Chapter 1

King Zhou and Goddess NuWa

The Shang Dynasty replaced the Xia Dynasty and ruled China for nearly 650 years.The Shang court produced twenty-eight kings of whom King Zhou was the last.

Before King Zhou ascended the throne,he and bis father,King Di Yi, and many civil and military officials were walking in the royal garden one day,viewing the blooming peonies,when suddenly theFlying Cloud Pavilion collapsed and a beam flew towards them.Rushing forward,King Zhou or then Prince Shou,caught the beam and replaced it in a display of miraculous strength.Deeply impressed,Prime Minister Shang Rong and Supreme Minister Mei Bo advised King Di Yi to name him Crown Prince. When King Di Yi passed away after thirty years on the throne, Crown Prince Shou was immediately crowned king to rule the country in his father's place.King Zhou established bis capital at Zhaoge,a metropolis on the Yellow River.The king appointed Grand Tutor Wen Zhong to be in charge of civil affairs and Huang Feihu,Prince for National Pacification and of Military Prowess,to supervise military affairs.In this way,the king hoped the nation would live in peace under a civil administration backed up by the military.The king placed Queen Jiang in the Central Palace;

Concubine Huang in the West Palace and Concubine Yangin the Fragrant Palace.They were all virtuous and chaste in their behavior and mild and gentle in manner.

King Zhou ruled his country in peace,and was respected by the neigh- boring states.His people worked happily in their different professions, and his peasants were especially blessed by favorable winds and rains. There were 800 marquises in the country who offered their allegiance to four dukes,each of whom ruled over 200ofthese marquises on behalf of King Zhou.The four dukes were:the East Grand Duke Jiang Huanchu, the South Grand Duke E Chongyu,the West Grand Duke Ji Chang and the North Grand Duke Chong Houhu.

In the second month of the seventh year of the reign of King Zhou,a report reached Zhaoge of a rebellion of seventy-two marquises in the North Sea district,and Grand Tutor Wen Zhong was immediately ordered to lead a strong army to suppress the rebels.One day when King Zhou was holding court, Shang Rong stepped out from the right row,knelt and said, "Your humble Prime Minister Shang Rong begs to report something urgent to Your Majesty.Tomorrow is the 15th day of the third month,the birthday of Goddess Nu Wa,and Your Majesty should honor her and hold a ceremony at her temple."

"What has Goddess Nu Wa done that a great king such as myself is obliged to go to her temple and worship her?"King Zhou asked.

"Goddess Nu Wa's been a great goddess since ancient times and possesses saintly virtues,When the enraged demon Gong Gong knocked his head against Buzhou Mountain,the northwest section of Heaven col- lapsed and the earth sunk down in the southeast.At this critical moment, Nu Wa came to the rescue and mended Heaven with multi-colored stones she bad obtained and refined from a mountain,"Shang Rong explained. "She's performed this great service for the people,who've built temples to honor her in gratitude. Zhaoge is fortunate to have the chance to worship this kind goddess.She'll ensure peace and health to the people and prosperity to the country;she'll bring us timely wind and rain and keep us free from famine and war.She's the proper guardian angel for both the people and the nation.So I make bold to suggest that Your Majesty honor her tomorrow."

"You're right,Prime Minister.I'll do as you advise."

Returming to his residential palace,King Zhou ordered a notice be issued that His Majesty,together with his civil and military officials,were to make a pilgrimage to worship Goddess Nu Wa at her temple the next day.

It would have been better if he hadn't gone at all,for it was this very pilgrimage that caused the fall of the Shang Dynasty,making it impossible for the people to live in peace.Itwas as if the king had tossed a fishing line into a big river and unexpectedly caught numerous disasters leading to the loss of both his throne and his life.

The king and his entourage left the palace and made their way through the south gate of the capital.Every house they passed was decorated with bright silk,and the streets were scented for the king by burning incense. The king was accompanied by 3,000 cavalrymen and 800 royal guards under the command of General Huang Feihu,Prince for National Pacification and of Military Prowess and followed by all the officials of the royal court.

Reaching the Temple of Goddess Nu Wa,King Zhou left his royal carriage and went to the main hall,where he burned incense sticks,bowed low with his ministers and offered prayers.King Zhou then wandered about the hall,finding it splendidly decorated in gold and other colors. Before the statue of the goddess stood golden lads holding pennants,and jade lasses holding S-shaped jade ornaments which symbolized peace and happiness.The jade hooks on the curtain hung obliquely,like newcres- cent moons suspended in the air,and hundreds of fine phoenixes embroidered on the curtain appeared to be flying towards the North Pole.Beside the altar of the goddess,made of fragrant wood,cranes and dragons were dancing in the scented smoke rising from the gold incense burners and the sparkling flames of the silvery candles.

As King Zhou was admiring the splendors of the hall,a whirlwind suddenly blew up,rolling back the curtain and exposing the image of the goddess to all.She was extremely beautiful,much more than flowers, more than the fairy in the moon palace,and certainly more than any woman in the world.She looked quite alive,smiling sweetly at the king and staring at him with joy in her eyes.

Her utter beauty bewitched King Zhou, setting him on fire with lust. He desired to possess her,and thought to himself in frustration,"Though I'm wealthy and powerful and have concubines and maidservants filling my palace,there's none as beautiful and charming as this goddess."

He ordered his attendants to bring brush and ink and wrote a poem on the wall near the image of the goddess to express his admiration and deep love for her.The poem ran like this:

The scene is gay with phoenixes and dragons, But they are only clay and golden colors.

Brows like winding hills in jade greep, Sleeves like graceful clouds,you're as pear blossoms soaked with raindrops, Charming as peonies enveloped in mist. I pray that you come alive,

With sweet voice and gentle movements, And I'll bring you along to my palace.

When he finished writing,Prime Minister Shang Rong approached him."Nu Wa's been a proper goddess and the guardian angel for Zhaoge, I only suggested that you worship her so that she would continue to bless the people with timely rains and favorable winds and ensurethat they'l continue to live in peace.But with this poem,you've not only shown your lack of sincerity on this trip but have insulted her as well."He demanded, "This isn't the way a king should behave.I pray you wash this blasphemous poem off the wall,lest you be condemned by the people for your immorality."

"I found Goddess Nu Wa so beautiful that I wrote a poem in praise of her,and that's all.Hold your tongue.Don't forget that I am the king. People will be only too glad to read the poem I wrote in my own hand,for it enables them to identify the true beauty of the goddess."

King Zhou dismissed him lightly.The other civil and military officials remained silent,none daring to utter a word.They then returned to the capital.The king went directly to the Dragon Virtue Court,where he met his queen and concubines in a happy reunion. On her birthday,Goddess Nu Wa had left her palace and paid her respects to the three emperors,Fu Xi, Shen Nong and Xuan Yuan. She then returned to her temple,seated herself in the main hall,and received greetings from the golden lads and jade lasses.

Looking up,she saw the poem on the wall."That wicked king!"She flew into a rage."He doesn't think how to protect his country with virtue and morality.On the contrary,he shows no fear of Heaven and insults me with this dirty poem.How vile he is!The Shang Dynasty's already ruled for over 600 years and is coming to an end.I must take my revenge on him if I'm to assuage my own conscience."

She took action at once.She mounted a phoenix and headed for Zhaoge. King Zhou had two sons.One was Yin Jiao,who later became the "Star God Presiding over the Year,"and the other Yin Hong,who later became the"God of Grain."As the two gods paid their respects to their father,two red divine beams rose from the tops of their heads and soared high in the sky,blocking the way of the goddess.Looking down through the clouds,Nu Wa at once realized KingZhou had still twenty-eight years to go before his downfall.She also realized that she could do nothing about it at this moment,since that would go against the will of Heaven.

The goddess returned to her temple,highly displeased.Back in her palace,Goddess Nu Wa ordered a young maidservant to fetch a golden gourd and put it on the Cinnabar Terrace outside her court.When its stopper was removed,Nu Wa pointed at the gourd with one finger and suddenly a thick beam of brilliant white light rose from the mouth of the gourd and shot up fifty feet into the air.Hanging from the beam was a multi-colored flag called the Demon Summoning Pennant.As soon as this pennant made its appearance, glittering high up in the sky,all demons and evil sprites,no matter where they were,would gather round.

Moments later,dark winds began to howl,eerie fogs enveloped the earth,and vicious-looking clouds gathered in the sky.All the demons in the world had arrived to receive her command.Nu Wa gave orders that all the demons return home except the three sprites that dwelt in the grave of Emperor Xuan Yuan.

Who were these three sprites?The first was a thousand-year-old fe- male fox sprite;the second was a female pheasant sprite with nine heads; and the third was a jade lute sprite.

"May you live eternally,dear goddess!"the three sprites greeted Nu Wa, kowtowing on the Cinnabar Terrace.

"Listen carefully to my secret orders.The Shang Dynasty's destined to end soon.The singing of the phoenix at Mount Qi augurs the birth of a new ruler in West Qi. This has all been determined by the will of Heaven, and no one has the power to change what must happen.You may trans- form yourselves into beauties,enter the palace,and distract King Zhou from state affairs.You'll be richly rewarded for giving the new dynasty an auspicious start and helping the old one to its downfall.However,you mustn't bring harm to the people."

At the end of her order,the three sprites kowtowed,turned themselves into winds,and flew away.

Since his visit to the Temple of Goddess Nu Wa, King Zhou had sunk into a deep depression.He ardently admired the beauty of the goddess and,yearning for her day and night,lost all desire to eatand drink.He had no passion for his queen,his concubines,or the numerous maids in his palace.They now all appeared to him like lumps of clay.He would not be bothered with state affairs.

One day,he remembered Fei Zhong and You Hun,two minion courtiers who would flatter and slander as he pleased.King Zhou sent for Fei Zhong,and the latter appeared in no time.

"I went to worship Goddess Nu Wa recently,"King Zhou began."She's so beautiful I believe she has no rival in the world,and none of my concubines is to be compared with her.I'm head over heels in love,and feel very sad as I cannot get her.Have you any ideas with which to comfort me?"

"Your Majesty!With all your honor and dignity,you're the most powerful and the richest man in the world.You possess all the wealth within the four seas,and are virtuous as the sage emperors Yao and Shun.You may have anything you wish for,and you should have no difficulty in satisfying yourdesires.You can issue an order tomorrow demanding 100 beauties from the grand dukes.You'll then have no trouble finding one as beautiful as Goddess Nu Wa,"Fei Zhong suggested.

King Zhou was delighted.He said,"Your suggestion appeals to me greatly.I'l issue the order tomorrow.You may return home for the time being."

He then left the throne hall and returned to his royal chambers to rest.

If you wish to know what happened thereafter,please read the following chapter.

Chapter 12

The Birth of Nezha

The commander at Chentang Pass was Li Jing, who had devoted him- self to Taoism since childhood.His master was Immortal Woe Evading Sage on the West Kunlun Mountain,from whom he had learned some magic arts.He could ride on metal,wood,water,fire or dust,but as he was not destined to be an immortal,he was instructed to enjoy riches and power in the human world.

His wife Madame Yin had given him two sons.The elder was called Jinzha and the younger Muzha. Now she was pregnant for the third time,but was still not in labor though three years and six months had already passed. The prolonged pregnancy made the husband and wife extremely worried.

"This pregnancy's been so long that the child must be either a demon or a monster,"Li Jing said one day,pointing at her belly.

"It's indeed inauspicious.I've worried about it day and night,"Madame Yin agreed.

His wife's words made him even more worried than before.Late that night Madame Yin fell asleep,and had a strange dream in which a Taoist rushed directly into their bedroom.

"How dare you intrude so rudely into our bed chamber!How detest- able you are!"she scolded him.

"Hurry,Madame,and receive this excellent baby,"the Taoist called to her. Before she could say anything,the Taoist threw something at her belly.

Greatly startled,she woke up in a cold sweat and quickly woke her husband.As she told him about the dream,she began to feel pains in her belly. Li Jing immediately left the room and waited in the front hall.

"Three and a half years of pregnancy,and the moment's here at last! Whether it's fortuitous or not still remains to be seen,"he mused.

But just then two maidservants rushed up to him."Sir,Madame's just given birth to a demon!"they cried out. Sword in hand,Li Jing rushed into the bed chamber.There he found the chamber full of red light and fragrance and saw a fleshy ball rolling to and fro near the bed.Shocked at the sight,he moved forward and struck the fleshy ball with his sharp sword.As it split in two,a baby boy jumped out amidst the red light.He had a white,beautiful face,wore a gold bracelet on his right wrist,and bis belly was covered with a piece of red damask silk that shone with golden light.

He was the reincarnation of the Pearl Spirit,disciple of Fairy Primordial.The gold bracelet was a magic weapon called the Universal Ring and the red silk was the magic Sky Muddling Damask.They were both treasures from the Golden Light Cave,

Li Jing was astonished to see this baby boy running about the room.He caught him and held him in his arms.He was such a lovely child that Li Jing could not believe it was a demon and slaughter it.He caried the baby to his wife,who took to him at once.Indeed they were both delighted.

The next day,his colleagues came to congratulate him on the birth of his third son.When all the guests had gone,Li Jing received the unexpected news that a Taoist had requested to see him.A Taoist himself, Li Jing quickly invited the man in and offered him the seat of honor.

"Master,from which holy mountain and cave do you come?What instructions would you give me?"

"I'm Fairy Primordial from the Golden Light Cave on Qianyuan Mountain.I've come here to congratulate you on your new son.May I see the child?"

Li Jing immediately told a maidservant to bring the baby out.Fairy Primordial held the child and looked at him over closely.

"At what hour was he born?"

"About four yesterday morning."

"That's terrible,"Fairy Primordial muttered.

"Do you mean that we may not bring him up,Master?"

"Oh,no!I mean that since he was born at four o'clock in the morning, he's sure to break the commandment on killing.Have you given him a name yet?"

"Not yet,Master."

"Would you let me give him a name and take him for a disciple?" "We would only be too delighted."

"How many sons do you have,General?"

"Three.The eldest is Jinzha,disciple of Heavenly Master of Outstanding Culture at the High Cloud Cave on the Five Dragon Mountain;the second is Muzha,disciple of Immortal Universal Virtue at the White Crane Cave on the Nine Palace Mountain.As you would have this youngest for a disciple,please give him a name."

"Call him Nezha,as he's the third."

"I greatly appreciate it and thank you very much,"Li Jing said,and ordered that a vegetarian feast be prepared for the immortal.

"I've got things to do at Qianyuan Mountain and must return there at once,"the immortal declined the offer and left.

One day Li Jing was siting in his office when news arrived that 400 marquises had rebelled against the king.He issued orders to keep close watch over the pass and other strategic places and to strengthen the de- fence at the Wild Horse Mountain.

Seasons came and went,and seven years quickly passed.Though it was now the fifth month by the lunar calendar,and the weather was very hot, Li Jing was still training his soldiers vigorously to defend Youhun Pass against Jiang Wenhuan.Irritated by the heat, Nezha,now seven years old and already six feet tall,went to see his mother.

"Mother,won't you let me stroll out beyond the pass? I daren't go there without your permission,"he said.

"Only if you bring a guard along,son.But you mustn't linger there too long.Return before your father does."

Accompanied by a guard, Nezha went out beyond the gates of the pass.By the time they had walked about one li, Nezha was so hot that he could go no further.

"There are shady trees ahead.Can we cool ourselves there?"he asked.

The guard rushed over and,walking under the shade of the trees, immediately felt a refreshing breeze."Master,it's really cool here,"he told Nezha. Nezha happily joined him in the shade.He untied the belt around his gown and stripped to the waist.He was soon cool and comfortable.Looking around him,he caught sight of blue ripples sparkling in a nearby stream. Long,slender willow branches hung low over the water,swaying grace- fully in the gentle breeze and small waterfalls gurgled over the rocks. Nezha stood up quickly and strode over to the bank of the stream.

"I got so hot on my way here that I'm bathed in a sweat.I want to have a wash in the stream,"he told the guard.

"Don't forget,Master,that you must be home earlier than your father,"the guard cautioned him.

"That's no problem,"Nezha replied airily and immediately took his clothes off.He sat on a rock and,dipping his Sky Muddling Damask into the water,wiped his body with it.

This stream was the Nine Bend River,and it flowed into the East Sea. As the Sky Muddling Damask was a magic weapon,every time Nezha dipped it in the water,the river turned red,and when he swished it,the river shook violently until the Crystal Palace of the East Sea creaked and groaned.

Ao Guang, the dragon king of the East Sea,was sitting in his own room when the palace began shaking violently."As there's no earthquake, what's shaking the palace?"he hurriedly asked,and ordered Li Gen,the Yaksha on duty,to find out the cause.

When the Yaksha reached the Nine Bend River,he saw the water there bad turned a bright shining red,and a young boy was dipping a red scarf in the water and wiping his body with it.

"Boy!What have you got in your hand that tums the water red and rocks the Crystal Palace?"Li Gen parted the waters and shouted loudly.

Nezha look up and saw a creature with a blue face,red hair,a huge mouth and long protruding tusks,holding a large axe

"What kind of beast are you?What a wonder that you can speak!" Nezha cried in surprise.

"I'm the Yaksha Sea Patrolman,and I'm here by order of my master. How dare you insult me,calling me a beast,"Li Gen said angrily.

He jumped onto the bank,raised his axe and struck at Nezha's head. Nezha,naked and empty-handed,dodged the vicious blow,raised his Universal Ring and struck Li Gen on the head.How could the Yaksha withstand the magic weapon from Fairy Primordial!His skull broke open and he fell dead on the river bank.

"He's soiled my Universal Ring,"Nezha laughed,and began to wash it in the stream.This shook the Crystal Palace so violently that it nearly fell down. "What's going on?It's rocking even more violently!And Li Gen still hasn't returned."

The dragon king was thus wondering when a dragon soldier ran up. "Your Majesty, Li Gen the Yaksha's been killed by a young boy."

Ao Guang was shocked."Li Gen was appointed by the Jade Emperor in person at the Spiritual Firmament Hall in Heaven.Who's dared to kill him?"He issued an order,"Alert the dragon troops!I'll personally con- front the fellow."

As he spoke,Ao Bing,his third son,arrived."Father,Why are you so angry?"

When Ao Guang told him the whole story,Ao Bing said,"You may rest at ease,father.I'll go and catch the criminal for you."

Mounted on his Water Parting Monster,Ao Bing took a lance and led the dragon soldiers out of the Crystal Palace.As the water parted before them,mighty waves rose as high as mountains and crashed onto the shore, flooding the low-lying land. Nezha was standing there watching the flood when he saw a man in full battle array surface on a marine beast.The man was armed with a lance and displayed valiant bearing.

"Who is it that killed Li Gen,the Yaksba Sea Patrolman?"the man demanded.

"It was me,"Nezha answered frankly. "Who are you?"Ao Bing asked.

"I'm the third son of Commander Li Jing of Chentang Pass.My father's the head of this district. My coming here to bathe in the river had nothing to do with Li Gen,yet he swore at me and acted rudely.Naturally I killed him."

"You damned scoundrel!"swore the third prince,growing angry."Li Gen was appointed to his post by the Jade Emperor.How dare you beat him to death and then spout such nonsense!"

He raised his lance and ran at Nezha.Having no weapon,Nezha ducked out of the way.

"Wait a moment!Tell me who you are,"he called to the dragon prince.

"I'm the third son of Ao Guang,Dragon King of the East Sea.My name's Ao Bing."

Nezha burst into laughter."Oh!So you're a son of Ao Guang.Don't be so proud.Should you annoy me further,I'll drag out your old loath of a father and skin him alive!

"You damned scoundrel!You've gone too far this time,"the dragon prince roared and lunged at Nezha again.

Nezha became irritated and cast his Sky Muddling Damask into the air at the dragon prince.Thousands of fireballs suddenly appeared,enveloping the third prince and sweeping him from his mount.Nezha rushed over,trod on his neck,and lifting his Universal Ring,struck the prince on the head.The third prince resumed his true form and lay stretched out motionless on the ground.

"What a surprise!I've beaten this young dragon into his true form.I'll take his main tendon and make my father a dragon belt for a present," Nezha said to himself.

When he had taken the tendon from the dead dragon,he left the place at once and returned to the pass.The scene had so terrified the guard that he had gone weak and could scarcely walk.

"My son!Where have you been?Why did it take you so long?"his mother asked him.

"I just wandered out beyond the pass.I forgot the time and so re- turned late."

Before long,Li Jing returned from the military exercises.He dismissed his attendants,removed his armor and went to the back ball.He sat there worrying about the rebellion of the marquises and the ever-increasing hardship people were suffering.

Ao Guang was waiting in his palace when he got the news of his son's death.He was told that "Nezha,son of Commander Li Jing of Chentang Pass,killed the third prince and cruelly drew out his tendon."

He was shocked."My son was God of Clouds and Rain and Plant Life,created by the Jade Emperor.Who dares to strike him a mortal blow? Li Jing,we met once when you were studying the Way at West Kunlun Mountain.How could you allow your son to wickedly murder mine?This in justice can never been erased.Your son's got the gall to take the tendon from my son's body!I'm burning with hatred!"

In a great rage and eager to avenge his son, Ao Guang transformed himself into a scholar and made his way directly to Chentang Pass.

