

Investiture of the Gods

Feng Shen Yanyi

by

Xu Zhonglin



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The Investiture of the Gods also called *The Creation of the Gods*, or simply by its native name *Feng Shen Yanyi*, meaning “*Inauguration of Doctrines Dramatized by the Gods*,” is an ancient masterpiece. Published around the 16th-century, it has been claimed a “novel” merging mythology, folklore and history. As to its key thematics, *Investiture of the Gods* features a work that mostly personifies myths that narrate the Cosmogony of the World according to the space-time established by the Chinese mythology.

Editor

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1. The text, though partly abridged, amounts the supposedly original one hundred chapters.

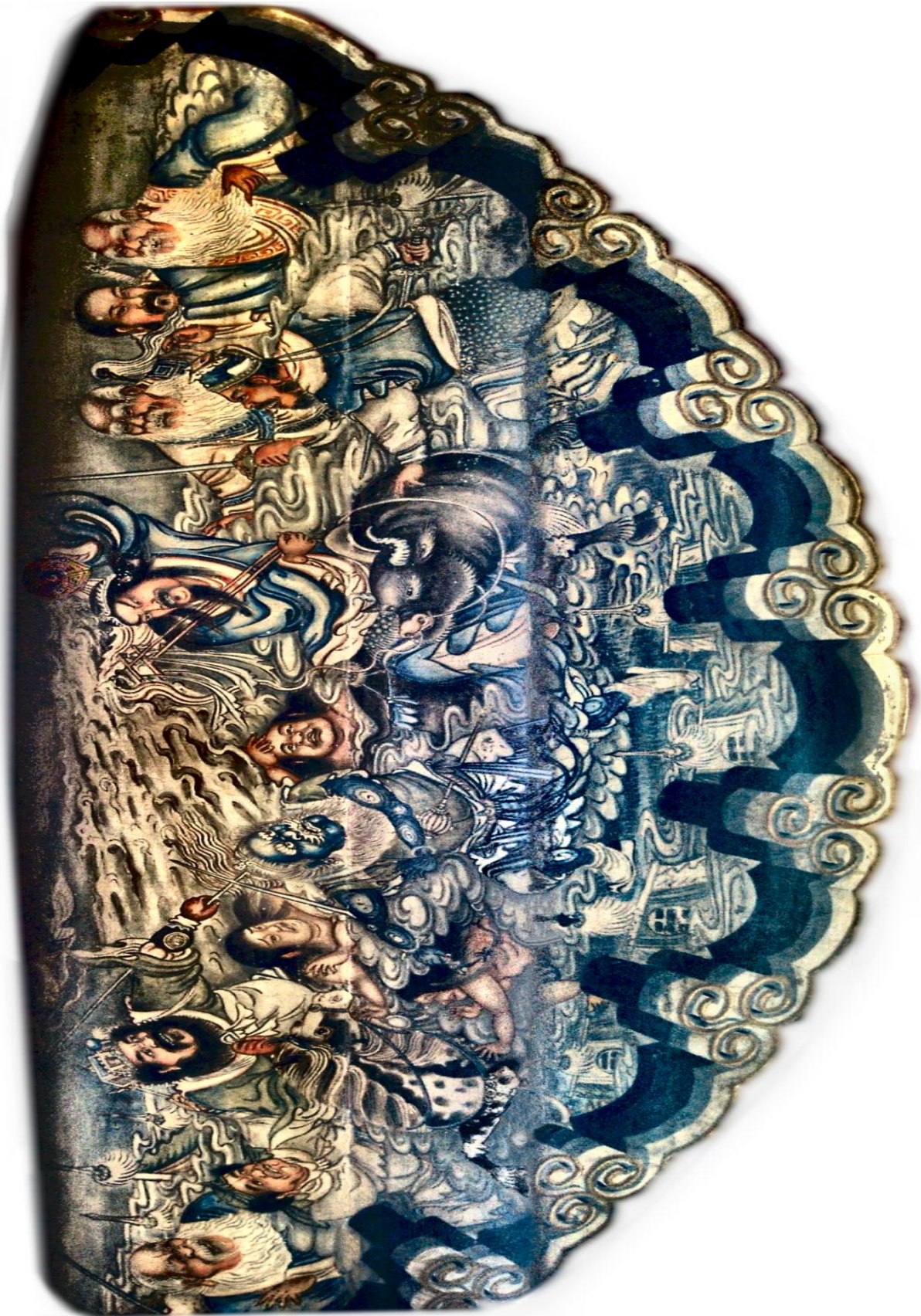
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The Investiture Great Wall-Corridor ²



2. In the picture are the Spirit-Stars who assist the Jade Emperor to rule the human world. At the center, the figure spurting the bagua is thought to be Yin Jiao, the overseer. Each one represents one year of the Jovian orbit of 11.86 years. Thus they are called "Highest Years" (Tai Sui), which, like the solar zodiac, determine the destiny. The original painting is probably from 13th century, therefore before this publication of Xu Zhonglin. It is part of Chinese Major Historical and Cultural Site.

Chapter 1

King Zhou and Goddess Nu Wa

At one point in time as King Da Yi, of the newly established Shang Dynasty of China, walked through the royal gardens to gaze at the great beauty that laid before him, the Flying Cloud Pavilion suddenly collapsed. As a single beam from the pavilion fell towards the king, Prince Zi Shou grabbed hold of the beam and threw it aside. After ministers such as Shan Rong and Mei Bo gazed at the strength that the prince possessed, they advised the king to name him Crown Prince. Thus following the death of King Da Yi, Prince Zi Shou took the title of '*King Zhou*' and became the new ruler of the Shang Dynasty within its new capital Morning Song.

After seven years of prosperity within the Shang Dynasty, etches of evil tyranny begin to evolve in the heart of King Zhou. As the first rebellion thus took place on the second month of the seventh year, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong, the head of civil affairs, went personally ride out upon his great dragon to subdue them at the North Sea district.

In the following day, the prime minister Shang Rong asked the king to head to the temple of Nu Wa in order to offer their condolences on her birthday. Following the latter's consent, the king and his entourage thus march from the capital's gates to the temple of Nu Wa.

As King Zhou enjoyed the palace's immense scenery after his arrival, he gazed into the eyes of Goddess Nu Wa — who sat behind a celestial curtain. Overtaken by her unparalleled beauty, King Zhou used his ink brush to write a poem of her valor upon a neighboring pillar within the temple. Even after being reproached by Shang Rong for what disaster the poem could bring about, the latter simply brushed him aside saying that it was nothing more than a literary representation of her beauty.

After the king and his entourage had returned to the capital, Nu Wa noticed the poem and immediately vow to end the Shang Dynasty due to the former's vile desires. Once she had arrived at Morning Song atop her phoenix, Nu Wa realized that King Zhou still possessed another twenty years of reign — and would thus live with lustful rage.

As she arrived at her temple, she summoned forth her three right-hand sprites: Daji, the thousand year-old female fox; Splendor, the nine-headed female pheasant; and Jade, the female lute. Thus following their summoning, Goddess Nu Wa told them to transform themselves into beautiful women in order to distract King Zhou from his state affairs — so that he would be overthrown in a further justified manner.

Back in Morning Song King Zhou seated in great depression over the incredible unattainable beauty that Nu Wa had possessed — and thus wished to not perform any action until he could attain her as one of his lovers. After effectively calling minister Fei Zhong to his presence, he suggested to the king that one-hundred women should be taken from each of the four Grand Dukes so that he might have an opportunity to find a woman that ranked in beauty with Nu Wa. With immense delight at such a grand opportunity, King Zhou rested for the night and would make his preparations in the following day.

Chapter 2

The Rebellion of Su Hu

The next morning, King Zhou prepared one letter for each of the four Grand Dukes stating that one hundred virgin women that possess at least a moderate level of physical beauty should be presented before the capital as soon as possible. As prime minister Shang Rong reminded the king that such an action would only bring out mass contempt and future rebellion, King Zhou saw his reasoning and withdraw the edict immediately.

When the eight-hundred marquises had appeared to offer their allegiance to the Shang Dynasty the following summer, Fei Zhong and You Hun became extremely influential in court due to the leave of Grand Old Master, and thus asked for many presents and additional bribes from the former wealthy classmen.

However, Su Hu, Marquis of Jizhou, refuted such compliances due to his fiery resolve to stand against such injustices fully. Due to such, Fei Zhong and You Hun grew rather hateful towards Su Hu throughout the future. As the nation's marquises and dukes had arrived at capital Morning Song to display their obeisance at the end of the year, the four grand dukes would be specifically placed before King Zhou and fully honored for great diligence in their duty.

After the four dukes had been well-feasted throughout the day, King Zhou returned to his inner chambers and discussed the current situation with his two favorite ministers Fei Zhong and You Hun. In a chance to force Su Hu to repent for his defiance, Fei Zhong declared to the king that the former possessed an exceedingly beautiful daughter that must be attained if the letter's ministers were to continue to trust his decision making.

After Su Hu had thus been summoned to the Dragon Virtue Court, King Zhou told the latter that if he was to attain his daughter, Su Hu would be granted great wealth, rank, and recognition within the dynasty of Shang. As Su Hu declined with many words of insult towards the king's lack of virtue, King Zhou became rageful and ordered Su Hu to be arrested. However, Fei Zhong advised the king that if he allowed Su Hu to return to Jizhou out of consideration and personal dignity, the people of Shang would look upon the king as a worthy ruler that listens keenly to his people's desires; in such a way, Su Hu's daughter could also be more easily attained.

Now settling down to an extent, King Zhou ordered Su Hu to be expelled from the court. As Su Hu thus returned to Jizhou, he considered his choices. If he was to give his daughter to King Zhou, ministers of the court would think of him as slanderous and immoral; if he refused to hand over his daughter, the king would most likely attack his prefecture with an army in order to ensure that his defiance could not spread further.

Carefully analyzing this, he decided it best to gather his own forces to fight Shang while he wrote a poem that represented hatred towards the Shang Dynasty upon the Meridian Gate inside the capital Morning Song.

After King Zhou had taken notice of this immensely defiant poem, he ordered a force of six armies to be placed under his command during the newly established attack upon Jizhou. As General Lu Xiong elaborated his suggestions to the king, it was decided that Grand Duke of the North, Chong Houhu, and Ji Chang, Grand Duke of the West, would lead a joint force against Su Hu's city instead.

At the capital hall, where the grand dukes and other high ranking officials were present, Ji Chang ordered an investigation as to why a loyal subject such as Su Hu would be deserving of punishment, while Chong Houhu unconditionally accepted the king's words and headed out immediately with his army.

Once Su Hu had attained word of Chong Houhu's movement towards his territory, the former ordered his soldiers to be well drilled to defend the city walls against the king's army. As Chong Houhu's army of 50,000 strong soldiers arrived before Jizhou, Su Hu grinded his teeth in frustration after hearing from an intelligence officer that Chong Houhu was the enemy commander due to his one-sided reasoning. Amidst the roar of cannons, Su Hu presented himself before Chong Houhu and elaborated the rationale behind his defiance. Chong Houhu became enraged at his words, and sent forth General Mei Wu to dispose of the former in a quick manner.

Su Quanzhong, the eldest son of Su Hu, intercepted Mei Wu, who was cut down by Quanzhong after following twenty rounds of fierce battle. Now that Su Hu's son had won the first victory, an all-out melee was unleashed between both forces resulting in Chong Houhu's eventual retreat. As the Jizhou forces thus returned to the city, it was decided that a surprise attack should be ushered forth that night upon the latter's stockades as to deal a critical blow to Chong Houhu's morale and attain potential assistance of other neighboring powers— such as the Grand Dukes — after they had heard of Jizhou's strength.

Once such a tactic had been fully employed at dusk, Chong Houhu fled to a newly established camp and drink his worries away at the thought of Ji Chang's future assistance. While his forces thus ignorantly slept for the night, Su Hu's forces charged forth with the furiousness of a tiger and slaughtered countless soldiers of Shang in mere moments. Now in a state of great fear for his life, Chong Houhu personally clashed his cutless against the resolved Su Hu until the former's generals ran to his assistance. As the Shang forces thus fled in majority, Su Hu called off their pursuit after twenty li³ of distance was traveled.

While currently fleeing through the stars of night with his generals, Chong Houhu came to the conclusion that strict defense should be employed for the moment while a messenger should be sent to Ji Chang in request for reinforcements. Unfortunately for Chong however, Su Quanzhong suddenly appeared before the light of the moon with his ambush-party completely determined to put an end to the former's life. With his immense renown and resolve, Su Quanzhong easily defeated three generals of Shang singlehandedly with his great dragon glaive.⁴

3. Chinese unit of distance, equal to about 0.6 km (0.4 mile).

4. A sword or a large curve blade fixed on the end of a pole; also, a light lance with a long sharp-pointed head.

Chong Houhu, who became exceedingly fearful over the former's skill, fled away immediately from the combat. In a state of distraction over his father's sudden choice, Chong Yingbiao received a deep wound through his left arm from Su Quanzhong's glaive — and thus fled for his life in addition.

As Su Hu held conference the following day, Quanzhong appeared before his father and elaborated his great victory in the previous night. With great joy, the former smiled in admiration at his son's prowess and thus made preparations for his next essential movement.

Chapter 3

Daji enters the Palace

As Chong Houhu thus regrouped his remaining forces, he'd grieve at their many past losses and what was yet to unfold. After General Huang Yuanji stated to the commander that it was currently best to ask Ji Chang for reinforcements, Chong Houhu resolutely refused lest the latter would be punished by the king for not already offering his promised assistance. Once word came out that a large military force was heading in their direction at an immense pace, Chong Houhu realized that it was none other than his younger brother, the renowned Black Tiger Chong Heihu, Marquis of Caozhou. With a total of twenty-three thousand soldiers, Chong Heihu declared assistance to his elder brother and thus left to Jizhou.

As Su Hu attained report on Black Tiger's arrival, he sat in utter frustration over the former's ability to use magic. Su Quanzhong, however, expressed little fear towards Black Tiger's magic renown and thus left the city to do battle with the latter. Even though Black Tiger arrived to simply discuss the situation with his old friend Su Hu, Su Quanzhong insisted to do nothing more than clash blades with the former after hearing of his physical prowess. Once the former and latter had thus begun their duel, Su Quanzhong noticed a large gourd present on Black Tiger's back — but continued to lash his dragon glaive forward with one resolve in mind, which was Chong Heihu's capture.

With little other choice, then Black Tiger opened his gourd which signaled countless celestial eagles to swoop down and peck their beaks into Su's flesh while black smoke oozed from his gourd profusely. After hearing of his son's capture, Su Hu flew into unparalleled frustration and thus concluded it best to kill himself by the sword after slaying his wife and daughter — lest they were to be killed once being taken prisoners following his defeat.

With such a thought in mind, Su Hu presented himself before his daughter with sword in hand utterly determined to preserve his honor until the very end. Just at this critical point in time, Black Tiger's second arrival was reported to Su Hu — and the latter thus made defensive preparations for the pass immediately. Black Tiger, who only intended on consulting with Su Hu, had no choice but to return to the Shang camp in frustration. Due to the former's continued obstinacy, the supply lines were secretly cut off at set intervals as to prevent Jizhou from attaining there needed provisions.

Within this moment of besiegement, Zheng Lun arrived and challenged Black Tiger with due determination. During their vigorous clash, Zheng Lun became aware of the latter's large gourd atop his back and thus immediately deployed his own magical ability which was the soul stealing beams from his nostrils. As Black Tiger was presented before Su Hu following his capture, he became grateful at the former's courtesy and thus took the place of honor.

Once Chong Houhu had attained word of his brother's condition, San Yisheng, supreme minister under Ji Chang, arrived and told the former that a letter of exhortation should be sent to Su Hu stating that he was to give up his daughter

on the condition that he reattains the title of Marquis of Jizhou — which would save the people from further suffering.

Following Chong Houhu's consenting, San Yisheng appeared before Jizhou and handed Ji Chang's letter to Su Hu immediately. Upon the reading of this letter, Su Hu became instantly enlightened at the West Grand Duke's rationale — and thus consented with great happiness and feasting. After asking San Yisheng to deliver his reply to Ji Chang with gifts of fine gold and satin, Su Hu made preparations to personally escort his daughter to the capital's palace.

Chapter 4

The Fox Sprite murders Daji

As Su Hu took leave from Jizhou, Black Tiger promised to the former that he would return his son immediately after arriving back at camp. With reciprocated dignity, both Su Hu and Black Tiger headed their separate ways to mark their conflict's true conclusion. Once Black Tiger had arrived back at the Shang camp, he explained the resolution of Su Hu and thoroughly reprimanded his elder brother for his disgraceful incompetence — vowing to never see him again.

With Black Tiger now returning to Caozhou, Chong Houhu felt immense shame and embarrassment at his former actions and thus returned to his dukedom immediately after filing a report to King Zhou. After Su Hu met with his newly freed son, Su Quanzhong, and explained to him about leadership over Jizhou while he was away, the former entered the inner palace to discuss the situation with his wife.

The next morning, Su Hu, and his tearful-eyed daughter, Daji, headed out in a carriage with three-thousand soldiers and five-hundred officers to make quick pace to the capital. Following the passage of many days Su Hu and his entourage arrived at a courier station within Enzhou and stay there for the night. However, there had been a rumor of an evil sprite that was lurking within this station for the past few years, and Su Hu thus constantly exchanged moments of reading his book of military strategy to ensuring his daughter's safety throughout the night — never daring to sleep for a single moment. Suddenly during the second watch at night, each candle flickered constantly throughout the halls and people screamed at the sight of a supposed ghost flying about.

Immediately with due vigor, Su Hu grabbed his iron staff and rushed to Daji's rear hall room — but his lamp suddenly burnt out forcing him to order a new lamp with due haste. Upon the entering of his daughter's room, he would be overjoyed to hear that she was only recently awoken once her father rushed into her room. As Su Hu thus returned to his room in relief at such a good omen that his daughter remained safe, little did he realize that the thousand-year fox had already seized Daji's body once Su Hu was busy attaining his secondary lamp. After several days following their setting out from Enzhou, Su Hu and his entourage finally arrived at Morning Song and present themselves before Prince Yellow Flying Tiger.

Once Su Hu had thus stationed his troops outside the city while Daji remained in the Golden Reception House, Fei Zhong and You Hun became angry at their lack of presents from the former following his arrival — and thus successfully encouraged King Zhou to put him to death the following day. As the following day arrived, Su Hu presented himself before the king in convicted robes stating that he deserves death for his past defiance.

With Shang Rong's immediate defense, Fei Zhong declared that if Su Hu's daughter was indeed very beautiful, she would be taken in while the former was freed; but if she lacked eloquence on the contrary, both of their heads should be displayed before the city's gates. As Daji thus bowed before the king with her full

condolences, the latter could barely control his inner lust and amazement at her colossal beauty and elegance. After immediately pardoning Su Hu for his crimes and placing him back at his original rank, King Zhou took Daji's hand and headed back to the Fairy Longevity Palace to fully enjoy his first night with her. With greatly displeased ministers, civil and military affairs were continuously ignored throughout the future as King Zhou enjoyed great pleasure with Daji from time to time. By thus setting aside exceedingly urgent matters, it seemed as if the Shang Dynasty itself was rapidly sinking into chaos...

Chapter 5

Cloud Dweller presents a Pine Wood Sword

This was the first chapter in which true chaos began to spread within the Shang Dynasty because of the King's new treasured concubine, Daji. In reality, this girl named Daji was truly killed and possessed by a fox specter, who plans on destroying the dynasty through Nu Wa's orders. When this chapter began, the man by the name of Cloud Dweller was currently searching around Tiger peak for medicinal herbs. After this renowned dweller of the clouds realized that there had been a thousand year old vixen in human form — as Daji — present within the kingdom, the dweller told his pupil to prepare for him a wooden sword — a sword that would sicken the vixen to death after a period of time.

After officials such as the Number One Grand Counselor Mei Bo had discussed the major issue of the kingdom with his fellow officials, it was soon decided that a large gong would be beaten and all officials of the kingdom would gather before the king as to show their dedication. After the annoyed King Zhou entered from his room to meet his "boring officials", he was not be in any mood to listen and only wished to return to his precious Daji.

Both the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister called out to their king, *"Sire! Our kingdom is in trouble. There are uncontrolled floods and droughts. The populace is suffering and restless. All the memoranda from the dukes have not been attended to. Your Majesty has not come for months to the morning assembly. Many urgent matters await your decision."* The king would generally turn a deaf ear to his officials primarily out of his ignorance.

After Cloud Dweller appears present before Zhou and engages in a long conversation, he departs and tells the king to hang his wooden sword over the door of the Longevity Palace. Thus, the chapter then ends following the departure of both the king and all of his officials. At the very end of this chapter however, the sword burnt through Daji's orders — it was mysteriously making her deathly ill.

Chapter 6

The Burning Pillar Torture

As the wooden sword was thus turned into ashes, Daji recovered in immediate pace. Still secretly remaining at Morning Song in order to inspect the outcome of his wooden sword, Master of the Clouds sighed at his inability to change the Shang Dynasty's destined outcome — and thus wrote a short poem upon the observatory wall within the market area so that all people could understand what future they were to experience. After thus returning to Mount Zhongnan people noticed the poem immediately and attempted to decipher its meaning. With no true success, Grand Tutor Du Yuanxian appeared, read the poem with partitioned understanding, and returned to his personal quarters to make up a report on what future the dynasty would experience if this evil specter was not effectively eradicated.

Upon the finishing of this report, Du Yuanxian gave it to Prime Minister Shang Rong so that it could be presented personally to the king. Once Shang Rong left to the royal palace to deliver it to King Zhou, he was admitted in with Yuanxian's report in hand. Reading the report fully, the king believed his words to be rather accurate but decided to have Daji's opinion on the issue. Daji told the king that the Taoist earlier was none other than a wicked sorcerer who spread rumors to put the dynasty into a frenzy, and Du Yuanxian was assisting this sorcerer with full intentions to ensure full unrest within the people and should thus be publicly executed. Shang Rong however, immediately retorted, saying that if Du Yuanxian was to be executed, his loyalty would not only be seen as mere rubbish but many ministers would rise up in addition to uphold his innocence.

King Zhou, who told Shang Rong that Yuanxian should be executed as to prevent further full unrest stories from coming about, immediately ordered royal guards to bound Du Yuanxian with thick ropes and chains. As the latter was thus dragged off to the palace gates, Supreme Minister Mei Bo stopped the executioners and immediately asked for an explanation from Prime Minister Shang Rong. After hearing the story fully, Mei Bo flew into a rage at Shang Rong's fear to uphold true justice within the dynasty — and thus grabbed the latter's arm while charging into the Fairy Longevity Palace to talk with King Zhou.

With uncontrolled anger, Mei Bo began to shout violently at the king for his ineptitude and thus was ordered to be executed immediately. Just before Mei Bo was to have his skull smashed, Daji told King Zhou to put the former in the gaols for now while a torture device known as the "Burning Pillar" was to be constructed as his destined punishment. While thus gazing at the king's atrocities and delusion, Shang Rong sincerely asked the king if he could faithfully retire from the dynasty lest he was to make any further mistakes in his old age.

Following the latter's consent, many ministers gathered at the Changting Pavilion to see their old comrade on his way that evening. Raising their cups to bid their old comrade farewell, Shang Rong wrote one final poem to express his inner grievance before taking leave with tearful eyes. Ignoring his ministers for several more days as usual, tyrant King Zhou obtained a report on the burning pillars completed construction. After Daji had thoroughly inspected the pillar's design,

she smiled with happiness and suggested to the king that tomorrow should be Mei Bo's day of punishment. The following day at the Grand Hall, Yellow Flying Tiger gazed at over twenty pillars being lit blood red — and sat in confusion as to why such objects would be in royal grounds. With Mei Bo's entrance into the Grand Hall, King Zhou sat in laughter at what was to soon befall the former.

Thus being stripped and chained fully against a burning pillar, a single deathly scream rang against the royal halls as Mei Bo's flesh and bones were turned to ashes. Now leaving the Grand Hall with his other comrades, Yellow Flying Tiger exclaimed his resolve to do whatever it takes to save the dynasty from it was supposedly destined downfall. With celebratory music and feasting resounding through the walls of King Zhou's inner chambers, Queen Jiang felt personal hatred over the newly heard burning pillar construction and thus ordered her attendants to prepare for her a carriage.

Chapter 7

Fei Zhong plots to depose the Queen

Following Queen Jiang's arrival at the Fairy Longevity Palace, she was approached by Daji with a single courteous bow before being escorted into the court. With the king thus fully enjoying the night by his queen's side, Daji began to dance with great eloquence and beauty. Not enjoying this stay by her husband's side, Queen Jiang reprimanded King Zhou for his continued delusion — and thus left the personal chambers of the court. Being rather angry and depressed over the queen's sudden words, King Zhou asked his precious Daji if she could dance once more to his delight. Falling to the floor with tears in her eyes, Daji exclaimed her worry towards the kingdom if the queen reported her actions to other ministers and nobles — resulting in her own death.

The king, now exceedingly angry, ensured to Daji that he would dispose of the queen shortly to ensure her safety. On the first day of the following month, Queen Jiang received congratulations from the royal concubines as a monthly custom. With Daji prostrating herself before the Queen, she was thoroughly humiliated over the former's words before taking her own leave. For being rebuked by the Queen so wrathfully in front of two other concubines, Daji discussed with Gun Juan, her maidservant, about how Queen Jiang should effectively be killed and replaced.

As King Zhou and Daji enjoyed the scenery of the gardens the following day, Fei Zhong attained a report on Daji's lust to kill Queen Jiang and thus pondered through night and day to think of a method — lest he was to be eventually killed for refusing her decree. Gazing outside his window, Fei Zhong noticed a tall bulky man by the name of Jiang Huan of East Lu that had come to repay the former with due respect and gratitude for his past consideration. With a plan now formed in his mind upon the latter's arrival, Fei Zhong immediately told Jiang Huan what to do while informing Daji in addition.

After being told to attend state affairs the following day by Daji, King Zhou was suddenly attacked by a disguised Jiang Huan — saying he should replace his own father as king for the sake of the Shang Dynasty's preservation. As Jiang lashed at the king with his dagger, he was brushed back immediately by royal guards and effectively captured.

Once Fei Zhong volunteered to personally interrogate the captive on the issue upon the entering of the Grand Hall, he reported to King Zhou shortly that the latter was a general under the Eastern Grand Duke — Queen Jiang's father. This duke had been ordered by Queen Jiang to put the king to death so that he could take the throne. After thus appointing Concubine Huang as Chief Justice for this case, King Zhou angrily charged back into the Fairy Longevity Palace asking about the issue with countless ministers. Not attaining any true knowledge of such a complicated incident, King Zhou passed an oral decree via the court herald onto Queen Jiang stating that she was to appear at the West Palace for trial immediately.

Following her arrival at the palace, Queen Jian pleaded her innocence personally to Lady Huang. As the former's words were accurately told to King Zhou

himself, Daji came forth from the shadows stating that the queen was simply pushing her own blames upon others with additional falsehood. It was thus decided that if Queen Jiang didn't confess the truth about the matter, one of her eyes would be gauged out as punishment. Lady Huang, who immediately ran to the Queen telling her to confess a false statement, simply gazed forth as a royal guard plucked one of the latter's eyes out after refusing the former's request with due resolve.

King Zhou, who became fearful of an attack by the Eastern Grand Duke or great condemnation from his ministers, was told by Daji that Queen should most reassuringly tell the truth after having her hands burnt to ashes by a boiling brass dipper. As such an action was resentfully decreed by the king, Queen Jiang sternly refused once more to confess any such crime — and thus lost her hands to the dipper in short time.

Regaining her strength after watching such a cruel scene, Lady Huang informed the king about her continued reluctance. In the former's great worry, Daji suggested to the king that Queen Jiang should be brought together to be tried with the accused Jiang Huan.

Chapter 8

Princes take Flight

As Jiang Huan and Queen Jiang was thus placed before the West Palace together, the Queen and Lady Huan wrathfully rebuked Huan for his evil treachery. At this same point in time, Crown Prince Yin Jiao and Yin Hong, who was playing chess, was immediately informed by Yang Rong of the current situation — and thus ran to the Western Palace in quick pace to meet with their mother. Gazing at their mother laying forth in a large pool of blood, the queen stated her final words to the crown prince to attain revenge before uttering one last breath before death. In unparalleled blood lust towards his mother's death, Yin Jiao grabbed his sword and sliced the neighboring Jiang Huan into two pieces after being informed of the latter's treachery.

Once Yin Jiao had impulsively shouted his additional desire to kill Daji, Chao Tian and Chao Lei — dubbed as the "Chao Twins" — immediately ran to the king at the Fairy Longevity Palace in fear and elaborated the crown prince's intentions. In resounding rage, King Zhou handed the Chao Twins his Dragon-Phoenix sword to personally put an end to both princes through decapitation. With the twins thus heading to the Eastern Palace, Lady Huang heard the king's newest decree and quickly told the two princes to take shelter with Concubine Yang at the Fragrant Palace for a few days.

As the princes thus arrived at Concubine Yang's residence, Chao Tiang and Chao Lei arrived shortly for inspection — but were barked away for their rude insolence. After the princes left to a greater area of safety — the Grand Hall with Yellow Flying Tiger — Concubine Yang decided to hang herself lest she was to be found out at a later time that she sheltered the princes. At this same point in time Lady Huang informed King Zhou of Queen Jiang's last saying before death, and the Chao Twins were ordered to head to the Grand Hall after elaborating their past failure. The princes arrived shortly before the Grand Hall and was met by Yellow Flying Tiger and many other ministers who angrily vowed to see His Majesty after hearing the former's unfortunate story.

Once Fang Bi and Fang Xiang — dubbed as the "Fang Brothers" — roared into the Grand Hall stating that King Zhou should be overthrown for his blatant tyranny, Yellow Flying Tiger and others stood silent in great frustration if such an action would truly be right. In justice's name, the two fang brothers each grabbed hold of one prince and charged forth from the palace gates stating boldly that they would escort the two princes to East Lu before raising their own army to uproot the evil tyrant.

As each minister sat in astonishment at what had just taken place, Yellow Flying Tiger solely stood forth in admiration of the Fang Brothers' exceeded loyalty. With the immediate arrival of the Chao Twins, they were informed of the incident with the Fang Brothers; being in a difficult situation, the two headed to see King Zhou in quick pace. After ensuring Yellow Flying Tiger with this task, the former headed out alone atop his divine Rainbow Ox. Following his immediate arrival before the two princes in the wilderness, he pleaded for the two children to put an end to their own lives; for if he was to kill them himself, his conscience

would never be the same; but if he was to refuse the king's order, he would receive death. After Prince Yellow Flying Tiger sat in frustration, he told Fang Bi to head to Jiang Huanchu at East Lu with the two princes while Fang Xiang was to see E Chongyu to encourage him to lead a two directional force against the capital with the former.

Handing Fang Bi his jade pendant as an expense, he headed back to the capital to report his failure — to the ministers' delight. Upon his report to King Zhou that evening, Daji suggested to the king that two generals should be sent immediately that night to pursue the two brothers with three-thousand soldiers in assistance. Once these two best generals — Yin and Lei — approached Yellow Flying Tiger that night, the latter ensured their supply of men and horses to be ready at the fifth watch the following morning — lest his plans were to be foiled.

Being equipped with old and infirmed men the next morning as soldiers, the two generals simply sighed to themselves with the knowledge that they had no other choice but to continue Traveling for the past two days with the young princes, the four individuals arrived at a fork in the road: one direction leading east, and the other leading south.

The Fang Brothers decided it best that the two princes solely traveled either paths while they both traveled to the west; for the precious jade piece given by Yellow Flying Tiger might be a risky expense lest anyone in the future realized who it truly belonged to.

Thus telling the princes their resolution, they informed them that they would take refuge in any neighboring dukedom along the way and join their vanguard upon it was future advance to Morning Song. Following their tearful farewell, Yin Jiao declared that he would continue to head east until he met with his grandfather, and Yin Hong should head to the south.

Once his grandfather was to begin his troop mobilization upon the capital, Yin Jiao promised to inform his younger brother of his route so that he could additionally join in the attack. Thus parting in their separate ways, Yin Hong arrived shortly at a small village and sat down to eat a meal after declaring to the cottagers that he was none other than the younger son of King Zhou.

Following his immediate leave once paying his obeisance, Yin Hong entered the Temple of Emperor Xuanyuan along his way and slept there for the night in comfort. While Yin Jiao meanwhile continued his journey towards East Lu, he found himself in front of a Grand Tutor's mansion — as displayed from a board hanging from its gate. Being late into the night, the prince decided it best to rest at this mansion for now while he resumes early into the following morning. Knocking continuously without any answer, Yin Jiao decided to open the gates where he heard someone reciting over a poem.

Walking closer and elaborating the reason upon his arrival, Yin Jiao entered the mansion and saw none other than former Prime Minister Shang Rong standing before him to his immense surprise. As Shang Rong sat down to listen to the prince's story, he stamped his foot in unparalleled rage — and thus vowed to Yin Jiao that he would return to the capital with the former and directly petition His Majesty to abandon his course of action to save the kingdom. With Shang Rong thus forming his petition, Generals Yin and Lei meanwhile decided to split their

forces into two—one halve leaving the east, and the other to the south — after arriving at the original tripe fork road. Thus leaving their separate directions, they decided to meet at this specific fork road as an area of regroup after the princes was captured.

Chapter 9

The Prime Minister's Resolve

As General Lei continued to the south from day to night, the majority of his soldiers fell off their saddles in their tiredness; and a command for rest was thus ensued. With the intention to rest at a village for the night, a section of his soldiers roamed about through the pine forest to eventually find the Temple of Xuanyuan. Upon the entering of this temple, General Lei smiled in immense delight as he saw none other than prince Yin Hong sleeping soundly before him. Awaking the prince immediately, he allowed the former to personally use his horse on their travel back to the three staked road.

Meanwhile after two days of travel, General Yin arrived at a small village by the name of Fengyun where he noticed the residence of Shang Rong nearby. Upon his entering of this residence, it was decided that Yin Jiao would personally ride together with General Yin back to the capital while Shang Rong heads to the former location at a later time lest Yin was to be accused of private dealings with Shang Rong in the future. As Generals Yin and Lei thus regrouped at the three-forked road in due happiness over their success, Yin Hong and Yin Jiao wept together for their unfortunate situation.

Following their arrival back to the capital, Yellow Flying Tiger ground his teeth in explosive rage, declaring that he would personally slay Generals Yin and Lei with his sword before they ever were to be recognized for their one-sided merit. Ordering all ministers to quickly gather before the palace gates in defense for the two princes, Yin and Lei meanwhile attained a written report from King Zhou to put them both to death before the gates in quick pace. Seeing such a report, Supreme Minister Zhao Qi grabbed it from their hands and tore it to many pieces in his rage. Continuing in such a manner, Zhao Qi declared to every minister present to go to the Grand Hall and invite His Majesty to attend; for such was the perfect chance to admonish the simple-minded tyrant.

With Yellow Flying Tiger's four right-hand generals protecting the princes with their lives, and ministers banging the bells and beating the drums to attain the king's attendance, King Zhou simply wrote a decree to put an end to the princes for their unfilial behavior while remaining in his Fairy Longevity Palace. With the executioners thus pacing towards the two bound princes, Superior man Pure Essence and Grand Completion meanwhile roamed about through the heavens in great boredom. As they thus appeared above Morning Song and saw the two princes ready for execution, a grand gust storm ran across the heavens — putting every official and soldier present in fear.

With the sudden disappearance of Yin Hong and Yin Jiao following the end of the storm, this calamity brought great relief and joy in the hearts of each official, while King Zhou sat in wonder at such a happening. Now finally arriving at the capital of Morning Song, Shang Rong rose forth and heard the complete story of current happenings from Yellow Flying Tiger himself. In due resolve to be able to confront the emperors of yore in high honor and loyalty, Shang Rong immediately ordered the beating of bells and drums to force the foul King Zhou into the Grand Hall. As the king thus arrived before his desk, Shang Rong kneeled forward and

presented to the former his written report. Upon the reading of this report, King Zhou flew into great rage — immediately ordering Shang Rong to be beaten to death with the golden hammer.

Yelling back at the king with words of duty and love towards his past services in the name of the Shang Dynasty, Shang Rong knocked away the guards and jumped head-first into a stone pillar — effectively ending his life in a rather gruesome manner. As many ministers exchanged glances at such a horrific scene, King Zhou ordered for his body to be thrown into an empty field behind the capital in an expression of his dignity towards the former.

Chapter 10

The Discovery of Thunder-quaker

Seeing this tragedy in full form, Supreme Minister Zhao Qi additionally expressed his inner hate towards the king without a single ounce of fear. Upon being bound before a burning pillar as punishment, Zhao Qi became nothing more than ash to the wind in mere moments. Now returning to the Fairy Longevity Palace in great satisfaction over his barbarity, King Zhou personally approached Daji, explained the past incident with Shang Rong, and discussed with her how to get rid of Jiang Huanchu as a threat to the capital.

With no true thought-out resolution to such a problem, Daji called forth Fei Zhong for a suggestion. Fei Zhong stated that the four regional grand dukes should effectively be disposed of lest any ministers of Morning Song attempted to rise up in rebellion with any neighboring force. Jiang Huanchu would also be effectively destroyed as a threat to the capital if he was to join the other three grand dukes in execution.

Following the king's immediate approval of Fei Zhong's suggestion, four royal messengers were personally sent to each grand duke — Jiang Huanchu, E Chongyu, Ji Chang, and Chong Houhu — in quick pace. As one of four messengers arrived before the Western Foothills — Ji Chang's domain — and presented it before Ji Chang himself, the latter offered fine silver and gold to the messenger before ensuring his departure to the capital at a later time. After appointing San Yisheng as commander of internal affairs, Ji Chang went to his son, Bo Yi Kao, told him of his seven-year-prisoner prophecy, and how he should take care of state affairs following his departure.

Explaining the situation to many other ministers in attendance throughout the day, Ji Chang took his leave from the Western Foothills the following morning with fifty attendants by his side. As his party arrived before Mount Yan, a sudden rainstorm appeared with giant waves rolling down from each neighboring mountain top; it was as if an ocean was falling from the very heavens. After hearing a colossal thunderbolt shake the very earth, Ji Chang gave the order for his soldiers to find "the star of a warrior" — followed from the saying that a gifted warrior was born after the movement of lightning.

Upon the finding of a small newborn child with eyes like that of stars, Ji Chang told his men to find a local family that could take the child in. However, Master of the Clouds personally presented himself shortly before Ji Chang, stating that he would graciously take the child — newly dubbed as "Thunder-quaker⁵" — in as his own, and return him to the former once he had left Morning Song. As Ji Chang thus continued his journey, he arrived at Morning Song one day to be entertained in the company of the other three grand dukes at the Golden Reception House.

5. Sometimes also called as "Thunderbolt".

As the night flew and the four grand dukes enjoyed their wine to the fullest, E Chongyu, the Grand Duke of the East, began to spout words of hatred at Chong Houhu's actions in his drunken state. Being at a loss in judgment due to their state of mind, Chong Houhu and E Chongyu began to physically attack each other before Ji Chang forcefully pulled the two apart and sent them to their respective rooms. At the second watch that night, Ji Chang heard someone present at the reception house mutter that the blood of the grand dukes would stain the market walls the following day. Threatening to put every individual to death if the culprit did not show himself, the accused Yao Fu was thrown before Ji Chang's feet shortly. As Yao Fu, who was a relative of a royal messenger, told Ji Chang and Jiang Huanchu of the unfortunate past within the kingdom, Jiang Huanchu fell to his feet in misery over his daughter's cruel death while Ji Chang offered to create a petition in his behalf.

Vowing to personally see King Zhou over the death of his precious daughter, Jiang Huanchu declared to Ji Chang that he should form his own report on the case instead. When Fei Zhong learned of their arrival before the capital, he told King Zhou that he should ignore any report that was to be handed to him the following morning — and the dukes should be publicly executed without condition. As King Zhou arrived within the Grand Hall the following morning, he announced forth the four grand dukes immediately. When Jiang Huanchu handed his report to King Zhou and calmly accused the latter for his barbarity, the former's robes were removed to prepare for his immediate execution. However, the other three grand dukes rushed forth protesting Huanchu's innocence.

Chapter 11

The III Fortunes of the Grand Dukes

Seeing how King Zhou was to put Jiang Huanchu to death so blatantly, the other three grand dukes knelt before the king in shock and told the latter to reconsider his decision in the name of preserving his king–minister relationship. As Bi Gan spread forth their petition upon King Zhou's desk, he had little choice but to read it. Upon the reading of this petition, which elaborated the king's many wrongs, the latter flew into a great rage while tearing it to many pieces. Once the three dukes had been bounded immediately for such a slanderous petition, Yellow Flying Tiger and other princes knelt down and elaborated the grand duty and loyalty that the dukes fully showed throughout their many merits towards the name of the Shang Dynasty.

After hearing their story, King Zhou came to a new conclusion, *“Ji Chang would be specially pardoned for his exceeded virtue and due loyalty while the other two dukes were to be executed at once as previously stated.”* Even with Yang Ren's continued plead to have mercy on the two remaining dukes, the king's decree was effectively carried out in efficient form nonetheless. Following King Zhou's return to his palace, each minister wept profusely at such a tragedy while the remaining attendants of the two newly deceased dukes fled immediately to their respective dukedoms in a chance to attain a future rebellion.

The two grand dukes were buried and Ji Chang made preparations to head back to his dukedom. Then Fei Zhong approached King Zhou and suggested to him that Ji Chang should effectively be destroyed lest he attempts to join forces with either Jiang Wenhuan of the East or E Shun of the South — the sons of the deceased dukes — due to his secret “inner treachery”. By observing the former during his farewell feast, Fei Zhong could effectively determine if he was truly loyal to the dynasty. For if he seemed the least bit treacherous, he should be disposed of immediately.

As Ji Chang thus presented his farewell to the king and Prime Minister Bi Gan, he rode to the Changting Pavilion where he was warmly welcomed by many high ranked ministers. With happiness and due dignity present within each minister's heart, Ji Chang was merrily treated to volleys of wine in a celebratory feast. Once both Fei Zhong and You Hun arrived shortly, each minister became displeased and dispersed immediately at the sight of such criminals in their presence. With Ji Chang now alone with Fei Zhong and You Hun, the latter presented forth an especially large jug of wine equipped with extra–large cups for the former to drink from it.

As Ji Chang thus happily guzzled down several glasses, and became somewhat drunk, Fei Zhong purposely asked the former the fate of the Shang Dynasty. After stating that King Zhou would be the last monarch of the dynasty, and his rule would last for another decade or so, Ji Chang additionally foretold the rather strange death that Fei Zhong and You Hun would experience in the future: *“they will be frozen to death in ice.”*

With expressive condolences towards Ji Chang's prophecies, Fei Zhong and You Hun shortly returned to the Fairy Longevity Palace to tell the king how truly foul the duke was. As Chao Tian — one of the Chao Twins — was thus deployed to bring back Ji Chang immediately by decree of King Zhou, Chao Tian arrived shortly before Ji Chang and rode back to the capital.

Once Ji Chang was presented before King Zhou, and received the death punishment, Bi Gan defended the former, saying that divination was simply meant to predict the success or failure of future events — and was most definitely not invented by Ji Chang or used for the sole purpose to create his own rash predictions whatsoever. After thus being forced to make a divination to see if it would come true, Ji Chang stated that the Ancestral Temple should burn to ashes at noon the following day.

With such a prophecy being reciprocated in real form, King Zhou flew back in astonishment at Ji Chang's sage-like qualities. However, it was concluded that Ji Chang would escape the death punishment — but would be forced to live within Morning Song's Yaoli District as to ensure no future trouble was caused through such divination. Once peace was to be restored in the capital, Ji Chang would be freed from such containment. Bowing in gratitude towards the king's grace, Ji Chang was welcomed merrily into Yaoli as a leader of the people who possessed void hate towards King Zhou.

One day into the future, Prince Yellow Flying Tiger received a report that Jiang Wenhuan was attacking Youhun Pass, while E Shun of the south was present at Sanshan. Now being fully rational over the rebellion of four-hundred marquises at present, he sighed with discontent before ordering his generals to protect the passes with all due haste.

Chapter 12

The Birth of Nezha

Present at Chentang Pass was none other than the renowned military commander Li Jing, who possessed the rare ability to travel through ground, metal, wood, or fire as taught by Superior man Woe Evading Sage. Currently with two sons — Muzha and Jinzha — and his wife, Madam Yin, Li Jing was in a strange situation: his wife was seemingly pregnant for over three years and sixth months, but never progressed into labor.

However, as Yin had a strange dream one night, she suddenly gave birth to this strange child the following morning. With maidens rushing about saying that a demon was present in Yin's chambers, Li Jing immediately rushed forth into her room and cleaved in two a strange fleshy ball that rolled to and fro across the floor. Within the ball emerged a small young child with hair as white as snow with a gleaming golden bracelet on his right wrist. Taking the young child into his arms, Li Jing and his wife were both very delighted at the sight of their new son.

As Fairy Primordial arrived shortly, and was happily welcomed into their territory, the former took hold of the child and declared his name to be '*Nezha*'. After containing consent that Primordial could adopt the child as his own disciple, Li Jing continued to train his soldiers fervently throughout the following seven years of time. As Nezha ventured outside of the pass one day with a guard after his seven-year nurturing under Fairy Primordial, Nezha arrived before the Nine Bed River which sparkled with the light of the sun. Determined to take a bath in this stream as an escape from the great heat of summer, Nezha immediately took his clothes off and used the Sky Budding Damask around his neck to wipe his body. Little did he know that each time this scarf touched the water the surface turned red when it swished about, and the ground beneath shook violently.

Ao Guang, the dragon king of the East Sea, thus ordered his yaksha⁶ scout, Li Gan, to find out the cause to each consistent tremors. After realizing Nezha to be the source of such tremors, Li Gan lashed his axe violently at the former in great rage — but only ended up losing his life shortly by Nezha's Universal Ring.

As Ao Guang was informed of his scout's death, Ao Bing eased his father Ao Guang with word that he would find out the reason for such an action. Experiencing great ridicule and arrogance upon the meeting of Nezha, Third Prince Ao Bing lashed forward his great renowned lance of jade. However, using both of his legendary items with synchronized ability, Nezha managed to strike the former dead — who thus returned to his original form, a silver dragon.

Being informed by Ao Bing's soldiers that his third son lost his life in addition, Ao Guang's rage pierced the very heavens as he transformed himself into a scholar to immediately see Li Jing on the issue. After angrily elaborating the issue to Li Jing, Ao Guang demanded to see Nezha in person without any moment to waste.

6. *Yaksha* is a nature-spirit-like that usually guards treasures hidden in caves and tree roots. He or she may be a friendly nature-fairy ally, but on the other hand also a dark ghost-like, which haunts in the ways and wilderness, and devours the travelers.

When Nezha appeared before Ao Guang and apologetically handed him his third son's tendon that was previously ripped out, the former flew into greater contempt declaring fully that he would personally see the Jade Emperor to ensure there punishment.

Feeling fully responsible for the great agony and frustration that his mother and father were now going through, Nezha declared that would see his master, Fairy Primordial, to see how he should deal with Ao Guang to ensure his family's safety. Using a dust cloud to move with great speed through the air, Nezha arrived shortly before his master's residence at Qianyuan Mountain.

Knowing fully that the minor actions of the past were destined to occur, and such a matter was not worthy to be placed before the Jade Emperor himself, Fairy Primordial first drew invisibility charms on Nezha and then sent him to the Virtue Gate of the Celestial Palace with his set instructions.

Arriving in moderate time before the Virtue Gate, Nezha gazed in great admiration at the beauty and elegance that revolved around him; such a sight truly was far too great to ever be present within earth. As Ao Guang eventually arrived through the gate, he rode swiftly towards the South Celestial Gate — determined indeed to see the Jade Emperor at once.

Yet realizing that such a gate was closed, a large pain suddenly erupted forth in his back as Nezha's Universal Ring landed a crucial blow to the former. Falling to the ground with Nezha grabbing hold of his neck, Ao Guang was truly in a difficult situation.

Chapter 13

Combat between two Fairies

As Nezha toppled about the dragon king and began beating him violently with his fist, the latter became even more infuriated. Determined to force Ao Guang to give up and return with him to the Chentang Pass, Nezha tore apart each individual scale upon his sides — effectively forcing the king to give in to such detriment. After Ao Guang had been ordered to take the form of a small lizard lest he attempted to escape, Nezha returned immediately to Chentang Pass in mere moments.

Upon his return before Li Jing, Ao Guang resumed his original form, stamped his foot in unparalleled rage, and vowed to gather the dragon kings of each of the four seas in his next attempt to see the Jade Emperor. With Li Jing in a state of rejuvenated frustration, Nezha effectively calmed his father down by stating that he had decreed existence upon the Red Dust by the Jade Emptiness Palace; and if any trouble was to be presented before the Jade Emperor in the future, his master, Fairy Primordial, would take care of the situation with precise accuracy.

As Nezha thus calmly walked off to his parent's garden after placing confidence in his father, he soon became rather bored and decided to climb the neighboring pass's watchtower to enjoy the afternoon breeze. After gazing forth at the great view before him, Nezha picked up a bow equipped with a set of three arrows that sat at the edge of this large tower. Deciding to better his archery technique, he shot one of three arrows — which glistened with brilliant crimson — into the southwest.

Truly Nezha little did realize that this bow was wielded by none other than Emperor Xuanyuan within the past — for only one of immortal ability could have the strength to wield it. With even greater misfortune, this arrow happened to pierce the throat of Blue Cloud Lad of White Bone Cave on Skeleton Mountain.

As such an incident was immediately informed to Lady Rock, the mistress of the cave, the latter vowed to attain revenge against Li Jing, the conjectured criminal of such an incident. Following Lady Rock's immediate arrival before Chentang Pass, she wrapped up Li Jing with her yellow-scarved genie without a moment of hesitation. After thus returning to her mountain with the latter, Li Jing told Lady Rock that he would immediately find out who the true murderer was upon his inspection of the sacred arrow.

As Li Jing called for Nezha and shortly realized that he was indeed the criminal behind this new incident, the former led Nezha to Skeleton Mountain atop a dust cloud. Once Pretty Cloud Lad, the secondary disciple under Lady Rock, approached Nezha to call him in to the cavern, Nezha determined this to be the perfect chance to knock the former out cold due to the calamity that should befall him in very short time anyways. Seeing her disciple near death on the ground, Lady Rock began to lash her sword at the latter in even greater rage.

Unfortunately for Nezha, his legendary items were absorbed into the former's sleeves with ease when he attempted to unleash them — and he thus had no choice but to flee immediately to his master at Qianyuan Mountain. Hiding in the peach garden immediately upon his arrival, Fairy Primordial left his domain to confront Lady Rock as she pursued the former. After yelling profusely at Fairy Primordial in her desire to confront Nezha, the latter retorted by saying that Nezha was destined to perform such calamities — and such an incident was only minor and of no real significance compared to his true future performance.

Realizing that his words were unfeared, and her only method to get past his resolve would be to approach his master at the Jade Emptiness Palace; the former decided to duel Fairy Primordial to prove her skill as being greater. Even with her magical item — the Dragon Beard Handkerchief — she proved inferior as the latter evaded and negated her every blow like the flow of water. Thus trapping her easily inside his great Nine Dragon Divine Fire Coverlet, Fairy Primordial glanced down at Nezha — who peered outside the cave — to head immediately to his family's residence due to the Jade Emperor's consensus of Ao Guang's request.

Thus telling Nezha what he should do during his arrival, Fairy Primordial clapped his hands to put the irrational Lady Rock to her rest in a pit of flames. Approaching the four dragon kings, who arrived shortly at his house, Nezha began to break his bones, gouge out his intestines, and slit his belly as a representation of the punishment that he deserves — and the innocence that was deserving of his parents. Seeing Nezha dead in a large pool of blood, Ao Guang and the other dragon kings consented to his sacrifice — and declared his parent's as innocent and free of any form of punishment.

