

Foxs' Wuxia

Wuxia Fan Translation

SDYXZ Chapter 38



Chapter 38 – Secret Order in Embroidered Pouch

Translated by Foxs



Guo Jing grabbed one end of his long robe and let his horse run close to Ouyang Feng. Ouyang Feng held out his hand and grabbed the other end. Guo Jing squeezed his legs and gave a loud shout. The little red horse furiously charged forward and with a loud splashing sound Ouyang Feng was pulled out of the mire and dragged along on the snowy ground.

Guo Jing accompanied Qiu Chuji and his eighteen disciples, among them were Li Zhichang, Yin Zhiping, Xia Zhicheng, Yu Zhike, Zhang Zhizsu, Wang Zhiming, and Song Defang. When they went out of the palace, they saw Huang Rong and the three elders,

Lu, Jian, and Liang, as well as about a thousand Beggar Clan disciples all on horseback, waiting outside the palace.

As soon as she saw Guo Jing leave the palace, Huang Rong slapped her horse to move forward, smiling she asked “Is everything all right?”

Guo Jing smiled, “My luck is not bad; Qiu Daozhang [Taoist Priest] arrived just in time, changing the Great Khan’s mood to the better,” he said.

Huang Rong paid her respects to Qiu Chuji, then she asked Guo Jing again, “I was afraid the Great Khan would kill you in his wrath, I took everybody here ready to rescue you. What did the Great Khan say? Did he agree to cancel your betrothal?”

Guo Jing hesitated for half a day before replying, “I did not ask.”

“Why?” Huang Rong was startled.

“Rong’er, please don’t get angry,” Guo Jing said, “It was because ...” Right then Princess Huazheng rushed out of the palace, loudly called out, “Guo Jing Gege [big brother – a term of endearment].”

As soon as she saw her, Huang Rong’s face changed immediately. She quickly mounted her horse and galloped away. Guo Jing was about to open his mouth to explain, when Huazheng pulled his hand and said, “Weren’t you surprised I came here? Are you happy to see me?”

Guo Jing nodded, he turned his head to see Huang Rong, but she had already disappeared. Huazheng only had her eyes to Guo Jing, she did not notice Huang Rong at all; she held his hand, laughing, giggling and telling him how much she missed him.

Guo Jing secretly groaned, “Rong’er must think it was because I saw Huazheng that I did not ask the Great Khan to cancel my betrothal.” He was silent and did not hear what Huazheng was saying.

A moment later Huazheng realized Guo Jing was in a daze, she was offended, “What’s the matter with you? I came from far away just to see you and you do not pay any attention to me?”

“Meizi [younger sister – term of endearment],” Guo Jing said, “I have a very important matter I need to take care of, we will talk when I come back.” Without waiting for her

answer he assigned his personal guard to take care of Qiu Chuji, then hurriedly he went back to his camp, looking for Huang Rong.

His guard said, “Miss Huang came back to take the painting, then left toward the eastern gate.”

Guo Jing was startled, “What painting?” he asked.

“The painting Master Consort frequently looked at,” his guard replied.

Now Guo Jing really freaked out. “She took away this picture that means she really severed her relationship with me. No matter what, I have to go south to look for her.” Hurriedly he wrote a letter to Qiu Chuji, then mounting his little red horse he went out of town to pursue.

That little red horse was very fast; but Guo Jing was afraid he might not see Huang Rong anymore, so he kept urging the horse to run even faster. In a short moment they had covered more than ten ‘li’s, already at the outskirts of the city; soldiers and horses’ remains scattered everywhere. Another dozen or so ‘li’s later, all he saw was a vast open prairie covered with white snow. To his delight, there were horse’s tracks on the snow heading east.

“The little red horse is so swift that no other horse in this world is its match. A little more time and I should be able to catch Rong’er,” he thought, “I will take mother, then the three of us will go south at once. I don’t care if Huazheng Meizi would blame me.”

Another dozen of ‘li’s the track suddenly turned north, and there were human footprints beside the horse’s track. The footprints were really peculiar, since the distance between two feet was about four feet; also, the size of the feet were big, but sank into the snow only lightly, only a few inches deep. Guo Jing was startled, “This person’s lightness kungfu is excellent.” Immediately he recalled something, “There is no one other than Ouyang Feng who has this kind of ability. Could it be that he is pursuing Rong’er?” Thinking of this, even though the cold wind was blowing, he could not help but sweat all over. The little red horse was truly smart, somehow it knew its master was in distress; so without Guo Jing pulling the rein it immediately ran following the tracks.

Guo Jing saw the footprints were always right by the horse’s track. Several ‘li’s later both the track and the footprint suddenly turned west, and then turned south; turning and winding around, there was not a single section that was straight. Guo Jing thought, “Rong’er must have found out Ouyang Feng was chasing her, so she tried to shake him

off. But the track is imprinted clearly on the snow, Old Poison won't have any difficulty following her."

Another dozen of 'li's or so, the footprint and the horse track intermingled, they were overlapping another set of footprint and horse track altogether. Guo Jing dismounted the horse to look closer. He was able to tell which set was made earlier and which set was made later. Looking both sets of tracks stretched out far on the snow he suddenly realized something, "Rong'er must have used her father's 'qi men zhi shu' [strange/wonderful/mysterious gate technique]; deliberately winding around to the east and circling to the west to confuse Ouyang Feng. Once he lost her track, she came back to her original route."

He stood back up, his heart was happy and anxious at the same time; happy because he knew most probably Ouyang Feng would not be able to overtake Huang Rong, anxious because of the confusing horse's track he also lost his trail. Standing on the snow he thought, "Rong'er went in circle, but eventually she must be heading east. I have to pursue to the east then." Leaping to his horseback, he looked to the sky to find his bearing then he rode to the east.

After speeding for quite some times, the horse's track indeed reappeared. He saw in the distance, where the blue sky met the snowy plain, a shadow of a person. Guo Jing urged his horse to run even faster and saw that the person was indeed Ouyang Feng. By now Ouyang Feng had also recognized Guo Jing, he called out, "Come, quick! Miss Huang has fallen into the quicksand." Guo Jing was shocked, his legs squeezed his horse, and the little red horse shot like an arrow forward.

When he was still about a dozen 'zhang's away from where Ouyang Feng was standing, suddenly he felt his horse's hoofs no longer tread on a solid ground, as if under the white snow was some kind of marsh. The little red horse also felt it was stepping on a softer ground, hurriedly it pulled its leg and sped forward. Guo Jing brought the horse in a big circle and came back, only to see Ouyang Feng continuously running around a small tree.

"Is he doing some kind of black magic?" Guo Jing wondered. He pulled his rein to stop the horse because he wanted to ask a question; who would have thought that his little red horse did not want to stop, but sped forward and circled back. Guo Jing realized immediately, "Turned out underneath the snow is a soft-mud marsh; we will sink down as soon as I stop." But then his blood froze, "Is it possible that Rong'er fell into this marsh?"

“Where is Miss Huang?” he called out to Ouyang Feng.

Ouyang Feng did not stop running, he called out, “I followed her horse’s track to this place, then suddenly it disappeared. Look!” While speaking he pointed his finger toward the small tree.

Guo Jing sped past the tree on the horseback, he saw a bright yellow ring on the tree branch. He made the little red horse run close to the tree, stretched out his hand and snatched that ring. It was the golden band Huang Rong wore on her hair. His heart almost jumped out through his throat.

He turned his horse’s head toward the east. Several ‘li’s later he saw something glittering on the snow ahead. Bending his body, hanging from the horseback he stretched his arm out and scooped that thing. It was the flower-patterned gold inlaid pearl head ornament that Huang Rong often wore. Guo Jing was very anxious, “Rong’er, Rong’er, where are you?” he shouted at the top of his lungs. He looked around as far as his eyes could see, but there was not a single movement on the vast and boundless white plain.

He went several ‘li’s further, toward his left he saw a black sable fur coat lying on the snowy ground. It was his own coat that he gave to Huang Rong when they first met at Zhangjiakou [Kalgan?]. He made the little red horse circle around the coat, while shouting loudly, “Rong’er!” His voice traveled far on the open snowy plain. There was no hill or mountain around, therefore, there was no echo answering his call. Guo Jing was extremely anxious, he wanted to cry but no sound was coming out from his throat.

A moment later Ouyang Feng arrived, “Let me rest on your horseback, then we will seek Miss Huang together,” he said.

Guo Jing was indignant, “If you did not chase her, how could she fall into this marsh?” he scolded. Squeezing his legs he made his little red horse leap forward.

Ouyang Feng was angry, he leaped forward, and in three jumps he had already behind the horse, stretching his hand to grab the horse’s tail.

Guo Jing did not expect him to come this quick, with a ‘Divine Dragon Swings Its Tail’ his right palm shot backward, crashing Ouyang Feng’s palm, both people were using their full strength. Guo Jing was blown by Ouyang Feng’s palm strength, his body flew from his saddle. Fortunately his red horse dashed forward; he stretched his left hand, grabbing the horse’s buttocks, and swinging his body forward he was back on his saddle in no time.