Hearing that it was Ao Guang,Li Jing was delighted."I've been separated from my brother Ao Guang for years and have missed him sorely.It must be a blessing from Heaven that we're to meet today,"he said.

He straightened his clothes, hurried out,and invited Ao Guang into the main hall.They greathearted other and sat down.Seeing that Ao Guang was boiling with rage,Li Jing was bemused.He was about to question him when Ao Guang began,"Worthy Brother,how lucky you are to have such a good son!"

Li Jing smiled."Brother,we haven't seen each other for many years. How happy I am that Heaven's blessed us with this meeting.Why do you speak so abruptly?I've got three sons,Jinzha, Muzha and Nezha,and each has been adopted by a sage as a disciple,Though they're not so good, they're not rascals,either.Please don't get a wrong impression of them.""Brother,you're the one with the wrong impression!One of your sons took a bath at the Nine Bend River today.Using some magic weapon,he shook the waters until my Crystal Palace nearly collapsed.I sent my Yaksha to find out what was going on,but your son beat him to death. When I sent my third son to see what had happened,he was also beaten to death,and his tendon was cut out.How can you be such reasonable as to defend his crimes!"

The dragon king was bitter,but Li Jing hurriedly comforted him with a smile."You've blamed me wrongly,Brother.It couldn't have been one of my sons.My eldest son's at the Five Dragon Mountain,the second at the Nine Palace Mountain.The third is just seven years old and stays indoors all day long.How could any of them have done such a thing?"

"It was your third son,Nezha,"Ao Guang said with assurance.

"That's most odd!Don't get impatient.Brother.Let me bring him out here and you can see for yourself."

Without any delay,Li Jing rushed to the back hall to see his wife,who asked,"Who's the visitor in the main hall?"

"My old friend,Ao Guang. He complains that his third son was killed by Nezha. I'll get Nezha to see him,and he'll see that it's not true.Where is Nezha now?""

Madame Yin thought to herself,"This is the first time Nezha went outside to play.How could he have done such a thing?"Not daring to tell him,she said simply,"He's playing in the back garden."

Li Jing entered the back garden."Where are you,Nezha?Come here at once,"he shouted.

Receiving no reply, LiJ ing went to Begonia Hall but found the door bolted.He shouted again. Nezha immediately opened the door and came out to meet his father.

"What are you doing here,son?"

"As I had nothing to do today.I went out to the Nine Bend River.It was very hot and so I bathed in the river.Then Li Gen the Yaksha appeared and swore at me most foully.He ruthlessly chopped at me with his axe.I lost my patience and knocked him off with my Universal Ring. Then some third prince called Ao Bing rushed at me,brandishing a lance,

but I captured him with my Sky Muddling Damask.I trod on his neck and

knocked him with my Universal Ring.He turned into a dead dragon with just one blow.I've heard that the main tendon of a dragon is very valuable,so I took it to make a dragon tendon belt for you."

Li Jing was stunned and speechless.It was a long time before he cried out,"Woe is me!Don't you know that you've got me into trouble and endless suffering?You'd better come with me to see your uncle and tell him what you did. "Don't worry,father.As I didn't do it deliberately,I shouldn't be considered guilty.I haven't done anything to his son's tendon yet.It's all here in one piece if he would like to have it.Let me go and see him."

When Nezha reached the main hall with his father,he rushed up and greeted Ao Guang,"Uncle,I've unknowingly committed an error and offended you.I beg you earnestly to forgive me.Here's the tendon in perfect condition.I haven't done anything to it yet."

Looking at it, Ao Guang felt even more grief-stricken."Your son's so wicked,yet you try to tell me that I'm wrong!Now that he's admitted to his crime,how can you be so cold and unsympathetic?Moreover,my son was a god,and the Yaksha was appointed by the Jade Emperor.How could you take it upon yourselves to murder them in cold blood!I'll report this case to the Jade Emperor tomorrow,and have you both severely dealt with,"he threatened,and stormed out in a fury.

Li Jing began to stamp his feet and bewail the great calamity.Hearing his cries,Madame Yin found out from her attendants what had happened and hurried to the main hall herself to comfort him.

When she came to him,Li Jing stopped crying and said,"It was bad luck enough that I failed to become an immortal,but now you've produced this wonderful son!He's going to bring destruction on our whole family!The dragon prince was the god of rain,and now Nezha's murdered him.Ao Guang's bound to report this case to Heaven tomorrow,and within no more than three days we'll all turn to ghosts under the sword."

He began to weep again.Madame Yin also wept."I suffered for three and a half years to give birth to you!Who would have guessed that you would be the ruin of our family,"she pointed at Nezha and accused him.

Nezha felt extremely upset and knelt down before them."Let me tell you the truth,Father and Mother.I'm not an ordinary mortal,but the disciple of Fairy Primordial at the Golden Light Cave on Qianyuan Mountain, and these weapons were all bestowed on me by him.It would certainly be impossible for Ao Guang to get the better of me.I'll now go straight to Qian yuan Mountain and ask my master how to deal with the matter.He'll surely help us out,"he said,then declared,"I've caused all this trouble,and I hold myself responsible for it.I won't get you involved."

He then left the room.Picking up a handful of earth and throwing it into the air,he disappeared.Using his magic powers,he flew on the dust to Qianyuan Mountain.He soon arrived,was ushered in by Golden Haze Lad,and knelt before Fairy Primordial.

"Why don't you stay at Chentang Pass?Why do you come here to see me?"his master asked.

Nezha explained what had happened and begged his master for help.

"Though Nezha killed Ao Bing by mistake,it was in fact destined by

fate.Even though Ao Guang is the king of dragons,he's only assigned to gather clouds and distribute the rain.He should understand the celestial phenomena that indicate political trends in the near future.It would be absurd to trouble Heaven with such a minor matter,"Fairy Primordial thought, and said,"Come over here,Nezha.Unbutton your coat and shirt."

Nezha did as his master ordered.The immortal drew an Invisibility Charm with his fingers on Nezha's chest and ordered,"Go to the Precious Virtue Gate of the Heavenly Palace and do the following..When you've finished,return directly to Chentang Pass.Should there be any more trouble,come to see me.I'll always help you,Nothing will happen to your parents.You may go now."

Nezha left Qiaryuan Mountain and made his way directly to the Precious Virtue Gate of the Heavenly Palace.Everything in Heaven was different from on earth.Rays of golden light,shining in all directions,produced thou- sands of beautiful rainbows,and an auspicious purple haze hung in the air.

The South Heavenly Gate was built entirely of green-blue glazed bricks, and was decorated with numerous dazzling precious tripods.On each side of the gate were four huge pillars around which coiled red-bearded dragons whose duty it was to make rain by gathering clouds and fog.Just within the gate were two jade bridges,on each of which stood or danced multi-colored phoenixes.

The Heavenly Palace complex contained thirty-six splendid palaces and seventy-two immense halls constructed with massive jade pillars, carved with the images of uniforms.Beneath the numerous terraces were wonderful gardens with exotic grasses and eternal flowers.Among the precious furnaces were the Furnace for Refining the Elixir of Life,the Divination Furnace and the Water-Fire Furnace,in which were planted evergreen fragrant grass.The Hall for Worshiping the Sages was full of officials dressed in brilliant purple silk robes,and standing or kneeling on the stone steps,were numerous officers wearing lotus coronets that glittered in the golden light.

Inside the Spiritual Firmament Hall,golden dragons coiled on the jade doors,while at the Hall for the Worthies,phoenixes danced in front of the

pearl gates.Long,winding corridors were exquisitely wrought with wonderful carvings.Pretty birds darted gracefully in and out under the eaves At the ends of roof-ridges were shining purple gourd-shaped adornments, and just under the roof hung jade bells that rang with sweet tunes in mild breeze.Inside the Heavenly Palace were many rare and precious things. The walls and beams were made of silver,gold and jade.Anyone who had the good fortune to enter the Heavenly Palace would never be polluted by the vulgar world again.

It was still early when Nezha reached the Precious Virtue Gate. Ao Guang had not yet arrived,and the palace gates had not yet opened.He waited at the Gate for the Worthies for a long while before he saw Ao Guang in his official robes striding swiftly towards the South Heavenly

Gate.

Finding the gate sill closed, Ao Guang said to himself,"I've arrived too early.The heavenly guards haven't come to open the gates yet.I'll have to wait here."

Though Nezha was standing close,he was invisible to the Dragon

King because Fairy Primordial had drawn a charm on his chest.

The idea that Ao Guang was to accuse him before the Jade Emperor and have him punished angered Nezha. Rushing over,he raised his Universal Ring and struck Ao Guang a heavy blow on the back.As Ao Guang fell to the ground,Nezha trod on his neck,ready to deal with him.

If you want to know what happened to Ao Guang,you must read the next chapter.

Chapter 21

Flight Through the Five Passes

With the help of Huang Feihu, Prince Wen secretly left Zhaoge and crossed the Yellow River on the same night.He made his way through MianchiCounty towards Lintong Pass

At the hostel,the officials became extremely anxious when he failed to return all night.They hurriedly reported the situation to Fei Zhong.

"What shall I do now?If I'm held responsible,it could cause me a lot of trouble," Fei Zhong hesitated as he got the news,and then immediately sent for You Hun to discuss the matter.When You Hun arrived he told him of the situation.

"On your recommendation,His Majesty created Ji Chang prince,As a special favor,he was also permitted to parade through the streets for three days.But yesterday,on only the second day,he ran away without the permission of His Majesty. He's obviously up to no good.This is really serious.We're already trying to cope with the south and east,and now his flight may mean another crisis.Who's going to assume responsibility? What shall we do?"Fei Zhong asked.

"Don't worry,Brother!I don't think this is any trouble.Let's talk to His Majesty and advise him to send men after Ji Chang.When he's brought back,we'll behead him in the market for insulting the king.We've got nothing to worry about."

Reaching agreement on the matter,Fei Zhong and You Hun went to see King Zhou at the Star Picking Mansion. "What do you have to report to me,Ministers?"

"We must inform Your Majesty that Ji Chang's so ungrateful that he's disobeyed your orders and stealthily ran away on just the second day of his celebratory parade.He's likely to rebel after returning to his dukedom. We wrongly recommended him and must assume responsibility for it.We await your decision,"they reported carefully.

King Zhou was infuriated."It's only on your recommendations that I decided to pardon him.What's happened today is entirely your responsibility!

"Human hearts have never been easy to fathom.A man may appear obedient,yet nurses treachery in bis heart.As the saying goes:'When the sea dries up one can see the bottom,but not even when a man dies can one know his heart. Ji Chang can't have gotten very far.Your Majesty may send Generals Yin Pobai and Lei Kai after him.When they bring him back,deal with him according to the law,"You Hun suggested.

King Zhou gave his immediate approval,and in no time at all,Generals Yin and Lei,leading 3,000 hand-picked cavalrymen,left the west gate in hot pursuit.

Prince Wen,meanwhile,was taking bis time.He was riding leisurely through Mianchi County when he heard the sudden clamor of men and horses behind him.Looking back,he saw a trail of dust rising in the air , and realizing that the king's men were after him,he was terrified.

He gazed at the heavens."Though Prince Huang was kind to me,I've been careless.The king's bound to find out that I've fled the capital and has sent troops after me.If I'm caught this time,I'll be a dead man.AllI can do is ride as fast as I can and try to escape danger,"he quickly decided. He galloped wildly,not knowing where he was going.He cried out to Heaven for help,but there was no response.He appealed to the earth,but the earth was silent.At about twenty li from Lintong Pass,the pursuing troops were almost upon him.Prince Wen was in a critical situation!

But now let's return to Master of the Clouds,who was just then meditating on his Green Touring Bed.All of a sudden he felt a surge of uneasiness pass through him,and he quickly made a divination on his fingers.

"Oh!"he exclaimed."The West Grand Duke's escaped one calamity only to un into another.I must fulfil the promise I made on Mount Yan and allow father and son to meet again today,"he told himself,then shouted,"Where are you,Golden Haze Lad?Go to the peach garden and bring Thunderbolt here at once."

Thunderbolt came and knelt before him."I await your instructions

Master."

"Disciple!Disaster is about to befall your father.You'd better go and

rescue him."

"Who's my father?"

"Ji Chang,the West Grand Duke.He's facing danger now near Lin tong Pass.You'd better go to the Tiger Cliff and find yourself a weapon.I'll teach you how to handle it so that you can go tobis rescue."

On these orders,Thunderbolt left the Jade Pillar Cave and went straight to the Tiger Cliff.He looked all around but could not find anything that looked like a weapon."I was careless not to have asked my master for more details. I've heard that there are many kinds of weapons,like spears, cutlasses,swords,halberds,whips,axes and hammers,but I don't know which kind my master meant.I'd better go back and ask him."

As he turned to go,an exotic fragrance suddenly filled his nostrils.He followed the scent and found a stream rushing down a hillside of exquisite beauty.Creepers entwined cypress and pine trees and swaying bamboos covered the slopes.Foxes and hares ran about freely;deer and cranes wandered amongst the trees.Fairy mushrooms peeped out from behind green grass,and tree branches bowed low under the weight of juicy plums.

Although drunk with this lovely scene,he noticed two beautiful red apricots hanging on a leafy bough.The sight filled him with delight and regardless of danger,he struggled up the steep slope clinging to vines and creepers,to pick the fruit.He was tempted by the exotic fragrance.

"I'll eat one of them and take the other to my master,"he decided.

But he found the first so delicious that he couldn't resist eating the other as well.He devoured them both.

He was going to resume his search for a weapon when there was a sudden explosion.A long wing grew from under his left armpit and hung to the ground.

"Oh!Woe is me!What shall ]do now?"he cried in terror

He was trying to rip the wing off when another one spray out from under his right arm.At a total loss what to do,he sank to the ground. What terrified him most was not the wings but that his whole body had been transformed.His nose had grown high,his face had turned indigo, his hair had turned red,his eyes bad become swollen balls,his teeth had become tusks and his trunk had grown twenty feet tall.

As he sat stupefied,Golden Haze Lad came up and called to him, "Brother,Master orders you to return at once."

"Look at me,Brother!How can I go and see him like this?"Thunderbolt said despondently.

But Golden Haze Lad shouted,"You'd better come quickly!Master's waiting for you."

Thunderbolt walked back dejectedly,feeling ugly and awkward,his two long wings dragging on the ground like a defeated cock.Master of the Clouds was standing outside the cave.When he saw Thunderbolt,he clapped his hands, exclaiming,"How wonderful!How wonderful!"and then ordered,"Come with me."

Thunderbolt followed him into the peach garden.The Taoist took up a golden cudgel,handed it to him and taught him how to use it.He learned to whirl it until it whistled like the wind,to advance and retreat like a darting serpent,to turn like a savage tiger and to rise like a dragon from the sea.The whirling cudgel filled the air with bright light,and at its flying tip formed beautiful brocades and myriads of dancing flowers. As soon as Thunderbolt had thoroughly mastered the weapon,Master of the Clouds wrote"wind"on his left wing and "thunder"on hisright.And when he muttered a magic charm,Thunderbolt spread his wings and soared high intothe sky,the beating of his wings producing a roar like thunder

Dropping back down to the ground,Thunderbolt knelt before Master of the Clouds and thanked him,saying,"Master,I'm so grateful to you for passing on such miraculous skills to me and enabling me to rescue my father.You couldn't have shown me greater kindness."

"You'd better go to Lintong Pass now and rescue your father,"replied Master of the Clouds."Go quickly,and return without delay.You may escort your father through the five passes,but you're not permitted to go to West Qi with him.Neither may you hurt any general or soldier.After fulfilling this mission,you must return to Mount Zhongnan at once and continue to cultivate yourself with me.I'll let you meet your brothers in the near future."

Thunderbolt left the Jade Pillar Cave on wing and reached Lintong Pass in the twinkling of an eye.Alighting on a peak,he looked around carefully,but could not see any sign of his father.

"I was really careless not to have asked my master what my father looks like.How am Igoing to recognize him?"he wondered. Just then,a man in a black shirt and green felt hat galloped swiftly towards him on a white horse. "Is that the West Grand Duke at the foot of the hill?"he shouted.

Hearing a voice,Prince Wen reined in his horse and looked up,but could see no one.He sighed to himself."My life's nearly over!Why else would I hear a voice,yet see no one!It must be a ghost or a devil fooling with me."

Since Thunderbolt had a blue face and green body,he blended in with the colors of the mountain,so Prince Wen could not see him at a distance. Thunderbolt saw the man stop his horse,look around,and then continue on his way.

"Is that His Highness the West Grand Duke Ji Chang?"he shouted again.

Prince Wen lifted his head again,and when he caught sight of Thunderbolt's indigo face and red hair,he was scared out of his wits."If he were a ghost,he wouldn't be able to speak.Since I've no way to evade him,I may as well climb the mountain and find out who he is,"he reasoned,and urged his horse up the mountain. "Who's that hero?How do you know my name?"he asked in return. Hearing his words. Thunderbolt fell to the ground and kowtowed."For-

give me,father!I've arrived late and caused you great alarm."

"You're wrong,hero.I've never met you before.Why do you call me father?"

"I'm Thunderbolt,you adopted me on Mount Yan seven years ago."

"My son,how is it that you've grown up to look like this?It's been exactly seven years since Master of the Clouds took you into his care. How did you come here today?"

"By order of my master,I've come here to help you out of trouble, I escort you through the five passes and repel the soldiers for you."

"I fled the capital and have committed a crime against King Zhou,"Prince Wen thought."This chap looks pretty rough.If he kills anyone,my crime will become much more serious.I must convince him not to use violence."

"Thunderbolt,my dear boy!You must be careful not to hurt the generals or soldiers.I fled Zhaoge, expressing gross ingratitude towards His Majesty.Should you hurt any of them,you wouldn't be saving my life but would place me in a much worse situation."

"Don't worry,father!"Thunderbolt assured him."My master also instructed me not to burt any of King Zhou's men.My duty is to rescue you, take you through the five passes,and then go straight back to the mountain. I'll go now and persuade the troops to return to Zhaoge in peace."

Thunderbolt discovered that the pursuing troops were close upon them. Their flags fluttered bravely in the air,drums and gongs sounded noisily, and dust filled the sky,blocking out the sun.

With a flap of his wings,Thunderbolt soared into the sky,brandishing his cudgel.Prince Wen was so shocked that he tumbled to the ground. Thunderbolt circled up into the sky and landed right in front of the soldiers.He stood the golden cudgel on the palm of his hand and roared, "Don't you dare come any further!"

The soldiers were astonished to see him,and rushed back to Yin Pobai and Lei Kai crying,"There's an evil god blocking the path ahead.He looks a ferocious,brutal fellow."

Yin and Lei angrily ordered them away,and spurring their horses forward,advanced to engage Thunderbolt.

What became of them?If you want to know,you must read the next chapter.

Chapter 24

From Fisherman to Prime Minister

At Panxi Stream,WuJi found Jiang Zya still fishing under the willow tree.As his bamboo rod floated on the blue ripples,he amused himself by singing a song.Wu Ji walked up behind him.

"Venerable master."

Looking round, Jiang Ziya asked,"Aren't you the woodcutter I met here the other day?"

"Yes,sir.I am."

"Did you kill someone that day?""

Wu Ji fell on his knees,sobbing."I'm a vulgar man who lives in the mountains.I know only how to use an axe and understand nothing of profound mysteries.I failed to recognize you as a highly cultured recluse. I offended you with my foolish words.I beg you to pardon my ignorance."he apologized,and went on to relate all that had happened since he left Jiang. He concluded,"In the autumn,I must go back to be punished for Wang Xiang's death,and the lives of my mother and myself are still in danger.Today I've come to pay you my respects and beg you to take pity on us and save us.We'll never forget your kindness."

"This is all determined by fate,and fate is difficult to change.Since you caused the death of another person,you have to pay with your life. What can I do to save you?"Jiang Ziya replied.

WuJi fell to the ground weeping bitterly."Have compassion,sir!"he pleaded."If you save our lives,we will be eternally grateful." Jiang Ziya knew that Wu Jj had an outstanding future.He relented. "I'll save you from death only if you acknowledge me as your teacher."

Wu Ji immediately knelt down and kowtowed in acknowledgment.

"Now that you're my disciple,I'm obliged to help you.Return home at once and dig a pit before your bed four feet deep and long enough for you to lie in.Sleep in it tonight with lighted lamps at your head and feet. Your mother must scatter a few handfuls of cooked or uncooked rice of your body and cover you with hay.Tomorrow you may get up and go about your business as usual.You'll have no more trouble from then on."

When Wu Ji returmed home and told his mother what had happened, she was overjoyed,and immediately directed him to dig the pit and prepare lamps.Late that night, Jiang Ziya loosened his hair,took a sword and walked in a square reciting charms to cover up Wu Ji's star and make it disappear from Heaven.

Early the next morning,Wu Ji came to see him.He knelt down and kowtowed."Master,"he greeted Jiang Ziya.

"Since you're my disciple now,you must always obey my instructions. It's not a good idea to spend all your tine cutting wood.You may go to the market and sell firewood before noon and come here in the afternoon for lessons on military theories and state gems.Do you know that four hundred marquises have declared independence and rebelled against King Zhou?"

"Master,which four hundred marquises?"