Chapter 14

Reincarnation with Lotus Flowers

The soul of Nezha appeared before Fairy Primordial recently after his death. The fairy latter told Nezha to approach his mother in a dream and tell her to construct a temple on Jade Screen Mountain that was to be worshiped with incense and candles for over three years of time. Following the three years, Nezha would be able to reincarnate into his original human form once again. Thus continuously pleading to his mother for the construction of his temple so that he could rest in peace, she finally ordered her attendants to do as such — resulting in the temple's completion following the passage of ten months.

As Li Jing was naturally not informed of such a construction lest he attempted to tear it down in the future, many people soon gathered to worship before the beautifully articulated temple due to the seemingly good fortune that resulted in such worship. Descending one day from the Wild Horse Mountain after thoroughly drilling his troops, Li Jing noticed many individuals gathering around a neighboring temple that was supposedly dedicated to "God Nezha". Burning the temple down shortly and calming the people with the truth, Li Jing returned immediately to see his wife and reprimand her for such one-sided thinking.

As Nezha heard what happened through his temple secretaries, he headed to see his master at Qianyuan Mountain to explain the current situation. Realizing that Nezha was to be reincarnated as soon as possible without a single moment of delay, Fairy Primordial ordered his attendant, Golden Haze Lad, to retrieve two lotus flowers and three lotus leaves from the lotus pond immediately. Performing a special process with his lotus leaves and flowers shortly after being received, Nezha suddenly leapt forth in a new human body without the slightest defect following a puff of smoke. Bowing in unparalleled gratitude before his master, Nezha was trained immediately with the Fire-Tip Lance combined with his new Wind-Fire Wheels, and ended up mastering such an art in very short time.

Before leaving Qianyuan to attain revenge against Li Jing, Fairy Primordial handed the former his original legendary items — after being retrieved off of Lady Rock's corpse — along with a golden brick that could change its mass at the user's will. Riding upon his flaming wheels with quick pace, and arriving before Li Jing's residence shortly, several guards reported the former's arrival — and Li Jing had little choice but to see if what they said was really true. Appearing before Nezha in great shock due to his miraculous return, Li Jing slashed his lance upon the former — but only ended up fleeing to the southeast after experiencing the celestial renown that Nezha now possessed.

Pursuing the latter with great ease with his Wind-Fire Wheels, Li Jing knew that his life was to end shortly and thus fled for his life at the fastest speed he could muster. As Li Jing happened to fortunately run into his second son, Muzha, along the way, he immediately explained the situation with quick words while hiding behind the former. Appearing before Muzha, Nezha soon learned that the person standing before him was his second brother — and he thus told the latter his reason for such an action. Without any hesitation for sympathy on Nezha's part due to unfilial behavior, Muzha lashed his sword forth at the former — but only

ended up being knocked in the stomach by Nezha's golden brick after leaving an opening. Falling to the ground in moderate unconsciousness after receiving such a heavy blow, Nezha seized this chance to pursue Li Jing further in his amusement. Resolved that he would only end up with further calamity if such shameful continued, Li Jing prostrated himself on the ground in preparation for his ritual suicide. Just before such could be performed, Master of Outstanding Culture⁷ suddenly appeared to stop the former with immediate pace.

With a large revolving lotus within his palm, the Taoist immediately ordered Li Jing to hide in his neighboring cavern while he personally confronts the pursuer. As Nezha thus arrived before Master of Outstanding Culture, and realized that the former was hiding Li Jing in his cave, Nezha boasted that he would slash him to pieces with his lance if he was to continue to shelter his father without understanding the true situation at hand. After telling Master of Outstanding Culture his name, and the respective master that he had trained under, Nezha began to lunge forward at the Taoist master knowing it probably wasn't the best choice.

Immediately parrying Nezha's lance with the lotus flower within his palm, Master of Outstanding Culture unleashed forth his renowned Dragon Bound Stake — effectively placing the former's mind into great confusion and thus resulting in easy capture. As Nezha shortly realized that he was completely bound to a golden stake with rings around his arms and legs, Master of Outstanding Culture ordered his disciple, Jinzha, to beat him with his cane as punishment. After they both returned to their cave after giving Nezha a long and severe beating, Fairy Primordial arrived from the heavens to meet with Master of Outstanding Culture. Walking into the Taoist's cave while ignoring Nezha's pleas completely, the former declared to Outstanding Culture that he sent him here for the sole purpose of temperament. With Nezha thus being set free shortly, he kneeled with dignity before his master within the cavern.

As Li Jing was reprimanded for the cruelty of burning down Nezha's sacrificial temple, he was soon dismissed but ordered to show no further animosity towards Nezha from this point on — and vice-versa. With Nezha thus being ordered to keep watch of the cave entrance while the two superior men plaid a round of chess, the former could not contain himself and left to pursue Li Jing immediately atop his flaming wheels. Believing to be fooled completely by the previous immortal due to Nezha's refreshed pursuit, Li Jing fortunately caught site of a man sitting on the side of a pine tree — and thus called to the latter for assistance.

Running up to the man and hiding behind him, Nezha arrived shortly and explained the situation to this man, determined to vent his hatred. Giving in to Nezha's furiousness, the man spat on Li Jing and then clapped his hand to the former's back.

As Li Jing was ordered by this man to fight back Nezha with little other choice, Nezha soon realized that his father's strength was far greater than originally — and thus the man standing at the pine tree must be none other than a Taoist who was a master at the enhancement arts.

7. "Culture" also may be translated as "Colours."

Realizing that if he effectively destroyed the Taoist, his father's strength would not be surpassing his own, Nezha lunged forward and slashed his lance into the latter's forehead. As a lotus flower appeared before the his face to negate Nezha's blow, the Taoist angrily unleashed forth his great golden pagoda from the heavens to trap the former within as punishment.

Clapping his hands to additionally signal a great fire to rage within the pagoda, Nezha had no choice but to beg for mercy and declare his acknowledgement to his father — thus seizing the chance of being set free. Realizing that he possessed not a single burn from the Taoist's great fire, Nezha deduced the former's ability to be none other than Genjutsu.⁸ Threatening to burn Nezha further in his pagoda if he did not kowtow to his father with needed respect, the former had no choice but to do so in a rageful state.

As the Taoist thus declared to Li Jing that he would teach him the burning pagoda art as a resistance against Nezha's potential future assaults, Nezha dismissed it first — and thus quickly rode back to Qianyuan Mountain in disappointment over his sullied vengeance. Now declaring his name to be Burning Lamp of Mount Divine Hawk, the former told Li Jing to forget about fame and riches under the Shang Dynasty and to live as a hermit in the neighboring mountain valleys until the preordained assault upon the dynasty comes his way; at that time he should assist King Wu in the campaign.

8. *Genjutsu* may relate to the *Kenjutsu* that is a general term for swordsmanship said originated with the samurai class of feudal Japan, which means "*the art of the sword.*" However, along this book "*Genjutsu*" also adds the use of magical skills.

Chapter 15

Jiang Ziya leaves Mount Kunlun

Living within the Jade Emptiness Palace on Mount Kunlun, Celestial Primogenitor was honored as Grand Master of Chan Taoism. Through a past meeting between the heads of Chan and Jie Taoism, and Confucianism, 365 gods would be chosen in the future as to represent the constellations, stars, sacred mountains, clouds, and the such. Such a creation served as to set each individual who died for their respective cause in the future war between the Shang Dynasty and the coming Zhou, to be reborn as a guardian of the Red Dust to ensure their individual resolve lives throughout the stars. After the Shang Dynasty falls, Jiang Ziya was destined to be the chooser of such an outcome.

As Celestial Primogenitor thus ascended his Eight Treasure and Cloud Radiance Throne one day, and asked for Jiang Ziya to appear before him, the latter knelt with great dignity towards his master for over forty years of valued service. Telling Jiang Ziya immediately his destined assistance to the sage king and his service as commander and prime minister in the name of the future Zhou Dynasty, the latter became rather discomfited over such a sudden statement and desired to stay by his master for eternity instead. With little other choice then to obey his master's declaration, Jiang Ziya received a prophecy from Primogenitor before taking his leave of the mountain with tears flowing from his eyes.

Realizing his blatant confusion as to where he should start in his journey, he decided to head immediately to Song Village to see his sworn brother, Song Yiren. Arriving at the latter's residence shortly and offering his condolences, the two sworn brothers sat beside each other with cups of fine wine. After discussing with Jiang Ziya various events and other incidents, Song decided that his old friend was in need of a wife so that his family line could continue on — and thus the latter left to see Ma Hong to set up a future engagement with his daughter.

Returning later to tell Jiang Ziya his success, the two prepared for an auspicious day in which such a marriage could take place. Following the shortly arrived marriage with Madame Ma, the two lived for some time under the support of Song Yiren, who was exceedingly rich and possessed high status within the community.

As Jiang Ziya began to make bamboo rakes as a form of business at Capital Morning Song lest anything was to happen with Yiren's support within the future, he unfortunately was not able to even sell a single rake — and thus returned to his original residence with great misery and frustration in short time. After attaining suggestion from Yiren that flour made from ground wheat would result in much better sale within the capital, Jiang Ziya carried the flour to Morning Song the following day in great confidence.

However, disaster only became greater as Jiang Ziya was tackled furiously by a horse raging from Morning Song's drilling ground, resulting in flour spilling in every direction. Returning to his residence without a single cent made from the flour, Jiang Ziya began to violently quarrel with his wife over such ill fortune experienced in the past. As Yiren took his old friend aside to comfort him over his

bad luck, the former declared to Jiang Ziya that he could work as an accountant or shopkeeper daily in one of fifty restaurants that he possesses within Morning Song. With immense gratitude over his brother's suggestion, Jiang Ziya assigned himself to a large restaurant that neighbored the southern gate of Morning Song — the busiest section within the city region. Unfortunately, however, every individual present within the city remained indoors due to a terrible rainstorm that ran amok throughout the entire day.

Without ever attaining a single customer, Jiang Ziya forced his staff to devour all prepared food lest it was to spoil over their terrible luck. As his sworn brother followed by handing Ziya a few talents of silver to buy and sell livestock within the capital, the latter did as he advised and thus spent several days buying sheep and pigs for further profit. Driving a great number of animals to the market place at Morning Song the next day, Jiang Ziya hardly realized that slaughtering livestock was strictly prohibited lest Sky became angry and expanded the capital's days of drought.

With guards thus running at the former for his intentions to make profit from the slaughterhouses, Jiang Ziya had no choice but to flee for his life while abandoning his animals. Following his return back to Song Yiren, the latter simply smiled while declaring to Jiang Ziya that they should both head to the back garden and drink away their past sorrows.

Chapter 16

Burning the Jade Lute Specter

Entering the back garden shortly, and gazing forth with keen delight at the beauty around him, Jiang Ziya suggested to Song Yiren that a tower should be constructed within its vacant space as to ensure great fortune with geomancy. After being told by the latter that such an action was constantly performed in the past, but the tower mysteriously burned down each consecutive time, Jiang Ziya realized that spirits must have been at work previously.

As the tower's beams were thus risen during the auspicious day ensured of success by Ziya, a rather fiercely expected wind rose about while Song Yiren entertained the guards in the front hall. Gazing forth at five large fiery spirits within the air, Jiang Ziya conjectured that they had evil intentions behind their former actions — and thus sent a thunder crack throughout the sky to force the spirits to kneel before him. Having mercy on the spirits for originally being animals and not knowing what true trouble that they caused in the past, Jiang Ziya declared that they should each head to the Western Foothills for now until he finds a laboring job for them to perform when he eventually arrives.

Following their immediate consent and departure, Madame Ma and Sun gazed at Jiang Ziya from the shadows wondering as to why he was talking to himself in such a strange manner. Explaining such an action as being incomprehensible to the former, they soon realized that Jiang Ziya was well skilled in the art of fortune-telling. As Madame Sun thus urged her husband to find a shop for Jiang Ziya to use for his fortune-telling, Song Yiren declared shortly that he would tell some of his servants to rent a house neighboring the south gate district of Morning Song for his future use.

With the fortune-telling house thus being opened after a short while, Jiang Ziya waited patiently for over four months before finally attaining his first customer, a woodcutter by the name of Liu Qian. Unfortunately for Ziya however, Liu was known for his fierceness and brutality. After declaring that if the former's divination was incorrect, he would close down his shop. And if he was correct, he would reward him with twenty ounces of copper. Jiang Ziya gave him this prophecy: *"If you are to head south, you will find a man under a willow tree that will give you 120 coppers, four dishes of fresh cake, and two cups of wine."*

Even though Liu Qian stated his prediction as being far from accurate, he ventured south as told — thus appearing before an old man under a large willow tree as previously stated. After effectively receiving 100 coppers from the old man following the purchase of his well-fined firewood, Liu was offered wine and refreshments immediately. Once Liu had realized that the wine bowl filled exactly two cups to the very brim, he sat in astonishment at such precise accuracy.

Upon his receiving of 20 coppers in addition due to the old man's gracious mood, Liu Qian ran back to the south gate district stating that a celestial being was indeed present. Being far too astonished and exited over Jiang Ziya's celestial accuracy to pay him any money, Liu Qian decided to grab hold of a neighboring yamen business manager and force him to have his fortune foretold instead. As the

former told this man he would pay if Jiang Ziya's prophecy proved false, the manager had little choice but to go along with such a deal. With precise accuracy in his future prediction as well, Jiang Ziya's fortune-telling shop soared in popularity throughout the capital in rather quick pace.

Following the passage of six months, Jiang Ziya's name soared throughout the region — attracting many foreigners from far and wide to experience his grand insight. As Jade, the lute specter under Empress Nu Wa, bade farewell to Daji one morning, she heard many great noises beneath her while soaring through the heavens on her spectral cloud. Realizing that the area beneath her was a fortune-telling center by the great clamor around her, she transformed into an exceedingly beautiful woman before moving swiftly through the crowds in order to attain her own prediction.

Allowing for her fortune to be immediately read before all others after seeing that she was indeed a specter despite her appearance, Jiang Ziya grabbed hold of her palm and held on tightly for an excruciating period of time. Crying in discomfort at Jiang's action, more people gathered around ordering Jiang to stop his action for further trouble would result. Not letting this chance dare slip away from his grasp, Jiang Ziya seized the moment to crack her skull with his ink slab in one vile thrust while still holding on to her palm lest her true specter form could escape.

As Prime Minister Bi Gan attained full word of this, Jiang Ziya appeared shortly before the former, still holding the visibly dead woman's palm, while exclaiming his full reasoning behind such an action. Leaving the southern gate district with Jiang Ziya lest a great riot was to ensue, they both headed to the palace gates while the former presented himself before King Zhou at the Star Picking Mansion to explain the situation.

With Jiang Ziya thus being sent before the king, he kneeled with deep respect while declaring to the former that he could essentially prove that this woman was indeed a specter if she was burned in a fierce fire for over four hours with charms stamped on her breasts and back. As such an action was fully performed, Bi Gan and King Zhou sat in utter astonishment at Jiang Ziya's most extraordinary potential.

Chapter 17

The Serpent Pit

As everyone present gazed at Jade's ability to withstand the fierce fire without the slightest burn on her body, Jiang Ziya unleashed divine fire from his mouth by tempering both his vital energies and spirit into breath. Telling Bi Gan and King Zhou to temporarily head inside lest they were harmed, Jiang Ziya summoned forth a large thunderbolt to completely destroy Jade, thus leaving her as nothing more than a large lute on the ground.

Daji, who saw her sister meet such a disastrous end, suggested to the king that Ziya should be appointed to a high position — while still harboring evil intentions to kill the former in one way or the other to attain revenge. After thus being appointed as Junior Minister and Director of the Imperial Observatory, Jiang Ziya celebrated for several days with Song Yiren and other relatives in congratulations.

While meanwhile placing the attained lute in a position in which it had free access to the spiritual essences of Sky, earth, the sun, and the moon, Daji could effectively revive Jade after around five years of time. As Daji began to sing and dance in King Zhou's entertainment one day within the Star Picking Belvedere, the former noticed seventy individual maids who only shed tears in silence instead of applauding her beautiful performance.

Realizing shortly that these maidens originally served under Queen Jiang, Daji suggested to keep them contained temporarily within the court prison while she supervises the construction of a large pit — 240 feet in circumference and 50 in depth — that was to be full of countless lethal snakes collected from each potential household within the capital. Once King Zhou fully unleashed this decree, people from every corner rushed about to find as many serpents as possible — even to the extent of heading to countries beyond Morning Song just to meet the king's demand lest they received punishment in any form. As Supreme Minister Jiao Ge inspected as to why people ran about with baskets in their hands all day long, without any successful information attained, the former discussed this issue with other high-ranking ministers in order to devise a way to uncover the reason.

After attaining full consent on his plan, Yellow Flying Tiger approached the Chief of Guards and offered him a grand reward if he uncovers the truth from His Majesty. With the pit being essentially filled completely with snakes following the passage of five days, Daji told the king that the maidens should be stripped completely before being thrown alive into the pit to be devoured. With King Zhou's immediate consent for the maidens to be thrown into the pit shortly that day, Jiao Ge attained word of the former's atrocity by the Chief of Guards afterwards.

Being stunned with horror and anger at such an outrageous decree, Jiao Ge presented himself before the king immediately. Yelling at the king for his behavior with full words of devotion in the name of the dynasty, Jiao Ge was soon ordered to be thrown into the snake pit in addition for his insolence. Not allowing for such a shameful death to be his end, Jiao Ge smashed his head into the ground instead as an act of suicide. As the maidens were thus shortly thrown into the pit without a

moment of hesitation, King Zhou patted Daji on the back in praise of her ingenious methods of torture. After Daji had suggested a 'Meat Forest' to be constructed to the left of the snake pit that possessed thick branches hung with slices of meat all around as a creative punishment game to future disobeying ministers, she additionally suggested the '*Wine Pool*,' an exceedingly deep pit with wine to drink from for the same playful purpose of the former.

Upon the consenting of such strange "torture devices", Daji added in later to King Zhou that both the eunuchs and the palace maids should physically wrestle each other for a set period of time; whoever seemed the weaker would have their bodies thrown within the Meat Forest after being beaten to death by golden hammers. Following King Zhou's consent, this became his favored form of entertainment from that point onwards.

The true reason behind why Daji suggested such an outrageous method of torture, however, was to secretly feast on the blood and flesh of the deceased within the Meat Forest while in her fox sprite state throughout each night. Sitting down one day and remembering the humiliation she felt at the death of her sister, Daji drew a magnificent building complex on a sheet of paper and brought it before King Zhou at the Star Picking Belvedere as a chance to attain her long awaited revenge.

Telling the former that this building — newly dubbed as the '*Happy Terrace*' — should possess jeweled halls and towers and stand forty-nine feet high. She exclaimed that it was the perfect manifestation of his dignity and prestige as ruler of the Shang Dynasty. Resembling jade as beautifully articulated as a celestial palace, celestial beings would be bound to appear for feasts and kneel in respect before King Zhou's magnificent glory. Due to additionally adding the appearance of celestial beings within this terrace, Daji could effectively convince the king that Jiang Ziya was the only present official within the kingdom that was able to perform such an unrealistic task.

Following the king's consent, and the order for Jiang Ziya to appear before him immediately, Jiang realized through divination that he was destined to meet one form of disaster shortly. Knowing that he most likely could never attain any chance to repay Prime Minister Bi Gan's kindness within the future, he appeared before the latter quickly and handed him a set of instructions lest the prime minister was to meet some form of calamity at a later point. As Jiang Ziya thus appeared before King Zhou and was handed the project's constructional report, he thought to himself how to effectively put reformation into the king's thinking and excuse such a project with full rationality.

Chapter 18

Flight from Morning Song

As King Zhou asked Jiang Ziya his thoughts on the project, the latter stated that it would take around thirty five years to produce considering the current labor with the people and the additional lack within the national treasury. Unfortunately however, Jiang Ziya foolishly went too far with his words by additionally stating the king's deluded qualities. And was thus ordered for an immediate execution without even considering his former reasoning.

Running for his life lest he was caught by King Zhou's guards, Jiang Ziya soon approached the Nine Dragon Bridge and jumped into the river beneath after confirming to everyone around him that it would be his act of suicide. Gazing into the water and not noticing his body — or any movement at that — the guards were rather confused but reported the case to the king nonetheless.

Little did anyone truly understand that Jiang Ziya mounted an underwater cloud and flew away in reality. Being fully resolved to search the waters afterwards lest Ziya was playing any form of trickery, the guards gazed continuously at the waters beneath the Nine Dragon Bridge before having their reasoning checked by Yang Ren. As Daji suggested afterwards to King Zhou that Chong Houhu was the best choice for the Happy Terrace's production, the latter ordered the secretariat to head immediately to Houhu's dukedom. Being stopped by Yang Ren along the way, Yang Ren was shortly informed of the Happy Terrace and thus headed immediately to the Star Picking Mansion to discuss the current circumstances with King Zhou.

As Yang Ren placed forth his suggestions in a manner that upset the king as usual, the latter ordered for Yang Ren's eyes to be gouged out as punishment. Once the former sat in agony and disgust as such a cruel action was performed for little reason, Superior man Virtue of the Pure Void on Mount Green Peak heard his cries of pain and ordered his genie to take action with quick pace. As such an action was effectively carried out with a grand wind-sandstorm, the unconscious Yang Ren was shortly placed before the feet of Pure Void. Placing two celestial elixirs into Yang's eye sockets, and blowing celestial breath into the his face, Pure Void immediately awoke the former.

Now in possession of two small hands that protruded from his sockets with one eye in each palm, Yang Ren vowed to serve eternally under his new master upon the hearing of the latter's kindness. Meanwhile, Chong Houhu had begun the construction of the Happy Terrace that not only forced thousands into exceedingly deep labor but additionally killed many out of exhaustion and turmoil.

Returning to his original residence shortly, Jiang Ziya approached Madame Ma and explained his desire to head quickly to the Western Foothills and attain the position of prime minister — as was his destiny; for if she was to stay by his side, she would enjoy endless honor and great fame — but Madame Ma unfortunately declined such an offer due to her lack of confidence in the former, and thinking of him as no more than an unrealistic failure who simply had luck in the past.

After a note of divorce was officially created so that both could part their ways justifiably, Jiang Ziya was invited by Song Yiren to have one final farewell drink in the name of their eternal friendship. Parting from his old friend with tears flowing from his eyes, Jiang Ziya rode onwards throughout the countryside before coming upon several hundred refugees stationed within Lintong Pass. Unfortunately however, all refugees present intended on voyaging through the five passes but were firmly held off by the garrison commander known as Zhang Feng. With due confidence and reassurance to the people, Jiang Ziya personally went forth to discuss the current circumstances with the commander.

Unfortunately however, Zhang Feng strongly declined Jiang Ziya's offer to allow the people passage due to his firmness in upholding the law and decreed by the king. Jiang Ziya thus had little choice but to inform the people of the commander's words while telling them set instructions: *"At dusk, you are to have your eyes firmly closed. A fierce sound of wind will rush about — but at no account should you open your eyes unless you wish to fall to your death."* Kowtowing to Mountain Kunlun while reciting many incantations, every refugee was lifted throughout the air by a fierce wind and soon placed before the Golden Chicken Range — which was beyond the capital's five passes.

After expressing their deep gratitude towards Jiang Ziya, every individuals stationed themselves thereon within Phoenix City to live out their days in well-deserved peace. As Bo Yi Kao sat discussing current affairs with San Yisheng, the former declared his clear resolve to head to Morning Song immediately in order to prove the faith and love he possesses towards his father by freeing him from his chains as previously ordained. Even with San Yisheng's suggestions not to, such words meant nothing compared to the pain that Bo Yi Kao felt within his heart — and he thus made preparations for his departure.

Chapter 19

Gifts to the King

Holding San Yisheng's words very dearly, Bo Yi Kao still believed that his actions were for the best — and thus informed his younger brother, Ji Fa, of his ascension as the temporarily ruler of the Western Foothills until he returns from the capital after around two or three months. Thus selecting an auspicious day for his departure, Bo Yi Kao soon departed to Morning Song following his final toast of farewell to the civil and military officials at the Changting Pavilion.

Arriving before Morning Song in short time without much effort sacrificed, Bo Yi Kao stationed himself within an official hostel before leaving to the palace gate in mourning robes the following day. Not daring to enter through the gates with his memorial lest his aura of dutifulness and loyalty to the king swayed in any way, Bo Yi Kao was approached by none other than Prime Minister Bi Gan one day. Kowtowing before the latter due to his past kindness, Bo Yi Kao shortly told him the tributes that he should present to the king: the Seven Fragrance Carriage (which was solely used by Emperor Xuanyuan), a sobriety carpet, a white-faced monkey, and ten maidens of exceeded beauty.

Realizing that Bo Yi Kao simply had filial intentions backing his resolve, Bi Gan immediately informed the king of the former's desire for audience. Kneeling with unparalleled respect before King Zhou while elaborating the reason for his appearance, the latter was deeply touched by his filial piety and courtesy and thus ordered for him to stand on his feet. As Daji gazed at Bo Yi Kao with lust over his handsomeness, she informed the king of the boy's great reputation in the art of music.

Being promised by King Zhou that if his skills were to exceed his expectations he would allow both him and his father to leave the capital with open arms, the latter reluctantly accepted such a challenge. Playing the zither with keen ability and prowess, Daji and King Zhou alike were very pleased — and thus ordered a banquet at the Star Picking Mansion in his honor.

Gazing at Bo Yi Kao from across the table during their banquet, Daji lusted to have sex with him no matter what it would take. Thus desiring the former over a deluded old man like King Zhou, Daji told the king that Bo Yi Kao should stay at the capital not only to teach her lessons with the zither, but to additionally spread such beautiful music throughout the whole capital for the benefit of everyone. Following King Zhou's consenting, Daji brought forth many glasses of fine wine for the former as an additional feast until he was essentially intoxicated and put forth to his bed for rest. Now sitting alone with Bo Yi Kao and her own zither in hand, Daji was thoroughly told of each individual trait possessed within the beautiful instrument.

However, she cared little about such; her only desire in mind was to arouse Bo Yi Kao in any way possible — and many amorous smiles, glances, and sweet words were thus performed. Realizing that her actions were meaningless, as the former never even paid any attention to them, Daji invited Bo Yi Kao to sit by her side at the honor of being her tutor during a newly prepared feast.

Being reluctant to preserve his propriety and righteousness than to sit by the Queen's side due to his lowly position, Daji had little choice but to continue the zither lessons instead. During their continued lessons together Daji declared that if she could sit on his lap, she could effectively make rapid progress as he holds her hand while guiding through the strings. Unfortunately however, Bo Yi Kao irrationally yelled at the former stating that such actions would be great shame to the title of Queen and thus declined immediately.

Dismissing him to his quarters, Daji informed King Zhou the following morning in her rage that Kao did little more than seduce her the former night rather than assist with the zither. Being approached the following morning by King Zhou and Daji, Bo Yi Kao was reprimanded for his slow tutoring performance the night before, and was thus ordered to play another tune to redeem himself. After playing his zither with keen ability, he placed forth his white-faced monkey at Daji's request — thus enchanting all around with its superb music and synchronization.

However, this monkey's music was used to bring out any neighboring evil spirit to the forefront; as Daji's true form came forth in her enchantment, the monkey seized this chance to lunge forward and attack her. Falling to the ground dead by a swift blow of King Zhou's hand, Bo Yi Kao was arrested but freed after convincing the former that it was nothing more than an undomesticated animal of little intelligence — and it most definitely didn't have the capability of plotting to hurt Daji.

Thus being ordered by the king to play one more tune with his zither to see if he truly reflects loyalty and sincerity, Bo Yi Kao began playing his instrument with many defiant words as a full expression of his hatred towards those who defy integrity and righteousness. Solely intending to get back at Daji for her unethical manner previously, and preserving his loyalty to the king in every way, Bo Yi Kao attached a long blade to his zither and threw it directly at Daji's face in an attempt to put an end to her life even if it cost his own. Fortunately for Daji however, she managed to leap out of the way while tumbling to the ground in shock.

As King Zhou roared with rage at such an unexpected action, he ordered the guards to throw Bo Yi Kao into the snake pit as punishment. Begging the king to do what she wished with him, Daji ordered the executioners to nail Bo Yi Kao's hands and feet to a board while his flesh was cut from his body piece by piece. Swearing at Daji up until his last dying breath, it was soon decided that his flesh would be made into small cakes and sent to Ji Chang to determine if he was worthy to be freed. If he ate the cakes, he was ordinary and thus should be freed. But if Ji Chang refused to eat them out of personal views, he was to be executed as to destroy any potential trouble in the future.

Chapter 20

San Yisheng bribes the corrupt Courtiers

Being imprisoned within Youli for seven years of time, Ji Chang studied the theory of the eight diagrams throughout each passing moment while writing a book known as the *'Book of Changes'* during his confinement. While sitting in his studies and performing divination with gold coins one day, believing that something unfortunate had taken place in his family, Ji Chang soon realized that his son, Bo Yi Kao, had met a cruel and unfortunate death. Being approached shortly by a palace messenger, and offered three large cakes of deer flesh as a token of King Zhou's respect for the former, Ji Chang happily accepted the cakes and immediately ate all three in his unparalleled show of gratitude. Knowing fully that he had just devoured the flesh of his precious son, Ji Chang sat on the ground and began weeping profusely over what little choice he possessed during the situation.

As King Zhou and Fei Zhong were fiercely clashing against each other during a game of chess, the messenger soon arrived and informed the king of Ji Chang's resolution. Deciding that Ji Chang should be excused from Youli after hearing his report, Fei Zhong swiftly retorted by stating that if Ji Chang was to return to his homeland at the current time he would most likely be influenced strongly not only by the blood lustful people of the Western Foothills due to Bo Yi Kao's death, but the southern and northern dukes in addition because of the strong potential they emanate. Seeing that it was a more rational resolution to keep Ji Chang detained, no matter how loyal he might seem from the outside, King Zhou consented to the former's suggestion.

As the entourage under Bo Yi Kao was soon informed by loyal ministers of their master's death, they fled through the night until arriving within Phoenix City to express their woes before Ji Fa. Bursting into many tears at the hearing of his elder brother's death, Nangong Kuo cried from among the generals present saying that was essential at all costs to deploy an army against the capital in order to wipe out King Zhou and effectively replace him with a true ruler.

Everyone present within the court ground their teeth in rage and glared with great hatred as they agreed with Nangong to destroy the tyrant at all costs possible. With San Yisheng moving forward and reprimanding all around for their lack of control, the former firmly stated that if such an action was put into motion and reported to the capital, all of Ji Chang's years of loyal service and reputation were nothing more than roadside chaff. With these words San Yisheng additionally stated that two messengers should be sent with gold, jade, and other valuable items, from their dukedom to the residence of Fei Zhong and You Hun to attain potential support in the future — and would more than likely result in Ji Chang's well-deserved exclusion.

After additional letters were also to be sent in secret to these two ministers, the soldiers of the Western Foothills should be drilled day and night as to prepare for a chance later on to strike at the capital with the other dukes. With two generals — Tai Dian and Hong Yao — effectively chosen for this task, they were ordered to take the guise of merchants traveling to the capital in offering to the suffering people. Not daring to stay at a government hostel following their arrival at the capital lest they were found out, the two generals approached their

respective supreme minister's lodgings that night. As Tai Dian kneeled before Fei Zhong in great respect, the former placed before him a letter from Supreme Minister San Yisheng stating that he would receive over 10,000 talents of silver and other valuable gifts if he freed Ji Chang as an expression of his inner virtue and compassion.

Fei Zhong ensured Tai Dian that he would do his upmost to set Ji Chang free at all costs. Thus, the latter left shortly with the same results as his ally general. Experiencing two successive wins within chess against both Fei Zhong and You Hun a few days later, King Zhou prepared a feast for the three of them as celebration. Beginning a discussion of Ji Chang, Fei Zhong declared that he had recently sent a few trustworthy men to Youli District with the sole purpose of analyzing Ji Chang's current motives following the death of Bo Yi Kao — for this would effectively prove if he still harbored his supposed loyalty even after the conjectured knowing of his son's death. Hearing reports from these men that Ji Chang was burning incense at every moment in the insurance of King Zhou's health and never uttered a single word of defiance to the current situation, Fei Zhong knew wholly that the former was indeed not a threat to the capital and was a minister of the highest loyalty.

As King Zhou heard such a report from Fei Zhong, he additionally asked You Hun for his take on the situation. With research that reciprocated Fei Zhong's analyze on Ji Chang, You Hun stated that if Ji Chang was effectively freed, he could be appointed into the position of prince and used to subdue the rebelling Northern and Southern grand dukes through words due to the natural respect that they possess towards the former. And thus might even be encouraged to stop their rebellion. The fact was that Ji Chang to be freed simply out of consideration, and his resolve to uphold the kindness bestowed upon him by the king would naturally increase and thus strengthen such an outcome. King Zhou thus issued a decree that stated Ji Chang's essential pardon and his freedom from confinement.

As the ministers all around clapped their hands in joy upon the hearing of Ji Chang's well-deserved attainment of freedom, a palace messenger immediately set out for Youli District with written decree in hand. Sitting inside his inner chambers with continued detriment over the death of his unfortunate son, Ji Chang made a divination with golden coins following a sudden ominous windstorm. After realizing that King Zhou would pardon him that day, the palace messenger arrived shortly and officially stated the king's decree.

Packing his belongings with both joy and sorrow, the people of Youli crowded before him and offered what they could in return for the former's immense kindness in the past. As they escorted the duke some distance from Youli District, every individual present gave their final farewells in tears. Arriving before high ranking ministers such as Bi Gan and Yellow Flying Tiger at the palace gates, Ji Chang expressed his immense gratitude at their kindness for freeing him from his extended confinement. Being in a state of great happiness in addition, an order was soon put forth that stated Ji Chang's presence before King Zhou. Dressing in convicted garb as he presented himself before the king, Ji Chang kneeled in respect and stated his many vows of gratitude. Being thus authorized to undertake military operations as chief of all dukes and appointed as overseeing prince, King Zhou additionally placed forth a banquet at the Dragon Virtue Court in his honor.

With each minister smiling with delight at such good fortune for Ji Chang — now known as Prince Wen — the latter paraded for two days throughout the capital's streets in a demonstration of his glory. Late into the afternoon during his second day of parade, Ji Chang was approached by Prince Yellow Flying Tiger and consented to the former's proposal of a personal drink at his residence. Personally sitting down and accompanying Ji Chang with many drinks, Yellow Flying Tiger firmly told him that he was in need of ceasing his current parading and should leave as quickly as possible lest any other unpredictable occurrence runs about in such a colossal torn capital like Morning Song.

Feeling as if he had been completely awoken to reality, Prince Wen calmly asked the former how he was get through the five passes. Handing him many military tallies and suggesting that he guises himself as a royal patrolmen to easily make his way through the passes, Yellow Flying Tiger gave one final bow to Prince Wen before being dismissed. That same evening, Yellow Flying Tiger ordered two of his generals — Dragon Huan and Wu Yan — to open the west gate of the capital and secretly escort Ji Chang from within.

Chapter 21

Flight through the Five Passes

With the help of Yellow Flying Tiger, Ji Chang managed to cross the Yellow River in a single night and then make his way towards Lintong Pass — the first of five passes. As many officials became exceedingly worried as to why Ji Chang failed to return throughout the entire night, Fei Zhong soon attained word of the situation and thus sat down with You Hun to analyze their next move. You Hun immediately placed forth his irrational suggestion: "After attaining the consent of His Majesty, soldiers should be sent to retrieve Ji Chang immediately. As he was brought back and placed before the king, he should be beheaded as punishment for putting insult over the former's kindness." With Fei Zhong's consenting, both ministers appeared before King Zhou and fully elaborated the situation.

After deciding that Generals Yin and Lei were to be sent out to retrieve the runaway prince, they both charged through the west gates with 3,000 soldiers strong in immediate pace. Riding leisurely through Lintong Pass when hearing a sudden clamor of men and horses behind him, Ji Chang soon realized that King Zhou must have sent men in pursuit — and thus galloped wildly atop his horse, not knowing where at all he was heading. As the soldiers of Shang shortly approached the unfortunate Prince Wen with immense speed, Master of the Clouds meanwhile attained sight of the situation from his Green Touring Bed and immediately called Thunder Quaker to his side. Ordering his disciple to quickly find a weapon at the Tiger Cliff, Thunder Quaker met no true success before finding two delicious red apricots which he devoured with great delight.

Just at the moment that he was going to resume his search, a sudden strange transformation took place. Two wings sprouted from both shoulder blades while he grew silver tusks and long red hair. Even though he had no desire to see his master again with such an appearance, he had no true choice once Golden Haze Lad, an assistant disciple under Master of the Clouds, called him back to the cavern. With great delight over his disciple's transformation, Master of the Clouds handed Thunder Quaker a golden cudgel and immediately taught him how to wield it with exceeded renown. After the essential mastering of his new weapon, "wind" was written on his left wing while "thunder" on his right — thus giving him the ability to soar through the heavens with his new wings at will.

Before Thunder Quaker was to take his leave, Master of the Clouds thoroughly told his disciple that he was to ensure his father's safe arrival at the Western Foothills; but at no account should any soldier be killed during such an incident. Leaving the mountain in immense pace, Thunder Quaker called continuously from a neighboring peak to see if a certain man below — who was fleeing in great speeds atop his horse — was truly his father, the Grand Duke of the West.

Riding to the peak and being told that he was none other than Thunder Quaker, the young child that was saved by his hands seven years in the past, Ji Chang told the former that on no account should any individual of Shang be hurt lest his punishment becomes even greater than current. Ensuring his father that he would persuade the generals to retire their pursuit, Thunder Quaker stood

resolutely before the entire army shortly, declaring that not a single individual was to pass unless they wished for their own death. As the Shang soldiers reported such a case to Generals Yin and Lei, the latter two rage fully advanced towards Thunder Quaker's position.

Chapter 22

Return of the Duke

As Generals Yin and Lei thus appeared before Thunder-quaker shortly, they charged fiercely at the latter while bursting into laughter at his attempt to protect Ji Chang through vaguely connected bonds of filially. Determined to end this incident quickly, Thunder-quaker cleaved the crag of a neighboring mountain into two halves in a single strike with his golden cudgel — thus sending the whole Shang army fleeing in great fear for their lives. Now returning to his father, who laid on the ground in shock, Thunder-quaker urged Prince Wen to get on his back so that he could be transported safely to the Western Foothills without any additional delay.

Weeping profusely over the void attempt to bring along the horse that had served him faithfully for over seven years of time, Ji Chang had little choice but to calmly tell the horse to run off to a new master while grabbing hold of his son's back and returning immediately to his native land. Arriving beyond the five passes shortly, Thunder Quaker left his father momentarily — thus forcing Ji Chang to travel day and night on foot with great misery. As Prince Wen eventually approached an inn one day during his travels, he shortly elaborated his identity before being offered a flour-grinding donkey from the innkeeper as a mount while personally escorting the former back to his capital.

Crossing through the Golden Chicken Range and Mount Shouyang, breezes of late autumn soon filled the heavens with great desolateness that touched Ji Chang's longish heart to return to his family of long ago. Tai Jiang, the mother of Ji Chang, soon realized through divination that her son was to return exceedingly soon — and she thus told everyone present within the capital of such long awaited news. As each minister rode from the capital with banners and great gifts of offering, they soon caught sight of Ji Chang and presented themselves before him in unparalleled happiness.

With Supreme Minister San Yisheng thoroughly elaborating the historical records of King Tang and his revolution to overthrow the Xia Dynasty after being captivated for so many years, he compared this to the Grand Duke's incident and offered him a chance to do the same for the sake of the people. However, Prince Wen retorted by saying that such words should never be spoken again — for he could not do anything as disloyal as rebelling against the king after receiving such merciful honor from the former.

As everyone present became somewhat convinced by his speech, Prince Wen returned to the dukedom shortly with people cheering left and right in happiness at their master's safe return. Arriving before Mount Small Dragon and seeing his ninety-nine sons standing before him, Ji Chang fell from his horse with tears of agony upon the remembering of the one son that was not present, Bo Yi Kao. With the help of his sons, Ji Chang suddenly coughed up a large slice of meat that strangely turned into a small white rabbit; such was reciprocated two more times immediately with the same result. As everyone present sat in shock while the three rabbits ran to the west, they placed Ji Chang under the care of a doctor for several days to await his recovery. After the inn keeper was handsomely

rewarded for his reported deeds before returning to his home, San Yisheng personally sat down before Prince Wen and stated that an attack upon Morning Song would be a rational choice considering the current circumstances — despite the loyalty that the prince might possess. With Nangong Kuo suddenly appearing before the prince while stating that an attack upon the capital as essential, Prince Wen reprimanded them both by declaring such an action as disloyal and without virtue to attack your own master despite what qualities that they might possess.

After Nangong exclaimed the death of Bo Yi Kao as a clear action of cruelty that was deserving of punishment no matter what the consequence might be, Prince Wen retorted by stating that such an incident was brought about through his son's pride and rash qualities and isn't to be compared with the larger picture of loyalty. Either way, acting in such a sudden manner would not only stir up the people to make many sacrifices during such a war, but they would additionally lose a level of love and confidence towards their master due to being forced into a situation that they most clearly would not enjoy — for they love peace in all aspects.

As both San Yisheng and Nangong Kuo clearly realized that the land should not be impoverished and provoked into war for the time being, Ji Chang stated that a "Spiritual Terrace" should be constructed in order to foretell any potential disaster within the future. Being afraid that the people would suffer through unnecessary trouble with such a project, San Yisheng reassured his master that the immense dignity and gratitude that the people possess would surely bring him swift victory without a thought of defiance. Prince Wen became delighted at his reassurance, and thus issued forth a decree on the terrace's construction.

Chapter 23

Dream of a Flying Bear

As Prince Wen's notices were posted up for the Spiritual Terrace's potential construction, it clearly stated that if any was to go out of their way to assist in the construction, they were to be paid one-tenth of a teal of silver as gratitude while being allowed to discontinue without any form of compulsion whatsoever. Being overjoyed at such a chance to show their love to Prince Wen, every individual was clearly willing to work wholeheartedly on such a project without any regret. Issuing forth the project's start on an auspicious day after hearing such joyous news, the Spiritual Terrace was effectively created under ten months of time.

Leading his civil and military officials out to gaze forth at the terrace, Prince Wen was the only individual present that exclaimed a level of depression — for the terrace was in need of a pool in order to meet the requirements of the yin–yang theory. As such words were passed on to the people, everyone present began its immediate construction in due happiness. Digging profusely in their attempts, human bones were found and placed off to the side due to being a blatant interference towards their work. However, Prince Wen soon attained word of such and ordered for the bones to be placed into small coffins and buried within a neighboring hill instead of being exposed — as would be a sign of disrespect.

After watching the continued work of his fellow people until night, Prince Wen enjoyed a meal with his ministers before retiring to rest within one of the terrace's rooms. Experiencing a strange dream involving a white-faced tiger with large wings, Prince Wen reported this dream to San Yisheng the following morning and was told that a highly talented minister was destined to be a part of the Western Foothills in the near future. Believing the former's words as truth, Prince Wen became determined to make immediate preparations in the finding of this minister. Now returning to Jiang Ziya, he had spent his time near Panxi Stream constantly fishing throughout day to night while studying the way and reciting scriptures. While leaning on his willow tree one day, Jiang Ziya heard a certain man singing a song to himself and soon realized that it was none other than a woodcutter.

As Wu Ji, the woodcutter, sat down by Jiang Ziya's side and realized that he fished with a mere pole without a needle — or any bait at that — he thoroughly mocked the former by stating that he wasn't very smart when it comes to such simple matters. After furthered discussion, Wu Ji was told by Jiang Ziya that he would kill a man that day within Phoenix City unexpectedly; the former became angry at such sudden words and left with a fury. Heading through the south gate of Phoenix City, Wu Ji swung his carrying pole of firewood from one shoulder to the other which suddenly struck Wang Xiang, a city guard, in the temple, ending his life instantly.

Being pushed before Prince Wen immediately, Wu Ji elaborated the case as being nothing more than an accident that possessed rather vague reasoning and more bad luck than anything else. Declaring that the woodcutter would pay for his life nonetheless, Wu Ji was imprisoned inside a small circle near the southern gate to await his set punishment. Tear stricken over what might be befalling his ailed

mother back at their home due to his lack of support for over three days, Wu Ji was soon approached by San Yisheng and thoroughly elaborated the situation. Realizing that Wu Ji did not kill Wang Xiang out of any vile intentions whatsoever, he decided that it would be best to discuss the current issue at hand with Prince Wen and effectively suspend his punishment until autumn if at all possible.

After reporting such a case with the prince the following day, the latter consented to Wu Ji's proposal for temporary freedom. Wu Ji thus immediately returned to his mother's side and told her the reason for his lengthened disappearance. Additionally elaborating the words of Jiang Ziya as the reason for such an atrocity, Wu Ji set forth to Pianxi Stream to meet the former.

Chapter 24

From Fisherman to Prime Minister

As Wu Ji ran quickly to the Panxi Stream, he saw Jiang Ziya sitting under his willow tree while fishing more calmly than ever. Kneeling before the latter and asking forgiveness for his past ignorance, Wu Ji pleaded to Jiang Ziya to save his life from a destined death. After declaring himself as his disciple, Jiang Ziya told the former that if he wished to escape death, he must sit in a four-foot hole throughout the night while covered completely with rice and hay; after such was completed, there should be no problems experienced in the future with the prior incident.

With Wu Ji following his master's instructions thoroughly throughout that night, Jiang Ziya meanwhile recited charms to cover up the Wu Ji's star and thus save him from potential death. As Wu Ji returned the following day and kneeled respectfully before Jiang Ziya, the latter told him to spend the entire morning selling his usual firewood while returning in the afternoon to hear lessons on military theory/stratagems — for Jiang Ziya could feel the expedition upon Morning Song drawing near and thus could use additional assistance if need be.

Upon the arrival of late autumn, Supreme Minister San Yisheng recalled the incident of Wu Ji and asked Prince Wen if he could make a divination as to why the convict had not shown himself. After Prince Wen had effectively performed divination, and realized through such that Wu Ji committed suicide out of fear for punishment, the former sighed in distress at such an outcome. As spring arrived in short time with everything around bursting with life, Prince Wen proposed to his ministers that a few days should be spent enjoying nature within the southern outskirts. With San Yisheng's suggestion to search for the "destined minister of the Western Foothills" in addition, their journey soon began shortly.

Enjoying fully the colossal beauty laid out before his eyes, Prince Wen became shortly distressed as he saw his troops killing leopards, wolves, and of the such unconditionally — as the area around him was set up as a hunting zone by General Nangong Kuo for the former's pleasure. The prince thus approached San Yisheng and solemnly told him that they were within the wildlife to simply gaze at the beauty around, not to kill innocent animals out of instinct; for the ancients of old would never act in such a manner as to harm their own benevolence. Joyfully continuing through the wilderness and gazing forth at many people enjoying the beauty of spring, Prince Wen caught ear on a certain song that two fishermen were singing.

Believing them to be sages of the sort, Xin Jia was sent shortly to investigate the matter; he returned by stating that the two fisherman simply heard and recited such a song from a mysterious old man near the Panxi Stream. Dismissing the two fisherman in distress, Prince Wen pondered over a single verse of the song that denoted the ignoring of power and wealth — and thus elaborated a story of Sage Emperor Yao and his meeting with a virtuous man to San Yisheng as an example. Continuing on their way while hearing a group of woodcutters spouting a song of similar connotations to the former two fishermen, Prince Wen ordered an immediate investigation of these men. Being told that the same old man near Panxi

Stream taught this song to the former in addition, Prince Wen was convinced that this man must be approached at all costs.

Unfortunately for Wu Ji however, he happened to be amongst the crowd and was instantly recognized as the convict who supposedly met death in late autumn. Realizing that he was indeed woodcutter Wu Ji, the former was placed before Prince Wen and thoroughly reprimanded as an immense threat that needs to be dealt with accordingly. Explaining his meeting with a man known as Jiang Ziya, Wu Ji promised to guide Prince Wen and his entourage to the former's location in exchange for freedom. Without any success on finding Jiang Ziya, Prince Wen was led to the sage's cottage — but immediately met failure again due to Jiang Ziya's random departures and unpredictable returns.

San Yisheng thus told his master that it would be best for them to return to the palace temporarily while returning on a date that was presumed as more probable for the meeting of the former. Being extremely disappointed but nonetheless cooperative to his minister's suggestion, Prince Wen ordered his men to thoroughly purify themselves daily in wait for their second departure before Jiang Ziya's residence. In a different perspective of mind, General Nangong Kuo stated that there was no definite knowing that this "Jiang Ziya" was the true sage that they were looking for simply due to the songs that he composes and his unnatural abilities — for sages of similar quality would be more than likely present within the neighboring mountains in addition.

However, San Yisheng retorted by stating that this man must be the destined minister from Prince Wen's dream due to the traditional manner that was need of being followed and his reputation amongst the neighboring populace as being differential to the majority. Through such discussion, all ministers cleansed their hearts and bodies before taking leave on the fourth day following their original appearance. Arriving at the Panxi Stream shortly, Wu Ji immediately took notice of Jiang Ziya and reported such to Prince Wen. Approaching the sage steadily, Prince Wen took Jiang Ziya's hand and welcomed him with colossal dignity.

As San Yisheng elaborated the reasoning behind their appearance with many fine gifts, Jiang Ziya soon left his cottage and proceeded with Prince Wen on horse top following many steady refusals to ride in the former's carriage. Arriving shortly before the capital, Jiang Ziya was appointed as prime minister and thus thoroughly assisted the Western Foothills with his knowledge and discipline.

Chapter 25

Banquet for Specters in the Palace

Once Han Rong, commander of Sishui Pass, obtained word on Jiang Ziya's appointment, he sent an urgent report to Morning Song. As Bi Gan attained such a report, he immediately presented himself before King Zhou and stated that since Jiang Ziya had effectively joined the West Grand Duke, there was a great possibility that the former could dwindle with Ji Chang's loyalty and thus convince him to assist the southern and eastern dukes in their campaign against the capital.

Once King Zhou told the prime minister that he would hold court as soon as possible lest any furthered threat might evolve, Chong Houhu, the Black Tiger, kneeled in presence before the king while stating the nearing finish of the Happy Terrace after two years and four months of determined work. King Zhou quickly asked Chong Houhu's additional take on the appointment of Jiang Ziya. The latter stated that Ji Chang was very peace loving and would never attack the capital unless it was forced upon him by his people. And that Jiang Ziya was also exceedingly old and wasn't a large enough threat to waste an entire army upon due to the scarceness already experienced amongst the populace.

King Zhou thus dismissed both Bi Gan and Chong Houhu shortly while taking hold of his beloved Daji and heading out to see the Happy Terrace's progress. Arriving before the Happy Terrace and realizing its current completion, King Zhou happily walked through the terrace with immense joy and satisfaction at the glittering jade and gold spread before him so vividly. As a grand celebration took place inside the terrace, Bi Gan could not help but sigh in great distress at the peoples' suffering simply through the deluded selfishness of a single person.

Asking Daji when the immortals and fairies would show themselves before the terrace as she originally stated, Daji had little time to react and immediately stated that a full moon before a cloudless sky would be the only signal for their essential coming. Knowing that the full moon would not show itself until five more days, Daji resumed her specter form three days later and headed immediately to the grave mound of Emperor Xuanyuan while King Zhou was fast asleep.

Being welcomed by Splendor, the nine-headed pheasant, Daji elaborated her reasoning before stating that all other specters present at the mound must transform themselves into immortals and come with her to the Happy Terrace within two days of time if they possess such an ability; if not, they were to remain at their original position. After this detailed discussion, Daji immediately returned to the palace on a gust of wind.