Ouyang Feng, on the other hand, was pushed two steps backwards. Because of Guo Jing's palm strength he landed heavily; his left leg unexpectedly fell deeply into the mud, straight to his knee. Ouyang Feng was totally shocked; he knew on this kind of quicksand, as soon as he exerted his strength and tried to jump out, his right foot would also fall into the mud. Once both legs were in, it did not matter if his skill was as high as the sky, he would have a very difficult time pulling his own body out of the mud. In desperation he laid his body horizontally on the ground, then rolled around while at the same time kicked his right leg to the air. Using 'lian huan yuan yang tui' [chain mandarin duck's leg] he borrowed the strength from his right kick to lift his left foot. Mud splashed everywhere, but his legs were free.

He turned over and stood up, only to hear Guo Jing's loud calls, "Rong'er! Rong'er!" The man on the horse had left him for more than a 'li'. He saw the little red horse was running steadily; apparently they were already out of the marsh area. Ouyang Feng decided to pursue, but the further he ran, the more he felt the ground underneath his feet was getting softer; as if he was at the edge of the marsh and now he had treaded into the center of it.

Three times had Ouyang Feng fallen under Guo Jing's hands; the last time he was forced to be naked in front of hundreds of thousands people. It was an extremely dangerous situation; other people might admire his martial art skill, but he actually thought that was his greatest disgrace. This time he met Guo Jing again, alone. Good or bad he simply had to seek revenge. Even though the terrain was dangerous, he simply could not let this good opportunity pass. Much less Huang Rong's life or death was still unknown; he could not give up in light of this, no way; therefore, in his anger he decided to pursue Guo Jing.

Displaying his excellent lightness kungfu; in just several 'li's he had reached the speed of a fast horse. Guo Jing heard footsteps on the snow behind him; he turned his head quickly only to see Ouyang Feng was only several 'zhang's behind his horse's tail. He was startled, hastily urged his horse to run faster. In just a short moment they have covered more than a dozen 'li's.

Guo Jing did stop calling, "Rong'er!" but he saw the sky was getting darker; Huang Rong's fate was increasingly uncertain. His voice was hoarse from shouting, his occasional choke turned into sobs. The little red horse understood the danger they were on from the start, as it felt softer ground underneath, it ran even faster; eventually its four hooves moved so fast as if they were flying above the snow.

'Han xue bao ma' [precious horse with blood-like sweats] was a rare animal capable of running very fast; but Ouyang Feng's lightness kungfu was not inferior. Unfortunately he was getting tired, after running for a long time his breathing was getting heavier, his legs' strength diminished, his footsteps gradually slowing down. Little red horse was also sweating profusely; beads of red sweats trickled down from its body, splashing to the white snow below, next to its hoof tracks, like cherry blossom in full bloom.

By the time the sky was completely dark the little red horse had completely left the marsh; early on Ouyang Feng had disappeared without a trace. Guo Jing thought, "The horse Rong'er was riding did not have this kind of divine speed; it wouldn't run for half a li into the marsh without falling into the mud below. Even if I have to lose my life I must try to rescue her." He very well realized that Huang Rong had been missing for a very long time; if she did fall into the marsh, even if he could pull her out, he would not be able to bring her back to life. So his motivation was really for his own peace of mind.

Guo Jing dismounted his horse to give it a rest; caressing his horse's back he said, "Little horse, oh little horse, today I am asking you not to be afraid of exhaustion. Let's take a short rest and then we'll go again."

Guo Jing leaped back to his saddle and pulled the rein to turn the horse's head. The little red horse was afraid to tread back into the marsh, but Guo Jing kept urging it to go. Finally with a loud neigh the horse's four hooves splashed back into the marsh. The horse knew their destination was still far away, so it ran with all its might, faster and faster into the marsh.

Suddenly they heard Ouyang Feng's desperate cry, "Help! Help!" Guo Jing sped his horse up. Under the glimmering reflection of the white snow he saw Ouyang Feng had fallen into the mud. His hands were high in the air, flailing chaotically. The mud was slowly rising, it already reached his chest. As soon as it reached his mouth and nose, he would certainly be suffocated to death.

Guo Jing could see his desperate situation; he recalled Huang Rong might face similar danger. His blood boiled inside his chest; he almost dismounted his horse and fell into the same trap; but decided against doing so at the last minute.

"Quick, help me!" Ouyang Feng cried out.

Guo Jing gritted his teeth and said, "You killed my benevolent masters, you also killed Miss Huang; do you still want me to save you? Dream on!"

With a stern voice Ouyang Feng replied, “We had made an agreement, you have to spare my life three times. This is the third time. Are you saying you don’t give a thought to the good faith?”

With tears in his eyes Guo Jing said, “Miss Huang is no longer alive, what use is our agreement?”

Ouyang Feng shouted curse and abusive words, but Guo Jing simply ignored him; he rode his horse away. Only a dozen ‘zhang’s later he heard Ouyang Feng’s pitiful cry. Guo Jing could not bear it anymore. He heaved a sigh and turned his horse around. The mud had already reached Ouyang Feng’s neck. “I am willing to save you, but if both of us ride on this horse, we will sink into the mud together,” he said.

“Use a rope to tow me,” Ouyang Feng suggested. Guo Jing did not carry any rope, but he remembered his long robe. Grabbing one end, he let his horse ran close to Ouyang Feng. Ouyang Feng held out his hand and grabbed the other end. Guo Jing squeezed his legs and gave a loud shout. The little red horse furiously charged forward and with a loud splashing sound Ouyang Feng was pulled out of the mire and dragged along on the snowy ground.

If they were heading east, very soon they were going to leave the marsh area; but Guo Jing was very anxious over Huang Rong, how would he be willing to give up searching for her? Therefore, they were galloping to the west. Ouyang Feng was still holding on to the robe, he laid down facing up, being dragged rapidly on the snow. He used this opportunity to catch his breath.

The little red horse ran very fast, before daybreak they had crossed the marsh. Guo Jing saw horse’s track on the snow; it was Huang Rong’s horse entering the marsh area. The track was still there, but what about Huang Rong? Guo Jing dismounted his horse, stood on the snow, lost in thought.

In his grief he had completely forgotten his archenemy; he stood with his left hand holding the rein, and his right hand holding the fur coat, his eyes gazing into the distance, his heart was shaken, beating rapidly.

Suddenly he felt a light touch on his shoulder. He turned around in shock, only to see Ouyang Feng’s palm was touching his ‘tao dao’ [pottery way] acupoint. When Ouyang Feng fell into Guo Jing’s trap and he came out from the sand, Guo Jing had sealed his ‘tao dao’ acupoint. This time Ouyang Feng managed to do the same to Guo Jing, it was a pay back time; Ouyang Feng could not help but laugh merrily.

Guo Jing was overwhelmed with grief, he had no regard of his life anymore; “If you want to kill me then just kill me; we don’t have any agreement that you should spare my life anyway,” he wryly said.

Ouyang Feng was taken aback; he had thought of torturing Guo Jing to disgrace him before finally taking his life. Who would have thought that Guo Jing did not expect to live? Ouyang Feng thought, “This dumb kid loves that little girl very much; if I kill him, then I am helping him fulfilling his desire to die together in the name of love.” He changed his mind and thought, “That little girl is already buried beneath this snow; he becomes my only hope of the explanation of the manual.” Grabbing Guo Jing’s arm he lifted him up and leaped to the horseback. They rode toward a valley in the south.

About the sixth hour [between 9 – 11 am] he saw a village by the roadside. Ouyang Feng steered the horse to enter the village, but everywhere he looked there were corpses scattered around the village. Because the weather was cold, the corpses were preserved; they looked exactly like the day they were mutilated and killed by the passing Mongolian army. Ouyang Feng called out several times, but nobody answered; looked like everybody in that village had died. Instead, he heard cattle mooing and sheep bleating. Ouyang Feng was delighted. He took Guo Jing to a stone house and said, “You are my prisoner now. I won’t kill you. If you can defeat me, you are free to go.” Having said that he took a sheep, butchered it, and boiled it in the kitchen.

The more Guo Jing saw his smug expression, the more he hated Ouyang Feng. Ouyang Feng threw a mutton leg to him and said, “I’ll wait until your stomach is full, then we’ll fight.”

Guo Jing was angry, “You want to fight then fight. Why wait for the full stomach?” His body flew, his palm hacked down. Ouyang Feng raised his hand to block then sent out a fist to counterattack.

Very soon they were fighting inside the stone house, among upturned table and broken chairs. About thirty stances later Guo Jing had to admit his inferiority; he was half a step in front of Ouyang Feng when Ouyang Feng’s right palm swung onto his side. It was very difficult for Guo Jing to fend off, all he could do was to wait for his death. Unexpectedly Ouyang Feng did not exert any strength; he laughed and said, “It’s enough for today. You go ahead and train martial art from the manual; tomorrow we’ll fight again.”

“Bah!” Guo Jing spat; he sat on an overturned chair, picked the mutton leg up and started to eat. He thought, “He wanted to see me using the martial art from the manual,

so that he might observe and steal it. I won't be fooled. If he wants to kill me, let him kill ... Hmm, his swing just now, how would I block it?"

Thinking about all kinds of fist techniques and palm methods in the manual, he could not find a single move capable of blocking Ouyang Feng's attack. He did remember, however, that there was a technique in the manual called 'fei xu jin' [flying cotton strength], which would allow him to strengthen his back and render Ouyang Feng's attack useless.

