

## Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

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## SDYXZ Chapter 39



### Chapter 39 – Discerning Good From Evil

*Translated by Foxs*



*It was actually Mount Hua's most dangerous place, called the 'to give one's life cliff' [she shen ya]; whoever jumped from this place would certainly meet a cruel death. Huang Rong dashed forward to grab Guo Jing's clothes. Her hand pulled hard a she jumped over his shoulder and a moment later she was the one standing at the edge of the cliff.*

Guo Jing rode his horse for several days, leaving the dangerous area, slowly heading south. The day was getting warmer, the grass looked longer; along the way he saw the remnants of war: broken walls and ruined homes, human bones scattered here and

there. The sights, the smell ... Everything brought a dreadful and nauseating feeling in his heart.

One day he stopped to take a rest in a pavilion by the roadside. He saw these inscriptions on the pavilion's wall, "A poem from a Tang Dynasty man: 'Water trickles downward day by day, ultimately overpowering the cry of chicken and dogs. Thousand villages fell to become food to the wild animals. The people vanished in smoke to give way to the flowers.' My Central Plains' beautiful river and mountain unexpectedly fallen victim to violent battles. People turned into ashes as if the above poem was written for today's situation."

Looking at these lines of characters Guo Jing was entranced, sadness came creeping into his heart and he could not refrain from shedding some tears.

He had roamed this vast and boundless world, but actually did not know where he should go. Within just one short year his mother, Huang Rong, his five masters, the people that were dear to him had all died. Ouyang Feng had killed his masters and Huang Rong; he was going to find him and seek revenge. But as soon as he thought about the words 'seek revenge', the tragic massacre of the people of Khoresm came into his mind. In order for him to avenge his father's death he had to kill so many innocent civilians, how could he have peace in his heart? It looked like this 'seeking revenge' matter was not necessarily a right thing to do.

Thinking about all other things, he came into this thought, "All my life I painstakingly trained myself in martial arts that finally I reached my current level, and then what? I can't even protect my own mother and Rong'er, then what use is my martial art skill? I wanted with all my heart to be a good person, but in the end who would be happy because of me? Mother, Rong'er, both died because of me. Huazheng Meizi has to suffer forever because of me. Truly the number of people who suffered miserably because of me is not a few."

"Wanyan Honglie and Muhammad were bad people. But what about Genghis Khan? He killed Wanyan Honglie; so I should say he is a good person. But then he ordered me to attack the Great Song. He took care of my mother and me for twenty years, but in the end he had caused my mother's death."

"Yang Kang and I became sworn brothers, but our hearts were a world apart from the start. Sister Mu Nianci is a good person, but why did her heart set on loving only Yang Kang? Tuolei Anda and I love each other, but when he leads the army attacking south and we meet each other on the battlefield, should he and I kill each other? No, no.

Everybody has a mother, a mother who carries him for ten months, who painstakingly nurture and raise him up; how could I kill somebody's son and cause his mother to weep bitterly? He doesn't have a heart to kill me; I don't have a heart to kill him. However, shall I ignore the fact that he kills my Great Song's innocent people?"

"Training martial art is for beating and killing people, it looks like I spent twenty years of my life incorrectly; I studied and learned diligently, painstakingly; in the end all I can do is bringing harm to other people. If I knew it from the start, I wouldn't train to have a better skill in martial art. But if I don't learn martial art, then what should I do? I live in this world, in the end, what is my purpose of life? Decades from now, what will happen to me? Is it better to live longer, or to die sooner? Right now I have already had endless anxiety, if I live longer, won't I have more anxiety? But if I die sooner, why would my mother give birth to me? Why would she endure hardship and suffering to raise me up?" Tossing and turning with these thought, the more he thought, the more confused he became.

For several days he could not eat during the day, and could not sleep during the night; he went back and forth in the wilderness pondering all these things.

"Mother and my benevolent masters all taught me to uphold justice and keep my words. Therefore, although I loved Rong'er dearly I could not ask the Great Khan to cancel our betrothal. But in the end, not only I drove mother and Rong'er to their injustice death, but did I make the Great Khan, Tuolei, and Huazheng happy? The Seven Heroes of Jiangnan, my seven masters, and benevolent master Hong, are all heroic people of honor, yet none of them ended up enjoying the fruit of their good deeds. Ouyang Feng and Qiu Qianren do not uphold justice and righteousness, yet they live free and unrestrained. Is there any justice in this world? Can 'lao tian ye' [the Heaven, God] really see?"

One day he arrived at a small town in Jinan prefecture, Shandong province. He stopped by a restaurant to drink some wine. He had just drunk three cups when suddenly a man rushed in, pointed his finger to Guo Jing and cursed him, "Barbarian thief, you have destroyed my home and killed my family; I must kill you!" While saying that his fist flew toward Guo Jing's face.

Guo Jing was startled, he turned his left hand around and caught his hand, gently twisted it; and the man fell tumbling down. Apparently that man did not know martial art at all. Guo Jing did not have any intention to harm him; he felt really bad that he had caused that man to fall down and bleed from his head. Hastily he held out his hand to raise that man up, saying, "Brother, you must have mistaken me for others!"

That man was bawling and kept cursing him, “Barbarian thief!” Dozens more men came from outside and start kicking and hitting Guo Jing for no reason at all. After pondering about the dire consequences of using martial art, Guo Jing had made a decision not to harm others using his martial art skill. Besides, these people were neither known to him nor did they know any martial arts; they were attacking him randomly. Hence he only evaded to the east and dodged to the west, but did not fight back at all. However, there were more and more people coming in from outside; the restaurant was small, so against his will Guo Jing had to taste some fists and kicks nonetheless.

He was about to use his strength to shove his way out of the restaurant when suddenly somebody loudly called from outside, “Jing’er! What are you doing here?”

Guo Jing raised his head up and saw the person calling was wearing a Taoist robe, with a long white beard; it was none other than the Changchun Zi [Eternal Spring] Qiu Chuji. Guo Jing was delighted, “Qiu Daozhang [Taoist Priest Qiu],” he called, “These people are hitting me for no reason at all.”

Qiu Chuji pushed his arms out and opened up a way for Guo Jing to escape; he pulled Guo Jing out of the restaurant. The people rushed out to attack them, but Qiu and Guo, two people faced them while moving backward step by step. Once outside Guo Jing whistled to call his red horse and not too long afterwards two people riding on one horse sped out of the town and disappeared into the wilderness.

Guo Jing again told about how those town people without any reason pounced on him and beat him. Qiu Chuji smiled, “You are dressed as a Mongolian; they thought you are a Barbarian Mongolian.” Then he proceeded by telling Guo Jing how the Mongolians and the Jins had violent battles in the Shandong province. The local people had been under the Jin’s oppression for a long time, they raised arm to help the Mongolians. Who would have thought that the Mongolian’s officers and soldiers were as oppressive and tyrannical as the Jins were; they destroyed, they killed, they took captive and they plundered; they made the lives of the common people miserable beyond description. When a Mongolian army was passing through, the people did not dare to do anything, but if there was a lone Mongolian officer or soldier left behind, usually he would be killed by the people.

“Why did you let them beat you?” Qiu Chuji asked, “Just look at you, bruised and swollen all over.”

Guo Jing heaved a deep sigh and then told him how Genghis Khan had issued a secret order to him to attack the south, and how his mother had died because of it. He told

Priest Qiu everything.

Qiu Chuji was shocked, “If Genghis Khan is going to attack our Great Song, then we must go south immediately to inform the government to guard against this invasion,” he said.

Guo Jing shook his head, “What good will that bring? The result would be corpses of officers and soldiers from both sides piling up as high as a mountain; innocent people’s families being broken and killed.”

“But if the Song perishes under the Mongolia, the common people will suffer even more,” Qiu Chuji said, “An endless hardship!”

“Qiu Daozhang,” Guo Jing said, “There are so many things I am not able to think through; I want to ask you to give me directions.”

Qiu Chuji pulled his hand, led him to a big locust tree and took him sitting underneath it. “Speak to me!” he said.

Guo Jing immediately poured out what had been troubling his heart these past few days; how he felt that his skill in martial art only brought harm to other people. Finally he sighed and said, “Therefore, disciple has decided not to fight with anybody for the rest of my life. I wish I could forget everything I know about martial arts, only an old habit will always come back. I was careless today, and made someone bleed from his head.”

Qiu Chuji shook his head, “Jing’er, your thinking is incorrect,” he said, “Dozens of years ago, the Wulin world secret manual, the Nine Yin Manual, appeared for the first time. I don’t know how many warriors of the Jianghu had died from fighting over this book. Afterwards at the Sword Meet of Huashan [Mount Hua] my master Chongyang Zhenren [Sage, lit. true/real man, a respectful term to address a Taoist priest] had defeated everybody and took possession of the manual. Initially he intended to destroy the book, but later on he said, ‘Water can carry the boat, but can also capsize it; be it fortune or calamity, in the end it depends on the person who uses it.’ In the end he decided to preserve the manual. Every talent in the world, whether it is ‘wen’ [literature] or ‘wu’ [martial art]; a strong army or a sophisticated device, not a single one of them does not benefit mankind; but the opposite is also true, every single one of them has the potential to bring calamity to the world. As long as you have a good heart, the stronger your martial art, the better it is for you. Why would you want to forget it?”