As King Zhou asked the following morning about the immortals, Daji suggested to the king that thirty-nine seats should be arranged while a minister — Bi Gan in this case — was chosen to serve them wine at their will. Upon the quick approach of evening the following day, the seats were set forth while King Zhou gazed in great anticipation for the arrival of his immortal guests. Following the king's temporary leave of the terrace while Daji invited forth her honored specter allies, Bi Gan was called shortly to serve the latter.

Pouring them wine at every call, Bi Gan became rather confused as to why they looked like fairy spirits but possessed the most disgusting of odors; indeed, he thought, this was truly a very ill omen for the Shang Dynasty. As everyone present began to drink wildly, Bi Gan noticed that some of the guests had tails sprouting forth upon further intoxication — and was thus dismissed immediately by Daji lest he realized that they were specters, not immortals. Charging from the palace gates with great shame and rage as to lower himself to serve vile beasts, he soon approached Yellow Flying Tiger, who was on night patrol, and reported the incident at the Happy Terrace in full details.

After ensuring to Bi Gan that he would deal with the issue, Yellow Flying Tiger ordered his four generals — Huang Ming, Zhou Ji, Dragon Huan, and Wu Qian — to each take twenty four soldiers and patrol the districts around the east, north, west, and south. When these "immortals" were to leave the palace, they were to be pursued closely and stealthily back to their respective lairs.

As each immortal specter took their leave from the palace on foot due to great intoxication preventing any form of natural flight, all thirty-nine that were present immediately returned to the grave mound of Emperor Xuanyuan while being closely followed by General Zhou Ji along the way. Informing Yellow Flying Tiger the following morning, the latter ordered his general to take 300 soldiers individually equipped with firewood and light them on fire while inside the mound hole to ensure destruction and no lack of possible escape for the specters. With Yellow Flying Tiger and Bi Gan calmly sitting by each other's side while drinking tea, Zhou Ji soon reported his success and thus called for them both to inspect the results.

Arriving shortly before the grave mound and finding corpses lying about that stank with burnt fur and flesh, Bi Gan ordered all corpses that possessed not scorched fur to be skinned so that he could present His Majesty with a specialized fur coat as a warning to the evil specter, Queen Daji. The two commanders thus returned to the palace in high spirits with such a grand display of the power and loyalty that they possessed in the name of the Shang Dynasty.

Chapter 26

Daji plots Revenge

With the recent arrival of winter, heavy snow fell throughout the capital like pearls of great silver illuminating the sky and earth alike with beauty. Entering before King Zhou at the Happy Terrace, Prime Minister Bi Gan expressed his inner worry over the king's health at such a time of year — and thus presented to the former a specialized fur robe of scarlet satin as a token of such affection and consideration.

Once King Zhou had placed the beautiful robe around his body with immediate appreciation towards the prime minister, Daji meanwhile gazed forth from the curtains and noticed the specialized insignias only present on fox specters of her relation. She thus inwardly vowed that her hatred would only be sullied if she was to attain Bi Gan's heart as punishment.

Not bearing to see the skin of her relatives any further after the prime minister's leave, Daji convinced the king that the fur robe was below his level of dignity and should be placed elsewhere. Forming a plot to effectively end Bi Gan's life, Daji used her specter powers to reduce her beauty to a great extent one day as she sat drinking with King Zhou within the Happy Terrace.

Realizing that the Queen was strangely lacking in beauty, Daji shortly told the king that she possesses a sister known as Splendor, who was far more beautiful and elegant. Continuing with her words, Daji additionally stated that her sister left one day from Jizhou while stating that if she was to ever attain immortal characteristics, she would send Daji incense as a signal for her immediate return. Telling King Zhou that the incense had yet to be burned, it was decided that the following day should be chosen for her sister's return.

As King Zhou thus slept soundly that night, Daji resumed her specter form and met Splendor at the burned grave mound — fully knowing that her sister could not have possibly been touched by the former flames due to her highly evolved specter attributes. With Splendor's immediate informing to Daji that all thirty-nine specter allies had been burnt to death and skinned, the latter wept while telling her sister a specific plan that essentially required her appearance before the palace the following day. Effectively attaining Splendor's consent, Daji happily returned to the palace throughout the remainder of the night while King Zhou lustfully desired to see his queen's elder sister as soon as possible throughout the next day.

Once night finally approached, Daji advised King Zhou to conceal himself while the incense was burned — for if she was to notice a man of mortal qualities other than her sister, she might not wish to perform any such task. With the incense being burned at last, great thunderous winds brewed about throughout the palace while Splendor made her immediate appearance shortly thereafter before Daji.

As Daji thus brought her sister to an inner chamber while sipping tea and exchanging conversation, King Zhou meanwhile peeped from the corner and instantly declared that he would give up his very own throne without the least

regret if he could have sex with Splendor. Scratching his ears and coughing profusely to attain Daji's attention, the latter asked her sister if she could meet with the king after clearly understanding his many signals.

Being convinced that King Zhou was worthy to sit by her side due to his rank, the king excitedly rushed forth and placed himself before Splendor immediately. Once Daji left the inner chamber for some time to change her clothing, King Zhou became exceedingly aroused after Splendor emitted many seductive glances — and thus invited his honored guest to stroll with him on the terrace.

Steadily pacing under the moonlight, King Zhou calmly fondled her breasts and body while declaring that was she was to stay by his side within the palace instead of living the life of an immortal, great wealth, rank, and honor would clearly be bestowed upon her in short time.

Realizing that Splendor did not respond or offer any resistance to his many physical attacks, King Zhou carried her to a side court and passionately began unleashing his inner essence upon the latter within a neighboring bed. Upon Daji's return with great laughter over her sister's state, the king enjoyed the remainder of the night with his two lovers. As all ministers outside the palace gates possessed no knowing of King Zhou's new indulgences with Splendor, Yellow Flying Tiger, the highest ranked among ministers, continued to train his 480,000 soldiers daily to ensure an effective protection of the neighboring passes.

One day however, Daji suddenly began to profusely spit forth blood while falling to the floor in a feverish state. King Zhou and Splendor immediately ran to her side while the latter stated that her sister possesses a strange heart attack disorder that reappears at random moments of time when intense anxiety and stress was felt. Additionally stating that a doctor by the name of Zhang Yuan cured such attacks with soup made from a highly developed human heart on great occasion back at Jizhou, it was indeed of great need for such a heart to be found among the populace and used at once to free Daji from her potential bonds of death.

Acting as if she was performing divination, Splendor told King Zhou that Prime Minister Bi Gan was the only individual present within the capital that possesses such a heart. As King Zhou thus sent out many decrees to ensure Bi Gan's arrival before the palace, the prime minister meanwhile attained word from the sixth royal messenger that Daji possessed a strange illness and was needing of his arrival.

Knowing that Daji was indeed an evil specter, and any such incident that specifically called him forth in her name more than likely meant certain death, Bi Gan approached his wife in tears while stating that she should do her best to observe the rules and take good care of their children while he was gone.

Explaining the situation thoroughly, Bi Gan rushed back to his study chambers and hastily followed the instructions that Jiang Ziya had given him earlier. Following his immediate arrival before King Zhou, and the learning of his heart being needed in order to cure Daji's ailment, the former retorted with great anger at the king and Daji's blatant hate towards him. Knowing that he had little choice before the situation, and his time was assuredly soon to end, Bi Gan knelt on

the ground and ripped the heart from his chest while throwing it to the ground without a single droplet of blood whatsoever. As the prime minister walked quickly to the palace gates, avoiding each minister that appeared along the way, the former took the reins off his horse and strode towards the capital's northern gate.

Chapter 27

Return of the Grand Old Master

Striding through the northern palace gates in a state of complete silence, Yellow Flying Tiger was very worried over the current situation — and thus sent forth Generals Zhou Ji and Huang Ming to follow him immediately. As Bi Gan approached a woman hawker along the way that declared humans as incapable of living without a heart, a sudden pulse surged through the former's veins violently, causing him to fall to the ground with blood surging profusely from his chest. With Zhou Ji and Huang Ming's arrival shortly, they inspected the deceased prime minister's body closely and realized that his heart was strangely nowhere to be found.

Unfortunately for Bi Gan however, he still would have remained alive if the woman previously had noted that humans can live even without a heart — for such was the trickery behind Jiang Ziya's magical note. Once the two generals had arrived before the palace gates and immediately reported their resolution on the incident to Yellow Flying Tiger, all ministers present sat heartbroken at such an absurd end to their treasured prime minister. Xia Zhao, a junior minister, could not hold back his emotions as he strode within the Happy Terrace prepared to put a well-deserved end to King Zhou's life.

Cutting down any guard that dared to oppose his path towards the king, Xia Zhao shortly arrived before the tyrant and charged at him with his flying-cloud sword. As he cleaved at the king's flesh with great renown, King Zhou managed to grab ahold of the blade while swiftly throwing it off to the side. Realizing the situation was rather grim, Xia Zhao ground his teeth until they bled profusely before launching himself off of the terrace to his death. As all ministers around grieved over their second loss, Bi Gan's body was soon returned while a funeral was held immediately for his countless loyal services to the Shang Dynasty.

News soon came about during their funeral that none other than Grand Old Master Wen Zhong was finally returning to the capital; all ministers thus made quick preparations to meet the former outside Morning Song's gates. Arriving shortly atop his great dragon unicorn, Wen Zhong gazed towards the capital and realized that a funeral was taking place due to many paper pennants flying about. Inspecting the reason for such, he was astonished to hear that Vice Prime Minister Bi Gan had died — and thus entered immediately to see many gorgeous buildings such as the Happy Terrace all around him. Dismounting before his fellow colleagues at the palace gate's roadside, the Grand Old Master expressed his greetings while entering the Grand Hall.

Being informed by Yellow Flying Tiger of the many torture devices created and the unjust deaths of countless loyal ministers throughout his years of departure, Wen Zhong's third eye burned red with rage as he ordered King Zhou to ascend his throne at once. With Daji joyfully drinking the soup made from Bi Gan's heart, King Zhou was rather frightened to hear that the Grand Old Master had returned — but nonetheless left immediately in his royal carriage to see the dignified latter. Sitting before Wen Zhong within the Grand Hall, the latter thoroughly elaborated his complete victory at the North Sea District while

inspecting the reason as to why two of the four grand dukes have risen in rebellion. Being told that Jiang Huanchu and E Chongyu were executed for conspiring against the throne — even though the king did not possess any such witness that could prove such a case — Wen Zhong became exceedingly wrathful and reprimanded the king for the blatant malevolent qualities that he possesses. Telling the former that he would personally endeavor to set the country in order in the name of King Da Yi, his former master, Wen Zhong told the king to return to his apartments while he plans out his next move for the dynasty's benefit.

As King Zhou left without uttering a single word against the Grand Old Master, the latter asked his fellow colleagues to join him at his residence. Arriving shortly before the Silver Peace Hall with each minister present, Yellow Flying Tiger came forth from the crowd to personally elaborate the full happenings from Daji's entry to Bi Gan's death. Now fully knowing the ultimate woes of the Shang Dynasty, Wen Zhong let out a great roar of rage before declaring that he would seal the gates for three days while presenting to King Zhou a memorial upon the fourth.

Approaching the king on the fourth day with his written memorial, King Zhou placed it before his desk and was handed by the former an ink slab and writing brush to sign his name on ten individual proposals. King Zhou signed his consent on all but the destruction of the Happy Terrace; the deposition of Daji; and the beheading of Fei Zhong and You Hun to as warning to all flatterers. With Wen Zhong's suggestion to the king that the remaining three proposals essentially need to be fulfilled if he was to prevent the Shang Dynasty from falling to utter ruin, the latter stood forth without uttering a word. Fei Zhong, who did not see the true seriousness of the situation, moved forward to speak with King Zhou before being stopped by the Grand Old Master.

As Fei Zhong began to state the former's propositions as a clear insult to His Majesty and violation to the general rites of inferior to superior, Wen Zhong seethed with rage at his words — and thus charged his fist into Fei Zhong's skull, causing the latter to tumble violently down the Grand Hall's steps in an injured state. Seeing Fei Zhong lying on the floor with a bruised head and face, You Hun ran before the Grand Old Master while declaring his actions as being the equivalent to beating King Zhou himself.

Learning that the man standing before him was none other than You Hun, Wen Zhong ran forward and smashed his fist into the former's face — sending him crashing seven yards past the Grand Hall stairway in a near death state. Grand Old Master Wen Zhong followed by ordering the two ministers to be taken to the palace gate for their awaited execution immediately afterwards. Just as Fei Zhong and You Hun were to have their heads cleaved off, King Zhou ran forward to Wen Zhong and pleaded for the two ministers to be placed before court and tried according to law for their former actions.

Observing the king's frightened manner, and realizing that it was a crime for the former to possess such intense fear towards him, Wen Zhong ordered the two ministers to be placed in gaol and await their trial while the three remaining proposals were carefully discussed within the near future. With such grand resolve to ensure political reform was effectively instilled, news soon reached the capital that King Ping Ling of the East Sea district had unfortunately declared independence. As Wen Zhong attained word of such, he appeared before Yellow

Flying Tiger's residence shortly and asked the latter who was more fitting to take care of the situation. After they both carefully considered their next move, Grand Old Master stated that he would take 200,000 soldiers to the East Sea district while Flying Tiger remains at the palace for internal defense.

Additionally stating that he would deal with the state's administration at his best following his return, Wen Zhong appeared before King Zhou the following morning to elaborate the current happenings within the east. Being very delighted internally at Wen Zhong's words of departure, both Yellow Flying Tiger and King Zhou personally escorted the Grand Old Master beyond the eastern gate of Morning Song. As the king handed Wen Zhong a glass of wine, the master handed it instead to Yellow Flying Tiger for the exceeded loyalty and administrative renown that he should elaborate while he himself was gone. Telling the king to listen well to his ministers and destroy the evil of the capital at all costs possible during his leave, cannons roared in all directions to signal the Grand Old Master's departure.

Chapter 28

Punitive Expedition against the North Grand Dukedom

Greatly delighted at Grand Old Master's leave, King Zhou returned to the palace shortly while ordering Fei Zhong and You Hun to be freed — for the king labeled them as being wrongly accused when they were clearly loyal and undeserving of death. Now that Wen Zhong was effectively gone, King Zhou knew that he could return to his original ways without anyone truly able to criticize his actions.

As spring raged forward spreading great beauty throughout the capital, King Zhou declared to his ministers that a party within the royal garden should be performed. Finding the garden as beautiful as the Penglai Fairyland, the Peony Pavilion of old along with the Brocade Hall could be seen with great extravagant detail.

Holding a banquet within the Peony Pavilion, the king enjoyed his own personal table with Splendor and Daji while other high ranking ministers such as Yellow Flying Tiger and Wei Zi sighed at such a grand celebration taking place even though the land was clearly rampant with deluded chaos and constant rebellion. Thanking the king for their party after midday, King Zhou convinced every former minister present to stay and drink away their woes from dusk till night.

As Daji and Splendor became exceedingly intoxicated while sleeping within the royal library, Daji lusted to attain human flesh immediately — and thus swooped about the midnight sky in her specter form. With attendants shouting about that a specter had been seen in the heavens, Yellow Flying Tiger left his seat hurriedly as he thrashed one of the pavilion's railings at the horrible beast. Ordering the hunting hawk with golden eyes to be unleashed immediately due to the lack of his weapon's effectiveness, the hawk soon soared to the specter while clawing violently with its great talons.

Being clearly wounded, Daji hid herself underneath some rocks within a neighboring artificial hill. King Zhou thus ordered his attendants to start digging away in hopes of capturing the specter. Unexpectedly finding an incredibly large pile of half-eaten corpses beneath the rock mound, the king became horrified at the reality of the situation: specters were present within the Shang Dynasty and were the evident reason for such disaster.

As King Zhou awoke the following morning after unhappily excusing his minister's the former evening, he stared in alarm at Daji, who possessed many scratches across her face. Being told that she happened to scratch her face upon overhanging branches within the royal garden, King Zhou told her to be very careful of her new surroundings considering the specter incident.

Pondering over what the king had said, Daji vaguely remembered through her intoxication that Yellow Flying Tiger had been the minister who thrashed at her with his pole — and she thus immediately vowed revenge against the former at all costs possible. Meanwhile, Jiang Ziya had shortly obtained report on King Ping Ling's rebellion and Chong Houhu's brutal treating of the people during the Happy

Terrace's development. Vying with rage at Chong's qualities, Jiang Ziya approached Prince Wen and suggested to him that if the Grand Duke of the North, Chong Houhu, was effectively destroyed — considering his many acts of tyranny through blatant brutality and impulsiveness. King Zhou would be assisted greatly in the path of becoming a benevolent ruler such as that of Yao or Shun of old. Being delighted at a chance to effectively help King Zhou as he accepted the prime minister's proposal, Jiang Ziya offered himself to be the commander of the army on the prince's behalf.

After declaring that he too would assist Jiang Ziya on the battlefield, Prince Wen chose an auspicious date before charging out of the capital with 100,000 soldiers. Many individuals present within the Western Foothills — especially the original Morning Song refugees — rejoiced in great happiness at the prince's departure to destroy Chong Houhu.

As the army arrived before Chong City, the north grand dukedom, after a few days of travel, Chong Houhu was meanwhile present within Morning Song while Chong Yinbiao, the duke's son, attained headship over the city. Attaining information shortly that Ji Chang was commander over the forces stationed outside his dukedom, Yingbiao grinned in delight at a chance to do away with the former in order to better the reputation of his father — even if Ji Chang arrived with intentions other than battle.

With full resolve to wipe out Chong Houhu at all costs possible, Jiang Ziya ordered General Nangong Kuo to head to the front and unleash the first battle immediately. As Huang Yuanji charged out of the city gates with a contingent of soldiers, the former fiercely clashed blades with Nangong in great vigor and heated rage at Ji Chang's clear intentions to destroy them. Attaining word in short time that Huang Yuanji had lost his life by the enemy general's blade, Yingbiao pounded his desk in rage while ordering a fierce engagement of mortal combat to be unleashed the following day. With both forces aligned before each other the next morning, Jiang Ziya stepped forward from his army while taking the appearance of a honored celestial in the eyes of Chong Yinbiao. Barking at Yinbiao for defending the evil ways of his father, the latter barked back at Jiang Ziya angrily while ordering a general from his side to quickly kill the opposition.

As Prince Wen charged before Yinbiao lest Jiang Ziya experienced any harm, the former profusely yelled at Yinbiao, stating that it would be better off for him to simply dismount from his horse and experience death instead of opposing the will of Heaven any further. With both sides fiercely clashing blades in great resolve, Chong Yinbiao additionally threw himself into combat in order to take Ji Chang's head if at all possible. Once two generals under the north dukedom had been effectively slain, Yinbiao ordered a full-scale retreat.

Urgently setting forth a meeting to discuss how they were to repel the enemy forces, everyone present under Yinbiao had no clue what to do. Seeing this as the perfect chance to strike forth at the city, Prince Wen declined Jiang Ziya's offer to attack their dukedom lest the innocent was to be hurt and his benevolence would be known amongst the country as mere folly. A letter was thus immediately sent to Black Tiger Chong Heihu in hopes that he could assist them in taking over Chong City.

Chapter 29

Clash between two Grand Dukes

As General Nangong Kuo left to Caozhou at immediate pace, he soon took lodgings within an official hotel upon his arrival at Black Tiger Chong Heihu's residence. Leaving his office upon Nangong's reported arrival, Heihu soon obtained a letter from Jiang Ziya on the current situation. Reading the letter over continuously, he decided that it would be for the greater good if he put an end to his brother in the name of the people; despite the blood that he was to stain on the faces of his ancestors through such an action.

Before he departed, 3,000 soldiers were individually chosen to accompany him from Caozhou while his son, Chong Yingluan, ensures the protection of the city during his leave. As Chong Heihu arrived before the north grand dukedom's city gates in short time, Yinbiao emerged forth and earnestly welcomed his fellow uncle — who had arrived with reinforcements after obtaining report on the situation.

Sitting within the main hall by his cousin's side, Chong Heihu asked the true reason as to why Ji Chang had suddenly attacked their residence. The latter stated that a man by the name of Jiang Ziya said earlier that they arrived out of some form of malice towards his father and have thus attacked with most probable intentions to kill him. Easily seeing such words as accurate and on the side of rationality, Chong Heihu charged from the city gates to do battle against the opposing forces of Prince Wen at the following dawn. Jiang Ziya was completely rational of Chong Heihu's intentions upon the arrival of Nangong Kuo — and thus sent the latter to do battle with Black Tiger.

As both warriors battled with great renown, Chong Heihu silently told Nangong to feign retreat after giving up ground as a pretext to the combat's end. Seeing the enemy general flee while Heihu did not pursue in any form, Yingbiao approached his uncle and inspected the reason for such an action. Being told Jiang Ziya was widely known for his magical renown, there alone arose the chance that the former would use such tactics in order to ensure his victory at all costs possible — considering the additional rash ways of such pursuit. As Heihu and Yingbiao thus returned to the city, Black Tiger stated that their probability of victory should increase dramatically if Houhu and King Zhou were effectively contacted and informed of the current happenings upon Chong City.

With Sun Rong thus being sent to the capital, he arrived before Chong Houhu's residence and first handed the duke the intended letter. Pounding his desk in utter rage at the ill gratitude and treacherous motives that Ji Chang possesses towards him, — despite the many sacrifices that he had made in order to ensure the safety of the former — Chong Houhu presented himself to King Zhou and elaborated the current case on hand.

After the king had ensured his minister that he should back him with soldiers if the need be, Houhu confidently set out with 3,000 soldiers from the capital in quick pace. As soon as Chong Heihu had obtained word that his brother was heading to Chong City, he told General Gao Ding to await in ambush inside the city gates and only emerge to seize the grand duke when the rattling of a sword

was effectively heard. After Shen Gong had been told in addition to arrest the entire Chong family and bring them to the Zhou camp upon Heihu's emerging from the city, both Chong Heihu and Yingbiao set out shortly to await the arrival of Houhu. As the grand duke was thus invited inside of the city gates, all soldiers suddenly seized both Houhu and his son once the sound of rattling had been heard.

Being fully rational that if Chong Houhu was effectively seized and destroyed before the eyes of the people, the Chong family would not only live on in an honorable prestige but his own reputation would soar due to reinforcing the greater good despite the blood that was to be shed. After thus placing the duke before Jiang Ziya's feet, and warmly greeting Ji Chang, Prince Wen became displeased at Heihu's actions for being ruthless. Informing the prince that such an action was for the greater good, and well on the side of virtue, Jiang Ziya ordered Chong Houhu and his son to be placed before him while their heads were immediately cut from their bodies.

Having no original intention whatsoever to kill the grand duke and his son, Prince Wen blinded his eyes from the sight of their decapitated heads while shrieking with fear and disgust. Ordering Chong Heihu to free all remaining captives, Jiang Ziya and Prince Wen took their leave from Chong City while Heihu remained to govern the people as the new grand duke of the north. Unfortunately however upon their return to the Western Foothills, Prince Wen began to see Chong Houhu's decapitated head at every moment he happened to close his eyes — and his health thus slowly decreased out of clear disgust and resentment.

Once Wei Zi, the secretariat of Morning Song, obtained word that Chong Houhu had been executed while his younger brother, Chong Heihu, took control over the former's territory, he realized that the threat of Ji Chang would become even more greater due to Heihu's independence from the capital — and thus informed King Zhou immediately lest any further trouble evolved. Seething with rage at the north grand duke's death upon the hearing of such an incident, King Zhou ordered a contingent of soldiers to bring back both Ji Chang and Chong Heihu for trial.

However, Li Ren moved forward from the ministers present and stated that if he was to effectively act in the benefit of Chong Houhu — who was widely despised by the ministers and people alike — then they naturally would feel great malice towards him for supporting one of criminal traits rather than the loyal. Realizing the rationality in his words, King Zhou decided to abandon the idea of attacking Heihu altogether.

Unfortunately back at the Western Foothills however, Prince Wen's health worsened day by day forcing constant medical attention from doctors within the capital. As Jiang Ziya knelt before his master one day upon the former's request, Prince Wen calmly told him from his bed to never ally the Western Foothills with the rebelling nobles at any costs whatsoever; due to the many not royal actions that had been taken earlier that proved a level of disloyalty towards the king's wishes, peace must always remain between the west and Morning Song as atonement for their past defiance.

Gazing at the tear-filled eyes of Prince Wen, and seeing the indomitable spirit of loyalty that surges through the former's heart, Jiang Ziya ensured that he

should eternally obey such instructions. With Ji Fa's sudden entrance, Prince Wen told his son that he should take his place as governor over the Western Foothills following his death — but at no account should he dare listen to any words that might harm the king during his succession. After telling the prime minister and Ji Fa to instill virtue and true loyalty to both the king and the people so that the future generations can possess eternal happiness, Prince Wen breathed his last, dying at the age of 97 and being given the title of King Wen of Zhou.

Following King Wen's funeral, Jiang Ziya proposed to all ministers present that Ji Fa should succeed his father with the title of West Grand Duke and King Wu. As all ministers were risen one rank with additional benefits, the 200 marquises came constantly to offer their obeisance to the new king over the Western Foothills. Once Commander Han Rong of Sishi Pass had obtained word on Ji Fa's succession to the throne, and the unexpected death of Ji Chang, a messenger was immediately sent before the capital's secretariat. With both Yao Zhong and Prince Wei Zi being the first to hear of such urgent news, Yao Zhong declared that he should see the king on such a matter no matter what the outcome might be.

Chapter 30

Incidents leading to a Rebellion

Ascending the Star Picking Belvedere and kowtowing before the king, Yao Zhao thoroughly declared that now Ji Fa had succeeded the deceased Ji Chang as king over the Western Foothills, Jiang Ziya should easily be able to influence the former through ambitious motives of attacking the capital. However, King Zhou was not the least worried — for he believed that Jiang Ziya was nothing more than a vile trickster that would sow hate and ill-trust in the hearts of any other potential rebel of the capital; Ji Fa in addition was considered a mere child that lacked any disciple in the art of war and should thus not be taken as a serious threat to any extent.

After leaving the Belvedere in great disappointment over King Zhou's words, Yao Zhao knew that King Wu must be the destined savior that should put the tyrannical king to his eternal rest. As the new year's day celebrating King Zhou's 21st year of reign over the Shang Dynasty had arrived in rather short time, ministers went about to offer their traditional greetings to the king, while each of their wives paid obeisance to Queen Daji. When the day's natural formalities had drifted by, Lady Jia, the wife of Yellow Flying Tiger, entered the palace to offer her personal greetings to Daji before visiting her sister in law, concubine Huang.

At the very moment that Daji had attained word that Lady Jia was none other than Yellow Flying Tiger's wife, she grinned in great delight at such a chance to attain revenge against the prince. As Lady Jia and Daji alike both offered their respective greetings, Daji realized that the former was eight years older than her at the age of forty-one. Asking her fellow lady if they would like to become sworn sisters, Lady Jia refuted at first but freed herself from such modesty after realizing that they were both similar in aristocratic rank.

After they had drunken two glasses of wine, Jia quickly hid herself within the Rear Hall upon Daji's suggestion once King Zhou had arrived to see his queen following such a long day of hard work. Clearly seeing that two cups were sitting one across the other in front of Daji, King Zhou inspected who had been present. Being told that Lady Jia, wife of Yellow Flying Tiger, had been present earlier, Daji told the king that he should see her. Rather reluctant at such a suggestion — for it would vile the rights between king and minister — King Zhou was eventually convinced after hearing that she was not only extraordinarily beautiful, but could be considered his relative out of ties between Yellow Flying Tiger's concubine sister.

As Daji thus approached Lady Jia shortly after, and asked for her to walk together at the Star Picking Mansion in order to enjoy the scenery around them, Lady Jia had little choice but to comply — for they can only meet one time a year according to the rights. Walking along the upper balcony and gazing forth at a large pit full of snakes and skeletons, Lady Jia became frightened at the explanation that such a method was in need simply to uphold discipline within the capital. Accepting a few more cups of wine from Daji after sitting down with the latter, Concubine Huang meanwhile became worried at the hearing that her sister-in-law was present at the Star Picking Mansion with Daji — and thus immediately sent one of

her maids to carefully observe the queen's motives. With report that King Zhou was currently ascending the Star Picking Mansion, Lady Jia stood outside of the balcony while the king made his approach. Following his arrival, and immediate informing that the woman standing outside the balcony was Yellow Flying Tiger's wife, King Zhou became very lustful over her beautiful looks. Being told by Daji to enter forth and sit by the king's side, she gradually accepted such an order lest she was to attain any such punishment as earlier seen if the slightest defiance was to be shown.

Begging, however, to leave the king's side to show her true loyalty through modesty, King Zhou encouraged her to sit by his side and enjoy a personal glass of wine. Feeling as if her honor would be torn apart if she sat by the side of such a wicked tyrant, Lady Jia took her glass of wine and threw it into King Zhou's face as a showing of her hatred towards his vile ways. Even though she clearly realized that such an action would probably cost her life, and bring about further mayhem within her family, Lady Jia was resolute to preserve her honor at all costs possible.

As King Zhou ordered his guards to seize her, Lady Jia ran to the balcony rails and exclaimed a final vow of farewell to her beloved husband and children before leaping forth to her unfortunate death. Attaining word shortly that Lady Jia had lost her life, Concubine Huang seethed with rage while running up the Star Picking Mansion's stairs immediately. Thrusting forth at Daji and physically beating her for conjectured treachery, King Zhou told his honored concubine that Daji was truly innocent — for Lady Jia acted out of her own irrational impulse and died because of it. Not in any mood whatsoever to stop beating Daji — or hear the king's words at that — Huang unthinkingly smacked King Zhou violently in the face.

Great rage thus filled the breast of King Zhou while he grabbed the sadistic maiden by the air and lunged her forcefully off the mansion's rails. Grabbing hold of Daji and holding her in his arms in great sadness over his beloved's condition, the attendants under Lady Jia were meanwhile informed by a palace maiden of the unfortunate events that came about at the Star Picking Mansion. As Yellow Flying Tiger was enjoying the New Year's feast throughout the evening with his right-hand generals and fellow brothers, Lady Jia's attendants ran to his residence immediately and informed him of the disaster incident with his wife and sister in law.

With everyone in great alarm while Yellow Flying Tiger sat in silence, Huang Ming approached his master and told him that it was clearly evident that they should seek a new ruler to serve under; considering Yellow Flying Tiger was the head of all military affairs and state headship, his reputation would be the first to suffer by the neighboring people who was rising in rebellion — thus by rebelling, he would be looked upon as a hero that strikes at any injustice that might befall his people upon circumstance.

Knowing that his reputation would effectively soar with the greater majority if he issued forth his rebellion, Yellow Flying Tiger still considered such an action as being far too risky due to solely rendering the incident with his wife. Running after his four generals and telling them to discuss the issue further before being completely resolved to leave the capital for good, each of the four returned with Yellow Flying Tiger to his residence. Raising his sword unexpectedly before

his generals, Yellow Flying Tiger declared that his family had served honorably under the Shang Dynasty for over seven generations — and the death of a single woman who was unknown to the former was most definitely not reason enough to destroy such honor through rebellion.

General Zhou Ji approached to his master and declared that all who were unknowing of his glory and rank would only believe that he attained such high rank through his wife's beauty instead of progressive loyalty through generations. Yellow Flying Tiger realized the reality of his reputation and thus ordered a full flight from Morning Song immediately. Being suggested by General Guang Ming to challenge King Zhou to a battle within the capital before leave lest his master regretted his decision in the future, Yellow Flying Tiger consented to such a suggestion as he equipped his armor and strode towards the palace gates atop his divine ox.

Once General Zhou Ji had declared to the guards that they were rebelling, and if they do not pull King Zhou out of the palace in short time they would be slaughtered in entirety, the guards fearfully fled through the gates and informed the king of such a sudden situation. Bursting with furiousness at such a report, King Zhou personally put on his armor, took his cutlass, and smashed open the gates to do away with the rebelling Yellow Flying Tiger at the crack of dawn.

As King Zhou aligned his royal army before the rebelling forces outside the palace, Yellow Flying Tiger looked into the king's fiery eyes and felt a level of shame for his actions at hand. Once Generals Huang Ming and Zhou Ji had clearly noticed such hesitation on his part, they both unleashed their cutlasses and clashed with great renown against King Zhou immediately. Originally intending on clarifying the facts with the king before taking any physical action, Yellow Flying Tiger felt greatly displeased but nonetheless strode forth to assist his two generals. Even though King Zhou possessed great skill with the cutlass, he could not handle a three-pronged attack — and was thus forced to flee through the palace gates following thirty-rounds of battle.

Grabbing hold of his two generals lest they attempted to chase the fleeing king, Yellow Flying Tiger rode through the capital's western gates while catching up shortly with the rest of his family along the way. As King Zhou meanwhile returned to court and felt a high level of remorse and rage at the former incidents, many people began hearing of the rebellion and thus approached the king to hear the reason for such a sudden turn of events.

Informing the ministers present that Lady Jia, Yellow Flying Tiger's sister, impulsively threw herself from the Star Picking Mansion simply out of her own personal dignity, and Madame Huang, the sister-in-law of the former lady, committed suicide after being informed of such news, King Zhou asked what should be done at such a present time of confusion that had little to do with him.

As everyone present began pondering in silence, it was soon heard that Grand Old Master Wen Zhong had returned from the East Sea district. Entering the palace gates and being warmly welcomed by each minister, Wen Zhong became worried as to why his old friend Yellow Flying Tiger was not seen — and he thus approached King Zhou to inspected the reason for such. Being informed by the king that Yellow Flying Tiger had rebelled most likely due to the elaborated

incident with Concubine Huang and Lady Jia, Wen Zhong clearly realized the reality of the situation — knowing that his comrade would never rebel unless the circumstances were indeed exceedingly crucial and in need of amendment.

Suggesting to King Zhou that he should return with Yellow Flying Tiger only if his case was personally considered as justified and without punishment on the part of the king, ministers began to shout about, saying that Flying Tiger's actions were deserving of punishment no matter what the case might have been. Excusing such pointless dribble nonetheless, Wen Zhong ordered Generals Li Ji and Yu Qing to send urgent reports to the Good Dream and Green Dragon passes so that Yellow Flying Tiger's route of escape was cut off during his future pursuit.

Chapter 31

Flight and Pursuit

With the great clamor of drums and cannons resounding about the capital's western gates, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong ascended to the sky atop his great dragon in immediate pursuit of his close comrade, Yellow Flying Tiger. As Yellow Flying Tiger's party had meanwhile arrived near the White Orile Forest of Lintong Pass, they began to see large clouds of dust spinning about from behind and thus realized that an army was most likely approaching their position with quick speed. As soldiers from the Green Dragon and Good Dream Pass suddenly surrounded them from differing directions, Yellow Flying Tiger led out a single yell of frustration that pierced all around after realizing that his situation was exceedingly critical and most improbable of escape.

Virtue of the Pure Void, who happened to live within a mountainous region neighboring Lintong Pass, heard the loud emanation of immense anger and despair — and thus parted the clouds beneath to find it to be none other than Prince Yellow Flying Tiger. Ordering his yellow carved genie to wrap the prince and his entourage with the Universe Muddling Pennant and place them at a hidden area within the mountains, the genie immediately obeyed its master's command.

As such was effectively carried out, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong had meanwhile attained word from a patrolman of the vanguard that neither Zhang Guifang of Green Dragon, nor the four Mo generals of Good Dream, had seen Yellow Flying Tiger to any extent. Ordering the five present before him to return to their respective passes and set up a strict defense, Wen Zhong became rather puzzled as to why Flying Tiger had not been seen whatsoever, considering that he was traveling in the very direction that the former was rumored to have crossed while three additional forces aligned themselves from opposite directions.

Peering over the great surroundings before him atop his dragon, soldiers shortly reported that Yellow Flying Tiger and his entourage had been seen heading straight towards Morning Song with unknown intentions from the eastern route. Swiftly gliding forth with great speed, Wen Zhong soon caught sight of who he thought to have been Yellow Flying Tiger — and thus launched forward with great speed. Approaching Meng Ford,⁹ while not catching up to the entourage in the very least, the forces before him suddenly vanished before a large veil of mist.

9. Meng Ford here seems to cross the Yellow River near Western Foothills and therefore also nearby White Orile Forest of Lintong Pass. However, other translations associate it with the River Meng, which might be a tributary of the mythical Yellow River.

Moreover, a popular legend on River Meng tells: "*Meng Jiang Nu*" — which means, "Lady of the River Meng" or "Spirit of the River Meng" — *was born from a gourd vine. One day the emperor took her husband to work for the construction the Great Wall, but he died and his body was used into the foundations of the Wall. Meng came sad and screaming, which made a section of the Wall to fall. The angry emperor tried to seize her but she cast herself into the ocean where she was rescued by the Dragon king of the Sea, who then repelled the emperor with an army of crabs.*

Using this as trickery to lure Wen Zhong to a faraway position, Virtue of the Pure Void placed Yellow Flying Tiger and his men back on their original path through Lintong after declaring the situation as being safe. Approaching the pass's gates, Zhang Feng appeared forth and suggested to Yellow Flying Tiger that he should return to Morning Song with due haste for the sake of his father and treasured ancestors.

Politely informing Zhang, despite the many great feats that he had performed as supreme military commander of Morning Song, King Zhou had shown him great insult with little consideration to his true loyalty — even going to the extent of killing his very own wife and sister out of nothing more than barbaric impulse.

Clearly realizing that Yellow Flying Tiger's resolve was impossible to pierce, Zhang unleashed his cutless and slashed at the latter violently. Trying to calm the former while parrying his every blow, Yellow Flying Tiger knew the situation was hopeless — and thus fought back with his duel swords with even greater renown. As Zhang knew that he was far less skilled in battle, he had no choice but to flee back to his pass in vain attempt.

Deciding it best to make camp in order to discuss the current issue at hand with his fellow generals and family members present, Zhang Feng meanwhile ordered General Xiao Yin to take a contingent of three thousand archers, surround the camp of Yellow Flying Tiger, and unleash a volley of arrows once the beating of bamboo slats was heard at midnight. Leaving immediately upon the hearing of such an order, Xiao Yin knew that such an action would be far too cruel and ungrateful — for Yellow Flying Tiger had promoted him as deputy commander over Lintong and showed him great kindness through military exercise and discipline within the past.

Secretly leaving the pass under the veil of night while approaching Yellow Flying Tiger's camp, Xiao Yin personally placed himself before Yellow Flying Tiger, told him of Zhang Feng's cruel intentions, and declared that he should open the pass's gates so that the former could attain a quick chance to cut his way through. As soon as great commotion roamed through Lintong Pass once Yellow Flying Tiger made his immediate escape, Zhang Feng sat in regret at previously choosing Xiao Yin for such a task. Striding through the pass gates in immediate pursuit, Zhang Feng was suddenly struck violently in the breast by Xiao Yin, who was hidden like a veil within the darkness.

Falling from his horse dead, Xiao Yin told Yellow Flying Tiger in a loud voice that he should do his utmost to ensure that King Zhou's men were essentially slowed down in their assault. Profusely thanking Xiao Yin for his kind motives, Yellow Flying Tiger and his entourage approached Tongguan Pass shortly. Setting up camp temporarily, Chen Tong, the commander of Tongguan Pass, realized that Yellow Flying Tiger's party was not far off — and this would truly be the only opportunity to attain revenge after the former's original intention to put him to death at one point in time.

Flouring his weapon with rage, Chen Tong flew from the pass gates while confronting Yellow Flying Tiger with great earnest. Knowing that Chen Tong was eager for revenge, Yellow Flying Tiger challenged him by stating that if he could

effectively defeat him in three rounds of combat, he would turn himself in to the former for trial back at Morning Song. Seething with rage at his lack of renown that did not even vaguely match up to Flying Tiger's, Chen Tong began to flee while launching his Fire Dragon Javelin — a weapon that never missed its intended mark through magic attributes — at his foe.

Being struck beneath the armpit by Chen's deadly weapon, Yellow Flying Tiger fell to the ground in unbearable pain. Seeing their commander severely wounded, General Guang Ming and Zhou Ji wrathfully engaged Chen Tong to the very death, while Huang Feibiao quickly grabbed hold of his brother and pulled him from the battle. As Chen Tong realized that he was thoroughly exhausted, he retreated from the battle after additionally wounding Zhou Ji with his javelin. Laying the motionless Yellow Flying Tiger down before the grass, all around broke into loud sobs at the unexpected death of their treasured commander. Meditating atop his Green Cloud Bed, Virtue of the Pure Void intuitively knew that calamity had befallen someone within Yellow Flying Tiger's entourage—and thus performed divination immediately.

Realizing that his intuition was indeed correct, Huang Tianhua, the fourth son of Yellow Flying Tiger, was summoned before him and ordered to revive his father first before dealing with the current trouble at Tongguan Pass. Being handed a sword and a flower basket with instructions to return to the Purple Sun Cave swiftly after assisting his father through the pass, Huang Tianhua traveled with great speed and unparalleled vigor.

Chapter 32

Meeting between Father and Son

Arriving before Tongguan Pass and entering a neighboring camp that was believed to be his father's, Huang Tianhua moved forward and declared his name and set intention to the guards present before him. As Huang Tianbiao, one of Yellow Flying Tiger's two brothers, approached this stranger from the camp gates, he was surprised to notice that the former had a face quite similar to that of his brother's — and thus immediately exchanged a polite bow.

Being led before Yellow Flying Tiger at the back camp, Huang Tianhua wept internally at the state that his father was currently present within. Seeing another man laying off to the left in a gravely wounded state, Huang Tianhua immediately began the revival process. Obtaining some water from a neighboring stream, Huang Tianhua used the elixir pills from his basket to dissolve the pills and gently pour the medicine down his father's throat. Awaking with a shock after about an hour of time, Yellow Flying Tiger asked hurriedly how long he had been unconscious.

Being informed fully of the situation, Yellow Flying Tiger broke into tears at the sight of his fourth son who had not been present before his eyes for over thirteen years. Telling his father that a superior man by the name of Virtue of the Pure Void had taken him in for discipleship due to being supposedly destined for such a fate, Huang Tianhua greeted his fellow uncles and brothers while restoring the wounded Zhou Ji back to full health. Suddenly realizing that his mother, Lady Jia, had not been present whatsoever, Yellow Flying Tiger had little choice but to inform his son about the incident at Capital Morning Song to the former's detriment.

As Huang Tianhua fell to the ground in unparalleled rage and great frustration, he vowed to give his very own life if it meant the death of King Zhou. A messenger shortly arrived before the camp of Yellow Flying Tiger and informed the commander immediately of Chen Tong's second challenge. Leaving with due confidence of his son's promised backing, Yellow Flying Tiger confronted his hated opponent once more with complete vigor to obtain revenge.

Being rather stunned at Flying Tiger's keen posture and seemingly good health, Chen Tong raised his halberd and charged the former with great furiousness nonetheless. Suffering defeat after a few rounds, Chen Tong began to flee while Yellow Flying Tiger hesitated lest he suffered gravely once more by the enemy commander's javelin. Knowing that his opponent would most assuredly not pursue a second time after suffering such a calamity within the past, Chen Tong decided to launch his Fire Dragon Javelin despite the great length between both commanders.

As Huang Tianhua unexpectedly leapt forth and absorbed the lance with his flower basket, Chen Tong knew that the boy would more than likely be a great obstacle between his long awaited revenge against Flying Tiger — and he thus slashed violently at Huang Tianhua in hopes of destroying him with quick speed. With a single swift slash of light from Tianhua's magical Moye Sword, Chen Tong's

head suddenly tumbled to the ground as an announcement of Flying Tiger's victory. Smashing the gates open with great speed, Yellow Flying Tiger emerged from Tongguan Pass shortly while Huang Tianhua bade a tearful farewell to his father, vowing to meet again at the Western Foothills sometime into the future. Arriving before Chuanyun Pass, Commander Chen Wu, the brother of Chen Tong, obtained word that Yellow Flying Tiger had broken through Tongguan and destroyed his brother.

Being rather furious at such an incident while calling forth his generals to a council, General He Shen moved forward and told the commander of his plan to "take the enemy by cunning, not by force". After accepting the former's plan with delight, Chen Wu appeared before the pass gates to courteously propose a feast for Yellow Flying Tiger due to the unjust suffering that he confronted within the past. Accepting such a proposal with due happiness, the night arrived in quick time during their fellow feast together.

Being asked to rest at their lodgings for the night, Yellow Flying Tiger reluctantly declined such an offer lest Chen Wu attempted to perform any treacherous deed at such a time; he unwillingly agreed, however, once his generals declared their reassurance that such could not possibly happen considering the former's kind motives.

Ordering his men to hide the luggage carts within neighboring corridors, every man fell asleep with true ease, while Yellow Flying Tiger insistently paced about in his room while reminiscing the past calamities that he had suffered and how he can effectively ensure that harm can be escaped within the present situation.

Carefully considering such thoughts throughout the night without the slightest would to sleep, he was startled to hear the voice of his beloved wife suddenly emit throughout the walls of his room, stating that a grand fire should burst about within their sleeping quarters in short time — as Chen Wu had essentially planned out. Waking everyone present immediately, Yellow Flying Tiger elaborated Lady Jia's words and declared that they should thus break out of their current position in quick pace.

As each general smashed the barred doors open with hand axes, they ordered the luggage carts to be pushed out of the building once heaps of firewood were clearly laying in front of them. Rushing out atop their horses with unparalleled speed, Chen Wu quickly attained word of such happenings — and thus pursued Yellow Flying Tiger's forces in immediate pace. Seeing Chen Wu rushing upon his back, Yellow Flying Tiger yelled at the enemy commander for his insincere kindness while possessing irrational enmity towards him.

Charging each other with great furiousness, Flying Tiger stabbed his sword deeply through Chen Wu's heart before smashing down the gates and destroying all enemy soldiers that dared to oppose his intense resolve.

Leaving Chuanyuan in complete victory while approaching Jiepai Pass in quick speed, General Huang Ming commented to Yellow Flying Tiger that Huang Gun, the former's father, was the commander of the following pass — and most assuredly would listen to his son's reason after the unjust incidents met within the past. As Huang Gun had obtained word of Yellow Flying Tiger's rebellion, and the

grand slaughter through such an incident, he opened the camp gates with 3,000 soldiers at his right hand while ten prisoner carts sat to his left in preparation to punish his son despite the filial relations that they might possess towards each other.

Chapter 33

The Battle at Sishui Pass

As Generals Huang Ming and Dragon Huan of Yellow Flying Tiger were the first to reach the gates of Jiepai Pass, they clearly noticed Huang Gun's blatant intentions but approached him nonetheless in greeting. With Yellow Flying Tiger's additional approach, Huang Ming suddenly lashed out many cold words of hatred towards his son due to the consequences that should be personally brought upon him as a latent result. Desiring to be remembered by the king as a loyal subject with the chance to live, Huang Gun demanded that his son dismounts and was taken in as prisoner for him to deliver before the feet of Morning Song.

He accepted his father's words as being his only chance left to prove that he was a filial son still possessing loyal attributes towards the Shang Dynasty. Huang Ming immediately stepped forward and convinced his master that such an action would only put great shame to his resolve, and clearly was not the Will of Heaven to give in to such an injustice without a second thought. Realizing that Huang Ming must have been a large influential figure that incited his son into rebellion, Huang Gun unleashed his blade wrathfully while charging at the former.

Attempting to convince Huang Guan that his actions would be void of virtue and filially if he continued to fight solely for his currently possessed reputation rather than the greater good, Huang Gun's rage became ignited with a tint of even greater infuriation. As the four main generals under Yellow Flying Tiger began to violently clash blades against Huang Gun, Huang Ming immediately suggested to his master to use the time that they keep Guan at bay to escape from the pass gates — which were currently wide open. Seeing his son flee from the pass gates as he continued to clash blades against the enemy generals, and knowing that he would suffer death by the king for such, Huang Gun fell from his horse and attempted immediate suicide as a new resolution.

Grabbing hold of Gun's arms to negate such an impulse resolve, Huang Ming calmly stated that he and the other three generals had originally intended on handing Yellow Flying Tiger in to Jiepai Pass after being forced into rebellion lest they wanted to be killed. Stating in addition that if Huang Gun could approach Yellow Flying Tiger and state his intention to join them on their journey after carefully considering the situation, Flying Tiger could be lured back to a feast between father and son while being thrown into prisoner carts upon a later surprise.

Accepting such a suggestion as his only true opportunity to deal with Flying Tiger even if Huang Ming was simply bluffing in intention, Huang Gun approached his son shortly and pleaded forgiveness for the earlier rudeness. After inviting the unsuspecting Yellow Flying Tiger into his residence, and drinking with his son in due happiness, Huang Gun began performing the signal to capture the former and his entourage into prisoner carts — beating a gong upon a drum — continuously without any response from Huang Ming whatsoever. Dishonestly stating from the curtains that that the soldiers were not ready as of yet, the former meanwhile ordered Dragon Huan and Wu Qian to fill the prisoner carts with Huang Gun's belongings while setting the barns and warehouses aflame. As soldiers of Shang

stormed in to inform their commander of the current happenings while the majority of Flying Tiger's generals had already left the pass a second time, he became convinced by Huang Ming that the only way to preserve his great reputation, avoid death, and shine greatness upon the names of his ancestors, was to essentially join them in their departure to the Western Foothills. Kowtowing to Morning Song eight times while hanging his seal of office within the Silver Security Court, Huang Gun joined his son with 3,000 soldiers and 1,000 guards shortly.

As Huang Gun was riding side by side with Huang Ming, he warned the latter that they were approaching Sishui Pass. A pass that wields a dangerous sorcerer named Yu Hua, the reputed "*Seven-headed General*," who had never lost a single battle in his life. While Yellow Flying Tiger met with Gun and Ming shortly at their neighboring camp of Sishui Pass, Han Rong, the commander of the pass, sighed in great displeasure at being forced to deal with a commander that was once renowned throughout the Shang Dynasty as a hero.

Summoning his generals nonetheless to do away with the threat that laid before him, he and his generals decided it best to block the pass's gates with a heavy-armored unit, while the rest of his forces outside prepare for combat with long spears as their attributed weaponry. As the feared Yu Ha exited the gates before the enemy's camp, Yellow Flying Tiger personally declared that he should meet the former in combat. With Yu Hua's inspection to Flying Tiger for his rationale behind rebellion upon their approach, Yu Hua almost became convinced by the general's words — but nonetheless rode forward to do battle lest his own grandly established reputation was to be lost for freeing a widely-accounted rebel of the dynasty.

Being utterly exhausted during their duel as Yellow Flying Tiger's swords were used with keen renown and skill, Yu Hua retreated a set interval between the former while unleashing his black-cloud pennant to knock Flying Tiger unconscious. Pushing the commander before the feet of Han Rong, Han Rong placed Yellow Flying Tiger into gaol while awaiting the additional capture of his assistant rebels. As Huang Gun sat in camp fuming over Han Rong's chance to attain a high level of rather undeserved merit that night, Yu Ha rode forward to be met by Generals Zhou Ji and Huang Ming the following morning.

Unfortunately however, Zhou Ji and Huang Ming had never seen the method used to capture their commander originally, and they thus fell in addition to Yu Hua's magic pennant very shortly. Even though the generals of Flying Tiger were clearly informed of Yu Hua's ability by Huang Gun at a later point, their inner pride blinded their eyes from rationality — and Yu Ha thus managed to capture Huang Feibiao, Huang Feibao, Dragon Huan, and Wu Qian in a mere two encounters.

