huang Yaoshi, Huang Rong, Yideng, Zhu Ziliu and company were observing the enemy and saw them building a tower. They could not figure out what they were up to. Zhu Ziliu said, "If they're building this tower to spy on the city it's too far out to see anything from there. Moreover, if we fire flaming arrows, the tower will be destroyed, what use is that?" Huang Rong frowned and thought deeply but could not come up with any reasonable explanation. The people around her were equally puzzled. Zhu Ziliu

continued, “Could it be that they can’t defeat us so they’re building some sort of prayer tower? Or are they trying to perform some witchcraft?”

Guo Jing said, “I was in the Mongolian armed forces for a long time, yet I’ve never seen anything like that before.”

As they were talking, they saw the workers digging a deep and broad moat around the tower and used the mud dug out to form some sort of wall. Huang Yaoshi said angrily, “Xiangyang is the hometown of Zhuge Liang. The Mongolians dare to try some silly tricks here; they’re really looking down on us.”

Then the horns blew and the drums sounded. The legion came up and took up positions on the left of the tower. Then another legion came forward and took up positions on the right. Finally another two legions took up positions at the front and back of the tower respectively. Altogether there were 40,000 soldiers surrounding the tower. The formation spread over a few li and footmen, cavalry, archers and infantry formed up together, looking like a metal wall around the tower.

A trumpet was blown and the drumming stopped; the soldiers were silent and two horses came up to the foot of the tower. The riders got off and went up the tower together. It was some distance away and they could not be seen clearly, but it looked like a male and female.

The people were still wondering what was going on when Huang Rong suddenly screamed and fainted, falling backwards. The people quickly revived her and asked together, “What? What?” Huang Rong’s face was deathly pale and she trembled as she said, “It’s Xiang’er...it’s Xiang’er.” Everyone was stunned.

Zhu Ziliu asked, “Madam Guo, what did you see?” Huang Rong said, “I didn’t see her face clearly but by intuition I deduced that it must be her. The Mongolians can’t take this city so they came up with this evil plan. This... this is totally despicable... terrible!” Huang Yaoshi and Zhu Ziliu heard this and were speechless; their faces turned pale with anger.

Guo Jing arrived and he asked, “How on Earth did Xiang’er end up there? And how are the Mongolians despicable?”

Huang Rong finally got up and said, “Brother Jing, Xiang’er was unfortunately captured by the Mongolians. They built this tower and filled the base with dry grass and forced Xiang’er up the tower. They’re trying to force you to surrender. If you don’t they will

burn her alive to wrench our hearts and destroy our resolve so that we can't defend the city properly."

Guo Jing was shocked and furious and asked, "How the hell was Xiang'er captured?"

Huang Rong said, "We were busy fighting the enemy for the past several days, so I didn't tell you about this in case you lost your concentration." She then narrated how Guo Xiang was captured by the Golden Wheel Monk (Jinlun Fawang) and how Yang Guo went missing at the bottom of the gorge in Passionless Valley.

After she finished, Guo Jing frowned and said, "Rong'er, it was wrong of you to do that. Without determining if Guo'er is dead or alive how could you just leave the valley like that?" Guo Jing had always respected his wife and never scolded her in front of others, but this time he spoke sternly to her in front of everyone, causing her to blush.

Yideng said, "Madam Guo was suffering an intense chill and could have died from hypothermia. We believed Yang Guo was not there. Besides the young lady had been captured so we quickly gave chase. You can't blame Madam Guo."

Guo Jing did not dare to argue with Yideng and only said sternly, "This girl Guo Xiang has always caused a lot of trouble. If anything happened to Guo'er how could we be at ease? Just let the Mongolians burn her."

Huang Rong did not say anything but descended from the city wall. The people were all discussing how they could rescue Guo Xiang when they suddenly saw the city gate left open and a single horse galloping north. The rider was of course Huang Rong. Everyone was shocked and Guo Jing, Huang Yaoshi, Yideng and company mounted their horses and gave chase.

They galloped near the tower and stopped out of range of the archers. They saw a young pretty girl tied to a wooden pole at the top of the tower. It was indeed Guo Xiang.

Although Guo Jing said she always created trouble, but she was, after all, his daughter; how could he not be anxious? He said loudly, "Xiang'er, don't worry, Father and Mother are coming to rescue you!" His internal strength was very solid and his voice was clearly heard at the top of the tower. Guo Xiang was already getting dizzy from the hot sun but when she heard her father's voice, she happily shouted, "Father, Mother!"

Fawang laughed, "Hero Guo, if you want me to release her it's very easy. But do you have the courage?"

Guo Jing had always been calm and steady; he was even calmer in precarious situations and was not angered by what Fawang said. He said, “Fawang, if you have a problem, just tell me.”

Fawang said, “If you have the benevolence of a parent, come up here with your hands bound and exchange yourself for your daughter.” He knew Guo Jing had a high sense of public duty and would not lose Xiangyang for his daughter, so he purposely said this to provoke him into walking into the trap.

But Guo Jing did not fall for it and said, “If it’s me you want, why create trouble for my daughter? Since the Mongols fear me, how can I let you kill me so easily?”

Fawang laughed coldly, “Everyone says Hero Guo’s martial arts are very outstanding and his bravery is unmatched; but he’s actually a coward who’s afraid of death.” His attempt to provoke him might have worked on others, but Guo Jing just smiled.

However Wu Santong and the Fisherman were provoked by Fawang and they waved their metal hammer and metal ores respectively and surged forward. The Mongol archers were already poised to strike and were only waiting for them to get closer to shoot them down. Reverend Yideng saw that this was not good and jumped off his horse and somersaulted, landing in front of their horses. He waved his sleeves and obstructed the horses, saying, “Go back!” The two had gone forth only because of a burst of anger, but they knew that there would be no return once they went forward. When they saw their master blocking them, they retreated immediately. The Mongols saw this old monk catch up with the horses and could not help but cheer.

Fawang said, “Your daughter is beautiful and intelligent, I like her very much. I want to take her as my disciple and pass down all my skills to her. But the Khan ordered her to be burned alive if you don’t surrender. You’ll be sad and I’ll feel that it’s such a pity, please consider this carefully.”

Guo Jing snorted but saw about forty soldiers standing at the foot of the tower with fire torches who would immediately set the tower ablaze on Fawang’s command. The forty thousand soldiers guarded the tower tightly, how could anyone penetrate their formation? Even if they got through, the soldiers could just set the tower on fire, then, could they rescue Guo Xiang on time?

Guo Jing was with the Mongolian armed forces for a long time so he knew how cruel the Mongolians could be. When they conquered a city, they could kill hundreds of thousands of women and children in a day. Burning Guo Xiang alive was like killing an ant

to them. He raised his head and saw that his daughter was thin and pale and was greatly distressed. He shouted, “Xiang’er, you’re a good girl of Great Song, don’t be afraid. If Father and Mother can’t save you today, we’ll kill this bald bastard to avenge you! Understand?” Guo Xiang cried and nodded, saying, “Father, Mother, I’m not afraid!”

Guo Jing said, “This is my good daughter!” He took out a metal bow and shot three arrows simultaneously, hitting three soldiers at the top of the tower and the arrows went right through them. They screamed and fell to the ground. Guo Jing’s archery skills were taught by the legendary Mongolian General Jebe [Zhe-be] and he’d practiced for many years. He was standing out of range of the Mongolian archers yet he managed to hit the 3 men on the tower. The Mongol troops yelled and quickly raised their shields to protect themselves. Guo Jing said, “Let’s go!” He turned the horse around and went back to the city.

They got back up to the city wall. Huang Rong blankly stared at the tower and her heart was beating rapidly.

Yideng said, “Their formation is solid, if we want to save Xiang’er we must first break and destroy the formation of the forty thousand men.”

Huang Yaoshi said, “Exactly.” He thought for a while then said, “Let’s use the “Twenty-eight Star Formation” and battle them.”

Huang Rong hung her head and said, “Even if we win, they will set the tower alight, what do we do then?”

Guo Jing said, “We’ll try our best. Whether Xiang’er lives or dies we’ll leave it to fate. Father-in-law, how do we use the “Twenty-eight Star Formation”?”

Huang Yaoshi laughed, “The formation’s changes are complicated. When I saw the “Big Dipper Formation” of the Quanzhen Sect, I thought deeply and came up with this formation to counter their “Big Dipper Formation”.”

Yideng said, “Old Heretic Huang is a master of the Five Elements so I think this “Twenty-eight Star Formation” must be incredible.”

Huang Yaoshi said, “My formation was originally intended for a fight consisting of only a few dozen Wulin fighters. I never expected to use it in a battle involving thousands of

men. But apart from a few changes, it can be used roughly as is. Unfortunately we lost the two eagles.” Yideng said, “Let’s hope for the best.”