"Jiang Wenhuan commands 400,000 men and is waging a fierce battle at Youhun Pass.E Shun's attacking Sanshan Pass with 300,000 men.A few days ago I observed the celestial phenomena and saw that West Qi will be affected by war soon.Military talents are needed.You'd better spend your time and effort learning weapon skills and military stratagems. If you offer outstanding service on the battlefield,you'll be made a minister in the government.An old proverb says,No one is born a general or prime minister,a man must make himself strong and able.'Another proverb says,'Sell your civil and military talents to the king.'As your teacher, I must help you to have a good future."

On his instructions,Wu Ji studied military techniques diligently day and night.One day,however,San Yisheng recollected the WuJi affair,

and wondered why he failed to come back to gaol.

"Though Wu Ji killed Wang Xiang,I set him free temporarily with your approval as he had an old mother unable to live alone at home,"he spoke to Prince Wen."I told him to return to gaol when he had made the necessary arrangements for her.However,he hasn't come back to receive the penalty deserved.He must be a sly and deceitful fellow.Perhaps Your Highness should make a divination to determine what's happened to him."

"Yes, yov're right,"Prince Wen answered.He picked up his gold coins and made a divination.He groaned as he shook his head."Wu Ji's neither sly nor deceitful.Out of fear of punishment, he committed suicide by throwing himself into a deep pool.According to the law,he ought not to be sentenced to death as he didn't kill Wang on purpose,but he's lost his life nonetheless.It's a great pity."

Sighing deeply, Prince and minister withdrew from the court.Time passed swiftly,and soon spring came again.Flowers blossomed on the willows,and peach and plum trees exploded with color.

"The scenery's lovely.Everything's bursting with new life.It's hard not to feel cheerful and vigorous.Let's take a trip to the southern outskirts and enjoy a few days of nature,"Prince Wen proposed to his ministers.

San Yi sheng came forward."Your Highness!You dreamed of a flying bear when you slept on the Spiritual Terrace.The dream signifies that West Qi will get a capable man,a pillar of the state,and you'll gain a talented assistant.We shouldn't only enjoy the spring scenery but should also try to find him somewhere in the wilderness.We ministers will accompany you, and General Nangong Kuo and General Xin Jia can act as guards.We can enjoy ourselves with the people just as the sage emperors Yao and Shun did." Delighted with the idea,Prince Wen announced that they would set off early the following day.The next morning,General Nangong Kuo took five hundred royal guards to the south of the city and closed off a bunting zone there.Prince Wen and his ministers followed on horseback admiring the scenery.Brilliant flowers and fragrant grass waved in the warm gentle breeze.In the forest,orioles and cuckoos welcomed the spring.Young cowherds with bamboo flutes piped mery tunes on the backs of oxen. Farmers were busy ploughing their fields,while young girls picked tea and mulberry leaves.Mandarin ducks played in pairs on the gentle blue cur- rent of a passing stream.The beauty of the spring scenery was indeed a captivating sight!

When Prince Wen reached the hill on which the hunting ground had been enclosed,he saw many guards with iron forks,hawks and hounds.In a very short time,deer,leopards and foxes fell before them as prey,staining the earth red with their blood and filling the air with their death cries.

Prince Wen was distressed by the scene of slaughter."Why did you establish a hunting zone on this hil?"he asked San Yi sheng.

"As Your Highness is taking a spring outing with us here,General Nangong Kuo closed off this area so that Your Highness could enjoy the pleasures of the hunt."

"You're wrong,Minister!"Prince Wen replied solemnly."In ancient times, Fu Xi was respected as a sage emperor because he never ate meat.Once when his Prime Minister Feng Hou entertained him with meat,he refused to eat it,saying,People eat the flesh of animals when hungry and drink their blood when thirsty,but I want them to live.I can't bear to have them killed.I would rather eat grain so that all creatures may live in peace.Isn't that as Heaven would wish?'Fu Xi lived in times less civilized than today.They didn't have the many different grains that we have now,but he still refused to eat meat.We're here to enjoy the spring scenery.How can we hunt down innocent animals?Besides,it's now the beginning of spring when everything's reproducing and growing,and to slaughter is most distressing to a benevolent man.The ancients didn't hunt animals in their periods of reproduction and growth,and neither should we.Make haste and tel lGeneral Nangong Kuo to open up the place at once."When the order had been carried out,Prince Wen proposed,"Let's drink and make merry on horseback."

They saw men and women,old and young,coming through the fields and meadows to enjoy the spring scenery,some drinking by the stream and others singing.Both the prince and his ministers were glad to see their people living in contentment as in the days of the sage emperor Yao. Just then,they spotted a group of fishermen singing:

Remember how King Tang felled the tyrant

Rose as he did in the town of Ge?

It's the people's will and Heaven's,

That he raised the banner and Restored peace to the land.

That was 600 years ago,and the glories Are things of the past.

Wine,women,and atrocities, The new tyrant wallows in evil.

Happy Terrace built in thick blood, Lust and pleasure trips all day,

While his citizens suffer bitterly. A hermit among the blue waters I wash my ears clean of

Anything to do with power and wealth. Singing on the surging waves,

I spend my days fishing,

And nights observing celestial phenomena. Alone,I remain aloof from the world,

All my life I'll be carefree

Until my hair tuns white

"That song's written so well that it must be the work of some sage recluse who lives here,"Prince Wen commented,and ordered Xin Jia, "Go and ask the ideal man that wrote that song to come and see me."

The general whipped his horse forward."Will the ideal man please come and see His Highness?"

Misunderstanding him,all the fishermen knelt down and replied,"All of us are idle men."

"How can you all be ideal men?"Xin Jia demanded.

"Because we fish early in the morning and have nothing to do the rest of the day. We're all idle."

Just then Prince Wen came up on his horse.

"Your Highness,they're all ordinary fishermen.There's no ideal man here,"Xin Jia told him.

"The song's so excellent that there must be a talented man among you,"the prince insisted.

"We didn't write the song,Your Highness. Thirty-five li from here is Panxi Stream.This song was composed by an old man who lives there.As we have often heard him sing it,we all became familiar with it as well."

"You may go then.I'm sorry to have troubled you,"Prince Wen said with disappointment.

After they had gone,Prince Wen kept thinking about the song,particularly the line "I wash my ears clean of anything to do with power and wealth."

"What does that line mean?Is there any story to it?"San Yi sheng asked.

"It refers to the story of how the sage emperor Yao sought out Shun as his successor.Yao was a virtuous ruler,but he had a worthless son.Not to disappoint his people,Yao often made secret trips in an attempt to find a good and talented man to succeed him.One day Yao was walkingthrough some remote mountains when he saw a man twirling a gourd ladle in a stream.He was intrigued and asked,\*Why do you twirl your gourd ladle about in the water?'

"The man smiled and answered, I've freed myself from worldly burdens.I've forsaken fame,riches,and family. I wish only to live here in the forests,eating salted vegetables and drinking from the springs.I'll be content to pass my life this way.

"Yao was delighted with the reply and thought," This man dislikes the riches and glories of the world,and distances himself from worldly disputes.He's a man of outstanding caliber,and just the man I should choose as my successor.'He said,'I'm none other than Emperor Yao. As I can see that you're so virtuous,I would like to abdicate in your favor.Would you accept the throne?'

"Hearing his words,the man immediately stood up,threw his gourd ladle on the ground and stamped on it,smashing it to pieces.Then he covered his ears with his hands and rushed to the stream where he began to wash his ears vigorously.

"As he washed,another man came up,leading an ox to the stream. 'Sir,I must water my ox,'the man called,but he just went on washing his ears.Perplexed,the man demanded,'How much dirt is in your ears that it takes you this long?"

"It was a long while before he finished washing and finally replied, 'Emperor Yao asked me to succeed him to the throne and polluted my ears dreadfully.I had to wash them in the stream.I'm sorry I delayed you watering your ox.'

"The man immediately led his ox upstream.'Why do you take it up there?"the ear-washer asked.

"The man replied,'By washing your ears,you've polluted the water.I don't want to pollute the mouth of my ox!?

"This story of the lofty and pure is the origin of that line,"Prince Wen concluded the story.

The party continued on its way enjoying the spring scenery.Soon they saw a group of woodcutters coming towards them singing:

There're certainly phoenixes and unicorns, But no ruler's virtuous enough to see them. When the dragon rises clouds appear

And with the tiger comes the wind,

But no one cares to seek out the talented.

Remember Yi Yin that toiled in the fields,

He thought of Yao and Shun beside the plough. Without the three visits from King Tang,

He would have remained a recluse like hermit Zuo. Look at Fu Yue the mason,unknown and poor,

Content to brave hardship in his cape of straw.

Had King Gaozong not dreamed of him that year, He would have worked on stone all his life.

Ever since the ancient times, Some have attained glory

While others remained in obscurity. I'm not the only one

Who might spend his life on The banks of a stream.

I play my flute in the sunshine,

And urge on the ox under white clouds, While kings.dukes,and the powerful, All fall as fate decrees. Unconcerned, I smile on the heavens While awaiting an enlightened ruler.

Prince Wen found the song to be extremely well written,and once more thought there must be a talented man among the crowd.He ordered General Xin Jia to go and find him out. Xin Jia rode over."Is there a talented man among you?If so,please come forward and see my master."

The woodcutters laid their loads on the ground."Sorry,there's no

talented man amongst us,General,"they replied.

"They say 'there's no such man among them,Your Highness,"Xin Jia told Prince Wen.

"How can that be?"Prince Wen asked them."The song's excellent."

"We didn't write the song,Your Highness,"one of the woodcutters replied."About ten li from here at Panxi Stream there's an old man who fishes all day.When we return from woodcutting and rest there,we always hear him sing this song.We didn't realize Your Highness was coming.Please forgive us."

"If that's the case,you may all go,"Prince Wen directed.

Riding along,he couldn't let the matter drop from his mind.Then a woodcutter appeared,carrying two loads of firewood on a shoulder-pole. He was singing happily:

Spring waters flow endlessly, Spring flowers are gay.

Meeting no opportunity, A hermit I'll stay

No one knows my ideals,

They see a mere fisherman Casting his line all day.

Hearing the song,Prince Wen sighed."This at last must be the worthy man I'm seeking."

But San Yisheng looked at the woodcutter and exclaimed,"Your Highness,he looks just like Wu Ji,the man who killed Wang Xiang!"

"You must be wrong,Minister.My divination showed clearly that Wu Ji committed suicide.How can he still be alive?"Prince Wen objected.

San Yisheng looked at the woodcutter closely and was convinced that it was Wu Ji.He ordered that Wu Ji be arrested at once.Having come so unexpectedly upon the prince,Wu Ji had no time to dodge aside and hide himself.He could only put down bis load and kneel before the general.As soon as Xin Mian ascertained his identity,he seized him and brought him before Prince Wen.The prince went scarlet with anger.

"You damned rascal!How dare you practice such deception on me!" he shouted,then said to San Yisheng,"Supreme Minister!Such a dishonest citizen must be sent to court for trial.He's a murderer and has cheated the government.He must be seriously dealt with.He's held my divination in contempt!He must be severely punished as a warning to others."

Wu Ji kowtowed on the ground,weeping."I'vealways strictly obeyed the law and have never dared to break it.I killed Wang Xiang accidentally. When I was set free,I went toPanxi Stream about three li from here and sought help from an old man called Jiang Shang or Jiang Ziya. His alternative name is Flying Bear. He took me as his disciple,then told me to go home and carry out the instructions he gave me.This freed me from any trouble and allowed me to live and work as usual. Your Highness!Even ants and worms struggle to live as long as they can,and men certainly cherish their lives even more.I beg you to forgive me."

San Yisheng immediately turned to Prince Wen."I should congratulate you,Your Highness!The Flying Bear that Wu Ji just mentioned is the very same that you dreamed of on the Spiritual Terrace.King Gaozong was blessed with Fu Yue as his prime minister after dreaming of a flying bear.Now you've had a similar dream.I suggest that you forgive Wu Ji and let him lead the way to your new minister."

Prince Wen approved San Yisheng's proposal and set Wu Ji free.Wu Ji kowtowed in gratitude then hurried to the forest in search of Jiang Ziya. When they arrived at the forest,Prince Wen and his party dismounted so as not to startle the worthy recluse whom they were seeking. Accompanied by San Yisheng, Prince Wen continued on into the forest on foot.

Wu Ji grew flustered when he couldn't find his master anywhere.

"Is your master here?"San Yisheng asked.

"He was here just a moment ago,but I can't find him now.""Where does he live?"Prince Wen asked

"In a cottage not far from here."

Wu Ji led them to the cottage,and Prince Wen knocked gently on the

door.A young boy came out to meet them.

"Is your teacher at home,"Prince Wen asked with a smile.

"No,he's not.He went out to stroll in the forest with a friend." "Do you know when he'll be back?"

"He never returns at a definite time.Sometimes he returns in a few

minutes,but sometimes he doesn't come back for days.He never has a fixed destination.He tours the lakes and streams or wanders in the deep mountains,or discusses the Way with his teachers and friends.It's impossible to know when he'll be back."

"Your Highness,"said San Yisheng,"to engage a worthy man,one must be single-minded and sincere.Today we're on a pleasure trip and came here only by chance,so naturally we've failed to meet him.As we know from history,when Emperor Shen Nong called on Chang Sang, when Emperor Xuan Yuan called on Lao Peng, when Emperor Huang Di called on Feng Hou and when King Tang called on Yi Yin,they were all sincere and earnest. They abstained from meat,washed themselves thoroughly and chose an auspicious date for the visit.These are the rites that should be observed in order to show due respect to the talented.

When they got back to the stream,he composed a poem:

To rule, I need a long-term plan,

And the assistance of a talented man. Today I've failed to see the sage,

But when to meet him and end the misery?

When he saw Jiang Ziya's fishing rod still floating on the water,Prince

Wen felt even more upset.He chanted:

I expected the sage,

But I see only his rod.

The green thread floats

Beneath the verdant willow.

And the stream sparkles,

While its waters flow in vain.

Prince Wen lingered on,unwilling to leave,but San Yisheng finally persuaded him to return to the capital.Arriving at the palace at dusk, Prince Wen ordered that his ministers stay in the palace for three days to purify themselves,in preparation for the second visit.

General Nangong Kuo, however,voiced his disapproval."The old fisher man may have a false reputation.How can we treat bim with honor and glory without ascertaining the truth?If he's not as talented as we've been led to believe,Your Highness will be made a fool.As I see it,there's no need to take such pains.I'll go there tomorrow and ask him to come here to see you.If he's as talented as they say,it still won't be too late then to treat him with honor.Otherwise you may dismiss him.There's no need for you to fast and bathe."

"General!This matter cannot be dealt with like that.The state's in turmoil,and the people cannot live in peace.Many highly talented men have secluded themselves in the mountains. Our master's dream about the flying bear shows clearly that Heaven will bestow upon us a highly talented man to help us in our cause.We must follow the example of the ancient sage emperors and secure his service with exceptional sincerity. At a time like this,no talented man will voluntarily offer his service. General,you mustn't say such things and slacken our efforts,"San Yisheng refuted him.

Prince Wen was very pleased with San Yisheng's rebuttal and said, "You're quite right.I'm of exactly the same mind."

All the ministers remained in the palace for three days,cleansing their hearts and bodies.On the fourth day,they bathed,dressed in official robes and accompanied Prince Wen in his phoenix carriage at the head of a long caravan.

Wu Ji,now General of Military Virtue,led the whole procession down the streets lined with flute players.The whole city surged out to watch them.

They traveled thirty-five li to the forest.Prince Wen ordered his soldiers to halt and wait quietly outside the forest so as not to startle the sage. He himself dismounted and went on foot with San Yisheng.To his great delight,they came upon Jiang Ziya sitting beside the stream.Prince Wen walked up quietly and stood behind him. As he approached, Jiang Ziya deliberately began to sing:

The west wind blows and white clouds fly,

Where shall I be when the year comes to an end? Five phoenixes sing as my true master appears, Few realize my talent as I sit here fishing.

When his song was over,Prince Wen asked softly,"Are you happy, my worthy man?"

Looking back and seeing the prince, Jiang Ziya instantly threw his fishing rod aside and knelt down."Please forgive me.I didn't know Your Highness was approaching and failed to welcome you."

Prince Wen hastily helped him up and bowed."T've admired you for a longtime,but not having shown you sufficient respect,failed to meet you on my first visit.Now I've fasted in order to express my sincerity,and I'm happy that I have the honor to meet you today,"he replied.

"I am old and lack talent.I can neither administer the country so that the people may live in peace nor subjugate the frontier tribes with the little knowledge I possess of civil or military affairs.I'm ashamed that you should have wasted your time in coming here."

"You mustn't be so modest,"said San Yisheng."To show our sincerity we've fasted and bathed in the hope that you'll accept an appointment by His Highness.At present the nation's disturbed and divided,and there's no one to bring an end to the chaos. King Zhou distances good ministers and maintains a close relationship with the minions.He wallows in wine and women and treats his subjects brutally. As a result,the marquises have rebelled and the people are unable to live in peace.My master worries about it all the time,unable to eat or sleep properly.He's long admired your virtue and comes with gifts today in the hope that you'll help him rule the nation.If you accept,Prince Wen and the people will be over- joyed.Why not use your talents to lift the people from their suffering? The future generations will be forever grateful."

San Yisheng laid out the gifts they had brought,and Jiang Ziya accepted them.He expressed his thanks,and told his boy servant to take them to the inner room.San Yisheng drove Prince Wen's carriage to the cottage and invited Jiang Ziya to board it.

Jiang knelt down."Your Highness,I'm deeply grateful for the great favor you've shown me.How could I dare to exceed the bounds of what's proper fora man of my status and ride in the prince's carriage?I would never dare do such a thing!"

"I arranged the carriage especially for you.You must ride in it so as not to thwart my good intentions," Prince Wen urged him.

But Jiang Ziya still refused to board the coach.

"Since the worthy man won't take your carriage,you may let him ride your horse while you yourself take the coach,"San Yisheng suggested.

"That would belie the sincerity I've shown in the last several days," Prince Wen disapproved of the idea.

After more urging and more polite refusals,Prince Wen finally yielded. He took the carriage while Jiang Ziya rode on his horse.Guarded by infantry and cavalry men, Jiang Ziya was warmly greeted all along the way to the palace.

Fortune smiled on Jiang Ziya at the age of eighty.Reaching the palace, King Wen immediately held court.After the exchange of usual courtesies, he appointed Jiang Ziya prime minister of the West Grand Dukedom. Jiang Ziya expressed his thanks and then attended a banquet in his honor. All the ministers offered their congratulations.

Jiang Ziya ruled with discipline,law,and virtue,and the dukedom prospered.Work was begun on a new Prime Minister's mansion in the capital.

News of the developments in West Qi soon reached the five passes, and Commander Han Rong of Si shui Pass immediately sent a messenger to Zhaoge.

If you want to know what became of Jiang Ziya,you must read the next chapter.

Chapter 56

Deng Jiugong Is Won Over

San Yisheng left the city for the Shang army camp."Would you please tell Commander Deng that Supreme Minister San Yisheng requests to see him?"he told the guard at the camp gate. Deng Jiugong was surprised at the report."We're enemies.Why should Jiang Ziya send someone to see me?This must be a plot to demoralize my army.Tell him I'm not in a position to meet him,as we're still at war with one another."

When this message was relayed, SanYisheng protested."According to custom,when two parties are at war,their representatives may still meet.What's wrong with my seeing him?By order of Prime Minister Jiang,I must see him about an important matter.Would you ask him again?"

When the guard repeated San Yisheng's words,Deng Jiugong thought the matter over silently,but Tai Luan approached him and said,"Why not let him come in,Commander.Listen to what he has to say and then decide what action we should take.What can be wrong with that?"

"You're quite right.Admit him into the camp."

San Yisheng was conducted in and cordially met by Deng Jiugong under the eaves.They greeted each other politely and sat down. "Minister!We're engaged in an unfinished war.It would be inconvenient for us to talk privately,so please speak here.Your tongue may be a sword and your lips a lance,but my heart is as hard as stone.I cannot be deceived by any sweet talk."

San Yisheng smiled."I would have never dared to see you under the present conditions.but this matter is very important.We took one of your generals yesterday.and as the result of our inquiries found surprisingly that he's your son-in-law.As a merciful man,Prime Minister Jiang hasn't the heart to disregard your daughter's love for him.He sent me here to inform you and wait for your decision."

Deng Jiugong was shocked."Who's this son-in-law of mine?"

"Don't pretend that you don't know.Commander.Your worthy son- in-law is Earth Traveler Sun."

Deng Jiugong flushed red."Listen,my dear minister!I've got only one daughter.She lost her mother during childhood.To me she's a pearl in the palm of my hand. How could I carelessly promise her to anyone?Though many young men have asked for her hand.I don't regard any of them as good enough for her.How can that fellow dare to speak such nonsense?"