Being honored by Han Rong for his evidential prowess, Huang Gun meanwhile sat in the camp while gazing into the eyes of his grandsons, knowing that they too would more than likely be forced to suffer the same fate as their comrades. Obtaining report that Yu Ha had appeared once more before Flying Tiger's camp, Huang Tianlu, Huang Ming's grandson, convinced his grandfather that he should defeat the enemy general with his keenly established renown on the battlefield despite his age.

As the bout thus began between Tianlu and Yu Hua, the latter managed to use his magical pennant on Tianlu despite the wounds that he obtained through the former's unexpected skill. Being utterly distressed beyond despair at the hearing of his grandson's additional capture, Huang Gun suggested to his fellow soldiers to display their fine gifts present as a purchasing of their own freedom, while he accepts his seemingly inevitable fate as prisoner.

Even though the soldiers tried to console his motives, Huang Gun ignored such words due to the situation's clear conditions — and thus set forth to Sishui's gates to convince Han Rong that his grandchildren should be free of any harm while he gives himself in to preserve what little reputation he should have. Obtaining report on Huang Gun's arrival, Han Rong set forth with generals side by side, believing that the former either came for negotiation or sympathy.

Chapter 34

Good and Bad Fortune of Yellow Flying Tiger

Crawling on his knees before Han Rong, while performing a reciprocated salutation, Huang Gun placed forth his remaining grandchild and begged for his life to be spared of any such punishment so that the Huang family would not only live on, but the latter would be remembered as a man of compassion even when under a ruler of contradicting attributes. Responding to such a statement, Han Rong declared that no matter what the circumstances might be, if he dares to violate his set orders through nothing more than personal consideration, others would suspect him as being an ally to the rebels and/or unreliable as a commanding personage of the Shang Dynasty.

Retorting nonetheless by stating that his grandson was obviously forced into rebellion through current circumstances, and Han Rong would prove his respect towards the Huang family for reputational benefit if the child was to be freed, the latter dismissed such words as being irrational and out of the question. Knowing that all hope was thus lost, Huang Gun gave in himself and his son to be placed forth in the gaols as prisoners. Being utterly delighted at the capture of Yellow Flying Tiger's entire family and subordinate generals, a feast was performed as congratulations for such a grand feat.

Discussing afterwards who should be in command of the Morning Song prisoner escort party, Han Rong sat back in satisfaction at Yu Ha's ensured backing. As Yu Ha and his party began to travel immediately with their eleven prisoners present, Huang Gun couldn't restrain his tears over such a vile conclusion to a clan that was honored as highly as the very dynasty itself. Meanwhile at the Golden Light Cave of Qianyuan Mountain, Fairy Primordial intuitively knew that trouble was running about — and thus made a divination to find Yellow Flying Tiger and his family in grave danger.

Calling for Nezha in immediate pace, Primordial ordered his disciple to rush down the mountain and set free any men who seem to be in a state of crucial need, and then return after assisting them through Sishui Pass. Grasping his Fire-Tip Lance, Nezha sped down the mountain in excitement before seeing an army marching towards his direction with prisoner carts at their side. Assuming that this entourage was the one he was looking for, Nezha took up position on a narrow stretch along the pathway and began to sing a song in order to aggravate the soldiers in some way.

Strolling along to Nezha's position after attaining report on the former's actions, Yu Ha became infuriated at Nezha's insistence to obtain ten ingots of gold as payment for passage — and thus spurred his mount forward to attack such an annoyance. Being overrun by the enemy immortal's clear renown, Yu Hua unleashed forth his magical pennant; but such was only taken away by Nezha's leopard skin bag without the slightest effort.

Knowing that the man standing before him must be that of an immortal, and for surely he would meet disaster if his magical pennant was not attained quickly, Yu Ha rushed at Nezha with great desperation — clearly realizing that he could not

do much in such a situation. Unleashing forth his golden brick to gravely wound Yu Hua lest the latter attempted to kill the prisoners as a last resort in his desperate situation, Yu Hua galloped away in great speed while blood poured profusely from his head and body. Rationalizing for a moment, Nezha decided it best to allow Yu Hua escape lest his mission was delayed any further. Sending all other soldiers to immediate flight, Nezha inspected whether a man by the name of "Yellow Flying Tiger" was present in their party before freeing anyone.

As Yellow Flying Tiger prostrated before Nezha in gratitude while announcing his name, each prisoner reciprocated many kowtows to the man who freed them from certain disaster after receiving freedom from their bonds. Ensuring Flying Tiger and his family that he should personally hold of the pass for their sake in the time being, the former set off immediately to assist.

Yu Hua had meanwhile returned to the side of Commander Han Rong and thoroughly elaborated his meeting with a strange immortal that attacked him solely out of greedy intentions for a toll passage. Han Rong became very uneasy over the current circumstances — but became reassured after a general reminder that the commander Yellow Flying Tiger would have little choice but to return to Sishui even if he happened to be freed.

Obtaining report shortly that a man by the name of "Nezha" had arrived before the camp gates for battle, Han Rong strode out of the pass immediately without the slightest patience for further trouble on his part. Being informed by Nezha outside the gates that he had freed Yellow Flying Tiger and his entourage while beating back a man by the name of "Yu Hua", Han Rong began to curse the former for the trouble that he had caused — and thus attacked Nezha without any further talk.

Not realizing what outstanding immortal qualities Nezha possessed, Han Rong and his soldiers were beaten back quickly with fear equivalent to that of fighting a great dragon. Not allowing such a threat to simply run amok no matter how strong it might be, the four generals and two brothers of Flying Tiger suddenly approached the gates of Sishui in assistance to the furthered detriment of Han Rong. As Yu Hua was informed of this critical situation, he immediately strode from the gates and became infuriated that the immortal from earlier dared to return simply to sully his great renown.

Using his golden brick and Universal Ring with great skill, Nezha forced both Han Rong and Yu Hua into immediate flight, while Yellow Flying Tiger and his father arrived shortly to break through the gates and gather all originally acquired belongings before charging through the pass in success. As Nezha took his leave shortly, Yellow Flying Tiger and his entourage eventually arrived to Mount Qi — a region neighboring Phoenix City of the Western Foothills — without any opposition or trouble at that. Ordering his fellow generals and family members to take up camp near Phoenix City following their arrival, Yellow Flying Tiger dressed in plain clothing while heading through the city alone.

Walking through the streets, Flying Tiger noticed that the market and household regions were very prosperous compared to that of Morning Song — and thus became quite satisfied over the long hard-won journey that he inevitably performed. After obtaining information from a fellow passer-by where Prime

Minister Jiang Ziya's mansion was located, Yellow Flying Tiger approached the mansion shortly while being ushered in before the prime minister. Thoroughly elaborating his rebellion against Morning Song and the rationale behind such an action, Jiang Ziya joyfully allowed his guest to sit by his side while ensuring the former that he should inform such words to King Wu as soon as possible.

As Jiang Ziya thus approached the palace gates shortly, while greeting the king as the usual tradition, the prime minister informed King Wu that Prince Yellow Flying Tiger of Military Prowess had forsaken King Zhou and was now present within Phoenix City to offer his service. Once Yellow Flying Tiger had been called for audience before King Wu, the prince's new title became Prince for National Pacification and Military Prowess in hopes that he should be one of the destined founders of the future Zhou Dynasty.

Performing a banquet feast in Flying Tiger's honor, each of the family members and generals serving under the former were brought within the city while reattaining their original rank and position when originally under Shang.

Chapter 35

The Surrender of two Generals

Returning to the incident at Lintong, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong was utterly astounded at being overtaken by such a simple trick even though he had mastered many immortal arts within the past — thus evidently suggesting that he must not have been destined to take Yellow Flying Tiger no matter what action was performed on his part. Returning to Morning Song shortly while elaborating to the ministers his unfortunate failure, Wen Zhong became rather worried over Yellow

Flying Tiger's conjectured immortal assistance reoccurring in the future as to increase his probability of escaping through the passes. As reports soon entered the capital, stating Yellow Flying Tiger's individual victory over the five passes, Wen Zhong became infuriated at the countless detrimental occurrences evolving out of King Zhou's incompetence — but nonetheless resolved in his heart that he must uphold the vow to King Da Yi: the eternal preservation of the Shang Dynasty, even if it costs his own life.

Knowing that Yellow Flying Tiger's successful arrive at the Western Foothills would be a great factor in Ji Fa's encouragement to rebel against the capital, Wen Zhong formed an audience before many generals to discuss the current issue. Then General Lu Xiong stepped forward and recommended to the Grand Old Master that any form of war against the Western Foothills would currently act against their favor — due to the lack of food supplies and generals willing to cooperate through extensive trouble with other rebelling forces such as the dukes. Thus Wen Zhong became convinced that the best course of action would be to obtain information about the Western Foothills set intentions in any means appropriate before taking impulsive courses of action.

With consent from the Chao Twins that they should undertake such a task, they immediately left the frontier with 30,000 soldiers at their backing — lest they were forced into a situation that was needing of attack. Haltering near the western gates of Phoenix City following their arrival, Jiang Ziya obtained word of such while becoming rather confused as to why King Zhou would act at such an inappropriate time. Not being rational of the situation to any means, the Chao Twins both agreed to challenge before the gates of Phoenix City in their desire for battle and bloodshed.

As Jiang Ziya sat in conference, while being approached by a guard shortly to be informed of the Shang Army's intentions, General Nangong Kuo volunteered to meet the foe outside the gates. Taking impulsiveness into his own hands, Chao Lei, the elder of the two brothers, approached his challenger, stating that Yellow Flying Tiger was to be bound up as the rebel he was — or the people of Phoenix City should suffer death for their contradictory manners.

Responding to the former's words with his cutless, Chao Lei was taken captive shortly after thirty rounds of battle. Refusing to kneel with hurtful words after being presented before Jiang Ziya, and receiving the order of execution for

such, Yellow Flying Tiger moved forward and convinced the prime minister that Chao Lei might be useful to them in the future if he remains alive for now.

Obtaining consent, Yellow Flying Tiger approached the general with convincing words that he should always remain at the lowest class if his loyalty belongs in the hands of a barbaric ruler like King Zhou, rather than a man of virtue such as that of King Wu. Expressing his immediate apologies to Jiang Ziya while being allowed to convince his brother, Chao Tian, Chao Lei appeared before his astonished brother outside the western gates shortly.

After elaborating his rationale behind being freed, and his new intentions under the Western Foothills, Chao Lei became very uneasy at the prospect that their fellow family members would be slaughtered in entirety if they were to both defect from Morning Song. As Chao Lei thus devised a plan so that they can essentially escape disaster, Chao Tian meanwhile returned to the city while informing Jiang Ziya that his brother was indeed willing to defect — but he requests a general to see him as a sign of respect. Once Yellow Flying Tiger had volunteered himself with consent, Jiang Ziya additionally sent Xin Jia, Xin Mian, and Nangong Kuo to set locations lest anything was to happen to the prince.

As Yellow Flying thus entered the Shang camp in greeting, the two Chao Twins laughed internally at the idiocy of the Western Foothills while binding the former and returning to Morning Song quickly. When they had arrived before Mount Dragon along the way, General Xin Jia suddenly stood before their path, suggesting that they hand over Yellow Flying Tiger if they wish to keep their lives. Knowing that the situation was in their favor, and it would be foolish to give up such a chance so blatantly, the two Chao Twins rage fully thrashed their blades at the enemy general.

As Xin Mian additionally fell upon the Shang forces with great force, Chao Lei decided to flee from the Western Foothills district in order to potentially obtain further support while his brother fought of the enemy. As Yellow Flying Tiger had essentially been freed more easily due to the former's departure, the prince wrathfully took Chao Tian prisoner in his vows for revenge. Meanwhile, Chao Lei unfortunately forgot the specific path of exit from the Western Foothills district — forcing him to run about atop his horse with great frustration over such a ridiculous situation.

Being approached shortly by General Nangong Kuo under the light of the moon that midnight, Chao Lei had no intention to feel regret over his previous decision, and thus charged at the enemy general with swift renown. Not realizing that Nangong's furiousness and aggression made him one of the strongest warriors of the Western Foothills, Chao Lei was bound shortly and placed within the Prime Minister's mansion the following dawn. Once Yellow Flying Tiger and Nangong Kuo elaborated their successful capture of Chao Lei and Chao Tian to Jiang Ziya, the prime minister ordered for the brothers to meet an immediate execution through beheading.

As Chao Lei quickly elaborated the situation with his fellow family members, and the regret that he possesses by not telling Jiang Ziya of such an issue sooner, Yellow Flying Tiger personally informed the prime minister that Chao Lei's words were indeed truthful. When the two brothers had thus been set free while

kneeling before Jiang Ziya, the latter stated that Chao Tian should remain as a hostage, while Chao Lei returns to the capital with secretly written instructions that would essentially ensure their family's safety. Realizing he had little choice, Chao Lei set out for Morning Song at once.

Chapter 36

First Disaster within the Western Foothills

As Chao Lei arrived before Capital Morning Song a few days following his departure, he presented himself before Grand Old Master Wen Zhong, stating that Commander Han Rong's lack of support with rations and fodder led to his army's decay — thus forcing him to flee back to the capital and plead for reinforcements. Knowing clearly that Han Rong could have easily supplied Chao Lei with full rations with a single lifting of his finger, the commander must have had quite a rational resolution as to not heed such a call — especially considering his reputation could falter through such an action.

Assigning Chao Lei 3,000 soldiers and 1,000 piculs¹⁰ of rice nonetheless, the general set out for the Western Foothills shortly while secretly taking along his family in addition. As Wen Zhong still pondered quite some time following Chao Lei's leave, he performed divination to find out that Lei only intended on bringing his family to the Western Foothills during his return. Knowing that Chao Lei was too far away to be harmed, Ji Li and Yu Qing, the disciples of Wen Zhong, approached their master and suggested that Zhang Guifang, Commander of Green Dragon Pass, should be chosen to lead an attack upon the Western Foothills.

With Zhang Guifang's immediate departure, Qiu Yin took the former's place as commander over the pass. Meanwhile Chao Lei arrived within Phoenix City to report his success before Prime Minister Jiang Ziya. Giving an account of his conversation with Wen Zhong, Jiang Ziya clearly realized that war with Shang was very probable, considering the current circumstances with Yellow Flying Tiger's rebellion and his own image of being a man of great trickery and deceit.

With Zhang Guifang's arrival before the southern gates of Phoenix City after seven days of march, Jiang Ziya obtained word of such — and thus asked Yellow Flying Tiger for his knowledge on the enemy commander's ability level. Informing the prime minister that Zhang Guifang possesses a strange technique that allows him to control each specific movement of his opponent after calling out their name, Jiang Ziya became rather worried over such an unexpected summary.

As many general of the Western Foothills believed Yellow Flying Tiger's words to be nothing more than nonsense, Commander Zhang Guifang meanwhile sent forth General Feng Lin for the first challenge. Placing scorn over rationality, Ji Shu Qian charged from Phoenix City's gates to do battle with the enemy general, no matter what technique he might have possessed. Realizing that the man standing before him was commander of the vanguard under Guifang, Ji Shu Qian stabbed his lance at the former with great precision and renown.

Unfortunately for Shu Qian however, a large red ball of light suddenly shot from Feng Lin's mouth, causing him to be blinded while beaten to death by the enemy general's tooth-fanged clubs at the same time.

10. Commercial unity of weight. In China, Japan, Sumatra, it is usually 133 lbs. (approx. 60 kg). Called also "*tan*" by the Chinese.

As Zhang Guifang mounted the fallen warrior's head atop his camp gates in satisfaction over Feng Lin's victory, Jiang Ziya gnashed his teeth in anger at such a report. Once Zhang Guifang had personally led his forces before the enemy gates in high morale, Jiang Ziya wrathfully approached the former with soldiers standing to his right and left.

With the forces of Jiang Ziya clashing blades fiercely against their foe, Zhang Guifang could not restrain the great anger that arose within his veins at the very sight of Yellow Flying Tiger fighting against His Majesty in full resolve — and thus yelled the name of the former, sending him crashing to the ground in a state of paralysis.

With the immediate assistance of Yellow Flying Tiger's two brothers, and Zhou Ji, the prince managed to escape any potential capture. Realizing that his true intention had slipped from his grasp, Zhang Guifang fled, but happened to obtain Zhou Ji in the process of his retreat. In additional ill-fortune, General Nangong Kuo's aggression overcame him during his pursuit of the fleeing Feng Lin — thus resulting in his capture.

As Jiang Ziya led his forces back to Phoenix City in great distress and rage over the reality of the situation, Zhang Guifang had meanwhile placed both captured generals within prisoner carts to await their eventual return back to Morning Song following the Western Foothill's fall.

Challenging the city the following morning as usual, a board of truce was hung before the gates, convincing Zhang Guifang that a short rest for his soldiers would be the best choice at hand. At this same point in time, Fairy Primordial had personally observed the current happenings at the Western Foothills through divination.

Calling forth Nezha at once, Primordial thoroughly elaborated the current and future happenings that should befall the west, declaring to his disciple that he should thus immediately assist Jiang Ziya as a showing of his celestial renown. Being very delighted at a chance to unleash his prowess upon impulse, Nezha kowtowed to his master before setting off to the Western Foothills, arriving shortly.

Once Nezha had approached Jiang Ziya at the Prime Minister's mansion, while elaborating his reason for appearance and obtaining word on Zhang Guifang's strange ability, the former asked the prime minister if he could challenge this foe at once. Being convinced by Nezha's celestial attributes and great vigor, Jiang Ziya ordered the board of truce to be removed at once. With Feng Lin's immediate departure before the city gates to offer challenge upon the realization of the board's disappearance, Nezha approached the enemy commander while lashing violently with his renowned lance of fire.

Clearly realizing that Nezha was more than likely a celestial being due his uncultured manner of battle and strange revolving wheels of fire, Feng Lin retreated a grand distance lest he received immediate death, while shooting forth his ball of red flames at the former's face. Being naturally well acquainted with such sorcery, Nezha negated his technique, while forcing Feng Lin into retreat after being gravely injured with the Universal Ring.

Following the injured general back to his camp, Nezha anxiously yelled for Zhang Guifang to show his face at once. Appearing before the celestial and attacking him with great renown, Zhang clearly showed signs of severe fatigue — and thus called forth Nezha's name — and set order — without any success whatsoever. Realizing that the situation was inevitably in the enemy's favor, Zhang Guifang resolutely charged his blade at the former with the furiousness of a great dragon.

Chapter 37

Jiang Ziya visits Mount Kunlun

As Nezha became determined to put an end to his vigorous enemy, the Universal Ring was used to break Zhang Guifang's arm and effectively send him fleeing. Reporting to Jiang Ziya that his innate celestial qualities saved him from any form of harm — and assisted in a grand victory at that — Zhang Guifang had meanwhile sent an urgent report to Grand Old Master, asking him for additional reinforcements for the front. Realizing that Guifang would try to obtain a far greater militia at his backing due to the unparalleled prowess that Nezha possesses, Jiang Ziya decided to head to Mount Kunlun to pay his master a visit after giving his traditional farewell to King Wu.

Informing His Majesty earlier that he would be gone for around three days of time, Jiang Ziya arrived very shortly before Unicorn Mountain of Mount Kunlun, while gazing at the beauty that was still present despite his being gone for over a decade. Entering the Jade Emptiness Palace while prostrating himself before Master Celestial Primogenitor, the latter offered fellow greetings to his disciple before ordering him to construct a Terrace of Creation upon Mount Western Foothills immediately — as it was his set destiny.

Additionally stating that many men of talent should appear before him once times of emergency present themselves, he dismissed Jiang Ziya, but carefully informed him to ignore any such voice that might call forth his name upon his return to the Western Foothills, lest any disaster comes of it. Holding the "List of Creations" while taking his leave from Primogenitor, Jiang Ziya began to hear someone calling his name from behind; recalling his master's words with clarity, he refused to reply while continuing along the path to Unicorn Cliff.

As the man became exceedingly angry over Jiang Ziya's rude behavior — for they had been friends for over forty years back at Mount Kunlun — Ziya turned his back to see Shen Gongbao before him. Expressing immediate retribution for his rudeness, and upon Shen Gongbao's inquiring as to which side the former was assisting, Jiang Ziya replied to his old friend that he was fully resolved to do away with the tyrant ruler King Zhou, as Prime Minister of the Western Foothills.

Believing King Zhou's manner of rulership as being for the greater good — due to the supreme military force at his backing through such disciplinary motives — Shen Gongbao became angry at Jiang Ziya's words — and thus declared to his old friend that King Wu would remain as nothing more than a mere laughing stock if he continued to oppose His Majesty with petty words of morality and virtue.

Declaring that he would remain with King Wu eternally, despite the former's words of hate, Shen Gongbao became determined to show Jiang Ziya not only his superior rationality, but his superiority in technique as well. Cutting the head from his body and tossing it into the air, Jiang Ziya gazed in amazement as it simply revolved many times in a single space while Gongbao's body still stood erect with full mobility. Possessing a natural hatred towards Shen Gongbao, and seeing such a chance as being very probable to end in his own intended way, Immortal of the South Pole ordered White Crane Lad to transform himself into a

crane and seize Gongbao's revolving head while tossing it into the North Sea. Immediately performing his set instructions, Immortal of the South Pole meanwhile scolded Jiang Ziya for defying Primogenitor's words.

As Shen Gongbao ran about in great confusion as to why he was unable to retract his head whatsoever, Jiang Ziya earnestly pleaded to spare Gongbao's life — for he might be able to convince his old friend that King Wu was the dynasty's savior to negate any potential opposition within the future. Clicking his fingers to allow Gongbao's head to be freed, it immediately returned to its host's body at once. Knowing that he could have died if his head had not returned after three hours of time, Shen Gongbao left the mountain region with the declaration that he should turn the Western Foothills into a sea of blood in short time.

As Jiang Ziya had thus headed quickly to the East Sea while gazing forth at the immense beauty laid before his eyes, the sea suddenly erupted, signaling the arrival of a spirit that had wondered for over 1,000 years. From the heavens he approached to Jiang Ziya stating that he had been a reputed warrior, under Emperor Xuanyuan, which had suffered death at this sea and had been entrapped ever since. Jiang Ziya let loose a grand show of lightning to free the fallen warrior from his bonds. Kneeling forth in unparalleled gratitude, Jiang Ziya took his hand, while continuing towards the Western Foothills only to find the air being thrashed about with a sudden storm that raged onwards.

As the four devils originally present within the Peony Pavilion approached Jiang Ziya from the heavens with a fellow greeting, they were immediately ordered to assist in the construction of a "Terrace of Creation", while Bai Jian personally acts as supervisor of the work. Performing the construction with great resolve and keen skill, Jiang Ziya had meanwhile returned to Phoenix City, where he was met warmly by both General Wu Ji and Nezha. Being informed that no such attack was performed by Zhang Guifang throughout the interval of his departure, Jiang Ziya issued specific orders to his generals the following morning in preparation for a specialized night-raid.

As Zhang Guifang stamped his feet impatiently at the confirmed backing of additional reinforcements from the capital, he suddenly began to hear the roaring of cannons and soldiers from within the gates of his camp — and thus immediately rushed forth with Feng Lin by his side in full armor. Realizing that the Zhou forces had leaked in throughout every direction — for the sounds of clashing swords had been heard from right to left — Zhang Guifang became terrified at the brilliant glow of fire that emitted from Nezha as his soldiers were slaughtered like lowly animals.

Knowing that the situation was hopeless without their reinforcements, Zhang Guifang and Feng Lin had little choice but to save their own lives by fleeing amongst the confusion to Mount Western Foothills with their remaining forces following. Smashing the ground with both fists at the sight of his pride being torn apart by such a ridiculous incident, Zhang Guifang rage fully wrote another urgent report for reinforcements at once. Holding a conference back at Capital Morning Song, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong was astonished to see an additional request for reinforcements obtained from Commander Zhang Guifang — and thus declared to all around that if victory was ever to be reality, he must personally set forth to the Western Foothills and show the enemy their place.

Ji Li, who was very close to Wen Zhong and knew much of his past, informed the Grand Old Master that he should head to the Nine Dragon Island within the West Sea in order to obtain his four Taoist friends as potential backing in his stead. Clapping his hands in delight at such a suggestion, Wen Zhong made immediate preparations to head to the island and invite his old friends with a fellow toast of greeting.

Chapter 38

Baby Tooth tackles Four Superior Men

Following Grand Old Master Wen Zhong's arrival at Nine Dragon Island, Wen Zhong would see his four superior men friends idly enjoying a game of chess. In time, it was decided that all four would assist; thus a strategy would be mapped out for their first move against Baby Tooth. Once they had completed their set strategy, Grand Old Master would present the foursome before King Zhou himself in the order: "Wang Magus, Yang Forest, High Amiable, and Li Resounding."

Once everything had then been set for movement, Zhang Cassia would once again appear before the unwavering Baby Tooth the following day. Suddenly, the foursome of Nine Dragon Island would suddenly appear on the battlefield — to the dismay of Baby Tooth. Wang Magus would then personally tell Baby Tooth the three-pronged request: "to force King Wu to return as a minister under King Zhou; the returning of Yellow Flying Tiger; and the feasting of Cassia's army."

Baby Tooth would ask for three days to think over their resolution. Following this, Baby Tooth would once again head out to Mount Kunlun. Upon his arrival, Baby Tooth would receive a Four-not-alike — a literal beast that had the body of a dragon, the head of a deer, feet like a cheetah, and hoofs like a qilin.¹¹ In addition, Baby Tooth would receive an XYZ Flag and a Devil Beating Whip. In short time, Baby Tooth's four-not-alike would bring him to a beautiful island within the North Sea. Following a somewhat short conflict with Good Lob, a fifteen-foot tall lobster, Baby Tooth would acquire the beast's consent to assist King Wu.

Once the Foursome of Nine Dragon Island had realized the following day that the granaries were never opened, they knew that Baby Tooth had refuted their request. Immediately after finding Baby Tooth, Wang Magus would personally charge out and give battle. Before Wang Magus was able to even touch Baby Tooth however, Nezha would suddenly appear and duel it out with him. Following a semi-major battle between the other three superior men, Good Lob, and Yellow Flying Tiger, Baby Tooth would attempt to make his escape through the clouds atop his beast.

The determined Wang Magus, however, joined Baby Tooth in the heavens. After directly hitting Baby Tooth with his Earth Slashing Pearl technique, Baby Tooth would fall to the ground beneath in an unconscious state. As Wang got off his animal to go for Baby Tooth's head, he heard a certain individual singing a song. Upon his approach, he would see none other than Superior man Broad Altruist. Once Broad Altruist had attempted to convince Wang Magus that Baby Tooth should be left alone for the sake of the Investiture of the Gods Register, Wang Magus would become rather annoyed.

11. The **qilin** is a magical animal with many varieties of descriptions. It can be quadruped, antlered, cloven hooved, with a fur either dull brown, colorful, fire-like, or like a gemstone. It can be either divine, peaceful, or evil. A tale tells that a qilin appeared in the garden of the mythical *Yellow Emperor*. Moreover, it is told that the birth of *Confucius* was preceded by the arrival of a qilin.

Without thinking deeply about the situation whatsoever, Wang Magus would blindly charge at Broad Altruist with his sword. Jinzha, Broad Altruist's student, would appear immediately and negate Wang Magus's blade. Broad Altruist would then throw his Seven-trick Lotus around Wang Magus; resulting in complete imbalance. Jinzha would then stand ready to deliver the final blow to Wang Magus.

Chapter 39

Lu Xiong assists Zhang Guifang

As the infuriated Wang Mo was unable to move in any form while being firmly immobilized by Outstanding Culture's stakes, Jinzha performed one quick slash maneuver of his blade — sending the unfortunate Taoist to his death, while his soul became the first to gather before the Terrace of Creation.

Reviving Jiang Ziya momentarily afterwards, Outstanding Culture told the prime minister to return to the Western Foothills with the assistance of Jinzha. Departing after being informed of the prior situation, Outstanding Culture had meanwhile buried the corpse of Wang Mo in a grievous state over his impulsive gestures of the past. Fortunately driving away the Shang forces earlier, without any notable casualties at that, King Wu and the others were greatly delighted to see the prime minister return before the city's northern gates with a stranger by his side later that day.

Elaborating the incidents prior in full detail, while introducing Jinzha to all present, Yang Sen meanwhile sat within the Shang camp, being exceedingly worried over Wang Mo's lack of return by dusk. Performing a divination across his fingers at once, Yang Sen flew back in horror at the gruesome end to their fellow brother, Wang Mo. Informing his other two brothers of the situation immediately, all three Taoists slept throughout that night in great agony and despair over the death of Wang Mo — but such only strengthened their resolve to destroy Jiang Ziya even if they must sacrifice everything they possess.

Mounting their beasts at the very crack of dawn, the Taoists demanded that Jiang Ziya shows himself at once. Hearing of such a challenge shortly, Jiang Ziya hesitated, due to the various wounds that he still possessed from the incident prior, but was nonetheless encouraged to head to the front once Nezha ensured his essential backing. Appearing outside the eastern gates shortly after, Jinzha and Nezha immediately rushed forward to protect the prime minister from any harm. With a sudden wrathful charge on the part of the three Taoists, Jiang Ziya carefully watched the battle, while determining it time to try out his Staff of Beating Gods.

Throwing the staff into the air in a horizontal fashion, a sudden flash of lightning triggered the weapon to fall like a boulder — aiming for the unfortunate Gao Youqian. As Youqian's head splattered instantly at such an impact, Yang Sen was terrified, but nonetheless immensely enraged at the following death of his brother. Seeing Jiang Ziya toss the staff into the air earlier, and concluding through such a fact that the former killed his brother, Yang Sen let out a piercing cry of despair and lunged at the prime minister like a berserk dragon ready to slaughter at whim.

Being distracted by an object — the Universal Ring — being flung straight at him, Jinzha seized such a chance to bind the former with his Invisible Dragon Stake, and then finishing the Taoist off with a vertical blade slash through his abdomen. Seeing the death of two additional brothers, Li Xingba charged at Jinzha and Muzha, while Feng Lin and Zhang Guifang, who could not allow the death of any more allies lest their chances of victory became nullified, leapt forward to

assist their Taoist ally. Huang Tianxiang, the fourth son of Yellow Flying Tiger, meanwhile rode forth with his silver spear, even though he was still yet a child. Being overtaken by an obvious advantage over Tianxiang, Feng Lin cockily charged at the young boy while thrashing his clubs about wrathfully, but ended up being killed upon a single thrust of Tianxiang's spear — which pierced the former's chest with great renown.

Now knowing that the day had most assuredly been lost, Zhang Guifang retreated to the Shang camp immediately, while Li Xingba followed close behind. Upon their return to the Shang camp, Li Xingba suggested to Zhang Guifang that reinforcements were of great necessity, considering the recent death of four additional generals; Zhang consented at once to such a suggestion by sending an urgent report to Grand Old Master Wen Zhong.

Jiang Ziya returned to Phoenix City, where he profusely praised the young Tianxiang for his renown. Jinzha clearly realized that with the loss of three generals on the opposing side and their earlier retreat, more than likely out of fear of complete annihilation, they most assuredly would be awaiting an immediate backing of some form of reinforcements that ensured their ultimate protection. Jinzha thus approached the prime minister suggesting to him that the enemy commander should be engaged as soon as possible.

Clearly seeing Jinzha's rationale, Jiang Ziya followed his suggestion by leading forth his army the following day, while demanding Zhang Guifang to show himself at once. Raging exiting the Shang camp with generals to his right and left, Zhang Guifang knew that the situation was grave, due to the current lack of reinforcements, and capable generals at that, but nonetheless charged forward to begin a grand battle.

As each general unleashed their prowess upon the battlefield, Li Xingba fled through the heavens at the very second in which Jiang Ziya had made a threatening gesture with his staff, thus leaving Zhang Guifang surrounded by many generals on each side. With the Chao Twin's attempt to convince the enemy commander that reconciliation was the best choice, considering the current situation he was within, Zhang Guifang did not for a second consider such a resolution as probable — for his loyalty and honor had been sworn to King Zhou, no matter what obstacle appeared before him.

Fighting on like a renowned warrior from dawn to noon, Zhang realized his great exhaustion and the lack of forces remaining on his side, and thus pierced his own belly as a final show of loyal intentions towards the Shang Dynasty. Seeing the enemy commander fall to the ground and emitted his final breath, Jiang Ziya and his men returned to Phoenix City in triumph, after receiving the remaining soldiers of Guifang, who had surrendered.

As Li Xingba had meanwhile landed before a neighboring mountain to plan out his next move, he decided it best to return to the capital, while meeting with Wen Zhong to discuss their method of revenge. Ready to take his leave immediately, Li Xingba heard someone singing a song in a very close distance — and thus turned around to see a young man, who stated his name to be "Muzha". Exchanging salutations, while stating his name and set purpose, Muzha smiled in delight at the man who his master sent him far and wide to search for standing

right before his very eyes. Informing the former that he had been sent to capture him, and a great reward would be presented through such an action, Li Xingba knew that it would be difficult to escape such a grasp — and thus lashed forth his duel staves at the enemy. Greatly resolved to destroy anything in his path for the sake of revenge, Muzha became clearly overpowered as they clashed weapons violently along the mountainside.

Unfortunately for Li Xingba, however, Muzha suddenly unleashed a large blade—dubbed as the male counterpart of the two "Hooks of Wu" atop his back — to slice off the former's head in one quick strike. Riding to the Western Foothills atop his dust cloud, Muzha arrived before a large city, and was unexpectedly admitted in by his elder brother, Jinzha, who which introduced the former to the prime minister at once. As Grand Old Master Wen Zhong had meanwhile stamped his fist in rage at the report of three of his Taoist allies being killed, he ordered all generals to appear before him to obtain ear on the situation currently at hand.

After a lengthened discussion, it was decided that Lu Xiong, a general of old age, but capable in the art of military commandership nonetheless, would be assisted by Fei Zhong and You Hun as advisors, in order to essentially reinforce Zhang Guifang at all costs possible. Being equipped with 50,000 soldiers, and leaving the capital immediately without delay, summer soon approached, forcing the Shang army to perspire under the immense sunlight without the slightest breath of wind whatsoever. Being told by a patrolman along the way that Zhang Guifang had lost his life, and his very head was hanging upon Phoenix City's eastern gate as he spoke, Commander Lu Xiong ordered his soldiers to camp at a neighboring forest within a region known as "*Mount Western Foothills*" — as one of his generals had stated it to be.

Immediately sending report to Wen Zhong on the current situation, Jiang Ziya had obtained report on the enemy's camping within Mount Western Foothills — and thus ordered Wu Ji and Nangong Kuo to block any sort of assault from the former with 5,000 soldiers at their disposal. As both generals camped opposite to the stationary Shang forces, General Xin Jia arrived shortly to move their camp before the mountain's summit — as ordered by Jiang Ziya himself.

Following such a ridiculous order without any true choice, the forces of Zhou began to complain profusely as they were forced to remain within the direct heat of summer, while being laughed at below by the Shang soldiers, who knew that they would die of exhaustion if they remained as such for at least three days.

As Lu Xiong kept his forces stationed closely by his side without external movement, lest an ambush or trap of some sort became unleashed at any noticeable retortion, Jiang Ziya arrived before his own forces with an additional 3,000, and ordered his soldiers to construct a three-foot high terrace at once. With General Xin Mian's additional arrival with padded cotton jackets and warm caps to be worn upon each soldier, everyone present followed such an order at once — knowing fully that they rushed the risk of their own deaths at any moment.

Chapter 40

Phoenix City's Great Siege

With the immediate arrival of dusk, and the essential completion of the terrace, Jiang Ziya began to recite many incantations and spells to stir up the winds for his set intentions. Destroying the deathly heat of summer with a refreshing breeze, the wind gradually became stronger — even to the extent that trees became uprooted, and sand flew about violently. As the wind became etched with a tint of coldness, winter snow suddenly fell from the heavens, covering the land beneath with a tint of silver and white. Being exceedingly astonished and enraged at the coldness at the same time, Lu Xiong began making preparations to make an immediate retreat, lest they were frozen to death by such blatant sorcery.

Realizing that the enemy army could escape his grasp without death, Jiang Ziya began to recite many charms, effectively summoning the sun before the Shang forces' eyes. Sending large torrents of waves raging about, the prime minister additionally summoned forth a cold wind, freezing all unfortunate soldiers of Shang to ice. Seeing an ocean of ice laid about beneath the summit, Wu Ji and Nangong Kuo broke into the Shang camp as ordered, taking back Lu Xiong, Fei Zhong, and You Hun as prisoners as easily as turning over their very palm. As Lu Xiong stood defiantly before the feet of Jiang Ziya, while Fei Zhong and You Hun fell to the ground, begging for mercy, the prime minister ordered them to be placed within prison for the time being.

Reciting incantations immediately after to melt away all ice below the mountain's summit, over 5,000 soldiers of the original 50,000 had been clearly frozen to death, while the remaining 45 managed to escape from the Western Foothills without any notable harm. With Jiang Ziya's decree to receive King Wu before Mount Western Foothills at once, General Nangong Kuo set out to Phoenix City shortly, performing such a task with immediate speed. Being accompanied by his civil and military officials along the way, King Wu noticed many lumps of ice and snow laying about in random areas of the mountain — and was thus informed by the prime minister following his arrival.

As the prime minister began to write an elegy of in memory of the warriors who lost their lives for the Zhou cause, King Wu began to burn incense, while Jiang Ziya ordered the three prisoners to be brought forth and beheaded at once. Following the end of their ceremony, Han Rong had received the remnants of Lu Xiong's army, and at the same time, sent an urgent report to Grand Old Master Wen Zhong on the current issue within the Western Foothills.

Being determined that his own appearance within the Western Foothills was the only insurance of Shang victory, Wen Zhong was immediately confronted by his two disciples, who suggested the four Diablo brothers — for they possess great magical renown, far exceeding what the original four Taoists could have obtained through their discipline. Being delighted, and well confident, over their summary, Wen Zhong sent an order to the four brothers, appointing them as expeditionary commanders if they were to comply. Realizing that the Grand Old Master must assuredly be rather desperate after receiving report on their

appointment, the Diablo brothers nonetheless roared through the Good Dream Pass, 100,000 strong, and arriving before Phoenix City in rather quick pace.

As the prime minister obtained word shortly on the arrival of a Shang army camped near the city, Yellow Flying Tiger carefully spied on their forces from the city wall, and upon the spotting of the renowned Diablo brothers — Mo Lihong, Mo Liqing, Mo Lihai, and Mo Lishou — he returned to Jiang Ziya's side and thoroughly elaborated the situation. Informing Jiang Ziya of their individualized special abilities — in which he knew by fighting by their side during a conflict against the East Sea district — the prime minister sat in great discomfort and distress.

After three days without any form of challenge, the four brothers toasted each other that night, while charging forth the following morning to do battle. Not having any preset plan as Jiang Ziya exited from the city gates to confront the four brothers, Mo Liqing started things off by rage fully yelling at the prime minister for his intentions on rebellion, especially after seeing Zhang Guifang's head atop Phoenix City's walls, who he had recognized.

He said that they never possessed any intentions to rebel against the dynasty, but they were simply defending themselves from King Zhou's constant debased assaults. Even after told that, the four brothers cared little of his words, for Grand Old Master was a keen man of intellect and competency and would surely not have sent them if the Western Foothills were not planning rebellion. And they thus charged at the Zhou forces, fighting right and left with great renown. Unfortunately for Nezha, and any other generals who had wielded a weapon of magical attributes, Mo Lihong used his Universe Muddling Umbrella to absorb such weapons with a single horizontal spin.

With eager to show the opposition his own power, Mo Liqing shook the Green Cloud Sword atop his back, forcing all within a set perimeter to unconditionally kill themselves with their own weapons. As the clouds above turned dark, with flames shooting about from Lihong's umbrella, Lishou used his white elephant to devour all unfortunate soldiers that happened to stand within its path. Fleeing back to Phoenix City in complete defeat, over 10,000 casualties had been counted, while nine generals had additionally lost their lives.

As the Shang forces returned in great happiness over such a feat, Lihong suggested a complete assault upon Phoenix City's walls during their next military conference, in a chance to force both Jiang Ziya and King Wu into effective surrender. Enforcing such a suggestion with open arms, the four Diablo brothers clearly realized that boards of truce had been placed forth the city gates, but they nonetheless assaulted the city with scaling ladders and cannons — not daring to let up for a single second, lest such a grand opportunity was to be negated at some later time.

Retorting with flaming arrows, lime bottles, throwing spears, and of the sort for over three days, the Shang forces became even more resolved to break through such a defense, even at their own lack of soldiers through such aggression. Ordering a retreat following the end of their third day of assault, the four brothers decided that they should besiege the city and ensure that external food supplies and reinforcements were essentially cut off. After three months without any true success, Lihong suggested to his brothers a full scale assault upon the city with

their legendary weapons; the amount of innocent casualties was of no more concern, for the city's capture was completely essential, lest their own personal expenses result in reprimanding from the Grand Old Master.

As it was agreed that such an action should be taken by midnight, Jiang Ziya had meanwhile performed divination after hearing a sudden unpredictable blast of wind blow down many obstacles within Phoenix City. Realizing that such a resolution was rather likely to come about eventually due to their obstinacy, Jiang Ziya summoned forth the North Sea as a large water barrier that stretched over the entire city, negating any potential attack from the opposition's weapons.

Being utterly astonished at the uselessness of their weapons against such a formidable crest of water over Phoenix City, the four brothers had little choice but to give up their pre-planned attack for that night. As the barrier remained erect before the city for months, as Jiang Ziya full realized the external actions of besiegement on the part of the Diablo brothers, the four brothers could do nothing more than continue to await food supply conveys in order to obtain a chance to attack the city from within.

Eventually obtaining word that their city's supply of food could only last another ten days at the most, Yellow Flying Tiger suggested that the rich citizens of the Western Foothills should be forced to open their granaries for the city's overall use, while being repaid at a later time. Declining such an offer due to the panic and exceedingly poor morale that it would create, Jiang Ziya decided it best to think the matter over. After eight days had passed, two distinguished Taoists — known as Han Dulong of the Poisoned Dragon, and Xue Ehu of the Wicked Tiger — arrived to offer their food supplies after declaring their discipleship under Superior man Divine Virtue.

Handing a letter from their master as proof of their identities, Han Dulong placed forth his promised provisions, a small bag that possessed two handfuls of rice overall. As the soldiers of the Western Foothills tried their very best to hold back their laughter at such a sight, Jiang Ziya asked the Taoist to place the rice within one of the city's three granaries. Obtaining word after the passage of three hours, stating from a patrolman, that the barns were overflowing with rice, Jiang Ziya smiled with great delight at the good fortune of his king.

Now knowing that he possessed a strengthened resistance that could still easily be crushed by the Diablo brothers with ease, Jiang Ziya reinforced the North Sea water barrier at every moment. Being exceedingly disgusted and utterly wrathful at their lack of ability to take the city in its current impenetrable state, the four brothers sent a report to Grand Old Master Wen Zhong, stating that Jiang Ziya had defended his city with treacherous methods, resulting in their expedition almost taking over an entire year without a sign of the enemy's decay.

As a few more days had passed by, another Taoist arrived before the gates of Phoenix City, and upon his admission, he declared his name to be "Yang Bliss", one of the head disciples under Jade Tripod. Being informed of the current situation against the Diablo brothers upon his asking, Yang Bliss managed to convince the prime minister that he should be able to deal with the opposition — for he was a man of incredible magic renown, far exceeding that of an ordinary Taoist.

As word of the board of truce being removed had reached the ears of the four brothers, they enthusiastically charged from the Shang camp, completely eager to destroy their opposition after such a long period of await. Once Ma Chenglong, commander of food supplies, had arrived from Caozhou before the feet of Phoenix City, Lishou, completely resolved to ensure the Western Foothill's internal decay at all costs, ordered his white elephant to devour the former at once. Seeing such an incident being carried out, Yang Bliss smiled with delight at such a chance, and thus threw himself in front of the elephant, being devoured in addition.

As the Zhou forces fled back in fear at such a sight, Nezha informed Jiang Ziya of current happenings, but the latter nonetheless felt reassured that Yang Bliss might still be alive, considering the magical renown that he stated to have possessed. Being delighted at their great success, and obtaining notice on the lack of Phoenix City's water barrier for reasons unknown, Lishou suggested the unleashing of his white elephant as a chance to devour both Jiang Ziya and King Wu in one quick assault. Realizing that the barrier's disappearance was very probable of being a trap, the three brothers nonetheless agreed to such a suggestion.

Once the white elephant had thus been sent forth with set intentions to destroy the king and his prime minister, Yang Bliss, still living within the beast's belly, thrashed its heart into pieces while destroying its body as a means of escape.

Cleaning his body from the blood, Yang Bliss was ushered forth within the city, to Nezha's immense surprise. Jiang Ziya, however, had expected such an outcome to an extent, and nonetheless became informed of the Diablo brother's original intentions before Yang's arrival. As Yang Bliss boastfully elaborated his many transformations, while becoming a small ermine weasel as proof, he left the prime minister's presence after ensuring the capture of the four weapons under the Diablo brothers.

Assuming the appearance of Lishou's elephant, and returning to the Shang camp in its place, the four brothers realized that their plan did not go as planned — due to the distinct insignias that would have appeared before the animal's skin if another victim had been consumed — but nonetheless drank away their worries that night. Falling asleep with deep drunken stupor, Yang Bliss managed to grab ahold of Lihong's legendary umbrella, but upon the accidental knocking down of two other weapons within the room, which triggered evidential signs of awakening on the part of the four brothers, Yang had little choice but to flee at once from the Shang camp.

Returning to Phoenix City, handing the prime minister Lihong's umbrella, and returning to the side of Lishou that same night, the four Diablo brothers awoke the following morning only to the great yells of fury on the part of Lihong, for his weapon had clearly been missing. Being ensured from the camp guards that no spy, or intruder at that, could ever get close to the camp without thorough inspection, the Diablo brothers unconditionally felt thoroughly unconfident at such a loss.

Meanwhile within the Purple Sun Cave, Virtue of the Pure Void called forth Huang Tianhua, his disciple, after carefully watching the former incidents involving the Western Foothill's Phoenix City. Instructing his disciple to head to the Western Foothills and assist Jiang Ziya's cause, Virtue of the Pure Void first taught Tianhua

how to use the twin golden-tipped hammers, and followed by giving the former his Fire Dragon Javelin and the jade unicorn as an additional form of assistance.

Seeing his disciple off shortly after, Tianhua used his unicorn's unparalleled attribute of speed to arrive before the Western Foothills in mere moments. After being allowed passage within the city, while greeting his fellow father and prime minister upon entry, Tianhua stayed at his family's house for the day, fully enjoying the amount of meat that he effectively received — for he was only allowed to feast on vegetables when originally under Pure Void. Cladding himself full with armor of bright gold the following day, Huang Tianhua obtained consent to face the four Diablo brothers after informing Jiang Ziya of his set instructions on how to deal with such an opposition.

Chapter 41

Grand Old Master Wen Zhong attacks the Western Foothills

Striding swiftly atop his jade-unicorn, Huang Tianhua arrived before the Shang camp shortly, offering battle immediately following. Seeing a young man of around sixteen years of age challenging their gates with seemingly great confidence, Mo Liqing moved forward to do battle immediately after being informed of the former's intentions. Using his White Jade Ring to deliver a brutal blow to the opposition's back, Nezha suddenly intercepted Liqing, fully resolved to protect his fellow ally at all costs.

After using his golden Universal Ring to shatter Liqing's jade ring to pieces, Nezha had little choice but to retreat with Tianhua in his arms — for the other three brothers quickly assisted with their respective weapons just following such a happening. Returning to Phoenix City immediately after, Yellow Flying Tiger gasped in astonishment at the report of his son, for Liqing was known for drenching his ring in the most deadly of poisons before use. Gazing forth at Tianhua at once, alas, it was too late. Tianhua was nothing more than a lifeless body shortly. Performing divination to become informed of the recent happenings within the Western Foothills, White Cloud Lad arrived before Phoenix City later on, retrieving the body of Huang Tianhua with reassurance to Yellow Flying Tiger.

As Pure Void revived his disciple with dissolved elixirs of legendary origin, he reprimanded Tianhua for impulsiveness, informed him of his former death by the hands of a jade ring, and handed him a special weapon to use against the opposition before giving his farewells. Returning to Phoenix City shortly following, Tianhua was admitted within the Prime Minister's mansion, where he thoroughly elaborated the happenings at his master's cavern. Riding from the city gates the following morning with great determination for revenge, Liqing was astonished to see Tianhua alive, and still fuming over the lack of his ring, he charged at the former with his lance immediately following.

Thrashing at the young warrior with exceeded renown, Tianhua unleashed the weapon that his master had given him — the Heart Penetrating Nail — and threw it straight at Liqing's breast. As the nail burrowed into his heart like a drill, resulting in immediate death, Lihong, who was enraged at the lack of power he possessed without his umbrella, fearlessly charged at Tianhua with his great halberd. Maneuvering like a snake in order to avoid any potential attack from other deadly weapons that the boy might possess, Tianhua launched a secondary nail, and to Lihong's great ill-fortune and surprise, it followed his movement like an enraged beast, piercing his throat in one sudden strike.

Piercing through Lihai's heart immediately after passing through the throat of Lihong like a raging bullet of incredible speed, Lishou clearly realized the situation was desperate — and thus ordered his elephant to crush Tianhua before he, included, meets death. As the elephant suddenly reared back to attack its master — for Yang Bliss was still performing his magic disguise — Lishou was thrashed about violently, resulting in his additional unfortunate end. Recollecting

his two nails afterwards, Yang Bliss returned to his former state, and upon introduction to Tianhua, they both returned to Phoenix City with the heads of the four Diablo brothers. Mounting the four newly received heads atop Phoenix City's eastern gates, Commander Han Rong had meanwhile received many soldiers under the Diablo brothers, and upon their explanation of such an unfortunate happening, Han Rong sent another urgent report to Wen Zhong, elaborating the recent happenings within the Western Foothills. Fuming with incredible rage upon the receiving of such a report, Wen Zhong was resolved in his heart that only he was truly capable of destroying Jiang Ziya once and for all, despite what the capital might suffer if he was to take leave so suddenly.

Approaching King Zhou the following day with written report, the king gave his immediate approval towards the Grand Old Master's declaration of taking leave. Obtaining a glass of wine from King Zhou as tribute to his departure, Grand Old Master left the palace and ascended his mount. Being idle for so many months, Wen Zhong was reared from the mount immediately, while at the same time being informed from other ministers that such might foretell a bad omen on the part of his future.

Dismissing such an incident as solely being the result of his mount's idleness for such a long period, the Grand Old Master set off at once, taking along over 300,000 soldiers as support. Obtaining suggestion to head through the Green Dragon Pass — for it was the shortest route to the Western Foothills — from Commander Zhang Kui of Mianchi Country later on, Wen Zhong did as he suggested, but regretfully met various narrow mountain paths and other such obstacles that resulted in a lengthened march. Arriving before the Yellow Flower Mountain along the way, beautiful flowers of yellow bloomed in every which direction, filling the soldiers of Shang, and Wen Zhong alike, with heightened happiness.

Halting his army before the summit of the mountain, the Grand Old Master personally inspected the terrain ahead, and was immensely satisfied at the enchanting view laid out before him. Suddenly hearing the gongs of soldiers behind him, while clearly seeing troops marching along the mountain, a patrolman reported to the commanding general that a certain man could be seen spying upon their formation — Grand Old Master in this case. As the general charged at the conjectured spy with great furiousness, Wen Zhong evaded each blow as easily as a leaf blowing through the wind.

Baiting the general farther to the east, Wen Zhong encased the pursuing general within four large golden walls, and followed by relaxing upon a rock to see how the situation should develop. Suddenly being confronted by two additional generals who declared themselves to be the "mountain chiefs" — thus being nothing more than unaligned outlaws — the former two charged at Wen Zhong like raging beasts. Waving his golden staves in a set direction, the first of two chiefs saw before him a grand ocean of sea, while the second felt as if being surrounded by a forest — thus indicating their being trapped within Grand Old Master's art of genjutsu.