Huang Yaoshi said, “If the eagles had not been killed by that bald bastard, we could send them in to rescue Xiang’er by air when the formation is in action. This “Twenty-eight Star Formation” follows the changes of the Five Elements and we need five skilled fighters to head this formation. We already have suitable people for the north, south, east and central. But Zhou Botong is injured so he can’t fill the last position. If only Yang Guo were here. His martial arts are not below Ouyang Feng’s, but where can we find him now? This last position is really giving me a headache.”

Guo Jing looked at the tower then looked far out into the north. His heart flew to the Passionless Valley, and muttered, “I’m worried about Guo’er, I don’t even know if he’s alive.”

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On that day Yang Guo was totally heartbroken and thought he would never see Xiao Longnu again and so he jumped down into the gorge, wanting to smash himself up and end it all. However after falling for some time there was a splash and he found himself in a deep lake. He had fallen from a great height and so he sank deeply into the water. Suddenly he noticed a light in front of him which looked like an underwater cave. He wanted to look closely at it but the water’s buoyant pressure was too high and he rose back to the surface. At this time Guo Xiang also fell into the lake.

Yang Guo did not hesitate and immediately dragged Guo Xiang to the surface and pulled her to the bank and asked, “Sister, how did you fall down here?”

Guo Xiang said, “I saw you jump down and so I followed suit.”

Yang Guo shook his head saying, “Nonsense! Are you not afraid of death?”

Guo Xiang laughed, “If you’re not afraid, neither am I.”

Yang Guo’s heart trembled and he thought, “Don’t tell me that at such a young age she already has deep feelings for me?” He shivered slightly.

She then took out the last needle saying, “Brother Yang, on that day when you gave me the three golden needles, you said I could ask for a wish for every needle and you would promise to do it. Today I’m telling you my third wish: Whether or not you get to



meet Sister-in-law, you will not commit suicide.” She then placed the needle on his palm.

Yang Guo looked at the needle and said, “You came all the way from Xiangyang just to ask for this?”

Guo Xiang was delighted and said, “Yup. You’re a man of your word. You won’t break your promise to me.”

Yang Guo sighed. He had just gone from life to death, then from death back to life. No matter how strong his will to die, he would not repeatedly attempt suicide. He examined Guo Xiang and saw that she was shivering and her teeth were chattering. Her face was void of colour. He picked some dried leaves and wanted to start a fire but their flints were wet and rendered useless, so he said, “Sister, circulate your internal energy to get rid of the cold so you won’t get a chill.”

Guo Xiang was still worried and asked, “So you promise not to attempt suicide again?” Yang Guo said, “I promise!” Guo Xiang was overjoyed and said, “Let’s circulate our energy together.”

They sat down together and circulated their chi. Yang Guo had practiced his internal energy on the “Chilled Jade Bed” when he was young and did not fear the cold so he placed his palm on Guo Xiang’s back and sent a stream of ‘yang’ chi to her. Before long Guo Xiang felt warm and stopped shivering.

When she was well-rested, Yang Guo asked how she ended up here in the Passionless Valley. Guo Xiang told him. Yang Guo angrily said, “That Fawang is so ruthless, when we get out of here I’m going to beat him to a pulp.” Then they saw a large white eagle crashing down into the lake, appearing to be severely injured. Guo Xiang was surprised and said, “That’s my family’s eagle.” Then another eagle flew down and landed near them after previously retrieving its injured mate and Yang Guo placed Guo Xiang on its back. He thought the eagle would be back to pick him up so he waited for some time but it did not show up. Little did he know that the eagle was dead.

Yang Guo looked around and saw a few bee hives on a large tree. The bees were larger than normal and were of the same species that Xiao Longnu reared back at the Ancient Tomb. Yang Guo exclaimed in surprise and stood rooted to the ground. He then went over to examine the hives closely. He saw that they were man-made and the workmanship looked like Xiao Longnu’s doing.

He thought, “Could Long’er have lived here after she jumped down?” He paced around the bank and felt that the gorge was like the bottom of a deep well. The place hardly received any sunlight.

He walked around and found that some of the trees had much of their bark stripped off and then he saw some flowers and stones arranged neatly. He suddenly became happy and worried at the same time. His heart beat rapidly as he felt that Xiao Longnu must have lived here before but after sixteen years he did not know what might have happened to her. He had never believed in divine intervention but now he was consumed with anxiety and knelt down and prayed, “O’ Heaven, please let me meet Long’er again.”

After praying, he looked around again but did not find any more traces of her. He sat under a tree and thought, “Even if Long’er is dead there would surely be some remains left behind, unless they have sunk to the bottom of the lake.” He then remembered the light beneath the lake’s surface and wanted to explore it, so he jumped into the lake.

He shouted, “I must get to the bottom of this. I’ll never give up until I find out what happened to her.” He dived into the lake and it got colder as he went deeper. Soon the water was icy-cold. Yang Guo did not mind the cold but the buoyant pressure was too high and he could not dive any deeper. He was now out of breath so he surfaced and grabbed a large stone and tried again.

This time he sank rapidly and saw the light again. He quickly swam towards it and strangely felt a swift current sweeping him into a cave. He threw the stone aside and found that the cave floor was going upwards. Soon he broke the surface with a splash. He saw brilliant sunlight and the fragrance of flowers filled his nose. It was like another world. He looked around and saw beautiful flowers and bright green grass – it was as if he entered a large garden. However the place was still and quiet and there was no one around. He got out of the water and saw a thatched hut several meters away.

He dashed forwards but slowed down after a few steps and thought, “What if I don’t find out anything here?” His heart sank and feared that his last hope would soon be dashed. He stopped outside the hut and listened carefully but there seemed to be no one inside. He only heard the bees buzzing.

After a while he plucked up his courage and trembled, saying, “I’ve come for a visit. Please pardon my intrusion.” He repeated this but there was still no response. He lightly pushed open the door and it creaked open.

Stepping in, he looked around and was stunned. The furniture was simple but the house was sparkling clean. There was only a table and chair but its arrangement was very familiar, exactly the same as the arrangement in the Ancient Tomb. He did not examine the place and naturally turned left and he saw a small room. After passing the small room, he found himself looking into a bigger room. In the room the bed, table and chair also had exactly the same arrangement as in the Ancient Tomb. The only difference was that the furniture in the Ancient Tomb was made of stone while the furniture here is made of wood.

On the left was a bed which looked like the “Cold Jade Bed” he’d practiced his Internal Strength on. In the middle, a long rope was suspended through the room like the one he used to practice his Qing Gong (Lightness Skill). Near the window was a small stool which was like the one where he learned to read and write. On the left was a rough wooden cabinet; when he opened it he saw children’s clothes made of tree bark which was exactly of the same design Xiao Longnu made for him years ago. He walked into the room and touched the bed. The tears had already welled up in his eyes but now he could not hold them back and the tears rolled down his cheeks and fell onto the bed.

Suddenly he felt a smooth hand lightly stroking his hair, gently asking, “Guo’er, what’s making you unhappy?”

The tone and the manner his hair was stroked was similar to how Xiao Longnu cajoled him when he was young. Yang Guo jerked around and saw a fair and extremely beautiful girl standing gracefully in front of him. She looked exactly the same as the Xiao Longnu he thought of daily and missed terribly for the past sixteen years.

The two of them stared at each other then exclaimed “Ah!” and embraced each other tightly. It seemed so real yet it seemed like a dream.

After a long while Yang Guo finally broke the silence. He said, “Long’er, you’ve not changed a single bit. But I have aged.” Xiao Longnu stared at him and said, “No, it’s just that my Guo’er has grown up.”

Xiao Longnu was slightly older than Yang Guo by a few years but she lived in the Ancient Tomb since young and learned internal strength techniques from her master, which required her to purge her emotions. Yang Guo however more readily expressed his emotions, so at their wedding the two already looked about the same age.

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The “Jade Maiden Skill’s” cultivating techniques from the Ancient Tomb sect concentrates on the essential rules of the “Twelve Nothingness and Twelve Plentifulness” which support each other. The ‘Twelve Nothingness’ refers to the restrictions regarding thought, love, desires, matters, words, laughter, worries, fun, happiness, anger, good and evil. The ‘Twelve Nothingness’ will inevitably become part of one’s life. The ‘Twelve Plentifulness’ states: that if one thinks too much, the concentration will be disrupted. If one loves too much, the energy will break down. If one desires too much, one will lose one’s knowledge. If one has too many matters at hand, one will look weary in appearance. If one talks too much, it will affect one’s breathing. If one laughs too much, one will strain one’s organs. If one worries too much, it will affect one’s nerves. If one plays too much, it will affect one’s ideas. If one is too happy, it will result in complacency and trouble. If one is too angry, it will affect one’s pulse. If one experiences too much good, one will despair. If one experiences too much evil, one will invite chaos. If one does not rid the ‘Twelve Plentifulness’, one would not reach enlightenment.