Guo Jing hesitated for a moment before saying, “What Daozhang said was not wrong, but among the current Jianghu heroes; the Eastern Heretic, the Western Poison, the Southern Emperor and the Northern Beggar have the strongest martial arts. Disciple has been thinking carefully; to reach the martial art level of these four experts one must undergoes difficulties, to the point of almost impossible, hardship and suffering. Yet even if one is able to endure all that, what good would that be for people other than oneself?”

Qiu Chuji was silent for a moment before answering, “Huang Yaoshi is an eccentric man; although outwardly he shows anger to the world and detests mundane affair, but in his heart there is an unspeakable bitterness. He acts as he pleases, he does not have any consideration toward other people. I won’t take him as an example. Ouyang Feng does all kinds of evil; we don’t need to talk about him. Emperor Duan is compassionate and benevolent; if he stayed on the throne he would be able to benefit the common people. It’s a pity that because of personal resentment over a tiny, tiny affair he withdrew from society and lives in seclusion; he can’t be regarded as great man with great courage. Only Hong Qigong, Hong Bangzhu [Clan Leader Hong] is left who is a great hero to uphold justice; always helping those in distress. He has my full admiration. The second Sword Meet of Mount Hua is right around the corner; I think there might be someone who can exceed Hong Bangzhu in term of martial art. But I believe the people will elect him as the Number One in the Wulin World.”

Hearing the four characters ‘Sword Meet of Mount Hua’, Guo Jing’s heart shivered. “Is my benevolent master completely healed from his injury? Do you think the Senior is going to attend the meeting at Mount Hua?” he asked.

“After returning from the west, I have never seen Hong Bangzhu,” Qiu Chuji said, “But whether he will take part in the Sword Meet or not, I think he will go to Mount Hua. Actually, I am passing through this place on my way over there; why don’t you come with me to take a look?”

These past several days Guo Jing was very downhearted; he lost interest in, and loathed all kinds of, fighting. He shook his head and said, “Disciple is not coming, please forgive me.”

“Where are you going?” Qiu Chuji asked.

Guo Jing awkwardly said, “Disciple does not know; I’ll go wherever my feet lead me!”

Qiu Chuji could see that his face had lost its color, he looked so ghastly; like someone who was just recovered from a severe illness. Qiu Chuji was very concerned, but no matter how he persuaded, Guo Jing simply shook his head and did not say anything. Qiu Chuji thought, “He would normally listen to Hong Bangzhu; if he goes to Mount Hua, then master and disciple will see each other, his spirit might be aroused and be back to his old kind self. But how can I convince him to go?” All of a sudden a thought came into his mind, “Jing’er,” he said, “If you really want to forget the martial art you have already learned, I think I might have a way.”

“Really?” Guo Jing said.

“I know someone who had accidentally learned the Nine Yin Manual’s excellent martial arts,” Qiu Chuji said, “But later on he realized that he had broken his own promise, he had betrayed something entrusted to him; in the end he strived to forget the skills he had learned. If you really want to follow his example, you must talk to him.”

Guo Jing jumped up immediately. “Right!” he exclaimed, “It’s Zhou Botong, Zhou Dage [big brother Zhou]!” But suddenly he remembered that Zhou Botong was Qiu Chuji’s martial uncle, while he casually called him big brother; he felt he was usurping Qiu Chuji’s seniority by one generation. He could not restrain from feeling really awkward.

Qiu Chuji simply smiled slightly, he said, “Zhou Shishu [Martial Uncle Zhou] has never had any regard of anybody’s seniority; you can call him whatever you like, I don’t mind a bit.”

“Where is he?” Guo Jing asked.

“I am sure Zhou Shishu will not miss the meeting at Mount Hua,” Qiu Chuji replied.

“Very well,” Guo Jing said, “In that case I will come with Daozhang to Mount Hua.”

Two men traveled together to the nearest town ahead then Guo Jing took out some silvers and bought a steed for Qiu Chuji to ride. They went riding to the west, and in less than one day arrived at the foot of Mount Hua.

This Mount Hua was one of the five mountains called the Western Mountains; people of the ancient time equate these five mountains with five scriptures. They said Mount Hua was like ‘chun qiu’ [spring and autumn period – 770-476 BC], possessed the same lethality as the Wei kingdom. Among the mountains in the world, the ruggedness of Mount Hua was matchless.



Two men arrived at the 'shan sun ting' [mountain grass pavilion] at the southern entrance of Mount Hua. Next to this pavilion they saw twelve big dragon rattans, so called because their trunks and branches intertwined each other resembled flying dragons.

Looking at these ancient twelve rattans with their branches rising up to the sky, suddenly the 'fei long zai tian' [dragon flies to the sky] came into Guo Jing's mind. Following the Nine Yin Manual principles, these twelve rattans formed different stances of the dragon postures, creating twelve grand stances where the move might be executed. From being lost in thought, suddenly he woke up with a start, "I was hoping I could forget the martial art I already learned, how I could think about creating a new move to defeat and to kill others? I have fallen too deep, truly I am incorrigible."

Suddenly Qiu Chuji voice was heard, "Mount Hua is our Taoist holy mountain; these twelve dragon rattans were supposedly planted by 'chen tuan lao zu', [ancestor Chen Tuan].

"Chen tuan lao zu?" Guo Jing asked, "Was he the deity who slept for many years without waking up?"

"Chen tuan lao zu was born toward the latter part of the Tang Dynasty," Qiu Chuji explained, "During the Five Dynasties period: Liang, Tang, Jin, Han, Zhou, every time he heard the kingdom changed ruler, he was always worried and not happy; so he closed his door and refused to come out. Hence the people said he was sleeping for many years. Actually he was just troubled by the world's anxiety, that the common people always suffered hardships; that's why he was not willing to go out. Finally he heard 'Song Dai Zu' [the great ancestor of Song Dynasty] rose up to the throne; he laughed heartily and in his happiness he fell from the donkey's back, saying that the world henceforth would be peaceful. Song Dai Zu was kind and had a deep affection toward the common people; his contribution was truly not a few."

"If Chen tuan lao zu were born today, he would unavoidably close his door and sleep for exhausting years and tiring months," Guo Jing commented.

Qiu Chuji heaved a deep sigh and said, "Mongolians rule in the north, deliberately will invade the south. It's a pity the Song Dynasty's princes and ministers are muddle-headed idiots; they have eyes but cannot see the problem we are facing. But we are real men, although we realize we are helpless, still we need to fight. Even though Chen tuan lao zu was an honorable person, he hid himself whenever the world was in trouble; that was a bad example of chivalry."

Guo Jing silently agreed.

Two men had to leave their steeds at the foot of the mountain. They continued on foot; slowly climbing through the 'tao hua ping' [peach blossom plain], crossing the 'xi yi xia' [lit. rare barbarian box, I don't know what it is], climbing 'sha meng ping' [grassy dream plain]. The further they went, the more dangerous the terrain became. After reaching 'xi xuan men' [western mysterious gate] they had to ascend holding on to an iron chain. Utilizing their lightness kungfu, two men climbed up rapidly. After about seven 'li's, they reached the 'qing ping' [green plain]. Beyond this plain they saw a row of rocks that looked like they were truncated. Toward the north of this wall there was a big rock blocking the pathway.

"This rock is called 'hui xin shi' [lit. turn-around heart stone]," Qiu Chuji said, "Beyond this stone the pathway is getting more rugged and dangerous than ever. Casual travelers are advised to turn back here."

In the distant they saw a small stone pavilion. "That is the 'du qi ting' [gambling chess pavilion]," Qiu Chuji explained, "Legend has it that the Song Emperor, Song Dai Zu made a bet playing chess with Mister Xi Yi [the same 'xi yi' as in the paragraph above]. The Mount Hua was the stake. The Emperor lost, and ever since the Mount Hua territory is exempt from paying tribute."

Guo Jing said, "Genghis Khan, the Khoresm King, the Great Jin Emperor, the Great Song Emperor; seemed like they are all gambling with this world as the stake."

Qiu Chuji nodded. "Absolutely," he said, "Jing'er, looks to me like you have done a lot of thinking lately. I can see the difference; you are no longer your muddle-headed-dumb-kid previous self." Then he continued, "These emperors and generals view the world as their gambling stake; if they lose, not only they will lose the 'jiang shan' [lit. river and mountain – country/homeland], they will also lose their lives, as well as making the world a living hell for common people."

Crossing the 'qian chi xia' [thousand-foot gorge], the 'bai chi xia' [hundred-foot gorge], they had to walk sideways. Guo Jing thought, "It will be very difficult to ward off if suddenly an enemy attack in this place." He was just having this thought when suddenly someone shouted from ahead of them, "Qiu Chuji, we spared your life at the Misty Rain Tavern [yan yu lou]; what are you doing climbing Mount Hua?"

Qiu Chuji hastily rushed ahead several steps until he reached a small cavity on the side of the cliff before he raised his head to see Sha Tongtian, Peng Lianhu, Lingzhi

Shangren [lit. upper/above man, a respectful term to address Buddhist monk], and Hou Tonghai, four people standing at the end of the pathway.

When he climbed the mountain, Qiu Chuji had expected at some point to see Ouyang Feng, Qiu Qianren and other archenemies; he thought Zhou Botong, Hong Qigong, Guo Jing and the others would meet their match. But he had never expected that Sha Tongtian and the others had the guts to climb this mountain. Although he was standing on an open space, the terrain was extremely dangerous. If he was crowded by the enemy, chances are he would fall into the tens of thousands 'zhang's deep canyon below.