"Please stay calm,Commander,and listen to what I have to say. When our ancestors choose a son-in-law,they don't always insist that bride and groom be of equal family status.Earth Traveler Sun is by no means a nobody.He's a prominent disciple of Krakucchanda. Shen Gongbao deceived Earth Traveler Sunin order to harm Jiang Ziya.That's what Sun told us yesterday before his master.First he was deceived by Shen Gongbao,then he was bewitched by your promise to marry your daughter to him.In order to do his best,he entered the city in an attempt to assassinate King Wu and JiangZiya .According to the law,he should be executed,but he begged for mercy,saying that he couldn't die in peace if he failed to marry Deng Chanyu.His plea was rejected,yet I was in full sympathy with him.I'm unwilling to see their pure love destroyed just because of an error on the part of Earth Traveler Sun.I persuaded Prime Minister Jiang to reconsider the matter,and I suggest that you also help your daughter and Earth Traveler Sun to happiness. Jiang Ziya would like to set Sun free and send him back to you before any further battle is waged."

"He was simply talking rubbish.I only took him on as a general.How could I promise my daughter to him in marriage!He has merely used this as a pretext to save bis life and insult my daughter at the same time.How can you believe him?"

"There must be some reason why he should say such a thing.He can't possibly have fabricated the whole story.I think that when you were drunk,you said things to encourage him.He believed that you spoke honestly and became infatuated with the idea of marrying your daughter."

"You're right,Minister.You have keen insight into things.When he first came,I merely appointed him to supervise the food supplies.After General Tai Luan was defeated,I appointed Sun general of the van- guard.He took Nezha in the first battle,Huang Tianhua in the second, and bound up Jiang Ziya in the third.I held a dinner party for him,and as we drank,he said,Commander,had you appointed me general of the vanguard earlier,West Qi would have been subdued long ago!"J was already drunk by that time and carelessly promised him,'If you subdue West Qi,I'll let you marry Deng Chanyu.'I only said it to encourage him to win an early victory for the king.Now that he's captured,the promise is naturally rendered invalid.It's outrageous that he should trouble you to come here to see me."

"You're mistaken,Commander.Once a promise is given,it's very difficult to withdraw.As matrimony is so important ethically,how can you regard it as a child's game?You made the promise,and he believed you.Since he's told everybody about it,all the people in the country think that you've picked an outstanding young man.No one will understand that you were playing a trick to fool him for the welfare of the state.As a commander and minister of the Shang Dynasty,how can you expose yourself to public ridicule?You must consider this carefully,"SanYisheng said with a smile.

Deng Jiugong fell silent,unable to find an answer.General Tai Luan moved forward."I have an idea.We can deal with the matter like this..." he whispered in his commander's ear.

Deng's anger turned to delight.He said to San Yisheng,"You're right,Minister. I'lI do just as you say.But my daughter lost her mother as a child and isn't well-educated.I don't know if she'll obey me.I'll have to discuss it with her before I can give you a final answer." San Yisheng bade him farewell,and Deng Jiugong saw him off to the camp gate.Back in the city,SanYisheng reported the matter to Jiang Ziya, who burst into laughter."How can he deceive me with such a poor plot!"

Krakucchanda also laughed heartily."Let's wait and see what they say to us."

"I'm sorry to trouble you,Minister,"Jiang said to San Yisheng."But we'll discuss this matter again as soon as Deng Jiugong sends word."

"Though I've given a skilful answer to San Yisheng,what shall we do next,General Tai Luan?"Deng asked.

"Commander!Send a capable person to West Qi tomorrow to tell Jiang Ziya,'Our commander has discussed the question of marriage with his daughter,and she has agreed to keep her father's promise.How- ever,as we're at war,she trusts no one other than Prime Minister Jiang. She requests his presence at the Shang camp to announce the engage- ment between herself and Earth Traveler Sun.'If Jiang comes here without protection,we can get him easily with just a single ordinary soldier If he comes with his generals,entertain him,and then signal for our men to rush out.West Qi can be easily conquered without Jiang Ziya."

Deng Jiugong was delighted."That's an excellent plan.Your wit is on a par with that of ghosts and celestials.We need an eloquent man who can rise to every occasion.Would you go there tomorrow to ensure the success of our plan,General?"

"If you think I'm not lacking in ability,I would be pleased to deliver the message."

General Tai Luan went to West Qi City the next day.He approached the city gate and said to the guards,"I'm General Tai Luan of the van- guard.By order of my commander,I've come to see Prime Minister Jiang.Please report this to your leader."

On learning of his arrival,JiangZiya said to Krakucchanda,"Our plan is working perfectly."

The immortal felt pleased by the prospect of their success as well.

The city gate was opened immediately,and the visitor was admitted and warmly welcomed by the prime minister and the immortal on the stone steps of the prime minister's reception hall.

General Tai Luan bowed."Prime Minister!I'm only a soldier,yet you show me such respect!I should kowtow before you."

"As the representative of your army,you're our distinguished guest. Please don't stand on ceremony,General."Jiang Ziya replied.

When they were all seated,Jiang Ziya began,"When Krakucchanda ordered his disciple be put to death,Sun begged to have his death penalty postponed on the grounds that Commander Deng had promised to take him as his son-in-law.We therefore asked San Yisheng to see your commander to arrange the marriage.We'll release Sun so that the two may be married.Your commander generously promised us a definite reply,so we're very happy to have your honorable presence here today."

General Tai Luan bowed politely."Commander Deng asked me to tell you that he was drunk when he made that promise to Earth Traveler Sun. He never imagined Sun would tell you that secret after his capture,making things very difficult for him.As his daughter lost her mother in child- hood,he adores her like a precious pearl.He demands that a solemn ceremony with full rites be held on an auspicious date.He's chosen the day after tomorrow.He would feel greatly honored if Sun were escorted to the wedding by both you and San Yisheng.He would also be pleased to discuss state affairs with you after the ceremony.Would you agree to this proposal,Prime Minister?"

"I know that his offer is sincere.We're loyal to His Majesty,yet we've been unjustly attacked several times by the royal forces without being given the chance to explain.Through this wedding,our loyalty and patriotism may finally be made known to King Zhou.I'll personally ac- company Sun to your camp.Would you kindly report all this to your commander,General,"Jiang Ziya replied.

After being entertained,General Tai Luan left the city and returned to the Shang camp.

"How did everything go?"Deng Jiugong asked anxiously upon his return.

When Tai Luan told him that Jiang Ziya had agreed to accompany Sun to his camp.Deng Jiugong touched his forehead with his hand and said happily."By the good fortune of the king. Jiang Ziya will bring about his own end the day after tomorrow."

"Though success is imminent,we should sill be on guard against any mishap,"General Tai Luan warned.

Deng Jiugong ordered."Select 300 strong warriors,arm them with daggers and cutlasses,and hide them outside the tent.When I break a cup,they must all rush in and slice Jiang Ziya and his generals to mince- meat."

In addition,Deng Jiugong ordered General Zhao Sheng to wait in the left camp with General Sun Yanhong in the right camp,ready to charge upon hearing cannon fire from the headquarters.He ordered General Tai Luan and his son,Deng Xiu,to meet Jiang Ziya and his generals at the camp gate,and Deng Chanyu to help the ambush.With all preparations made,Deng Jiugong waited patiently for the day to come.

After seeing off General Tai Luan,Jiang Ziya said to Krakucchanda, "We can win if we handle the situation like this...."

Time passed swiftly,and the day of the wedding was already upon them.Jiang Ziya ordered Yang Jian to accompany him secretly,using his power of transformation.He chose fifty strong soldiers to carry the wed- ding presents and ordered Xin Jia,XinMian,Tai Dian,and Hong Yao to act as his attendants,all carrying concealed weapons.He also ordered Thunderbolt to attack the enemy from the left and Nangong Kuo from the right.Jinzha,Muzha and Dragon Beard Tiger were to lead the reinforcements and help seize the bride.The Zhou troops secretly lefi the city and took up their positions. In the Shang camp,Deng Jiugong told his daughter,"Your marriage to Earth Traveler Sun is only a plot to seize Jiang Ziya.I've already ordered that all our generals take necessary measures.Arm yourself and be ready."

Deng Chanyu did as she was told.DengJiugong then ordered his men to lay carpets and decorate the camp for the arrival of Jiang Ziya.

In West Qi City, JiangZiya called Earth Traveler Sun over."Ill take you with me to the Shang camp.As soon as you hear the roar of cannons,enter the back camp and carry Miss Deng away with you.Stay on the alert."

Jiang Ziya waited until noon and then ordered San Yisheng to set out first.The supreme minister immediately left the city and marched directly toward the Shang camp.He was met by General Tai Luan,and at the news of his arrival,Deng Jiugong also came out to welcome him.

"We're pleased that you've agreed to the marriage.Prime Minister Jiang will be here soon with your son-in-law and the wedding presents. I’ve been sent to inform you of the arrangements."San Yisheng said.

"I must thank you for your unstinting service.If it's all right with you, let's wait here forthe prime minister,"Deng Jiugong suggested.

"How dare we trouble you,Commander?"

"Oh!It's our pleasure,Minister."

They waited for a long time before Deng Jiugong saw the prime minister on his nondescript horse approaching in the distance with a train of fifty unarmed carriers.He was secretly delighted.

When he saw Deng Jiugong and San Yisheng waiting for him, Jiang Ziya hurriedly dismounted.Deng walked forward to meet him."Please pardon me for not meeting you further away."

"I've long esteemed your great virtue.I'm most fortunate that Heaven has destined that we meet today,"Jiang Ziya reciprocated,re- turning the bow.

As Krakucchanda moved forward,Deng Jiugong asked,"Who's that gentleman?"

"This is Krakucchanda,Earth Traveler Sun's master,"Jiang Ziya answered.

Deng Jiugong bowed."I'm very pleased to meet you.Ive admired you for a long time."

When the courtesies had been completed,they entered the camp gate and took their seats. Jiang Ziya saw that tables had been laid for a feast, and the camp was well decorated with silks and flowers.Nevertheless. he could clearly sense an aura of death filling the air.He signaled to Earth Traveler Sun and his generals with his eyes,and they all entered the tent to greet Deng Jiugong.

"Carry the presents in."Jiang Ziya ordered.

Deng Jiugong received the list of presents and was reading it over when XinJia quietly lit the fuse of a large cannon hidden within a box.At the earth-shaking explosion,Deng Jiugong looked up as Jiang's carriers surged toward the tent,drawing their hidden weapons as they ran.It was already too late to repel them.Deng Jiugong fled with Tai Luan and Deng Xiu close behind him.The Zhou soldiers Iying in ambush on all sides, charged at the camp,their shouts reverberating through the air.

Earth Traveler Sun fought his way to the back camp while Jiang Ziya and his men mounted their horses and plunged into battle.How could Deng's 300 warriors stand against them?By the time Deng Jiugong had mounted his horse and returned,the camp was already in chaos.Hearing the cannon fire,General ZhaoSheng tried to fight his way over from the left camp and General Sun Yanhong attempted to breakthrough from the right.But they were intercepted by Xin Jia and Xin Mian.Deng Chanyu could not help her father,as she was battling with Earth Traveler Sun. The two sides remained locked in a bitter struggle.

Thunderbolt and Nangong Kuo unexpectedly joined the attack from the left and right,encircling the whole Shang army.When Jinzha and Muzha also joined in,Deng Jiugong realized that his position was hope- less and began to retreat.Deng Chanyu saw her father and his generals flee,and she also took flight to the south. Earh Traveler knew well that she was skilled in throwing stones.He cast a Celestial Binding Rope and bound her up tightly.She fell from her horse and was taken at once.

The Zhou troops chased Deng Jiugong for over fifty li before liang Ziya ordered that they retire to West Qi City.Deng Jiugong halted at the foot of Mount Qi to gather the remnants of his army and only then found that though Tai Luan,Deng Xiu and Zhao Sheng were still with him,his dear daughter Chanyu was missing.He was filled with deep remorse.He had plotted to catch Jiang Ziya but instead fallen straight into Jiang's trap.

Back in West Qi City, Jiang Ziya took his seat in the Silver Security Hall.His generals reported one by one their deeds of the day.When the report was over,Jiang said to Krakucchanda,"As it's an auspicious date today,we should marry those two,don't you think?"

"I'm of the same opinion.The matter cannot be delayed."

Jiang Ziya ordered Earth Traveler Sun."Go with Miss Deng Chanyu to the back chamber.Today you'll become husband and wife.I'll speak with you further tomorrow."

Jiang Ziya told a maidservant to lead Deng Chanyu to the back chamber and attend to all her needs.

Deng Chanyu was overcome with shyness and shed silent tears on her way to the back chamber.Jiang Ziya and his generals meanwhile celebrated the marriage with a wedding feast.

When Miss Deng Chanyu was assisted into the bridal chamber,Earth Traveler Sun went up to meet her.At his pleased smile,she only wept in silence.When Sun tried to comfort her.she swore at him furiously."You damned fool!You betrayed your master for the sake of personal glory. What kind of man are you!"

Earth Traveler Sun,however,answered gently with a smile,"Though you're worth 1,000 taels of gold,I'm no ordinary man either.It's no degradation for you to marry me.Besides,if you'll remember,I healed your wound.Your father did promise that our wedding was to take place as soon as King Wu had been assassinated and the army returned in victory.That is widely known to all In order to arrange the marriage,San Yisheng called on your father,and he promised to let us wed today.Afraid that your father might change his mind,Prime Minister Jiang was well- prepared to help us marry as destined by fate.Don't be so obstinate about it,Sister."

"My father's promise was only a trick to deceive the prime minister. Now that the plan has failed,I'm ready to meet my death."

"You're wrong,Sister.How could your father regard our marriage as a joke?You may make a joke of anything,but not the marriage of a man and woman.I'm a member of Chan Taoism,but I was unfortu- nately deceived by Shen Gongbao.When I was seized by my master,he rebuked me for my attempt to assassinate King Wu and Prime Minister Jiang.They intended to cut my head off,but I told them that your father had promised me your hand,and it was only because of this that I had secretly entered West Qi City as an assassin.My master then made a divination and told the prime minister,This fellow's destined by fate to marry Deng Chanyu.They'll both be ministers of the Zhou court in the future.'So they forgave me and sent San Yisheng to see your father to arrange the marriage.Sister,if it weren't destined by Heaven,how could your father have made the promise,and how could you have been brought here now?In addition.King Zhou is so cruel that everyone is forsaking him for King Wu.In successive expeditions against West Qi,the Mo brothers.Grand Tutor Wen and the immortals from thirteen places have all met death.The will of Heaven is clear,and the right path is obvious. The struggle of your father and his handful of soldiers will be totally in vain.He should follow the ancient proverb that says 'a virtuous minister should choose a good master to serve,just as a bird carefully chooses the tree in which it will roost.'You may be obstinate,but the whole army knows you're already my wife.Please think it over,Sister."

Deng Chanyu lowered her head in silence.Seeing her attitude soften, Earth Traveler Sun moved closer and urged,"Think about it,Sister!You're like an exotic,Heavenly flower of dazzling beauty,while I'm from the Dragon Squeezing Mountain.We were widely separated before but how lucky I am today to get close to you."

He tried to touch her and pull her clothes,but she blushed scarlet and pushed him away."That may be so,but you can't be so rough.I'll ask my father tomorrow.It won't be too late to consummate the marriage then."

Already highly aroused,Earth Traveler Sun stepped forward.He tried to take her in his arms,but she resisted with all her might.

"It's a lucky hour and lucky day.Don't let it pass in vain,"Sun begged.

He tried to loosen her clothes.Deng Chanyu continued to resist,but she had not the strength to fight him off.Before long,she was panting and perspiring,and her aching arms went limp.Sun seized the chance to tuck his right hand under her shirn and break its tie.He grabbed her shirt and held her tightly to him with the other hand so that he could kiss her. Deng Chanyu turned her face left and right to evade him and exclaimed in tears,"If you use force,I'll resist you to the death!"

They struggled for a long time,and Deng Chanyu sill refused to yield. Sun said deceptively."As you're unwilling,I won't force you.I'm just afraid that you'll change your mind after meeting your father tomorrow."

"Since my body already belongs to you,dear General,how could I change my mind?Just have pity on me.Let me see my father first,and then I will perform my duty as your wife.If I break my word,I'll certainly meet a violent death,"Deng Chanyu hastily assured him. "If that be so,then please get up,dear."Sun said,helping her up gently.

Deng Chanyu thought he was sincere.She got up and pushed his hands away.To her surprise,Sun suddenly grabbed her round the waist and lifted her up so that her arms hung over his shoulders.She was unable to struggle.

"You're so tricky,General.How can you treat your bride like this!" "If I didn't,you would never stop resisting me,dear wife."

Deng Chanyu closed her eyes and blushed.She did not utter another word but allowed Sun to remove her clothes without further resistance Lying under the quilt,she said,"General,I'm a virgin and understand nothing of making love.Please take good care of me."

"I've long admired your beauty. How could I dare treat you roughly," Sun reassured her earnestly.

At daybreak,they washed and dressed.Sun said,"Let's go to the front hall and thank Prime Minister Jiang and my master for making us husband and wife.What do you think,my dear?"

"We must certainly thank them,but I wonder where my father is now.How can father and daughter serve different masters?Please consult Prime Minister Jiang about this problem,"Deng Chanyu replied.

"I'll talk to him about it."

When they saw Jiang Ziya that morning,the prime minister said, "Though you're now a Zhou general,Deng Chanyu, your father remains our enemy.As you're his daughter,I can't very well send troops.What should we do?"

"Deng Chanyu has just discussed this problem with me.We beg you to show compassion,Uncle,and find a solution satisfactory to both sides,"" Earth Traveler Sun pleaded."This isn't such a difficult matter.She may go to see her father and urge him to come over.But I don't know whether Chanyu is willing to go or not,"Jiang Ziya said.

Deng Chanyu walked up,knelt down,and said,"Since I belong to Zhou now,how can I waver in my loyalty?If you trust me,I'll be glad to persuade my father to surrender."

"I have no doubt about your loyalty,but I'm afraid your father may not be willing to join us.That would make matters worse.Take an army with you."

Deng Chanyu thanked him then left the city with an army and marched rapidly to Mount Qi.

Deng Jiugong had gathered his defeated soldiers together and was holding a military conference with Deng Xiu,TaiLuan,Zhao Sheng,and Sun Yanhong.

"I've never suffered such a terrible feat.I've lost my darling daughter and don't even know whether she's dead or alive.Now we're like a goat caught in a fence,unable either to advance or retreat.What shall we do?"Deng Jiu gong asked his generals sadly.

"You may report the matter to His Majesty and request reinforcements.We must also find out the whereabouts of your daughter,"General Tai Luan suggested.

As they were discussing what course to take,a guard came in to report,"General Deng Chanyu is at the camp gate awaiting your orders. She's here with an army flying the Zhou flags."

When she was admitted,Chanyu knelt before Deng Jiugong. Her father hastily helped her up and asked,"My child,what do you have to say?"

"I dare not tell you,Father,"Deng Chanyu answered in tears. "What's wrong?Just tell me in detail,daughter."

"You thoughtlessly promised me to Earth Traveler Sun.You then induced Jiang Ziya to come to our camp so that he took me away by force and compelled me to marry Earth Traveler Sun.It's already too late for regrets,"Deng Chanyu said worriedly.

Deng Jiugong felt deep sorrow and remained silent for a long time.

"As Sun's wife,I've come to see you,Papa,only to help you avoid calamity.Don't you see,Father,King Zhou is so cruel that two-thirds of the kingdom has already turned to West Qi. The will of Heaven is clear. Even the Mo brothers,Grand Tutor Wen,and the immortals couldn't escape destruction.I'm not your filial child any more.I've come here as a minister of Zhou to tell you the truth about what's right and wrong. what's just and unjust.Who will ever believe that it was only a ruse to promise me to your enemy and induce Jiang Ziya to enter the Shang camp?Do you think the tyrant will spare your life after you've humiliated the country in this way?I've lawfully married a man on your own orders;I didn't elope with my lover against your will.If you abandon that wicked tyrant and serve a proper and just master,not only will our family be safe but the people of the nation will also rejoice."

As he listened to her arguments,Deng Jiugong became convinced that she was absolutely right.His outnumbered army could not launch another offensive,but if he returned to Zhaoge,he would certainly be suspected of treachery.He pondered for a long time and then said to Deng Chanyu,"My child,I won't give you up.Nevertheless,I would be ashamed to enter West Qi and kneel before Jiang Ziya."

"That's no problem,Father.Prime Minister Jiang is open-minded.If you would really like to come with me to Zhou, I'll leave first and tell him 10 come out to meet you,"Deng Chanyu reassured him.

Jiang Ziya was overjoyed to hear her report.He ordered his attendants "Line up the men.March out of the city to meet Commander Deng."

He rode more than one li from the city and saw Deng Jiugong approaching at the head of his army. JiangZiya went up to meet him."Greetings,Commander."

Deng Jiugong bowed on his horse."I'm not talented and ignorant. It's only right that you should condemn me.I come here today in complete submission.Will you forgive me,Prime Minister?"

Jiang Ziya rodeup and took his hand."We're now ministers in the same court.Please don't speak like that."

Deng Jiugong was deeply moved by his words.The two former enemies dismounted before the prime minister's mansion,entered the Silver Security Hall,and celebrated at a banquet with all the generals.Deng was led to see King Wu the following morning.

As soon as the news of Deng's surrender reached Si shui Pass,Han Rong sent a report to Zhaoge. Supreme Minister Zhang Qian received it and immediately went to the inner palace to see King Zhou at the Star Picking Mansion. "What do you have to report to me.Minister?Tell me quickly,"King Zhou commanded.