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Xiao Longnu had practiced this skill since young and had no happiness or worries, so she was even more emotionless than the founder Lin Chaoying. Once Yang Guo entered the Ancient Tomb things changed and as they got closer she found it harder to follow the ‘less speech’, ‘less action’, ‘less happiness’ and ‘less worries’ rules. After their marriage they were separated for sixteen years. Yang Guo traveled around and roamed Jianghu and missed her terribly. Xiao Longnu, on the other hand, was forced to live in this deserted valley and could not totally avoid thinking of him. She found herself practicing these principles again to combat her boredom. When they finally met again it appeared as though Yang Guo was older than her.

Xiao Longnu had not spoken for the past sixteen years and now when she started speaking again she was not very fluent. So they did not speak and just stared at each other smiling. Yang Guo could not contain his excitement any longer and took her hand and ran out of the hut, saying, “Long’er, I’m extremely happy.” He jumped up into a big tree and somersaulted several times.

In his excitement he forgot everything and somersaulted just like he did when he was young in the Ancient Tomb. He never thought about this before and never expected to do something like this as a middle-aged man. The only difference was that his qing gong (lightness skill) was excellent and he could somersault effortlessly. Xiao Longnu laughed heartily and cast all the ‘less laughter’ and ‘less happiness’ into the wind.

Xiao Longnu took out a handkerchief. Yang Guo finished somersaulting and walked to her grinning. Xiao Longnu would always wipe his sweat with a handkerchief; but now his face was not flushed and he was not breathless, of course he was not sweating. But she wiped his forehead all the same.

Yang Guo took the handkerchief and saw that it was made of tree bark and was rather rough and thought she'd had an uncomfortable life here and was very regretful. He stroked her hair gently and said, "Long'er, you have suffered much these past sixteen years."

Xiao Longnu sighed and said, "If I hadn't grown up in the Ancient Tomb, the past sixteen years would not have been easy for me."

They sat shoulder to shoulder beside a stone and talked about past events. Yang Guo asked her every single detail. As Xiao Longnu talked for a while, her speech became more fluent; then she slowly narrated her story of the past sixteen years.

That day when Yang Guo threw the half-pill down in the gorge Xiao Longnu knew he did not want to be left alone since her condition was supposedly fatal. That night she thought carefully and decided to die first and kill off his thoughts of suicide so that he would neutralize the "Passionless Poison". She was afraid that if she left traces of her suicide it would only hasten his suicide. She thought for half a night and then she finally went to the Broken Heart Cliff and carved the words. She purposely made a sixteen-year long appointment and then she jumped into the gorge. At that time she thought that if Yang Guo's life could be saved, after sixteen years he would have forgotten her and dispelled his thoughts of suicide.

When she said this, Yang Guo sighed, saying, "Why did you think of sixteen years? If you said eight years wouldn't we have been reunited eight years ago?"

Xiao Longnu said, "I'm aware of your deep feelings for me and eight years would be too short to ease your feelings. Ah, I didn't expect that even after sixteen years you would still jump down."

Yang Guo laughed, "That's the advantage of having such profound feelings. If I got over you and only cried at the Broken Heart Cliff then went off, I would never see you again."

Xiao Longnu said, "This is fate." Both of them came back from death to life and were finally reunited, so they were very thankful for their good fortune.

They felt sad for a while. Yang Guo then asked, “Then what happened after you jumped down?”

Xiao Longnu said, “I was swept unconscious into the cave and carried to this place, so I lived here. This place is devoid of animals but there were plenty of fish in the lake and fruits on the trees but there was no cloth so I had to use tree bark to make clothes.”

Yang Guo said, “When you were struck by the “Soul Freezing Needles” and the poison entered your major accupoints, your condition was near-fatal. How did you get well down here?” Yang Guo looked carefully at her and saw her snow-white face had no traces of blood and the black cloud between her eyes had disappeared.

Xiao Longnu said, “After I lived here for several days the poison took effect and my whole body was on fire and I almost could not take it, but I remembered that on our wedding night you taught me how to reverse my chi flow on the “Chilled Jade Bed”. It couldn’t neutralize the poison but could relieve the symptoms. The water here is icy cold and the chill could penetrate the bones, so I got back into the water and stayed for a while and found that the effects were amazing. Thereafter I often went to the lake’s bank and looked up, hoping to get some news from you. One day a few Jade Bees flew down to the lake. They were left behind by the Old Urchin (Zhou Botong). I treated them like friends and built a few nests for them. Soon they multiplied. I consumed the Jade Bees’ honey and the white fish in the lake and found my discomfort decreasing. So the Jade Bees’ honey and the white fish have anti-poison properties and when consumed as food would increase the time interval between the poison’s reactions. At first it reacted twice a day, then once every few days, then once every few months, then for the past five or six years it never reacted again, so I guess I’m cured now.”

Yang Guo happily said, “So good will be rewarded with good. That year if you hadn’t given the Jade Bees to the Old Urchin he wouldn’t have brought them here and you wouldn’t have been saved.”

Xiao Longnu said, “When I got better, I missed you but the cliff walls were several hundred meters high and were straight and sheer, how could I get up? So I used the thorns on the flowers and tattooed the words ‘I’m at the bottom of Passionless Valley’ on the bees’ wings. I tattooed several thousand bees but I got no response so I feared that I would never see you again.”

Yang Guo slapped his leg and said, “I’m too careless. Every time I came to the Passionless Valley I always saw the bees but I never caught one to examine it or I could have kept you from a few years of misery.”

Xiao Longnu laughed, “This is just a plan I used because I couldn’t think of anything else. Actually who would think a bee would have words on its wings? The words are also so small; even if a hundred of them flew past your eyes you wouldn’t notice the words. I was just hoping that a bee might get trapped in a spider’s web and then you would see the words. When you saw them you would remember our relationship and rescue me.” What she did not know was that the words were discovered by Zhou Botong, who did nothing, and the meaning was deciphered by Huang Rong when she saw them.

They chatted for half a day and Xiao Longnu went back into the hut to grill a big fish. The lake’s water was very cold and the white fish were smallish but tasty and filling. Yang Guo ate the fish and felt some warmth in his stomach, making it very comfortable. He then told her what he did for the past sixteen years. He roamed Jianghu and did many heroic deeds so his life was more action-packed than Xiao Longnu’s who lived in the lonely valley. Xiao Longnu never bothered about all the action and was contented with just looking at Yang Guo. So she smiled and listened to his exciting adventures and forgot everything he said soon after. Yang Guo however was very inquisitive and asked everything, including how she caught the fish and built the hut and showed great interest in every detail, making it seem like the small valley was actually more interesting than the whole world. The two of them talked throughout the night and into the next morning before sleeping. They woke up in the afternoon and Yang Guo said, “Long’er, should we stay here until we’re old or should we go back to the wonderful world?”

Xiao Longnu would have preferred to live here peacefully with Yang Guo but she knew he liked noise and excitement. Although she loved him deeply she was reluctant to leave this place so she said, “Let’s go up and take a look, if things are bad out there we can always come back, but... but it’d be difficult to get up.”

They dived back into the lake, through the cave and went back to the bank. They saw a long rope going all the way up and many random footprints by the bank. There was even a makeshift fireplace which had not died out. Yang Guo said, “Ah, some people came to look for us but couldn’t get past the lake.” He walked around and saw some words carved on a large tree which said, “Yideng, Yaoshi, Botong, Yinggu, Rong, Ying and Wushuang couldn’t find Yang Guo so we went back.”

Yang Guo was touched and said, “They’ve not forgotten me.” Xiao Longnu said, “No one would forget you.” Yang Guo said, “Although they came here, they did not fall into the lake with great speed and hence couldn’t go deep enough to see the underwater cave. If I also came down with a rope, I wouldn’t have been able to find you either.” Xiao

Longnu said, “I already said all this coincidence is due to fate.” Yang Guo shook his head and laughed, “This is called ‘With sincerity, one can cut rocks or gold’.”

He tugged the rope to test it and it felt firmly attached, so he said, “Let me go up first to see if that Fawang is still there.” But he remembered that Reverend Yideng, Island Master Huang and Zhou Botong were all present so Fawang must be miles away by now. Then he asked, “Do you still have any martial skills? If you can’t climb, I can carry you up.” Xiao Longnu smiled, “Although I didn’t improve even slightly for the past sixteen years, I still retain much of my old skills.” Yang Guo laughed. He grabbed the rope and jumped, moving several meters a second. Xiao Longnu followed suit and they got out in no time.

They stood side-by-side at the Broken Heart Cliff and looked at the words carved into the rock face by Xiao Longnu years ago; it seemed like a lifetime ago to them. They looked at each other and giggled with joy and forgot all their troubles of sixteen years ago.

Yang Guo plucked a Dragon Girl Flower and placed it in her hair and the color contrasted with her face beautifully. He could not decide if the flower added vibrancy to her or she added beauty to the flower.