In this critical time he did not have time to think, with a 'shua' sound he pulled his sword and with 'bai hong jing tian' [bright rainbow across the sky] he ferociously attacked Hou Tonghai. Among these four enemies, Hou Tonghai was the weakest, but he was also the closest; Qiu Chuji's sword stance was precisely aimed to the weakest point of the enemy.

Hou Tonghai saw the sword was swift and fierce, he had no alternative, he leaned sideways to evade and lifted up his three-prong fork to block the sword. Peng Lianhu's judge pen and Lingzhi Shangren's copper cymbals made a converging attack with the intention of forcing Qiu Chuji to fall into the ravine below.

As Qiu Chuji's sword made contact with Hou Tonghai's three-prong fork, he transferred his energy to the tip of the sword and borrowing the strength, his body soared above Hou Tonghai's head. Sparks flew everywhere as Peng Lianhu and Lingzhi Shangren's weapon hit a rock.

Sha Tongtian had lost an arm at the Temple of the Iron Spear; by this time his wound was completely healed. Seeing his 'shi di' [younger martial brother] fail to block the enemy, he executed the 'yi xing huan wei' [altering shape changing position] technique right in front of Qiu Chuji to prevent him from running away. Qiu Chuji's sword moved swiftly; Sha Tongtian only saw bright lights flashing around him, aiming his vital points. Sha Tongtian was dazzled and unable to fend off the sword; he was forced to move back several steps, giving Qiu Chuji an opportunity to dash forward.

Sha and Peng shouted loudly and pursued him. Qiu Chuji turned his sword around and launched several stances. At that moment Lingzhi Shangren arrived sweeping his cymbals. Three different types of weapons clashed.

Seeing Qiu Chuji's precarious condition Guo Jing should have gone forward and help, but he felt that people who resort to violence were very bad. He loathed watching both

sides fought violently; turning his head, unwilling to watch, he continued his journey, holding on to a rattan branch. Unexpectedly the path was sloping down.

While strolling leisurely two thoughts were waging war inside his mind, “Shall I help Qiu Daozhang? Or shall I stick to my commitment of not fighting anybody anymore?” The more he thought, the more confused he became. He considered, “If Qiu Daozhang is killed by Peng Lianhu and the others, how can I not blame myself? But if I did help and struck Peng Lianhu and the others that they fell into the ravine below, do they really deserve to die?”

He walked farther and farther away until he could not hear the clashing sound of the weapons anymore. He sat leaning on a rock, deep in thought. After a long time suddenly he heard a noise from behind the pine tree next to him, and a man appeared. Guo Jing turned around to see that man had white hair, but ruddy face; turned out it was ‘shen xian lao guai’ [ginseng immortal old freak] Liang Ziweng. But Guo Jing ignored him; he still sat quietly lost in thought.

Liang Ziweng was startled, he knew Guo Jing’s martial art had advanced greatly; early on he was not Guo Jing match anymore. Immediately he shrunk back behind the tree. A moment later he saw Guo Jing did not pursue, he also saw that Guo Jing looked to be absentminded, his eyebrows creased on a distressed face; he was mumbling indistinctly, like he was possessed by some kind of evil spirit. Liang Ziweng thought, “Today this kid looks so weird. Let me try provoking him.” He did not dare to approach; he picked up a pebble and threw it toward Guo Jing’s back.

Guo Jing heard the wind, but he simply leaned sideways to evade, and still did not pay any attention to Liang Ziweng. Liang Ziweng became bolder; he came out from behind the tree, came several steps closer, and called out in a soft voice, “Guo Jing, what are you doing here?”

“I am thinking,” Guo Jing replied, “If I use martial art to fight someone, do I have a good reason for it?”

Liang Ziweng was stupefied and delighted at the same time, he thought, “This dumb kid has become crazier.” He approached several steps closer and said, “Hurting people is a very bad thing, of course you don’t have any reason to do it.”

“You think so?” Guo Jing said, “I really hope I can forget all the martial arts I’ve learned.”

Liang Ziweng saw Guo Jing's eyes were gazing into the horizon with a blank look on his face; slowly he came from behind Guo Jing's back. "I am also in the process of forgetting my own martial art, how about I lend you a helping hand to forget yours?" he softly asked.

"Fine," Guo Jing said, "What should I do?"

"Hmm, I have an idea," Liang Ziweng said. Both of his hands made a sudden movement and expertly grabbed two major acupoints: 'tian zhu' [sky pillar] on Guo Jing's neck and 'shen tang' [divine hall] on his back.

Guo Jing was shocked, he felt his whole body went numb and he could not move. With a wicked grin on his face Liang Ziweng said, "Let me suck the blood out of your body, then you will forget using your martial art ever again." Opening his mouth wide he bit into Guo Jing's throat and sucked with all his might. He remembered how this dumb kid had sucked the valuable blood of the viper he laboriously raised so this dumb kid's martial art had improved tremendously while his own did not make any progress; by sucking Guo Jing's blood he hoped he would gain some benefit while venting off his anger at the same time. Actually, it had been a long time since Guo Jing drank the viper's blood, that the effectiveness of the blood had long gone; but in his deep resentment he ignored that fact completely.

This sudden turn of event shocked Guo Jing; he felt a severe pain on his neck that he was seeing stars in his eyes. Hastily he tried to struggle free, but his two major acupoints were sealed by enemy, his whole body unexpectedly did not have the least bit of strength. He saw Liang Ziweng's pair of eyes was red, his face looked so scary; Guo Jing felt his bite was getting harder and harder. It felt like his throat was about to be cut, then his life would leave him for sure.

In desperation he did not have time to think whether it was appropriate to use martial art to resist the enemy or not; immediately he used the 'yi jin duan gu pian' [changing muscle forging bone] to send out internal energy from his 'dan tian' toward the 'tian zhu' and 'shen tang' acupoints.

Both of Liang Ziweng's hands were holding Guo Jing extremely tight when suddenly he felt a surge of energy bursting out from within his victim's body through the two major acupoints, his hands shook and they could not help but slip. Guo Jing lowered his head and shrank his shoulder, and then using his waist's strength he struggled up. As a result Liang Ziweng's body was lifted up and flung away. With a hair-rising shriek he fell into the tens of thousands 'zhang's deep canyon below.

His scream reverberated on the canyon walls, creating a series of terrifying echoes seemingly coming from everywhere. Guo Jing was horrified; the hair behind his back rose up involuntarily. He was in a daze for half a day before he gradually calmed down. Absent-mindedly he caressed his injured neck and only then he remembered that he had accidentally killed a man using his martial art. But he thought, “If I did not kill him, he would kill me. If I don’t have any reason to kill him, did he have any reason to kill me?” He stretched his neck trying to see into the valley below, but the canyon was so deep that he could not even see the bottom; did not know where Shen Xian Lao Guai’s body could be.

Guo Jing sat on a rock. Tearing a piece of cloth from his robe he wrapped the wound on his neck. Suddenly he was startled by a ‘bonk, bonk, bonk’ noise; it sounded like a monster was coming out from behind the cliff. He was frightened; he turned his gaze to look, turned out it was a human. But this man stood with his head on the bottom and his feet on the top; with a stone in each hand. He used those hands in place of his feet, and those ‘bonk, bonk, bonk’ noise was actually the sound of the stones knocking the mountain’s stony pathway. Guo Jing was stunned; he squatted down to take a good look at that man’s face, and he was even more surprised. That weird man was actually the Western Poison, Ouyang Feng.

Guo Jing had just received a surprise attack; seeing Ouyang Feng in this weird position he believed he was up to no good. Guo Jing retreated two steps, fully alert to guard against any potential attack. But Ouyang Feng only bent his arms and jumped on top of a big rock; standing upside down using his head as his feet, his arms stretched wide, resembled a stiff corpse.

Guo Jing’s curiosity was piqued, “Mr. Ouyang, what are you doing?” he called out.

Ouyang Feng did not answer; seemed like his mind was someplace else and he did not even hear his question.

Guo Jing withdrew several more steps to make more distance between them. He raised his left hand in front of his chest to guard against Ouyang Feng’s sudden attack; only then did he pay close attention of what Ouyang Feng was doing.

For about the time needed to drink a cup of tea Ouyang Feng stood upside down motionless. Guo Jing was more curious than ever; he wanted to see more clearly, so he stooped down and looked through his legs to see Ouyang Feng’s face was sweating profusely; he looked in pain, like he was cultivating some strange internal energy. A mo-

ment later he stretched his arm horizontally, his body started spinning like a big top, turning faster and faster until his clothes created a strong gust of wind.

“He really is practicing martial art,” Guo Jing thought, “But this kind of martial art that requires upside down position is so strange.” Further he thought that a person who practice internal energy cultivation was usually vulnerable, probably because while circulating the energy within, the body itself devoid of any defense against outside circumstances. That was the reason usually somebody, be it his master or a friend with high level of martial art skill, would stay alongside to protect that person. Moreover, they would usually find a secluded place to avoid mishap. But strangely Ouyang Feng was practicing alone without anybody to accompany him; seemingly oblivious to outside interference. It was almost time for the second Sword Meet of Mount Hua; there would be many martial art experts in attendance, with more enemies than friends to Ouyang Feng; how could he be so bold as to practice martial art alone in this place? At this time, not to mention an expert in martial art, if even an ordinary person without any martial art skill would hit or kick him, he would certainly suffer a severe internal injury.