Relaxing under a tree, Wen Zhong became confronted by a fourth high-ranking chief: "a large beast that could fly swiftly through the clouds with its wings, while equipped with two hammers." Grinning with delight at the chance to obtain

this individual under the flag of Shang, Grand Old Master used neighboring rocks to break the wings of his foe, leaving him no choice but to beg for mercy. Obtaining consent from the enemy — who's name had been "Xin Huan" — to serve under him as a left arm of the royal army sent to destroy the Western Foothills, Wen Zhong was informed that over 10,000 outlaws were present within the mountain and were under the former's command.

As Xin Huan pleaded for the freeing of his three allies, and upon Wen Zhong's inquiring of their strong bond of loyalty and friendship despite being nothing more than outlaws, the Grand Old Master rose his palm to the heavens in consent, and upon a sudden clap of thunder, the three bound individuals felt as if they awoke from a dream. However, these three, as expected, still considered Wen Zhong as their enemy — and thus charged at the former, completely resolved to destroy him for assaulting their mountain.

Chapter 42

Surrender of the Bandit Chiefs

As the three outlaws charged at Wen Zhong with great furiousness, Xin Huan immediately intervened, stating that none other than the renowned Grand Old Master was the man before their very midst. Falling to their feet with both shame and embarrassment, they led Wen Zhong before their head camp at once, offering him a drink as fellow friendship and atonement for their former rudeness. Stating their names — Deng Zhong, Tao Rong, and Zhang Jie — while declaring their original alignment with Morning Song before secluding themselves away from the capital's troubles later on, Wen Zhong promised them high positions as ministers if they were to achieve great success by his side against the Western Foothills.

After obtaining a consensual agreement with the other three outlaw leaders, Wen Zhong instructed them to gather all who was willing to stand by his side in exchange for wealth, while the remainder was given money and food as a form of shelter. Performing such a task immediately following, 7,000 of the original 10,000 chose to fight by the Grand Old Master's side after being overjoyed at a chance to obtain heightened wealth and rank — the very opposite they obtained before fleeing from Morning Song.

With immense delight at the expected result of such an offer, Wen Zhong departed with his newly combined forces, arriving before an auspicious stone monument along the way. With the words "Dragon Extinction Peak" inscribed within the monument, Wen Zhong became reminded of his original master, Mother Golden Spirit, informing him that disaster was destined to follow if the character "extinction" was ever to be come across in the future.

Telling such to his generals nearby, Deng Zhong reassured the Grand Old Master that with his virtue and great talent, he was sure to win over the Western Foothills without any extreme sacrifices. Silently considering his words along the journey, and obtaining report of their closing in on the southern gate of Phoenix City, Wen Zhong ordered his army to set up camp for the time being. Due to the unparalleled reputation that the Grand Old Master had possessed, many patrolman instantly realized the identity of the man camped before them, and thus approached Jiang Ziya and informed him of such a situation.

Hearing of Wen Zhong's great reputation and renowned characteristics, the prime minister decided to mount the city walls and gaze forth at his camp; Jiang Ziya was indeed immensely pleased at the ingenious layout set before him — and thus returned to his mansion and summoned the generals for a meeting. As they discussed their next movement carefully, a letter was soon given to the prime minister, being addressed from the Grand Old Master himself. Reading the letter, which stated Wen Zhong's intention to receive Jiang Ziya for capital punishment, or the unconditional destruction of their city, the prime minister instructed the messenger to tell the Grand Old Master his intention: "to meet each other on the battlefield in three days."

Being informed of such a statement, Grand Old Master fiercely led forth his soldiers before the southern gates three days following, immensely resolved to destroy such defiance with his own two hands. After the firing of five cannons on the side of Zhou, Jiang Ziya appeared with generals right and left, while bowing before the newly arrived Grand Old Master, who laid out his forces before the former.

Angrily yelling at Jiang Ziya for enthroning Ji Fa as king without the authorization of King Zhou, and destroying their forces left and right unconditionally throughout the past, Jiang Ziya retorted with more clearer rationality, placing great shame into the face of Wen Zhong. Angrily calling forth Yellow Flying Tiger before him in his great rage, Wen Zhong ordered one of his men to capture the rebel for his blatant violation of rebellion against the capital. With General Deng Zhong's acceptance of such an order, a grand battle began between many generals under both the Zhou and Shang forces.

As Xin Huan roared forth atop his wings to slay Jiang Ziya from the heavens, Huang Tianhua became exceedingly frightened at the former's appearance, but nonetheless charged forth atop his unicorn in order to protect the prime minister. Realizing that Xin was currently occupying Jiang Ziya's last line of defense, Wen Zhong thrust about his two golden staves with unparalleled renown, arriving before the rebel commander shortly, and attacking the opposition like a raging beast. To Jiang Ziya's lack of knowledge, Wen Zhong's two staves were created through the scales of legendary dragons of old, and after throwing the leftern staff into the air, it crashed down directly upon the prime minister's right shoulder, shooting blood in every which direction.

As such an action immediately triggered the retortion of Nezha and his two brothers, Wen Zhong had little choice but to hold off the celestials laid out before him until he can seize the chance to kill the rebel commander. Upon Tao Rong's release of the Wind Collecting Pearl, which sent sand and dirt flying about profusely, Wen Zhong, and his generals alike, used their weapons in a synchronized manner amongst the confusion, forcing the Zhou forces to flee like helpless animals.

As the generals of Shang congratulated the Grand Old Master over his victory following their return, Yang Bliss had meanwhile suggested to the prime minister that a night raid should be deployed after their potential victory the following day. Approving such a suggestion fully, Jiang Ziya and Wen Zhong fiercely clashed blade against staff the next morning. With generals battling right to left, with Jiang Ziya in a sizable position for reciprocated attack, Wen Zhong seized this chance by launching forth one of his golden staves within the air, aiming for the head of Jiang Ziya.

Little did he expect however, the prime minister immediately recognized the staff approaching him, and thus used his Staff of Beating Gods to coil around the weapon, breaking it into golden shards upon the ground. Not believing his eyes, Wen Zhong wrathfully charged his great dragon into the enemy commander with colossal speed and mobility. Being stricken in the back by the sudden movement of Jiang Ziya's multi-jointed weapon, Wen Zhong had little choice but to flee, resulting in the retreat of the Shang army shortly after. As Jiang Ziya began his preparations for the night-raid that afternoon, Wen Zhong sat in his inner

quarters, exceedingly resentful over the destruction of one of his golden staffs, and the impact that such would place before the morale of his army.

Knowing Jiang Ziya to be a man of treachery, and surely improved of morale after such a lucky victory earlier that day, Wen Zhong ordered his generals to meet any potential assault at set points within the camp, while he directly stands before the central quarters to see if the prime minister would act in such a predictable manner as to attempt a raid or any other form of attack. As such preparations were being made within the Shang camp, Jiang Ziya stealthily moved his forces towards the opposition, and upon the sudden signal of cannon fire, the forces of Zhou attacked the camp from three differing directions.

Chapter 43

The Grand Old Master's Bad Luck

As Nezha and Huang Tianhua smashed down the central gates of the Shang camp, Wen Zhong rushed forth, using his remaining golden staff with renowned force and resolve. Unfortunately however, many of the generals on the side of Zhou possessed strange weapons of unparalleled ability compared to the generals of Shang, thus resulting in disasters evolving within random parts of the camp. Especially due to that of Yang Bliss, who possessed exceedingly rare qualities coming from a Taoist — in this case being fire — the Shang army's store of grain and fodder was turned into ashes in mere moments upon his arrival.

As Wen Zhong gazed at flames shooting throughout the air within the direction of his provisional supplies, he immediately realized that the situation had turned very chaotic, and survival would be difficult even if he manages to fight back the enemy in any way possible. With such thought in mind, Grand Old Master soared through the air atop his great dragon, ordering all soldiers present to regroup with him once they were to arrival within Mount Western Foothills.

As Xin Huan valiantly protected his commander from any potential harm in their escape, Master of the Clouds had meanwhile seen the banners of the Grand Old Master present throughout the Western Foothills region, and thus realizing that Jiang Ziya would find great difficulty against such a foe, he ordered Thunder-quaker to appear before him at once. Kowtowing before his master upon arrival, Thunder-quaker left with the instructions to assist his elder brother, King Wu, and the prime minister of the Western Foothills at all costs possible.

Seeing a great army spread before him in conjectured retreat, Thunder-quaker realized that the soldiers before him must be from the Shang Dynasty — for they were present with the same insignias upon their armor as when he protected Ji Chang originally in the past. Deciding to test the strength of the opposing army due to being idle for such a long period of time, Thunder-quaker charged at the enemy from the heavens with his two hammers, but was immediately intercepted by Xin Huan, who additionally possessed two hammers as his set weapons.

Realizing Xin Huan's skill greatly outmatched his own, Thunder-quaker fled at once to what he thought to have been Phoenix City without any pursuing of the enemy afterwards. Holding a conference within the city that morning, the generals had praised their commander profusely for his ability to wield such an outstanding cast of immortals in such a fortunate manner.

As they continued on with their praise, Thunder-quaker was invited before the prime minister shortly, immediately following his essential permission to enter. Stating his name, origin, and past service towards his father, Ji Chang, Jiang Ziya was very pleased to see the man who was late master constantly talked about before his very own eyes.

Introducing Thunder-quaker before King Wu shortly after, the king, who was startled at the strange appearance of his supposed younger brother, and worried over the fear that might be placed over his family if they were to see such

a sight, had his brother taken in to Jiang Ziya's family upon volunteer. After Grand Old Master's arrival before Mount Western Foothills, he became extremely angry at the realization that over 20,000 soldiers of his original 307,000 had been wiped out in one single assault the former night.

Realizing that it would be difficult to obtain reinforcements from neighboring generals, due to their guarding of local districts and territory from the rebelling dukes and nobles, Wen Zhong decided it would not be best to ask for assistance from the capital either — for such would damage his reputation and would additionally take too long. Being reminded of the many fellow Taoists that would assuredly assist in his cause, Wen Zhong ordered Deng Zhong and Xin Huan to guard the camp closely while he departs for the time being.

Arriving before Golden Turtle Island at the East Sea, Wen Zhong gazed delightfully at the beauty around him, and feeling great anticipation as to what day he could relax in such beauty without the least worry, he searched the entire circumference of the island, and thus began his leave after finding no one present. Glancing behind at the sudden hearing of his name, Grand Old Master saw Celestial Lotus standing before him.

Being informed by her that their Taoist comrades were currently present on White Deer Island, finishing their own individual traps — dubbed wholly as the "Ten Death Traps" — at the moment, Wen Zhong took his appreciative leave to the island she had mentioned. Arriving before White Deer Island momentarily, the nine celestial masters present approached their friend from afar, declaring the near completion of ten traps that should assist him in his attack upon the rebel leader Jiang Ziya.

Mentioning the expected arrival of their tenth ally, Mother Golden Light, Wen Zhong volunteered to await her return while they each head to his camp stationed at Mount Western Foothills. Seeing her arrive shortly following, the two greeted each other with great dignity, and then took their immediate leave to Mount Western Foothills. Regrouping with his other nine Taoist comrades, Grand Old Master directed them to Phoenix City, and followed by setting up camp at a point that seemed to their strategic advantage.

As Jiang Ziya had heard the great commotion of war-cries resound outside the city gates from afar, Yang Bliss warned the prime minister that Wen Zhong had more than likely returned with reinforcements of Taoist origin for the destruction of his camp by mainly due to the assistance of immortal powers. Thus, he would naturally have to reciprocate such power if he wished to obtain victory in any form.

Ascending the city walls and seeing a mystical cloud of haze solely within the direction of the war cries, Jiang Ziya clearly realized that the situation was going to be difficult. Back in the camp of Shang, it was decided that the ten Taoists — dubbed as the "Sky Lords¹²" — would personally display their own individual traps to Jiang Ziya and his forces as a showing of their invincibility and intellect behind such creations.

12. In the original translation instead of "Sky Lords" is written "**Welkin Lords**," which also can be translated as "*Walking Lords*."

Appearing before Phoenix City the following day, Qin Wan, the first of ten lords, appeared before Jiang Ziya and declared his intentions for the latter to inspect ten traps without the slightest physical combat — for such would violate the compassionate will of Heaven.

Consenting with full reassurance of his safety — for Qin Wan was already confident enough that Jiang's life can easily be seized by such weapons any time he desires in the future — Jiang Ziya began to read the name of the ten traps: "*Celestial Destruction*", "*Earthly Fury*", "*Roaring Typhoon*", "*Frigid Ice*", "*Golden Light*", "*Bleeding Blood*", "*Vehement Flame*", "*Soul Snatching*", "*Red Water*", and "*Red Sand*".

Emerging from the enemy camp after carefully analyzing each trap with a fearful look in his eyes that he tried best to cover, Jiang Ziya proudly stated his ability to overcome such traps to Qin Wan, and then returned to his camp after exchanging a polite bow. Returning to his mansion with intense distress over the complexity of each trap that he most assuredly could not comprehend, Grand Old Master Wen Zhong had meanwhile returned with the rebel commander's set response, and thus began to inspect the specialty of each trap under their possession.

Chapter 44

Jiang Ziya's Souls float over Mount Kunlun

As Qin Wan began with the elaboration of his "Celestial Destruction Trap", he noted its possession of three pennants, Sky, earth, and humanity, and upon the consent of its creator, the trap reduces any potential intruder into nothing more than ashes — be it immortal or human. Individually elaborating the other nine traps following, Grand Old Master grinned with delight at such a summary.

However, Master Yao declared to Wen Zhong his own intentions of destroying the rebel commander under twenty-one days of time, and upon the latter's consent, Yao ascended the platform within his Soul Snatching Trap and created a straw effigy of Jiang Ziya, which was used to effectively gather his souls into one set region. Performing such an action three times every day, the prime minister clearly showed signs of being consciously dead — for he never said a word, and appeared as if he was constantly dazed.

As days upon days passed by with Jiang Ziya's clear intentions to do nothing other than sleep and complain subconsciously, each general realized that one of the new Taoist foes must possess an ability that was taking control of the prime minister in some form — for Jiang Ziya was the only individual who carefully analyzed the traits within each trap, so they naturally would not understand the situation fully. Rousing the prime minister as a resolution, and forcing him to appear before his generals within the conference hall, Nezha started by asking the former why he acts the way he does currently.

Bending his fingers in a divination attempt, Jiang Ziya replied by stating that everything was usual and need not worry about. Once twenty-one days had essentially passed, Yang Bliss and the others were surprised to see the prime minister nothing more than a lifeless corpse. Little did Master Yao truly understand, however, was that even after gathering all spirits present within Jiang Ziya, they would unconditionally head to the Terrace of Creation as preordained by Sky. Being pushed away by Bai Jian upon arrival before the terrace, Jiang Ziya's souls floated onwards towards Mount Kunlun.

Being gathered immediately by Master of the Cloud's gourd, and sealed tightly within by a cork, Pure Essence appeared before him, and upon the realization of the situation, the latter took hold of the gourd and headed to the Western Foothills at once, knowing that they must be the souls of Jiang Ziya, for any other soul would be accepted by the terrace unconditionally.

Being allowed entrance within Phoenix City, and essentially realizing that Jiang Ziya was indeed void of his souls, Pure Essence informed the king of the reason behind the prime minister's passing before leaving the city late into the night. Realizing that his gourd shook more violently with each step taken closer before the Soul Snatching Trap, Master Yao had meanwhile performed his incantations, but to his great dismay, the remaining souls of Jiang Ziya refused to gather themselves before his trap.

As Yao continuously began to chant and recite incantations incessantly, Pure Essence, upon his arrival, assumed the man standing before him was attempting the retrieval of the prime minister's remaining souls — due to the souls within his gourd shaking in synchronization to the former's calls — and thus charged down to steal the straw effigy. Managing to grab ahold of the effigy, Yao coincidentally looked up at the very second of the former's theory, and threw forth his black sand needles at Pure Essence, fully realizing his opposing intentions.

To the fortunate sacrifice of his lotus flowers as protection, Pure Essence managed to escape the trap while elaborating the prior incidents to Master of South Pole upon his arrival at Mount Kunlun. As such was reported to Celestial Primogenitor, Pure Essence became instructed to head to the Eight Landscape Palace to visit Lao Tzu — for he would be able to effectively deal with the issue. Upon his arrival before Lao Tzu's residence at such a palace, he was allowed entry shortly, while thoroughly elaborating the incident with Master Yao in his attempt to steal the souls of Jiang Ziya.

As Lao Tzu had personally seen the construction of what had been known as the "Soul Snatching Trap", he naturally understood that the Map of Eight Diagrams was the only way to negate such a trap's effect — and thus handed such to Pure Essence, who departed just following. Returning to Phoenix City and reassuring King Wu and his generals of a newly obtained method that would result in the prime minister's revival, Pure Essence departed immediately to Master Yao's trap.

Unrolling the map to create a large golden bridge descending through the Soul Snatching Trap, Pure Essence managed to retrieve the straw effigy, but at the same moment, Yao fumed with rage at the enemy's second attempt, while unleashing a large volley of his sand upon the former. Dropping the map in his immense terror, Pure Essence managed to escape, but was struck pale at the realization of his new weapon being lost so subtly.

Returning at once to Phoenix City, Pure Essence was allowed entry to the Prime Minister's mansion, where he began to pour the souls down Jiang Ziya's throat, including the additional two sub-souls essentially acquired from Yao's effigy. As Jiang Ziya awoke as if from a long night of sleep, and was completely informed of the prior incidents involving his souls, he banged his fist in rage at such a treacherous act that even he could not prevent.

Resting for several more days as a resolution, an immortal by the name of "Yellow Dragon" had arrived before the city gates shortly following, and was allowed entry upon his awakening. Informing the prime minister that many additional immortals should be expected to arrive before the Western Foothills as a result of the ten traps, he proposed the building of a reed pavilion in addition, which should be constructed far from the capital city not only for potential military conferences, but the ultimate protection of the people as well. Following such a proposal fully, General Wu Ji reported the creation of the pavilion around a day following decree for construction.

Immortals gathered shortly following within the pavilion, and each minister of the capital, excluding that of King Wu, gathered to pay their obeisance. Once all expected immortals had effectively arrived, a conflict between who should take the

title of commander resounded throughout the pavilion. At such a moment in time, a whistle throughout the air had been heard to announce the arrival of an immortal of exceeded characteristics.

Chapter 45

Confronting the Destructive Forces

As all immortals present left the pavilion to confront the noise from outside, Superior man Burning Lamp of Prime Consciousness Cave was seen before their eyes. Expressing his apologies over such a late arrival, Burning Lamp was given the seal of commandship upon proposal, and thus elaborated the visible attributes of each of the ten known traps — as such knowledge could easily be obtained from his magical bull eye, which had the ability to see in distances far unparalleled to that of human vision.

Not desiring to wait any longer, lest the rebel commander obtains some type of immortal assistance against the traps, a note of challenge involving the ten traps was given to Jiang Ziya via the messages of Deng Zhong. With reply to meet in three days of time for battle, the ten lords suddenly noticed auspicious clouds and golden lanterns only present within the residence of immortals upon their leave from camp the second night, and each lord thus returned to their respective traps, entirely resolved to destroy the opposition even with such expected assistance.

Leaving the camp of Shang the following morning with the ten traps at his left and right hands, Wen Zhong obtained sight of the Zhou forces approaching before him steadily with many individuals of conjectured immortal traits. As Qin Wan's Celestial Destruction Trap was of the closest distance, Burning Lamp and his forces appeared before the trap at once. Pondering over a method that would lead to the trap's destruction without excessive sacrifice, Deng Hua, a junior disciple of the Jade Emptiness Palace, descended from the heavens, immediately declaring his desire to tear the opposition before him to shreds.

Qin Wan, who was currently present outside of his trap, knew the man standing before him could be destroyed by his own primitive aggression without any real trouble — and thus lashed at Deng Hua with his staff. Leading Deng into his trap with a mere faint, Qin Wan grabbed ahold of three representative pennants upon the desk present, and placed them in a triangle formation upon the ground. As a large beam of thunder shot from the gap between the pennants, Qin directed the thunder into the direction of his opponent, burning Deng Hua into ash in a single blinking of the eye.

Declaring his easy won victory upon the exiting of the trap, Burning Lamp felt great grievance at such words, but nonetheless asked Outstanding Culture to have a try against Qin Wan. Lashing forth his sword at Qin Wan upon full consenting, the latter retreated to his trap following a single faint, and to the great fear of entry on the part of Outstanding Culture, he nonetheless entered the trap while floating upon two lotus flowers. Unfortunately for Qin Wan, however, large lotus flowers sprouted in every direction from the very finger tips of Outstanding Culture.

Seizing the chance to bind the enemy with his invisible stakes, Qin Wan became terrified for his life, but nonetheless died just following a single cleave from Outstanding Culture's blade. As Outstanding Culture left the trap with Qin Wan's head firmly within the grip of his palm as a display of his prowess, Grand

Old Master gazed at such a sight from the heavens, and with great rage filled within his breast, charged down upon the former like a dragon seething with bloodlust. Being intercepted, however, by Yellow Dragon, who declared that they were solely competing in magic prowess, not physical conquest despite the situation which reinforces such rationale, Master Zhao Jiang had meanwhile rode forth from his Earthly Fury Trap to place forth a challenge. As Han Dulong accepted such a challenge upon the consent of Burning Lamp, Zhao gave up ground shortly starting, while Han pursued with great determination to wipe out the opposition.

Ascending his platform within the trap, Zhao Jiang grabbed ahold of his two pennants, and upon the acquiring of fire and lightning attributes by waving such pennants, the unfortunate Han Dulong became mere dust before the wind in a single second. Exiting his trap with immense confidence, Krakucchanda strode forth from the Zhou forces and offered battle against the former. Upon the entering of the Earthly Fury Trap, Krakucchanda negated any potential harm from the fire and lightning by covering his entire body with mystical clouds acquired from the crust of his skull.

Tieing Zhao Jiang with his Immortal Binding Rope at such a moment, Krakucchanda felt great mercy for the life of Zhao — and thus ordered his genie to forcefully drop the celestial master within the Reed Pavilion, still in a captive state. Spouting with great wrath at the destruction of two of ten traps, and the death of Zhao Jiang and Qin Wan, Wen Zhong called off the competition, and returned to the Shang camp to hold a military conference over the current circumstances. Having intense confidence in the renown of his Roaring Typhoon and its fierce wind attributes, Master Dong ensured the Grand Old Master that he should obtain revenge in his stead no matter what opponent he was forced to fight.

Back at the Reed Pavilion, Zhao Jiang had been hung upon the pavilion gates, still nothing more than a captive, while Burning Lamp and the others discussed how they should go about with the destruction of the Roaring Typhoon Trap, as it was the third trap standing before their midst. During their discussion, Superior man Spiritual Treasure stated that his friend at Cloud Light Cave of Mount Nine Tripods and Iron Forks possesses an item known as the "Wind Stopping Pearl" that was used to negate wind at the user's will. Receiving such a pearl from "Wo Evading Sage" shortly, the two sped to the Western Foothills at high speed, but to their detriment, no ferries operated for over two days following their arrival before the Yellow River.

Approaching a fellow passerby and inspecting the reason for such, San Yisheng became informed that two giants — in this case being the Fang Brothers — monopolized the river by demanding great fares if any individual was to pass, and as a result of such a recent incident, only one additional ferry had been open for current use. Approaching such a ferry, Fang Bi and Fang Xiang were indeed seen, and upon Chao Tian's recognition of such men, he declared his intentions and was thus allowed passage.

Informing the two brothers of their recent obtainment of the Wind Stopping Pearl as their reason for departure, Fang Bi asked to gaze at it; holding the pearl within his hand, he knew that he could obtain great reputation if such power was wielded effectively, and thus pocketed the pearl, declaring such as being toll for passage. Not having any true courage to act against such a resolution, the two

officials had little choice but to accept. As San Yisheng and Chao Tian thus made their way back to the Western Foothills, they luckily ran into Yellow Flying Tiger, who was bringing supplies of grain within the city gates. Elaborating their story immediately upon arrival, Yellow Flying Tiger set out at once, knowing fully that the two giants would heed his call.

Luckily catching the two brothers before they returned to the opposite bank at the Yellow River, Yellow Flying Tiger approached Fang Bi and Fang Xiang and essentially retrieved the pearl with a single demand. Being informed of their current position within society after elaborating his disdain of King Zhou, Yellow Flying Tiger convinced the two brothers to serve under King Wu by his side, and then followed by handing San Yisheng the pearl as he returned. Arriving before the prime minister at the reed pavilion and elaborating the incidents lathering their departure, Jiang Ziya handed the pearl to Burning Lamp without a moment of hesitation.

Chapter 46

Breaking the Golden Light Trap

As the Shang and Zhou forces arrayed themselves the following morning, Burning Lamp signaled his choosing of the Roaring Typhoon Trap by approaching it with each immortal and disciple by his side. Master Dong of Shang thus stepped forward from his trap, and upon Burning Lamp's seeing of Fang Bi, a man that was seemingly capable of great strength, he ordered the latter to take the challenge at once.

Fleeing into his trap at the very sight of such a giant beast, Dong ascended his platform at once, and upon the waving of his pennant, Fang Bi was stabbed to death by thousands of swords that became multiplied with the power of black wind. As Dong thus exited from the trap, Merciful Navigation, who was handed the Wind Stopping Pearl, entered the Roaring Typhoon Trap shortly following a clash between blades. Negating all black wind with the pearl touching his body in any form, Merciful Navigation used his glazed vase to trap Dong within, in which he exited the trap immediately following such a victory.

Just as Grand Old Master seethed with great rage at such a sight, and was determined to obtain some form of revenge at once, Master Yuan ran forth from his Frigid Ice Trap and called forth for battle, vowing to Wen Zhong that he should become his embodiment of vengeance. With the retortion of Xue Ehu, Yuan retreated into his trap following a meager amount of rounds, and upon the ascension of his terrace, Yuan froze the lower body of Xue Ehu with frozen ice emitting from his purple pennant, and followed by smashing the opposition to literal pieces with a glacier, twenty feet in overall circumference.

As Wen Zhong grinned with great delight at such promised destructive force at his very disposal, Universal Virtue approached Yuan as the secondary challenger. Knowing that he must destroy this foe in order to prove his ascended might to the Grand Old Master no matter what, Yuan immediately rushed forth within his trap and summoned forth multiple glaciers of outstanding size within a single moment. Unfortunately however, no matter how ice that happened to topple upon Universal Virtue, Universal Virtue created many majestic clouds above his head that emitted flames upon the user's will.

Realizing the situation to be grim — as the opponent possesses a clearly dominant advantage against his ability — Yuan fled for the sake of his promise to Wen Zhong, but was at the same time wiped away from life as he was beheaded by Virtue's "Hooks of Wu". Immediately following, Mother Golden Light exited from her Golden Light Trap, and at the same moment, was challenged by Xiao Zhen, another disposable disciple of the Jade Emptiness Palace.

Entering the trap following a few exchanged blows upon Burning Lamp's consenting, Golden Light ascended her platform and unleashed myriads of golden light beams emitting from her magic mirrors, burning away the flesh of Xiao Zhen instantaneously. With Grand Completion's approach following such an incident, Golden Light retreated within her trap, while unleashing volleys of light upon the former. To her ill-fortune, however, Grand Completion completely protected

himself from any potential harm with his eight-diagramed robe, and used his Sky Overturning Stamp to destroy every mirror present within the trap. Finishing off Golden Light with a second round of his stamp, and exiting the trap shortly following, Grand Old Master's rage touched the very heavens, and nothing could stand in his way now that half of his fellow allies had been wiped away so easily.

With Master Sun's immediate intrusion, Qiao Kun, a hermit of Mount Wuyi, volunteered to meet the opposition within the Bleeding Blood Trap. Following a clash between blades, Sun ascended the platform within his trap and summoned forth volleys of black sand to pierce Qiao's flesh, who ended up dying shortly through a loss of blood. As usual, an individual of superior man qualities was sent forth for battle — in this case being Fairy Primordial — and upon the consenting of Burning Lamp, the two fought with great renown before venturing within the opposition's trap.

Using green lotus flowers to negate any black sand that came near his body, Sun's ability became rather useless, resulting in his own life being ended shortly by the former's Nine Dragon Divine Fire Coverlet. As Yellow Dragon ordered the two sides to return to their respective camps in preparation for the next day of battle, Grand Old Master had meanwhile returned to the side of his fellow comrades, and with tears within his eyes, he pleaded for the four remaining lords to return to their mountain lest any further casualties arise.

Solely possessing intentions to assist the Grand Old Master for the sake of the greater good, even if they might lose their lives through such resolve, Wen Zhong's morale rose to an extent, but he clearly realized that more celestial reinforcements were essential if the foul Jiang Ziya was to be eradicated along with his defiant comrades. Recalling Zhao Gongming, his old friend from Mount Emei, Wen Zhong ordered Ji Li and Yu Qing to take command of the camp before taking leave to such a mountain at once. Successfully arriving before the residence of Zhao Gongming and performing his formal greetings, Wen Zhong thoroughly elaborated the current happenings in his clash against the rebel leader Jiang Ziya.

Reproving his old friend for not telling him of such earlier, he promised the Grand Old Master to return for the time being while he personally departs to the Western Foothills after making essential preparations. Arriving before the camp of Shang atop a large black tiger, Zhao was allowed entrance, and upon his greetings before Wen Zhong and the four celestial masters, he inquired as to why a certain man was seen within the distance hanging upon a pavilion gate. Being informed that such was Zhao Jiang, one of their fellow allies, as a simple means for Jiang Ziya to express his contempt towards their cause, Zhao Gongming rage fully mounted his tiger and set forth in the direction of the pavilion in order to show Jiang Ziya his place.

Chapter 47

Zhao Gongming, the Conqueror of Sun and Moon

Appearing before the reed pavilion shortly while shouting great words of rage, Jiang Ziya appeared before the former with disciples to his right and left. Commenting on the foul cruelty of Jiang Ziya in his opposition against the greater good, Gongming leaped at the commander with his lightning staff, and as he threw such a staff into the air, it came crashing down upon the prime minister's head with weight exceeding that of a boulder — killing him instantly.

Being distracted by the Zhou forces great fury immediately following, Yang Bliss seized the moment to order his Sky Barking Hound to attack the opposing immortal. Realizing that his precious robes were being torn apart by such a foul beast, Zhao Gongming smacked the dog several times within the head before fleeing temporarily to the Shang camp in dismay. Upon his return before the camp, he informed Grand Old Master Wen Zhong that he managed to kill the rebel commander in a single blow of his staff, but was forced to return upon a ferocious attack from the Zhou forces as a resolution.

Luckily for Jiang Ziya, however, Grand Completion arrived before the prime minister's mansion to analyze his corpse, and upon the mixing of elixir with water to create a medicine that can effectively revive the fallen prime minister, Jiang revived after around two hours of time. As Grand Completion informed Jiang Ziya of the past happenings involving his suffered death by Gongming's hands, he reported the prime minister's revival to Burning Lamp while heading to the camp of Shang in order to secretly inspect their next move.

Wen Zhong informed that a man by the name of "Burning Lamp" was more than likely the second in command amongst the immortal party under the deceased rebel commander. And was thus in need of additional elimination to sully the enemy's morale. Zhao Gongming left the Shang camp early the following morning, and called for Burning Lamp to show himself at once. Burning Lamp departed from the reed pavilion and thoroughly reprimanded Zhao Gongming for his "defiance of Heaven's will." Gongming knew clearly in his heart that his actions were for the greater good — for the dignity of the land would only suffer when Taoists sully their simple nature by running rampant with weapons of destructive qualities, fighting for a cause that was nothing more than ideal.

Thus, for the sake of his eternal friendship with Wen Zhong and reputation as a god amongst Taoists, Gongming lashed forth his staff upon the former, but Yellow Dragon immediately retorted in protection of his leader. Little did Yellow Dragon expected truly. However, Gongming suddenly unleashed a Dragon Binding Rope from the sleeves of his robe, which bound Yellow Dragon instantly. Not taking the chance for Yellow Dragon's life to be cut, Pure Essence lunged forward at Gongming, but to the great difference of their renown which the former had little knowledge of, Zhao Gongming threw twenty-four Sea Conquering Pearls within the sky, forcing all foes present to their knees in blindness. As each immortal fortunately managed to escape without being taken captive, or being killed at that, Gongming returned to the Shang camp and was welcomedly toasted by the Grand Old Master, while their single captive became held on a flagpole within

the camp as retortion to the enemy's arrogance. Meanwhile, Burning Lamp was not able to obtain any acknowledgment as to what weapon Gongming had been using to result in such a potential disaster, and nonetheless became even further distressed upon the seeing of Yellow Dragon being treated so contemptuously — and thus asked who, if even possible, could save the immortal from further humiliation.

With the volunteering of Yang Bliss, Yang Bliss transformed himself into a flying ant that evening, and upon his approach before the camp of Shang, he ascended the flag pole and removed a magical charm that bound Yellow Dragon in place, thus returning to the reed pavilion in success. As Wen Zhong obtained word that Yellow Dragon had escaped mysteriously shortly afterwards, he clearly realized that no one could have ascended the flagpole without the obvious notice of royal guards, and Yellow Dragon assuredly could not have removed the charm by himself due to being magically and physically bound, thus concluding that a man who possesses transformational capability had to have been the cause for such an incident.

With such an assumption in mind, Wen Zhong sent Zhao Gongming to challenge the reed pavilion early the following morning. As Gongming approached the solo Burning Lamp outside the gates of the reed pavilion, while learning that a man by the name of "Yang Bliss" had been the cause behind Yellow Dragon's freedom, he lashed forth his staff and sea conquering pearls upon the opposition.

Fleeing immediately to the southwest lest he suffers by the hands of Gongming's mysterious weaponry, Zhao Gongming gave chase at the very same moment. Approaching a slope and seeing two distinguished men playing Go underneath the shade of a pine tree, Burning Lamp had no idea who these men were, but knowing that he was in a desperate situation indeed, he began to elaborate the past and current circumstances all at once.

As the men — known as Xiao Sheng and Cao Bao — believed it best to assist this strange man for the sake of their morals and overall mutual cooperation within the future, they suddenly caught sight upon a man Burning Lamp claimed to be "Zhao Gongming", and lashed at the latter as a result. Being infuriated at such unexpected obstinacy, Gongming unleashed his Dragon Binding Rope upon Xiao Sheng.

As Xiao Sheng flipped his Treasure Catching Golden Coin into the air, which resulted in any weapon standing before him to fall to the ground with the weight of a large rock, such an action reciprocated as Gongming attempted the additional usage of his Sea Conquering Pearls. Becoming even more enraged at such a resolution, he used his staff, which was unaffected by any immortal weapon, to smash Xiao Sheng's head in, killing him instantly. Being devastated over the death of a man that was seemingly innocent and had little to do with the current situation, Burning Lamp protected the remaining Cao Bao by gravely wounding Zhao Gongming from behind with his Universal Ruler.

As Gongming thus rage fully fled atop his black tiger, Burning Lamp approached Cao Bao and upon the receiving of the enemy's Sea Conquering Pearls, they both left to Phoenix City shortly following. With the Zhou forces now in possession of Gongming's most powerful weapon, which was to their knowledge,

Gongming had little choice but to report the issue to Grand Old Master upon his return, and then leave to the Three Fairy Island in order to obtain an essential backing. Promising his old friend that he should swiftly return, Zhao Gongming soared across the heavens with the greatest of speed atop his mystical black tiger. Upon his arrival before the intended island, he approached the residence of his three younger sisters, *High Firmament*, *Jade Firmament*, and *Green Firmament*, who reciprocated a bow of greeting to their elder brother while inspecting the reason for his arrival.

Elaborating the current situation, the loss of his treasure-items and the need for either the Golden Dragon Scissors or the Golden Universe Muddling Dipper as an essential replacement, his three sisters declined stating best to await until Jiang Ziya had created the gods, lest they ended up losing their lives fighting against the cause stated to be one with Sky. With their continued refusal to assist their brother in any form as a measure of caution rather than unwilling defiance, Gongming left their residence in a great fume of rage, considering he already knew Jiang Ziya had been killed by his hands, and his sisters were resolved to act against his views even with such a reality.

Traveling a few miles on foot in search of other comrades that could assist in his cause, Gongming was suddenly met by his old friend Celestial Lotus, who, after being informed of the former's woes, grabbed his hand and returned to the residence of High Firmament and the others immediately. With Celestial Lotus's persistent intentions to obtain at least the Golden Dragon Scissors for the sake of Gongming's cause, High Firmament agreed to give her brother the scissors upon one condition: "Gongming makes constant threats to this 'Burning Lamp' until the Sea Conquering Pearls was obtained out of fear. "

Ensuring his sister that he would do what he can in order to reobtain the pearls at all costs, Zhao Gongming returned to the camp of Shang and was welcomed by Wen Zhong momentarily following. As the next day arrived with immediate departure before the reed pavilion, Burning Lamp met the former and remained obstinate to never hand back the treasure — for such an action would be nothing other than detrimental, even if the opposition declares a supposed level of truce following. Clashing blade against staff as a resolution of such, Zhao Gongming decided to finish matters quickly by casting his Golden Dragon Scissors within the sky at once.

Chapter 48

Lu Ya's Gourd of Supreme Light

As the scissors became two large dragons with tails interlocking as one, Burning Lamp fled for his life atop a cloud made of wood, while his deer was unfortunately cut into two halves in an instant. Not desiring to risk the loss of his newly obtained weapon by pursuing Burning Lamp a second time, Zhao Gongming returned to the camp of Shang intensely annoyed. Returning to the reed pavilion after fleeing for an extended distance, Burning Lamp thoroughly elaborated about Gongming's scissors that can turn into large dragons at will, creating great fear within the hearts of all who happened to be present. At such a point in time, a certain man claiming to be a Taoist had entered; he was a hermit from Mount West Kunlun known as Lu Ya.

Declaring that he had come in order to put an end to Zhao Gongming, and after seeing his magical prowess early on from the clouds, each superior man present thought little of such words with justifiable rationale as they maintained a doubtful silence. As Zhao Gongming appeared before the reed pavilion the following morning, as easily expected, he began to mock Burning Lamp for his cowardice despite holding such a high rank amongst the immortal populace on the side of Zhou.

Suddenly meeting the man who he recognized to be Lu Ya from outside the pavilion's gates, he knew that such a man would be far too dangerous to let live — for even if Lu Ya was to assist the side of Shang, who knows what treachery he could pull with the weapons at his very disposal. Thus, Gongming unleashed his Golden Dragon Scissors to destroy the foe in a single shot, which unfortunately transformed into a rainbow and fled far to the southeast. Zhao Gongming ground his teeth in rage, fully realizing that he would have no possible method to capture such an annoyance in his current state.

Personally observing Gongming in his previous encounter, Lu Ya returned to the reed pavilion while instructing Jiang Ziya to build a straw effigy of Zhao Gongming on Mount Western Foothills. Additionally instructing the prime minister to worship the effigy three times a day and burn charms at the very same moment — as was the method he taught Master Yao of the Soul Snatching Trap far into the past — Gongming would die on the twenty-first day following. As the prime minister followed such instructions very carefully and secretively for days upon end, Zhao Gongming clearly began to feel as if his heart was burning like a great fire.

Walking to and fro as a resolution without the slightest feel of comfort whatsoever, Master Bai became enraged at the sight of his comrade, and knowing that the enemy was the primary cause for such a condition, he challenged the gates of the reed pavilion later that day, completely disregarding the words of Wen Zhong. As Burning Lamp and the other superior men exited the pavilion gates shortly following, Lu Ya declared his intentions to answer Bai's challenge at once, knowing that he possesses a weapon that would not only destroy the opposition in mere moments, but would ensure his prowess to be known amongst each of his allies in addition. Entering the Vehement Flame Trap after a few rounds of battle,

Master Bai ascended his platform and summoned many volleys of fire from all eight directions upon Lu Ya. Standing amongst the flames without a single burn mark present on his body, Lu Ya opened his gourd, and as a slender white beam of light ascended through the clouds and rotated several times throughout the air in a circular fashion, large eyes began to grow upon the light, putting Bai into intense fear exceeding his imagination. As this beam of light fell down upon Bai's head like an enormous blade with intense speed, Bai had little time to evade, and was cut into two halves as an immediate result. Leaving the trap shortly afterwards, Master Yao of the Soul Snatching Trap suddenly appeared, vowing to avenge his fallen comrades and the humiliation he suffered through the hands of Pure Essence.

With the retortion of a warrior known as Fang Xiang, Yao entered his trap momentarily, and not intending to waste any more time with such a nuisance, he smothered the former with his black sand of needles, killing the opposition at once. Exiting the trap and ordering Pure Essence to show himself lest others were killed off as a latent resolution, Pure Essence knew in his heart that he possessed little choice in the matter — and thus approached the enemy master with sword drawn. Upon the entering of the Soul Snatching Trap, Yao Bin unleashed countless clouds of black sand to not only blind the enemy in all directions, but to additionally ensure an immediate death.

Emerging from the sand with white clouds negating any potential harm, Pure Essence flashed the white side of his Yin Yang Mirror into the eyes of Yao Bin, sending him plummeting to the ground in great dismay. Being helplessly paralyzed by the mirror's ability, Yao realized that he could do nothing in such a state, and thus he met an unfortunate death by the edge of Pure Essence's blade. As Pure Essence returned the Map of the Eight Diagrams to Xuandu Cave immediately after retrieving it from Yao's body, Wen Zhong had meanwhile been informed of the death of two additional masters and the strange condition of Zhao Gongming in the camp of Shang.

With fifteen days having passed with Zhao Gongming sleeping daily upon end, Wen Zhong performed divination only to find out that a straw effigy of his old friend would be pierced through the heart by the arrow of Lu Ya upon a set date — which would result in Gongming's death. As Master Bai conjectured the summit of Mount Western Foothills being the more probable region to which the effigy would be present, Grand Old Master knew that such a region would be heavily guarded nonetheless due to its strategic position, and thus decided to inform Zhao Gongming before taking any action.

Zhao Gongming, who happened to be mainly conscious despite the condition of his internal spirits, was informed of his condition entirely. Upon the most careful of consideration that he could muster in such a state, he suggested that his two disciples, Chen Jiugong and Yao Shaosi, should be sent to seize the effigy — for they had been trained with extraordinary stealth and were naturally akin to such situations.

As Wen Zhong immediately approved such a suggestion, Burning Lamp had already made cautious preparations by protecting the prime minister with Nezha and Yang Bliss lest the enemy was to obtain knowledge of their intentions through rational means. Approaching Mount Western Foothill's summit, and seeing a certain man kowtowing before a straw effigy, Yao Shaosi and Chen Jiugong smiled

with great delight as they snatched the effigy with the speed of lightning while fleeing in the direction of the Shang camp. Nezha and Yang Bliss, who were naturally startled to see such an incident take place so suddenly, pursued the two thieves immediately following.

As Chen Jiugong and Yao Shaosi approached the Shang camp, they were immensely started to find it disappear upon their entry following a burst of lightning — as Yang Bliss used his genjutsu art to form an illusionary image that seemed as if to be their true camp. Using the lightning signal to appear before the two thieves momentarily, Nezha and Yang Bliss managed to dispose of Chen Jiugong and Yao Shaosi while successfully retrieving the effigy.

Returning to Jiang Ziya that night with effigy in hand, Xin Huan of Shang had meanwhile been sent to investigate the location of the two disciples, but to his great dismay, he found them both dead at a region neighboring the Shang camp, which he naturally informed the Grand Old Master about immediately following. Pounding his desk in utter rage at such a stunning report, Wen Zhong entered the room of Zhao Gongming and informed him of such unfortunate news after he had awakened.

Requesting the Golden Dragon Scissors to be wrapped within his robes while sent to the residence of his three sisters following death, with tears spouting from his eyes, Gongming became exceedingly resentful by not following the words of High Firmament within the past. Seeing his old friend in such a miserable condition, Wen Zhong began to grind his teeth in unparalleled rage while vowing to destroy the foul Lu Ya even if he must give up the life he possesses to sully such hate. With Wang Bian of the Red Water Trap reciprocating such rage, the former dashed forth before the reed pavilion's gates and shouted for immediate challenge.

As Cao Bao, the newly obtained friend of Burning Lamp, stepped forward to challenge the opposition, Wang Bian's rage touched new heights as his old comrade stepped before him, willing to oppose the greater good so unconditionally. Not having any tolerance for treachery in any form, Bian ran within his trap, and upon the approach of Cao Bao, he boiled the latter alive with burning red water. With hatred burning with a steady blaze, Bian exited his trap and was met by none other than Virtue of the Pure Void momentarily.

After Wen Zhong had made the divination, he would realize that Lu Ya was planning on killing Zhao Gongming with charmed arrows. Thus, Chen Jiugong and Yao Shaosi would be ordered to seize the straw effigy at the time of night. By feeling a sudden blood rush to his heart, Lamp Lighter would realize that two disciples under Wen Zhong were currently being sent to steal the effigy; and if such an action was not stopped, Lamp Lighter and the others would surely be killed by Gongming's might. Nezha and Yang bliss would thus be sent immediately to the Western Foothills to elaborate such news to Jiang Ziya.

By the time that they had arrived to Ziya's location however, Chen Jiugong and Yao Shaosi would already get their hands on the effigy and effectively escape. Thus, Nezha and Yang Bliss would head out at full speed in order to retrieve the stolen effigy. When both Cheng and Yao arrived at the Shang camp, they would be admitted by Deng Zhong. After discussing the situation with Grand Old Master, they would both hand the effigy to him. Immediately, the two disciples would head

to the back camp and suddenly realize that the whole Shang camp was gone in a mere instant.

Before Yang Bliss appeared atop his horse, the two individuals would stand completely puzzled. While within the darkness of the night, both Nezha and Yang Bliss would duel out against the two disciples. Following the passage of a few minutes, Yao Shaosi would be stabbed to death by Nezha, and Yang Bliss would penetrate the breast of Chen Juigong; effectively putting an end to both of Zhao Gongming's disciples.

In short time, both Yang Bliss and Nezha would arrive at Phoenix City and return the effigy to Jiang Ziya. When the Grand Old Master had learned of the death of Chen and Yao, he would pound his desk in immense rage. As Wen Zhong fumed in his anger, he would head to Zhao Gongming's room and order him to awaken. Once Gongming heard of the news, he would tell Wen Zhong to wrap up his Golden Dragon Scissors with his robe to be given to his three younger sisters when he dies.

Zhao Gongming would weep bitterly with tears pouring down from his face — even to the extent that he could not speak. As Wen Zhong watched the tragic scene, his hair would stand on end, and he would gnash his teeth in eternal hate. At the same moment, Sky Lord Wang Bian would head out with his Red Water Trap; completely determined to crush Jiang Ziya. After killing Cao Bao easily with his red acid water, Virtue of the Pure Void would be chosen as his second opponent.

Chapter 49

King Wu in the Red Sand Trap

As Pure Void lashed at the opposition with exceeded renown, Bian entered his trap shortly while flooding the entire region with burning red water. Floating atop the water on a white lotus flower without any worry of being burned, Pure Void used was Five Fire and Seven Fowl Fan to turn the unfortunate Bian into nothing more than ashes upon the ground.

The Red Water Trap now being destroyed, Burning Lamp and the other superior men returned to the reed pavilion while Grand Old Master was informed of Bai's death shortly following such an incident. As the twentieth day of the month approached soon following, Wen Zhong, who knew clearly in his heart that he was the indirect reason that his old friend would suffer death soon, approached Zhao Gongming, even more furious to wipe out the entire Western Foothills even if such was opposing his very own destiny. With reciprocated rage and inner distress upon the faces of Gongming and Master Zhang in addition, they wept throughout the night in great agony.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, Lu Ya approached Jiang Ziya, who was still present before the straw effigy as expected, and instructed the prime minister upon handing him a mulberry bow with three short peach arrows, to shoot the left eye first, his right eye second, and the third through Gongming's heart. Doing as instructed momentarily following, Zhao Gongming roared with great agony as the first two arrows created exceedingly crucial pain within his two eyes.

Being held in the arms of Grand Old Master, and looking into the latter's eyes one final time, Gongming suddenly became pure pale without a blood pulse — thus signaling his recent passing. With Gongming still held tightly within his arms, tears poured unrestrainedly from Wen Zhong's eyes as he vowed to tear apart Lu Ya's flesh as reward for such underhanded treachery. Ordering a grandiose ceremony to mark the confining of Zhao Gongming's body, all generals alike became frightened at such a happening, and clearly knowing the great treachery at the very disposal of each superior men rebel, the overall morale of the Shang forces decreased dramatically as a result.

Jiang Ziya and Lu Ya returned to the reed pavilion stealthily upon a rainbow lest any enemies were to await for potential ambush. Meanwhile Master Zhang approached the pavilion with his trap, and Burning Lamp suggested to the prime minister upon arrival that King Wu should be sent into the opposition's Red Sand Trap — for upon analyzing, only a man of sagely stature would be able to conquer the trap, as possessed to that of any superior man on their side.

Knowing that Burning Lamp more than likely knew what he was talking about, despite the holy grail of detriment that would result if the king was to lose his life, Jiang Ziya sent Wu Ji to fetch King Wu nonetheless. Arriving shortly, and upon the king's unconditional consenting, Burning Lamp placed many charms upon King Wu's body, and ordering Nezha and Thunder-quaker to thoroughly protect the former from any harm, all three arrayed themselves before Zhang immediately following.

As Zhang ran within his trap while being pursued by the enemy, he ascended his platform and spread red sand throughout the entire perimeter, completely engulfing the three individuals until they found themselves deep within large pits of sand as a resolution. Gazing into the distance with his magical bull eye, and seeing the king and his protectors deep within a layer of sand, Burning Lamp informed Jiang Ziya that *King Wu is destined to remain in such a state for 100 days, and that he will assuredly survive "as according to Heaven's will"*.

Realizing that Burning Lamp had never informed him of such information prior, and he more than likely created such a statement as to ensure his reputation meets no harm if the king was to be found alive by any other superior man, he immediately suspected the former as plotting the death of King Wu, and thus kept careful watch of his every move lest disaster was to follow.

Entering Phoenix City and reporting such an incident to the family members of King Wu and other relatives of the same nature, Zhang had meanwhile returned to the side of Grand Old Master Wen Zhong while boasting about his great victory, who in exchange felt some sense of relief, but was still greatly hurt by the passing of Gongming.

Shen Gongbao, who secretly perceived the happenings with Gongming from the time of his arrival to the time of his death, appeared before the residence of High Firmament and informed her of Zhao Gongming's recent passing by the hands of Jiang Ziya. High Firmament, who secretly knew that her name was on the List of Creations and any impulsive action of revenge would surely fulfill such a fate, readily declared to Shen Gongbao that she was indeed grievant over such news, but on no account should she risk her own life for his sake.

Jade Firmament and Green Firmament, who did not share her philosophy on the situation whatsoever, left their residence with Shen Gongbao leading the way to the Western Foothills. As High Firmament joined her two sisters in fear of any potential danger they could suffer within the future, all three were met by Celestial Lotus and Lady Pretty Cloud in addition, who vowed to assist them against the rebel commander Jiang Ziya. Arriving before the camp of Shang shortly following, Wen Zhong informed them of Gongming's death by the hands of Lu Ya on the twenty-first day of the month.

Receiving the Golden Dragon Scissors in tears, the three sisters arrived before their brother's coffin in the back camp and clearly realized that his eyes and body had been bleeding very recently despite him being dead. Knowing that the foul Lu Ya was the cause behind his death, the five ladies and Grand Old Master appeared before the reed pavilion the following day, essentially resolved to do away with Lu Ya for the sake of their vengeance and the morale of their forces.