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Huang Yaoshi was explaining the “Twenty-eight Star Formation” at the top of Xiangyang’s city wall for the battle with Fawang. Guo Jing found Lu Wenhuan and requested him to give the order for Huang Yaoshi to take command of the soldiers. At this time many of the heroes who attended the ‘Heroes’ Meet had already left, but there were still many able people in the city.

Huang Yaoshi said, “The Mongolians are using 40,000 soldiers to surround the tower. If we use more soldiers to defeat them it wouldn’t require much skill. So we’ll also use forty thousand soldiers. In Sun Zi’s Art of War, using surrounding the enemy when you outnumber him ten to one is no big deal, but it needs some skill to surround the enemy one on one.” He stood on the command post and said, “This “Twenty-eight Star Formation” follows the Five Elements.” He waved the command flag and briefed them. Then he said, “The changes are complex and you can’t be familiar with this in a single day. So for this battle we must appoint five skilled martial arts experts familiar with the Five Elements to command the five divisions. Everyone is to obey their commands to carry out the formation.” They all waited eagerly.



Huang Yaoshi said, "The central division represents Earth and it shall be commanded by Guo Jing with eight thousand troops. Its mission is to rescue Guo Xiang and not to battle the enemy. All the soldiers are to carry a bag of sand on their backs to put out the fire if necessary." Guo Jing received the order and stood aside.

Huang Yaoshi continued, "The south division represents Fire and it shall be commanded by Reverend Yideng with eight thousand troops. One thousand men will escort the commander and the other seven thousand will be split into 7 battalions commanded by Zhu Ziliu, Wu Santong, The Fisherman, the Wu brothers, Yelu Yan and Wanyan Ping." Reverend Yideng accepted the command.

Huang Yaoshi continued, "The north division represents Water and it shall be commanded by Huang Rong with eight thousand troops. One thousand men will escort the commander and the other seven thousand will be split into seven battalions commanded by Yelu Qi, Elder Liang, Guo Fu and other senior Beggar Clan members." Huang Rong accepted the command. This division was made up mainly of Beggar Clan members and all were tried and valiant veterans.

Huang Yaoshi then said, "The east division represents Wood and it shall be commanded by me, Old Heretic Huang, and there shall also be eight thousand men under me. All my disciples are dead with the exception of Cheng Ying and Sha Gu, but they are not present." So he appointed six heroes who had attended the 'Heroes' Meet to command the battalions in his division. He said, "The east division shall also be divided into eight battalions of one thousand men each and 1 battalion will escort me."

Finally he appointed the west division's commander, saying, "This division shall be commanded by Quanzhen Sect Leader Li Zhichang..." As he said this, everyone felt that in terms of martial arts, this division's commander had the weakest martial arts among the five divisions. Suddenly someone shouted, "Old Heretic Huang, how could you ignore me?" Everyone turned around and saw Zhou Botong. Huang Yaoshi said, "Brother Zhou, you're injured, you shouldn't exert yourself, I originally wanted to appoint you to this position but..."

Zhou Botong said, "It's such a minor injury; it's not important. I'll take it. Zhi Chang, you dare to vie with me?" Li Zhichang bowed and said, "I do not." Zhou Botong laughed, "Good, I knew you wouldn't dare." He then took the command token from Li Zhichang. Huang Yaoshi just said, "Brother Zhou, be careful. You shall take eight thousand troops and one thousand of them shall be under Yinggu to escort you. The other seven battalions shall be commanded by Li Zhichang and other third Generation Quanzhen disciples. Your division represents Metal."

After appointing the commanders he ordered the sergeant-major to prepare the weapons and equipment. He then waved his command flag and the forty thousand men got into formation. He shouted, "Legend has it that "Twenty-eight Celestial Generals" subdued the Demons long, long ago. Although we are not some Heavenly Army, we shall repel the invaders and protect our land from the Mongolians or we shall die trying!" Everyone cheered like thunder and the five divisions left the city in all directions.

The west division marched out and each soldier carried a wooden pole on his back and they attacked the tower. One thousand of them carried shields and warded off the arrows while the remaining seven thousand threw down their poles and quickly built a structure which followed Huang Yaoshi's diagram based on the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams. Soon they blockaded off the eastern side of the tower.

The west division was made up mainly of Quanzhen disciples and they were familiar with the Dipper Formation, so their swords flashed like lightning and they formed groups of seven and platoons of forty-nine darting left and right, causing the Mongolians to see blurry images and could only fend them off with arrows.

The north division roared in and Huang Rong, together with the Beggars' Clan members, brought hoses with them and they sprayed poison onto the Mongol troops. The poison caused severe pain and corroded the skin. The Mongols could not take it and retreated south.

The south division appeared through a great cloud of smoke and the 8,000 troops led by Yideng attacked with fire. The soldiers had some sort of fire thrower which spewed out flames at the enemy soldiers. The Mongol troops saw that things were really going wrong and were pushed towards the centre. Guo Jing and his eight thousand troops moved forward gradually and when they saw the Mongol soldiers thrown into confusion, they charged straight to the tower.

Suddenly an alarm was sounded and many heads popped up from the ground. The Mongols were also well-versed in warfare and they also placed more than ten thousand troops in ambush. Guo Jing saw this and knew it was a trap. The Mongol troops were already in chaos under the onslaught of the "Twenty-eight Star Formation" and the Song troops were about to reach their objective; but now they could not advance.

The drums rolled like the rumbling thunder and the Song troops were engaged in a bitter fight with the Mongol troops. The soldiers protecting the tower were some of the best archers and their arrows descended like rain and hindered the advance of Guo

Jing's central division. Huang Yaoshi waved his flag and changed the formation; now it was Fire against Wood and Metal against Water.

The "Twenty-eight Star Formation" followed the principles of the Five Elements. The south division's Yideng attacked the centre, Guo Jing's central division attacked the west, Zhou Botong and the Quanzhen Sect attacked the north, Huang Rong and the Beggars' Sect attacked the east and Huang Yaoshi's division attacked the south. The formation's status now was: Fire and Earth, Earth and Metal, Metal and Water, Water and Wood, Wood and Fire. The Song regiment only had forty thousand men but the formation was ingenious and the division commanders were highly skilled fighters. Moreover the Song soldiers were all grateful towards Guo Jing and Huang Rong, so they risked their lives to save his daughter. Even though the Mongolians outnumbered them almost two to one, the Mongolians could not fend them off.

They fought for a long time and Huang Yaoshi waved his flag again. One division withdrew to the central position, Guo Jing's division attacked north again, Yideng's division returned south, one division went west and another attacked the east. The formation changed and now the status was: Wood against Earth, Earth against Water, Water against Fire, Fire against Metal, and Metal against Wood.

The principles of the Five Elements seem mysterious but was actually discovered when the ancient Chinese people studied the changes in the environment. The principles were derived from the Tao of the Yin and Yang, religious worship, medicine and mathematics etc. all depended on these. This was said to be unique in the whole world. The Mongols were brave and fierce warriors and their fighting skills were excellent. But their knowledge of such matters was rather shallow; how could they be a match for someone like Huang Yaoshi? After a few changes, the soldiers guarding the tower became very confused as they saw groups of Song troops moving back and forth and they did not know how to deal with them.

Fawang was watching the battle from atop the tower and was shocked. A long time ago even Huang Rong's "Stone Formation" gave him many difficulties. With Huang Yaoshi being ten times more knowledgeable than Huang Rong, how could he understand what was going on? The "Twenty-eight Star Formation" completely awed him and he saw that the casualties on his side were increasing rapidly. Guo Jing's division was getting closer to the tower every second. Although he had Guo Xiang in his power, he was reluctant to burn her alive. He glanced at her and saw that although she was tied up, her head was raised proudly and she showed no fear. Fawang said, "Little Guo Xiang, get your father to surrender quickly. I'll count from one to ten; if they don't surrender I'll order the tower to be set on fire."

Guo Xiang said, “If you love to count you can count to ten thousand for all I care.”

Fawang angrily said, “You really think I won’t burn you alive?”

Guo Xiang coldly said, “I just think you’re pathetic.”

Fawang shouted, “How?”

Guo Xiang said, “You can’t beat my father and mother, you can’t beat my grandfather, you can’t beat Reverend Yideng, you can’t beat Zhou Botong and you can’t beat my brother Yang Guo. All you’re capable of is to tie me up here. I’m just a small fry in Xiangyang, so I don’t deserve such despicable behavior. Fawang let me give you a piece of advice.”

Fawang gritted his teeth and asked, “What?”

Guo Xiang said, “What use has a person like you got on Earth? Just jump off the tower and go to hell!” Guo Xiang was already past caring about life and death. She had a razor-sharp tongue and she had never lost an argument.

Fawang exploded with rage and screamed, “Guo Jing listen well! If you don’t surrender I’ll burn the tower!”

Guo Jing said, “Do you think I am the sort who will surrender?”