In Guo Jing’s eyes Ouyang Feng was like a sacrificial animal on the table, ready to be butchered. If Guo Jing did not seek revenge now, what was he waiting for? Only he had just killed Liang Ziwen; he had this heavy guilty feeling in his heart. He only moved forward a couple of steps then stood still, unable to kill Ouyang Feng.

Ouyang Feng practiced for about the time needed to boil tea; he gradually slowed down until his body stopped spinning. Finally he stretched his arms and grabbed the rocks, then ‘bonk, bonk, bonk’ he went back to where he was coming from.

Guo Jing’s curiosity was really piqued, he wanted to know where Ouyang Feng was heading, and what kind of marvelous martial art he practiced by standing upside down; therefore, quietly Guo Jing followed after him.

Ouyang Feng walked using his hands, surprisingly it was not any slower than walking with his feet. He climbed to a hill peak, going higher and higher. Guo Jing followed not too far behind until they arrived at the jade-green lush, beautiful peak. He saw Ouyang Feng was heading straight into a cave and stopped in front it. Guo Jing hid himself behind a big rock; suddenly he heard Ouyang Feng sternly said, “Ha hu wen ying, xing er ji jin, si gu er. Your explanation is not right; I could not practice appropriately.”

Guo Jing was startled, at first he thought that those three lines were the Sanskrit lines from the Nine Yin Manual; but it sounded a little bit different. And then he immediately

remembered that those were the lines he deliberately altered per his benevolent master Hong's instruction on the boat. But why did Ouyang Feng suddenly recite those lines? Whom did he speak to?

He heard a crisp and clear female voice came out from the cave, "Your martial art is not adequate, of course you can't practice appropriately. How could I explain incorrectly?" Guo Jing was so surprised that he almost cried out; it was the voice Huang Rong for whom he day and night mourned with grief. Didn't she get killed in the desert? Was he dreaming? Was he in heaven? Or perhaps because of his deep affection he thought it was Huang Rong's voice?

"I have practiced according to what you said, no mistake about it, but why did my 'yi ren mai' [appointed arteries] and 'yang wei mai' [positive dimension arteries] unexpectedly flow in reverse?" Ouyang Feng asked.

That female voice answered, "You didn't want to wait, your strength is wanting." This voice was clearly Huang Rong's voice, Guo Jing had no doubt whatsoever. He was so surprised and happy at the same time that he became giddy and faltered, almost lost his conscience. Because of this excitement the wound on his neck was broken, blood seeped through the wrapped cloth; but he did not seem to notice it.

He heard Ouyang Feng turn angry, "By noon tomorrow the sword meet will start; how can I practice leisurely? Quickly translate the whole manual for me, don't try to mess with me."

At last Guo Jing understood why Ouyang Feng practiced internal energy cultivation right there; turned out he was anxious about the sword meet and wanted to get a quick result. He heard Huang Rong laugh, "You have made an agreement with my Jing Gege; he would spare your life three times in exchange of you not compelling me against my wishes. You have to wait until I am happy enough to teach you."

Hearing her say the word 'my Jing Gege' a sweet, happy feeling flooded Guo Jing's heart. He was almost unable to refrain from leaping out and shout his delight.

Ouyang Feng coldly said, "This is important, my business today takes precedence over all agreements I made in the past." After he said that, he moved his arms, flexed his body and stood right-side up. Then he walked toward the cave in big strides.

"You are shameless!" Huang Rong called out, "I am not going to teach you!"



Ouyang Feng grinned wickedly, “I want to see if you are going to teach me or not,” he said in low voice.

Guo Jing heard Huang Rong cry out, “Aiyo!” then he heard Ouyang Feng’s cold laugh, followed by a sound of ripping clothes. At a moment like this Guo Jing did not have any time to think whether it was appropriate to fight anybody using his martial art; he leaped out and shouted, “Rong’er! I am here!” With the left palm guarding in front of his body he rushed into the cave.

Ouyang Feng’s left hand was grabbing Huang Rong’s bamboo stick, while his right hand was just about to grab her left arm. Huang Rong launched the ‘bang tiau lai quan’ [carrying a skin-diseased dog on a stick] by slanting her stick in front of her body and with a jerk pulled the stick from Ouyang Feng’s hand. Ouyang Feng shouted and was about to continue his attack when suddenly he heard Guo Jing’s voice outside.

Ouyang Feng was the grand master of his martial art school; he had never broken his words to anybody. This time it was in his desperation that he used force against Huang Rong; when suddenly Guo Jing arrived. His face turned beet red, he was ashamed of breaking his own agreement. He flicked his sleeve to cover his own face then fast as lightning he darted through Guo Jing’s side, went out of the cave in a hurry and in a moment not even his shadow was to be seen.

Guo Jing rushed forward to grip Huang Rong’s hands, he called out, “I almost died thinking about you!” He was so agitated that his whole body shivered.

Huang Rong pulled her hands out and coldly said, “Who are you? Why are you holding my hands?”

Guo Jing was stunned. “I ... I am Guo Jing. You ... you are not dead. I ... I ...” he stuttered.

“I don’t know you!” Huang Rong cut him off; and then she went out the cave.

Guo Jing followed her outside, repeatedly bowing in front of her. “Rong’er, Rong’er, please listen to me!” he begged.

“Hmm,” Huang Rong snorted, “Do you think you can call Rong’er’s name just like that? What are you?”

Guo Jing opened his mouth wide, but did not know what to say.

Huang Rong looked at him; she saw he was rather thin, his face haggard; for an instant she felt sorry for him. But immediately she remembered how he had dumped her over and over; her anger flared. She took a step forward.

Guo Jing was really anxious, he pulled her sleeve and said, "Please listen to me."

"Speak!" Huang Rong said.

"I saw your golden hair band and black sable fur coat on the marsh, I thought you ..."  
Guo Jing said. But Huang Rong cut him off again, "Very well, you wanted me to listen to you, and I did!" She pulled her sleeve and walked away.

Guo Jing felt awkward and anxious at the same time. He knew how exceptionally mule-headed Huang Rong could be; he was afraid he might lose her again but he did not know how to express himself. Seeing her sleeve floating while she was climbing the mountain, he had no choice but silently follow.

When she came across Guo Jing earlier, Huang Rong was overwhelmed with mixed feeling. She recalled how she deliberately threw Ouyang Feng from her trail by leaving her golden hair band and her black sable fur coat on the marsh. Then heartbroken she headed back to the east. Her intention was to go back to the Peach Blossom Island to see her father; unfortunately when she reached Shandong she fell sick with nobody to care for her. On her sickbed, while her body was either feverishly hot or cold, she lamented the fact that Guo Jing was a fickle lover; she regretted that her parents had given birth to her that now she had to endure pain and sufferings. When she recovered from her illness she came across Ouyang Feng on the southern Shandong road; and was compelled to follow him to Mount Hua to explain the manual to him.

Looking back to the past she hated everything that had happened. She heard Guo Jing was following her closely. When she walked quickly, Guo Jing also walked quickly; when she slowed down, Guo Jing also slowed down. After walking for a while she turned around abruptly and shouted, "Why are you following me?"

"I will forever follow you, I will never leave you as long as I live," Guo Jing said.

Huang Rong sneered, "You are the Great Khan's son-in-law, what do you want from me, a poor little girl?"

"The Great Khan has caused my mother's death, how can I become his son-in-law?"  
Guo Jing said.

Huang Rong was angry, her entire face turned red, “Good! I thought you still have a heart for me. Turned out the Great Khan has kicked you out! Now that you are not the Master Consort anymore you come looking for the poor little girl. Am I that cheap that you can bully me as you wish?” Speaking to this point she could not control her anger any longer and broke in uncontrollable sobs.

Seeing her bursting in tears Guo Jing was flabbergasted. He wanted to say some comforting words, but he was tongue-tied, did not know what to say. After stayed silent for half a day he finally opened his mouth, “Rong’er, I am here. You want to hit me or kill me; you can do what you want.”

“Why would I want to hit you or kill you?” Huang Rong asked mournfully, “Let’s just say that we have known each other in vain. Please, I am asking you, stop following me.”

Seeing she was not willing to forgive him, Guo Jing’s countenance paled. With a trembling voice he asked, “What do I have to do to make you understand what’s in my heart?”

“Today you are good to me, but if tomorrow you see Huazheng Meizi or Huazheng Jiejie [elder sister], you will immediately shove me away from your brain,” Huang Rong said, “Only if you die in front of me will I believe what you said.”

The blood in Guo Jing’s chest boiled; he nodded and turned around, walked in big strides toward the cliff nearby. It was actually Mount Hua’s most dangerous place, called the ‘she shen ya’ [to give one’s life cliff]; whoever jumped from this place would certainly meet a cruel death.

Knowing his strong-willed temper well, Huang Rong realized Guo Jing was capable of doing what he said he would do. Hastily she dashed forward to grab his clothes. Her hand pulled hard and she jumped over Guo Jing’s shoulder that a moment later she was the one standing at the edge of the cliff. She was angry and anxious at the same time; with tears in her eyes she said, “Fine! I know you don’t care about me one bit. I spoke thoughtless words out of anger and you didn’t miss that opportunity. I am telling you: you don’t need to get angry with me; just don’t see me anymore.”