As Lu Ya exited the gates of the pavilion, and upon realization that Gongming's sisters were before him and demanding a rational reason for their brother's murder, Lu Ya, who now realized the opposition must possess either a keen level of spies or divination in order to know such information, responded to the call by declaring Zhao Gongming to be a man that lacked great virtue, and solely acted out of evil intentions to support the tyrant ruler King Zhou — and such was the reason as to why he deserved death. Jade Firmament, who was naturally quick tempered, rushed at Lu Ya, and with the immediate assistance of her fellow

sisters, the opposition was knocked unconscious by the power of their Universe Muddling Dipper.

Lu Ya was thus stuck with charms upon his entire body and hanged on a flag pole within the Shang camp — as like the situation earlier with Yellow Dragon. Hanging upon the flag pole, Jade Firmament could not withhold her hatred to any extent, and upon her order to unleash volleys of arrows at Lu Ya all at once, each arrow suddenly dissolved into nothing more than ash before touching the bounded man's body.

Realizing the chance to kill Lu Ya could easily slip from their grasps in the current situation, Green Firmament casted forth the Universe Muddling Dipper upon the former, but, to her detriment, Lu Ya turned into a rainbow and fled back to the reed pavilion immediately following, putting even greater bloodlust in the hearts of the three sisters.

As Lu Ya had meanwhile departed from the reed pavilion upon Burning Lamp's consenting, High Firmament, who knew that she could use the evidential reasoning of Shen Gongbao as being the cause of her brother's death to attack the rebel commander Jiang Ziya, approached the pavilion with her sisters and shouted for him to show his face. Yelling at Jiang Ziya for being the cause behind their brother's death, the three sisters and Pretty Cloud with Celestial Lotus each attacked the commander with full force.

Chapter 50

The Yellow River Trap

As Jiang Ziya was immediately reinforced by Yang Bliss, Huang Tianhua, and Nezha on both sides, High Firmament would suffer a crucial blow from Ziya's Staff of Beating Gods, and Celestial Lotus thus used her black wind art combined with Pretty Cloud's Eye Blinding Pearl to send the forces of Zhou fleeing in fear, while they themselves returned to the Shang camp.

High Firmament, who now knew the strength at Jiang Ziya's disposal, realized that with treacherous immortals like Lu Ya on his side, the theory of him reciprocating the qualities of Sky was truly nothing more than a joke, and the fact that she was destined to be on the List of Creations would thus have to additionally be wrong, considering that the former was the list's "destined creator".

Realizing through such rationale that it would be best to avenge her brother with the avail of Shen Gongbao's fake words in a chance to obtain Jiang Ziya's position effectively without risk for her own reputation, High Firmament asked Grand Old Master Wen Zhong to specifically pick out 600 warriors that were seemingly of the greatest strength amongst the majority of the Shang forces. With these warriors, High Firmament created a trap that possessed chalk drawings of windows, exits, and other forms of signals to denote advancement or retreat on the part of the soldiers that were to be placed within.

With individual spells placed upon their bodies and other sorts of magical attributes within the trap, anyone of immortal or human characteristics would feel as if confronted against one-thousand soldiers. As High Firmament entirely informed the Grand Old Master of this trap and its traits, Wen Zhong, the five women, and a set number of soldiers disclusing the original 600 left the camp of Shang and approached the opposition's reed pavilion shortly following.

Seeing Jiang Ziya, Burning Lamp, and others exit the pavilion, Wen Zhong was astounded beyond words at the mysterious survival of the rebel commander, and thus immediately gnashed his teeth in rage at the great magical treachery within the sleeves of the enemy superior men. As High Firmament rode before Jiang Ziya, she declared the invincibility of her newly established trap while offering the former a chance to inspect such a trap without any sort of harm in the process.

Taking her word, Jiang Ziya began a thorough inspection, and upon his leave, Yang Bliss was greatly eager for battle, and lunged forth at Jade Firmament with his Sky Barking Hound. High Firmament, who became disturbed at such rudeness, used her Universe Muddling Dipper to throw Yang Bliss within her trap. With the retortion of Jinzha and that of Muzha, they in addition were thrown into the Yellow River Trap shortly afterwards. Jiang Ziya, who would have shared the same fate as the former three if he did not possess his Yellow Apricot Flag for essential protection, fled back to the reed pavilion after countering High Firmament's dipper.

As Jiang Ziya returned to the pavilion and thoroughly elaborated the special weapon at High Firmament's disposal earlier that day, the five women of Shang had meanwhile decided to spare the lives of the three captured celestials until they personally confront Burning Lamp. Grand Old Master Wen Zhong, who was naturally delighted at six individuals of the Western Foothills being held captive, held a special banquet for Master Zhang and the others.

Approaching before the reed pavilion the following morning as previously promised, Burning Lamp exited the gates, and upon the reprimand of High Firmament and the others for their vengeful intentions despite the risk of death, Jade Firmament lashed forth at the enemy commander atop her swan. Pure Essence, who intercepted Jade with immense speed, was only thrown into the Yellow River Trap in mere moments following his interruption by the muddling dipper. As such an action became reciprocated to every other superior man present, Burning Lamp realized that the situation was exceedingly dire, and grabbed Jiang Ziya while fleeing back to the reed pavilion once a gust of wind had been created as essential protection.

Expressing his deepest of apologies to the prime minister for carelessly allowing such a dilemma to take place, Burning Lamp headed to Mount Kunlun, where he obtained information via from White Crane Lad that Celestial Primogenitor was currently making his way to the Western Foothills at such a moment. Arriving before the pavilion shortly, and upon the arrival of midnight, an incredibly large cloud appeared above the pavilion with thousands of lamps floating around it in every direction visible — a process in which Celestial Primogenitor had summoned for reasons not told.

High Firmament, who assumed the arrival of a far greater personage — more than likely the reputed Celestial Primogenitor of Chan — by seeing such great magic at work that Burning Lamp or any other superior man seen with her eyes would not have the ability to produce, began to consider whether killing the captives within her trap would be the better choice rather than going about another process.

Deciding to wait and see how the enemy reacts further, Celestial Primogenitor arrived before the enemy's trap the following morning and began to inspect it upon the polite consenting of High Firmament, who became quite worried at the arrival of such a trump card to potentially interfere with her plans.

Sighing deeply at the sight of his disciples laying about so humiliated, Primogenitor began to take his leave; but at the same time, Pretty Cloud threw one of her Eye Blinding Pearl's at the former only for it to be burned to ashes before touching his body. As the five women became frightful at such a sight, Primogenitor meanwhile returned to the pavilion, stating that his disciples were little more than lowly mortals, and no potential act to save them wasn't considered — for Lao Tzu was to arrive shortly, and he wishes to discuss the situation with him before taking any such action.

With the arrival of Lao Tzu, High Firmament gazed into the direction of the reed pavilion, and upon the realization that the Grand Master of Mount Xuandu, Lao Tzu, was more than likely present due to his specialized jade pagoda floating above the pavilion, the four other women suggested any form of surprise attack if

the enemy was to approach their trap the following morning. As the two grand masters solely approached the trap, High Firmament, Jade Firmament, and Green Firmament exited the trap without the slightest of greeting, to the great rage of Lao Tzu, who declared his intentions to fight them in their own field, the Yellow River Trap.

Chapter 51

The Final Resolve of Grand Old Master Wen Zhong

When Lao Tzu and Celestial Primogenitor entered the Yellow River Trap as previously intended, Jade Firmament suddenly lashed forth the Golden Dragon Scissors upon Lao Tzu, who was awaiting such a surprise attack from the beginning. As the duel dragons came towards Lao Tzu at the brink of cutting him into two halves horizontally, Lao Tzu simply lifted forth one of his sleeves, sending the scissors back in their original state within his very hands.

Obtaining Green Firmament's Universe Muddling Dipper just as easily, Lao ordered his genie to take both weapons before the Jade Emptiness Palace, to the obvious rage of the three sisters. High Firmament, who was determined to defeat the great Lao Tzu in magical renown in order to prove to all celestials that she was deserving of Jiang Ziya's reputation and title amongst the land, lunged forth at the grand master with sword posed.

To High Firmament's unparalleled ill fortune, however, another yellow-scarved genie under Lao Tzu suddenly rushed forth, beat her with its fists, and then toppled the entire Unicorn Cliff upon her body. Jade Firmament, who became enraged beyond imagination at the death of her sister, High Firmament, lunged forth at Lao Tzu only to have her skull smashed by Celestial Primogenitor's jade scepter.

As Green Firmament now realized the great unjust ways of the Chan Taoists, she ground her teeth in rage while lashing her blade at the two celestials; but alas, it was too late. Primogenitor had awakened his magical casket only to trap Green Firmament within, dissolving her flesh in mere moments upon entry. Following such a brutal end to the three sisters, Lao Tzu awakened all celestials present with an immediate teal of thunder, and then guided them back to the reed pavilion at once.

Present back at the pavilion, he went teaching each disciple how to travel on golden beams of light at will, lest reoccur in the future any unfortunate incident as such like that in the past. Meanwhile the two grand masters took their leave from the pavilion, but ordered Immortal of South Pole to stay and assist until Jiang Ziya had successfully done away with the Red Sand Trap.

Meanwhile Celestial Lotus and Pretty Cloud entered the Yellow River Trap's remnants only to find High Firmament and Jade Firmament dead. To their great horror and rage, they both reported such an incident to Grand Old Master, who, being greatly distressed in return, ordered a royal messenger to be sent to Morning Song for reinforcements while another messenger was sent to Sanshan Pass's Deng Jiugong with intentions for the latter to assist him at the Western Foothills.

With Immortal of the South Pole's appearance before the remaining Red Sand Trap the following morning, Master Zhang charged forth with cutless in hand, fully determined to make up for the loss of so many fellow warriors on the side of Shang. Being effectively reinforced by White Crane Lad upon entering the opposition's trap, Zhang Shao ascended his platform and sprayed volleys of red

sand across the entire perimeter, which was easily negated by the Five Fire and Seven Fowl Fan of South Pole. Using the jade scepter to knock celestial master from his platform, Immortal of the South Pole ended Zhang Shao's life with a single stroke of his sword, and then uncovered the three captives who he had been told were present for some time. Nezha and Thunder-quaker, who awoke immediately following a sudden bolt of lightning, realized shortly that King Wu was nothing more than a lifeless body that had not been decayed due to the magical charms that protected him from any such resolution.

Burning Lamp, who revived the fallen king with elixir pills and water after receiving his body at the reed pavilion, declared that the prior incident with King Wu was of necessity, and Sky had now experienced the self-sacrificial ways that the king possesses — a factor that would assuredly assist them in the future.

Now knowing that all ten traps essentially had been destroyed, Burning Lamp declared that all immortals should return to their respective mountains for the time being while Grand Completion and Pure Essence were to guard the five passes and the two neighboring border passes as to ensure no further assistance can come to the Grand Old Master from such means.

As Burning Lamp took his additional leave shortly following, with Merciful Navigation being the only remaining superior man, Jiang Ziya ordered his soldiers and generals to prepare thoroughly for a decisive battle against Grand Old Master in the following day. Meanwhile Wen Zhong, who was exceedingly depressed over the lack of reinforcements from either that of the capital or Commander Deng Jiugong, held a conference with Pretty Cloud and Celestial Lotus, only to obtain word of Jiang Ziya's intentions by an enemy messenger.

Approaching the rebel commander on the battlefield the following morning, completely resolved to sacrifice his very own life to do away with Jiang Ziya, Wu Ji, under the immediate order of the prime minister, decapitated the remaining master Zhao Jiang before Wen Zhong's very own eyes as a showing of their defiance. Not allowing his anger to be controlled in any manner, Wen Zhong, combined with Pretty Cloud, Celestial Lotus, and his four personal generals — Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao — each lashed forward and clashed their weapons furiously against their respective opponents.

As Celestial Lotus had her sack of wind calmed to nothing by the Wind Conquering Pearl of Merciful Navigation shortly following the start of the battle, Jiang Ziya seized such a chance to brutally smash Lotus's head in with his Staff of Beating Gods.

Pretty Cloud, who became horrified and fuming with rage at the sight of her close friend die before her very own eyes so suddenly, was stabbed from the back multiple times by the fire lance of Nezha, putting an additionally unfortunate end to her life. Yellow Flying Tiger, who was greatly encouraged by the heightened morale of the Zhou forces, pierced the heart of Zhang Jie with his duel Dragon-Phoenix blades.

Realizing that three of his generals had just recently lost their lives, and it would be evidentially pointless to continue the fight with heightened morale clearly present on the opposite side, Wen Zhong ordered a full-scale retreat in his great distress. As Merciful Navigation returned to his respective mountain that

afternoon, Jiang Ziya gave set orders to the majority of his generals, with intentions to not only assault the Shang camp in a raid, but to additionally attempt to draw many into surrender.

Wen Zhong, who obviously knew that the prime minister would more than likely attempt such a feat, ordered his generals to protect set regions in especial caution of such a potential happening. As the raid began that night, with Jiang Ziya and other such generals breaking into the Shang forces' camp gates, Wen Zhong personally lunged forward atop his dragon to smite the enemy with exceeded valiance and magical prowess.

Being unexpectedly struck once more due the unparalleled speed of Jiang Ziya's Staff of Beating Gods, Wen Zhong, and the majority of the Shang forces, clearly realized that they were simply struggling against an inevitable defeat — especially after seeing fierce flames and smoke soar above their food supplies and other parts of the camp. As the forces of Shang began to flee as a resolution, around half of the remaining soldiers surrendered to the Western Foothills while another majority fled back to their respective homes in fear of any form of death. Grand Old Master, who knew he had little authority over such an incident, considering the circumstances at hand, fled in the direction of Mount Western Foothills with Deng and Xin protecting their commander's life even if it cost their own.

With the eventual retreat of Jiang Ziya's forces in great victory, Wen Zhong camped upon the foot of Mount Western Foothills, became informed of the reported death of Tao Rong within the former conflict, and suggested his forces — currently numbering 30,000—to march through Good Dream Pass to obtain a level of assistance from neighboring generals. As the Grand Old Master continued on his way through Mount Peach Blossom, he suddenly caught sight of a man of Taoist appearance, who he resembled to be one of the superior men who assisted the rebel commander in breaking his ten traps.

Announcing his name to be "Grand Completion", and his desire to stop the Grand Old Master from obtaining any additional assistance from neighboring passes, Wen Zhong knew that such a simpleton could not be reconciled with, and thus lashed his golden staff at the former with far greater renown. After being in contact with the Sky Overturning Stamp, Wen Zhong's advance was halted by its great power, and realizing that great casualties could be further suffered by such an opponent of celestial attributes, he ordered his forces to head to the west for now. Heading in the direction of Mount Yan for several nights upon days, Pure Essence appeared before their pathway as they approached Mount Taihua, to the great disgust of Wen Zhong.

Recognizing Pure Essence as being the man that was causing Master Yao an extreme amount of trouble far into the past, and combined with his current obstinacy of not letting them reach neighboring passes, Wen Zhong vowed to destroy such an opposition not only for revenge, but for the sake of his reputation and great pride in the name of Shang. Charging forth with smoke spouting from his third eye, Pure Essence was obviously overwhelmed beyond imagination — and thus unleashed his Yin Yang Mirror upon the Grand Old Master following a few rounds of battle.

Chapter 52

Fall of the Legendary Hero

As the Yin Yang Mirror's white side was effectively placed before Wen Zhong's eyes, in a single moment of time he realized that the enemy's weapon attempted to drown away his consciousness. Naturally immune to such magic trickery with the power of genjutsu that he wields within his very own palm, the Grand Old Master nonetheless had little choice but to flee as Pure Essence began to shine the red side in his face — which he knew to be certain death than anything else. Realizing that the only choice he had left was to head through the Yellow Flower Mountain to reach the Green Dragon Pass as opposed to personally heading to Morning Song while abandoning his comrades, Wen Zhong and his soldiers traveled for half a day before seeing a young celestial surrounded by flags and banners that represented the Western Foothills.

As this celestial declared himself being none other than Nezha, with intentions to ensure that the enemy was blocked off from any source of assistance, Wen Zhong, who was already furious at the obnoxious opposition prior, began to fume with even greater hatred and resolve to destroy all that stood before him as supreme head of the Shang Dynasty. Nezha, who began to battle with Wen Zhong and every other general of Shang singlehandedly, managed to strike down both Ji Li — one of two disciples under Grand Old Master — and that of Deng Zhong, which shattered the morale of the opposite forces, forcing Wen Zhong to break through and travel along an additional path towards the Yellow Flower Mountain.

As the Grand Old Master camped for the night while realizing that 20,000 of his original 30,000 had supposedly defected to the enemy due to not being present, he was comforted by Xin Huan, who suggested that they both return to Morning Song and gather forces to avenge their suffered humiliation another day. Continuing along the pathway to the Yellow Flower Mountain, and upon their arrival, Huang Tianhua stepped forward to prevent the Grand Old Master and his remaining soldiers from heading any further by order of Prime Minister Jiang Ziya.

Annoyed by this fourth blockade with his hair standing on end and his teeth grinded with rage, Wen Zhong sent the young warrior fleeing in fear of his wrath. Unfortunately however, Tianhua seized the moment to not only kill Yu Qing — the secondary disciple of Wen Zhong — with his Fire Dragon Javelin, but to additionally wound Xin Huan with one of his Heart Penetrating Nails through the leftern wing. Grand Old Master, who was confused and utterly distressed, ordered his soldiers to rest upon a bleak mountain upon the arrival of dawn, where he sat by himself, devising his next plan of evasion lest another army appears before his midst.

As everyone within the camp of Shang had slept throughout the end of dusk and into night, Wen Zhong became startled at a sudden hearing of cannon fire, and, to his unparalleled rage, he noticed Jiang Ziya and Ji Fa drinking happily upon the mountain top while at the same time mocking him from below with great laughter. Charging upon them angrily, an intense bolt of lightning shook the sky, and to the Grand Old Master's perplexed amazement, not a single soldier nor that of Jiang Ziya or King Wu could be seen anymore — even when using the power of his

divine third eye. Considering what kind of genjutsu user was behind such trickery, and how he wields power exceeding his own in such an art, a large army suddenly surrounded the foot of the mountain below and charged at Wen Zhong immediately following. Falling upon them with exceeded resolve, every soldier disappeared with an additional blinding bolt of lightning; Wen Zhong, in his state of perplexity, prepared to perform divination in order to understand what was truly happening.

As Jiang Ziya and King Wu suddenly appeared before the mountaintop, openly mocking the Grand Old Master for losing all honor and dignity in such a humiliating scene, Wen Zhong, who began to perform divination immediately following, was suddenly interrupted by the swift thrust of a monster's hammer through the darkness. Letting out a cry of great dismay while managing to effectively dodge the blow, Wen Zhong's dragon received the hit from below the Grand Old Master, killing it instantly. Tumbling to the ground and fleeing atop a dust cloud in startled fear, Xin Huan roared from the shadows of the mountainside and parried each blow from the pursuing beast — which in this case happened to be Thunder-quaker.

Protecting Wen Zhong with all the strength he possessed, even if it cost him his very own life, Xin Huan remembered this creature previously had attacked him during a moment of his master's retreat. And knowing that he must prove himself to the Grand Old Master as a warrior of the greater good, Xin Huan nearly killed Thunder-quaker with his twin hammers. But at the same [time], Yang Bliss's Sky Barking Hound bit into the flesh of Xin Huan, effectively opening a chance for Thunder-quaker to deal a brutal blow to the opposition's head, killing him instantly.

As Wen Zhong returned to his camp, he felt intense distress over Heaven's intentions of forsaking the Shang Dynasty despite the many loyal feats that he had performed in the name of the late King Da Yi. He gazed forth at the fallen body of Xin Huan, upon his return, fell to the ground and wept profusely at the many great warriors that gave their lives for the sake of his name — especially that of Xin, who had seemed to him as being his very own guardian.

Wen Zhong gathered the remnants of his soldiers, who had been protected by golden walls throughout the former night — as Wen Zhong knew that the situation would be far too risky to allow more any potential casualties on his side. Then he marched along secondary pathways through the Yellow Flower Mountain until he arrived before a village, where he and his soldiers were graciously served many meals by a certain old man upon their welcoming.

Receiving this old man's name as Li Ji, so that he could record such a name in order to reciprocate such kindness sometime into the future, Wen Zhong and his men continued along the direction of the Green Dragon Pass until being confronted by a certain woodcutter along the way.

As soldiers under the Grand Old Master had asked this certain man the closest route to the Green Dragon, they returned to tell Wen Zhong that the southwest was the fastest route to such a destination. Knowing that the Dragon Extinction Peak lays to the southwest, and he would more than likely suffer even greater detriment — possibly his own life — if he arrived in such a region, Wen

Zhong wished to prove to Heaven that he should conquer all that stands in his way for the longevity of the Shang Dynasty, and thus pressed forward with intense resolve. Arriving before the peak shortly, and seeing a man of Taoist appearance — namely in this case being Master of the Clouds — who declared that he should take the Grand Old Master's life as destined, Wen Zhong began to burst into great laughter, knowing that nothing can stand in the way of his magical prowess and great resolve to uphold the greater good.

Pressing forward upon Master of the Clouds with staff firmly gripped in his hands, eight skyscraper pillars of divine fire suddenly sprang out from the ground, completely hemming in Wen Zhong from all sides. These pillars, being thirty-feet in height and ten feet in circumference, suddenly emitted countless great fire dragons which soared about throughout the air upon the signal of Master of the Cloud's thunderbolt.

Laughing with great confidence at such a meager ability, fire charms appeared all around Grand Old Master's body as he vanished in a beam of white light to escape the enormous barrier previously trapped within. This barrier, which was unfortunately made of the hardest diamond, was impenetrable, and only resulted in Wen Zhong ramming his own head into the walls of such a barrier, hitting him with such intense force that he fell to the ground dead.

As the soul of the unfortunate Wen Zhong flew back at Morning Song before King Zhou, who in return was in an exceedingly drowsy state at the time due to heavy drinking, the Grand Old Master informed the king to employ virtuous qualities as repentance for his vile manner towards the people, considering that he himself lives no longer, and assuredly cannot perform any more feats for the sake of the Shang Dynasty.

As Wen Zhong's soul disappeared within the wind, King Zhou awoke that night with a start, and upon informing Daji of his meeting with Wen Zhong, which he remembered more subconsciously than anything else, the latter suggested that such was nothing more than a dream of his worries, and should thus be forgotten about completely.

Meanwhile back at the Western Foothills, Jiang Ziya was delighted to hear of the success on the part of his specific generals, and the death of Wen Zhong. But at this same moment in time, Shen Gongbao had seen the fall of the Grand Old Master with his own eyes, and began to search for powerful immortals as an attempt to wipe out the foul Jiang Ziya no matter what.

As Shen approached a certain mountain by the name of "*Squeezing Dragon*", he happened upon a small man around four-feet in overall height who was running around the mountainside in great joy. Upon inspection that this certain man was a disciple under that of Krakucchanda, but had only studied the Way for 100 years, Shen Gongbao seized such knowledge by offering the lad a chance to wear a great dragon robe and be remembered among the people as a hero if he was to follow his advice.

This disciple, who was known as "*Earth Traveler Sun*", was naturally not fond of his master and more on the side of being carefree. And as Shen had informed Sun that he should recommend him a post under Deng Jiugong, Commander of Sanshan Pass, and learned that the former had the ability to travel

underground at will, he suggested that the Celestial Binding Ropes — which were prized as Krakucchanda's ultimate weapons — should be stolen. Doing as he was told, Shen Gongbao led Earth Traveler Sun towards the location of Deng Jiugong at once.

Chapter 53

Wrath of Commander Deng Jiugong

As Shen Gongbao successfully led Earth Traveler Sun before Sanshan Pass, he continued along various other regions in desperate search for potential comrades. At this same point in time, the remnants of Wen Zhong's forces had reported the death of their commander to Han Rong of Sishui Pass, which was then transferred in the form of a letter before the eyes of Wei Zi, who was unexpectedly startled beyond his own belief at such news.

Appearing before King Zhou within a side court immediately following, the king discussed with his fellow ministers how the Grand Old Master was to be essentially avenged after feeling intense grievance over such an incredible loss. Supreme Minister Ji Shang suggested Deng Jiugong for a high rate of potential reinforcement, a man that had recently defeated many rebelling forces under Western Duke E Shun and was stationed closest to the Western Foothills. King Zhou agreed to such a suggestion, and issued forth a royal decree to the residence of Deng Jiugong, granting him the white scepter and yellow axe as a symbolization of his newly attained military authority.

As Royal Messenger Wang Zhen rode for days upon end through the beautiful autumn weather, he eventually arrived before Sanshan Pass, and handed the royal decree to Deng Jiugong, who, in exchange, accepted such a decree while ordering Kong Xuan to take over the pass as commander for the time being. Leaving the pass the following day with a great army at his essential backing, a small lad appeared before the gates with a letter of recommendation for Deng Jiugong — who in this case had been none other than Earth Traveler Sun, who happened to run around for quite some time before deciding to confront the commander as intended.

Personally opening the letter and realizing that it was from one of his past acquaintances — Shen Gongbao — Deng Jiugong, who was still rather unconfident in the capacity of such a young boy despite his supposed abilities, merely appointed him as assistant supervisor of the food supplies and then continued along his way to the Western Foothills. Arriving before the reported eastern gate of Phoenix City not long after, and camping for the night, a patrolman had meanwhile approached Jiang Ziya at his mansion, reporting the arrival of a man he knew to have been Deng Jiugong, a reputed commander of the Shang Dynasty.

As Deng issued forth a command to challenge the eastern gates the following morning, Tai Luan, his right-hand vanguard, strode forth to the enemy gates with cutless firmly in hand, where he was met momentarily by General Nangong Kuo. Not having any patience for a man of treachery, Tai Luan immediately slashed apart the former's armor plates, leaving a great opening that was not allowed for seizing as Nangong fled the scene in great fear of being killed by the opposition's renown.

Praising Tai Luan for demoralizing the enemy forces later that day, Deng Jiugong approached the western gate with his troops placed within five individual square formations, ready to pounce upon the enemy at any moment. As the two

sides began to fiercely clash against one other following the array of Jiang Ziya's forces, the forces of Shang eventually retreated back to camp once their commander and vanguard were seriously wounded. The former struck in the left arm by Nezha's ring, while the latter was burned by the flames of Zhao Sheng. Deng Chanyu, the daughter of Deng Jiugong, who was greatly distressed at the condition of her father, was allowed the right to challenge the gates of Phoenix City later that day.

With Nezha retorting against such a challenge shortly, he was startled to see such a beautiful woman on the battlefield, but had little choice but to fight back once she relentlessly lunged forth at him with her long cutless. As Chanyu began to flee in feigned defeat, Nezha pursued; but to his detriment, the former casted forth a golden pebble with her hand at quick speed, wounding Nezha severely in the eyes and nose, forcing him to retreat back to the city immediately.

Huang Tianhua, who began to ridicule Nezha for being hurt by a mere pebble despite the celestial attributes that he supposedly possesses, volunteered to meet Chanyu once she had challenged the city the following morning in addition. As the two fought valiantly for some time, with Chanyu's feigned retreat, Tianhua ended up suffering a wound to his forehead even more severe than that of Nezha's, and thus fled back to the city only to be ridiculed in return by an vengeful Nezha. With the prime minister busy breaking up the fight between that of Tianhua and Nezha, Deng Jiugong was meanwhile exceedingly delighted over the successive victories of his young daughter.

Chanyu, who possessed great confidence over her two former victories, presented herself before Phoenix City's gates the next day only to be met by Dragon Beard Tiger, who wields the same general art in battle. As the two began to battle each other with great renown, Dragon Beard Tiger suddenly unleashed a volley of stones and boulder dust from his two hands, and as he violently thrust forth at the opposition within such confusion, Chanyu managed to land two hits on his neck and face, and then followed by lifting her sword to finish the beast through beheading.

Chapter 54

The Master Burrower Earth Traveler Sun

Yang Bliss, who leapt to Dragon Beard Tiger's assistance at the very notice of his comrade's situation, held off Deng Chanyu for a lengthened time, never being hurt in the least even when the latter deployed her golden pebbles at regular intervals. Using his Sky Barking Hound to tear at Chanyu's neck at such a point of advantage, the unfortunate woman had little choice but to flee back to the Shang camp with tears in her eyes and in a state of tremendous pain.

As Deng Jiugong burned with far greater bloodlust at the pitiful sight of his daughter upon her return, Earth Traveler Sun had meanwhile finished his daily supervision and soon obtained word upon the condition of his commander. Feeling regret over not hearing of such information prior, Sun entered the main camp and used his elixir pills to heal Deng Jiugong's wound in mere moments upon entry. Reciprocating such an action upon Chanyu after being informed of her condition, Jiugong hosted a personal feast in honor of Sun, in which he became determined to allow Sun the position of vanguard at the latter's request.

At Tai Luan's consenting to his commander's request, knowing that Sun's reputed ability would more than likely bring Shang a swifter victory, Earth Traveler Sun left the camp at once, ordering an enemy celestial to present himself before his feet. As Nezha retorted such a challenge openly, and began to lunge forth in great laughter at the shortness of his opponent, Sun, on the other hand, had little trouble against this foe — for he could easily jump about nimbly and strike at great speeds with his cudgel. Using such an advantage to his essential benefit, Sun suddenly unleashed his Celestial Binding Rope to bind the unfortunate Nezha while throwing him before the feet of Deng Jiugong upon his return shortly following.

Deng Jiugong, who knew that King Zhou and the commanders of neighboring regions would think highly of him if he was to possess evidential proof of his ability to conquer even that of celestials with great ease, decided to throw Nezha in the back camp, where he prepared to send the former to the capital for the benefit of his reputation. As Jiang Ziya had meanwhile displayed great astonishment at the learning of Nezha's capture — which would naturally be impossible considering his celestial renown Huang Tianhua ensured the prime minister that he would challenge this certain foe the following day in order to see if such information was true.

Confronting Earth Traveler Sun nonetheless the next morning, Tianhua unfortunately had little advantage against the strategic prowess that Sun could pull off simply with his shortness and speed, and was thus captured and thrown into the gaols with his counterpart, Nezha, back at the camp of Shang in short time. Deng Jiugong, who was naturally exceedingly delighted at the simultaneous victories of his vanguard, created another banquet to honor Sun, where they both drank merrily for hours upon end. Carelessly allowing himself to become rather drunk with dulled senses, Deng Jiugong declared that if Sun was able to essentially subdue the Western Foothills through the potential capture of rebel commander Jiang Ziya, he would give him was precious daughter as a token of gratitude. Being

overjoyed at the prospect of obtaining Chanyu, Earth Traveler Sun appeared before the gates of Phoenix City at the brink of dawn the next morning; and upon the calling of Jiang Ziya to show himself, the prime minister realized that he would be looked upon as a fool if he was not to confront a mere boy, and thus exited the camp gates with generals to his right and left. Charging upon the rebel commander with heightened confidence, Earth Traveler Sun deployed his Celestial Binding Rope following a few volleys; but to his overpower upon immediate retortion of the enemy, the prime minister was carried back to safety while the Zhou forces fought with even greater vigor.

Having his Celestial Binding Rope still tightly bound upon the prime minister, and considering the current overpower on the side of Zhou, Sun had little choice but to retreat in a state of intense rage at the thought of his rope being taken away from his grasp permanently — thus increasing the probability of loss rather than an essential victory. As the Zhou forces returned to the Phoenix City, each general realized that the rope around the prime minister only grew tighter around his body whenever an individual attempted its removal.

Yang Bliss, who was naturally akin to such situations, placed a single magical charm upon the rope, which caused it to fall to the ground immediately following. Informing the prime minister that such a rope was none other than the 'Celestial Binding Rope', and was used by Krakucchanda within the Vehement Flame Trap, Yang Bliss obtained consenting to meet Earth Traveler Sun the following day to ask the reason behind Sun's actions — and more importantly, how he even obtained the rope.

Confronting Sun the next day, the lad had little patience for talk and immediately bound the celestial foe with a secondary rope made of the hardest mineral while returning to the Shang camp in a state of satisfaction over his victory. As Yang Bliss easily slipped from such bonds and sent his Sky Barking Hound upon Earth Traveler Sun in surprise, Sun had little time to react, and immediately burrowed deeply into the ground.

Being slightly frightened at such an unexpected art, Yang Bliss fled back to Phoenix City shortly to elaborate the current situation with Prime Minister Jiang Ziya. Now fully realizing that Sun possesses the ability to travel underground at will, and that he would more than likely seize such an ability to attempt a full-scale assault upon the capital city in unpredictable locations, Jiang Ziya and Yang Bliss thought throughout the day as to how such potential danger could be erased.

Taking immediate preparations, the prime minister moved King Wu safely to a neighboring mansion while generals and countless mirrors were hung about the city gates. As Jiang Ziya had thus sheltered King Wu safely away from any potential harm, that evening Earth Traveler Sun burrowed beneath Phoenix City's gates.

And upon the realization that Jiang Ziya was heavily guarded by soldiers from every direction, which was close to what he thought to have been the rebel commander's mansion, Sun decided to roam around until he was led in the direction of the palace, which exude forth music into the air. Seeing a man of kingly appearance who he had assumed to have been King Wu, Earth Traveler Sun emerged from the ground beneath once the great clamor had stopped, and the king

was supposedly asleep and easily harmful. Approaching the king's bed and cleaving off the former's head, Sun noticed a woman of exceeded beauty sleeping near his fallen victim. Closing near upon this woman, Yang Bliss suddenly emerged forth from the darkness and forcefully grappled ahold of Sun, while carrying him cautiously in the air lest he manages to flee through the ground.

Approaching Jiang Ziya shortly following, the order to execute Earth Traveler Sun was given; but, to their ill-fortune, Sun struggled to such an extent to which he was able to essentially reach the ground and burrow away from trouble. As the young lad had meanwhile returned to the side of Commander Deng Jiugong, while elaborating the unfortunate happenings, Yang Bliss departed to Dragon Squeezing Mountain in order to discuss the current happenings with Krakucchanda, who he assumed to have been Sun's master.

Chapter 55

Submission of Earth Traveler Sun

As Yang Bliss continued along to the residence of Krakuchanda of Dragon Squeezing Mountain, he happened upon a neighboring mountain, where he had noticed an extravagant mansion known as "The Green Phoenix Palace". Suddenly noticing a beautiful woman exit the palace's outer gates while he sat behind a pine tree fully observing the situation, he politely bowed before her upon approach, and inquired her knowledge of a boy by the name of "Earth Traveler Sun", who was the current cause of trouble within the Western Foothills. Happening to know the young lad through his constant behavior of roaming about between regions, she informed Yang Bliss that he was indeed a disciple of Krakucchanda — so the matter should thus be easily subdued if the latter was elaborated on the current circumstances.

Receiving her name as being "*Princess Dragon Ji, daughter of the Jade Emperor*" — who had been exiled to this specific mountain after performing many accidents simultaneously — Yang Bliss kowtowed in thanks while continuing along the direction to Krakucchanda's residence. As he approached a large swamp with a storm rising violently throughout the air, a large dragon-like beast with sword-sharp teeth emerged from the water's depths, lunging forth at the former while being thirty-feet in overall heights.

Using his hands to unleash cracks of lightning upon this beast, which sent it into immediate flight, Yang Bliss pursued it within a large cave without a single moment of hesitation. Shining brilliant rays of light from his eyes as a method to see eternal light even inside a purely dark cave, Yang Bliss happened upon a double-edged cutless with three sharp points laid upon a parcel as he approached the far end of the cave, not finding a single trace of the beast he had clashed with prior.

Finding a shining yellow gown inside the parcel, which fortunately fit him perfectly, he took ahold of the cutless and began to stride out of the cave before hearing the unexpected voice of two individuals, who exclaimed him to be a thief. These individuals, who were none other than the Golden Fleece Lads of Mount Wuyi, noticed that the thief was none other than their master. Upon a traditional kowtow of apologies, while allowing their master to receive the gown and sword as a gift, Yang Bliss instructed them to return to the Western Foothills and inform Prime Minister Jiang Ziya of his past happenings with a woman by the name of Dragon Ji after elaborating her words in full detail to his two disciples.

As the two lads thus used the sword of Yang Bliss as proof of their identities as disciples of the former, they arrived before the Prime Minister's mansion shortly and elaborated their master's words to Jiang Ziya himself.

With Yang Bliss's arrival at Krakucchanda's residence, he asked if he knew a certain lad by the name of "Earth Traveler Sun", who happened to be using a Celestial Binding Rope against the Western Foothill cause. Knowing that his rope was missing, and Earth Traveler Sun would be the kind to act against his word to such an extent, Krakucchanda believed Yang's words, and declared that he should

arrive at the Western Foothills in short time. As both Yang Bliss and Krakucchanda had arrived at separate moments to elaborate the situation's truth, Jiang Ziya personally approached the Shang camp and began to inspect it from the shadows. Deng Jiugong, who knew that the situation most obviously suggested a potential trap, ordered Earth Traveler Sun, who was a master at any such predicament, to charge forth at the rebel commander and capture him if at all possible.

Strongly resolved to do away with Jiang Ziya for the sake of obtaining the hand of the beautiful Deng Chanyu, Earth Traveler Sun burrowed his way to the enemy's position and immediately lunged from the ground to deploy his Celestial Binding Rope, which he happened upon within the capital city during his former night attack.

Realizing that his rope mysteriously stayed afloat in mid-air whenever he attempted to wield it's power, as was the same for his secondary rope, he suddenly caught sight of his master descending from the heavens, and thus began to burrow into the ground as a means of escape. Taking immediate action, Krakucchanda slammed his palm upon the ground, turning it into iron and resulting in an easy capture of the unfortunate Earth Traveler Sun, who happened not to flee in time. Presenting his disciple before the feet of Jiang Ziya, Krakucchanda demanded the reason as to why he acted against his authority in such an impulsive manner.

He informed his master that a man by the name of "Shen Gongbao" had enticed him to attack the Western Foothills, for he would never have a chance at greatness in any other manner employable. Additionally he stated that he was greatly encouraged by Deng Jiugong, his commander, to destroy the Western Foothills for the sake of obtaining the hand of Deng Chanyu, a beautiful woman that was the former's daughter.

Taking such statements into consideration, Krakucchanda realized through divination that Sun was supposedly destined to be married to this "Deng Chanyu", and thus suggested to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya that a matchmaker should be found — who in this case was chosen to be none other than San Yisheng.

Consenting to such a suggestion, Jiang Ziya told San Yisheng upon the latter's arrival to see Commander Deng Jiugong of Shang about a certain matter that involves Earth Traveler Sun's marriage to his daughter, Deng Chanyu. As the supreme minister was elaborated on the issue further before taking any form of leave, Deng Jiugong had obtained word some time before on the capture of his vanguard, and began to fume in frustration as to be expected.

Chapter 56

The Conflict for the sake of Reputation

As San Yisheng had approached the Shang camp, he was refused any potential entrance, for Deng Jiugong personally stated that he was not in any position to meet the former, out of fear that any furthered amount of demoralization would come about his soldiers. With San Yisheng's consistent protests, and Tai Luan's suggestion to allow the Supreme Minister entrance for the sake of furthered observation, the two individuals met each other shortly, where they exchanged traditional bows of greeting as respective enemies. As San Yisheng began to elaborate the issue concerning Earth Traveler Sun's supposedly destined marriage to the former's daughter as an unavoidable matter, he asked for Jiugong's decision on the matter.

Deng Jiugong, who knew that Earth Traveler Sun must have spout such words in order to ensure his own potential safety, retorted his intentions to never allow any individual the hand of his precious daughter, and that the rebel commander was simply spouting nonsense for the sake of reconciliation. San Yisheng vaguely recalled his original statement to Sun that involved giving him Chanyu if the Western Foothills were conquered. He received such words, and told the commander that such a statement could easily be proven as the resolving figure of Sun's determination, and if it was to be retracted as a mere child's game, Jiugong might lose an extent of reputation amongst the populace and would naturally lose faith amongst the greater whole of Shang.

Taking these words into consideration, General Tai Luan secretly whispered a plan into the commander's ear, who in turn lightened with delight, and declared to San Yisheng that he should do as the latter advises, but was in need of carefully discussing such information to Chanyu before forming any final decision. As San Yisheng was clearly glad to hear such words, he returned to Phoenix City to report the Shang commander's declaration immediately following.

Meanwhile, Tai Luan elaborated his plan in great length, suggesting that a capable individual should first tell the prime minister that Chanyu had consented but in fear that such words were only involving some form of trap that would end to her detriment. And she was in need of seeing Jiang Ziya in order for the information to be confirmed, and without any additional risk adding upon her part.

In doing so, a great feast would be prepared for the rebel commander, but, at a time of advantage, men should be ordered to seize the former at a set signal. Consenting to such a plan would be of great risk to his reputation, but an opportunity to act in the greater good, Deng Jiugong ordered Tai Luan to appear before Phoenix City with such a message in hand. Allowing the individual presence within the city, he appeared before Prime Minister Jiang Ziya and began to elaborate his master's words, declaring that the day after tomorrow should be chosen for the marriage, with the honor of the prime minister and San Yisheng to personally lead his son-in-law to the ceremonial region.

In return giving a reply of consent, Tai Luan returned to the side of his commander. Jiugong, knowing that such a resolution was the only true rational

choice on the part of Ziya, had already made careful preparations in order to ensure that over three-hundred set warriors were placed in regions that would not only allow them secrecy from any potential enemy, but would additionally allow a quick strike when the signal for attack was called. As the second day had thus arrived in quick time, Jiang Ziya, who knew that the possibility for Jiugong to attempt deceitful measures was exceedingly likely, additionally placed his forces in set regions that would ensure his essential safety from the enemy.

However, just to ensure that everything ends in his own victory with a personal taste of deceit, Jiang Ziya, still present within Phoenix City that morning, specifically told Earth Traveler Sun to enter the back camp and carry away Deng Chanyu at the first hearing of cannon roar. With the arrival of mid-afternoon, San Yisheng and Jiang Ziya appeared before the camp of Shang, to which they exchanged proper courtesies before taking their seats inside the camp gates.

As Jiang Ziya's generals brought forth many presents of the celebration before Deng Jiugong and the soldiers present, Xin Jia of Zhou suddenly ignited the fuse of a large cannon hidden within a box, creating an earth shaking explosion and clouding the air with dirt. With the rebel commander's courtiers unleashing forth their hidden weapons while charging forth at Deng Jiugong, who was startled out of his very imagination, fled from the camp with Tai Luan, but became hemmed in by the forces of Zhou, which had surrounded the camp from strategic points while wiping out any opposition from outside.

Managing to flee nonetheless, Jiang Ziya's forces poured forward, overpowering the great power of Shang with the element of surprise. With Deng Jiugong fleeing to the south amongst such great confusion, Chanyu and other such generals and soldiers went in pursuit of their commander. But Chanyu was unfortunately seized at a sudden moment by the Celestial Binding Rope of Earth Traveler Sun — which was temporarily allowed to him by his master — resulting in the forces of Shang desperately regrouping at Mount Western Foothills after being pursued by the Zhou forces for a lengthened period of time. Feeling exceedingly deep remorse and fear at the sight of his daughter not being present to any extent, Deng Jiugong felt utterly humiliated at his stupidity for allowing such an incident to come about so easily.

Meanwhile back at Phoenix City, Jiang Ziya suggested to Krakucchanda that the marriage between Deng Chanyu and Earth Traveler Sun should not be delayed any further. The latter in return stated his consenting. Ordering a maidservant to attend to Chanyu's needs as a resolution, Chanyu knew that the situation prior was only meant to seize Jiang Ziya, she fell to the ground and began to weep silently at the unfortunate reality of her situation, which was being married to Earth Traveler Sun.

Accepting such circumstances nonetheless as being for the benefit of her father above all else, and for any potential chance at seizing Jiang Ziya's life, Deng Chanyu gave herself in to the lustful Earth Traveler Sun, to which the latter unleashed his "inner essence" with keen anticipation throughout that night upon his lover.

As Jiang Ziya had confronted the two individuals the following day, Deng Chanyu declared her intentions to persuade her father into surrender, considering

the current circumstances. Knowing that Deng Jiugong more than likely possesses a small remaining force at his disposal, and there was a high chance that Chanyu would defect at a moment of advantage if the time arises, Jiang Ziya allowed her leave with a large army under the flag of Zhou, completely prepared to take any measures for the means of success.

Arriving before the camp of Shang, after obtaining report on its specific whereabouts from neighboring scouts along the mountain, Chanyu was allowed entrance before her father. She not only exclaimed to him her forced marriage to Earth Traveler Sun, but declared that an alliance with the Western Foothills would be the best choice at hand considering the length of time it would take to obtain any potential reinforcements and the stricken morale it would cause to currently assaulted passes under the flag of Shang. Thus encouraging them to submit to the rebelling nobles.

Seeing the rationality of her daughter, Deng Jiugong decided that submission was indeed the best option considering the current circumstances. As soldiers of Zhou reported such a statement to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya shortly following, Jiang Ziya joyfully ordered his attendants to march from the city to meet Commandeering Deng. Confronting the commander as he arrived, they both took each other's hand in mutual respect and entered the Silver Security Hall for a banquet of celebration towards their newly confirmed comrade.

Many soldiers that escaped from the Western Foothills reported such an incident to Han Rong of Sishui Pass, who in return sent an immediate report to Supreme Minister Zhang Qian of Morning Song. Ascending the Star Picking Mansion in meeting before King Zhou, the king became very wrathful at such an unexpected report, and thus called a conference before his ministers in order to determine how to make up for Deng Jiugong's defection.

Fei Lian, who secretly despised the Shang Dynasty and assisted in any manner that would result in its eventual downfall, suggested that Su Hu, Marquis of Jizhou, should be sent as commander of the expedition. For he was an imperial relative of the king, and would certainly make every effort to destroy the Western Foothills for the sake of his relation and mutual benefit with the Shang Dynasty. Setting aside Su Hu's original rebellion against the dynasty as simply being a result of bad circumstances, King Zhou sent an imperial decree to Jizhou at once, appointing Su Hu as expeditionary commander against the Western Foothills.

Chapter 57

The Resolve of Su Hu

As the royal messenger was received with customary rites of incense burning while being seen off shortly following, Su Hu announced that evening before his fellow generals and relatives that he had been appointed as expeditionary commander. An opportunity that he could easily seize in order to ally himself with the Western Foothills as he intended for far too long. Obtaining mutual consent amongst the greater whole of his generals with such intentions in mind, Su Hu gathered an army of 100,000 soldiers before leaving Jizhou and marching swiftly to the Western Foothills. Camping immediately upon his arrival, three days passed without any sign of movement on the part of the Shang forces.

Obtaining report that Su Hu was the expeditionary commander, and would more than likely submit out of his past dissatisfaction against King Zhou, Yellow Flying Tiger approached the camp of Shang upon Jiang Ziya's consenting; and to his surprise, a man by the name of Zhao Bing charged defiantly from the camp, furiously clashing his blade against the former's.

As Yellow Flying Tiger easily took Zhao Bing captive that morning, Zheng Lun, who had no intention whatsoever to serve the Western Foothill cause in the name of his honor, informed his commander that Yellow Flying Tiger, the former rebel of the Shang Dynasty, had mercilessly taken Zhao captive without a second thought. To which Su Hu retorted by ordering the former to do battle with the rebel, for it would assist both the Western Foothills and that of his reputation under the Shang Dynasty if such an individual was to be disposed of.

Successfully capturing Yellow Flying Tiger as suggested the following morning, Su Hu was enraged at the rebel's conjectured behavior, and thus ordered him to be thrown into the gaols temporarily. Jiang Ziya, who became alarmed at the report of his comrade's capture, was approached by Huang Tianhua, who possessed the intention to meet this "Zheng Lun" in battle. With the Prime Minister's consent, Tianhua approached the battlefield but only received the same fate as his master by the hands of Zheng Lun, while any other soldiers of Zhou that had the intention of reconciliation on the part of Shang got beheaded, much to the lack of Su Hu's knowledge.

Knowing clearly that even if any of his soldiers was to leak such information to his commander, Su Hu would be convinced to destroy Jiang Ziya as a prospect of not only doing away with the country's "evil" for the sake of saving King Wu, but to prevent any potential attack from neighboring comrades, who would be eager to acquire the title of expeditionary commander as their own while easily being able to kill Su Hu with the former evidence of his deceit.

Realizing that Su Hu had no intentions for reconciliation whatsoever, despite Yellow Flying Tiger's words, Jiang Ziya deployed both Earth Traveler Sun and Deng Chanyu to the front, to which they were confronted by Zheng Lun. Laughing heartily at a mere young lad approaching him and boasting many words of overconfidence, Zheng Lun disassociated himself from Chanyu and began to lunge violently upon Earth Traveler Sun. Realizing that the pesky kid had great

speed and sank beneath the ground whenever a threatening blow was issued forth, Zheng Lun, who began to perspire in his frustration, unleashed two beams of light that forced Sun into unconsciousness, resulting in easy capture. Unfortunately however, at the very moment he commanded his crow soldiers to take the captive back to their main camp, Chanyu seized the moment to launch a golden pebble into Zheng Lun's forehead at incredible speed, forcing him into retreat with his face covered in blood.

As Earth Traveler Sun was successfully placed before the feet of Su Hu, the latter ordered his immediate execution through beheading, knowing that it would be far too risky to keep a young boy that supposedly possesses such a rare ability alive. Escaping through the ground as he broke free from his bonds in fear, both Su Hu and Zheng Lun became enraged at such a turn of events, and thus became resolved to attack the city the following morning. Zheng Lun, who adopted such determination, was confronted by Nezha after essentially healing his wound — even though he intended to see Chanyu, who he greatly hated for humiliating his pride.

Realizing very shortly that the man confronting him was a celestial with great renown in the art of spear, Zheng Lun deployed his beams of light consecutively; but alas, for it did not have any effect on Nezha whatsoever. Being stricken with fear at his trump card being of lack, Nezha impatiently thrust forward his Universal Ring, breaking the bones within Zheng Lun's back and forcing his soldiers to assist him into retreat.

Su Hu, who became saddened and enraged in entirety at the condition of his general, declared that the ability of Jiang Ziya's generals was evidentially dangerous, and surrender might be the better option in order to ensure that the rebel commander falls internally one way or the other for the benefit of King Wu. Seeing his commander's words as being rational and more potentially profitable than of any detriment, Zheng Lun still embraced the pride and honor within his heart and fully declared that he would find one way or the other in order to ensure that Jiang Ziya and his generals fall by the resolve wielded in his two hands.

Resolved to give in to the Western Foothills only when his head was separated from his body, Su Hu knew the situation could not heed his fellow comrade, and thus approached Yellow Flying Tiger and began to show him great kindness in hopes to eventually seize Jiang Ziya's life in the name of his virtue. Preparing a feast and allowing Yellow Flying Tiger passage back to Phoenix City in open arms, Su Hu began to form a written letter to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya stating mutual cooperation in a pre-set night raid that would end in Zheng Lun's capture on the side of Zhou.

However, at this same point in time, a man by the name of "Lu Yue" was allowed entrance within the Shang camp, to which he declared his intentions to dispose of Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya by order of Shen Gongbao. Allowing this man a seating within the camp, who was of Taoist heritage, he requested to see Zheng Lun upon hearing of the latter's many cries of pain, and thus healed his wounds with a mere droplet of water as a showing of his magical renown being far exceeding that of an ordinary Taoist. Zheng Lun, who was grateful beyond words, declared Lu Yue as "master" while falling to the ground in formal kowtow. Waiting several days following and disallowing Su Hu to send any further "mutual"

communication with the Zhou forces — thus disposing of his prior intentions — Lu Yue acquired the assistance of four Taoist men who known as Zhou Xin, Li Qi, Zhu Tianlin, and Yang Wenhui. As Su Hu took notice of these four individuals, he knew that his chances of success against Jiang Ziya was heightened, but due to not being able to enforce his former words to Yellow Flying Tiger, he felt a level of shame and embarrassment. Now that Lu Yue obtained the mutual support of the Shang army, he sent forth one of his four disciples to do battle against the Phoenix City.