Huang Yaoshi shouted in Mongolian, “Jinlun Fawang, you’re too stupid to beat this enemy. You can only bully small girls and you are not brave enough to fight us with real weapons. How can such a stupid and cowardly man be considered a hero? You were captured by us at the Passionless Valley and you kowtowed to Guo Xiang eighteen times and begged her to release you. You’re an ungrateful bastard and you still dare to call yourself the First Protector of Mongolia?”

The part about kowtowing to Guo Xiang was rubbish. Huang Yaoshi was crafty and brilliant and got Huang Rong to translate all the stuff he just said before the battle and he quickly memorized everything. Now he said it with his chi and everyone heard this clearly through the din and Fawang did not know how to argue. The Mongolians always respected their warriors and despised cowards; now they heard what Huang Yaoshi said, they looked up at the tower with contempt. The two armies were fighting intensely when the Mongolians heard that their commander was such a despicable

man, and their morale fell. The Song troops were all brave and valiant and now had an advantage.

Fawang saw that something was wrong and shouted, “Guo Jing, listen. I’m going to count from one to ten. When I shout ‘10’, your daughter will burn! 1... 2... 3... 4...” He paused slightly after every number and hoped that Guo Jing could not take it and be greatly distressed if he did not surrender.

Guo Jing, Huang Yaoshi, Yideng and Zhou Botong’s divisions heard Fawang counting from the top of the tower. They saw a few hundred soldiers bearing torches at the foot of the tower, only waiting for the command to set everything alight. Everyone was getting anxious and charged toward the tower for all they were worth. But there were a few thousand archers firing arrows from the tower which severely impeded their advance. Under the rain of arrows, people like the Fisherman, Elder Liang and Wu Xiuwen were injured and some third Generation Quanzhen disciples were killed together with dozens of Beggar Clan members. The Song soldiers killed were beyond counting.

Before the battle Huang Rong told Guo Fu to take off the Soft Armour and give it to her grandfather. She expected a tough battle and did not want her father to get hurt in the process of saving Guo Xiang. Huang Yaoshi accepted it but secretly took it off and tricked Zhou Botong into putting it on. So although Zhou Botong was hit by many arrows he was not injured and he found this amusing. He went charging forward and attacked the archers with his palms, causing them to back off.

Then Fawang shouted, “... 8... 9... 10! Good, burn the tower!” In an instant the base of the tower was engulfed in flames and the thick smoke rose into the air. Guo Jing’s eight thousand soldiers all had bags of sand on their backs but they could not get near the tower.

Huang Rong saw the thick black smoke and her face turned white. She waved her flag randomly and disorderly. Yelu Qi went forward to support her and said, “Mother-in-law, go behind the formation and rest, I’ll save Sister Xiang even if it costs me my life.”

At this time a thunderous roar came from afar. Many Mongolian soldiers from behind the formation appeared and attacked Xiangyang from two sides. “Long live the Khan!” The Mongol Khan was personally commanding the assault and the Mongol troops swarmed towards the city.

Guo Jing was carrying a spear and shield and had already advanced within a hundred feet of the tower. The Mongolian archers were unable to hold him off any longer and he looked like he would ascend the tower at any moment. Suddenly he heard a disturbance at the rear of the formation and thought, “Oh no, we’ve been tricked! The city has many soldiers but no able commanders, this is bad!”

When Guo Jing and Huang Yaoshi planned the battle they made sure the city was fully prepared for any sneak attack. But the Mongol soldiers at the tower were exceptionally tough and the Khan ignored the battle at the tower and attacked Xiangyang with his entire army. Guo Jing thought, “Saving the city is more important than saving my daughter!” He said loudly, “Father-in-law, let’s not worry about Xiang’er, we must go back and attack the enemy.”

Huang Yaoshi looked back and saw the smoke rising higher and Fawang walking down the tower, leaving Guo Xiang alone at the top. He decided that he could not sacrifice the whole city for Guo Xiang and sighed, “So be it!” He waved his command flag and the troops headed back to the city.

Guo Xiang, tied on top of the tower, saw that her parents and grandfather would be unable to save her. The heat was getting more intense. She knew the fire was spreading quickly and she would be burned to death soon. She was rather fearful at first, but then she calmed down and looked at the beautiful scenery, thinking, “It’s such a fun world, but I’m going to die soon. I wonder where Brother Yang is. Has he come up from the valley yet?”

She thought back to her meeting with Yang Guo and felt her life was not a waste. She was in grave danger but she did not bother about the battle at the foot of the tower. Suddenly there was roar from afar and it sounded like soldiers being killed by the thousands.

Guo Xiang was surprised because the roar was similar to Yang Guo’s roar which made wild animals cower. She turned her head and saw the Mongol troops on the west and north falling and rolling away from two people. The soldiers were being swept aside with a force comparable to huge waves. Between the two people was a large eagle and it spread its wings generating a typhoon and the arrows fell harmlessly to the ground on contacting its wings. This bird was fierce and majestic and it was of course Yang Guo’s Divine Eagle.

Guo Xiang was overjoyed and saw that one of the two people wore a green hat and yellow shirt and was definitely Yang Guo. The other was a beautiful lady who wore a

white gown which floated in the wind. The two wielded long swords and the swords flashed together gracefully. They followed behind the eagle and charged to the tower. Guo Xiang shouted, “Big brother is this Xiao Longnu?”

The lady was obviously Xiao Longnu, but he was too far and did not hear Guo Xiang talking to him. The Divine Eagle cleared the path and deflected the arrows effortlessly; its wings were like iron but it was still slightly injured. The Mongol troops had never seen such a fierce and powerful animal before and tried to stab it but were struck by Yang Guo and Xiao Longnu's swords and they fell away.

Yang Guo shouted, “Sister, don't be afraid, I'll save you.” He saw the lower half of the tower on fire and jumped lightly, reaching the ladder and he quickly climbed up. Suddenly a strong wind generated by a palm struck downwards – it was Fawang.

Yang Guo sheathed his sword and used his palm to intercept the blow from Fawang. When the two huge forces collided, both of them rocked about and the wooden ladder trembled like it was going to break. Both were shocked and both praised his opponent: “I haven't seen him for sixteen years, I never imagined his internal strength would have increased this much.”

Yang Guo saw that the situation was dire and would not allow him to compete with palm strength at the ladder again. He drew his sword again and attacked Fawang's legs. Fawang was standing above and if he used his wheels to fight he would have to bend over and that would put him at a disadvantage. Furthermore his wheels were shorter than the sword, so he turned around and decided to go back up to the platform again. Yang Guo raised his sword and attacked him ferociously from behind; every stance was swift as lightning. Fawang did not turn around but used his ears to determine where the attacks came from. He used a wheel to block every stance; it was as though he had eyes on the back of his head. Yang Guo praised him, “Damn monk; very impressive!”

Fawang was standing on top of the platform and immediately retaliated with one wheel. Yang Guo avoided it and counter-attacked with his sword. He dived towards Fawang in the air. Fawang used his golden wheel to block him and his silver wheel was about to strike the blade.

Just a moment ago they exchanged one stance and Yang Guo felt that the palm energy of Fawang was solid, robust and strong. He had never encountered such power amongst his former adversaries. He was surprised by this. He had trained in the waves of the ocean and was capable of withstanding the strong forces of the tide's waves.

Sixteen years ago Fawang was no match for him; but today, after exchanging one blow, he was almost unable to withstand that blast.

Seeing that the wheels were about to make contact with his blade, he did not retract his sword. He wanted to test the internal strength of Fawang. The wheels and sword collided with a loud clang. The huge powers collided with each other and Yang Guo's sword broke in two while the wheels flew out of Fawang's hands. The wheels fell to the ground smashing three Mongolian archers. Yang Guo was shocked and thought, "For sixteen years I have not used the heavy iron sword; I see that I am too overconfident today."

In order to perform the "Jade Maiden Swordplay", Yang Guo could not use his heavy iron sword; therefore he used an ordinary sword instead. When his blade made contact with the wheels of the Fawang it broke immediately.

After exchanging one blow both leapt aside and their arms felt numb. Then Fawang took out his iron and bronze wheels and attacked again. Yang Guo did not have any other weapon, so he generated his strength to his right sleeve and whisked out. He also used his left palm to attack Fawang.

Guo Xiang shouted, "Old monk, I told you before. You're no match for him! If you're really that powerful, why do you have to use your weapons? Can't you fight him empty-handed? You're a disgrace!" Fawang grunted and did not answer but increased the power and speed of his stances.

Huang Yaoshi, Guo Jing and Huang Rong were leading their troops back to defend Xiangyang, but when they saw Yang Guo, Xiao Longnu and the Divine Eagle fighting their way towards the platform, they had hopes again of saving Guo Xiang.