Huang Rong’s body trembled, her face was snow-white; she stood on the edge of the cliff, leaning against ice-covered rock. She looked like a white ‘cha hua’ [camellia?] gently swaying in the wind.

Because he did not care about his own life, Guo Jing had exerted his strength to jump into the canyon below; but now seeing Huang Rong on the cliff edge he was afraid she might lost her footing. “Come over here,” he hastily said.

Huang Rong could hear the affection in his voice, she was unable to restrain from feeling sad; she cried, “Who wants to hear your fake words? I was sick in Shandong, nobody cared for me; you didn’t even come looking for me. I was captured by that old scoundrel Ouyang Feng and was unable to escape; you didn’t come to rescue me. My mother did not want me; she died and left me to fend for myself. My father did not want me; he did not come looking for me. Worst of all, you obviously did not want me either! There is nobody in this world wants me, nobody loves me!” While saying that she stomped her feet and cried loudly; sounded like she was releasing all anger, sadness, and frustration pent-up for several days.

Guo Jing’s heart was overwhelmed with love and affection, yet he realized what she said was not wrong; the more he listened to her, the more he hated himself.

A cold wind blew, Huang Rong felt cold, her body trembled a little bit. Guo Jing took out his outer coat and was about to drape it across her shoulder when suddenly someone shouted from the side of the cliff, “Who has such guts, dared to bully my Miss Huang?” A man with white beard and long hair appeared, climbing up the cliff. It was none other than the Old Urchin Zhou Botong.

Guo Jing’s attention was focused on Huang Rong; he did not care who came toward them. Huang Rong was not in the mood to joke around, she shouted, “Old Urchin, I told you to kill Qiu Qianren. Where is his head?”

Zhou Botong giggled, he did not know how to answer her; so before she pursued further, he tried to shift the blame, “Miss Huang, who made you angry? The Old Urchin will vent your anger for you.”

Huang Rong pointed her finger to Guo Jing, “Who else if not him?” she said.

Zhou Botong only knew he had to win Huang Rong’s heart, so without saying anything his hand moved; once with the back of his hand, then another with his palm, ‘Slap! Slap!’ he whacked Guo Jing’s ears twice.

Guo Jing’s mind was someplace else, he did not guard against any attack; the Old Urchin’s hand was rather heavy, Guo Jing’s vision turned black and his cheeks were swollen red.

“Miss Huang, is that enough?” Zhou Botong asked, “If not enough I will beat him some more.”

Seeing Guo Jing’s face was swollen with red five-finger print on each cheek, Huang Rong’s anger turned into affection; and her affection toward Guo Jing turned into anger toward Zhou Botong. “I am angry at him, what does it have to do with you? Who told you to beat him up?” she angrily said, “I told you to kill Qiu Qianren, why didn’t you do what I told you?”

Zhou Botong stuck out his tongue, could not answer her question; he said in his heart, “Turned out in wanting to beat a horse fart the Old Urchin has beaten the horse’s hoof instead.” In that difficult situation he suddenly heard from behind the cliff some noise of weapons clashing and indistinct voices of people fighting. He thought if he did not slip away right now, he would not get another chance; he called out immediately, “Most probably that old Qiu Qianren has arrived. I am going to kill him at once.” Before he finished speaking, he had disappeared behind the cliff in a flash.

Actually, if it was really Qiu Qianren, Zhou Botong would not dare to even come near to him. That day Zhou Botong blindly fought with Qiu Qianren, Ouyang Feng and Guo Jing inside the stone house in the western region; Guo Jing escaped and Ouyang Feng followed not too long afterwards. Then Qiu Qianren finally found an opportunity to run away. Zhou Botong did not give up chasing him until Qiu Qianren was exhausted. Qiu Qianren was furious and desperate; he was the clan leader of a big clan in Wulin world, and he was forced to run away from the enemy, he felt really humiliated. He thought he would be better off killing himself rather than falling into the enemy’s hands and suffer further humiliation. He caught a glimpse of several vipers on the sand and stone by the road side. He knew this kind of viper was very poisonous; once he got bitten, the whole body would be numb immediately and he would die without too much pain. Therefore, he caught one viper and held it by pinching the snake at seven inches from the head; he called out, “Zhou Botong the old thief, look here!”

He was about to let the viper bite his own hand; but who would have thought that Zhou Botong was extremely afraid of snakes that he cried out, turned around and ran away. Qiu Qianren was startled, but after half a day, he realized Zhou Botong was afraid of his snake. Unexpectedly the situation was reversed to his benefit. With his left hand he caught another viper, and shouted loudly he gave Zhou Botong a chase.

Zhou Botong was terrified, he ran like crazy. Qiu Qianren was known as the ‘tie zhang shui shang piao’ [iron palm floating on the water]; his lightness kungfu was superior

from Zhou Botong's. If he was not scared of Zhou Botong, he would have caught up with him early on.

Two men chasing each other noisily until the day turned dark. Zhou Botong ran with all his might, Qiu Qianren was actually looking for an opportunity to escape; he was secretly amused and pretended to chase Zhou Botong seriously. On the second day Zhou Botong found a horse which he quickly mounted and rode back into the east; afraid that Qiu Qianren might overtake him.

Seeing Zhou Botong sneaked out, Huang Rong cast a sidelong glance toward Guo Jing, sighed, and lowered her head without saying anything.

"Rong'er," Guo Jing called.

"Hmm," Huang Rong lightly uttered.

Guo Jing wanted to apologize and asked for her forgiveness, but realizing he was clumsy, he was afraid he might say something wrong and actually stirred up her anger. Two people stood side by side in the wind; suddenly Huang Rong sneezed. Immediately Guo Jing took his coat off and spread it over Huang Rong's body. Huang Rong lowered her head, seemingly oblivious to him. Suddenly they heard Zhou Botong's loud laughter, followed by his shouts, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

Huang Rong held out her hand, touching Guo Jing's hand, "Jing Gege, let's take a look," she said with a low voice. Guo Jing was so happy that tears rolled down his cheeks, he could not say anything. Huang Rong wiped out the tears with her sleeve; she laughed and said, "You have tears on your face; also fingerprints on your cheeks. People will say I beat you until you cry." Her smile was so graceful; signifying the two of them had been reconciled. After this incident, actually the bond between them grew deeper.

Hand in hand the two of them walked down the cliff; they saw Zhou Botong was bending over with laughter, he looked so proud of himself. Qiu Chuji stood on the side with a sword in his hand. Sha Tongtian, Peng Lianhu, Lingzhi Shangren, and Hou Tonghai, four people were seen with weapons in their hands in various postures; some were attacking, some were retreating or eluding an attack, but they all looked like motionless wooden statues. Turned out their acupoints had been sealed by Zhou Botong.

Zhou Botong said, "The other day I made some pills from the dirt on my body and gave them to you. But you stinky thieves are actually crafty and smart; as soon as you found

out they were not poisonous, you did not want to obey your grandfather anymore. Hmm, hmm ... how about today?"

Even though he managed to overpower these four men, but actually he had no idea what to do with them. Hence, as soon as he saw Guo Jing and Huang Rong walked over he said, "Miss Huang, I present these four stinky thieves to you!"

"What do I want to do with them?" Huang Rong said, "Hmm, you don't want to kill them, you also don't want to release them. You subdued these four stinky thieves, yet don't have any idea what to do with them. Call me 'Good Elder Sister' three times, I will teach you what to do."

Zhou Botong was delighted; immediately he called, "Good Elder Sister!" three times; each time he added a cupping of his fists.

Huang Rong pursed her lips and laughed. Pointing her finger to Peng Lianhu she said, "Search his pocket."

Zhou Botong immediately complied; from Peng Lianhu's body he took out a ring with poisonous needle on it, and two bottles of antidotes.

"He had once used this needle to prick your Martial Nephew Ma Yu, now prick him several times with that same needle," Huang Rong said.

Peng Lianhu and the others could hear everything clearly, they were so frightened that they felt their souls were leaving their bodies; but their acupoints were sealed, they could not move. They felt severe pain since each of them was pricked several times by Zhou Botong.

"The antidote is in your hand, whatever you want them to do, I want to see if they will dare to defy," Huang Rong said.

Zhou Botong was delighted; he rubbed some dirt from his body and mixed them with the antidote, he made some pills from the mixture and gave the pills to Qiu Chuji. He said, "You take these four stinky thieves as prisoners; take them to Mount Zhongnan, imprison them at the Chongyang Palace for twenty years. If they behave well along the way, give each of them one of my wonder pill; otherwise let them enjoy the poison. This is called taking consequences for their own actions. Show no mercy!"

Qiu Chuji bowed and complied.

Huang Rong laughed, “Old Urchin, what you said was very reasonable. I haven’t seen you for a year and look how far you have progressed!”

Zhou Botong was very pleased with himself, he unsealed Peng Lianhu and the others’ acupoints and said, “You go to the Chongyang Palace, stay there meditating your lives for twenty years. If you are really willing to repent, you might still be able to live as good people in the future. But if you don’t want to repent, hmmm ... just know that our Quanzhen people are experts in killing people without batting an eye; we can torture without creasing an eyebrow; we can make you four stinky thieves into meatballs and everybody can come and eat you. By that time I want to see what other trick you have in your sleeve?”