"I'd better train internal strength; even if he wants to see it, he can't," Guo Jing thought. Immediately he ate the mutton leg clean then sat cross-legged on the ground; he recited the manual in his heart then started practicing according to the manual. Since mastering the 'yi jin duan gu pian' [changing muscle forging bone technique], his foundation was getting stronger; moreover, with what Reverend Yideng had taught him the Manual became like a second nature to him. This 'fei xu jin' for instance, in less than four hours he had learned how to use it.

With the corner of his eye he looked at Ouyang Feng, who was also sitting quietly, meditating. "Watch out!" Guo Jing called out. Without standing up his palm hacked down on the enemy.

Ouyang Feng parried the attack while sending out a counterattack. He wanted to repeat his earlier stance toward Guo Jing's side. But to his surprise his palm slid down Guo Jing's back, slanting to one side; because of his own strength he was slightly propelled forward. Taking that opportunity Guo Jing's left palm shot toward his neck.

Ouyang Feng was startled and pleased at the same time; he continued moving forward and thus had evaded the attack. He turned around and called out, "Good move! Was it from the Manual? What is it called?"

"Sha cha yi tui, ai mo qin er," Guo Jing said.

Ouyang Feng was startled, but then he remembered the weird sentences from the manual. He thought, "This dumb kid has a profound strength, but he is as hardheaded as a bull. I have to trick him since brute force will be useless." Changing his tactic he fought Guo Jing carefully.

Two people fought without ceasing. As soon as Guo Jing lost they would stop, then Guo Jing would train himself in new stances. Guo Jing slept soundly during the nights, but

Ouyang Feng slept with trepidation; he was afraid Guo Jing might attack him in the middle of the night, or that he would try to escape in the dark.

They lived like that in the stone house for over a month, and had eaten almost half of the cattle and sheep in the village. Within this one month Guo Jing was forced to train his martial art, while Ouyang Feng tried hard to steal it. What Ouyang Feng had learned was already profound, but when he verified what he saw at Guo Jing, he realized there were many discrepancies; it was very difficult from him to link from one sentence to the next. The more he pondered, the more he did not understand; and he could not get anything from Guo Jing. In the meantime, within this month Guo Jing's martial art had unexpectedly advanced by leaps and bounds.

Ouyang Feng could not help but secretly anxious, "If we continue like this, before I understand the essence of the manual, I might not be this dumb kid's match."

The first several days Guo Jing was filled with hatred; after every fight he would be more determined than ever to score a victory, he wanted to master a fierce martial art to kill his enemy. However, he soon learned that this matter was extremely difficult. He was not discouraged nonetheless; his anger had decreased somewhat, but his firm resolution had actually increased.

One day he picked a steel sword from among the corpses lying around in the village; then trained hard on swordsmanship to fight Ouyang Feng's wooden staff.

Ouyang Feng's original snake staff fell and was lost in the ocean when he was fighting Hong Qigong on the boat. Afterwards he made another cast steel staff complete with new pair of strange snake; but it was also lost when he was trapped inside the ice block, destroyed by Lu Youjiao. Right now he was using an ordinary wooden staff, without any assistance from his strange snakes; but his staff technique was still out-of-this-world, with infinite variations. Several times the staff shook the sword in Guo Jing's hand and made it fly. If there were snakes on his staff, definitely Guo Jing would not be able to resist at all.

In the meantime they heard Genghis Khan's army returning to the east; the people and the horses were marching noisily, the noise did not stop for several days. But two people were engrossed in fighting each other violently, they did not pay the slightest attention to this. One evening the noise simply stopped, the army had all gone and nothing was heard except the quietness of the night.

Guo Jing raised his sword straight up, thinking, “Although I can’t win over you tonight, your wooden staff won’t shake my sword in any way.” He was anxious to try the new stance he had just learned, but he waited calmly for the opponent to attack first. Suddenly from outside the house somebody was shouting loudly, “Traitor! Where are you running to?” Guo Jing was absolutely certain it was the Old Urchin Zhou Botong’s voice.

Ouyang Feng and Guo Jing looked at each other in bewilderment, they both thought, “Why did he go thousands of miles to the west?” They wanted to say something, but heard footsteps came approaching; then two people, one after another, rushed toward the stone house. There were numerous other buildings in the village, but apparently they saw that firelight came from this house.

Ouyang Feng waved his left hand and with his internal strength extinguished the fire. By that time the front door was shoved open, somebody rushed in, with somebody else hot on his heels; the latter one was indeed Zhou Botong. Both men’s footsteps were extraordinarily light and nimble; the man in the front’s martial art certainly not below Zhou Botong’s.

Ouyang Feng marveled greatly, “This man surprisingly able to escape the Old Urchin’s hand. His skill is very rare among the experts of this generation. If it were Huang Yaoshi or Hong Qigong, the Old Poison won’t be so surprised.” Because of this thought he refrained from making any move.

They heard the man in the front jump vertically up and sat on the beam. Zhou Botong laughed, “The Old Urchin’s favorite game is the hide-and-seek; I won’t let you slip away anymore.” In the darkness they heard him closing down the front door, and placed a nearby big rock behind it. He called out, “Stinky thief, where are you?” At the same time he groped around back and forth to find him.

Guo Jing was thinking of making some noise to tell him the enemy was on the beam, when suddenly Zhou Botong leaped high while laughing loudly, grabbing that man on the beam. Turned out he was aware from the start that his enemy was on the beam. He was deliberately groping around to the east and to the west to throw him off guard, then suddenly launched a sudden attack.

The man on the beam was not weak either; without waiting for Zhou’s fingers to touch him he somersaulted and crouched by the north wall. Even though his mouth was babbling nonsense, but Zhou Botong was actually very wary of this man. He stopped to listen to his exact location; did not dare to act rashly. In the quietness of the night he

heard three distinct breathings. He had known from the start that this house must be occupied, since he saw the fire was extinguished. But since they did not make any sound, he thought they must be frightened; thereupon he called out, “Master of the house please don’t be afraid, I am here to capture this little thief. Once I get him I will go out immediately.”

He knew ordinary people’s breathing was rough and heavy, while those with strong internal energy would breathe slowly and long, light and deep; with just a little attention they were very easy to distinguish. But when he cocked his ears to listen, the people toward his north, east and west were all breathing low and slowly.

Zhou Botong was greatly surprised, “Traitor,” he called out, “You have prepared an ambush here!”

Guo Jing wanted to open his mouth to greet him, but changed his mind at the last minute; he thought, “Ouyang Feng is lurking on the side, the man Zhou Dage [Big Brother Zhou] is chasing is another powerful enemy. I’d better stay quiet and wait for a good opportunity to help him.”

Zhou Botong moved step by step toward the front door while mumbling, “Looked like before the Old Urchin can capture the enemy, he would be captured by the enemy.” He had made a decision to dash out the door if the situation was unfavorable. Right at that moment came a rumbling noise from a distance; hoof beats sounded like an evening tide came crashing the shore. It looked like a strong army with multitude of horses had arrived to kill.

Zhou Botong called out, “You have more and more helpers coming, the Old Urchin doesn’t want to play anymore.” While saying that he picked the rock stopping the door as if he was about to open the door and leave; but then suddenly he hurled the rock toward the man he chased. The rock was not light; Ouyang Feng placed that rock behind the door every night, so that if Guo Jing wanted to sneak out he would find out even when he was sleeping.

Ouyang Feng heard the wind carried a lot of strength in it, he thought that when the Old Urchin threw the stone, his right flank must have been defenseless; if he attacked him first, not only he would have one less enemy for the present time, but also during the second Sword Meet of Mount Hua he would have one less powerful contestant. Having this intention he bent his knee, slightly squatting, pushed both hands together to launch a ‘Toad Stance’ attack.

He was squatting on the west, therefore, his attack was toward the east, carrying a very strong energy. Guo Jing had fought him for dozens of days, he knew by heart Ouyang Feng's every action and every movement even though the room was pitch black. As soon as he heard the gust of wind, he knew Ouyang Feng was attacking Zhou Botong. Guo Jing stepped forward and launched the 'Proud Dragon Repents' to meet Ouyang Feng's 'Toad Stance' head-on.

In the meantime the man who was standing on the north also heard the big rock was flying his way; he bent his knees to get a stronger stand, and push both hands forward, creating a strong force striking the big rock.

Four people from four directions sending out four forces; even though they did not release their energy at exactly the same time, but the forces were actually not inferior one to another. The big rock was struck by forces from east, south, west and north; it fell on the center of the room. 'Crash!' with a loud noise it broke the table to smithereens.

The sound was actually very loud; which Zhou Botong thought amusing. He could not restrain from bursting into loud laughter. But his laughter was drowned by the sound of thousands of cavalry soldiers entering the village. They could hear the warhorses neighing, the weapons clashing, and the soldiers shouting their battle cry.

Guo Jing listened to the officers' commands, and he found out they were the defeated army of Khoresm entering the village, perhaps trying to hold their ground in the village; but it sounded like the Mongolian army had pursued them. He heard the hoof beats, the sound of battle flag fluttered in the wind, the loud battle cry, as well as flying arrows near and far. It sounded like the armies were engaged in a close hand-to-hand combat. The four people in the house did not know for certain how many soldiers were fighting outside. Suddenly someone shoved the door open and came in. Zhou Botong grabbed that person and flung him back outside; then he lifted the rock and placed it back behind the door.