"Here's a report from Han Rong of Sishui Pass.I dare not hide it from you.I beg you to pardon me,Your Majesty."Zhang Qian said timidly.

"Never mind,Minister.Let me read it now,"King Zhou said.

He ordered his attendants to place the report on his dragon desk,and he began reading.But before he could finish,he flew into a rage,"How dare he!I'll ascend the throne right now and hold a conference."

Zhang Qian withdrew and went downstairs.Soon drums and gongs were beaten loudly at the Nine-Chamber Court,summoning all the ministers to gather for a conference.When the king arrived,he ascended his throne and his ministers moved forward and knelt before him,listening attentively.

"By my order,Deng Jiugong led a big army to West Qi. However,he has not only failed to defeat the enemy,but worst of all,he has permitted his daughter to marry an enemy general and surrendered unconditionally. His crime is unpardonable,and he must be arrested and punished according to the law.How shall we go about it?"

Fei Lian,a royal ad monitor,left the ranks."As far as I can see,those who win,of course,feel happy.But those who suffer defeat feel compelled to surrender for fear of punishment.How can we subdue West Qi if things goon this way?This time pick a general closely related to you. Such a man will fight his hardest for you and refuse to surrender in the face of defeat.Such a man would fight until the final victory is his,as his fate is tightly bound to yours."

"The king and his ministers,like father and sons,are all equally close in their relationship.I've never discriminated against my ministers,"King Zhou said.

"Allow me to recommend Su Hu,the Marquis of Ji zhou,to Your Majesty.First,he's an imperial relative,and second,he's one of the leading noblemen in the country.He would certainly make every effort to win the war,"Fei Lian continued.

The King was overjoyed."You're quite right,Minister.I fully agree with you."

A royal decree,along with the white axe and yellow flag of office was sent to Su Hu,appointing him to command the new expeditionary force.

Did he win or lose?If you want to know,you must continue with the next chapter.

Chapter 70

Subjugation of the Peacock

Gao Jineng could not last long,fighting against five weapons with his single lance.He ran away,and when he saw the five generals close behind,he jerked his bag wide open,releasing swarms of wasps and centipedes.Wen Ping pulled his horseback as if to run away,but Chong Heihu stopped him."Don't worry!I'm here.Look what I have!""

He opened the gourd on his back,and thick black smoke poured out. Thousands of fierce hawks then flew into the sky and quickly devoured all the wasps and centipedes. Gao Jineng screamed back at him,"How dare you destroy my magic insects!"

He turned his horse and engaged the five generals again.Huang Feihu played his lance wonderfully,missing the Shang general by only inches. Hearing the war cries outside,Kong Xuan asked,"Whom is General Gao fighting against?"

"He is encircled by five generals,"an officer answered.

Kong Xuan rushed to the front,intending to help Gao Jineng. But it was already too late.Thoroughly exhausted,Gao was stabbed in the side by Huang Feihu;he fell from his horse,and his head was sliced off.

As they were just about to return,the five generals heard shouting from behind,"You damned fools!Don't run away!I'm coming."

Kong Xuan rushed over,and Huang Feihu swore at him,"You really are a damned fool.You have no idea what's happening here!"

"There's no use talking to you:you're as low as the weeds and grass at my feet.Turn your ox over to me,"Kong Xuan replied with a smile.

Facing the five generals,Kong Xuan thought,"I'd better act first. Any delay may mean danger for me."

He took all five generals with one sweep of the five light beams at his back.

Jiang Ziya was astounded when he heard that all five had been taken. He said,"Though we killed Gao Jineng,we've now lost five generals. What shall we do?We must withdraw from the fight for the time being."

Entering his camp,Kong Xuan waved his light beams to release the prisoners.They were locked up with the others in the back.Now that he was alone,Kong Xuan did not challenge the enemy;he just blocked the way.

When YangJian arrived with the food supplies,he was surprised to see the army camped before the mountain."How is it that we haven't moved forward?"he wondered. Hearing that Huang Tianhua had been killed and many others captured, Yang Jian began to fume with rage."Would you please go to the front tomorrow so we can find out what Kong Xuan really is.We can then deal with him accordingly,"he said to Jiang Ziya.

Yang Jian went to see Nangong Kuo and Wu Ji. They told him that Huang Feihu,Hong Jin,Nezha, and Thunderbolt had all been taken by Kong Xuan and that their whereabouts were unknown.

"I still have the Demon Exposing Mirror.I can use it on Kong Xuan when Commander Jiang meets him tomorrow,"Yang Jian said.

The next day Jiang Ziya left the camp to meet Kong Xuan.

"Rebel,I won't do any battle with you.I'm going only to block your way until you run out of food supplies,"Kong Xuan said to Jiang Ziya.

Standing under the banners,Yang Jian used his mirror to take a close look at Kong Xuan.He saw something in variegated colors,like a piece of agate,rolling to and fro.

When he saw that Yang Jian was looking at him in a mirror,Kong Xuan laughed."Yang Jian!Come closer,so you can see more clearly.A brave warrior mustn't do things stealthily.Look at me straight through the mirror."

Yang Jian moved closer and held the mirror up to look at Kong Xuan, but he only got the same image as before.Yang Jian stared perplexedly until Kong Xuan finally lost his patience.He spurred his horse forward to attack Yang Jian.

Yang Jian grew anxious after thirty rounds,as he could neither find out the identity of this general nor beat him.He released his Sky Barking Hound,but the hound only floated in the air before falling into the light beams at Kong Xuan's back.

Wei Hu appeared to help Yang Jian with his Monster Subduing Club, but it also disappeared into the red light.Realizing the seriousness of the situation,YangJian quickly sped away through a golden light beam. "Yang Jian, even you,with your ability to effect transformations,run in terror!Come back and meet me again!"Kong Xuan shouted loudly.

Li Jing appeared from behind Jiang Ziya with the next attack.Kong met him with his cutlass,and after several rounds,Li Jing threw his gold pagoda up in the air. Butthis magic pagoda disappeared like all the others when Kong waved the yellow light.

"Don't go away,Li Jing!I've got you now,"Kong Xuan screamed at him.

When they saw their father being taken captive,both Jinzha and Muzha rushed over."Damn you,Kong Xuan!How dare you hurt our father!" Kong Xuan turned his cutlass against them.After just three rounds, Jinzha took out his Invisible Dragon Stake and Muzha his Hooks of Wu, but Kong ignored them.Shrugging his shoulders,his red light beam took both the stake and the hooks.The two generals had no time to run away.

Jiang Ziya was furious to have lost so many disciples.He cried,"Kong Xuan,you bastard!I'm not afraid of you;there are many talented people on Mount Kunlun ready to help us."

He raced upon his nondescript horse to engage Kong Xuan.When Kong Xuan swept his green light at him,he unrolled the Yellow Apricot Fag,which protected him with thousands of golden lotus flowers.Deng Chanyu then grabbed a pebble and threw it at Kong Xuan's face.Seriously wounded,Kong Xuan pulled his horse around,intending to flee back to camp,but Princess LongJi stepped in with her Phoenix Sword and stabbed him in the left shoulder.He cried in pain and nearly fell from his horse.Defeated,he ran back to his camp. Safe in his tent.Kong Xuan cured his wounds and released both the captured weapons and generals onto the ground.He put away the magic weapons and ordered that Li Jing. Jinzha and Muzha be put in prison.

Returning to camp,Jiang Ziya found Yang Jian had already returned. "How did you get away?"he asked.

"Kong Xuan's light beams are difficult to cope with,so I fled in a stream of golden light,"Yang Jian replied.

Seeing Yang Jian made him feel a little better.But Jiang was still worried.He said to himself,"I remember what my master told me about the Immortal Slaughtering Trap at Jiepai Pass,but now this Kong Xuan has held us up for such a long time.What can Ido?"

Justthen King Wu's attendant arrived to invite him to the back camp. King Wu said to him,"We've lost many battles here.You are responsible for 600,000 soldiers;they left their parents,wives,and children to fight for West Qi. I have left my mother and am unable to serve her as a filial son.disobeying the wishes of our late king.Commander,don't you think it's better to withdraw and let the other nobles do as they please?"

"You're right,Your Highness.But I am afraid that would be against the will of Heaven,"Jiang Ziya answered hesitatingly.

"If Heaven were with us,we wouldn't have had all this trouble!"

Jiang Ziya was moved by King Wu's words and gradually lost his determination to keep up the fight. He returned to his tent and issued the order,"Reduce the cooking stoves tonight."

This simple order alarmed everyone,because it was then clear that the army would withdraw.Everyone began to pack up,but no one dared to discuss why.

At the second watch that night,Lu Ya arrived in a flurry,"Ill see your commander at once,"he told the guards. Jiang Ziya came out to meet him,and they entered the camp hand in hand.When he noticed that Lu Ya was still panting,Jiang Ziya asked, "Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I heard that you were going to withdraw,so I had to come as quickly as possible.You can't retreat;that would only place your disciples in danger.This has all been destined by Heaven,"Lu Ya replied.

Jiang Ziya could not decide what to do,even after listening to Lu Ya. Finally he just issued the order,"The army is to remain camped here awaiting for further orders."

King Wu,learning of Lu Ya's arrival,came out anxiously to meet him. He asked his opinion about the matter.

"You don't understand the will of Heaven.For every skilled general, there's another one that can overcome him.Everyone has his vanquisher. Don't worry about Kong Xuan but think about those generals who have been taken captive.They might all die if you leave now,"Lu Ya warned.

King Wu dared not mention their plan to withdraw again.The next morning when Kong Xuan came to challenge them,Lu Ya said to Jiang Ziya,"I'll meet him to find out what he really is."

Dressed in full armor,Lu Ya asked,"Are you General Kong Xuan?" "Yes, I am."

"You can't stand up to Heaven on your own.It will be too late for regrets when someone more powerful comes along,"Lu Ya said.

"You're as stupid as a log.How can you recognize Heaven above or people on the earth?"Kong Xuan answered with a laugh.

He attacked Lu Ya with his cutlass,and Lu returned the blow with his sword.Lu was just about to uncover his gourd to release the Immortal Beheading Sword when he saw that Kong Xuan's beams coming.Lu Ya turned himself into a rainbow and ran away.He returned to camp and reported to JiangZiya,"Oh!This is terrible!I don't know what he is either."

Kong Xuan was unwilling to give up the fight.He yelled loudly,demanding to see Jiang Ziya,but Jiang refused to appear. Arriving at the camp gate with his load of food supplies,Earth Traveler Sun also heard the curses.He yelled angrily."Bloody bastard! How dare you insult my commander!"

Without another word,Earth Traveler Sun ran over and lifted his cud- gel to beat Kong Xuan.

At the sight of a dwarf only three feet high,Kong Xuan laughed. "What a funny creature you are,coming to play with me!"

He waved his cutlass at the dwarf.Earth Traveler Sun was small but very quick.He jumped lithely about,wearing out Kong Xuan after just three rounds

The dwarf general decided to trick his opponent.He leapt away and said,"KongXuan,it's difficult for you to fight me from your horse.Why don't you dismount?"

Kong Xuan thought nothing of the dwarf but did believe that he was speaking honestly.He thought,"That poor dwarf is doomed to die;I can just kick him to death."

Jiang Ziya heard the news that they were fighting out front, and fearing that food transportation might be affected,he sent Deng Chanyu out to offer assistance if needed.

As Earth Traveler Sun was used to fighting on foot and Kong Xuan was a general accustomed to fighting on a horse,Kong Xuan was in a difficult position.He was hit by the dwarf general several times,though not seriously,and soon realized that he'd been tricked.He quickly swept his rays of light towards Sun.

When he saw the colored light,Earth Traveler Sun twisted his body and disappeared.Kong was looking for the missing dwarf when Deng Chanyu unexpectedly threw a stone at him and wounded him seriously in the face.As he turned and ran away.Deng Chanyu hit him with another stone in the neck.

Earh Traveler Sun and Deng Chanyu returned in triumph.Back in his camp,Kong Xuan sat seething in rage.He hated Deng Chanyu for hitting him twice.After he cured his wounds he was eager to take revenge.

Early the next morning,he demanded to see Deng Chanyu.But Jiang Ziya forbade her to answer the challenge,because he knew how much Kong Xuan hated her.He ordered the board of truce be hung on the gate,and Kong could only retum to his camp in disappointment.

Burning Lamp arrived the following day and was informed of what Kong Xuan had done.

"I know very well.I've come today to take care of him,"Burning Lamp said.

Jiang Ziya ordered his men to remove the board of truce,and Kong Xuan rushed over at once with a challenge.

Burning Lamp went to meet him.Kong Xuan knew the immortal well and said with a smile,"Burning Lamp!Why have you come to get involved?"

"If you knew anything about me,you would lay down your arms and surrender.You ought to accompany King Wu into the five passes."

Kong Xuan burst into laughter."You may have magic powers,but you know nothing of mine!"he answered derisively.

Burning Lamp did not know what kind of creature he was confronting. He said,"If you are powerful,why have you ignored Heaven's wishes?"

"All that talk is nonsense.How can you rebels be right and the throne which has been destined by Heaven wrong?""You beast!You brag too much!"Burning Lamp cursed.

Kong Xuan waved his cutlass against the immortal,and Burning Lamp met the attack with his sword.After just three rounds,Burning Lamp tossed up bis Sea Conquering Pearls,but KongXuan took them with bis light.In astonishment, Burning Lamp threw up his purple-gold alms bowl, but it too fell into the magic light.

Burning Lamp roared,"Where's my disciple?"

A huge eagle arrived with a whirl of violent wind.When he saw the eagle,Kong Xuan pushed his helmet and a red beam soared up into the sky. Burning Lamp stared at it with his magic eye but still could not uncover the mysterious general's identity.A great noise,like cracking and rattling,filled the sky,and about two hours later,the eagle fell to the ground with a thud.Kong Xuan spurred his horse forward,and when he flashed his magic light toward Burning Lamp,the immortal turned him- self into an auspicious beam and ran away.

Back in the camp,Burning Lamp told Jiang Ziya how terrible the magic light was.When the eagle returned,the immortal asked him,"Do you know what kind of creature he is?"

"I saw only that his whole body is protected by auspicious clouds in five colors.It seems that he also has two wings,but I don't know what kind of bird he is."

Just then it was reported that a Buddha was waiting outside the camp gate.

Both Jiang Ziya and Burning Lamp walked out to meet the visitor.He was thin,had a yellow face,two coils of hair,and two flowers on his head.In his hand was a tree branch.

The visitor said,"I am a Buddha from the Western Region.Kong Xuan is blocking your path,and I have come to take him back with me."

Burning Lamp invited him to enter the camp.The visitor there could feel in every particle of dust the spirit of destruction.

"I hear that the Western Region is really a paradise.It's very kind of you to come and help the people in this land.May I know your honorable name,Brother?"Burning Lamp inquired.

"My name is Candi.I had the pleasure of meeting Grand Completion when he went to get the Green Lotus Flag.Kong Xuan is predestined to be with us,so I've come to invite him to share our happiness in the Western Region."

Burning Lamp said happily,"We'll be able to march on if you can subdue Kong Xuan today."

"That is surely the best for all,"Candi said as he went out to meet Kong Xuan.

If you want to know what happened next,please read the next chapter.

Chapter 79

Four Generals in Captivity at Chuanyun Pass

The following day Wang Bao challenged the Zhou army directly.Jiang Ziya sent Nezha to the front.

The two fought for several rounds before Wang Bao decided to make the first move.But Wang's thunderbolt had no effect on Nezha,as his body was made from lotus flowers.

Nezha threw out his Universal Ring and hit Wang Bao on the head. Wang fell to the ground,and Nezha cut his head off with a single slash.

Just as Xu Gai was about to surrender to Jiang Ziya,it was reported that a monk wished to see him.When the monk was escorted in,Xu Gai asked,"Dear Monk,what can I do for you?"

"Commander!You know that my disciple,Peng Zun,was killed by Thunderbolt,and I have to come here to avenge him." "May I know your honorable name.sir?" "Fa Jie,"was the reply.

Xu Gai invited Fa Jie to take the seat of honor.

The next day,Fa Jie went to the Zhou camp,demanding Jiang Ziya. Jiang led all his disciples out to meet him.The monk had a glaring gold ring around his head,and he wore a black gown embroidered with a white crane. Jiang Ziya spurred his nondescript horse forward and said, "Please tell me your name."

"I know who you are.I'm Fa Jie of Penglai Island. Peng Zun was my disciple,so I've come to see Thunder bolt.Please send him forward."

Thunderbolt answered furiously,"You damned monk.Here I am!"

He flew up to attack with his gold cudgel,but after four or five rounds, Fa Jie took out a pennant and waved it before him.Thunderbolt fell on the ground unconscious.He was immediately bound up by Xu Gai's soldiers and taken away.

"We must get Jiang Ziya today!"Fa Jie roared.

"How dare you hurt my brother with sorcery,"Nezha shouted angrily.He stabbed at Fa Jie with his Fire-Tip Lance,and Fa Jie waved his pennant as before.But to his complete surprise,Nezha remained standing firmly on his Wind-Fire Wheels.

Seeing the monk's consternation,Nezha threw up his Universal Ring and knocked Fa Jie to the ground. Nezha stabbed at him,but it was already too late,as Fa Jie was able to escape on a dust cloud.

Fa Jie returned to the pass and was met by Xu Gai.

"I'm sorry to see you wounded,Master,"he said to the monk.

"Oh,never mind.I used my weapon in the wrong place.I couldn't hurt Nezha with my pennant because he was born from the pearl spirit and is soulless,"Fa Jie replied.He took out a pill and swallowed it to restore his health.

"Bring Thunderbolt here,"Fa Jie ordered.He took out the pennant and turned it from right to left two times to bring Thunderbolt.

"Because of you,I was hit by Nezha,"Fa Jie swore wrathfully.He ordered,"Push him out and cut his head off."

Xu Gai stopped him and said,"Since you are here to help me,you should not kill him.I'll escort him to Zhaoge with the others.Let His Majesty try him so as to to prove our merit."

Xu Gai intended to join the Zhou Dynasty,so he tricked Fa Jie with this lie to save Thunderbolt's life.

"You are right,Commander,"Fa Jie agreed.

The next day Fa Jie challenged again,and Jiang Ziya rode out on his nondescript horse to fight him with his sword. Afier several rounds,Li Jing ran up to help Jiang Ziya,and Jiang had time to toss up his Staff for Beating Gods.But it was absolutely useless against Fa Jie,who was not on the List of Creations.The staff was easily taken by Fa Jie. Jiang Ziya was very upset to lose his Staff for Beating Gods.Just then.Earth Traveler Sun arrived with fresh food supplies,and seeing Fa Jie with the staff,he shouted."Look,here I come!"

The dwarf struck at him with a long iron cudgel,and Fa Jie hit back with his sword.It was not long before Yang Jian arrived and joined in as well.

When Zheng Lun galloped forward to attack Fa Jie, Jiang Ziya happily left the combat circle and ordered the beating of drums to encourage his generals.

Fa Jie had no chance to use his witchcraft and before long,he was hit by Earth Traveler Sun.When he tried to flee, Zheng Lun instantly gave out two columns of white light.Fa Jie fell to the ground and was taken by the Crow soldiers.

Fearing that Fa Jie would run away,Jiang Ziya stamped some spells on his head,and they all returned to camp. Jiang praised the three convoy officers.Then he ordered his men to bring Fa Jie before him.Fa Jie shouted in his face,"Jiang Ziya! You need not say a word to me.I had destined bad luck today.A great man,experienced through many storms on the sea,has been taken captive by a small potato.This must be the will of Heaven.You may deal with me according to military law as quickly as possible." "If you knew the will of Heaven.why didn't you surrender earlier?" Jiang Ziya asked then ordered his guard."Take him out and cut his head off at once."

As Fa Jie was being taken out,a Buddha appeared,singing:

Forgetting what is good and what is bad.

Caring not about glory,wealth or poverty,

To eat when hungry and drink when thirsty. Let fortunes and misfortunes float about,

Quietly in meditation on a straw cushion,

Devils induce you.out of your caution.

Why do you oppose the kind and good king. And meet the sword in this vulgar world.

The Buddha then shouted,"Mercy!Mercy!Save that life beneath the sword.Tell your commander that Candi is here to see him."

Jiang Ziyaand his disciples went out to meet Candi at the camp gate. Candi said,"Excuse me.I won't go in,but I have something important of beg you.Fa Jie is not on the List of Creations. He is predestined to our religion.I beg you to have mercy on him."

"How dare I disobey your instructions,Master,"Jiang Ziya said and immediately ordered,"Set Fa Jie free at once."

Candi held Fa Jie by the arm,singing:

So quiet and tranquil is the happy west land Bright moon,pleasant air,and mild wind,

White clouds lead the auspicious light,

Water sounds sweetly to please the mountain, Apes call,birds chirp,and flowers bloom,

By the linden way the orchids grow.

Pine trees sweep away the smoke,

Bamboo branches flirt with pretty phoenixes, A merry land in the forest of seven treasures, A quiet pond of eight virtues.

The distant cliff as a screen.

The winding stream flows like music, Cereus flowers give off fragrance,

Buddhist relics shine brightly everywhere, Mount Kunlun has all things wonderful.