Chapter 58

Lu Yue, the God of the Plague

This certain man deployed was none other than Zhou Xin, who was met shortly by Jinzha outside the eastern gates of Phoenix City. Fleeing faintly following a few rounds of battle, Zhou Xin struck his pair of chimes three consecutive times, sending Jinzha fleeing into Phoenix City in a great headache, fearing prior that such a factor could have led to his potential death if he had not fled. The day following such an incident, Li Qi appeared before the enemy's gates only to be confronted by Muzha, who in turn was resolved to avenge the humiliation that his elder brother had suffered earlier. To the detriment of Muzha, however, Li Qi waved a large pennant several times, resulting in the former turning exceedingly pale with the feeling of intense fire burning within his flesh.

Fleeing back to the capital city in fear at knowing his current vulnerability, he fell to the ground and began to foam at the mouth — a point to which he was no longer conscious. Hearing from Li Qi of his two consecutive victories, despite not taking the former foes captives, Lu Yue began to sing in great joy knowing that the magical prowess within the hands of his disciples was truly unrivaled. As like the two days prior, Zhu Tianlin volunteered to meet the opposition the day following, to which he was confronted by Thunder-quaker.

Experiencing great difficulty in striking at Thunder-quaker — as the latter constantly used the vantage of his wings to evade any potential attack — Tianlin retreated a set distance before suddenly landing a blow upon Thunder-quaker at an unexpected angle, forcing him to fall to the ground with intense gravitational pull being thrust upon his body. Despite such a disadvantage, Thunder-quaker managed to kick about a great measure of sand with the strength left within his wings, resulting in more or less lucky escape. As Thunder-quaker returned to Phoenix City with the assistance of neighboring scouts, Jiang Ziya received report that a fourth man had just confronted their territory. A man seemingly different from the three originally confronted.

This individual, who was expectedly Yang Wenhui, was met in short measure by Dragon Beard Tiger, a man to which he considered exceedingly strange in appearance. As Dragon Beard began to unleash volleys of stones upon the opposition, Wenhui retorted by negating each attack with the swift movement of his silver-edged whip; the Zhou general had little choice but to flee, knowing that his technique proved fruitless against such a foe. The Prime Minister being highly distressed at such continued happenings, obtained report that a fifth Taoist with three eyes had just appeared before the city's gates.

Riding forth from the gates with generals at his right and left hands, Jiang Ziya confronted this man — who was known as "Lu Yue" — and immediately realized that he must be the reason as to why Su Hu had not been won over at the beginning — for he eternally trusted the words of Yellow Flying Tiger and knew that Su Hu must have been controlled due to such assumed intentions. As the generals of Zhou impulsively charged and surrounded Lu Yue from all sides, not intending on giving in to any form of reconciliation that could end with detriment, Zheng Lun immediately assisted his master with immense speed; but at the

moment to which he caught sight of Huang Tianhua, he immediately realized that Su Hu must have set free the former in an eventual attempt at Jiang Ziya's life. Knowing that the situation at hand was of far greater benefit with Lu Yue at his side, Zheng Lun thrust his club at the youthful warrior, but was met by Nezha in merely an instant.

As Lu Yue began to consider the situation with desperation, he transformed himself into an enormous beast with six heads and sword-like fangs. Unfortunately however, Yang Bliss seized such a moment to shoot Lu Yue consecutively with his golden balled bow, forcing the latter into immediate retreat with a wounded Zheng Lun tailing behind him. Grinning with delight nonetheless upon his return to the Shang camp, Lu Yue first healed his disciple's wound with an elixir pill before ordering his other four disciples to scatter forth many plague pills within the rivers, streams, creeks, and ponds that were used as provisionary supplies for the benefit of the Zhou forces and fellow civilian of Phoenix City.

The people of Phoenix City, who did not visibly notice any difference in their natural consumable water, fell right and left, torn apart by a hideous plague that spread about as a resolution of their unknowing. As all generals disclouing that of Nezha and Yang Bliss were also affected by this plague, Zheng Lun obtained the consenting of both of his commanders, and charged at the city gates with high morale and great determination to prove his past defeats as being a mere strike of bad luck. To his immediate surprise however, he took notice of many soldiers gathered before the city wall ready to pounce upon him as if it was an ambush rather than an act of desperation as he would have naturally considered.

Cautioning the situation, Zheng Lun decided to return to the side of Lu Yue, where he elaborated the evidence that Phoenix City was seemingly strongly guarded. Yang Bliss, who had created many false warriors out of grass while molding their figures with the assistance of his magic prowess, began to perspire, knowing that he had little more than a few hours left to preserve such a tactic. At such a critical moment in time, Yellow Dragon and Jade Tripod had originally felt in their minds an unpredictable happening could have taken place, and thus arrived within Phoenix City and greeted Jiang Ziya and King Wu, to which they were enlightened about the situation.

With such knowledge, Tripod ordered his disciple, Yang Bliss, to head immediately to Fire Cloud Cave for the sake of obtaining elixirs from the "Three Holy Masters" while he personally continues the original grass-soldier technique in the latter's stead. Obeying his master's command and arriving shortly before the intentioned cavern, Yang was allowed entry after obtaining the consenting of a Taoist lad, where he confronted the three masters, "*Emperor Sky, Emperor Earth, and Emperor Mankind.*"

Kowtowing before Fu Xi, the Emperor of Sky, and elaborating the rationale behind his arrival, Fu Xi asked Shen Nong to hand the former three specialized elixirs that could negate such a continued tragedy in entirety. As Shen Nong consented, he additionally handed Yang Bliss a magical herb that possessed the ability to cure any infectious disease if boiled in water; Yang thus left shortly afterwards, fully grateful for the kindness recently considered towards the cause he fought for. Using every such instruction noted with the three elixir pills present, the plague dispersed at a quick pace while the magical herb cured the diseases that

had been previously rampant. At this same point in time, Lu Yue, after hearing Zheng Lun's words prior, and concluding that their former stand was only a final desperate movement, besieged the city from all external provisions for an entire week, longing for the people of Zhou to feel great humiliation in the face of the greater power wielded within his palm.

As Su Hu was naturally unwilling to accept such a truth after seeing the evidence of Lu Yue's former defeat, he scoped the city from a high position and realized that full activity was present within the capital city — concluding that such a plague obviously did not have any visible effect. Returning to the camp and scolding Lu Yue for not being aware of the situation, Lu Yue, in his enraged wonder, saw the truth with his own eyes, and thus ordered his five disciples to immediately strike the city from all directions with a combined force of 15,000 soldiers. As the people of Phoenix City had not recovered their strength after such a plague was only recently diminished, Nezha, Yang Bliss, Yellow Dragon, and Jade Tripod all headed to the four gates in order to block the opposition's assault from all sides.

Chapter 59

Awakening of the Left Arm of Succession

As the Shang forces charged through the four gates with supreme resolve for victory after such a long period of suspense, Lu Yue himself broke through the northern gate only to nearly crush Yellow Dragon to death in his six-headed, three-armed form. As Yang Bliss had meanwhile held off the enemy forces leaking into the eastern gate while ordering soldiers to find regions of safety for the common civilians to take shelter, he immediately charged forward, slashing the invading General Zhou Xin into two vertical halves in a single cleaving of his sword. With the Shang forces within the east being effectively beaten back as a result of their leader's death, Yang Bliss seized the moment to assist Jade Tripod at the southern gates against Zhu Tianlin.

As Nezha slashed apart Li Qi at the western gate with the great renown of his fire-tipped lance, he was allowed entry to assist the troubled Yellow Dragon at the northern gate against Yang Wenhui and the overpowering Lu Yue. Unfortunately, at such a moment in time, Tianlin had been killed in addition, resulting in all four celestials charging forth upon Lu Yue, who ground his teeth in great frustration and rage at the prospect of his ambitions being failed.

Fleeing at the moment to which he realized the situation was dire he managed to reach the neighboring hills with Wenhui, mind the loss of his left arm during such a violent feud. Sitting beside a rock and attending to his crucial wound, Lu Yue greatly considered the visiting of his former colleague, Shen Gongbao, until a strange man with a battle club appeared before the former, declaring his name as being "Wei Hu".

Declaring that he had been looking for a man by the name of "Lu Yue" upon order of his master, Divine Virtue, Yang Wenhui became exceedingly fearful for the safety of his master, and out of immediate impulse, began striking violently forth at the opposition with his silver-edged whip — much to Lu Yue's detriment, who was now put into an even greater situation of danger as he had realized.

Unfortunately however, Wei Hu possessed exceeded speed despite the wielding of his powerful club; and as a resolution, Wenhui was immediately overpowered and smashed directly in the head by the former's weapon, forcing Lu Yue to flee on a beam of light, knowing that the situation was hopeless even though revenge was strongly boiling within his blood. Being told the specific route of arrival to Phoenix City by his master at a prior time, Wei Hu shortly arrived before the presence of the Prime Minister, to which he reported his confrontation with a man that was supposedly Lu Yue, while additionally declaring his intentions to serve under the former as a new assistance to their cause.

Meanwhile, Su Hu obtained report on the disappearance of Lu Yue, and thus began to counsel his vanguard general, Zheng Lun, on his former plan that he believed to be the best according to the situation. Zheng Lun, who possessed strong intentions of loyalty, declared his commander's form of action would never be able to bear fruit. And if Lu Yue were to obtain knowledge on such a desperate movement that proved to be against his direct intentions, he would naturally feel

resentment and great jealousy for missing an opportunity that was handed into the arms of individuals who were truly undeserving of such a chance. Therefore strengthening the probability that he would find one way or another to act in impulsive defiance, leading for their eventual intentions to be nullified in one form or the other. As Pure Essence was meditating in his cave, he shortly obtained report via the hand of White Crane Lad on the invitation to attend his master's banquet in celebration of Jiang Ziya's future position of commander against the Shang Dynasty.

Seeing the lad off, Pure Essence believed that considering Ziya would soon obtain the title of Commander against King Zhou, to which he was "destined" to strike the five passes in short measure, Yin Hong, the secondary son of King Zhou, who was now his very own disciple, could be used as a keen figure to act against the morale of the opposition, and prove to the populace that their cause was truly for the greater good — considering that the matter of Yin Hong's disappearance was widely unknown to the populace, and can thus be used as a great factor for the Shang soldiers of higher morals and would to strike back at their king if the situation was called for. With such a thought clearly in his mind, Yin Hong was called to his side and elaborated about his intentions to send him as an assistant factor with Jiang Ziya.

Yin Hong, in return, declared the great hatred he possessed towards his father. A hatred that he was willingly to embrace even if it cost him his own life. Handing the resolute Yin Hong his Purple Fairy Longevity Robe, the Yin Yang Mirror, and his Water Fire Sword, Pure Essence clearly knew that Yin Hong possesses great resolve to dispose of his father, but he still might return to the side of Shang if he was to be treated with reciprocated feelings within the hearts of commanders loyal to the dynasty — considering that he would indeed do anything for the greater good. Pure Essence thus commanded his disciple to say an oath in pledge. Realizing that his master's trust was of the utmost importance, Yin Hong declared that his body might be burned to ash if he was to defy the former's wishes.

He then set out to the Western Foothills after receiving careful instruction from his master, to which he made his way through a mountain he thought beautiful, before being confronted by a strange brute-like warrior who possessed the immediate impulse to protect his homeland from all intruders. Being stricken with fear as this brute not only lashed at him with his two ridged staves, but was additionally reinforced by a comrade of similar appearance, Yin Hong unleashed the white side of the Yin Yang Mirror, effectively absorbing the souls of the two warriors and rendering them as nothing more than mere corpses to the soil.

As two more men rushed forth from the shadows to attack, with the first falling to the mirror's unparalleled ability, the latter of the two fell to his knees and pleaded forgiveness, to which he soon realized that the young man standing before him was none other than Yin Hong, the second son of King Zhou. Receiving pleads to spare the former three individuals that the fourth had not realized were in truth dead, Yin Hong was naturally compassionate despite the danger of the situation, and thus flashed the red side of the mirror, bringing the three warriors back to life, who additionally prostrated themselves upon realization of the personage before them. These four men — Liu Fu, Gou Zhang, Bi Huan, and the fourth, Pang Hong — explained to the prince that they were four outlaws of the Shang Dynasty who live

in their homeland — the Yellow Peak Range on Mount Two Dragons — in order to acquire some means of reputation as protectors of such a region, despite their being nothing more than bandits due to not possessing the ability of becoming government authorized generals. As Yin Hong declared his own intentions to serve under the benevolent King Wu, and such for being the reasoning behind his appearance in their territory, he essentially obtained the mutual support of these three men shortly following, who, in return, vowed to serve under Yin Hong with the 3,000 outlaws under their command out of means to obtain the reputation they have longed for.

As the entourage continued their march towards the Western Foothills, a man of Taoist appearance riding a celestial tiger of silver fur descended before their army from the north. This man was none other than the reputed leading figure against Jiang Ziya, Shen Gongbao, who was shortly allowed presence before Yin Hong, to which he inquired the identity of the leader and where he intended on traveling to.

Upon realization that this young man was Prince Yin Hong, and possessed the resolved intentions to act against the world of his father, Shen Gongbao laughed aloud, stating that a son of royal class should never attack his father no matter how immoral and hated he might be, great political detriment would result from such an action and his ancestral temples and name would be shamed for generations to come, ensuring that the Shang Dynasty was thrown to the mud in disgrace.

Yin Hong, who clearly saw the logic in his words, and considered the possibility that his master was truly intending on deceiving him, cast aside his oath upon Gongbao's reassurance and thanked the Taoist for truly enlightening him. As both parted ways in satisfaction, Pang Hong and the other three leaders lost a large amount of confidence in the competence of their leader, but nonetheless decided on following Yin Hong in the name of the Shang, and only defect if the situation does not prove fruitful. Changing the banners to the insignia of the Shang Dynasty, with Pang Hong's instructorship over such a task, they soon recognized flags of similar relation far to the north, to which they were told that Commander Su Hu was stationed at such a region through the helpful ears of Shang scouts along the perimeter.

Grinding his teeth in frustration at the prospect of assisting the father of the wicked Daji — who had been the reason behind his mother's cruel death — Yin Hong nonetheless approached Su Hu's camp and sent forth Pang Hong as messenger. As Su Hu obtained word that a man by the name of "*Prince Yin*" had arrived and wished to see him. He immediately suspected that this supposed "prince" might in fact be one of the two heirs of the Shang Dynasty, who were blown away by the wind seven years into the past, and thus left the camp at once with Zheng Lun by his side.

Su Hu realized upon entry that the second crown prince, Yin Hong, had survived and prospered through the help of a certain immortal by the name of "Pure Essence", and had risen an army in the name of his father. Su Hu knew clearly that such a chance would greatly benefit his reputation under the dynasty and certainly heighten his current chances of conquering the enemy, Jiang Ziya. Yin Hong thus left the camp the following day with the four outlaw generals by his side

while Yellow Flying Tiger, upon retortion, charged from the city gates with his sons. Not recognizing the man standing before him, Yin Hong drew his halberd and charged at the opposition with full intent to ensure unconditional victory for the sake of his reputation.

Chapter 60

The “Three-handed” Beast fights under the Veil of Princely Repute

Yin Hong, who though being trained continuously in the art of combat by his master, Pure Essence, for the past seven years, could not handle the great prowess that Yellow Flying Tiger possessed, and was thus immediately reinforced by Pang Hong lest he was to suffer any form of crucial harm.

Fearing the condition of his fellow general as he desperately clashed against the veteran warrior, Yin Hong strode forward between their duel, flashing the white side of the mirror into Yellow Flying Tiger's eyes at a sudden instant, forcing him to the ground as a lifeless corpse. After additionally performing such an action upon Huang Tianhua, the three remaining sons fled back to the city while Yin Hong and his generals — taking ahold of the two victims — returned to the Shang camp in satisfaction over their first victory.

As Yin Hong flashed the red side into the faces of the two prisoners within the camp of Shang later that day, awakening them instantaneously, Yellow Flying began to angrily criticize the "prince" for being an imposter: *The true Yin Hong should have easily been able to remember that of his savior, considering he even declared his own name within the process of their feud.* Yin Hong, who was startled at the reality that he did not wish to accept, but believed it to be rational for Yellow Flying Tiger to have joined King Wu, freed his old friend from the bonds around him and bowed in respect, allowing the fellow man return to his respective home as a means to return the kindness he had showed him far into the past.

Zheng Lun, who protested that such an action would further decrease the confidence and morale of Shang and destroy an opportunity that could prove crucial to the Zhou forces, was retorted by Ying Hong, who stated that the people know he was fighting for the sake of his reputation, and by showing such a form of kindness, the probability that others should adhere to his call would increase in great fold — considering that their own rank would be duly enhanced, and filial piety was a far more respected motive than blatant rebellion, so even the common man would bow before such courage and strength of leadership and humanity. Zheng Lun, seeing the light of his words, fell into silence, while Yellow Flying Tiger and his son set out at once with thanks.

Advancing to the city wall of Phoenix City the following morning with his renewed generals left and right, Jiang Ziya and his own unit exited the gates and began to do battle against the young prince after a feeble attempt to convince Yin Hong to defect. As their conflict arose, Jiang Ziya had attempted to land a crucial blow upon the young prince with his Staff of Beating Gods, but such a hit was nothing more than the landing of a feather before the ability that Yin Hong's magic robe possessed.

Advancing forward to finish the rebel commander off in such a state of vulnerability, he suddenly gazed to his side only to see his head commander, and trustworthy comrade, Pang Hong, pierced through the heart by Nezha's lance in one immediate attack. Bursting with unparalleled hatred and despair, Yin Hong

furiously charged his halberd into Nezha's body with many thrusts as he continuously attempted to steal the latter's soul with the Yin Yang Mirror to no avail. With Jiang Ziya's immediate order, Deng Chanyu landed a crucial blow into Yin Hong's face with one of her golden pebbles, forcing him to flee back to the Shang camp in great humiliation. Detesting his master for deceiving him to join the ranks of such barbarians who would attempt to take his life at many moments without the slightest remorse or hesitation, the news of Bi Huan's additional death was heard amongst the camp, putting the young prince in an even greater state of despair and hate.

Yang Bliss, who had taken notice of Yin Hong's mirror, and suspecting the probability that such a mirror was belonging to Pure Essence as the rumors hold, was allowed Jiang Ziya's consenting to head before Mount Tainhua in a chance to confront the superior man on the current situation. Entering the Exalted Cloud Cave upon his arrival, and confronting Pure Essence, Yang Bliss soon acquired knowledge that the former's disciple, Yin Hong, was given the Yin Yang Mirror; in response to such a factor, Yang Bliss declared that the prince was attacking the Western Foothills on the contrary. Distressed at the immortal's statement, Pure Essence commanded Yang to return to Phoenix City while he makes his own preparations before departure, to which he would confront the prime minister on the matter.

Arriving at the Western Foothills three days into the future, Pure Essence resentfully declared the truth of the matter to Jiang Ziya before personally confronting Yin Hong later that day within the Shang camp. As Yin Hong confronted his master outside the Shang camp with Liu Fu and Gou Zhong to his right and left, Pure Essence commanded his disciple to stop this nonsensical rebellion and defect to the Western Foothills before any crucial form of harm was forced upon him.

Yin Hong in retortion declared that a son should never cast aside the colossal benefit of his filial piety, and go to the extent of killing his very own father. *"For the people of Zhou are evidentially cruel in their general manner, and by joining such men that cloud their reputation with supposed 'virtue', the Shang name would be naturally thrown to the very dirt in time."*

Pure Essence, who was enraged to hear such words come from his disciple, angrily clashed his sword against the former's halberd, resolved to dispose of anyone — even his own precious disciple — if it meant the enforcement of time's need. Yin Hong, who was overpowered by the strong will of his master, desperately shined the white side of the mirror into the opposition's face; but Pure Essence managed to escape upon a beam of light at that very moment.

Frustrated that his master managed to escape his grasp, thus ensuring furthered annoyance in the future, Yin Hong was nonetheless filled with pride at the evidence that he had the potential to overcome whatever stands before him as long as the mirror was at his side. As Su Hu and the others inquired potential stratagems against the Western Foothills that night, a strange man with fire emitting from the sockets of his eyes and mouth, fully surrounded by a form of skeleton-like armor, approached the camp of Shang, asking to see Prince Yin Hong.

Upon meeting the prince, this fearsome Taoist-warrior, known as "Ma Yuan" of White Bone Cavern on Skeleton Mountain, declared that he had been recently convinced by his friend, Shen Gongbao, to assist the Shang cause against the Western Foothills. Yin Hong, who was naturally delighted to hear the prospect of another warrior by his side, feasted Ma Yuan full with as much meat as the latter had desired.

As Ma Yuan swore to the prince that he would destroy Jiang Ziya for the sake of his friendship with Shen Gongbao and the crucial defeat the former had suffered, he approached Phoenix City that day only to be confronted shortly by the rebel commander and his generals. Declaring his intentions to execute the opposition for the honor of Jie Taoism to which Jiang Ziya had destroyed, Ma Yuan stole his Staff of Beating Gods following a single round of combat while a general by the name of Wu Rong immediately ran to his commander's assistance.

Not longing to waste any amount of time on a mere commoner, Ma Yuan shouted many incantations, giving rise to an enormous "third hand" which sprouted from his back; this hand grabbed ahold of the unfortunate general while smashing him to the ground with unparalleled strength. Stomping on his thighs and tearing his body in two horizontal halves, Ma Yuan tore open Wu Rong's heart and began to devour it lavishly to the terror of all others who happened to be present. Earth Traveler Sun, who was enraged beyond words at such an unexpected sight, wished to seize this moment to acquire potentially great merit, and thus charged at Ma Yuan only to be smashed to the ground in short measure.

As Ma Yuan was astonished to see an enormous whole beneath the crater to which he just smashed his new victim, he had little time to consider the situation. Deng Chanyu unleashed a volley of pebbles upon the beast, forcing him to lunge desperately at the rebel commander. Devouring the heart of a certain individual who happened to get in his way, —who in this case was Yang Bliss — Ma Yuan was still kept at bay by the desperate resolve of the Zhou soldiers. Seeing that he was already crucially suffering from wounds, he openly vowed that Jiang Ziya had one more day to live, and the day following, his life should be torn apart.

Jiang Ziya shivered in terror within the city at the prospect of such a carnivorous beast taking his life in the same manner as suffered by Wu Rong and Yang Bliss. Meanwhile Yin Hong provided a great feasting between that of the generals and Ma Yuan, who, not feeling very well, began to drink a large majority of hot wine upon Zheng Lun's suggestion.

Falling to the floor with an immense stomachache that seemingly grew stronger in pain, Ma Yuan was escorted to the latrine in the back of Shang camp, to which he began to relieve himself. To his great detriment however, the "heart" of Yang Bliss was in fact a specialized form of matter that was constructed with atoms of magic that reduced the user's vital energy dramatically.

As a result of such, Ma Yuan was rendered weak for at least three days of time while Yang Bliss returned to see the Prime Minister, fully elaborating his devious method that should have proved affect to the beast. Being greatly relieved at such news, arrived reportedly Outstanding Culture, who, in return, declared to Jiang Ziya that he had arrived solely out of speculation that his disciple, Ma Yuan, might have been assisting the cause of Shang.

Enlightened with the current situation, Outstanding Culture told Jiang Ziya a specific plan that should result in Ma Yuan's capture based upon the duration of Yang Bliss's former trick. Taking the superior man's instructions into heart, Jiang Ziya approached the camp of Shang on the specified date, and upon the pretense that he intended spying on their encampment, Ma Yuan lunged from the gates on the prince's consent. With rejuvenated power, Ma Yuan charged at Jiang Ziya, who ran away as fast as he could muster.

Chapter 61

The Left Arm vanishes upon a Celestial Bridge of Flame

As Ma Yuan continued to chase the fleeing rebel commander further, he suspected that an ambush or any other form of detriment would arise if he was to act out of impulse, and he thus began to retreat until further provoking words from Jiang Ziya encouraged him to pursue regardless. When dusk had arrived, Jiang Ziya immediately disappeared through the shadows with the help of Outstanding Culture's assistant magic while Ma Yuan, utterly frustrated and full of anxiety as a result of chasing the opposition to such lengths, decided to sit down against a pine tree and camouflage his body as he rests throughout the night.

As a sudden roar of cannon fire awakened his eyes only to catch sight of Jiang Ziya and King Wu drinking at the mountain's summit. Ma Yuan, delighted at this potential moment to kill the rebel commander, climbed the mountain only to find a light cloud of mist evaporate in front of his eyes. And the two individuals being no longer.

Lunging beneath at a mass of enemy soldiers that intended on attacking him with a volley of arrows latched to their bows, Ma Yuan reached the bottom only to find another mass of mist evaporate before his presence. Having such a factor in mind, Ma Yuan deduced that Jiang Ziya must possess a sum of magical attributes to evade his prior pursuit in entirety, while a man — very likely that of a superior man — must be assisting him from the shadows as to explain the creation of such magical trickery recently experienced.

Ma Yuan realized the probability that this man might be that of his master as he considered the timing between his former victory and this humiliating resolution. Ma Yuan knew that return to the Shang camp was of essential. As he began to return, he noticed a young woman laying in the grass nearby calling for assistance after the declaration that she was supposedly suffering from a heart attack. Approaching this woman and receiving immediate plea to return a set amount of hot water so that her life might be saved, Ma Yuan was already exhausted out of hunger, and, not taking another moment, leaped upon the woman and began to drink her blood with both palms.

As Ma Yuan tore open her chest with great astonishment at the lack of any internal organs, he gazed off to the south only to catch sight of a man who he recognized to be his master, Outstanding Culture. Assuming it more probable that his master had arrived out of means that would prove for his detriment, Ma Yuan began to flee at great speeds.

But to his utter astonishment, his arms and legs were stuck within the woman's body — that had mysteriously regenerated its skin — such as that of stone, regardless what he performed in attempt to escape. In a state of despair, Ma Yuan had little choice but to fall to the ground and beg for his life as Outstanding Culture approached with his sword in pose that suggested intentions to behead the former.

To the fortune of Ma Yuan, however, a Buddha from the West known as "Candi" suddenly appeared to convince the enraged master that his disciple was "destined" to become a Buddhist under his jurisdiction within the western region. As Outstanding Culture immediately yielded in respect with full acknowledgement to the former's declaration, Candi walked forward, shaved off Ma Yuan's hair, and then took hold of his hand, offering him the chance to acquire great happiness as a Buddhist within the Eight Virtue Pond, as opposed to living a life of barbaric nature.

Convinced that no form of retaliation could possibly be executed without any means to success, Ma Yuan obediently obeyed Candi's words, and left to the West after Outstanding Culture had forcibly returned the Staff of Beating Gods belonging to that of Jiang Ziya. As Outstanding Culture elaborated the threat of Ma Yuan being no longer to Jiang Ziya within Phoenix City, in the following morning Yang Bliss momentarily stepped forward with report that "Merciful Navigation had arrived".

Being allowed entrance into the Prime Minister's mansion, Merciful Navigation, after traditionally greeting Jiang Ziya with due respect, asked of Pure Essence if he still possesses the magic map to which was handed to him by Lao Tzu some time into the past. Consenting that he was still in possession of such an object, he was informed of a plan by the former that involved the use of Jiang Ziya, and would result in a resolution to which he deemed as unfavorable.

Nonetheless, Pure Essence ensured that such a plan would be carried out at best. Meanwhile, Yin Hong was exceedingly worried over the lengthened disappearance of Ma Yuan, and upon sending scouts to search through neighboring regions for the sake of potentially finding their lost trump card, he prepared Zheng Lun and the others for a major battle that would be unleashed the following day.

He knew that Ma Yuan must have fallen into a trap that was currently well concentrated on by the forces of Zhou, and that his soldiers attained a level of fear as a result of such a prospect. Thus, he used such a fear as the primary factor to strengthen the blades of his soldiers as they assaulted Phoenix City's gates in the intended morning.

Approaching the enemy's gates only to be confronted by Jiang Ziya, Yin Hong exchanged a few blows with his lance before pursuing the fleeing rebel commander into the neighboring wilderness region with Gou Zhang and Liu Fu at his side, ordering the remainder of his soldiers to strike with even greater valiancy during his departure. Relentlessly charging forth at Jiang Ziya in immense speed, entirely confident of the potential victory laying within his very palm, Pure Essence suddenly lunged from the southeast and unrolled Lao Tzu's map, to which a large golden bridge appeared as a pathway of escape for the prime minister.

As the prince boldly pursued Jiang Ziya upon the celestial bridge, regardless of the danger it could have held, he suddenly began to see illusions sprout from every corner of his vision: "Soldiers of Zhou crawled upon the bridge and attempted to strike him with their swords; Jiang Ziya ran at him with his staff lashing about." And, after these images disappeared with a mere variation of his inner thoughts, he found himself greeting Concubine Huang and Concubine Yang back at Morning Song without any reply whatsoever.

Guo Zhong and Liu Fu, seeing their commander walk to and fro in a dazed manner, feared that their chance at greatness would be sullied by this unknown enemy, and they thus lunged across the bridge and pierced their blades into the flesh of Pure Essence. Already being in despair at his required duty "under Heaven's will", Pure Essence, without any form of hesitation, drew his great sword with a horizontal cut, slicing Guo Zhong and Liu Fu into two halves. Being in a state of utter confusion, the hearing of a gentle voice encouraged Yin Hong to gaze up, to which he was confronted by his mother who informed her son that he was in the enemy's trap and would be momentarily burned to ashes.

As he began to yell in great fear at the prospect of such words, he awakened from these illusions with a great level of willpower only to see his master standing mere inches from his body. Pure Essence coldly declared that he had "disobeyed Heaven's will" and would be turned to nothing more than ash as his "destined" punishment. Yin Hong realized the intense desperation of the situation, and thus began to plead to his master, stating that he had been threatened with death by Shen Gongbao.

If he was to oppose Gongbao will and fight under Zhou, and if he wanted to be spared, he would serve under King Wu and help to eradicate all evil within the country as a measure of his gratitude, and the very Heavens would surely rejoice at the former's kindness if such a measure was to be taken. Pure Essence, resolved to accomplish his "duty", was still greatly affected by the words of his disciple, and thus began to roll up the map, causing the bridge to slowly disappear.

Unfortunately, however, Merciful Navigation, out of retortion to such an action, began loudly to criticize Pure Essence if he was to defy Yin Hong's "fate" and thus oppose "Heaven's will". As tears began to flow unrestrainedly from his eyes, his disciple clung to him in despair; but, with a flicking of his fingers upon the map — giving signal for the bridge to become a torrent of flames — Yin Hong let out a single calm cry of betrayal, and disappeared into dust. With his precious disciple being no longer, Pure Essence violently threw aside Lao Tzu's map and began banging his fists upon the ground in utter despair and frustration, knowing that Yin Hong was truly undeserving of such an end that could have been easily altered.

Crying aloud in such a state of mind, Pure Essence cast aside Merciful Navigation's words of comfort and returned to Mount Taihua, already enraged at the probability that no one would wish to study with him in the future after such a cruel incident that he was the cause of. Following such an event, Outstanding Culture and Merciful Navigation reported the happenings to Jiang Ziya — who had returned to Phoenix City shortly following the map's deployment — and followed by taking their own leave shortly afterwards, promising that they would return upon the date of Jiang Ziya's "destined" inauguration.

Su Hu, who saw the enormous torrents of flames shooting to the very heavens at the time of Yin Hong's death, soon obtained word from fleeing soldiers that the prince had vanished in the flames by some incredible source of magic. Being greatly fearful at such words, Su Hu frantically ordered scouts to find and return Ma Yuan, Gou Zhang, and Liu Fu as soon as physically possible — that was, if they were in fact alive. Realizing that his original plan was the only method employable after carefully analyzing the circumstances, Su Hu handed his son a

message that specifically instructed the Prime Minister to launch an attack upon their encampment the following dusk while the family of Su was safely evacuated into the western gate of Phoenix City — and at the same time forcing the defiant Zheng Lun into surrender.

This message was to be latched to an arrow and sent into the enemy city that night. After Su Quanzhong had effectively obeyed the words of his father, Nangong Kuo had found such a missive and immediately handed it to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya, who, upon reading the letter, knew that Su Hu wouldn't be able to pose any form of threat after the death of Yin Hong, and thus made preparations to act without hesitation. Following immediate drilling, Jiang Ziya deployed Generals Nangong Kuo, Yellow Flying Tiger, and Nezha, with set orders of attack.

Meanwhile, Zheng Lun, who knew that his master was more than likely plotting the desperate scheme of giving in to the rebel commander, attempted to send many urgent reports of assistance to Morning Song, but was checked by his commander, who stated that such a task should be considered in the morning as to prevent the messengers from getting lost in the dark of night.

As a resolution, Zheng Lun, who had little intention whatsoever to even momentarily work under the hand of Jiang Ziya — even though being a rational course of action, secretly deployed a small messenger unit that night with ultimate intention to acquire reinforcements at all costs possible. At the very second of sunrise at dusk the following morning, the Zhou army, far overwhelming all external opposition of Shang with sheer numbers at hand, broke into the main encampment at differing directions.

As Zheng Lun engaged the invading Yellow Flying Tiger with great might and firm resolve, reinforcements constantly leaked from the western gate of Phoenix City as Su Hu's family was escorted through such a gate at the same measure. Despite his valiant warrior renown, the remainder of the Shang forces began to flee in fear at the prospect of death, thus causing a larger number of enemy forces to pierce through the encampment with far greater morale and strength at their disposal.

Zheng Lun, seeing the situation dire, was suddenly struck from his horse by the reputed Deng Jiugong, and was thus bound shortly and brought to the Silver Security Hall following the conflict's conclusion. With the sun shining brightly in the heavens as a signal of morning, Jiang Ziya took his seat in the Silver Security Hall as Su Hu entered in, knelt before the former, and expressed a level of inner remorse for his past actions against the Zhou cause.

As Su Quanzhong reciprocated his father's showing, Zheng Lun was forced into the hall with bonds tightly binding his arms from any form of action as he fiercely glared at Su Hu for the blatant weakness he had shown in the name of military strength and honor. Being criticized for not kneeling as he stood before the rebel commander without uttering a single word, Zheng Lun resolutely declared that he would rather have his head cut from his body than to display affiliation to a man that had a reputation of treachery and shame. Jiang Ziya, being enraged at the defiant warrior's mocking words, and ordering to behead Zheng Lun immediately, was interceded by Su Hu, who pleaded his subordinate to be freed in prospect that he could be won over.

Upon obtaining the prime minister's consent, Su Hu, dismissed the personal guards of Zheng Lun, entered a private chamber and began to reconcile with his fellow subordinate. Declaring that they would be looked upon as true heroes if they went to destroy the rebel commander after obtaining his mutual trust following a long period of assistance. Su Hu additionally stated that King Zhou was nothing more than a fool running rampant in desire, and, even if Zheng Lun was to give his life in the name of such a beast, he would never be considered with the dignity of a hero or be remembered in the hearts of the people to any true measure.

Zheng Lun, who became aware of the latent effects of his loyal heart being considered as mere dirt if he was to dismiss such an opportunity and die in honor, saw the rationality of his master's words and thus declared his cooperation. Bound in rope, Zheng Lun personally approached the prime minister, fell to his knees, and dishonestly apologized for his former behavior. He stated that fellow generals of Zhou, as opposed to his commander, Su Hu, had enlightened him of the former's true virtue and ensured him that his loyalty and honor could reach a new beacon of light under the arm of King Wu. Jiang Ziya, being convinced at Zheng Lun's words of conviction, hosted a grand banquet in the rear palace for all the newcomers to enjoy.

Chapter 62

The Golden-Winged Celestial inherits the Will of Shang

The elite messenger unit that had been deployed by General Zheng Lun the former night was intercepted by neighboring Shang scouts along the Western Foothills, and was immediately informed of Su Hu's defection over to Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya. Bearing such unfortunate news to Han Rong of Sishui Pass as they continued along the path to the capital, the former, being somewhat surprised over such a resolution, wrote a report on the current circumstances and sent it the capital via the hands of royal messenger.

Secretariat Fang Jingchun of Morning Song, upon obtaining official report from Han Rong involving Su Hu's defection, ascended the Star Picking Mansion and informed King Zhou of the letter's contents the following morning. As the king became astonished at such unexpected words, Daji, expressing a false level of filial humility, pressed her hands upon King Zhou's body and declared that her own head should be hung upon the capital's eastern gate as atonement for the treachery that her father had shown in the name of Shang. Naturally being far from content with such a resolution to the woman he loves more than anything, King Zhou declared that he would rather sacrifice the entire dynasty than to see his beloved fall before him in such a cruel manner.

As Daji thanked him for his kind generosity and consideration, King Zhou dismissed Fang Jingchun and all other secretariats and returned to his private chambers with Daji by his side, casting aside the circumstances involving Su Hu for the entire afternoon. The following morning, the king ascended his throne and called forth all head ministers to a meeting, to which they would discuss whether a new commander should be deployed in battle against the Western Foothill cause. Supreme Minister Li Deng, who presently arrived at this meeting, recommended that Commander Zhang Shan of Sanshan Pass should be chosen as expeditionary commander: *"He is well versed in the art of strategy, and should therefore be able to conquer all potential trickery that Jiang Ziya may unleash upon his opposition."*

King Zhou, long knowing this Zhang Shan fellow as being a man of great ability, immediately accepted this recommendation over all others, and thus sent decree to Sanshan Pass, appointing Zhang Shan to Expeditionary Commander of Military Renown. Receiving such a decree a mere day following its departure, Zhang Shan handed his seal of commandship over the pass to Hong Jin, and followed by equipping himself with 100,000 soldiers before setting off to the front lines of battle.

With the beauty of summer sprouting about in all directions, the soldiers of Shang soared in morale, knowing that their conviction would surely result in the benefit of their country — especially under that of Zhang Shan, a man entrusted with the hand of supremacy. As they continuously enjoyed such sights throughout their travel, the Shang forces finally arrived deep within the Western Foothills territory neighboring the northern gate of Phoenix City upon the fifth day. Setting up camp at once, Zhang Shan, knowing his soldiers to be exceedingly exhausted after such a period of travel, ordered the entire army to rest for the night before making any form of attack against the enemy. Within Phoenix City the day

following, Jiang Ziya made the utmost of preparations for his future attack upon King Zhou — to which he believed to be an ordeal that was very unavoidable under the circumstances involving his "destiny under Sky".

One such form of preparation involved the bearing of specialized red signal flags. These flags would possess random colors within the background while red remained as the dominant after. The soldiers of Zhou were competent in the logic behind this specific flag, and the soldiers of Shang were expectedly to be confused upon what action the opposition would take when such a flag was risen for command, and should succumb to a loss in morale and suffer potential defeat.

With such a plan in mind, and effectively implemented into the minds of his people, two reports had arrived before his desk to which he unhesitatingly received them. The first elaborating the 800 marquises having gathered within the east of Western Foothills prepared to meet Jiang Ziya at Meng Ford. The second stated that a man by the name of "Zhang Shan" had arrived, and currently neighbors the capital's northern gates under the Shang flag. Realizing the probability that General Deng Jiugong might be well-versed with such a man, Jiang Ziya approached the former commander of Shang and asked his take on the current situation involving Zhang Shan.

Jiugong, who gave the seal of commandership over Sanshan Pass to Zhang Shan, his subordinate general, before departing against the Western Foothills at the prior time, was naturally knowledgeable about the man, and declared him as lacking in the fields of strategy and bravery. Just as such a moment in time, report was received that a Shang general rolling on an enormous wheel of fire had arrived. Deng Jiugong departed to the frontlines immediately upon the hearing of such words.

Approaching this general, who he recognized as being none other than the reputed "Qian Bao of The Flaming Wheel", Deng Jiugong, not wishing to deal his former subordinate any harm, told Qian Bao to call out Zhang Shan at once for a discussion. Qian Bao, however, knew that he would unconditionally acquire great benefit under King Zhou and bask in reputation and prestige if he was to end Deng Jiugong's life instead of letting such an opportunity pass itself; and he thus charged at the opposition with immense speed, presently within his flaming wheel. Seeing the danger of the situation as Bao approached him, Deng Jiugong resolutely cleaved his sword through the wheel's flames, cutting apart both Qian Bao and his weapon into two horizontal halves.

Taking the head of the fallen warrior in his hands and returning to Phoenix City with a clamor of happiness as resolution to his success, Zhang Shan took ear to such news and, in a state of rage, made immediate preparations to personally meet his former commander on the battlefield the day following. Zhang Shan confronted by both Deng Jiugong and Deng Chanyu at the northern gates of Phoenix City, after yelling a volley of abuse the next morning, had little intention to spare his former commander through the impulsive and demeaning manner he had shown in the name of Shang.

Thus, he charged forward [but] only to be struck several times in the face by Chanyu's stones. Not being able to press onward with such a nuisance, Zhang Shan, spitting blood in his rage, had little choice but to return to the camp of Shang in

utter humiliation over such unexpected circumstances. As he was now fully aware of the detriment that would consecutively appear if he was to continue in his attempt to take Deng Jiugong's life, Zhang Shan began to ponder deeply on what move he could make when a Taoist carrying a great-sword requested entry into his residence later that day.

Allowing this Taoist — who called himself "*Winged Celestial*" — entrance into the head camp of Shang, the latter immediately proved his "celestial" characteristics by applying the ordinary magic elixir to Zhang Shan's face, resulting in the original wounds disappearing in mere moments. He obtained knowledge from the Taoist that he had come from Penglai Island upon request from Shen Gongbao, an agent superior man of the Shang Dynasty, in order to stay the hands of the evil Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya. Zhang Shan, for the benefit of his own reputation, knew that this man could be used as the ultimate weapon to exact revenge upon Deng Jiugong. But decided it best to keep neutral such an ambition for the time being lest perceived arrogance caused the loss of the former's mutual cooperation.

As Winged Celestial approached the gates of Phoenix City upon Zhang Shan's consenting the following morning, Jiang Ziya took ear to such a demand and set forth with five square formations of soldiers along with Nezha, Yang Bliss, and Huang Tianhua. Confronting the opposition momentarily after his departure from the city, Jiang Ziya was astounded at the appearance of this new foe. Winged Celestial possessed two ten-foot long golden wings and wore a bird mask of gleaming jade, making him appear as if being the fiercest of warriors.

As the prime minister approached this man and politely declared his name with a low bow, Winged Celestial began to loudly criticize Jiang Ziya, stating that he had, according to rumor, publicly stated the threat that he shall pluck his bones and pull of his feathers when he conquers the dynasty of Shang. Upon hearing such words, the prime minister immediately retorted, stating that the cooperation within his dynasty would fall apart and his reputation would be put into internal shame if such blatant threats were irrationally created.

Winged Celestial, who realized that the rebel commander's words were on the side of reason, decided to pardon the opposition for the time being as he investigates the truth; but at such a moment, Nezha, enraged at the former's boastful demeanor, lunged at Winged Celestial with his fire-tipped spear, thrusting at all sides.

Seeing that the Zhou forces clearly lack discipline, Winged Celestial made immediate preparations to defend himself with his great-sword. But was suddenly attacked at from all sides by the enemy generals: "Yang Bliss using his dog to pierce into the opposition's neck; Huang Tianhua thrusting both of his Heart Penetrating Nails into his arms; and Earth Traveler Sun striking from the ground with his heavy iron cudgel." Roaring with great pain and enraged beyond words at the rebel commander's clear treachery, Winged Celestial spread his great wings and unleashed an enormous torrent of dust, effectively escaping such a crucial situation at once.

Momentarily returning to the camp of Shang that afternoon, Zhang Shan treated his fellow comrade with a cup of wine after hearing the circumstances

involving his former defeat and treachery on the part of Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya. Accepting this cup of wine after essentially healing his wounds with the magical renown of his elixirs, Winged Celestial resolutely declared that he shall turn the entire city of Western Foothills into a great sea of despair as an act of vengeance that night. As Zhang Shan expressed a level of delight at the confidence of his general, Jiang Ziya had meanwhile experienced an intense gust of wind that encouraged him to perform divination presently following, to which he discovered the pretense of Phoenix City's destruction through Winged Celestial's wrath.

Being frightened at such a prospect, Jiang Ziya took the usual preparations and followed by performing many summoning chants, causing the north sea to essentially cover all of Phoenix City as like the former incident with the Diablo Brothers. Celestial Primogenitor, who presently realized such a danger through the same employed means as his disciple, poured the Divine Water of Three Lights over the north sea barrier and ordered four Divine Chanters of Truth to protect the terrestrial region surrounding the city from any potential earthquake that could disrupt the water's formation.

As Winged Celestial thus left the camp of Shang at the second watch that night, he was immensely startled to see an enormous sea covering Phoenix City in the shape of a circular barrier, but was nonetheless prepared for even the most unexpected circumstances, and thus fanned his two golden wings with power that uprooted even trees, vying to collapse the barrier so that the enemy city could be drowned. Fanning the wind with even greater strength, the barrier of water — with the ultimate help of the Divine Water of Three Lights — mysteriously expanded to an even greater size at each attempt made — forcing him to give up the attempt as he was already panting in perspiration.

Being ashamed at such a resolution, Winged Celestial believed that he would be humiliated by the soldiers of Shang if he was to return after his consecutive failure, and Zhang Shan would surely lose a high level of trust in his abilities after his former boasting. With such a thought in mind, the immortal took flight from the Western Foothills, vowing to destroy Jiang Ziya with secretion to preserve his pride and reputation as a man of great renown.

Chapter 63

The Right Arm of Supremacy awakens from the Land of Deceit

As Winged Celestial had presently fled upon the night of his failed attempt to drown Phoenix City, he arrived the following afternoon upon a fragrant mountain — to which he would confront a Taoist man cultivating his conduct in front of a cavern suggested to be his homestead. Already being intense with hunger and despair, Winged Celestial was resolved not to feel an ounce of remorse at the prospect of devouring this man whole, and thus lunged from the heavens with his claws swooping down upon the "prey" beneath him.

Opening his eyes and acquiring realization of the danger before him, the Taoist pointed two fingers at the opposition, sending Winged Celestial crashing to the ground and begging to be pardoned. He was only acting out of the impulse of hunger, and would never wish to harm him if such a factor was not present. This Taoist, who decided to be generous despite the blatant rudeness that the former had just recently displayed, told him to journey 200 li to the east, to which he would arrive at a region known as "Purple Cloud Cliff" that was renowned for having Taoist men that provide delicious food to any passerby as a token of charity.

Winged Celestial, being delighted at such words, thanked the layman before setting off to the east and arriving upon the intended mountain. A time at which he took notice of many Taoists serving fresh food to an entourage of travelers, who took leave shortly after receiving such a token of generosity. Descending from the heavens and arraying himself before the Taoists present, Winged Celestial pleaded his own share for fresh food.

But alas! None remained for the poor man to feast upon, forcing him to demand at least the smallest of provision with immense furiousness. These men, naturally being frightened at the prospect of this celestial taking their lives if his request was not essentially answered, managed to find a large unit of flour cake within their inner reservoir, to which was offered to the hungry celestial shortly following, who ate over 108 cakes before declaring that his stomach was presently full.

Kneeling with immense gratitude before his servers, Winged Celestial took flight immediately following, returning to the Taoist man's homestead, knowing that he could potentially acquire the mutual support of this individual of great ability as opposed to solely acting against the will of Jiang Ziya, which would prove lest fruitful in resolution. As he thus arrived before the layman's residence, his stomach suddenly erupted with immense pain, causing him to collapse upon the ground and beg for some type of medicinal substance that could disperse such a detriment.

Suggesting to the former that regurgitation would be best in such a situation, Winged Celestial did as he said; but, to his combined detriment, a string of shining white pearls began to chain from his mouth, causing him to choke with great force. The Taoist, who thus declared that he was a man by the name of

"Burning Lamp", gave a signal with his fingers that caused the pearl string to fall from Winged Celestial's mouth, rendering him safe from death. Burning Lamp saw the white pearl string as evidence that the former had eaten food out of the hands of the Taoist men that he had set as a trap. He took the celestial's hands and stated that he had long detested the rebel commander for his cruel behavior and quick rise to suspicion among his subordinates, and would thus like to take him in as disciple for the sake of future retaliation against the *"will of Heaven"*.

Winged Celestial, who was in return very rejoiceful to hear such intended words, vowed to stay by Burning Lamp's side in the name of "acting in revenge against the name of Jiang Ziya". Both individuals being filled with delight at their intentions being answered, left to Mount Divine Hawk presently following.

At this same measure in time, Master Grand Completion of Nine Immortal Mountain had received word — via the hands of White Crane Lad — informing him to head to the Western Foothills on the specific date that Jiang Ziya was to be inaugurated as commander. A time at which the prime minister would head to the east against the passes held by Shang.

Seeing that such circumstances easily could be acted upon for his essential benefit of reputation, Grand Completion called forth the Crown Prince of Shang, Yin Jiao, to his side at once. Yin Jiao was informed that Jiang Ziya, a man long renowned as being of celestial attributes and holding the very "will of Heaven" within his fingertips, was to assault the neighboring passes under Shang with ultimate intention to occupy Capital Morning Song in short measure. Yin Jiao became resolved that his ambition to crush King Zhou, in the name of his late mother's vengeance, could thus be realized if he was to fight under the banner of this man.

Seeing Yin Jiao's willingness to assist the prime minister under such a cause, Grand Completion ordered his disciple to head immediately to the Lion Cliff Cavern for the sake of acquiring a special weapon. Leaving the cavern of his master and arriving before the intended region, Yin Jiao found himself entering a house of princely distinction, to which he came upon seven beans sitting in the stature of sacrifice to a deity statue marked with the insignia of Shang that stood neighboring it. Devouring these beans and pouring the blood from his right hand into the container that originally possessed the food — showing his resolve to give his very own life in the face of his father's humiliation to the name of Shang — Yin Jiao suddenly grew four additional arms and three additional heads presently following his leave from the place of sacrifice.

Returning to the side of his master in a state of great perplexing and startled fear, Grand Completion was delighted at the clear conviction of his disciple, and thus began to teach him how to wield a halberd that possessed a blade of golden jade and a hilt of coiling dragons. Learning how to contract and unleash his six-headed, three-armed form at the same moment to which he fervently mastered the art of halberd, Grand Completion clearly realized his disciple's prowess now met the required expectation, and thus handed the former his Sky Overturning Stamp, the renowned Soul Dropping Bell, and the Yin-Yang Swords as additional items that would prove of assistance.

Now bidding farewell to Grand Completion and exiting his place of residence, prepared to leave without a moment of hesitation, Yin Jiao resolutely declared that he shall kill himself with his own blade if he was to betray the entrustment of his master, and took leave immediately following. Being told the specific route of arrival to his intended destination, Phoenix City — at the time prior to his leave from Nine Immortal Mountain, Yin Jiao navigated himself atop a cloud of dust as he soared through a neighboring mountain that was seemingly lush with beauty. Continuing along his way only to be confronted by a fearsome warrior with duel wolf-tooth iron clubs, Yin Jiao declared his name and title under the dynasty of Shang to the former upon request with his imperial hereditary seal.

This warrior, who knew that the individual before him was not done in any clothing that would reflect princely prominence to any means and surely must be some form of celestial that had taken the crown prince's name — which would explain his ability to use magic. He was convinced nonetheless that this man was extraordinary regardless whether his words were backed with evidential truth. Besides, being nothing more than a mere bandit in the mountains, would naturally call for measures to spring upon any opportunity to assist mutually an individual of high status for his own potential benefit.