As Ouyang Feng's attack failed, he thought that he had been discovered anyway, so he called out, "Old Urchin, do you know who I am?"

Zhou Botong indistinctly heard someone speaking, but because of the noise he could not distinguish who the speaker was. He raised his left hand to guard against an attack while stretching his right hand to grab. Ouyang Feng easily neutralized this grab with his right hand, while slapping with the back of his left hand. Zhou Botong parried this attack, he was startled, "The Old Poison! You are here?" he called out. He swayed his

body slightly, leaning to the left. At that very moment the man on the north took the opportunity to attack Zhou Botong's back.

Zhou Botong's right hand engaged Ouyang Feng, while his left fist parried the attack to his back. He was thinking of testing the mutual hands combat that he created on the Peach Blossom Island. Until that day Zhou Botong had not tested his special skill against two masters; so even though he was in danger, he could not let this good opportunity to pass. But suddenly Guo Jing from the east threw himself into the fight; his right hand parried Zhou Botong's fist, while his left hand engaged that person's attack.

Three people simultaneously called out in alarm; Zhou Botong shouted, "Guo Xiongdi [Brother Guo]," that person shouted, "Guo Jing," and Guo Jing himself cried out, "Qiu Qianren."

Zhou Botong was scared by the snakes at the martial art contest at the 'yan yu lou' [Misty Rain Tavern]; he saw no way to escape, so he laid down on top of the tavern's roof, using layers upon layers of split-bamboo sheets to cover up his body. Because his 'armor' was so thick no arrow could harm him, Ouyang Feng's vipers were also helpless to climb to the roof. When the morning fog was gone, the snakes, as well as the soldiers were also gone; so was everybody else, he did not know where they went. He was bored to death, so he just wandered around everywhere.

A few months later a Beggar Clan disciple delivered a letter to him; it was from Huang Rong. In the letter Huang Rong reminded him that he had promised no matter what Huang Rong asked, he would comply. Now Huang Rong wanted him to go kill the Clan Leader of the Iron Palm Clan, Qiu Qianren. She explained that Emperor Duan's Concubine Liu had a very deep enmity against this man; if he killed him, Concubine Liu would not look for him anymore. Otherwise, Concubine Liu would find him even to the end of the earth, to take him as her husband. Huang Rong also gave him the detail of the Iron Palm Peak's exact location.

Zhou Botong thought that his promise 'to comply no matter what' was actually given to Huang Rong; but that old scoundrel Qiu Qianren colluded with the Jins, he was a traitor, so he felt it was appropriate to kill him. As for his own affair with Concubine Liu, he realized he had offended her deeply; she had a deep enmity against Qiu Qianren, so if he lent her a hand, she might not come and bother him anymore, and that would be an awfully good luck for him. Therefore, he decided to go to the Iron Palm Peak.

At first Qiu Qianren was able to match him stance for stance, but as soon as Zhou Botong used the mutual hands combat technique, Qiu Qianren was forced to withdraw. When martial art masters contended, as soon as one admit inferiority, then victory or defeat should be decided; who would have thought that Zhou Botong did not want to stop and kept chasing him. Qiu Qianren did ask him the reason behind it several times, but Zhou Botong only looked at him with a blank expression; could not tell him the real reason. He only said three characters 'liu gui fei' [Concubine Liu]; and that would be enough to take his head.

Two men fought and stop, one ran away the other chased; they went farther and farther away. Zhou Botong's martial art was slightly superior to Qiu Qianren's; yet it would not be easy for him to kill Qiu Qianren. Qiu Qianren had tried any means possible to get rid of him; but Zhou Botong doggedly chased him anywhere he went. He thought, "Would you still chase me if I go to the bitter cold west?" On the other hand Zhou Botong thought, "I want to see where you would go; then I'll go back home."

As soon as they arrive at the desert outside the great wall, the landscape was flat, it was easy to follow someone's trail; Qiu Qianren did not have any place to hide. Fortunately Zhou Botong had shown a good faith toward him; whenever Qiu Qianren needed to sleep or sat down to eat his meal, or perhaps he was having a bowel movement or urinating, Zhou Botong did not disturb him in any way; he simply did the same. But no matter what Qiu Qianren did, no matter how bad he cursed him, the Old Urchin haunted him like a ghost, continuously pestering him.

The more Zhou Botong fought Qiu Qianren, the more excited he became. Several times he did gain an upper hand, but unexpectedly he did not kill Qiu Qianren. That particular day, two men fought and ran and by a pure coincidence rushed into the stone building.

Now Zhou and Guo two people knew who the other three people were, but when the three of them called out each other's name, their voices were drown by the loud commotion outside; hence Ouyang Feng still did not know who the other person was. He only knew that person was Zhou Botong's enemy. On the other hand, Qiu Qianren thought the other two were on the same side.

Zhou, Qiu and Ouyang, all three people possessed outstanding martial art skills; but after battling Ouyang Feng for more than a month, Guo Jing's martial art level was also improving by leaps and bound, which enable him to keep pace with the other three. These four martial art masters were confined in a pitch-black, approximately two

‘zhang’s square room; they could not see a thing, could not hear each other, and could not talk to each other. It was as if they had turned into deaf, mute and blind people.

“If I block Ouyang Feng, then Zhou Dage can finish off Qiu Qianren. After that it won’t be too difficult for us two people to join forces to kill Ouyang Feng,” Guo Jing thought. Once he reached that decision, his hands started to move. His right hand hit an empty air, while his left palm met someone else’s hand.

On the Peach Blossom Island Guo Jing had fought Zhou Botong countless of times; therefore, as soon as his palm touched Zhou’s hand, he knew immediately it was his Zhou Dage, he retracted his palm quickly. Unexpectedly Zhou Botong’s childlike enthusiasm was aroused; he slightly shrank his left arm then sent out a right fist toward Guo Jing’s shoulder. This hit did not carry any strong internal energy, but since Guo Jing did not guard against it, he felt pain nonetheless.

“Hao Xiongdi [Good Brother], you want to test your Dage’s martial art? Be careful!” Zhou Botong said, his left palm shot out. Guo Jing could not hear what he said, but this time he was prepared; he wielded his arms and neutralized the attack.

By this time Ouyang Feng and Qiu Qianren had also exchanged several stances; as a result they recognized the opponent by his martial art. These two men did not have any enmity against each other, but they both thought that the Sword Meet of Mount Hua was coming. Potentially they were going to fight a life and death battle against each other anyway; therefore, why not try to inflict as much damage as possible to the opponent since they have the opportunity now? Hence they did not slack one bit.

After fighting for a moment they felt gusts of wind blowing behind them, to their surprise Zhou Botong was fighting Guo Jing. They were bewildered, but then they remembered Zhou Botong always handled matters differently, he was an unpredictable man; besides, it gave them a good opportunity, why wouldn’t they be happy? Thus without prior agreement they both attacked Zhou Botong and Guo Jing.

After exchanging more than a dozen moves with Guo Jing; Zhou Botong found out that Guo Jing’s martial art was far more advanced than what he had known, he was pleasantly surprised. “Xiongdi, where did you learn your martial art from?” he asked. But the noise outside was deafening, how could Guo Jing hear what he said? Zhou Botong was offended, “Fine, you don’t want to tell me. Do you think I care?” Right at that moment he felt a gust of wind on his face, Ouyang and Qiu’s attacks had arrived. Zhou Botong kicked the ground and leaped up to the beam. “I’ll let you fight these two alone!” he called out.

Ouyang Feng and Qiu Qianren felt the wind from Zhou Botong's sleeves, they realized he had jumped to the beam; they had the same thought of joining forces and kill this dumb kid, suddenly Guo Jing had to face a converging attack from left and right.

Initially Guo Jing was surrounded by Zhou Botong's attacks; he had tried four, five different techniques but was unable to free himself. He was waiting for Zhou Botong to withdraw when two powerful enemies attacked; which forced him to groan inwardly. He had no choice but braced himself and used the mutual hands combat technique to resist these two.

After fighting for a while Ouyang Feng and Qiu Qianren were unable to restrain their amazement. Knowing Guo Jing's skill, either one of Ouyang Feng or Qiu Qianren should be able to defeat him easily. Who would have thought that after fighting two against one, Guo Jing's left palm could block Ouyang Feng's attacks, while his right fist thwarted Qiu's palms? Two people were helpless against one.

Zhou Botong was sitting on the beam; he had decided to get down, but was afraid Guo Jing might get hurt, so quietly he slid down the wall, stretching out both his hands arbitrarily, and by coincidence caught Ouyang Feng's back.

Ouyang Feng was squatting on the ground, ready to strike Guo Jing with his fierce Toad Stance; suddenly he felt somebody on his back, hastily he sent his palms backward. Guo Jing seized this opportunity to kick Qiu Qianren then leap to the corner of the house, gasping for breath. If Zhou Botong were one step late, he would be injured by Ouyang Feng's attack.