Peng Lianhu and the others did not dare to say anything; they only nodded and mumbled their consents. Qiu Chuji stifled his laughter; he bade Zhou Botong farewell, then with a sword in his hand herded four people walking down the mountain.

Huang Rong laughed, “Old Urchin, when did you learn to teach others? The front part of your speech made a lot of sense, but the latter part was a lot of nonsense.”

Zhou Botong looked up to the sky and laughed; but suddenly he saw toward his left there was a flashing white light. Apparently it was a weapon reflecting the sunlight. “Well, what is that?” he called out.

Jing and Rong lifted their heads to see, but the flashing light was gone. Zhou Botong was afraid Huang Rong would raise Qiu Qianren’s matter to him, he quickly said, “Let me take a look.” And he flew to the nearby peak.

Jing and Rong two people had a lot to talk; they looked for a cave and poured out their hearts’ content to each other. They talked and talked until the sun disappeared behind the western peak; still there were more to talk about. Guo Jing took some dried food from his backpack and gave some to Huang Rong.

Huang Rong ate and smiled, “That old scoundrel Ouyang Feng compelled me to explain to him the Nine Yin Manual; his source was the one you wrote randomly, so I also gave him a random explanation. He accepted it as real, and he trained hard on it for several months. I told him that this type of martial art has to be practiced upside down; he really turned head over heels training diligently. He managed to reverse the whole body passage through which vital energy circulates. It was really not easy; his ‘yin wei’ [negative dimension], ‘yang wei’ [positive dimension], yin and yang; four main arteries are



flowing in reverse. I don't know how he will look like if his entire system flows in reverse." Having said that she giggled.

Guo Jing was also smiling, "No wonder I saw him upside down in the middle of the road," he said, "It was really not easy to do."

"You are coming to Mount Hua; are you going to join the contest to win the title Number One Martial Artist of the World?" Huang Rong asked.

"Rong'er, why are you teasing me?" Guo Jing said, "I am here to ask Zhou Dage on how I can forget the martial arts I have already learned." And then he told Huang Rong everything he had pondered in his heart these past several days.

Huang Rong leaned her head slightly and thought for a moment. "Ay! It's good if we can forget it," she said, "The more we train, the stronger our martial art become; but actually our heart is not getting happier. I wish we were just like little children who don't know anything; nothing burdened our minds, no worry, no anxiety." She forgot that as one grew older, the more hardship and anxiety one would have to face; it had nothing to do with whether one's martial art skill was high or not.

Huang Rong continued, "I heard Ouyang Feng saying that tomorrow is the sword meet day; I am sure my father will come to this mountain. You said you are not going to join the contest; how about we think of something to help my father win the title?"

"Rong'er," Guo Jing said, "It's not that I don't want to help you, but I think in term of conduct, Benevolent Master Hong is superior to your father."

Originally Huang Rong was leaning against Guo Jing's body, but as she heard him saying her father was not good, she pushed him away in anger. Guo Jing was startled, he was confused. But suddenly Huang Rong laughed, "Hmm, actually Benevolent Master Hong's treatment to us was not bad. Let's just not help any of them, what do you think?"

"Both your father and Benevolent Master Hong are honorable warriors; they won't like it if we secretly help them," Guo Jing said.

"Fine! Now you are saying that I am sly and crafty, that I am a wicked traitor coward?" Huang Rong said pulling up her face.

"I am sorry," Guo Jing said, "I am a fool, always say wrong things and provoke you to anger." His face looked really terrified.

Huang Rong stifled her laughter, “I don’t know how many more times I am going to be mad at you.”

Guo Jing was perplexed; he scratched his head and looked at her with blank expression.

“If you don’t dump me anymore, we will have many days to be together. I really don’t care how many more times you are going to say stupid things,” Huang Rong said.

Guo Jing was ecstatic, he gripped her hands tight and earnestly said, “How can I dump you? How can I?”

“It was because the princess didn’t want you that naturally you have no choice but looking for me, a poor little girl,” Huang Rong said.

What Huang Rong said had brought back a flood of sad memories into Guo Jing’s mind; he remembered his mother’s tragic death in the desert, he looked so dispirited and was silent. It was a new moon, silver light like water shone on them. Huang Rong saw his dejected countenance and realized she had offended him deeply; she quickly tried to change the subject. “Jing Gege, let us not talk about past matters. Being together with you like this makes my heart so happy. How about I let you kiss my cheek?”

Guo Jing’s entire face turned red; indeed he did not dare to kiss her. Huang Rong flashed a captivating smile; she was fully aware that she had embarrassed both Guo Jing and herself, so she changed the subject again, “On the sword meet tomorrow, who do you say will win?” she asked.

“That is really difficult to say,” Guo Jing replied, “I wonder if Reverend Yideng is coming?”

“The reverend has entered emptiness; he would not want to fight over empty reputation,” Huang Rong reasoned.

Guo Jing nodded his agreement, “I think so too. Your father, Benevolent Master Hong, Big Brother Zhou, Qiu Qianren and Ouyang Feng, five people; each one is the grand-master of their respective school, each one has their own unique skill. I am just wondering if Benevolent Master Hong has recovered from his injury. Can his skill level back to where it was?” Remembering his master Guo Jing was saddened.

“Reasonably speaking, the Old Urchin’s martial art is the strongest,” Huang Rong said, “However, if he does not use the martial art from the Nine Yin Manual, then he is still inferior to the other four.”

Two people talked until Huang Rong felt tired; then she leaned on Guo Jing’s bosom and fell asleep. Guo Jing was also weary and was dozing off when suddenly he heard foot-steps approaching. Two dark shadows, one in front of the other, were rushing over the cliff. Those two people’s clothes were fluttering in the wind, they were running very fast. From their footwork, looked like the one in the front was the Old Urchin Zhou Botong, and the one pursuing him was surprisingly Qiu Qianren. Guo Jing did not know that Qiu Qianren had used vipers to scare Zhou Botong off; he was baffled, in the western region Qiu Qianren was running away for his life because of Zhou Botong, how come the situation was reversed now? Lightly he nudged Huang Rong and whispered in her ear, “Look!”

Huang Rong raised her head and saw under the moonlight Zhou Botong eloped to the east and escaped to the west; did not dare to face the enemy at all. Zhou Botong was heard shouting, “Old thief surnamed Qiu, I have somebody here who is an expert in catching viper; you’d better run away as quick as you can!”

Qiu Qianren laughed, “Do you think I am a three-year old kid?” he said.

“Guo Xiongdi [Brother Guo], Miss Huang! Come and help me, please!” Zhou Botong shouted.

Guo Jing was about to leap out, but Huang Rong pushed his chest back, “Don’t move!” she hissed.

Zhou Botong had run around in circles yet did not see Jing and Rong two people come out, he started to curse, “Stinky Kid, Crafty Girl, if you don’t come out, I am going to curse your ancestors to the eighteenth generation.”

Huang Rong stood up and laughed, “I don’t want to come out, curse if you can.”

Zhou Botong saw the vipers in Qiu Qianren’s hands lifted their heads high with their tongues stuck out; he was so scared that his knees turned into jelly. “Miss Huang, please come, please come. What about if I curse my own ancestors to the eighteenth generation?” he begged.

Qiu Qianren was shocked to see Jing and Rong two people were standing nearby. Quickly he cooked up some ideas to slip away; otherwise if those three people ganged up against him, definitely things would not go well for him. Tomorrow would be another story; he would fight each of them on a one-to-one battle, he was not afraid of any of them. He started to move his feet, but before running away he flung the vipers toward Zhou Botong's face.

Zhou Botong wielded his sleeve in panic, he stepped aside to elude; suddenly there was a light plopping sound and he felt something cold fell on his neck, straight through his collar into his back. That something wiggled and bounced around inside his clothes; it felt slippery. He was so scared, it felt like his soul was leaving his body. "I am dying, I am dying!" he cried. He did not dare to put his hands into his clothes to pull the 'snakes' out; he only jumped around wildly. Suddenly he felt the 'snake' bit him in the chest; he thought he really died this time, his whole body tingled with numbness and he fell down to the ground.

Jing and Rong two people were shocked, they quickly leaped forward to help. Seeing Zhou Botong suddenly fall down, Qiu Qianren was also surprised; he was about to seek a way to go down the mountain when suddenly a black shadow appeared from among the trees. That shadow coldly said, "Old thief Qiu, today you can't run away anymore."

That person's back was facing the moon, so Qiu Qianren could not see that person's face clearly. Qiu Qianren felt a chill creep up his back. "Who are you?" he barked.

Zhou Botong was lying on the ground, bedazzled. He felt he would soon be gone to the underworld; but suddenly he felt someone helped him up. "Master Zhou, don't be afraid, that is not a snake," he heard that person said. Zhou Botong was startled, he quickly stood up, but that cold thing on his back started to bounce around again; he jumped around and shouted madly, "It is biting me, it's a snake, it's a snake!"

"It's a 'jin wa wa' [golden baby doll, see Chapter 29] fish, not a snake," that person said. By now Jing and Rong two people could see clearly that person's appearance; turned out it was the Fisherman from the Fisherman, Woodcutter, Farmer, and Scholar, four main disciples of Reverend Yideng. They saw him stretching out his arm and took a 'jin wa wa' from Zhou Botong's clothes.