But ours are the most supreme. Fa Jie was thus converted into Buddhism and,bidding farewell to all, he followed Candi to the west.He became a prince of a small state and then a prominent Buddha.He returned to China during the Han Dynasty to develop Buddhism.

Xu Gai.having been informed that Fa Jie was taken captive,set Thunderbolt free.He left the pass and went to the Zhou camp to surrender.

"Xu Gai wanted to join us long ago,but he was hindered by some of his generals.He has now come to hand over the pass and is waiting outside the gate for your order,"Thunderbolt reported to Jiang Ziya.

Jiang invited him in and welcomed him to join their forces.They then marched into the pass and Jiang sent for King Wu.When he arrived,His Highness said happily,"General Xu has done a great deed by peacefully surrendering the pass."

Jiang Ziya ordered that the whole army advance to Chuanyun Pass. The garrison commander there was Xu Fang,the younger brother of Xu Gai.Learning of his brother's surrender,Xu Fang angrily swore,"You damned fool!Why do you disregard the safety of your parents,wife and children?"

He announced to his generals,"It is unfortunate that my elder brother, ignoring the safety of his parents and relatives,has rebelled against His Majesty to seek riches and power.We are guilty and our whole family is liable to be punished with death.We must do our best to capture the rebels and thus seek forgiveness from His Majesty."

"Don't worry,Commander!I'll take their leader to show that we are loyal and to enable your family to live in peace,"said Long Anji, the vanguard general. The following day, Jiang Ziya asked,"Who would like to challenge first?"

"Commander!The garrison commander is my younger brother.We need neither bows nor arrows.I'll go and persuade him to join us,"Xu Gai volunteered.

"If you can achieve this,you will be remembered for generations," Jiang Ziya said with a smile of satisfaction.

Xu Gai approached the pass and shouted,"Open the gate."

The guards dared not open the gate on their own.They ran to the headquarters and reported,"Commander!Your elder brother has arrived. What shall we do?"

"Open the gate,"Xu Fang said happily.He ordered his executioners to hide on either side of the court.When his brother entered,Xu Fang roared,"Guards.grab him!"In a wink,the executioners rushed out from both sides of the court and bound up Xu Gai.

"You damned rebel!You've humiliated our ancestors and disregarded our family.The spirit of our ancestors must have sent you here today to save the whole Xu family from extermination,"Xu Fang yelled at him.

Xu Gai swore back at him,"You're a damned fool!Can't you see that the whole kingdom has joined Zhou? How can you stand against the great army?Look at Su Hu and Huang Feihu if you wish to be a loyal minister.And what about Hong Jin and Deng Jiugong?I'm not afraid of death,but I'm sure there will be someone to revenge me."

Xu Fang ordered,"Send this bloody fool to gaol.I'll take him to Zhaoge with King Wu and Jiang Ziya later."

Xu Fang then asked his generals,"Who would like to take the first combat?"

"I will,Commander,"answered Ma Zhong, the vanguard general. Ma Zhong rode to the pass and challenged the Zhou army.

Jiang Ziya sighed,"Woe to Xu Gai.What else can we do?"

He sent Nezha out to meet the challenge.Nezha got on his wind-fire wheels and rushed outside,where he saw Ma Zhong dressed in red robe and gold armor.The two clashed bitterly.

Finding Nezha to be highly talented,Ma Zhong thought,"If I don't get him first,all will be lost."

He opened his mouth,and a column of black smoke gushed out,making both himself and his horse invisible. Nezha immediately flew up,and with a shake,transformed himself into his second shape.

When Ma Zhong lost sight of Nezha,he abandoned his black smoke and turned toward the pass.But then he heard Nezha shouting from behind,"Don't run away,Ma Zhong! Here I come again!” Ma Zhong was nearly frightened to death when he saw Nezha with his three heads,eight arms,and indigo face.He ran away as quickly as possible,but Nezha took out his Nine Dragon Divine Fire Coverlet and covered him up.He then clapped his hands,and the nine dragons burned Ma Zhong into ashes. Xu Fang swore in anger to hear the news of his general's death,but Long Anji comforted him and volunteered to go out the next day.Huang Feihu rode out on his divine ox to meet Long Anji.Long Anji shouted, "Who is that coming?"

"I'm Prince Huang Feihu."

"Oh,that is you,Huang Feihu?You rebelled against the Shang Dy- nasty and have created all this trouble.I must take you captive today!" Long roared.

Long Anji attacked Huang Feihu,and Huang resisted with his lance. Long Anji thought,"I won't waste any time fighting with him."

He took something from his silk bag and threw it up into the air.It tinkled sweetly like music.Long shouted,"Huang Feihu! Look at my miraculous weapon!"

Huang Feihu looked up,and in a moment,fell from his saddle.He was taken captive and led before Xu Fang.

"You are a damned fool!You forsook your old master,"Xu Fang swore.He ordered,"Take him away and put him in gaol."When Huang was brought in,Xu Gai came up to comfort him."My wicked brotheris stupid and relies only on his sorcery.I'm sorry that you have also been caught in his net."

Huang Feihu nodded and sighed without saying a word.Xu Fang held a feast for Long Anji,and Long rode out again the next day.

Hong Jin rode out to the front,and when he saw Long Anji,who used to be a general under his command,he said,"Long Anji! Why don't you dismount and greet your old commander?"

"Oh,Hong Jin!You needn't talk so much,"Long Anji said,smiling coldly.

After only a few rounds,Long Anji threw up his two rings,which spun around and tinkled together in the air. They were called the "Paralyzing Rings,"because when they played over in the air,anyone below. either seeing them or hearing them,would fall to the ground senseless. Bones were dislocated,muscles paralyzed,limbs numbed,and the whole body was disable.Hong Jin fell from his horse and was carried to the pass a captive.

When he recovered,Hong Jin thought,"I never knew he had that weapon when he was under my command!"

Xu Fang ordered his men to pui Hong Jinin gaol.Huang Feihu could only groan when he saw the next captured general.

When Nangong Kuo was taken captive the next day,Jiang Ziya began to worry.Nezha saw this and said,"Let me meet him and find out what sort of sorcery he's using."

Please read the next chapter to find out what happened next.

Chapter 88

Crossing the Yellow River

Waiting day and night for the reinforcements from Zhaoge, Zhang Kui finally received the report that Yuan Hong had gone to Mengjin with 200,000 soldiers.Filled with alarm,he quickly went to consult with Gao Lanying,but she only said,"Even two of us can stand against the Zhou army,and now with Yuan Hong in Meng jin,it will be impossible for the nobles to attack us from behind.Should Yuan Hong repulse the two grand dukes,we can join him to beat the Zhou army.We must now do our best to guard the city,and as soon as they are exhausted and short of food,we can win the day with just one battle."

Jiang Ziya was pondering over their many loses when it was reported that a Taoist lad had arrived to see him.He said,"I'm a disciple of Krakucchanda. Earth Traveler Sun was destined to be assassinated by Zhang Kui at the Fierce Beast Cliff.My master has sent me with this letter to help you get into Mianchi County."

The letter said:

"Earth Traveler Sun was destined to be assassinated by Zhang Kuiat the Fierce Beast Cliff.I could not help him,but only weep,as I looked at the cliff in the distance.Though Zhang Kui is skilful,he will not last long. Give Yang Jian this sheet of spells and tell him to wait on the bank of the Yellow River.Order Yang Ren and Wei Hu to chase him there.Let Nezha and Thunderbolt attack the county and you will score a great victory withjustone battle.I'll see you again after the Creation."

After reading the letter,Jiang Ziya ordered the whole army to attack Mianchi County.But when Zhang Kui mounted the city wall, Jiang quickly ordered his troops to withdraw.

At two o'clock the next day,Jiang Ziya invited King Wu to accompany him on an inspection of the city wall to discuss the strategy for attacking the enemy.King Wu was an honest gentleman,and he immediately gave his consent.They rode out to the city wall and looked at it carefully.

"We must use large cannons to break through at this point..."Jiang Ziya said to King Wu,pointing at the wall.

The guards quickly reported the matter to Zhang Kui,who climbed up himself and saw the two talking below."How can Jiang Ziya insult me so?"he pondered."We've had some battles with him,but he acts as if he owns the place!" Zhang went to see his wife."You guard the city carefully,and I will go and take care of Jiang Ziya and Ji Fa.Our troubles will be solved once and for all,"he told her.

He then rode from the city straight for the king and Jiang Ziya,roaring threats and curses.Jiang and King Wu turned and ran westward,unprotected by any Zhou general. After some twenty li, Zhang heard the sound of gongs,drums,and cannons behind.The Zhou generals had rushed from their camp and were leading the army on a massive attack against the city.

Gao Lanying, in full armor,led the defensive force.Nezha suddenly dropped onto the city wall with his three heads and eight arms,and Gao Lanying struggled against him with her double cutlasses.Finding it diff- cult to keep up the fight,Gao rushed downward to finer footing,pursued closely by Nezha.

Thunderbolt flew up with his gold cudgel and dispersed the soldiers guarding the gate.He smashed the locks and opened the gate to let the Zhou army bush through.

Finding herself in such a dilemma, GaoLanying tried to use her golden Sun Needles,but it was already too late.She was knocked down by the Universal Ring and stabbed quickly by Nezha. She died at once.

When Gao died,all the guards surrendered.

"Brother,you'd better finish up here.I'll go to protect King Wu and our uncle,lest they meet any harm,"Nezha said to Thunderbolt.He rushed in a westerly direction after him.

When the sound of cannons and war cries filled the air, Zhang Kui pulled up in astonishment.Jiang Ziya shouted back at him,"Zhang Kui, your Mianchi County is already taken.Why don't you surrender?"

When he realized he'd been tricked,Zhang turned to go back,but before long Nezha appeared with his three heads and eight arms."You rascal!Get off your horse and surrender.What are you waiting for?" Nezha swore.

Zhang Kui attacked Nezha with his cutlass,and after several rounds, Nezha threw up his Nine Dragon Divine Fire Coverlet. Zhang immediately twisted into the earth and disappeared.

When he got to the city wall, Zhang saw Thunderbolt guarding the gate.He realized that the county must have been lost but had no idea what had happened to his wife.He decided to return to Zhaoge and then meet up with Yuan Hong.

King Wu,Jiang Ziya,and Nezha returned to the city.They collected the corpses on the city wall and buried them with funeral rites.

Zhang Kui set out fully armored underground toward the Yellow River. Yang Ren spotted him in the distance and warned Wei Hu and Yang Jian. Running underground, Zhang Kui could see Yang Ren above on his cloud-haze beast,the two hand-eyes following his every movement.He was greatly frightened but dared not hesitate for even a second.He pushed on faster than before,but Yang Ren followed him all the way to the Yellow River on his cloud-haze beast.When they approached the river, Yang Ren yelled out to Yang Jian,who quickly burned Krakucchanda's spells with his own real samadhi fire.Pointing at the ground,he then turned the earth to steel,trapping Zhang Kui with copper walls and iron partitions.Wei Hu quickly cast his club intothe air, reducing Zhang Kui to powder.

Yang Ren,Yang Jian,and Wei Hu then returned to the city and re- ported their feat to Jiang Ziya. Jiang ordered his army to rest for a few days and then picked a lucky date to march on to the Yellow River.It was a cold winter,and everyone was dressed in heavy cotton clothes and iron amour to fend off the chill winds.

When they got to the river,Jiang ordered that boats be rented from the people at half a tael of silver each.A large dragon boat was also prepared for King Wu and Jiang Ziya.The people were pleased because the army paid for his passage across.

King Wu and Jiang Ziya boarded their dragon boat and sat in the middle cabin with the boatmen on either side.The wind was strong and the waves high,and the dragon boat rocked about wildly. "Why does the boat toss about so,Prime Minister?"King Wu asked.

"The river current is rapid and strong and the waves are usually violent even on ordinary days.It's very windy today and the boat is rather small,"Jiang Ziya explained.

"Would you open the cabin window to let me have a look at the Yellow River?"King Wu asked.

Jiang Ziya pushed the cabin window open for a full view of the river. The waves were high and boundless.King Wu paled,frightened by the scene before him.

The dragon boat was suddenly caught in a whirlpool,and with a great crash,a big white fish leaped high into the air and landed on the deck,startling King Wu.The fish continued to thrash about wildly all over the deck.

"I should congratulate you,Your Highness,"Jiang addressed King Wu."This is a sign that King Zhou's days are numbered,and the Zhou Dynasty will soon replace the Shang. ell the cook to prepare fish for His Highness,"Jiang Ziya ordered his men.

"Oh,no!Don't hurt it!Throw it back in the river,"King Wu protested.

"As it's already jumped on board,why should we give it up?An ancient proverb says,'If one neglects what Heaven endows,one will face condemnation.'We should eat the fish as a gift from Heaven," Jiang Ziya argued back.

Before long,the fish arrived on a platter,and Jiang invited all the generals on board to join them for lunch.Soon the wind subsided and the waves calmed. The dragon boat crossed the Yellow River safely and reached the other side.

The 400 nobles were already prepared to welcome King Wu. Jiang Ziya knew that King Wu was a virtuous ruler and was unwilling to dis- honor King Zhou by being addressed by the dukes as His Majesty the King.Complications would arise if the problem were not well considered. Jiang knew he must discuss this with the nobles first,lest anything unfavorable were to happen.So he said to King Wu,"Though we've already arrived,it would be better for Your Highness to rest here.I'Hl go on shore first to supervise the army.When we have set up camp,I will invite you ashore."

"As you like,Prime Minister,"King Wu replied.

Jiang Ziya led the army to Mengjin and set up camp.When the nobles came to meet him,they were warmly welcomed.After the exchange of greetings, Jiang said,"Dear Nobles!I must request that when you meet King Wu,please do not mention our plan to attack the tyrant.You may just say that we are going to observe the political situation of Shang at Mengjin.We can discuss the matter further when the tyrant's been defeated."

All the nobles readily agreed. Jiang Ziya then sent Nezha,Yang Jian, and some other military officers to invite King Wu to the camp.Two hundred nobles went along to welcome King Wu,and some accompanied him in the coach.Jiang Ziya led another 400 nobles from the north and south to welcome King Wu at the camp gate.

King Wu entered the camp,followed by E Shun,the South Grand Duke; Chong Yingluan,the NorthGrand Duke;Zhang Zhiming,Marquis of Yang;Y ao Chuliang,Marquis of Yuzhou;Peng Zushou,Marquisof Yanzhou;Wu Gaokui,Count of Yimen;Zong Zhiming,the Left Count; Yao Shuliang,the Right Count;Chang Xinren,the Distant Count;Cao Zong,the Near Count;and Ding Jianji,the Count of Binzhou.Everyone was there except Jiang Wenhuan,the East Grand Duke,who was still blocked at Youhun Pass.

All the dukes,marquises and counts invited King Wu to take the pre- siding seat,but he politely refused.After the greetings were over,the nobles knelt before King Wu and said,"Your honorable presence brings glory and virtue to our humble gathering.Your dignity and wisdom are admired by all.The people would be blessed to have you to rescue them from their suffering."

"I am but a humble son who has inherited a title from my ancestors.I am poor in virtue and shallow in learning.but by the grace of the nobles, I have been gloriously invited to accompany our prime minister to ob- serve the politics of the Shang Dynasty.I dare not assume any leader- ship,and only hope that you will generously teach me how to serve the people,"King Wu answered.

"King Zhou is not virtuous.He has furiously enraged Heaven,which is resolutely bent on ending his dynasty.We all support you in punishing the tyrant as Heaven wishes and save the suffering people from further disaster.Heaven will be pleased and our people will appreciate your struggle for justice.We would be condemned by all if we disregarded this problem and showed indifference.Please consider it carefully,Your Highness,"Yao Chuliang,Marquis of Yuzhou,said emotionally.

"All King Zhou's ministers were influenced by his bad ministers.Let's seize the bootlickers and advise the king to rectify his improper behavior. The nation will then soon be restored to good order and will enjoy peace again,"King Wu answered at once.

"The will of Heaven is always subject to change and always those who are virtuous are fit to rule.In ancient times,though Yao was a good emperor,he unfortunately had a bad son,so he let Shun take the throne before his death.Emperor Shun succeeded Yao,but he,like Yao,did not have a good son either,so he had to enthrone Yu as his successor.Unlike Yao and Shun,Yu had a good son and good grandsons who were able to carry on the royal line,but Jie,the last emperor of the Xia Dynasty,poor in virtue, cruel,and unkind,was opposed by the people and abandoned by Heaven.He was overthrown and expelled to Nanchao by Tang,the first ruler of the Shang Dynasty.The dynasty came under six or seven good rulers in succession,but now Zhou has failed to do anything good in poli- tics and has wallowed endlessly in evil ways. May you take it as your duty to punish him and not let the nobles down!"PengZushou, Marquis of Yanzhou encouraged him. Noticing King Wu's hesitation,Jiang Ziya said,"Dear Nobles!Let us not discuss this problem today.I suggest we bring it up later when we have reached the outskirt of Zhaoge."

"You are right,Prime Minister,"they all agreed.

King Wu ordered a grand feast to entertain all the nobles.

Just about this time,Yuan Hong learned of the big conference in Meng jin.The staff officer,Yin Pobai,moved up and said,"King Wu is the leader of these rebels and has won every battle so far.His army is strong.We must be well prepared,Commander."

"You are not entirely wrong,but Jiang Ziya was only a fisherman at Panxi Stream.He can't be very talented.He was only able to occupy our passes and territories because our generals did not fight wholeheartedly.Don't worry,I'll smash them to pieces in just one combat,"Yuan Hong replied proudly.

At the nobles' military conference the next day,Wu Gaokui,Count of Yimen,moved up and said to Jiang Ziya,"Commander,though we have 400 nobles here,we have not dared to fight without receiving your or- ders. We have only taken up defensive positions,waiting for the honor- able arrival of King Wu.But we should not delay any longer.Ifwe don't move quickly,they will remain unaware of our invincible strength.We hope that you will deal with this as soon as possible."

"You're absolutely right,Count.I'll send them a note for combat and then have all our forces concentrated at Meng jin to meet them,"Jiang Ziya replied accordingly.

Jiang Ziya sent Yang Jian to deliver the note to Yuan Hong directly, and Yuan promised in return to meet the Zhou army the following day.

Early the next morning,cannons fired loudly in the Zhou camp,and Jiang Ziya led out his whole army,accompanied by 600 nobles.Yuan Hong had his generals and soldiers rush to the front,where they saw Jiang Ziya on his nondescript horse,attended by his disciples,and King Wu on his jaunty horse,followed by the dukes and counts. "Are you Jiang Ziya?"Yuan Hong asked.

"Yes.Nearly the whole kingdom belongs to Zhou now.The king has lost the support of the people and will soon be taken captive.You are merely a cup of water trying to extinguish the raging fire.You may save yourself if you surrender immediately,but a moment's hesitation will end your life,"Jiang Ziya stated frankly.

Yuan Hong smiled and replied,"Jiang Ziya!You only know how to fish beside a stream but have no idea about the depth of the water.You've been lucky to get here,but dare you go on so with your stirring words?" Yuan Hong looked at the generals beside him and shouted,"Who will get that bloody fool for me and for the sake of the people?"

"Don't worry,Commander.Let me take him!"a general beside Yuan Hong roared.He raced forward on his horse to attack Jiang Ziya.

Yao Shuliang,the Right Count,rocked his long-handled axe."Don't be in such a hurry,bastard!Here I am,"he yelled.

Chang Hao and Yao Shuliang fought desperately,lance against axe. Yao Shuliang was an ordinary person,and Chang Hao was a snake sprite from Mount Plum.He was no match for Yao Shuliang. He ran away exhausted,with Yao hot on his heels.

Please read the next chapter to find out what happened next.

Chapter 99

Deification of the Dead

When he arrived at the Jade Emptiness Palace on Mount Kunlun, Jiang Ziya was admitted by White Crane Lad and went in to see Heavenly Primogenitor.

Jiang knelt down and said,"May you live ten thousand years.I beg you to grant me the jade spells so I can deify the souls in the Terrace of Creation.Dear Master,have mercy on them.Both I and the Gods will appreciate your kindness forever."

"I already knew this,Jiang Ziya.You may return first.I will send the jade spells and my decree before long,"Heavenly Primogenitor replied.

Jiang Ziya kowtowed and returned to West Qi. He went to see King Wu to report all that had happened.A few days later,soft music and a sweet fragrance drifted down from the sky.Several yellow-scarved genii accompanied White Crane Lad to deliver the jade spells and decree. Jiang Ziya went out to welcome the messengers.He knelt down to receive the jade spells and golden decree and kowtowed toward the Jade Emptiness Palace to thank his master. Jiang then left immediately for Mount Qi. When he got to the Terrace of Creation,he was welcomed by Bai Jian, the God of Pure Happiness.

Jiang Ziya placed the jade spells and golden decree on the alter in the center.He ordered Wu Ji and Nangong Kuo to erect paper pennants with the decimal and duodecimal cycle signs all around the terrace to suppress evil spirits.He also ordered that 3,000 soldiers should be brought in to guard the terrace.

Jiang then took a bach and changed his robe.He burnt incense inside a gold tripod,poured wine,presented flowers and raced around the terrace three times.After he had thus given honor to the golden decree, Jiang Ziya ordered Bai Jian to wait below the terrace for his order.He then unrolled the golden decree and read aloud:

I authorize Jiang Ziyato deify you on my behalf.You shall all be free from transmigration from birth to death.You shall be promoted according

to your merits.You must obey the law.Don't commit any new sin or crime...