Four people in the pitch-black room clashed to each other then separated from each other. Sometimes Zhou Botong fought Qiu Qianren, sometimes Guo Jing fought Qiu Qianren, sometimes Ouyang Feng fought Qiu Qianren, sometimes Zhou Botong fought Ouyang Feng, and sometimes Guo Jing fought Zhou Botong. Four people engaged in this mixed-up fight, among them Zhou Botong was most excited; it was the most fun among all of his fights, of course he would not let this opportunity pass.

After fighting for a while an idea popped up in his head. "My two hands can be considered two people; Ouyang and Qiu are also two. See if you can fight four people at once. Have you ever tried this?" he asked Guo Jing.

Guo Jing did not hear what he said, but suddenly felt three people attack him at the same time; desperately he tried to block and evade. "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid," Zhou Botong encouraged him, "I will help you if you are in danger." But in this dark

room, as soon as somebody sent out a fist or a kick, his life would be in grave danger; how could Zhou Botong have time to help?

A dozen or so stances later Guo Jing was already dead-tired; he felt Ouyang and Qiu, two people's fists were getting heavier and heavier, he was forced to step back one step after another. He wanted to jump up the beam to catch his breath, but Zhou Botong's palms did not give him any slack. He was both alarmed and angry, finally he lost his patience, "Zhou Dage, you silly old man, why do you bother me?" but his words were drowned by the commotion outside, nobody heard him.

Guo Jing withdrew several more steps, suddenly his feet knocked the big rock on the ground; he nearly tumbled down. Before he had any chance to straighten up his waist, Qiu Qianren's iron palm was ready to slap him down. In this dire situation Guo Jing did not lose his wit, swiftly he picked the big rock up and held it in front of his chest. Qiu Qianren's palm hit the rock. Guo Jing focused his strength on his arms and pushed the rock forward to meet the attack. Suddenly he felt gust of wind coming from his left; Ouyang Feng's palm had arrived. With a loud shout Guo Jing threw the big rock upward, while he jumped sideways to evade the attack.

The big rock flew through the roof; bricks and plasters fell down like rain. Immediately the stars in the sky above cast a dim light through the hole. Zhou Botong was angry, "Look what you did! Now we lost all the fun!"

Guo Jing was extremely exhausted; he kicked the ground and jumped out through the hole. Ouyang Feng hastily flew up to chase him. Zhou Botong shouted, "Don't go! Don't go! Stay here and play with me." He stretched out his hand to grab Ouyang Feng's left foot. Ouyang Feng was startled, quickly his right foot kicked, forcing Zhou Botong's hand to let go; but as a result he could not jump and was forced to land back down.

Qiu Qianren did not wait for him to land, he sent out a kick toward Ouyang Feng's chest. Ouyang Feng slightly pulled his chest back while stretching out his arm to grab Qiu Qianren's ankle. Three people once again engaged in a fierce battle against each other. This time they could vaguely see each other's shadow; while the battle noise outside was also gradually diminishing. The thrill of the fight decreased substantially.

Zhou Botong was upset, he lost his interest; he vented his disappointment toward these two people. His fist technique changed abruptly, he fought the two people with murderous intention.

After escaping from the house via the roof, Guo Jing saw the troops and horses running around swiftly; he could also hear the sound of clashing weapons in a distance. Oftentimes he heard heart-rending groan and cry of soldiers wounded by blades or arrows. He dashed through these miserable people, running toward a small wood outside the village to lie down and take some rest.

He had fought fiercely for half a night, as he lay down, he felt his whole body, muscles and bones were aching, like they were going to crack. Recalling the fight inside that stone house, he shivered involuntarily. Although worried about Zhou Botong's safety, but with his martial art level he knew even if he came back there he would not be able to help Zhou escape. Finally he closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

Early morning the next day he felt his face was wet and cold, something was wiggling around on his face. Startled he opened his eyes and leaped up, only to listen to a happy neighing sound. Turned out it was his little red horse licking his face. Guo Jing was delighted, immediately he hugged the horse's neck; one man and one horse embraced in a joyful reunion.

When Guo Jing was held captive by Ouyang Feng, the red horse was let loose outside; it went grazing on the nearby prairie. During the fierce battle last night the horse utilized its swift legs to escape. When the soldiers were gone, the horse came back and found its master.

Guo Jing led the red horse returned to the village only to see broken bows and arrows everywhere, dead soldiers and horses scattered all around. Here and there he saw injured soldiers who were still alive, crying out pitifully. He had been in a lot of battles, he was accustomed to dead or wounded soldiers; but recalling his own life experience he could not refrain from feeling a great sorrow.

Quietly he returned to the stone building. Cocking his ears outside he tried to listen, but the house was quiet. He took a peek through a crack in the door and saw no one inside. He pushed the door open to see; but Zhou Botong, Ouyang Feng, and Qiu Qianren three people had already disappeared without any trace.

He stared blankly for half a day then mounted his horse heading east. The little red horse ran very fast, very soon they caught up with Genghis Khan's main army.

By this time Khorasm cities had either surrendered or been destroyed; hundreds of thousand warriors had fallen like broken tiles. Khorasm king, Muhammad, was a haughty tyrant; he was deserted by his friends and allies. He led the remnants of his de-

feated army desperately escape to the west. Genghis Khan assigned his senior generals, Subotai and Jebeh to lead twenty thousand soldiers to pursue to the west; while he led the main army went home to the east.

Subotai and Jebeh pursued to the west of modern day city of Moscow, to the city of Kiev nearby the bank of Dnieper River. They crushed several hundred thousands of Russia and Kipchak alliance army; destroyed the city of Kiev and killed the Hertog [Grand Duke] of Kiev along with eleven princes by running a chariot over them. This war was called 'The Battle of the Kalka River'. Since then the Russian prairie groaned under the Mongolian horses' hoofs.

Muhammad went as far west as he could, finally he escaped to a deserted island on the Caspian Sea and died of illness there.

When suddenly Guo Jing disappeared at Samarkhand, Genghis Khan was very worried. He was afraid that Guo Jing somehow got killed in the chaotic battle without anybody knowing it. Seeing him return safe and sound he was really thrilled. Needless to say, Princess Huazheng was even more overjoyed.

Qiu Chuji followed the main army went back to the east. Along the way he was always giving advice to the Great Khan to love the people more and kill innocent civilians less. Although Genghis Khan did not necessarily agree with his view, he realized the Priest spoke reasonably, hence he did not argue too much. In the chaotic battles that followed, Qiu Chuji had succeeded in saving innumerable civilians' lives.

Khoresm was located tens of thousands of 'li's from Mongolia; the return of Genghis Khan's army to the east took a very long time. As soon as they arrived back home, he held a big feast to celebrate their victory by the bank of Onon River; while giving the injured soldiers time to recuperate. Qiu Chuji and his disciples, along with Lu Youjiao and the rest of the Beggar Clan disciples took their leave and went back to the south.

Several months later Genghis Khan saw his warriors had eaten to their hearts' contents, their horses galloped freely on the prairie; his interest to attack the south was rekindled. One day he held a general assembly to discuss strategies to defeat the Jin country.

Ever since Huang Rong's death, Guo Jing was broken hearted; oftentimes he went riding alone with only his little red horse and his pair of eagles to keep him company, wandering the vast Mongolian prairie. Most of the time he would just stare blankly and not say anything for a few days. Princess Huazheng was always trying to speak warmly

to him, but it seemed like he did not hear anything she said. Everybody knew his feelings, knew that he was grieving, so nobody dared to bring up the wedding plan; while Genghis Khan was busy preparing the expedition to the south and did not pay attention to this matter.

That day at the general assembly inside the Great Khan's Golden Tent, many generals proposed various tactics and strategies to attack the south; yet Guo Jing did not utter a single word.

After dismissing his generals, Genghis Khan went to the top of a small hill and stayed there for half a day, to think of the actions he would take. The next day he dispatched his army to attack the Jins from three directions. At that moment his eldest son Jochi and his second son Chagatai were still busy consolidating their conquests in the west; therefore, he put the main army to take the Jins down under his third son, Ogedei; while the left flank was placed under the command of his fourth son, Tuolei, and the right flank was placed under Guo Jing's command.

Genghis Khan summoned the three commander-in-chiefs privately; he even ordered his personal guards to leave the tent. To Ogedei, Tuolei and Guo Jing he said, "The Jins concentrate their defense in the city of Tongguan; the city is bordered on the south by a mountain and on the north by a river, it really is difficult to break. Numerous generals' proposals all have some ground to them, but if we advance frontally, unavoidably we will waste a lot of time. Currently our Mongolia has formed an alliance with the Great Song; I think the best strategy would be advancing through the Song territory. From Tangzhou the army to proceed via Dengzhou straight to the Jin capital Daliang."

As Ogedei, Tuolei and Guo Jing three people heard to this point, they jumped and hugged each other, loudly shouted, "Ingenious plan!"

Genghis Khan smiled and asked Guo Jing, "You are very good in battle strategy; truly a man after my own heart. Let me ask you, after attacking Daliang, then what?"

Guo Jing contemplated for a while then shook his head, "We are not attacking Daliang," he said.

Ogedei and Tuolei clearly heard their father king said they were going to attack Daliang, why did Guo Jing say they were not going to? They were startled and looked at him with a questioning look. Genghis Khan still showed a faint smile on his face, "Not attacking Daliang, then what?" he asked.