Turned out that fisherman saw a pair of 'jin wa wa' in a creek nearby; he caught them and kept them in his bosom. One of them slipped and jumped high into a tree; as luck had it, it fell down inside Zhou Botong's collar. That 'jin wa wa' did not bite, but Zhou Botong was so scared of snakes that he imagined this cold and slippery thing was actu-

ally a viper biting his back. If the Fisherman was one step late, Zhou Botong might pass out of fright.

Zhou Botong opened his eyes and saw the fisherman; but he was still in shock. He knew he had met this person before, but he could not remember who it was. He turned his head to see Qiu Qianren was walking step-by-step backward, while the black shadow in front of him walked step-by-step forward, slowly approaching. Zhou Botong was a little bit relaxed but then he was startled and frightened out of his wits; he saw clearly that the black shadow was precisely the Concubine Liu Ying Gu from the Dali country's royal palace.

Qiu Qianren was led to believe at the present time only Zhou Botong's martial art was superior to his. If he managed to scare Zhou Botong away with his snakes, then on the sword meet the next day he was certain he would have a great chance to come out the winner. Unexpectedly on the eve of the sword meet Ying Gu appeared. That day on the 'qing long tan' [green dragon shore] she madly fought him; he thought that if this granny entangled him in another fight while his enemies were standing on the side; his life would be in grave danger. But then he heard she hissed with a throaty voice, "Give me back my son's life!"

Qiu Qianren's heart turned cold; he thought that that night when he entered the royal palace and injured her son in his attempt to force Emperor Duan to waste his strength he had disguised himself carefully. Who would have thought that the emperor did not save the child's life, and now she had somehow learned the truth? He forced a smile and said, "Crazy Granny, why are you bothering me?"

"Give me back my son's life!" Ying Gu called out.

"What son?" Qiu Qianren asked, "You son died, it has nothing to do with me."

"Hmm, that night I did not see your face, but I remember your laughter," Ying Gu said, "You laugh, now! Laugh! Laugh!"

Qiu Qianren saw her stretching both hands to pounce on him; he withdrew two steps, slightly leaned his body to the side, then his left palm slapped his right, and his right palm swept diagonally to strike Ying Gu's abdomen. It was the fiercest one of his thirteen stances Iron Palms, called the 'yin yang gui yi' [negative and positive converge into one].

Ying Gu realized the fierceness of this attack; she used the Loach Maneuver to evade. Who would have thought that the enemy's strike was so swift that before she could even move her feet, his palm was already less than half a foot from her body. Ying Gu felt a stab of pain in her heart; knowing that her hope of seeking revenge was shattered. Disregarding his palm, she jumped forward with the intention of grabbing his body so that both of them would fall down into the canyon below. Suddenly she heard a gust of wind and a fist cut like a knife in front of her. Just before his palm reached its target, Qiu Qianren was forced to retract his arm and parry that incoming fist. He was angry, "Old Urchin, it's you again!"

When Zhou Botong saw the danger threatening Ying Gu, he used the skill he learned from the Nine Yin Manual to its fullest extent to defeat the Iron Palm stance. Zhou Botong did not dare to look straight to Ying Gu; putting his back to her he said, "Ying Gu, you are not this old scoundrel's match. Quickly go! I will go too!"

He was about to fly down the mountain when suddenly Ying Gu called out, "Zhou Botong, why don't you avenge your son?"

Zhou Botong was dumbstruck. "What? My son?"

"Exactly," Ying Gu said, "Your son is killed by Qiu Qianren."

Zhou Botong still did not know that his affair with Ying Gu had resulted in they having a child. His mind was muddled; he was at lost. He turned his head to see that there were several more people standing next to Ying Gu; other than Guo Jing and Huang Rong, there were Reverend Yideng and his four disciples.

At that time Qiu Qianren had walked away from the edge of the cliff less than three feet, suddenly he saw in front of him a group of formidable enemies while the terrain they were on was really dangerous. He knew he was facing a grave danger. He clapped his hands and boldly said, "I am climbing the Mount Hua to fight over the 'Number One Martial Artist in the World' title. Hmm, hmm ... all of you gang up to get rid of a powerful opponent. It's truly despicable!"

Zhou Botong thought what this old thief said was reasonable, he said, "All right, I am going to wait until after the sword meet tomorrow, then I am going to take your dog life."

Ying Gu angrily called out, "I want to seek revenge, how can I wait until tomorrow?"

Huang Rong also said, “Old Urchin, toward a person with a good faith we speak with a good faith; toward a deceitful person we speak deceitfully. Let us just get rid of him once and for all; I want to see what he is going to do.”

Qiu Qianren face turned deathly pale, he realized his precarious situation; but suddenly he got an idea, “Why do you want to kill me?” he called out.

The scholar replied, “You have done all kinds of evil deeds; everybody deserved to punish you.”

Qiu Qianren lifted his face to the sky and laughed, “Speaking about martial art, you rely on numbers to bully me, certainly I am not your match. But speaking about right and wrong, good and evil, hey, hey ... Qiu Qianren is not alone. Whoever among you who has never killed anybody or done anything wrong; you can start punishing me. I will stretch out my neck to die in your hand; if I even creased my eyebrows; don't consider me a real man.”

Reverend Yideng heaved a deep sigh, he was the first to step back then he lowered his head and sat cross-legged on the ground. Everybody else was deeply affected by Qiu Qianren's words; each thought how they have committed countless errors in their lives. The Fisherman, Woodcutter, Farmer, and the Scholar were all high-ranking government officials of the Dali country; they had killed people. Although they were acting in enforcing the justice, in the end they had unavoidably made some mistakes.

Zhou Botong and Ying Gu looked at each other; they recalled the love and hate between them, and each felt ashamed. During the expedition to the west Guo Jing had killed numerous people, and he still blamed himself for that. Huang Rong remembered how she had made her father suffer, how she was being an unfilial daughter, and how many times she had deceived others; truly she had committed not a few faults of her own.

Qiu Qianren thought that his speech had silenced everybody, now it was a good time to slip away; therefore, with big strides he walked pass Guo Jing's left side to leave. He saw Guo Jing step aside to let him go; he exerted his strength and about to flee when suddenly a bamboo stick appeared from behind the mountain rock, blocking his way. This bamboo stick was so swift, Qiu Qianren's left palm flew up, his wrist made a turn, trying to catch the stick's end; but unexpectedly the stick poked three times swiftly, targeting three major acupoints on his chest. Qiu Qianren was shocked; he felt that the bamboo stick's incoming force was like a strong wind. He was unable to neither parry nor evade, and had no choice but step backwards and thus return to where he started,

by the edge of the cliff. From behind the rock a dark shadow appeared with the stick in his hand, and then stood up in front of him.

“Shifu!” Guo Jing and Huang Rong cried out. The ‘jiu zhi shen gai’ [nine-fingered divine beggar] Hong Qigong had arrived.

“Stinky beggar, you come to meddle. It’s not time for the sword meet yet,” Qiu Qianren cursed.

“I came to get rid of a traitor. Who wants to have a contest with you?” Hong Qigong said.

“Fine! What a great hero and warrior [actually, here he used the term ‘da ying xiong da xia shi’ – I don’t know how to differentiate ‘ying xiong’ and ‘xia’] you are, and I am a traitor. You are a good man and have never committed any misconduct,” Qiu Qianren said.

“That’s correct,” Hong Qigong replied, “During my lifetime the Old Beggar has killed 231 people; all these 231 people were wicked, if not greedy and corrupt officials, then they were local bullies or criminals who oppressed common people; they were all evil people who had no regard of justice and honor. The Old Beggar is a glutton, but in all my life I have never killed an innocent person. Qiu Qianren, you are the 232nd person!”

His speech had made Qiu Qianren shiver with fear; he felt like his life had been taken from him. Hong Qigong continued, “Qiu Qianren, your Iron Palm Clan’s past Clan Leader Shangguan Jian Nan was a true hero; he devoted his entire life to serve the country, he was loyal till the day he died. Didn’t your master advise you to be a real man? You succeeded your master as the Iron Palm Clan Leader; yet you colluded with the Jins, betraying your own country. When you die, do you have any face to meet your master and Shangguan Jian Nan, Shangguan Bangzhu? You climb Mount Hua in a vain attempt to compete against other martial art experts to win the ‘Number One Martial Artist in the World’. Not only your martial art is inferior to everybody else’s; but even if your martial art were matchless, which hero of this world would want to submit to a traitor who sells his own country?”

This speech was like a bucket of cold water drenched over Qiu Qianren; everything he had ever done in the past dozens of years came into his mind one by one. He remembered his master’s instructions. How his master at his deathbed had imparted the Iron Palm Clan rules and regulations after he assumed the Clan Leader position; earnestly



warning him to be a patriot, loyal to his country and love its people. Who would have thought that the older he got, the stronger his martial art became, the more he forgot his oath to love his country; he has become a traitor and a criminal, killing people who oppose his personal ambition. He fell deeper and deeper, until the clan members who were loyal and righteous left him, and in their place he took criminals as his disciples. He went as far as changing the upright Iron Palm Clan into a gang of bandits; sheltering evil people and support their evil practices; carrying out all kinds of evil things.