Huang Yaoshi waved his command flag and ordered four thousand soldiers from the east, south, west, north and central divisions forming a total of twenty thousand soldiers to return and attack the invading Mongolian troops. The remaining soldiers were to assist Yang Guo in saving Guo Xiang. Although the Song troops were outnumbered their spirits were raised when they saw Yang Guo on the platform. Each fought one against ten and the Mongolian archers kept shooting their arrows and held their ground firmly. Each time the Song soldiers advanced forward they were soon pushed back by the uncountable arrows.

The battle at the gates of Xiangyang was also at its' peak. Governor Lu Wenhuan was too afraid to lead the armies; he wore his armour and hid in the government office



with his two beloved concubines. He was trembling madly and kept stammering, “Merciful Avalokitesvara... please protect m...m...my entire family...Merci... merciful Avalokitesvara...” His two concubines were patting his chest and wiping away his saliva.

The scouts came and reported, “Another ten thousand enemy soldiers have reinforced the attacking troops at the east gate... At the north gate the enemy troops have put up the ladders...”

Lu Wenhuan rolled his eyes with fear and kept asking, “Is Master Guo back yet? Haven’t the Mongolians retreated yet?”

By this time Yang Guo, using one arm, had fought more than two hundred stances with Fawang. Both of their martial arts were quite different from each other and the battle kept intensifying. The entire platform was shaken by their wheels and palm. The smoke coming from the bottom of the platform also thickened and soon a black cloud covered the platform. Although Yang Guo was not using a weapon he was not at a disadvantage. Fawang felt the platform shaking lightly and knew that the fire had started to consume one of the support pillars of the platform. It would only be a question of time before the platform collapsed and then he, Yang Guo and Guo Xiang would all die together. Also he saw that the techniques of Yang Guo were quite marvelous and feared that after another hundred stances or so he would be defeated by Yang Guo. In this dire situation he attacked Yang Guo’s right shoulder with his iron wheel and when Yang Guo was about to avoid that wheel he threw his bronze wheel towards Guo Xiang’s face. Since she was tied to a pole, it was impossible for her to dodge that wheel.

Yang Guo was horrified and leapt towards Guo Xiang and used his sleeve to whisk the bronze wheel away. However, when two experts fought, it was unwise to be distracted and Yang Guo’s attention was on Guo Xiang, leaving himself unguarded. Fawang struck out with his iron wheel the sharp edges were aimed at Yang Guo’s left leg. In mid-air Yang Guo frantically kicked Fawang’s wrist with his right leg. Fawang twisted his wheel around and Yang Guo could not avoid it and his right leg was cut. Blood immediately flowed from his wound and his injury was not slight. Guo Xiang called out in fear and Fawang took out his lead wheel. With two wheels in his hands he attacked Guo Xiang again from the top and bottom. He knew, that although Yang Guo was injured, he could not overcome him at the moment. So he deliberately launched a fake attack on Guo Xiang and by doing so Yang Guo would try to protect her with all his might. In a few moments Yang Guo was in a dangerous position and could only defend and no longer attack.

Guo Xiang shouted, “Don’t bother about me now! Just kill this old monk to avenge me!” Yang Guo called out in pain, as his right shoulder was cut again by a wheel.

Xiao Longnu and the Divine Eagle were standing on the ground together with Zhou Botong and they prevented the archers from shooting arrows at Guo Xiang. Her attention was entirely focused on Yang Guo, even while she was killing those soldiers. When she saw him drenched in blood her heart skipped a beat. It was like her soul left her body; the ladder was consumed by the fire and there was no way for her to go up and help. Her mind went blank and she just raised her sword and was unaware of where she was and what she was doing there.

Whenever Yang Guo was faced with a great, powerful adversary he would use his “Melancholic Sad Palms” to defeat his opponent. This style was linked to his emotional state, but now he was newly reunited with Xiao Longnu and his heart was filled with bliss and happiness. There was not a trace of melancholy or sadness any longer. He was now faced with a dangerous situation and was using this very style. But somehow the influence of melancholy and longing was gone; every move and every stance he made was the same as in the past but the power of it was greatly diminished.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong saw Yang Guo’s battle against Fawang and saw him being injured; unfortunately they could not rush over to help him. Huang Rong suddenly thought of something and took Yelu Qi’s sword and gave it to Guo Jing. She said loudly, “Shoot it over to Guo’er.” Guo Jing took the sword and used two iron bows and placed the sword in between. He aimed and shot the sword towards Yang Guo. A bright flash seared through the sky and a loud whooshing sound was heard.

Yang Guo heard the whooshing sound and used his right sleeve to curl around the sword and immediately used his left hand to wield it. He thrust the sword through the two wheels of Fawang. Fawang twisted his wheels and the sword was broken again. Everyone saw what happened and was stunned.

Yang Guo knew it was in vain; he could not rescue Guo Xiang by himself. He would probably die here as well. He looked tragically at Xiao Longnu and said, “Long’er, farewell. Take care...” At this moment Fawang used his iron wheel to advance forward, wanting to strike Yang Guo on the skull. Yang Guo had given up all hope; he casually whisked his sleeve and struck out his palm and it smashed Fawang directly on the shoulder.

Zhou Botong who was standing below shouted, “Good! That’s one very impressive ‘Entangled by the Web of Love’.” Yang Guo was stunned for a moment and then he real-

ized he was feeling lost and hopeless and he unintentionally used the stance “Entangled by the Web of Love”. The heart is the most important factor of this style – it commands the arm and the arm commands the palm. That day, in the “Hundred Flowers Valley”, Zhou Botong did not feel sadness and melancholy and therefore he could not grasp the essence behind this style. When Yang Guo was reunited with Xiao Longnu, this style lost its essence. When Yang Guo faced death and parting with Xiao Longnu the sorrow and melancholy suddenly surged forth in his heart and immediately boosted the power of the “Melancholic Sad Palms”.

Fawang was about to be victorious when, suddenly, he was hit on the shoulder. His chest hurt greatly and he trembled. He was furious and surprised and instantly attacked again.

Yang Guo backed away and retaliated with “In A State Of Disunity”, “Irrational Direction”, “The Settled Cessation” and another move quickly followed these three attacks. It was the “The Meaningless Wanderer”. This stance was a kick, but it was a most elusive attack. Fawang could only vaguely see a leg; it was there, but it was not. He could not avoid this kick and he suffered a heavy blow to his chest. He coughed up blood and fell. Both armies yelled, the Song yelled with joy and the Mongolians called out in surprise.

*Note: Here we present the original and the third [final?] edition versions of the end of Yang Guo and Jinlun Fawang's battle.*

### **1st / 2nd Edition:**

By now the tower was crumbling and Yang Guo knew he had no time to untie Guo Xiang, so he quickly smashed the pole she was tied to and carrying everything – girl, pole and all – jumped off the tower. The Divine Eagle jumped up and they landed on its back. They landed safely only just in time. The tower came crashing down.

Fawang was kicked off the platform and was injured but not fatally. He swallowed his pain and rolled away, wanting to get up. Suddenly someone laughed and jumped onto his back. He was pinned to the ground and it seemed like a thousand needles pierced through him. It was Zhou Botong and his Soft Armour was like a porcupine. Fawang was severely injured and he could not move. The tower collapsed and, as Zhou Botong leapt away, a huge beam struck Fawang on his back.

Huang Rong saw that her daughter had escaped death and was filled with emotions. She was very grateful towards Yang Guo and was willing to die for him. She quickly ran

forward and cut the ropes. Guo Jing, Yideng, Huang Yaoshi and Yelu Qi were all greatly impressed.

### **3rd Edition Ending:**

The platform shook greatly now and was about to collapse. If it collapsed entirely now Guo Xiang was bound to die. Suddenly, Fawang found his benevolence again and he leapt up and cut the ropes tying Guo Xiang using his iron wheel. He took her in his arms and said to her, “Call me Master one more time.” Guo Xiang looked up and saw tears in his eyes. She called loudly, “Master!”

Fawang shouted, “Yang Guo, catch her!”

Yang Guo saw Fawang throwing Guo Xiang to him and used his sleeve to catch her and his left arm to support her. He jumped down with her. The Divine Eagle spread its wings and leaped up; although it could not fly it could leap about 3 or 4 meters into the air. Guo Xiang and Yang Guo landed on the back of the eagle and were descended on it. At this time the platform was collapsing and the Eagle could not deal with the weight of two persons and fell down. Yang Guo gently pushed Guo Xiang aside and said, “Watch out!”

Guo Xiang performed the technique “The Flying Swallow Circling Away” and touched down. Seeing she was close to being safe, Huang Rong screamed, “Dodge! Faster!”

A heavy burning beam came crashing down towards her. Guo Xiang was shocked and fell down. Huang Rong and Yang Guo wanted to rush over to rescue her but they were too far away. Furthermore, they were blocked by Mongolian soldiers. Seeing that it was too late Huang Rong fainted.