“Not attacking is actually attacking; attack but do not attack, do not attack but attack,” Guo Jing said. He made Ogedei and Tuolei more confused than ever.

“Attack but do not attack, do not attack but attack [gong er bu gong, bu gong er gong],” Genghis Khan smiled, “These eight characters were very well said. Explain it to your two brothers.”

Guo Jing complied. “I can guess the Great Khan’s troops advancement method; we pretend to attack the Jin capital, destroying the enemy under the city wall. Daliang is where the Jin Emperor resides, but the troops stationed there are actually not too many. As soon as it is under attack, the Jins will immediately send troops from the neighboring city Tongguan to rescue. Chinese military strategist said, ‘A massive troops movement can’t be done in a day; traveling hundreds of ‘li’s is draining the energy and crippling the three generals. Strong at first, weary in the end. This is the eleventh method.’ By traveling fast for a hundred ‘li’s, the soldiers strength will be reduced to only 10% of their original strength. As they leave Tongguan and go to Daliang, the great distance is their biggest disadvantage; they should take ten rest stops, but can only take one instead. Even if they reach Daliang on time, they will be weary and unable to fight. Our troops simply have to wait for the exhausted enemy then we can easily destroy the Jin army. Once the strong Jin army is defeated, then Daliang will fall. If we concentrate on directly attacking Daliang, not only it will be difficult, but we can be attacked from both front and rear.”

Genghis Khan clapped his hands and laughed aloud, he called out, “Well said, well said!” He pulled a scroll out and spread it on the table. Three people looked at it and were greatly astonished. Turned out it was the map of Daliang and its neighboring area. On it were drawn routes of troop’s movement, both theirs and the enemy’s. It also contained strategies on how to attack the enemy’s rear flank, how to attack the enemy’s main body, how to lure and destroy the incoming enemies from Tongguan, how to make them weary and obliterate them outside the city wall; everything was just as Guo Jing had said.

Ogedei and Tuolei looked at their father king, also looked at Guo Jing with bewilderment and admiration on their face. Guo Jing’s heart was also full of admiration, he thought, “I learned the military strategy from the ‘Wumu Legacy’, nothing strange about it; but the Great Khan is illiterate, he possesses a natural ability for this kind of things.”

Genghis Khan continued, “In our expedition to the south this time, I am sure the Jins will be destroyed. I have here three embroidered pouches for each one of you. After

Daliang falls, the three of you should gather inside the imperial palace of the Jin emperor; you can open them up and act accordingly.” Upon saying that he took those embroidered pouches from his pocket and gave one to each of them.

As Guo Jing received the pouch, he saw that the mouth was sealed with wax and the seal carried the image of Genghis Khan’s signet ring.

“Before entering Daliang, I forbid you to open the pouch without authorization,” Genghis Khan said, “Before you open them, I want the three of you to examine each other’s pouch to see if the seal is damaged.”

The three of them bowed and said, “Who dare to defy The Great Khan’s decree?”

Genghis Khan asked Guo Jing, “You are usually slow in dealing everyday affairs; but how come you are so resourceful in dealing with military strategy?” Guo Jin then told him how he studied the military strategy from the ‘Wumu Legacy’. Genghis Khan asked him the life story of Yue Fei. Guo Jing told him how Yue Fei scored a big victory over the Jins at the ‘zhu xian zhen’ [vermillion immortal small town]; that the Jins gave him a nickname, ‘Yue Yeye’ [grandfather Yue]; that they had a saying, ‘shaking a mountain is easy, shaking Yue’s army is difficult’; Guo Jing recounted everything.

Genghis Khan was silent, carrying his hands behind his back he paced back and forth inside his tent; sighing, “I regret I was not born a hundred years earlier to befriend this great hero. In this world today, who can be my rival?” His words carried a great loneliness.

As he was leaving the Golden Tent, Guo Jing remembered that in the past several days he had been busy with military business and did not spend as much time with his mother as he should. Since the next day he was going south leading the troops to avenge his country, the Great Song, against its archenemy, the Jin; today he wanted to spend as much time with his mother as he could. Hence he immediately headed toward his mother’s tent.

To his surprise, the tent was empty, all her clothes and other belongings were moved someplace else; only an old soldier stayed there on guard duty. He asked the soldier, and was told that the madam surnamed Li had received the Great Khan’s order to move to another tent. Guo Jing asked where the new tent was, and quickly walked over. He was surprised to see the tent was several times bigger than the one she used to live in. He lifted the curtain to enter, and he was even more surprised; the tent was full of

gold, jade, and precious jewels, as well as fancy clothes and embroidery works; they were all the spoils of Mongolian army's military expedition.

Princess Huazheng was sitting next to Li Ping, listening to her story about Guo Jing's childhood. As she saw Guo Jing enter, she smiled, stood up and greeted him.

"Ma [mother], where did all these things come from?" Guo Jing asked.

"The Great Khan says you have rendered a great service in the west; therefore, he bestowed all of these for you to enjoy," Li Ping answered. "Actually, we are simple people and have no use of these extravagances."

Guo Jing nodded, he also saw there were more than eight maids attending to his mother's needs; they were also captives that the troops seized.

After making some idle talk with Guo Jing and his mother for a while, Huazheng took her leave. She thought Guo Jing would leave for another long journey the next day, so he must have had a lot to talk about with her today. Who would have thought that after waiting outside the tent for half a day Guo Jing did not come out. Li Ping understood, she said, "Jing'er, Princess is waiting for you outside, you need to say goodbye to her."

Guo Jing replied in affirmative, but did not budge from his chair. Li Ping sighed, "We have lived in this northern country for twenty years. Although we have received the Great Khan's benevolence like we are part of his family, but actually I miss my hometown very much. I hope you can defeat the Jin country soon, so that we, mother and son, will be able to return to our hometown. We can live in the Ox Village, where your father's home used to be. I know you are not greedy of fame and fortune, so you don't need to go back north. Only this business with the Princess, I don't know how to deal with; it is a really difficult matter."

"Your son had early on told the Princess, that if Rong'er died, your son will never marry for the rest of my life," Guo Jing said.

Li Ping sighed, "Perhaps the Princess can accept that, but what worries me most is the Great Khan."

"What about the Great Khan?" Guo Jing asked.

"These past few days the Great Khan all of a sudden treats us, mother and child, with an unusual kindness," Li Ping answered, "He showered us with money, precious jewels,

everything. He said it was your reward from the expedition to the west, but I have lived in this northern Mongolian desert for twenty years, I know the Great Khan's personality. I feel like there is more to it than what meets the eye."

"Ma," Guo Jing said, "What do you think it is?"

"I am just a simple woman, how could I have a respected opinion?" Li Ping said, "But if my intuition is right, the Great Khan wants to compel us to do something for him."

"Hmm, perhaps he wants me to marry the Princess," Guo Jing guessed.

"Getting married is a good thing," Li Ping answered, "Even if the Great Khan does not know your feeling, he does not need to compel you. The way I see it, you are commanding a big army to the south; maybe the Great Khan is afraid you will have a change of heart and rebel against him."

Guo Jing shook his head, "I have no intention to gain riches and honor, and the Great Khan knew it. Why would I rebel against him?"

"I have an idea," Li Ping said, "We will find out quietly what the Great Khan's real intention is. Tell him that I miss my hometown very much, and want to go along to the south with you. Tell him that, see what he would say."

Guo Jing was delighted, "Ma, why didn't you say so earlier? We go home together, that will be wonderful! I am sure the Great Khan will give his permission." He went out the tent and did not see Huazheng outside. He thought perhaps she had waited for a while and could not wait much longer.

Guo Jing was gone for half a day, and he came back dejected. "The Great Khan did not give us his permission, did he?" Li Ping asked.

"I don't understand," Guo Jing replied, "Why would the Great Khan want to keep you here?" Li Ping was silent. "The Great Khan said," Guo Jing continued, "That as soon as the Jin country is defeated, he will let me take you home; we will return with all the glory and honor. Why would I want that? I said mother misses her home very much and wants to go home sooner. The Great Khan suddenly looked angry, he kept shaking his head, did not give us his permission."

Li Ping hesitated. "What else did the Great Khan say to you today?" she asked.

Guo Jing told her everything that happened inside the Golden Tent earlier, how he received his assignment, including the secret order he received inside the embroidered pouch.

“Ay!” Li Ping sighed, “If only your Second Master and Rong’er were here, they should be able to shed some lights on this matter. It’s a pity I am only a simple country girl. The more I think about it, the more restless I became; I don’t know why.”

Guo Jing played with the embroidered pouch in his hand; he said, “When the Great Khan gave this embroidered pouch, his face looked unusual. I am afraid it has something to do with this secret order.”

Li Ping took the embroidered pouch from his hand; she looked at it carefully, then she dismissed all the maids and suddenly said, “Let’s open it up and take a look.”

Guo Jing was shocked, “No! Breaking the royal seal means death.”

Li Ping smiled, “Do you know that the embroidery work of the Lin’an prefecture is well-known throughout the world? Your mother is a Lin’an native, I have learned embroidery since my childhood. I can open up this pouch without damaging the seal, and I can sew it back on as good as new. Nobody will find out.”