He lifted up his eyes to see the bright moon in the sky; he lowered his eyes to see Hong Qigong's bright pair of eyes with a penetrating gaze looking at him. Suddenly his conscience was awakened; he felt that among all of his life conducts not one could be called honorable. His body was drenched in cold sweats; he sighed, "Hong Bangzhu, you are right." He turned around and jumped into the canyon below.

Hong Qigong was holding tight his bamboo stick to guard against Qiu Qianren lest he would launch a sudden attack from shame. This person's martial art is nothing to be trifled with; in his desperation his attack must be really fierce. Not in a million years would he expect him to suddenly attempt to commit suicide. He was stunned, but suddenly a grey shadow flew by his side; Reverend Yideng had arrived at the cliff edge. Initially he was sitting cross-legged, and when he moved, he was still cross-legged. His left arm stretched out and grabbed Qiu Qianren's feet, pulled him strongly back to safety.

"Zhan zai, zhan cai!" he said, "The sea of bitterness knows no bounds; turn around and you will see the shore. You have already repented of your previous wrong doings; it's not too late to become a new man."

Qiu Qianren wept loudly, he knelt down in front of Yideng. He had millions of things he wanted to say, but was unable to utter a single word.

Ying Gu saw his back was in front of her; it was a very good opportunity for her to seek her revenge. She took a dagger from her bosom and fiercely thrust it into Qiu Qianren's back.

"Wait!" Zhou Botong called out; stretching his hand to block Ying Gu's dagger.

Ying Gu was angry, "What are you doing?" she asked sternly.

Since the first time Zhou Botong saw Ying Gu, he had been scared. Now that she scolded him, he shouted, "Aiyo!" and turned around, rushing down the mountain.

“Where are you going?” Ying Gu called out and immediately pursued him.

“I have tummy ache, I need to defecate!” Zhou Botong shouted. Ying Gu was startled only for a second, then she ignored him and did not stop pursuing Zhou Botong.

Zhou Botong was stunned, “Aiyo! Not good! I have shits all over my pants; it stinks to high heaven. Don’t come over here!” he anxiously shouted.

Ying Gu had been searching for him for over twenty years; she believed that if she missed him again this time, she would not see him anymore. Hence she did not care whether Zhou Botong was really defecating or just pretending, she kept pursuing him.

Zhou Botong heard the sound of footsteps approaching; he was scared out of his wits. Initially he said he was defecating to scare Ying Gu out from coming near him; he was hoping that he would find an opportunity to slip away. Who would have thought that Ying Gu ignored his words. He was so frightened that he cried out; and from pretending, Zhou Botong actually did start urinating and defecating.

Guo Jing and Huang Rong were amused to watch this couple who quickly disappear beyond the cliff in the distant; and then they turned their heads to see Reverend Yideng was speaking in low voice on Qiu Qianren’s ears. Qiu Qianren did not say anything, he simply nodded his head repeatedly. Yideng spoke for a long while then finally he stood up and said, “Let’s go.”

Jing and Rong two people hurriedly went forward to pay their respects; they also bowed to the Fisherman, the Woodcutter, the Farmer and the Scholar. Yideng held out his hand to stroke their heads; he looked at them tenderly with a gentle smile on his face. “Qi Xiong,” he turned to Hong Qigong, “You are in good shape, your bravery is as great as I remember it; you also received these two fine disciples. I must congratulate you.”

Hong Qigong bowed and said, “Reverend is also well.”

Yideng smiled, “The mountain is tall and the river is long; till we meet again,” he said. Putting his palms together he turned around and left.

“Tomorrow is the sword meet, why are you leaving?” Hong Qigong called out.

Yideng turned his head and smiled, “The Old Monk is an outsider; how could I dare to compete with world class heroes over a title? The Old Monk is here today to take care

of twenty years' worth of gratitude and grudges; and I am happy my intention has been achieved. Qi Xiong, who is the present age hero but you? Why are you being modest?" Again he put his palms together, took Qiu Qianren's hand, and walked down the mountain.

The four main disciples of Dali bowed toward Hong Qigong then followed behind their master. The Scholar walked by Huang Rong's side. Seeing her cheeks were glowing he raised his eyebrows and smiled while reciting a line, "On the marshy land there was a 'chang chu' tree, its branches are soft and willowy!"

Hearing him tease her, Huang Rong replied with another line, "The chicken perched on their roost, the evening has arrived."

The Scholar laughed a big laughter, he cupped his fists and left.

Guo Jing was bewildered, "Rong'er," he asked, "Was that another Sanskrit line?"

"No," Huang Rong smiled, "It was from 'the book of poems'" she explained.

Hearing they were exchanging poetry, Guo Jing did not ask further. Looking at him Huang Rong smiled. She thought, "This 'zhuang yuan' [honorable title conferred to the person who scored highest in the imperial examination] is really smart; he had guessed correctly what's in my heart. The next lines of what he recited from the book of poems are 'pleasure does not need knowledge, pleasure does not need a family, pleasure does not need a room'. It was about a maiden adoring a bachelor's love song. It is very appropriate to Jing Gege's situation; he was saying that this scattered brain dumb kid has finally found a wife. I am very happy!" Having thought this suddenly she uttered a soft cry, "Aiyo!"

"What is it?" Guo Jing hastily asked.

Huang Rong smiled and said, "The next lines of what I recited are 'The sheep and the cows coming down, the sheep and the cows went into the pen.' The poem says that it was getting late, the sheep and the cows from the hillside returned to the fold and the gate was closed. In short I called that 'zhuang yuan' an animal. But it can be considered that I called Reverend Yideng an animal too!"

Guo Jing did not pay too much attention to this poetry exchange; he was pondering on what Hong Qigong had said to Qiu Qianren earlier. His heart was heavy with doubts and anxiety for these past several days; all his questions were answered in just a few

words. His mind became open and he understood, “Shifu said he has killed 231 people; but these 231 people were all wicked. As long as he did not kill an innocent person, then his conscience is clear. Look how Shifu reprimanded Qiu Qianren, physical prowess is useless. This Qiu Qianren’s martial art is not necessary below that of Shifu’s, but because his heart was not upright, he cowered in Shifu’s presence. As long as I use my martial art to uphold justice, why would I want to put my martial art behind?”

It was actually a clear cut truth, even Qiu Chuji had spoken to him about the same truth. It was not that he did not believe Qiu Chuji, it was just that he recently joined Genghis Khan’s expedition to the west; he saw with his own eyes the terrible massacre, the cruelty on the battlefield, the suffering of the people, the tragic death of his mother under his own dagger; he loathed all kinds of war and violence and his mind was overwhelmed with this bitter thought. But after going through this deep thinking in his mind, finally his determination to do good deeds was getting stronger.

Jing and Rong two people went forward and kowtowed in front of their master; then they talked about things that happened after they parted. Turned out Hong Qigong followed Huang Yaoshi back to the Peach Blossom Island to tend to his injury. Using the method from the Nine Yin Manual he was able to revive his internal strength and open up the passages through which the vital energy circulate. It took him about half a year to heal his internal injury, then another half a year to recover his internal strength.

Huang Yaoshi was worried about his daughter; therefore, as soon as Hong Qigong’s injury was healed, he went to the north looking for her. Hong Qigong left the island much later than Huang Yaoshi did, and only a few days ago he came across Lu Youjiao; thus for the most part he had learned what happened to his disciples Jing and Rong.

Three people talked for a while. Finally Guo Jing said, “Shifu, please take some rest. Come daybreak you will compete in the sword meet; you will need a lot of energy.”

Hong Qigong laughed, “The older I get, my desire to outdo others is actually getting stronger; but thinking that very soon I am going to fight the Eastern Heretic and Western Poison, my heart is anxious. It is ridiculous! Rong’er, in the recent years your father’s martial art has improved tremendously. Tell me, in the upcoming contest between your father and your Shifu, who is strong and who is weak?”

Huang Rong replied, “The martial art of yours, Senior, and that of my father’s are always difficult to compare; but now you have mastered the ‘jiu yin shen gong’ [nine yin divine energy]; how can my father be your match? Later when I see my father I am go-

ing to advise him not to compete with you; he'd better go back home to the Peach Blossom Island early on."

Listening to her manner of speaking, Hong Qigong felt something was strange. After pondering it for a while he understood her intention. He laughed loudly and said, "You don't need to talk in circle to me; I got the 'jiu yin shen gong' from you two. You don't have to goad me; the Old Beggar's face is not thick enough to use that skill. When I compete with the Old Heretic Huang later, I am going to use only my own original skills."

Huang Rong was expecting him to say these exact words; so she smiled and said, "Shifu, if you lose under my father's hand, I am going to prepare a hundred types of food for you to eat. So winning you will no doubt be delighted, losing you will also be happy."

Hong Qigong swallowed his saliva. "Hmm, this girl's heart is not good. You provoke me then you bribe me. You are wickedly shrewd; you hope wholeheartedly your own father will win."

Huang Rong smiled, but before she could answer Hong Qigong suddenly stood up. He pointed his finger toward Huang Rong's back and called out, "Old Poison, you arrived very early!"

Guo Jing and Huang Rong were startled; quickly they sprang up and stood next to Hong Qigong. They turned their heads and saw Ouyang Feng with his tall stature standing nearby. He arrived so quietly that these two people were not aware of his presence; they were greatly astonished.