Guo Xiang had her hands on the ground and wanted to leap away again, but she was trapped by the fiery beam. Her clothes were on fire too and the smoke was choking her. She closed her eyes and awaited death. Suddenly she heard someone landing next to her; she opened her eyes and saw Fawang. He was kneeling down on one knee and using his hands to lift the heavy, burning beam. He generated a large force from his “Dragon Elephant Wisdom Dexterity” and hurled the beam away.

Although the beam was very heavy his “Dragon Elephant Wisdom Dexterity” was awesome and he generated every bit of his remaining incredible internal strength. The beam flew into the sky like a red blazing dragon. Both Song and Mongol soldiers looked

up. The Mongolian soldiers ran away fearing that the beam would land on them. A gap appeared in their formation and Yang Guo helped Huang Rong up and dashed forward.

Guo Xiang escaped from death and was helping Fawang up. She was calling, “Master, Master!”

Fawang opened his eyes and said, “Good, good! I have finally managed to convince you...” He coughed up blood and could not finish talking. His blood splattered on Guo Xiang’s clothes and she saw pieces of the platform falling down on them. She tried her best to lift Fawang and move him to safety. Yang Guo saw that she could not lift Fawang and helped her to drag him away from the falling debris. Fawang kept coughing up blood and looked at Guo Xiang; he smiled and closed his eyes for the final time. Guo Xiang embraced his body and was devastated, she cried, “Master, Master!”

Yang Guo saw Fawang sacrificing his own life to save Guo Xiang. In doing so, Fawang earned his respect and he bowed to the body.

Huang Rong saw her beloved daughter safe again, she hugged her and tears of joy flowed freely. She was most thankful toward Yang Guo and Fawang. Guo Jing, Huang Yaoshi and Reverend Yideng were also touched by the actions of Fawang and were also very grateful to him.

### **End of Excerpts**

The Mongol soldiers saw that their commander was dead and they were thrown into great chaos. The five divisions attacked them again and this time they were totally defeated.

Guo Jing waved and shouted, “Let’s go back and save Xiangyang, then kill their Khan!” The Song army cheered and turned around and charged towards the Mongol troops attacking the city.

Xiao Longnu tore off some cloth and dressed Yang Guo’s wound. Her hands were trembling and she could not speak. Yang Guo smiled, “You suffered more from your worries than I from the fight.”

The Song troops gave a thunderous yell and formed up into five divisions again and attacked the Mongol army. Yang Guo saw that the enemy was orderly and unyielding and they outnumbered the Song army many times. Although the Song army attacked them like mighty waves, they still could not move the enemy.

Yang Guo shouted, “The scum of a Khan isn’t dead yet and the enemy isn’t defeated yet. Let’s fight again. Are you tired?” He spoke the last few words gently and softly. Xiao Longnu just smiled and said, “You say go then we’ll go.”

Then they heard a young girl say, “Sister-in-law, you’re ravishing.” It was Guo Xiang.

Xiao Longnu turned around and laughed, “Sister thanks you for praying for our reunion. Your brother praised you and dragged me to Xiangyang to meet you.”

Guo Xiang sighed, “Only you are worthy of him.”

Xiao Longnu took her hand and was very friendly to her. Xiao Longnu was usually cold and indifferent to everyone, but since Yang Guo heaped praise on Guo Xiang and told how she jumped off the cliff to make him promise not to commit suicide, Xiao Longnu treated her differently.

Yang Guo ran past some stray horses and said, “I’ll cut a way through. Let’s go together!” He hopped onto the horse and rode off. Xiao Longnu and Guo Xiang took a horse each and followed behind. The three of them galloped south and saw several hundred Mongol soldiers setting up the ladders at the south gate and climbing up like ants.

The three of them got onto a small hill and looked around and saw a few thousand Mongol troops surrounding Yelu Qi and his three hundred men. The Mongolians used long spears and chopped down on Yelu Qi’s cavalry. Guo Fu led a company and attempted to rescue him but was blocked by two thousand Mongol troops. The couple longed for each other from afar but could not meet. Guo Fu saw that her husband’s troops were decreasing rapidly and her heart sank as she knew that once surrounded by a large army, even a highly skilled martial artist could do nothing.

Yang Guo said, “Guo Fu, if you kowtow to me three times I will rescue your husband.” Because of Guo Fu’s proud, overbearing and obnoxious behavior, she would rather die than kowtow to him and admit his superiority. But now, seeing that her husband was in grave danger, she did not hesitate and immediately got off her horse and fell to her knees, knocking her head on the ground.

Yang Guo was shocked and quickly dragged her up. He regretted saying that and said, “I’m just teasing you, don’t mind me. Brother Yelu and I are close friends, how can I ignore his plight?” He jumped from the hill and gathered as many horses as he could and

formed them up in two rows. He mounted a horse and held all the reins in one hand, yelling and charging into the enemy's formation.

Yang Guo's two rows of horses followed the "Multiple Horse Formation" originated in the Song army. However the horses were not trained in this and did not move in a straight path and followed Yang Guo only because he held on to the reins tightly. They galloped through the formation and Yang Guo utilized his advanced qing gong (lightness skill) and was jumping back and forth on the horses' backs. The Mongols had never seen such an awesome riding skill before and their lack of reaction allowed Yang Guo to pass through their formation without resistance. Yang Guo grabbed a large banner and fastened it on one of the saddles.

The Mongol soldiers shouted and tried to block him but Yang Guo swept the banner and knocked three officers down from their horses. He saw that Yelu Qi was just a few meters away and shouted, "Brother Yelu, jump up!" He thrust out the banner and Yelu Qi jumped, landing on the banner. He mounted a horse and the two of them broke out of the encirclement together.

Yelu Qi panted and said, "Brother Yang, thanks for saving me, but my subordinates are still trapped and I don't want to desert them." Yang Guo was moved and said, "You go grab a big banner too." Then he set both banners on fire. Yelu Qi said, "Brilliant!" He went forward and snatched a banner and lit it against Yang Guo's banner. They shouted and charged into the enemy lines, waving the flaming banners about.

The two flaming banners flying around struck fear in the enemy troops. All those who went forward to stop them suffered serious burns. The tide was turning and the Mongol troops had no choice but to retreat. Yelu Qi's battalion had only about seventy people left and they all charged together, finally managing to break out of the encirclement. Yelu Qi assembled the remnants of his soldiers and took them up a mountain to rest.

Guo Fu went up to Yang Guo and bowed lowly to him, saying, "Brother Yang, I've caused trouble for you my whole life but you're open-minded and magnanimous. You returned my resentment with benevolence, saving..." Her voice became hoarse and she could not continue. Yang Guo had saved her life several times in the past and knew she owed him a debt of gratitude. But she had always loathed him, thinking that he was always eager to show off his martial arts and did not really intend to save her. Only now, when he saved her husband, she felt truly grateful and realized her past mistakes.

Yang Guo hastily returned the bow and said, “Sister Fu, we grew up together, although we quarreled a lot, we’ve always been as close as siblings. If you no longer hate me or despise me I will be very happy.”

Guo Fu was stunned and the past events flashed past in her mind. She thought, “Do I really hate him? The Wu brothers were always trying to gain my favour but he never bothered about me. If he had treated me better I would have been willing to die for him. Why did I hate him without any reason for so many years? Is it because I always think of him and miss him but he’d never paid any attention to me?”

For the past twenty years, even she did not understand her own heart and always treated him like her enemy. Deep in her heart she actually had deep feelings for him. But Yang Guo could not understand her; even she could not understand herself.

Now her hate was gone she suddenly realized that she was actually very concerned about him. She thought, “When he charged into the enemy formation to save Brother Qi, who did I worry for more? I really cannot say.” At this time the clash of the ongoing fierce battle could be heard and she suddenly understood herself, “When he gave Sister Xiang such great presents on her birthday, why did I hate him to the bones? Guo Fu, ah Guo Fu, you’re jealous of your own little sister! He treated Sister Xiang so well but didn’t even acknowledge your presence.”

While she was lost in thought about this, her anger flared up again and she stared hard at Yang Guo and Guo Xiang. Then she woke up, thinking, “Why do I still care about all this? I’m a married woman now and Brother Qi treats me so well!” She gave a long sigh. Although she did not lack for anything since she was young, deep in her heart she felt a strange void. She always got whatever she wanted but could never get what she really desired most. In her whole life she did not know why she was always so hot-tempered and why she was always sulking when everyone was happy.

Guo Fu’s face flushed red and then paled white as she thought about her heart’s affairs. However Yang Guo, Xiao Longnu, Guo Xiang and Yelu Qi were all observing the ongoing battle at Xiangyang. The front line soldiers had already scaled the city wall. Guo Jing and Huang Yaoshi’s army attacked their flank heavily but the Mongol army was too large and their formation remained intact. The Khan directed all his forces to attack the city and the defenders inside were getting more disorderly and could not hold the enemy much longer. Guo Xiang anxiously cried, “Brother, what do we do? What do we do?”