Guo Jing was delighted. Li Ping fetched her needles and carefully undid the silk thread that was holding the embroidered pouch together. She took a folded paper through the seam and spread it out to take a look. As they read the paper, mother and son looked at each other; a chill crept up their bodies.

Turned out it was Genghis Khan’s secret order to Ogedei, Tuolei and Guo Jing; as soon as the Jin is defeated, they were to proceed south to Lin’an in the shortest time possible, to defeat the Song and unify it under the Great Mongolia. The secret order also said that if Guo Jing rendered a great merit, he was to be crowned the prince with all glory and honor belonging to that title; but if he harbored a different mind, Ogedei and Tuolei were to behead him immediately, and his mother must also be executed.

Guo Jing stared blankly for half a day, finally he said, “Ma, if not for your skill in opening up this pouch, I don’t know if we, mother and child, could have kept our lives. I am a citizen of our Great Song, how could I sell my own country for personal gain?”

“What are we going to do?” Li Ping asked.

“Ma, I regret that you will have to suffer some hardship,” Guo Jing said, “We are running away to the south, tonight.”

“Absolutely,” Li Ping replied, “Go and make necessary preparation; don’t let anybody find out our plan.”

Guo Jing nodded; quickly returned to his own tent. He only took several changes of clothing. Other than his little red horse, he took eight horses, with the thought of his mother and he could rely on those horses to escape in case the Great Khan’s army pursued them. He left all the gold and precious jewels the Great Khan gave him, along with the tiger-head hilt golden blade, in the tent. He removed his general uniform and put on regular leather clothing. He grew up in the desert, today he was going to leave for good, never to return, he could not refrain from feeling sadness in his heart. He left the tent he considered to be home with a heavy heart. He saw the sky was getting darker, so quickly he went back to his mother’s tent.

Lifting the tent cover his heart skipped a beat. His mother was gone; only two bundles lying on the ground. “Ma!” he called out, but nobody answered. He felt something was terribly wrong; he was about to go out of the tent to look for his mother when suddenly the curtain was lifted up, a bright light from a torch dazzled his eyes. General Chilaun was standing outside the tent, calling out, “The Great Khan summons the Golden Blade Consort!” Chilaun was accompanied by a great number of soldiers, all wielding spears.

Seeing this situation Guo Jing was really anxious. If he relied on his martial art, Chilaun would not be able to do anything to him, but he remembered his mother, “Mother must be captured by the Great Khan, how I could escape alone?” he thought. Thus he followed Chilaun walking toward the Golden Tent.

He saw two-thousand of the Great Khan’s archers were arrayed in row after row outside the tent, all wielding long sabers or halberds. Chilaun said, “The Great Khan ordered me to bind you. Please forgive me for offending the Consort.” Guo Jing nodded, put his hands behind his back, then in big strides he entered the tent.

It was very bright, almost like a daytime, with dozens of butter candles burning inside the tent. Genghis Khan looked very angry, he slapped a table and shouted, “I have never treated you badly; I raised you up since you were little; I also gave my beloved daughter to be your wife. Little thief, you dare to rebel against me?”

Guo Jing saw the embroidered pouch and the letter inside it were lying on the table; he knew he would die soon. Boldly he answered, “I am the Great Song’s citizen. How can I

obey your order to attack my own country?”

Hearing him boldly defying his words, Genghis Khan was enraged. “Take him out and execute him!” he shouted.

Guo Jing’s hands were tightly tied behind his back, while eight soldiers wielding sabers guarded him; he was unable to resist, he shouted loudly, “You made an alliance with the Great Song to defeat the Jins; halfway there you renounced your own promise, you failed to keep your word, what kind of hero is that?”

Genghis Khan was livid; his foot flew out and kicked the table upside down, shouted loudly, “After the Jin is defeated my alliance with the Song will be completed. If I attack the south, how can you say I break my promise? Quickly behead him!”

A lot of the generals were actually good to Guo Jing, but seeing their Great Khan was in fury, nobody dared to say anything. Guo Jing did not say another word. He walked out of the tent in big strides.

Suddenly from the prairie Toulei came rushing in, riding on a horseback, shouting loudly, “Hold your blade!” His upper body was naked, while only wearing a pair of leather pants on his lower body. It looked like he was asleep when the report came; hastily he came over to plead for Guo Jing. He rushed into the Golden Tent and said, “Father King, Guo Jing Anda has rendered a great service; he had saved your life as well as mine. Although he had committed a capital crime, you can’t behead him.”

Recalling Guo Jing’s merits Genghis Khan called out, “Bring him back!” The guards took him back into the tent.

Genghis Khan was silent for half a day; he finally said, “You are loyal to the Song; what good does it bring you? Once you told me the story of Yue Fei; he was utterly loyal, serving his country, yet in the end he was executed anyway. You help me conquering the Song Dynasty, today in front of all these people I give you my oath that I am going to make you the king of the Song, then you can unify your river and mountain [jiang shan – meaning country].”

“I have never dared to rebel against the Great Khan,” Guo Jing said, “But if you want me to sell my own country in exchange of my own riches and honor, then although a thousand blades and ten thousand arrows should pierce my body, I still cannot follow your order.”

“Bring his mother here!” Genghis Khan ordered. Two of his guards took Li Ping out from the back of the tent.

Guo Jing saw his mother, “Ma!” he called out trying to approach her, but the guards raised their blades to block. “This matter is only known to us, mother and son, who could have leaked our secret?” Guo Jing thought.

Genghis Khan said, “If you will obey my command, you and your mother will enjoy abundant riches and glory; if not, your mother will be executed, that means you bring your own mother’s death. You will become an unfilial son.”

Guo Jing was intimidated by his words, he was terror-stricken, and could only lower his head without knowing what to do.

“Anda,” Tuolei urged, “You grew up in Mongolia, you are no different than Mongolian people. The Song Dynasty is a corrupt government, colluding with the Jins in killing your father and forcing your mother to leave home. If not for my Father King’s benevolence, where would you be today? You and I are brothers who love each other so much; I cannot let you become an unfilial person. I do hope you will reconsider your decision; receive and obey the Great Khan’s command.”

Guo Jing looked at his mother, wanting to ask her opinion; but he recalled what his mother had taught him all this time he was growing up. He also remembered the pitiable condition of the people of the western countries Mongolia had conquered; how families were broken up and killed. It was truly a difficult dilemma he was facing.

Genghis Khan’s pair of tiger eyes stared at him, waiting for him to speak. The several hundreds people inside the Golden Tent held their breath; all eyes were trained toward Guo Jing.

“I ...,” Guo Jing said, moved forward one step, but did not continue.

“Great Khan,” suddenly Li Ping opened her mouth, “I am afraid this child doesn’t understand this matter clearly; why don’t I try to give him some advice?”

Genghis Khan was delighted, he quickly agreed, “Very well, quickly advice him.”

Li Ping stepped forward, pulled Guo Jing’s arm, took him to a corner of the Golden Tent, then they sat down together. Li Ping embraced her son tight in her bosom, then gently said, “Twenty years ago at the Ox Village in Lin’an prefecture, I was expecting a child:

you. It was snowing heavily that day, when Priest Qiu Chuji met your father. He presented a gift of two daggers; one he gave to your father, the other he gave to your Uncle Yang.” While saying that, she took the dagger from Guo Jing’s waist, and pointed to the two characters carved on the dagger’s hilt, ‘Guo Jing’. She said, “Qiu Daozhang gave the name ‘Guo Jing’ to you, and ‘Yang Kang’ to Uncle Yang’s child. Do you know the story behind those names?”

“Qiu Daozhang wanted us not to forget the disgrace of Jingkang,” Guo Jing answered.

“Right,” Li Ping said, “That Yang family kid regarded an enemy for a father, and as a result his body perished and his name disgraced. But it’s useless to talk about him. I just feel bad for your Uncle Yang; he was such a great hero, his own son has tarnished his illustrious name.” Sighing heavily she continued, “I have endured suffering and shame for many years; raising you in this bitter cold desert of the north, why did I do that? Would I raise someone who would sell his own country and become a traitor; so that your father in the underworld would be grieved and disgraced?”

“Ma!” Guo Jing almost shouted; tears flowing down his cheeks.

Li Ping was speaking in Chinese, Genghis Khan, Tuolei, and the other generals did not understand what she said, but they saw Guo Jing burst into tears; they thought Li Ping was afraid of death and she had succeeded in persuading her son, they were secretly pleased.

Li Ping continued, “Man can only live for a hundred years, it will pass in a flash; what’s the big deal about living or dying? As long as you live with an upright heart and keep your honor clean; then your life won’t be in vain. If other people treat us badly, we don’t need to repay their wickedness. Child, remember what I said!” She looked at Guo Jing intently for a long time; her face looked very tender. Finally she said, “Child, you must take a good care of yourself!” While saying that she raised the dagger and cut the ropes binding Guo Jing’s hands; then straightaway turned the blade and thrust it into her own chest.

Guo Jing untied his hands, and rushed to snatch the dagger away, but he was too late. The dagger was extremely sharp, it had already entered her chest up to the hilt.

Genghis Khan was shocked, “Seize him!” he shouted. The eight guards did not dare to hurt the Consort; they threw their blades to the ground and pounced on Guo Jing.