Jiang Ziya then placed the jade spells on the desk.He was fully armed and held the Yellow Apricot Flag in his left hand and the Staff for Beating Gods in his right."Bai Jian!"he shouted loudly."Hang up the List of Creations.Let all the souls come to me in good order.No one is allowed to leave the line."

Bai Jian hung up the list,and all the souls rushed forward to read it. When he saw that his name was at the top of the list, Bai Jian instantly held up the Soul Leading Pennant,entered the terrace,and knelt down before the altar.

"By decree of Heavenly Primogenitor,I deify you as the God of Pure Happiness.You must take this post with care and respect,"Jiang Ziya declared.

Bai Jian kowtowed and then left the terrace to wait for further orders. "Bring in Huang Tianhua,"Jiang Ziya ordered.

Huang Tian hua entered and knelt down.

"Huang Tian hua,you sacrificed your life for the nation when you were young.You achieved many great merits.We must reward you with a high post.I deify you as Bing LingGong,the God of the Three Sacred Mountains."Jiang Ziya declared.

Huang Tianhua kowtowed and left the terrace at once.

Jiang Ziya then ordered,"Bring in Huang Feihu,Chong Heihu,Wen Pin,Cui Ying,and JiangXiong."

Bai Jian led the five souls to the terrace,and they all knelt down.

"All of you were loyal,but your merits differ one from another.I entitle you,Huang Feihu,as the chief God of the five mountains with power over the eighteen hells for the deceased.All incarnations after death,into human beings,Gods,fairies,or ghosts,are under your control. I deify you,Huang Feihu,as the God of Taishan,the East Mountain-the King and Saintly Emperor as great as Heaven.You control all fortune and misfortune,blessings and punishment for the human beings in this world."

Huang Feihu kowtowed to show his gratitude.Then Jiang Ziya announced,"I deify ChongHeihu as the God of Hengshan,the South Mountain;Wen Pin the God of Songshan,the Middle Mountain;Cui Ying the God of Hengshan,the North Mountain;and Jiang Xiong the God of Huashan,the West Mountain.Each is entitled the 'Great Saint Emperor'."

Chong Heihu,WenPin,Cui Ying,and JiangXiong all kowtowed and then left the terrace with Huang Feihu.

"Let the Gods of thunder come to see me,"Jiang Ziya ordered.

When they were led forward,Grand Tutor Wen was unwilling to kneel before Jiang Ziya

"All kneel down at once to hear the decree from the Jade Emptiness Palace,"Jiang Ziya shouted,waving his staff.

Grand Tutor Wen was forced to yield and kneel down with other souls.

"Wen Zhong,your loyalty and chastity are admirable.You are to be the head of the thunder Gods.Your duties are gather clouds,drop rain, and grow crops for the people.You will punish the wicked and bless the good.I deify you as Chief of the Thunder Gods under the Nine Heavens. The twenty-four Gods under your leadership are as follows:

Deng Zhong,Xin Huan,Zhang Jie,Tao Rong.Pang Hong,Liu Fu, Gou Zhang,BiHuan,Qin Wan,Zhao Jiang,Dong Quan,Yuan Jue,LiDe,Sun Liang,BaiLi,Wang Bian,YaoBin,Zhang Shao,Huang Geng,Jin Su, Ji Li,Yu Qing,Mother Golden Light (Goddess of Lightning),and Fairy Lotus (Goddess of the Wind).All are honored with the title of 'Heavenly Master,'"Jiang Ziya declared.

Wen Zhong and his twenty-four thunder Gods kowtowed and left the terrace.Auspicious clouds and purple haze floated through the air.lightning and wind appeared immediately in the air.

"Lead the Gods of fire before me,"Jiang Ziya ordered next.

When Luo Xuan and the other fire Gods had knelt down,Jiang Ziya declared,"Luo Xuan,you are deified as Chief of the Fire Gods.You must watch over the people and check their evil or good deeds.The five Gods beneath you are: Zhu Zhao,Gao Zhen,Fang Gui,Wang Jiao,and Liu Huan."

After they had kowtowed and left,Jiang Ziya ordered,"Lead the Gods of plague to the terrace."

Before long,Lu Yue and the others ascended the terrace,knelt down, and listened.

"Lu Yue,I deify you as Chief of the Plague Gods,with the honorable title of 'Heavenly King.'The six Gods under your control are:Zhou Xin,the God of Plague in the East;LiQi,theGod of Plague in the South; Zhu Tianlin,the God of Plague in the West;Yang Wenhui,the God of Plague in the North;Chen Geng,the Grand Instructor for Goodness;and Li Ping,the God of Destroying the Plague,"Jiang Ziya declared.

Lu Yue and the other Gods kowtowed and left the terrace for their

posts at once.

Jiang Ziya then ordered,"Lead the Gods of the constellation to the terrace for deification."

In a short while,Bai Jian led Mother Golden Spirit and the others to the terrace.They knelt down and listened.

"Mother Golden Spirit,I appoint you as the head of the constellations. You are deified as the Honorable Goddess of the North Pole Dippers, with 84,000 Gods of the stars under your command.These are the Gods

of the five constellations:

Gods of the Eastern Constellation:Su Hu,Jin Kui,Ji Shuming,and Zhao Bing;

Gods of the Western Constellation:Huang Tianlu,Long Huan,Sun Ziyu,Hu Sheng,and Hu Yunpeng;

Gods of the Central Constellation:Lu Renjie,Chao Lei,and Ji Shusheng God of the North Pole,the Great Emperor:Ji Bo Yikao;

Gods of the South Constellation:ZhouJi,Hu Lei,Gao Gui,Yu Cheng, Sun Bao,and Lei Kun;

Gods of the Northern Constellation:Huang Tianxiang,BiGan(God of Culture),Dou Rong(God of Military Affairs),Han Sheng,Han Bian,Su Quanzhong.E Shun,Guo Chen,and Dong Zhong;

The Gods or Goddesses of the stars:

God of the Green Dragon Star.Deng Jiugong; God of the White Tiger Star:Yin Chengxiu;

God of the Red Sparrow Star:Ma Fang;

God ofthe Mysterious Martial Star:Xu Kun; God of the Gone-with-the-Old Star.Lei Peng; God of the Snake Star:Zhang Shan;

God of the Solar Star.Xu Gai;

Goddess of the Lunar Star:Queen Jiang; God of the Jade Hall Star:Shang Rong:

God of the Heavenly Precious Star:Ji Shuqian; God of the Dragon Virtue Star.Hong Jin;

Goddess of the Red Phoenix Star:Princess LongJi; Godof the Heavenly Happy Star:King Zhou;

God of the Heavenly Virtue Star:Mei Bo;

Godof the Lonar Virtue Star:Xia Zhao;

God of the Heavenly Amnesty Star:Zhao Qi;

Goddessof the Upright Behavior Star:Lady Jia (Huang Feihu's wife); God of the Metal Mansion Star:Xiao Zhen;

God of the Wooden Mansion Star:Deng Hua; God of the Water Mansion Star:Yu Yuan;

Goddess of the Fire Mansion Star:Mother Fiery Spirit;

God of the Earth Mansion Star(Saturm):Earth Traveler Sun; Goddess of the Six Combinations Star.Deng Chanyu;

God of the Doctorate Star:Du Yuanxian; Godof the Power Star:Wu Wenhua;

God of the Admonishment Star:Jiao Ge;

God of the River Leading Star:Huang Feibiao;

Goddess of the Moon Leading Star:Madam Chedi;

God of the Imperial Coach Star:Jiang Huanchu;

God of the Heavenly Inheritance Star:Huang Feibao;

God of the Imperial Chariot Star:Ding Ce;

God of the Heavenly Horse Star:E Chongyu; God of the Imperial Grace Star:LiJin;

God of the Heavenly Medical Star:Qian Bao;

Goddess of the Earthly Queen Star Concubine Huang;

God of the Domestic Dragon Star:Ji Shude:

God of the Dragon Taming Star:Huang Ming;

God of the Station Horse Star:Lei Kai:

God of the Yellow Pennant Star:Wei Ben;

God of the Leopard Tail Star:Wu Qian;

God of the Mourning House Star:Zhang Guifang; God of the Lamenting Visitor Star Feng Lin;

God of the Pulling-Twisting Star:Fei Zhong; God of the Rolled Tongue Star You Hun;

God of the Throat Control Star:Peng Zun;

God of the City Planning Star:Wang Bao;

God of the Fying Curtain Star:Ji Shukun;

God of the Great Spending Star:Chong Houhu;

God of the Minor Spending Star:Yin Pobai;

God of the the Linked String Star:Qiu Yin;

God of the Railing Star:Long Anji;

God of the Head Spreading Star:Tai Luan;

God of the Five Devils Star:Deng Xiu;

God of the Goat Cutlass Star:Zhao Sheng;

God of the Bloody Light Star:Sun Yanhong:

God of the Official Seal Star:Fang Yizhen; God of the Single Moming Star Yu Hua;

God of the Heavenly Dog Star:Ji Kang;

God of the Sickness Spell Star Wang Zuo;

God of the Bone Boring Star:Zhang Feng; God of the Death Spell Star:BianJinlong;

God of the Heavenly Defeat Star:Bai Xianzhong;

God of the Hoating-Submerging Star:Zheng Chun;

God of the Heavenly Slaying Star:Bian Ji;

God of the Yearly Killing Star:Chen Geng;

God of the Yearly Punishment Star:Xu Fang;

God of the Yearly Breaking Star:Chao Tian God of the Lonely FireStar:JiShuyi;

God of the Blood Red Star:Ma Zhong;

God of the Lost Spirit Star Ouyang Chun;

God of the Monthly BreakingStar:Wang Hu;

Goddess of the Monthly Touring Star:Lady Rock;

God of the Dead Air Star:Chen Jizhen; God of the Salty Pond Star:Xu Zhong:

God of the Monthly Disgusted Star:Yao Zhong; God of the Monthly Punishment Star:Chen Wu; God of the Black Killing Star:Gao Jineng;

God of the Seven Murders Star:Zhang Kui; God of the Five Grains Star:Yin Hong;

God of the Avoiding Murder Star:Yu Zhong;

God of the Heavenly Punishment Star:Ouyang Tianlu; God of the Heavenly Net Star:Chen Tong:

God of the Earthly Net Star:Ji Shuji;

God of the Heavenly Space Star:Mei Wu; God of the Parasol Star:Ao Bing;

God of the Ten Evils Star:Zhou Xin;

Goddess of the Silkworm Breeding Star:Huang Yuanji; Goddessof the Peach Blossom Star:Gao Lanying;

Goddess of the Broom Star:Lady Ma(Jiang Ziya's wife); God of the Great Calamity Star LiGen;

God of the Scattering About Star:Han Rong; God of the Mouming Dress Star:Lin Shan;

God of the Nine Ugliness Star:Dragon Beard Tiger;

Gods of the Three Corpse Stars:Sa Jian,Sa Qiang,and SaYong; God of the Yin Mistake Star:Jin Cheng;

God of the Yang Eror Star:Ma Chenglong;

God of the Cutlass Slaying Star:Gongsun Duo; God of the Four Waste Star:Yuan Hong;

God of the Five Poverties Star:Sun He;

God of the Earthly Space Empty Star:Mei De;

Goddess of the Red Lovely Star:Concubine Yang; God of the Fowing Haze Star:Wu Rong;

God of the Sleeping Alone Star:Zhu Sheng; God of the Heavenly Plague Star:Jin Dasheng; God of the Laying Waste Star:Dai Li;

God of the Fetus Spirit Star:JiShuli;

God of the Decision Star:ZhuZizhen;

God of the Anti-Singing Star:Yang Xian;

God of the Pro-Singing Star:Yao Shuliang; God of the Knife Anvil Star:Chang Hao;

God of the Exterminating Star:Fang Jingyuan;

God of the Yearly Disgusted Star:Peng Zushou;

God of the Breaking Star:Wu Long.

The Gods of the twenty-eight constellations:

God of the Homy Wood Dragon Constellation:Bai Lin; God of the Dipper Wood Insect Constellation:Yang Xin; God of the Huge Wood Wolf Constellation;Li Xiong;

God of the Weil Wood Elk Constellation:Shen Geng;

God of the Ox Metal Ox Constellation:Li Hong;

God of the Devil Metal Goat Constellation:Zhao Baigao;

God of the Blundering Metal Dog Constellation:Zhang Xiong; God of the Haughty Metal Dragon Constellation:Li Daotong; God of the Female Earth Bat Constellation:Zheng Yuan;

God of the Stomach Earth PheasantConstellation:Song Geng: God of the Willow Earth Roebuck Constellation:Wu Kun;

God of the Native Earth Jackal Constellation:Gao Bing; God of the Star Sun Horse Constellation:Lu Neng;

God of the Heroic Sun Cock Constellation:Huang Cang; God of the Vain Sun Rat Constellation:Zhou Bao;

God of the Room Sun Rabbit Constellation:Yao Gongbo;

God of the Completion Moon Crow Constellation:Jin Shengyang; God of the Danger Moon Swallow Constellation:Hou Taiyi;

God of the Heart Moon Fox Constellation:Su Yuan; God of the Long Moon Deer Constellation:Xue Ding.

The thirty-six Gods of the Heavenly Gallant Stars:

God of the Heavenly Leading Star:Gao Yan;

God of the Heavenly Gallant Star:Huang Zhen; God of the Heavenly Planning Star:Lu Chang: God of the Heavenly Leisure Star:Ji Bing;

God of the Heavenly Courageous Star:Yao Gongxiao; God of the Heavenly Heroic Star:Shi Kuai;

God of the HeavenlyFierce Star.Sun Yi;

God of the Heavenly Mighty Star:Li Bao;

God of the Heavenly Courageous Star:Zhu Yi;

God of the Heavenly Honorable Star:Chen Kan; Godof the Heavenly Rich Star:Li Xian;

God of the Heavenly Full Star:Fang Bao;

God of the Heavenly Lonely Star:Zhan Xiu; God ofthe Heavenly Injured Star:Li Hongren;

God of the Heavenly Mystic Star:Wang Longmao; God of the Heavenly Healthy Star:Deng Yu;

God of the Heavenly Dark Star:Li Xin;

God of the Heavenly Safety Star:Xu Zhengdao; God of the Heavenly Empty Star:Dian Tong:

God of the Heavenly Swift Star:Wu Xu;

God of the Heavenly Different Star Lu Zicheng: God of the HeavenlyDemon Star:Ren Laipin;

God of the Heavenly Minute Star:Gong Qing;

God of the Heavenly Contemplating Star.Shan Baizhao; God of the Heavenly Retreating Star:Gao Ke;

God of the Heavenly Longevity Star:Qi Cheng: God ofthe Heavenly Sword Star:Wang Hu;

God of the Heavenly Level Star:Bu Tong;

God of the Heavenly Criminal Star:Yao Gong;

God of the Heavenly Damage Star:Tang Tianzheng; God of the Heavenly Defeat Star:Shen Li;

God of the Heavenly Imprisonment Star:Wen Jie; Godof the Heavenly Clever Star:Zhang Zhixiong;

God of the Heavenly Violent Star:Bi De;

God of the Heavenly Weeping Star:Liu Da;

God of the Heavenly Skilful Star:Chen Sanyi. The seventy-two Gods of the Earthly Evil Stars:

God of the Earthly Leading Star:Chen Jizhen; God of the Earthly Evil Star:Huang Jingyuan; God of the Earthly Courageous Star.Jia Cheng: God of the Earthly Heroic Star:Hu Baiyan;

God of the Earthly Gallant Star:Lu Xiude;

God of the Earthly Power Star:Xu Cheng;

God of the Earthly Mighty Star Sun Xiang; God of the Earthly Strange Star:Wang Ping; God of the Earthly Fierce Star:Bai Youhuan; God of the Earthly Literature Star:Ge Gao;

God of the Earthly Upright Star:Kao Ge;

God of the Earthly Secluded Star:Li Sui; God of the Earthly Closing Star:Liu Heng; God of the Earthly Strong Star:Xia Xiang;

God of the Earthly Dark Star:Yu Hui;

God of the Earthly Helping Star.Bao Long; God of the Earthly Gathering Star:Lu Zhi;

God of the Earthly Assisting Star:Huang Bingqing: God of the Earthly Safety Star:Zhang Qi;

God of the Earthly Spirit Star:Guo Yi;

God of the Earthly Beast Star:Jin Nandao; God of the Earthly Minute Star Chen Yuan; God of the Earthly Clever Star:Che Kun;

God of the Earthly Violent Star Sang Chengdao; Godof the Earthly Silent Star:Zhou Geng;

God of the Earthly Mad Star:Qi Gong;

God of the Earthly Rampant Star:Huo Zhiyuan; God of the Earthly Fying Star:Ye Zhong;

God of the Earthly Walking Star:Gu Zong; God of the Earthly Skillfuì Star:Li Chang: God of the Earthly Bright Star:Fang Ji;

God of the Earthly Progressive Star:Xu Ji;

God of the Earthly Retreating Star:Fan Huan;

God of the Earthly Full Star:Zhuo Gong;

God of the Earthly Successful Star:Kong Cheng; God of the Earthly Round Star:Yao Jinxiu;

God of the Earthly Disappearing Star:Ning Sanyi;

God of the Earthly Different Star:Yu Zhi;

God of the Earthly Theory Star:TongZhen;

God of the Earthly Gallant Star:Yuan Dingxiang;

God of the Earthly Happy Star:Wang Xiang;

God of the Earthly Adroit Star:Geng Yan;

God of the Earthly SwiftStar:Xing Sanluan;

God of the Earthly Suppressing Star:Jiang Zhong:

God of the Earthly Detaining Star:Kong Tianzhao;

God of the Earthly Devil Star:Li Yue;

God of the Earthly Sprite Star:GongQian;

God of the Earthly Tranquil Star:Duan Qing;

God of the Earthly Submitting Star:Men Daozheng;

God of the Earthly Secluded Star:Zu Lin; God of the Earthly Space Star Xiao Dian; God of the Earthly Lonely Star Wu Siyu;

God of the Earthly Complete Star:Kuang Yu;

God of the Earthly ShortStar:Cai Gong;

God of the Earthly Corner Star:Lan Hu;

God of the Earthly Imprisonment Star:Song Lu;

God of the Earthly Treasure Star:Guan Bin;

God of the Earthly Level Star:Long Cheng;

God of the Earthly Damage Star:Huang Wu;

God of the Earthly Slave Star:Kong Daoling;

God of the Earthly Examining Star:ZhangHuan; God of the Earthly Wicked Star Li Xin;

God of the Earthly Soul Star:Xu Shan;

God of the Earthly Counting Star:Ge Fang;

God of the Earthly Punishment Star:Jiao Long; God of the EarthlyTorture Star.Qin Xiang;

God of the Earthly Strong Star Wu Yangong;

God of the Earthly Inefficient Star:Fan Bin;

God of the Earthly Healthy Star:Ye Jingchang;

God of the Earthly Spending Star:Yao Ye;

God of the Earthly Theft Star:Sun Ji;

God of the Earthly Dog Star:Chen Menggeng.

The Gods of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars:Chong Yingbiao,Gao Xiping,Han Peng,Li Ji,Wang Feng.Liu Jin,Wang Chu,Peng Jiuyuan and LiSanyi.

The five Gods of the Water Virtue Stars in the Big Dipper:

God of the Water Virtue Star:Lu Xiong;

God of the Water Leopard Star Yang Zhen; God of the Water Beaver Star:Fang Jiqing; God of the Water Ape Star Sun Xiang;

God of the Water Earthworm Star:Hu Daoyuan.The Gods of the stars and constellations,after hearing the announcements,kowtowed to express their thanks and left the terrace.

"Lead the Gods of the year to the terrace for their deification,"Jiang Ziya ordered.

Bai Jian then led Yin Jiao,Yang Ren,and a few others to the terrace. They knelt down to wait for their orders.

"I declare Yin Jiao as the God of the Year.Your duty is to watch over all that happens in the year,whether good or bad.And I deify you,Yang Ren, as the God of the Sixty-Year Cycle.The Gods under you will act according to the decrees of the universe and examine all the good or evil done by the people. All of you must adhere strictly to your duties.The Gods under your command are:

God on Day Patrol:Wen Liang: God on Night Patrol:QiaoKuan;

God for Increasing Happiness:HanDulong; God for Reducing Happiness:Xue Ehu;

God of Doctrine Preaching:Fang Bi;

God of the Vanguard:Fang Xiang; God on Yearly Duty:Li Bing;

God on Monthly Duty:Huang Chengyi;

God on Daily Duty:Zhou Deng: God on Hourly Duty:Liu Hong."

After they had left the terrace,Jiang Ziya ordered,"Lead Wang Mo and others to the terrace for deification."

When they had knelt down on the terrace to listen,Jiang said,"I deify you four as the Gods to guard the Precious Spiritual Firmament.All will hold the honorable title of Great Saint Commander-in-Chief."Wang Mo,

Yang Sen,Gao Tiqian,and Li Xingba kowtowed their thanks and left the terrace.

Jiang Ziya next ordered,"Lead Zhao Gongming and others to the terrace."