Yang Guo thought, “I’m fortunate enough to see Long’er again and Heaven has been very kind to me. Even if I die today I wouldn’t regret it. Dying for one’s country is the greatest honour for a true hero.” He became alert and said, “Brother Yelu, let’s fight the enemy again.” Yelu Qi said, “Nothing could be better.” Xiao Longnu and Guo Xiang also said, “Let’s go!” Yang Guo said, “OK! I’ll lead and you will wield long spears and follow behind.” Yelu Qi relayed the command to his company and everyone grabbed a few spears.

Yang Guo took a spear and jumped onto a horse, galloping off with the Divine Eagle running at his side and using its wings to deflect any incoming arrows. Xiao Longnu, Yelu Qi, Guo Fu and Guo Xiang followed closely behind. Yang Guo dashed straight to the Khan’s banner. Yelu Qi was shocked and thought since the Khan was personally commanding the attack, all his elite guards must be there protecting him. There were only about a hundred Song soldiers with them – this was suicide. Then he remembered his life was saved by Yang Guo and he would follow him to the ends of the Earth.

This company moved extremely fast and reached Xiangyang city in the blink of an eye. Mengke’s (The Khan) guards saw Yang Guo coming swiftly and fiercely towards them and so they sent two hundred men ahead to stop him. Yang Guo threw his spear and it pierced right through a company commander’s chest. He took a spear from Yelu Qi and killed the other company commander. The Mongol guards panicked and Yang Guo tore through their formation. All the soldiers were alarmed and held their weapons tightly and swarmed forward to block him. He threw a spear at every man he saw and killed them instantly. His left arm’s superhuman strength was developed when he trained against the mighty waves of the sea. The spears he threw could pierce rocks; obviously it could fly through flesh and blood. Every throw of his was aimed at an officer and he threw seventeen spears, all penetrating the officers’ armour and killing them.

This sudden attack was like a bolt from the blue and the legions of Mongol troops at the foot of Xiangyang city could not stop him. He shot right through their formation and came right up to the Khan himself.

Mengke’s guards dashed forward to block him, disregarding their own lives. A body of armored guards rushed together and formed a wall in front of the Khan. Yang Guo reached out to take a spear from Yelu Qi but he grabbed thin air. The spear had been knocked away by some Mongol warrior. The Khan’s face turned as white as sheet and he immediately rode off. Yang Guo shouted, stepped up on the horse’s back, then threw himself forward. Some Mongol soldiers thrust their spears toward him desperately, but Yang Guo somersaulted in mid-air and used his internal strength to snatch all their spears away.

The Khan saw the situation was very dangerous and quickly whipped his horse and galloped away. The horse he was riding was hand-picked from the best horses of the Mongolian stables and was swift as a dragon and could fly like the wind. It was nicknamed the 'Flying Cloud Horse' and was superior to Guo Jing's 'Sweating Blood Horse'. The horse flew on the plains and Yang Guo, using his qing gong, tried to chase him. The Mongol troops behind hurriedly pursued Yang Guo.

All the soldiers, on both sides, saw this and everyone just stopped fighting to watch what would happen next.

Yang Guo saw the Khan riding away and was happy, thinking he could catch up with him. However this 'Flying Cloud Horse' was extremely fast and seemed to be gliding along on the plains. Yang Guo was getting more anxious as the Khan got further away from him. He quickly bent down to pick up a spear and threw it at the Khan.

The spear flew like a meteor and everyone held their breath in anticipation. The horse galloped even faster and just as the spear was about to hit the Khan it lost its propulsive force and stuck into the ground. The Song army cursed while the Mongol army cheered.

Now Guo Jing, Huang Rong, Huang Yaoshi, Zhou Botong and the others were too far away and could only stare in desperation. The Mongol army had tens of thousands of troops but they could only cheer the Khan on as they could not catch up with his horse.

Mengke looked back and saw Yang Guo getting further and further behind him and was less worried and quickly rode towards a legion. The legion cheered and came forward to welcome him. If he reached them, even with Yang Guo's skills he would be no match for an entire legion.

Yang Guo was starting to despair when he suddenly thought, "The spear is too heavy and can't go that far, why not use a stone?" He leaned over and picked up two stones and shot them out forcefully with his internal strength. The stones cut through the air like bullets and they hit the horse on the back. The horse neighed in pain and reared up, throwing its rider into the air.

Although Mengke (Meng-ge) was the emperor of the Mongolians, he had ridden horses and trained in archery since he was young, just like Genghis Khan and his father. He conquered the European territories on horse-back. Though he was thrown into the air, he did not panic and steadied himself back on the horse. He grabbed a bow and hooked his legs firmly onto the horse. He then turned his body and shot an arrow at Yang Guo.

Yang Guo ducked and quickly picked up a larger stone and shot it out with all his strength. The stone flew like a missile, ripped through the Khan and emerged from his chest, shattering on impact. The Khan's organs were crushed and he fell off his horse dead.

The Mongol army saw their Khan fall from the horse and they were stunned. Guo Jing immediately gave the command to counter-attack and all the Song troops rushed out from the city. The Song troops formed up in the "Twenty-eight Star Formation" again and attacked the Mongol army. The Mongol army was now in total chaos and they fled without their weapons and trampled one another trying to retreat. The countless Mongol dead lay scattered throughout the plains and the remnants scurried north.

Guo Jing and the Song army pursued them, then suddenly they saw a Mongol army appear in the west and its formation was orderly. The main banner bore the insignia of Khubilai. Both Guo Jing and Khubilai knew something was wrong. Guo Jing knew the fleeing soldiers could not have re-grouped so fast, while Khubilai knew something had happened to the Khan's army. Khubilai quickly ordered a withdrawal. Guo Jing and the Song army pursued them for 30 li but could not catch up. Moreover Lu Wenhuan had sent his officials to summon Guo Jing back to the city. The Song army withdrew as well.

Ever since the Mongols opened the campaign with the Song Empire, they had never suffered such a disastrous defeat – they even lost their Khan in the battle. The Khan did not appoint an heir before his death and all the generals vied for the Khan's position. Khubilai ordered his army back north. He then battled his brothers for the position. Finally, Khubilai emerged as the victor in the civil war and became Khubilai Khan. However after the civil war the Mongols did not have the resources to launch another invasion on the Song Empire. Xiangyang would be safe from the Mongolians until they launched another campaign thirteen years later.

Guo Jing led the army back to Xiangyang and Lu Wenhuan was waiting at the city gate with the remaining soldiers, welcoming the return of the victors. The citizens of Xiangyang also came out to welcome them with wine.

Guo Jing took Yang Guo's hand and raised a cup of good wine and offered a toast to him, saying, "Guo'er, you did such a great thing today; from now everyone shall revere and respect you."

Yang Guo was touched and finally said something he had wanted to say for the past 20 years: "Uncle Guo, my accomplishments today are all due to your guidance."

The two heroes said no more and drank the wine, thinking there was nothing more they could desire.

They entered the city together and the citizens welcomed them with thunderous applause. Yang Guo thought, “More than twenty years ago, Guo Jing took my hand and brought me to Zhongnan Shan (Mount Zhongnan) and sent me to the Chongyang Palace to learn martial arts. He was completely sincere and honest towards me, yet I rebelled against my teacher and created a lot of trouble! If I hadn’t corrected myself, how would I be what I am today?” He was extremely satisfied with himself.

The city was in a joyous mood even though many had lost their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons; but because of them their victory was complete.

Night fell and a large banquet was thrown for the heroes. Lu Wenhuan wanted Yang Guo to be the Guest-of-Honour but he refused flatly. Everyone pushed each other for a long time and they finally persuaded Yideng to be the Guest-of-Honour. Seated next to him was Zhou Botong, followed by Huang Yaoshi, Guo Jing, Huang Rong, Yang Guo, Xiao Longnu and Yelu Qi. Lu Wenhuan thought, “Island Master Huang is Hero Guo’s father-in-law but that old monk Yideng’s appearance is not remarkable while that old man Zhou is crazy and silly, how can either of them be the Guest-of-Honour?” However everyone was overjoyed and ignored him.

All the generals and officials took turns offering toasts to Guo Jing and Yang Guo and praised them as heroes of the highest order.

Guo Jing then thought of his master’s kindness and said, “If not for Quanzhen’s Priest Qiu’s righteousness and my seven masters who went to Mongolia to teach me martial arts, and not to forget Master Hong, how would I be so highly-skilled today? But as we indulge in wine today, all my masters with the exception of Master Ke are already dead.” Everyone felt rather sad. Guo Jing continued, “Now we have won the day, I would like to ascend Mount Hua (Hua Shan) tomorrow and visit my master’s grave.” Yang Guo said, “Uncle Guo, I was thinking of this too; why don’t we all go together?” Yideng, Huang Yaoshi and Zhou Botong all missed their old friend and so they agreed.

The banquet lasted late into the night before ending.



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