Guo Jing's heart was full of sorrow; while holding his mother tight, he swept his leg and two guards were sent flying and tumbling down to the ground. His left elbow shot backwards, and with a 'crack' sound hit a guard on the chest, breaking his ribs.

Several generals shouted and stepped forward. Guo Jing dashed toward the back of the tent. His left hand pulled the rope that held the tent taut, and half of the golden tent collapsed, falling on top of the officers' heads.

Amidst the confusion he leaped up and out of the tent, still holding his mother tight. But the horn was sounded, officers and soldiers mounted their horses and pursued after him. Guo Jing was weeping and calling his mother, "Ma!" yet his mother did not answer; he felt for her breathing, but his mother had already died. Holding his mother's corpse he tried to take advantage of the dark and break through the camp, but everywhere he heard people shouting and horses neighing; then torches were lighted up, illuminating the camp like millions of stars illuminating the dark night.

He was nervous not knowing which way he should go; everywhere he looked he saw Mongolian officers and soldiers. Even if he were supernaturally brave, but he was only one man; how could he face tens of thousands Mongolian army by himself? If he were riding on his little red horse, then he could outrun all these people, but he was on foot carrying his mother. It was a million times more difficult to escape from danger.

He stopped crying and without saying another word ran forward as fast as he could. He thought that as long as he could reach the cliff, he could use his lightness kungfu to climb the cliff. Although Mongolian soldiers were many, nobody could crawl up the cliff. Hence he might evade their chase momentarily and thought about ways to escape.

While rushing forward suddenly he heard shouts coming from the front, a cavalry was coming, under the torch light he saw they were led by a red-face, white-bearded general; it was one of the four warriors, senior general Chilaun. Guo Jing leaned sideways to evade Chilaun's hacking saber. Instead of turning back to run away, he charged into the cavalry. The Mongolian soldiers were startled and shouted even louder.

Guo Jing stretched out his left hand, grabbing a 'shi zhang fu' [leader of a ten men unit] right leg; at the same time his right foot kicked the ground and he flew upwards. He landed on the horseback, put down his mother's corpse on the horseback. Without too much trouble he threw the 'shi zhang fu' to the ground while simultaneously snatched his spear.

The jump to the horseback, putting down his mother, throwing the 'shi zhang fu' down, and snatching his spear; four actions were executed in one swift and fluid motion. On the horseback he became like a tiger grew a pair of wings; his legs squeezed the horse, and sweeping his spear he charged through the cavalry. Chilaun shouted his order and his troops turned back to pursue Guo Jing.

He managed to escape from the enemy, but the direction his horse was running was actually opposite to the direction to the cliff; the more the horse ran, the farther they became. Should he run directly to the south, or should he try to reach the cliff?

While he was still contemplating which way to go, another senior general, Bourchu had arrived with his troops. This time Genghis Khan had flown into a rage; he passed an order to capture Guo Jing at all cost. Group by group the cavalries were dispatched; thousand of riders ran quickly to the south, trying to block all passages leading to the south. Guo Jing outran the group led by Bourchu; his clothes and his horse were full of blood.

It was a good thing that the Great Khan ordered them to capture Guo Jing alive; otherwise the Mongolian soldiers would assault him with arrows. With arrows coming from all three directions, even if Guo Jing were supernaturally brave, how could he escape this tight siege?

Guo Jing felt his mother's body in his hand turned colder and colder; he struggled hard to hold his tears, urging his horse to keep running south. He had left the pursuers far behind, but the day was getting brighter, soon it would be dawn; while he was still in the center of Mongolian territory; ten thousands 'li's away from the Central Plains. With only a horse and a spear, how could he escape to his hometown?

Riding for a while, he saw the dust was rising from the ground ahead of him; a group of cavalry was coming his way. Guo Jing held the rein and turned to the east. But his horse had been running for half a night, continuously supporting Guo Jing and his mother's body; suddenly its front legs gave up, it fell kneeling on the ground, unable to stand any longer. It was a very critical situation, yet Guo Jing still did not want to be separated from his mother's corpse. With his left arm holding her and his right arm wielding the spear, he charged into the incoming cavalry.

He saw the cavalry was getting very close; suddenly amidst the rising dust came a swishing noise, an arrow flew in and hit his spear. The arrow was very strong, Guo Jing's hand was shaken and the spearhead was broken. While he was still in shock, another arrow flew toward his chest. Guo Jing tossed the broken spear sideways and held out his hand in front of his body to catch the arrow. To his surprise, the arrowhead was

already broken. He lifted his head only to see a general holding his rein and stopped in front of Guo Jing. It was the man who taught him archery; the Divine Archer Jebek.

“Shifu!” Guo Jing called out, “Are you going to take me back?”

“Absolutely,” Jebek said.

Guo Jing thought, “In any way it will be difficult for me to escape this tight siege today. Rather than let others capture me, why don’t I let Shifu have this merit?” Therefore, he said, “Very well, just let me bury my mother first.”

Looking at four directions he saw toward his left a small mound. He carried his mother’s body to that mound; dug the earth with his broken spear and lowered his mother gently into the hole. He saw the dagger in her chest, but he could not bear to take it out. He knelt on the ground and kowtowed several times before finally pouring the sandy soil on top of her body. He remembered his mother’s bitter suffering in raising him since he was a baby until he became an adult; and in the end he had to bury her just like this. He was overwhelmed with grief that he was unable to cry anymore.

Jebek dismounted his horse and kowtowed four times in front of Li Ping’s grave. He stood up, then took his quiver, his bow, and his spear; and gave everything to Guo Jing. He also led his horse by the reins, and placed the reins in Guo Jing’s hand, he said, “Go. I am afraid we are not going to see each other anymore.”

Guo Jing was taken aback, “Shifu!” he called out.

“You dared to risk your life for me in the past; am I not a real man that I don’t dare to risk my life for you?” Jebek said.

“Shifu, you are defying the Great Khan’s order,” Guo Jing said, “You will be in great danger.”

“I have followed him attacking to the east and going to war in the west, my contribution is not small,” Jebek said, “At most the Great Khan will beat me to half dead, he won’t behead me. Just go, quick!”

Guo Jing was still hesitating; Jebek continued, “I am afraid my own troops would not want to listen to me, so I took the troops you led in the expedition to the west. Go ahead and asked them, whether they are greedy of riches and honor to turn you in?”

Leading his horse Guo Jing stepped forward; the cavalry dismounted their horses at once, and then knelt down on the ground, shouted, “Xiao Ren respectfully send General home to the south.” Guo Jing raised his eyes to see, and they were indeed the officers and soldiers who faced death with him in the west. Guo Jing’s heart was so moved. He said, “I have offended the Great Khan, deserving a capital punishment. You let me go; if the Great Khan finds out, all of you will be in big trouble.”

The soldiers replied, “General has treated us with benevolence as high as the mountain; we won’t forget that.”

Guo Jing sighed. He raised his hands to say goodbye to the troops, then with the spear in his hand he leaped to the horseback. He was about to move when suddenly the dust rose ahead of him, another group of cavalry came approaching.

Jebbeh, Guo Jing, and the troops’ expression changed. Jebbeh thought, “I have deliberately defied Khan’s order by letting Guo Jing go; but if I fight these troops, that would be a blatant rebellion.” Yet he did not change his mind, “Guo Jing, go!” he shouted. However, from the incoming army came a loud shout, “Don’t hurt the Consort!” Everybody was stunned. They saw the rushing army bore the Fourth Prince’s banner.

Amidst the rising cloud of dust Tuolei appeared and arrived in a flash; turned out he was riding Guo Jing’s swift little red horse. He held his rein and jumped down from the horseback, anxiously asked, “Anda, are you all right?”

“I am fine,” Guo Jing replied, “Master Jebbeh is going to take me back to see the Great Khan.” He was deliberately protecting Jebbeh; so that the Great Khan would not find out the real story.

Toulei cast a sidelong glance toward Jebbeh, he said, “Anda, take this little red horse and leave quickly.” He also put a bundle on the saddle and continued, “Here is a thousand ‘liang’ of gold; we brothers will see each other again some other time.”

They were both great warriors; in time like this there was no need to say another word. Guo Jing stood up and mounted his little red horse. “Tell Huazheng Meizi [little sister – term of endearment] to take a good care of herself. Tell her to marry another man, just forget about me.”

Tuolei heaved a long sigh, “Huazheng Meizi will never agree to marry another. I think she is going to look for you in the south. At that time I will send somebody to escort her.”

“No, don’t come looking for me,” Guo Jing hastily said, “Not to mention the world is big, but even if she can find me, that will only add to our agony.”

Tuolei was silent; they looked at each other without saying anything. After half a day finally Tuolei said, “Just go, I will see you off for a while.”

Two people rode fast to the south; very soon they have covered more than thirty ‘li’s. “Anda,” Guo Jing said, “Even if one sees someone off a thousand ‘li’s, in the end they must part’, you can go back now!”

“Let me see you off some more time,” Tuolei answered.

About ten more ‘li’s later, both men dismounted their horses and said their goodbyes; tears rolling down their cheeks.

Tuolei gazed at Guo Jing’s back, which became smaller and smaller; it looked like a dark shadow on the vastness of the desert, finally disappeared on the southern horizon. He stood motionless for a long time, then sadly mounted his horse and headed back north.



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