When they arrived,Jiang Ziya declared,"Zhao Gongming,you are deified as the Genuine God of the Profound Dragon Tiger Altar.Your duties are to welcome the blessings of auspicious happiness and chase criminals who are fleeing.The names of the four other Gods under your command are:

God of Welcoming Treasures:Xiao Sheng: God of Storing Valuables:Cao Bao:

Envoy of Welcoming Wealth:Chen Jiugong; Fairy Officer of Good Market:Yao Shaosi."

Zhao and the four others kowtowed and left the terrace.

"Lead the four Mo generals to the terrace for deification,"Jiang Ziya ordered once again.

In a short while,Bai Jian led Mo Liqing and his three brothers to the terrace.They knelt down to receive their deification.

Jiang Ziya declared,"You are named the Great Heavenly Kings,who will guard and serve the western religion of Buddhism,protect the country and people with earth,water,fire,and wind,and regulate both the wind and rain.Your posts and duties are as follows:

Mo Liqing,you are the Developing Heavenly King.You hold the green light precious sword and are in charge of the wind;

Mo Lihong,you are the Wide-eyed Heavenly King.You hold the green jade lute,and your duty is to regulate the wind;

Mo Lihai,you are the Literature Heavenly King.You hold the Precious Universe Muddling Umbrella and are in charge of the rain;

Mo Lishou,you are the National Protection Heavenly King.You hold the spoted ermine,and your duty is to adjust the rain.You all must ad- here to your duties faithfully."

The four generals kowtowed and left the terrace.

Jiang Ziya then ordered,"Lead Zheng Lun and Chen Qi to the ter- race for deification."

When both Zheng Lun and ChenQi came and knelt before him,Jiang Ziya announced,"I deify you,because of your wonderful strength,as the Gods of heng and ha;to guard the gate of the western Buddha's residence;to preach the truth;and to protect the precious weapons and instruments there.You must carry out your duties faithfully."Both Zheng Lun and Chen Qi kowtowed and left the terrace. Jiang Ziya ordered Yu Hualong and others to see him.When they arrived,he said,"I deify you,Yu Hualong,as chief God,with the title of the Green Haze Prime King Controller of Smallpox.You must carry out your duties with the five other Gods of Smallpox.I deify your wife,Lady Jin,as the Saint Queen to Protect Sickrooms.The five other Gods are as follows:

God of Smallpox in the east:Yu Da;

God of Smallpoxin the west Yu Zhao;

God of Smallpox in the south:Yu Guang; God of Smallpoxin the north:Yu Xian;

God of Smallpox in the center:Yu De.

You must all fulfl your duties respectfully."

After the Yu family had left the terrace,High Fimmament,Jade Fimament,and Green Firmament arrived for deification. Jiang Ziya announced, "Your crimes were serious,but you are generously forgiven and honored with glorious titles.Hereafter,you are to be called the Goddesses of the Golden Universe Muddling Dipper.Your duty is to deal with birth.Every- one,fairies,ordinary people,saints,dukes,kings,the rich and the poor, the clever and the foolish,must all come into this world with the golden dipper.You,High Firmament,Jade Firmament,and Green Firmament, must strictly adhere to your duties and respectfully appreciate the grace bestowed upon you."

The three Goddesses kowtowed their thanks,and Jiang Ziya finally ordered Shen Gon gbao to ascend the terrace.

When Shen Gongbao had come to kneel before him,Jiang Ziya pro- nounced,"Shen Gongbao,you were originally a member of Chan Taoism but later opposed your own sect.When you were arrested,you dishon- estly made a false oath to cover up your crimes.Knowing that you once tried to devote yourself to learning the doctrines,we now generously grant you the title of God of the East Sea.Your duties are to watch the sunrise and sunset and the water in summer and the ice in winter.In addition,you are graced with the position of Water-Dividing General. You must adhere faithfully to your post."

After the announcement was over,Shen Gongbao kowtowed and left the terrace.As soon as all 365 Gods were deified,they left Mount Qi to take up their posts.The sad wind and fog disappeared,and the bright sun shone again from above.

Jiang Ziya went below and gave an order to General Nangong Kuo. "Invite all the ministers andofficials,civil and military,high and low,to come to Mount Qi tomorrow."

General Nangong raced to West Qi City to carry out the order.Early the next day,Jiang Ziya held a conference with his ministers and officials.He ordered that Fei Lian and E Lai be led before them.

When Fei Lian and E Lai pleaded innocence,Jiang Ziya smiled and said,"You two wicked chaps have committed capital crimes.You tricked the king and put many loyal ministers to death,leading to the complete destruction of the Shang Dynasty.Even death is far too light a punish- ment for the seriousness of your crimes.Both the nation and the king were destroyed,andyou brought treasures to us in an attempt to buy high posts in the Zhou Dynasty.Our new king has risen to the throne according to the will of Heaven and is doing his best to effect reform.We cannot let you two disloyal bastards live any longer to humiliate us."

Jiang Ziya then ordered,"Take them out and cut their heads off!" Please read the next chapter if you wish to know how they fared.

Chapter 100

King Wu Creates the States

By order of Jiang Ziya,Fei Lian and ELai were led out to havetheir heads cut off.Jiang Ziya re-entered the Terrace of Creation,knocked on his desk,and shouted,"Where is Bai Jian?Lead the souls of Fei Lian and E Lai to the terrace."

When the souls of Fei Lian and E Lai came forward to kneel down, Jiang Ziya declared,"Fei Lian and ELai were bootlickers by birth.They cheated the king,causing him to lose his nation and his life.Though these crimes were their own,it had all been destined by fate.I now declare them the Gods to Dissolve Frozen Ice."

Fei Lian and E Lai kowtowed and left the terrace.After all the ceremonies were completed,Jiang Ziya led his ministers back to West Qi. The next morning King Wu appeared at a court conference.The atmosphere is always different when a virtuous ruler ascends the throne. Fragrant mist filled the air,and the sun shone brightly overall.Auspicious clouds floated above,and the tinkling of jade worn by the ministers was as sweet as music.The bells were rung three times,and the court conference began with cheers of "Long Live His Majesty!"

When King Wu had ascended the throne,his attendants asked,"Is there anyone who has something important to report?If not,the court conference shall be dismissed at once."

Jiang Ziya immediately left his line,bowed,and reported,"By order of my master,your old minister has deified all the loyal ministers,brave generals,good fairies and bad who were killed in the war.They are to be worshiped by the people.They are to protect the nation and all its citizens and to regulate the wind and rain.They are authorized to bless the people, to do good deeds,and to punish the wicked.Peace shall reign forever in this world.Further,there are many nobles,generals,and Taoist disciples who bravely risked their lives in the war effort,some falling to the enemy's arrows.They have accomplished great deeds for the nation,and as the whole country is settling down now,we should bestow upon them honor- able titles and land.In recognition of their efforts,let their descendants be eligible for inheritance forever.To strengthen the royal family,the royal sons and grandsons should also enjoy the same privileges,and the descendants of the three ancient emperors and five renowned emperors should be granted the same in recognition of their ancestors' good works. These important matters should all be settled as quickly as possible."

"I had been considering this for a long time,but we had to wait until the deification was finished.Now that you have returned,you may do things as you wish."King Wu replied.

Before King Wu could finish speaking,Li Jing, Jinzha, Muzha,Nezha, Yang Jian,Wei Hu,and Thunderbolt moved up and said,"We are not highly cultured,having come from the mountains and valleys.Following our masters' orders,we left our mountain homes to help you putan end to the disturbances.Now that there is peace,we must all return to report to our masters.We cannot accept honor,iches,or high rank in this vulgar world.We bid you farewell today,and we beg you,Your Majesty,to allow us leave.Your grace will be appreciated forever."

"With your help,all has been settled,and the sun shines brightly again. Your good works for the people and nation are boundless.Nothing can ever return your grace.How can you leave us now and return to the mountains?How can I see you go without great sorrow?"King Wu said sadly.

"We have bathed in your kindness and virtue for so long already,and we are used to simple living.We'd rather have springs and rocks in the mountains than honor and riches here.Besides,it would be difficult for us to go against our masters and the will of Heaven.We beg for your mercy to allow us to return to our mountains,"Li Jing and his colleagues replied in unison.

King Wu was greatly saddened to know that the Taoist disciples had resolutely decided to leave him.He said,"At the onset of our expedition against King Zhou,many loyal ministers and righteous generals joined our efforts.How could I have known that so many would lose their lives for the nation?Only a few are left;I can't help but feel sentimental when I compare the present with the past.But you wish to leave me now instead of staying to enjoy happiness in this peaceful time.What shall I do?IfI don't agree with you,it would certainly be against your will.But if I'm compelled to agree,what a sad day for me!As there seems to be no other way,won't you let us hold a farewell feast tomorrow in the southern suburb to wish you on your way?"

Li Jing and his six colleagues thanked the king for his grace and left the court,Jiang Ziya also felt sad to watch them go.

The next day,a grand feast was prepared on the southern suburbs of the West Qi City.The civil and military ministers arrived first with LiJing, Jinzha,Muzha,Nezha,Yang Jian,Wei Hu,and Thunderbolt.Jiang Ziya went to the palace to accompany King Wu.Their long procession at- tracted great crowds along the way;everyone wanted to see His Majesty's farewell party to the Taoists.

In the southern suburb,the ministers and all the disciples went out to greet His Majesty King Wu.

LiJing and his party kowtowed to express their thanks and said,"How dare we expect that His Majesty trouble himself to come here to drink and dine with us.We will appreciate your kindness forever." King Wu grasped their hands and said,"As you must return to your mountains,you are not subject to our rule any longer.The relationship of a king and his ministers does not exist between us.You mustn't be too polite.Let us drink till we can forget the sorrow of our parting."

Li Jing and the others kowtowed to thank King Wu.In a short while, it was reported that the feast was ready.King Wu ordered his orchestra to play,and everyone took their seats,with King Wu in the seat of honor. The king and his ministers toasted one another and drank together happily. The delicious spread,including dragon and phoenix,was enjoyed by all.

After drinking for a long time,the Taoists tried to leave,but King Wu held them back and urged them to have more.

After several more cups,Li and his party got up again to bid the king farewell.King Wu wept sadly when he realized that he could not detain them any longer.

They all comforted King Wu,saying,"May Your Majesty enjoy good health and live long so that we may meet again some day in the future."

King Wu finally had to let Li Jing and the others leave,but Jiang Ziya was still reluctant to see them go.He escorted them a long way and finally saw them off in bitter tears.Not long thereafter,Li Jing,Jinzha, Muzha,Nezha,Yang Jian,Wei Hu,and Thunderbolt all became immortals,free from the cycle of death and rebirth.

When King Wu ascended his throne the next morning,both Jiang Ziya and Ji Dan moved forward and said,"We were delighted to see Your Majesty kindly allow Li Jing and his colleagues return to their mountains yesterday.However,we beg you to act immediately to grant land and titles to those who have achieved great merit for the nation."

"I was so sad to see the seven disciples return to their mountains yesterday,but now the prime minister and my brother may discuss how to divide land and grant titles as proposed.Please implement these measures as soon as possible,"King Wu replied.

Jiang Ziya andJi Dan left the king and drafted a proposal to present to King Wu.The king ascended the throne the next day and asked his brother, Ji Dan,to read out the names of those to whom land and titles had been granted.The draft first bestowed upon Tai Wang,Wang Ji and King Wen,King Wu's great-grandfather,grandfather,and father,the title of emperor.Next,five ranks-duke,marquise,count,viscount,and baron- were granted to those ministers who had served the country as well as the descendants of the past and present dynasties.Any petty state below the fifth rank was called a vassal.The most important states and their ministers were named as follows:

State of Lu—surnamed Ji,marquis,the fourth son of King Wen, named Ji Dan.He achieved great merit in his service to King Wen,King Wu,and King Cheng.He was later appointed Grand Premier and the head duke east of Shaanxi by King Cheng. His eldest son,Bo Qin,was granted 700 square li in Qufu and bestowed with precious jade and a great bow to offer service to Zhou forever.

State of Qi-surmamed Jiang,marquis.Bo Yi,grandson of Emperor Yan,achieved great merit in helping Emperor Yu deal with floods and was surnamed Jiang by the emperor.Jiang Ziya,honored as Jiang Taigong, from Weishui River,helped King Wen and King Wu defeat King Zhou and restore peace to the nation.Also honored as Father-Prime Minister, he was granted land at Yingqiu and given the title of Marquis Qi. As the head of five marquises and nine counts,his state was situated in Qingzhou (today's Shandong Province).

State of Yan—surnamed Ji,count,named Ji Junshi.Having offered his service to King Wen and King Wu in the struggle against King Zhou, he was honored as the Grand Protector of Zhou,with land granted at Shao but remained to serve in the royal court and supervise the nobles west of Shaanxi.His son was given the title Count of North Yan(today's Hebei Province).

State of Wei—surnamed Ji,count,named Bi Gongkao.He aided King Wen and King Wu in the struggle to restore peace to the country. He was granted the state of Wei(in today's Gaomi County,Kaifeng Prefecture,Henan Province).

State of Guan-sumamed Ji,marquis,brother of King Wu,named Ji Shuxian. He was appointed to supervise Wu Keng,with land granted at Guan (today's Xinyang County,Henan Province).

State of Cai—surmamed Ji,marquis,brother of King Wu,named Ji Shudu.He was appointed to supervise Wu Keng,with land granted at Cai (today's Shangcai County,Henan Province).

State of Cao—surnamed Ji,count,brother of King Wu,named Ji Shuzhenduo.Granted thestate of Cao(today's Dingtao County).

State of Cheng—surnamed Ji,count,brother of KingWu,named Ji Shuwu.He was granted the state of Cheng (today's Yanzhou,Shandong Province). State of Huo—surnamed Ji,count,brotherof King Wu,named Ji Shuchu,He was granted the state of Huo (today's Pingyang Prefecture, Shanxi Province).

State of Wei-sumamed Ji,marquis,brother of King Wu by the same mother.He was appointed Grand Minister of National Public Safety and was known as Uncle Kang,because he had a piece of land there.He was granted land at Wei(today's Jizhou,Hebei Province).

State of Teng-surnamed Ji,marquis,brothe rof King Wu,named Ji Shuxiao.He was granted land at Teng (today's Zhangqiu County, Shandong Province).

State of Jin—surmamed Ji,marquis,the youngest son of King Wu. He was called Tang Shuyu as he was granted land at Tang,but was soon re-granted land at Jin (today's Pingyang Prefecture,Shanxi Province).

State of Wu—sumamed Ji,viscount,grandson of Taibo,the eldest son ofTai Wang.He was granted land at Wu(today's Suzhou,Jiangsu Province).

State of Yu-sumamed Ji,duke,grandson of Zhong Yong,son of Tai Wang.He wasgranted land at Yu,in Taiyang County of Hedong District.

State of Guo—surmamed Ji,duke,named Guo Zhong,son of Em- peror WangJi,brother of King Wen.Both brothers,Guo Zhong and Guo Shu,were ministers in King Wen's court.He loved them very much and called them the two Guos.Guo Zhong was granted land at Hongnong,(in today's southeast of Shaanxi Province).

State of Chu—surnamed Mi,viscount,descendant of the ancient Emperor Zhuan Xu,named Yu Xiong.He served as tutor for both King Wen and King Wu.He was granted land at Jinmen,(somewhere in today's Hubei Province).

State of Xu—surnamed Jiang,baron,descendant of Emperor Yao. For his ancestors achievements,Wen Shu was granted land atXu(today's Xuzhou).

State ofQin-surnamed Ying,count,descendant of the ancient Em- peror Zhuan Xu.For his ancestor's achievements,Bai Yi was granted land at Qin(today's Xian,Shaanxi Province). State ofJu—surmamed Ying,viscount,descendantof the ancientEm- peror Shao Hao.For his ancestor's achievements,Shu Wuqi was granted land at Ju(today's Ju County).

State of Ji—surnamed Jiang,marquis,second son of Jiang Ziya.In recognition of his father's service,He was granted land at Ji(today's Dongguanju County).

State of Zhu-surnamed Cao,viscount,named Cao Xie,descendant of Yan An.He was granted land at Zhu (today's Zou County,Shandong Province).

State of Xue—surnamed Shi,marquis,descendant of the ancient Yellow Emperor.For his ancestor's achievements,Xi Zhong was granted land at Xue(today's Yizhou,Shandong Province).

State of Song—sumamed Zi,duke,named Wei Ziqi,the eldest son of King Diyi of the Shang Dynasty.As King Zhou was improper and not virtuous,Prince Wei Zi took the sacrificial utensils to West Qi.He was later granted land at Song(today's Suiyang County).

State of Qi—surnamed Si,count,descendant of the ancient Emperor Yu.After subduing Shang,King Wu searched for the descendants of Emperor Yu.He found Dong Lougong and granted him land at Qi(today's Yongqiu County,Henan Province).

State of Chen—sumamed Wei,marquis,descendant of the ancient Emperor Shun,named Yu Fu.He served King Wu as an artisan of pot- tery.King Wu married his eldest daughter to Yu Fu's son and granted him land at Chen(today'sChen County).

State of Jiao—surnamed Yi Qi,marquis,descendant of the ancient Emperor Shen Nong.For his ancestor's achievements,he was granted land at Jiao (today's Hongnong in Shan County).

State of Ji—surnamed Ji,marquis,descendant of the ancient Em- peror Yao.When the new dynasty was established,King Wu found a descendant of Emperor Yao and granted him land at Ji(today's Beijing). State of Korea-surnamed Zi,known as JiZi,descendant and virtu- ous minister of the Shang Dynasty.As he was unwilling to serve King Zhou,he moved far away to the Liao dong Peninsula.King Wu granted him land in the place now known as Korea.

There were seventy-two states granted in all.Nangong Kuo,San Yisheng,Hong Yao,and many others were given land and honorable titles as well.

That same day King Wu held a grand banquet to celebrate and con- gratulate the new dukes,marquises,and others granted land.Finally,the king's treasure houses were opened to share out gold,silver,jewels,and money amongthe nobles.They toasted each other and drank happily,not dispersing until late that night.

The next day,after all the newly appointed nobles sent King Wu let- ters of thanks and farewell,they left to take up their various posts.Only Ji Dan and Shao Shi,King Wu's two younger brothers,remained in the court to handle administrative affairs.

"Gaojing is located in the center of the country and is therefore the most suitable place for the capital,"King Wu said to Ji Dan.The king then ordered Shao Shi to arrange the transfer of the capital from West Qi to Gaojing.Gaojing was located to the north of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province(today's Xianyang County).

"Prime Minister!"King Wu said to Jiang Ziya one day,"You are old now and may find it inconvenient to continue your service in the court.It would do you good to relax in your own state."

King Wu gave Jiang Ziya precious jewels,a yellow axe,and the white scepter,represening leadership oyer all the dukes.Jiang was also authorized to attack any state in a punitive expedition if necessary.The next day,Jiang appeared at court to thank King Wu before leaving the capital. King Wu and his ministers then escorted Jiang as far as the southern suburb. Jiang kowtowed to thank the king and said,"As you have so kindly granted me the state of Qi,I shall be unable to serve you and be at your side day and night.I hate to leave you,for I don't know when we'll have the chance to meet again."

King Wu comforted Jiang,saying "Prime Minister,you are old and have already served the royal court for so many years.I think you should return to your own state to rest and enjoy the blessings of peace and good health.I don't expect you to work hard here any longer."

Jiang Ziya thanked him again and again."How can I ever return your magnificent grace?You are always so kind to me,"he said.

Thus,King Wu and Jiang Ziya separated that day.King Wu and his ministers returned to the capital,while Jiang Ziya went on his way to the state of Qi in Shandong.

Whenhe had settled in,Jiang Ziya thought,"Many years ago when I left Mount Kunlun for Zhaoge,I was treated kindly by my sworn brother, Song Yiren.I was so busy handling state affairs,I never had the chance to express my thanks.Now that everything is settled,it would be most ungrateful ifI didn't send him a letter with my best regards and a small gift."

Jiang Ziya sent a special messenger to Zhaoge with a letter and a thousand catties of gold to pay his respects to Song Yiren and his wife.

A few days later,the messenger found that unfortunately both Song and his wife had passed away.Song's son,however,had taken over as head of the family property and was managing their business enterprises so well that he was more prosperous than ever.He received the letter and gift,and sent the messenger back to express his thanks.

Jiang Ziya governed his state according to the law and directed the people to work properly.After five months,everything was in good order, and everyone was living peacefully and happily.

After Jiang Ziya passed away,his son Zhao succeeded him as ruler of the state. Xiao Bai,his later descendant,appointed Guan Zhong as prime minister,and Qi ruled superiorover all the states during the Spring and Autumn Period of the Zhou Dynasty.In the days of Kang Gong,the Qi state was taken over by the Tian family. At Gao jing,King Wu ruled the country well,enabling all within the four seas to enjoy peace.The people lived happily and everyone prospered.King Wu was a virtuous ruler just like the ancient emperors Yao and Shun.After King Wu's death,King Cheng succeeded to the throne, with the assistance of his uncle,Ji Dan.The country continued to enjoy peace and prosperity.The Zhou Dynasty lasted a full eight hundred years from the days when Jiang Ziya launched his attacks against King Zhou and Ji Dan succeeded him as prime minister.