With such a thought in mind, the rogue graciously led Yin Jiao before his head camp, where he introduced the name of himself and that of his fellow comrade who sat on patrol, "Wen Liang" and the latter "Ma Shan". Seeing that these two warriors, who were both mighty in appearance, could assist him in his cause to destroy the evil King Zhou, he proposed whether they would accept the prospect of assisting King Wu of the Western Foothills against the decaying dynasty of Shang for the sake of future repute under his rulership over the country. Knowing that this man was of great ambition and surely must possess the authority and power to back such words, Wen Liang and Ma Shan knelt in consent, and followed by equipping their new lord with an outlaw army numbering 10,000 in number. With such a resolution firmly in state, both Yin Jiao and his new right and left arms took leave from White Dragon Mountain and continued along their intended path to the west.

Following two days of travel, it was received report that a Taoist known as "Shen Gongbao" had arrived with intentions to meet their commander. Yin Jiao respectfully allowed the former entrance and presently inquired the reasoning behind his appearance. More evolved than other Taoists of the same sect, Shen Gongbao knew upon a single glance that this man was the Crown Prince Yin Jiao.

After received knowledge of the prince's intentions, Shen Gongbao remonstrated with the former. He stated that despite King Zhou's blatant dread and hatred in the eyes of the people, he could use such an opportunity to unconditionally and forcefully receive the throne from the hands of his father by fighting under the arms of Shang until he acquired enough mutual cooperation and evidence to destroy the king.

In such a situation, he would be looked upon as the country's true hero by wiping away the threat of Jiang Ziya, and proving that he isn't an individual claiming to be that of the prince — which would be a relatively rejected form of evidence if he was to fight under the cause of Zhou.

Shen Gongbao saw that Yin Jiao was still in a state of deep thought over such declared rationality. He stated that Jiang Ziya was clearly not a man of virtue and righteousness as the "superior men" might have stated, "*How can a man that kills the young prince Yin Hong out of mere jealousy and threat of name be considered as any entity of peace?*" Being greatly startled at Shen Gongbao's new declaration, the latter added that Commander Zhang Shan was currently fighting against Jiang Ziya, and could be certain the truth behind such words.

Now clearly seeing Yin Jiao flustered with bewilderment, Shen Gongbao took leave from the prince with assurance that he shall recruit a very powerful man to fight by his side in short measure. With such a meeting now over, Yin Jiao and his forces marched to the Western Foothills at even greater speed, determined to tear apart Jiang Ziya if the words of Shen Gongbao were truly evidential. Arriving within the Western Foothills, after the passage of three additional days of travel, Yin Jiao caught sight of the flags of Shang fluttering in the wind to the east. Naturally assuming that this "Zhang Shan" must be present within such a region, commanded Wen Liang to relay a message to the Shang commander, telling him to meet him for an audience in his head camp.

As Zhang Shan received such a report not long after, he recalled the dominant conjecture of King Zhou's killing of Crown Prince Yin Jiao and Yin Hong seven years into the past, and was thus very willing to confront such a man in order to testify the truth behind such a rumor. Entering the head tent of his consultant following such a resolution, Zhang Shan approached Yin Jiao and politely demanded to what means he can prove that he was indeed the former crown prince of Shang.

Showing the former his hereditary seal as evidence — effectively convincing the commander that the man before him was indeed none other than the crown prince — Yin Jiao presently inquired the fate of his younger brother, Yin Hong. Zhang Shan, through the words of soldiers originally under Former Expeditionary Commander Su Hu, relayed that Yin Hong had been burned to the death in an enormous torrent of flame that shot to the heavens like a raging tornado at the result of a celestial man's magic. Yin Jiao fell from his seat in great despair and roared with a strong voice of hatred.

Gratifyingly dismissing the head commander presently following, declaring that he shall willingly assist his cause against the Western Foothills after essential preparations were made, Yin Jiao vied in his heart to slay the rebel commander without any means of remorse whatsoever. As both Yin Jiao and Zhang Shan came to the conclusion that a mutual attack should be unleashed upon Phoenix City's northern gates that same night, they approached the enemy city at the brink of dawn the following morning, and immediately demanded for Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya to show his face without hesitation.

Exiting the city gates with his generals standing closely at his right and left hands, Yin Jiao declared to Jiang Ziya his name while demanding the reasoning behind why he killed his younger brother, Yin Hong, in such a cruel manner unbefitting of his social status among "Heaven's will". The prime minister, who simply stated that he brought about his own death by fighting against his master's words to support the Western Foothills, suggested to Yin Jiao that, even if Ziya must not have slain his brother directly, but allowed such an action to be

taken simply out of his irrational forms of leadership, resolutely unveiled his three-headed, six-armed form and lunged at the opposition in intense rage.

Using his Sky Overturning Stamp to thrust Nezha to the ground with the feeling of an incredible gravitational pull pressing upon his body, Huang Tianhua intervened in time to save his fellow comrade, but was stricken from his saddle by the power of the former's Soul Dropping Bell, and became a prisoner under the hands of Zhang Shan as a result. As Yellow Flying Tiger presently attacked Yin Jiao for the sake of saving his eldest son, Yin Jiao took the former captive with a mere turning of his Soul Dropping Bell, forcing Yang Bliss to run between the two forces and create an enormous horizontal ground barrier to allow the prime minister and the other generals of Zhou a safe retreat to Phoenix City.

Seeing that he could not continue to conquer the opposition forces in such a state, Yin Jiao resumed his original form and returned to the Shang encampment with Zhang Shan and the two captives by their side. That night within the camp of Shang, Yin Jiao felt as if he knew the elder of the two prisoners from somewhere into the past, and thus approached Yellow Flying Tiger, who was still presently within bonds, and asked him his name and title under Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya.

Yin Jiao realized that the prisoner sitting before him was none other than the man who had saved him from King Zhou's clutches seven years prior. Thus Yin Jiao elaborated the full reasoning — including his confrontation with Shen Gongbao — behind why he had chosen to destroy both Jiang Ziya and that of King Zhou in order to claim the throne of Shang for the sake of the people and that of his ancestors.

Additionally he attempted to convince Yellow Flying Tiger to defect from the Western Hill forces for the sake of a brilliant future, which unfortunately resulted to no avail. Yin Jiao nonetheless freed the bonds from him and his son, allowing them return to their respective city as a token of his former gratitude only at the cost of showing their commander written letter via the hands of his messenger, informing him to surrender in seven days of time. If such an action was refuted, then all of Phoenix City should be turned to a flaming sea of ash as legions of celestials tear apart their homeland. Promising the prince that he would ensure the safety of such a missive, the two friends parted from each other's sides with great emotion.

As Yellow Flying Tiger and Huang Tianhua returned to Phoenix City that same night, approaching Prime Minister Jiang Ziya and informing him of their happenings, the messenger of Shang was allowed entrance, to which he handed the prime minister Yin Jiao's written letter presently following. Tearing apart the letter as a showing of his disgust towards such declared arrogance, Jiang Ziya knew that the superior men under the "will of Heaven" would unconditionally ensure that such a happening would be negated regardless of the circumstances.

With the rise of the sun the following morning, Yang Bliss's earth blockade was no longer, and General Ma Shan seized such an opportunity to stride forward to do battle against Phoenix City as soon as Prince Yin Jiao had received word on the rebel commander's unwise response to his former letter. Being immediately confronted by Deng Jiugong of Zhou momentarily following, the two generals

clashed their blades with intense furiousness. But as Ma Shan was nothing more than a bandit in the mountains without excelled training in the art of the sword, as opposed to that of Deng Jiugong, who had served as Commander of Shang for several years, he was naturally bested in mere moments following their engagement, resulting in his immediate capture. As Ma Shan was brought before Prime Minister Jiang Ziya in Phoenix City shortly following capture, he was immediately sentenced to beheading after uttering rude defiant words in his determination to remain standing before the former.

General Nangong Kuo, who took up such an order, presently within the executional grounds, was astonished beyond words as his sword cleaved through Ma Shan's neck only for the neck to retake its original form as if possessing the property of water. Reporting such a matter to Jiang Ziya, who was naturally astonished at such a turn-of-events, ordered Samadhi fire to spread throughout the execution grounds in attempt to burn the prisoner into ash.

[With] such action carried out momentarily following the declaration of such an order, [yet] Ma Shan was clearly not effected even in the smallest of measure. And as the warrior stood among the burning flames, he let out a single loud cry of laughter as he directed the fire to open a pathway at which he was able to escape from Phoenix City. Yang Bliss received Jiang Ziya, needless to say, who was distressed at the detrimental report of Ma Shan's escape. Yang Bliss proposed whether he could visit "*Grand Completion*" at Nine Immortal Mountain concerning the case involving Yin Jiao's use of his Sky Overturning Stamp, while additionally confronting Master of the Clouds of Mount Zhongnan for the sake of receiving the reputed "*Demon Exposing Mirror*" to destroy Ma Shan.

The Prime Minister, who was naturally willing to destroy the threat of Yin Jiao to save Phoenix City from harm with complete reassurance in it was backing, unhesitatingly consented to the former's request. Yang Bliss confronted Grand Completion, within his Peach Spring Cavern, only to receive knowledge that Yin Jiao, the latter's disciple, had been sent to the Western Foothills for the sake of assisting Prime Minister Jiang Ziya against the cause of Shang. Yang Bliss told the superior man as the truth behind such circumstances that the prince had declared as threat, to wipe out the entire Phoenix City, with unknown rationale backing his intentions. Grand Completion was taken aback with confusion as to why his disciple would break his oath with such an intense showing of resolve against his former words that expressed clear conviction. He promised to Yang Bliss that he would head to the Western Foothills very shortly.

As Yang took leave with a kowtow of gratitude, he immediately took leave to Mount Zhongnan, his second intended region, and bowed low before *Master of the Clouds*, who presently had exited his cavern to confront the former. Yang elaborated the characteristics of the certain man known by the name "Ma Shan", along with the incident involving his escape. Master of the Clouds understood the circumstances, and unhesitatingly gave to Yang Bliss his *Demon Exposing Mirror*. He left with a showing of gratitude as he took leave from the mountain and returned to the side of Prime Minister Jiang Ziya back at Phoenix City.

Confronting Ma Shan in front of the Shang encampment after receiving the consent of Jiang Ziya to take leave to battle, Yang Bliss firmly hid in his grasp the new weapon he had recently received the day prior much to the opposition's

unknowing. Pulling out the Demon Exposing Mirror and shining it in the direction of Ma Shan as he presently charged forward, he saw nothing more than a mere flick of fire from a lamp emitting within. Immediately contracting the mirror and parrying the enemy's blade with his long sword, Yang Bliss, following a mere few rounds of battle, retreated in expectation that the former would not pursue him after taking realization of the new weapon recently deployed.

Ma Shan acted in such a manner, ordering a full retreat back to the encampment of Shang for the time being in order to elaborate this new potential threat to Crown Prince Yin Jiao. Meanwhile Yang Bliss had entered the Prime Minister's mansion and explained to all present that Ma Shan, according to the mirror, was a flick of fire suggesting to be a host to that of a lamp. General Wei Hu, who was well-knowledgeable about the "*World's Three Magical Lamps*," elaborated that there was an equal possibility that either the Eight Landscape Palace, the Jade Emptiness Palace, or that of Mount Divine Hawk were missing their specific lamps of origin. And that Ma Shan was more than likely one of these three when considering his properties of eternal life, to which his "flame" was ever burning such as only present within the magical lamps.

Comprehending Wei Hu's logic, Yang Bliss took leave to Mount Kunlun's Jade Emptiness Palace presently following the Prime Minister's consent to his request. Being received by White Crane Lad upon immediate arrival, Yang Bliss learned shortly that their glazed lamp was still in full flame, and he thus gave a kowtow of acknowledgement before leaving to Mount Divine Hawk, where he confronted Burning Lamp with full inquire involving the condition of the latter's lamp. Burning Lamp, who gave a false display of frustration and surprise at the realization that the flick of his lamp had disappeared despite unconditional restraint, was enlightened upon the happenings at the Western Foothills involving the probable incarnation of his flame: *A man that calls himself by the name of "Ma Shan"*.

Vowing to Yang Bliss that he would settle such circumstances as soon as he was able to attend to the matters presently acting against the "will of Zhou", regardless whether this "Ma Shan" was in truth his lamp's flame, Yang Bliss gratefully kowtowed in thanks and took leave just following. As Yang Bliss informed Jiang Ziya about the highly probable success involving Burning Lamp's declared assistance, Grand Completion arrived as originally promised, and headed to the Shang encampment after explaining to the Prime Minister that he was indeed the master of the defiant prince, Yin Jiao.

Chapter 64

With the Left Arm of Fire, Yin Jiao's Ambition tears apart the House of Zhou

At the immediate report that a man of Taoist appearance had appeared before the Shang encampment and called for the prince to appear at once, Yin Jiao understood the probability that his master might have arrived, and thus took leave from his head camp presently following. Bowing in traditional manner to his master, Grand Completion, as he took leave from his place of residence outside the encampment, the latter immediately demanded the reasoning behind why he had chosen to fight against the "will of Heaven" and stay the hand of Prime Minister Jiang Ziya in a manner that defies his former words of conviction.

Unhesitatingly replied that he had been enlightened by "Master Shen Gongbao", who had evidentially informed him of the rebel commander's cruel murdering of Yin Hong and his terrible forms of leadership and administration that had only led to the forces of Shang, viewing their very lives just to destroy him. Declared that it was his ultimate "duty," under the footsteps of his ancestors, to wipe out the false "will of Heaven" and become the new ruler of the country after he slays Jiang Ziya and King Zhou in the name of the people. Grand Completion, saw that Yin Jiao was resolute beyond change to slay Jiang Ziya. Out of mere words declared by the swindler, Shen Gongbao charged his blade at the young prince, declaring that the Prime Minister never possessed the slightest of intention to kill Yin Hong, and that if he does not repent in his general way of thought, he would be unmercifully slain without a moment of hesitation.

Yin Jiao saw that his master had no evidence to back his statement involving the rebel commander. He realized that Grand Completion was fully determined to destroy their relations of disciple and master through a completely irrational basis, and thus unleashed his legendary halberd, for the sake of living on with his ambitions than to die by the sword of a fool. As the stone dragon present on Yin Jiao's halberd began to wrap itself tightly around Grand Completion's arms as the two individuals clashed their respective weapons, Grand Completion managed to flee upon a beam of light at the very moment at which the prince was suggestively posed to unleash his Sky Overturning Stamp.

Relating the incident involving his attempt to win the prince over, and the detrimental resolution that followed, as he returned to the side of Jiang Ziya, Burning Lamp appeared presently before Grand Completion and Prime Minister Jiang Ziya within the head mansion of Phoenix City. And he declared that he was coming for the sake of capturing the "*lamp flick*", and thus easing their current troubles.

Following this declaration, Burning Lamp specifically told the Prime Minister a plan that would result in this "Ma Shan's" capture. A plan that was put into effect the following morning at the immediate brink of dawn. At such a set moment in time during their arranged trap, Ma Shan exited the camp of Shang as Yin Jiao received report on Rebel Commander Jiang Ziya's arrival. To which he allowed the former leave upon the prospect of what would be shown to the populace if a mere bandit in the mountains were to single-handedly wipe out the

reputed "receiver of Heaven's will", thus backing his standing with complete evidence of his truth of word. But Yin Jiao decided to additionally send a unit of one-thousand soldiers in order to ensure that the commander does not attempt any trickery that cannot be retorted alone. Returning to the confrontation between both Ma Shan and that of Jiang Ziya, the Prime Minister, according to the original plan, violently lashed about his Staff of Beating Gods in a manner that greatly angered Ma Shan to the point that Jiang Ziya was essentially able to lure the former to the southeast following a sudden retreat.

Ma Shan, not intending to allow the rebel commander's blatant intentions of ambush get the best of him during such a pursuit, ordered his 1,000-strong unit to split into two halves, forming a pincer-formation that would crush upon the opposition from both sides, while Ma Shan heads the middle with a handful of spear-armed soldiers. As the pursuers advanced to a region lush with willow trees on all sides, Ma Shan noticed Jiang Ziya escape behind a certain man sitting under one of these trees, who immediately blocked Ma Shan's pathway of pursuit after the Prime Minister had passed. This man, who was known other than that of Burning Lamp, recognized the pursuer as being his lamp wick, following a moment or two of consideration, and thus dropped the glazed container atop Ma Shan, putting the latter into frenzy fear before being physically manipulated by the container's magic — which forced him to return to his original form, and rendering him unmethodical to any potential escape.

The soldiers of Shang, seeing their commander bested by a man of completely new appearance and ability, fled back to their respective encampment in prospect that they could surely not have any greater of chance to seize the life of the rebel commander with such circumstances in play. As Burning Lamp had presently taken leave to Mount Divine Hawk after being pleased at the results of the Ma Shan incident and the evidential backing that he would possess in the future by using this happening for the betterment of his reputation, and that of Prince Yin Jiao, the soldiers of Shang had meanwhile returned to the side of their prince, and relaid the unfortunate happenings to that of Ma Shan.

A report that filled Yin Jiao's heart with utter remorse and made him resolved more than ever to tear apart Jiang Ziya in a battle that would prove decisive to his name. Burning Lamp, who had safely escorted the Prime Minister within Phoenix City prior to his return to Mount Divine Hawk, arrived before the head mansion and relaid his report on successfully subduing Ma Shan.

Receiving written letter via messenger presently following, the message stated that Prince Yin Jiao demands Jiang Ziya to an unconditional battle on the frontlines as vengeance for the stated loss of Ma Shan. the Prime Minister, recalling the ability that he can effectively wield if he was to utilize the power of his Yellow Apricot Flag, unhesitatingly gathered forth a large armada before exiting the gates of Phoenix City at the moment to which the army of Shang was advancing from the east. As the two forces confronted each other in mere moments, Yin Jiao wrathfully lashed his halberd at the rebel commander with an intense showing of skill, while Wen Liang used his Jade Ring to negate the power of Nezha's Universal Ring.

Unfortunately however, Yang Bliss mutually assisted Nezha in the form of using magical pellets that were of equal power to that of Chanyu's, resulting in Nezha seizing many opportunities to strike consecutive blows upon Wen Liang's

body with his fire-tipped spear; and after several strikes to the chest, the warrior under Shang toppled to the ground, spurting blood in every direction as he let loose his last few breaths in despair. Meanwhile, during the prince's clash with the rebel commander, Yin Jiao unleashed the power of his Sky Overturning Stamp; but to his immediate dismay, Jiang Ziya unraveled the Yellow Apricot Flag, which caused the stamp to consistently spin in the air without causing any effect to his body in the form of its gravitational pull.

Being suddenly charged at by Yang Bliss, who wielded his long sword with great aggravation, Yin Jiao became very flustered at his clear detriment in such a situation, and thus retreated after receiving a critical blow to his back by the rebel commander's staff, retrieving the stamp before departing in unparalleled rage. Zhang Shan and Li Jin, who additionally suffered from similar circumstances at the same present time, followed their prince's lead, retreating back to the camp of Shang after covering their retreat with large clouds of dust that they spread through the air.

As Yin Jiao returned to his inner quarters that evening, he publicly burned incense within the central camp of Shang, weeping over the death of his head general, Wen Liang, and the additional passing of his right-hand comrade, Ma Shan, who both assisted him like true warriors beneath the name of the greater good. As Zhang Shan and the soldiers alike began to express inner sorrow at the death of these two leaders, a man of Taoist origin had arrived before the Shang encampment with request to confront Crown Prince Yin Jiao.

Being allowed entrance, this man, who declared himself to be "Luo Xuan, the Burning Flame Immortal from Fire Dragon Island." He informed the prince that he had arrived after being asked to assist the cause of Shang by none other than Shen Gongbao. Yin Jiao immediately realized that the man, to which Shen had specifically stated would support his name, had finally arrived to uphold the will of the people. He entertained Luo Xuan with great generosity, knowing that Phoenix City's declared survival date had expired, and that it should be burned to ashes by all means with the use of this new subordinate. Unfortunately however, Luo Xuan declared that his comrade, Lu Huan, had yet to arrive, and Yin Jiao was thus forced to wait an additional two days before the latter finally showed, handing Luo Xuan many additional magical weapons as they prepared to attack the city that afternoon.

At the brink of dawn the following morning, the two Taoist warriors were entirely prepared with their set strategy, and thus challenged the gates of Phoenix City only to be confronted by Prime Minister Jiang Ziya in short measure. As the two forces became aligned before their respective opponents, Luo Xuan was already angry at being humiliated to a certain level at his comrade's late showing. Thus, he vented such a rage by charging through the Zhou army ranks, violently clanging his duel Flying Smoke Swords against the mere long sword of the rebel commander, who naturally was taken aback by such an unexpected display of speed.

Immediately retorted by Yang Bliss, Huang Tianhua, and others, meanwhile Liu Huan evaded many attacks from Nezha's spear. Luo Xuan realized that the matter needed to be settled with the utmost of swiftness, and thus assumed a form at which he possessed two additional heads and four additional arms, effectively

allowing him the control of multiple weapons at one time. Jiang Ziya, saw this as a moment at which he could seize for striking upon Luo Xuan in his transformed state. He suddenly wiped his staff in combination with Yang's Sky Barking Hound, thus startling Luo Xuan for a mere instant, and giving way to many consecutive blows from other soldiers within the neighboring terrain. A lucky blow that forced the enraged warrior to retreat in grave pain, as Lu Huan respectively reciprocated his comrade's action after being overpowered by Nezha's new boost in morale.

The two Taoists thus made their way within the encampment of Shang, and naturally fumed in great measure at their carelessness in the former feud, resolute to turn all of Phoenix City into nothing more than flames within death after being told of Yin Jiao's sworn intentions. Yin Jiao was naturally more than inclined to answer the resolve of his subordinates after being unexpectedly forced to delay his plans for two additional days. The prince equipped the two warriors with countless arrows supplied by Zhang Shan. And by the second watch of night, Luo Xuan and Liu Huan strode from the Shang encampment atop their respective steeds, laughing in confidence at the prospect of their vengeance, and upholding the intentions of their leader at the same time.

Arriving before the gates of Phoenix City under the darkness of night, Luo Xuan and Liu Huan slew every guard on patrol with incredible swiftness before unleashing their Cloud Raising Smoke above the enemy city, sending over ten thousand flaming arrows spraying down within the terrain beneath, causing countless buildings to be set aflame.

Meanwhile the Zhou soldiers within the first district began to flee in great panic at such a fierce situation. Luo Xuan gave the signal for an all-out attack upon Phoenix City's inner district, and stated that — upon the order of Yin Jiao — all civilians were to be safely escorted temporarily from the city without harm, while any soldier of Zhou that did not express submission to the name of the crown prince was to be slain without hesitation. Upon this order, over 100,000 soldiers of Shang respectively burst forward, invading the enemy city with immense speed and morale.

Men and women, young and old, began to be safely distributed outside of the city for the time, while the majority of the soldiers sprayed onwards to smite upon the forces of Zhou, who immediately began to retaliate in full force. Luo Xuan resolutely charged like a beam of light across the battlefield atop his flaming steed, slaying legions of enemy soldiers with a mere few turns of his Flying Smoke Swords and the compounded power of his Five Dragon Wheel. King Wu, who took notice of the disastrous circumstances within his city, fell to the ground and prayed for the Heavens to grant him sympathy, while Jiang Ziya and his superior men stood with astonishment, deploying many units of archers and swordsmen to reinforce the frontline defense.

Luo Xuan, who single-handedly slew over 10,000 soldiers of Zhou, presently advanced before many architectural buildings of great stature, tore them to shreds of rock with the burning grip of his fire dragons, and absorbed the fire within the first district, distributing it before the noble grounds to protect what remained of the civilian homes. Now taking notice of the head palace of Zhou, and the Prime Minister's mansion that neighbored it, Luo Xuan and Liu Huan advanced with greater speed only to be confronted by a young celestial woman known as

"Princess Dragon Ji", who had arrived at a prior time to assist the regulation of the agriculture within Phoenix City's region of farming. As she began to spread the Mist Dew Universal Net over the city, effectively ceasing any fire that was originally distributed by the two enemy celestials, Luo Xuan angrily turned at the woman, knowing that she would be a nothing more than a nuisance, and must be eliminated if he was to progress upon the Zhou mansions. Approaching Dragon Ji's position and hurling his Five Dragon Wheel at the latter, upon approaching her position, Ji unveiled her Four Sea Vase, absorbing the wheel and all other fire arrows that Luo Xuan deployed following this humiliating display of retortion.

Liu Huan, who was equally enraged at the effectiveness of this woman's item, charged upon Dragon Ji only to be smitten in half by her Double Dragon Sword. As Luo Xuan became mixed with emotions of rage, frustration, and fear, at the sight of such crucial circumstances, he hurriedly merged his remaining Sky Shining Stamp into the blades of his duel Flying Smoke Swords, causing the swords to consistently glow with immense light and burst with flaming smoke. Resuming his three-headed, six-armed form, Luo Xuan thrashed his blades at Dragon Ji like a madman, but was overpowered by her enormous Double Dragon Sword, and was consecutively beaten back at every attempt.

Charging her sword into Luo's flesh and then striking dead his steed with a single stroke, Luo Xuan realized the situations as being dire, and thus ordered his soldiers to retreat back to the Shang encampment with every civilian and head of the enemy soldiers slain. Protecting the masses with an enormous barrier of fire to cover their essential retreat, Luo Xuan, with resolute vengeance, charged deeply into the neighboring mountains to detour all pursuers, slaying each and every scout and soldier encountered and healing his wounds for another immediate attempt on the city.

Meanwhile the following day, the many soldiers of Zhou reported the great renown displayed by Princess Dragon Ji to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya, who in return granted her due rank and was well-pleased with her having appeared for his mutual sake. Now that Luo Xuan had his strength re-gathered after devouring a tiger whole and consuming an additional elixir pill, he summed up his energy and began to make his way back to Phoenix City only for a man of old age to appear beside his pathway, singing heartedly with unknown reasoning.

Luo Xuan saw that this man had an aura of great strength as he carried a long halberd, and wore a distinctive cloud-shaped helmet above his brow with the symbol of Zhou placed therein. Thus, Luo Xuan knew that, he being alone, it was of the upmost importance that all his strength was reserved for the sake of destroying Phoenix City and the assassination of Jiang Ziya. Thus, he gave a bow of respect followed by declaration that he was a new recruit of the Prime Minister and had been ordered to carry a missive to the city of Zhou, relating that a terrible incident involving some form of detriment had taken place within Phoenix City the night before. And, he, by the order of his master, had been sent for the sake of its essential protection. Showing the false decree to this man, who was none other than Li Jing, father of Nezha, Luo Xuan began his way to the enemy city without harm or suggested suspicion.

Chapter 65

The Will of a Million is Shattered by Four

As Luo Xuan received the warrior's name as being "Li Jing", a man who was presently heading to the residence of the Prime Minister for employment under the Zhou flag, Luo Xuan carefully strolled side-by-side with the former, until they closely bordered the city walls of Phoenix City. Not allowing for his aspirations to be postponed for any moment longer, Luo Xuan presently gave a signal to himself, causing the Flying Smoke Swords that he planted within the earth to burst from the ground and fiercely impale the unfortunate Li Jing in the back, who in return gave a cry of immense astonishment while, assuming that he had been betrayed by Luo Xuan at such a moment in time, grabbed at the latter's throat in desperation.

Beating back the old warrior and setting him aflame with the natural attributes of his duel swords, Li Jing instantaneously formed an enormous golden pagoda in the heavens upon will, and smashed it down upon the unwary Luo Xuan's skull, killing the unfortunate celestial in a mere moment in time. Presently diminishing the pagoda and desperately scavenging upon the fallen warrior's body, Li Jing luckily found a large mass of silver elixir pills that possessed the attributes of healing any wound upon swallow — as opposed to pills that need to be dissolved in water — and, formerly being informed of this substance by his master, Burning Lamp, immediately devoured the majority of the pills before making his way to Phoenix City.

Being allowed entrance into Phoenix City after giving evidential proof of his identity, Li Jing was escorted before Jiang Ziya in the Prime Minister's mansion, at which Li Jing presently declared his prior incident with a celestial of fire, who attempted to take his life along the way to Phoenix City. Being forced to prove his case with complete evidence, Zhou soldiers were sent to the specific region at which Luo Xuan had supposedly died.

But, to their justified suspicion towards this new warrior, no body remained whatsoever, for Luo Xuan had planted 3,000 Shang soldiers in the neighboring forests to retrieve his body if any incident was to occur that would result in evidence of his passing. As the Flying Smoke swords were made from his own body, they dissipated into dust at the moment to which Luo Xuan died, destroying all evidence and forcing the rebel commander and his soldiers to not only distrust the new recruit, but to additionally become wary at every moment in fear of the enemy's return to smite them where they stood.

To make matters worse in a display of bad luck towards Li Jing, one of the more seemingly distrusted celestials among others, Burning Lamp, was his master, and was the only individual other than Muzha, Nezha, and Jinzha, able to justify that Li Jing should be trusted. And Jiang Ziya and the others thus put their time into forming a strategy on how to deal with Yin Jiao's Sky Overturning Stamp and Soul Dropping Bell above everything else, while stationing a high level of celestials outside of the gates and quickening their reconstruction as to fight against Luo Xuan's probable return.

During their strategic discussion, Grand Completion recalled from his memory three additional flags separate from the Yellow Apricot Flag under the Prime Minister, but of the same magical properties: “the Soaring Flame Flag within Mount Xuandu, the Green Lotus Flag within the Western Lands, and the White Cloud Bound Flag with whereabouts unknown.” Receiving immediate consenting to retrieve these three flags, Grand Completion presently left Phoenix City and arrived before Mount Xuandu, at which he received the Soaring Flame from Lao Tzu momentarily following his request, before then heading to the Western Lands.

He arrived at the intended region and was allowed entrance before Buddha. Buddha was obstinate at first upon hearing the request of Grand Completion and his intentions to use the flag that represented Buddhism and their reputation, but was presently convinced by Candi to allow him the Green Lotus Flag for the sake of their religion's mutual expansion throughout the east: *“This being an intention of the upmost importance.”*

As Grand Completion was very gratified at their consideration towards his troubled circumstances, he returned back to Phoenix City to report his present success, at which he entered the residence of Princess Dragon Ji and requested whether she knew anything about the remaining White Cloud Bound Flag's location.

Dragon Ji, who had not been informed of Grand Completion and his search to obtain this remaining flag at the prior time, informed the former that her mother happened to possess such a flag within the Jade Pond residence. But, as the flag was an essential symbol of will and authority within such a region, only a celestial of great status such as that of Immortal of the South Pole could request it. For Grand Completion had little choice but to head first to Mount Kunlun after deeply thanking the princess for her guidance and handing the two acquired flags to Prime Minister Jiang Ziya.

Arriving before Mount Kunlun and obtaining the mutual cooperation of Immortal of the South Pole, South Pole immediately strode to the Jade Pond atop his mystical crane, expressing delight and satisfaction over the unique architecture about him as he presently arrived before the residence of the Golden Mother.

Receiving the White Cloud Bound Flag after elaborating the reasoning behind why he had appeared, at which he naturally showed great gratification for the lady's consideration, South Pole entered Phoenix City following this incident, handing the remaining flag to Jiang Ziya. Jiang Ziya entertained him in his mansion hall as reward before sending the respected celestial back on his way to Mount Kunlun.

As Master Pure Essence and Outstanding Culture presently arrived before the Prime Minister's residence according to their prearranged time of meeting, Jiang Ziya began set their order of attack:

“Outstanding Culture will wait upon the eastern edge of Mount Western Foothills with the Green Lotus as his tool. Pure Essence will head to the south, equipped with the Soaring Flame. Burning Lamp will head the center perimeter with the Yellow Apricot. And he shall personally take up position in the west with the White Cloud Bound. “

After setting forth these orders, Jiang Ziya followed to set commands with his generals:

“Yellow Flying Tiger will assault the frontal encampment of Commander Zhang Shan; Deng Jiugong and Nangong Kuo will simultaneously assault the right and left camps that neighbor the front using Nezha, Yang Bliss, Wei Hu, and Thunderbolt as respective reinforcement; and Li Jing, Nezha, Muzha, and Huang Tianhua will distribute themselves where they are essentially needed from the rear.”

Each general and celestial thus made immediate preparations throughout the remainder of day, at which they awaited until the time of dusk before pursuing any form of attack. Meanwhile within the encampment of Shang, Yin Jiao was exceedingly distressed and grieved over the unexpected report of Liu Huan and Luo Xuan having been killed, and thus cofined the honorable Luo Xuan in a respective coffin, sending a unit of soldiers as escort to bury the warrior upon the mountain's summit.

This being done, Yin Jiao was told of Luo Xuan's final employed strategy that would result in the rebel commander's forces being of a despaired state of fear. Thus, he knew that they would surely attempt an attack upon his encampment to ensure that revenge was not only obtained in the face of their humiliation, but to ensure that they have destroyed any means of threat that could assist the potential return of Luo Xuan.

“An action that is entirely essential to their future safety, by all means.” With this deduction, Yin Jiao sent written decree via messenger, ordering neighboring passes to send reinforcement by order of Crown Prince, while securing a route of retreat to the east at which he would be able to reach the passes and call upon the assistance of the capital and that of his comrade, Shen Gongbao.

In addition to these preparations, Yin Jiao ordered his generals and soldiers to sharpen their blades and dominantly practice the Bull-Horn Formation and Pincer-Formation according to the perimeter surrounding the encampment's respective sides. And priorly distributed many units of royal soldiers to the mountains neighboring the Western Foothills, at which they would search all head residences and temples, burning them to the ground upon princely decree if any tool of magical attributes were to be located.

This ruse would allow Yin Jiao to ensure that the rebel commander's unknown sources of assistance in the form of magical items would be cut off to some extent, while they were then supplied to the capital as insurance to his name and power gain even greater evidence. For ensuring his mutual reinforcement from the king, he obviously would not possess intentions to harm Morning Song if such a display of assistance was to be shown,.

With this being set, Yin Jiao and Zhang Shan took their respective places. And as dusk had approached with report that the rebel army was presently closing in upon their encampment from every employable direction, the soldiers of Shang took up their stations and readied their weapons for a decisive battle. As Yellow Flying Tiger closed in upon the Shang encampment's frontal center, Yin Jiao and a large battalion of pike men fiercely clashed against the rebel army, greatly overpowering their advances with waves of arrows and the gravitational power of the Sky Overturning Stamp. Meanwhile, Zhang Shan, given the Yin-Yang Swords by

the prince, was met by Nangong Kuo, Deng Jiugong, and other lesser generals at the right encampment, at which he defended his strategic stronghold with the combined assistance of Li Jin.

Unfortunately however, a new foe by the name of Sun Yanhong advanced upon the defenders and spat large quantities of fire from his mouth, setting the soldiers of Shang aflame and resulting in mass confusion, to the detriment of Zhang Shan who had little choice but to fight with even greater valor. But even with his new display of prowess, Deng Jiugong advanced and, seeing that his former subordinate was unwilling to surrender even in such bested circumstances, struck a fatal blow to Zhang Shan's chest and ordered the fallen commander to be buried in Sanshan Pass in honor of his characteristics of zeal. At this present time Yellow Flying Tiger, who did not possess any magical backing, was bested very quickly; but to his benefit, Nezha and Yang Bliss immediately arrived to assist the commander, smiting the opposition forces with incredible power, at which Yin Jiao had great difficulty in suppressing even with the ability of his stamp and bell.

Knowing that the central camp was of vital importance and that if lost, would result in a prime advantage for the enemy force, Yin Jiao assumed his three-headed, six-armed form, and willfully multiplied his golden halberd until he possessed six ones. And followed by valiantly striking hundreds of blows into the rebel soldiers, felling hundreds with every swing of his individual halberds, and making the remaining whole more resolved than ever to press on and smite the crown prince. Naturally, if not defeated quickly, he would sully their opportunity to obtain victory.

As a result, the thousands of Zhou soldiers created a pincer around Yin Jiao, and the legions of spearmen pressed forward at one sudden instant and impaled the prince with their respective weapons, ceasing the warrior from his rampage. Enraged beyond measure at such a display, Yin Jiao firmly unleashed his Sky Overturning Stamp, causing the enormous mass of soldiers piled around him to be thrust to the ground, blood gushing from their ears and eyes as the gravitational weight became overwhelmingly strong — even to the point of crushing their bodies.

Nezha and Yang Bliss, who had presently stricken dead the multitude of the Shang forces singlehandedly, causing individual retreat for the majority of their enemy, assaulted the wounded prince with their sword and spear respectively, but were greatly held back by an enormous mass of crossbowmen that laid before the encampment's head gate, allowing Yin Jiao a safe retreat back within the central camp, at which he ordered the vast majority of the defenders to equip themselves with crossbows, while handing them loads of straw hay and the flaming arrows originally received from Liu Huan for the sake of an ultimate defense around the entire perimeter of their encampment.

Presently devouring one of Luo Xuan's silver elixir pills and mounting a cloud of dust, the crown prince immediately sped to the east with incredible speed, intending on reaching the capital and receiving a grand majority of magical items to use as backing for his ambitions. Approaching Sishui Pass as he killed the masses of Zhou soldiers that stood before his way as respective ambush parties, Yin Jiao presently confronted Master of Outstanding Culture along the way, who, without any hesitation, unraveled his Green Lotus Flag, forcing the prince's

weapon of destruction — the Sky Overturning Stamp — to reverse its power as the light from the flag shined upon it.

Overwhelmed at such an annoyance, Yin Jiao had little choice but to call back his stamp, blind his opponent with a storm of dust, and spur off to the southeast atop his cloud with even mightier resolve. Slaying the many Zhou soldiers that continued to confront him along the pathway to the southeast, in the form of additional ambush parties, Yin Jiao was met by his master, Pure Essence, who intended more than anything to stop his former disciple from completing his intentions.

Showing such an intention by unwisely revealing his Soaring Flame Flag even without the Stamp's release, Yin Jiao predicted that each flag must only possess a variable exterior appearance to confuse their opponent, while it was internally nothing different than its counterparts in the form of its use, and thus did not attempt to release the Sky Overturning Stamp, but impaled his master's hands with one of his golden halberds, stole the flag, and thrust Pure Essence from his direction, thus changing his direction to the east and continuing onward to the capital. Jiang Ziya and Burning Lamp, presently hearing of Yin Jiao's movement to the east, abandoned their respective positions of defense and divided themselves before the pathway of the prince — Burning Lamp being the first to confront Yin Jiao.

Exceedingly cautious in all nature and not wishing to be seen as an enemy to the Prime Minister in fear of the detriment of acting against "Heaven's will," until he can eventually seize power for himself over Jie Taoism, Burning Lamp made no effort to prevent Yin Jiao's advance, considerately allowing the prince passage in honor of his resolve, awakening the Yellow Apricot Flag following the former's departure, creating thousands of golden lotus flowers to cloud the pathway of any potential pursuit.

As Yin Jiao thus presently charged towards the east, he saw the rebel commander posed before him with dragon banners fluttering about and, seeing Jiang Ziya's fool behavior in the name of warfare, seized the opportunity to attack from the air, at which he slaughtered the surrounding disorganized parties under Zhou before piercing his six halberds into the commander's flesh. Jiang Ziya, not having a former chance to resist against the prince's speedy assault, immediately released his White Cloud Bound Flag causing fog to dissipate all potential sight and forcing Yin Jiao to charge and thrash about in random directions — for upon release, the Prime Minister disappeared like nothing more than an illusion.

Fearing that more detrimental of circumstances would sully his efforts, even though such an opportunity was rare in suitability, Yin Jiao mounted his dust cloud and charged with unparalleled speed to the east. As the prince resolutely continued, the circle of fog remained no longer and Yin Jiao began to see the final brim of sunlight across the sky as talents of thunder echoed throughout the air, strengthening his determination to live on, no matter what. Presently entering a region at which the terrain closed upon him from left and right and continued with such an expanse, Yin Jiao continued by way of foot, until he had confronted a mountain of incredible span that blocked any potential advancement.

Being perplexed as to why such a pathway of essential importance for transportation and travel would remain at such a state up until the present, Yin Jiao was naturally annoyed by such unlucky circumstances and willfully cleaved the entire mountain into two vertical halves, with the secondary ability of his Sky Overturning Stamp, but draining a greater majority of its remaining magical potential.

Now being able to advance once again, the two sides of the mountain suddenly began to cave towards him, as if with the intention to crush him. Knowing that the mountain's rocks would smash his body if he attempted the use of the Sky Overturning Stamp, Yin Jiao lunged towards the sky as he used the wind to elevate his body; but as he reached the very surface of the mountain, both ends clamped shut upon his abdomen, causing him to let out a loud shriek of pain as he comprehended the danger of such a situation.

Chapter 66

A Hero Vows Redemption upon a Moonlighting Night; A Dragon of Justice rises from a Sea filled with Shame

A Dragon of Justice Rises from a Sea Filled with Shame". As the unfortunate prince experienced unparalleled pain in such drastic circumstances, he wasted little time in using the Sky Overturning Stamp to free his lower body from the mountain's grip; and as he was thus free, he swallowed another silver elixir pill to heal his broken body, at which he then mounted his cloud and continued to the east. To his continued detriment, however, mist as white as snow suddenly blinded his eyes from the recently experienced dark of night, as he continued, followed by four metal chains, which lunged from the terrain beneath, wrapping around Yin Jiao's heels and throwing him to the ground.

As he struggled to break free from this hold, the chains suddenly began to expand from the earth, wrapping themselves around both of his legs as if being that of a snake. Using his Soul Dropping Bell to stall the chains from expanding to even greater lengths — even though still presently remaining tight around his body — Jiang Ziya suddenly appeared before Yin Jiao's face, content with having captured the runaway prince.

Unfortunately for the prince, he had treaded upon a mountain that distinctively possessed metal chains beneath the earth that could be effectively controlled by the hands of any member of Jie Taoism; and as Jiang Ziya had specifically constructed this mountain solely for protecting the lands of the Western Foothills from a neighboring distance, he allowed Yin Jiao to continue on his pathway to the east without having to stop him with his own hands — which was unexpectedly an impossible task otherwise. Presently, King Wu appeared atop his stallion — having been stationed upon a neighboring vicinity for viewing purposes before Yin Jiao's capture — with Grand Completion by his side.

Approaching the captive and being told who he was, King Wu forced the Prime Minister aside and kneeled before Yin Jiao, stating that he would gladly give his life and suffer for 10,000 years in the face of the latter's humiliating condition, while ordering Jiang Ziya not to harm the prince in any form. In retortion, Jiang Ziya boldly stated that even though Yin Jiao was a status symbol before the entire country and its inhabitants, he had opposed the "Will of Heaven", and thus must be put to the sword in the name of true justice. Even with consecutive orders to pardon Yin Jiao from such a fate, the malignant Prime Minister refuted every request, handing Grand Completion his sword, to deliver the fatal blow.

With ready resolve to put an end to his dangerous disciple — who could risk the entire death of the Western Foothills if allowed to live — Grand Completion presently approached the captive with sword in hand. Meanwhile Yin Jiao, frantic to escape such circumstances, for the sake of his ambitions and the will of the people, suddenly revealed the Sky Overturning Stamp within his sleeve, striking it before his master's face and causing the latter to flinch with an intense gravitational pull upon his body. As Yin Jiao immediately followed with a slash from his golden halberd, Grand Completion, with tears gushing from his eyes,

shattered the former's blade to pieces with his right arm, and extending his fatal blade with the right, piercing Yin Jiao's throat and rendering his body motionless. Remaining upright after such a fatal blow, Yin Jiao eye's gazed resolutely at his master with the final remaining moment of life that he still possessed, while he dropped the activated Sky Overturning Stamp from his hand, stepping upon it with his feet; and as it hit the ground, the metal within the mountain equally reacted to the immediate change in pressure, causing the terrain to immediately collapse in a large ripple effect as the magical energy transferred through the metal, as if being electricity.

As Yin Jiao unleashed one final grin of achievement right before death, the mountain collapsed in all entirety, causing Jiang Ziya and the others to be buried like sand from within. Alas! Yin Jiao thus died, remembered by the people of China as a true hero, sacrificing his every ounce of life energy to destroy the country's evil in the face of the suffering populace and the war-torn hearts of all that inhabit it. As Yin Jiao's spirit took flight through the heavens and gazed down upon the enormous wreckage as a result to the mountain's collapse, the prince was justifiably infuriated that his ambitions have been evidentially sullied, but was still relieved that the rebel commander was indeed dead, allowing him some form of opportunity to easily take the Western Foothills if any new body was to be found.

In resolution to this, the first worry that struck Yin Jiao was seeing whether his respectable comrades had succeeded in their initial defense of the Shang encampment; but as he arrived to inspect, corpses laid desolate along the region's perimeter, with his encampment having been breached and desolated in all entirety. Seeing the evidence that many soldiers of Shang had scattered to variable distances after the dominant use of fire, Yin Jiao wrathfully altered the clouds of the sky and uprooted neighboring trees, as he loudly lamented the death of his fellow allies.

Following this incident of lamenting, Yin Jiao realized that some form of gravitational force was pulling him in the direction of the east, and nonetheless resisted such a force, arriving before the grounds of Capital Morning Song and searching widely for his father, who he intended on seeing, as opposed to initially killing him, which would provide a heavy weight of populace support to the side of Zhou, considering that his aspirations to be seen as the country's influence would be harmed by such circumstances, and recovery would be almost impossible.

Therefore, Yin Jiao eventually found his father — who was presently dozing off by means of heavy drinking outside the Happy Terrace — and stood before his father, informing him of his identity, the past circumstances taken place within the Western Foothills, and that the able and powerful should be convinced to negotiate and tear apart the Zhou influence — for by no other means was such a resolution possible.

Following this, Yin Jiao created an enormous gust of wind, soared through the heavens, and arrived before the Terrace of Creation in which his body was innately drawn towards; at this initial point in time, Yin Jiao allowed himself entry within the terrace, after being elaborated to by the guardian, knowing that even with Jiang Ziya dead, he did not possess any actual body or magical item to reinforce his authority. The crown prince thus took rest, vowing upon the

moonlighted night that he would rest for the time being, awaiting the moment in which he would be able to reinforce his eternal ambitions once again. The following morning, King Zhou sat concentrated on the message that he received from his "deceased" son, but nonetheless grew frenzy when receiving an urgent report that stated that Crown Prince Yin Jiao was indeed present on the battlefield; and as the worst possible circumstances would have it, he and that of Zhang Shan had both been killed while in the ultimate attempt of destroying the Western Foothills.

Unhesitant to act in some means of retortion to this detriment, King Zhou immediately held a council within the Royal Hall, where he announced the entire situation before every minister, accordingly asking who should be chosen as the following expeditionary commander to enact vengeance. In response to this, Supreme Minister Li Deng stepped forward from the others, stating that Commander Hong Jin of Sanshan Pass possesses both unparalleled magically capability and was additionally successful in military strategy — someone who should thus be employed and tasked with such an obligation.

Initially accepting this recommendation, King Zhou sent a messenger with royal decree to Sanshan Pass, where Hong Jin accepted the proposal, equipped himself with the Commander's Seal and 100,000 soldiers, and appointed his subordinate — Kong Xuan — as Sanshan's new head guardian. He then took leave of the pass and lead his army towards the direction of the Western Foothills.

At the present time at which Crown Prince Yin Jiao gave his final stand by collapsing the Western Foothill's Guardian Mountain, Grand Completion and the others were initially buried by the rubble that encased upon them, but the former immediately deployed thousands of lotus flowers that protected them from the weight of the rocks' pressure, escaping with both Jiang Ziya and King Wu before any furthered amount of detriment could result. Regardless, both Jiang Ziya and Grand Completion were heavily wounded, and were thus handed by Zhou generals silver elixir pills that were retrieved from the fallen Shang encampment, which were previously identified by the Prime Minister as only being consumable by a man of immortal characteristics.

The Zhou soldiers had also located the respective grave of Luo Xuan and freed the citizens that were held by Yin Jiao, so proclamations were immediately spread about the city that appeased the people from their strife, and reconstruction immediately took place within Phoenix City as many days passed by in conviction. Meanwhile, Hong Jin and his army of 100,000 had made their way deeply into the Western Foothills after a straight week of marching, where they presently made themselves an encampment secluded within a forest region that laid to the south. Scouts were then sent to report on the current circumstances present within Phoenix City.

After some time, information had been received that many escorts of provisions, silver, and iron were being transported regularly, and many soldiers were being drilled apart from one another in variable regions, suggesting that the Western Foothills were quick on their feet to ensure that further invasion was well defended from, and that such an opportunity to strike shouldn't be avoided. Thus, Hong Jin distributed his soldiers to specific strategic positions, drilled the sword,

bow, and spear units beneath his command, and ordered General Ji Kang to take the field the following morning. As dawn arrived the next day, Ji Kang marched a grand army of 70,000 soldiers before Phoenix City, ordering his soldiers to pounce upon its western gates and besiege it as quickly as physically employable. At this initial time, General Nangong Kuo charged through the gates that presently suffered from besiegement and furiously ordered his unit of 20,000 to fit arrows to their bows and barrage the Shang soldiers from the city's walls, additionally meeting Ji Kang one-on-one, prepared to fight to the death if the need be.

Ji Kang, relatively being overwhelmed by Nangong Kuo's stand of desperation and rage, presently recited many incantations, causing an enormous cloud of darkness to appear directly above his respective head, at which a wolf of bronze fur lunged from the darkness, piercing its fangs into Nangong's flesh and rendering him screaming in pain. Ji Kang then stabbed his sword relentlessly upon the wounded warrior, causing Sun Yanhong, who gazed at such a sight from the city walls, to spray an enormous torrent of fire down upon Ji Kang. Ji Kang initially fled in great surprise at such a display, knowing that such a monster might have been the justification as to why the Shang encampment's remnants were found as being mainly nothing more than deeply incinerated ashes.

Ordering his soldiers to retreat lest they were to be killed in mass by this incredible beast, Ji Kang and the Shang army fled the day, and Nangong Kuo was immediately carried back into the Zhou encampment, where he was treated. The circumstances involving Sun Yanhong's appearance was presently reported to Hong Jin after the time at which Ji Kang effectively returned to his commander's encampment. Hong Jin was delighted that the source of the previously seen catastrophe had now been filled in with partial evidence. He thus chose to send General Bai Xianzhong to do battle the following day with 10,000 pike men and crossbowmen alike, meanwhile forming a fixed strategy on how to destroy such a beast and its conspirators.

As the warrior of Shang approached Phoenix City's gates, he aligned his pike men in a pincer formation, while his respective bowmen formed towers out of mounds of mud in the rear, so as to have a mounted position that would allow them to spray upon the enemy soldiers like rain. With these formations having been aligned, Deng Jiugong alone commanded a frontal army of half the number. And after failing in the controversial attempt to convince Xianzhong that his course of action would only result in death, Deng Jiugong fearlessly charged upon the enemy's pincer formation, ordering his fire-arrow ambush units on his right and left to clear a pathway of fire that would separate the opposing pike men from his body.

As the pincer formation became distorted by this show of unexpected bravery, Deng Jiugong whipped his noble steed until he obtained great agility, at which he closed in upon the enemy commander — who remained at the middle — and felled him in a single cut of his blade, presently fending off volleys of arrows at the same initial time. As Deng Jiugong ordered his soldiers to then begin to spray their flaming arrows upon the mounds of mud, the morale of the Shang soldiers diminished. They fled back to their encampment while Jiugong took the enemy commander's head and made his return to Phoenix City, much to the praise of Jiang Ziya, who ordered the head to be hung upon a pole before the city gates as a

showing of their conviction. As Hong Jin was naturally distressed to hear of such a detriment upon hearing report, he still relatively harbored a very keen interest in the capable men of the Western Foothill rebel faction, and more than anything desired to visit their city personally, where he would be able to engage in some form of controversy.

The following day, Hong Jin equipped his body with full-plated armor and led an enormous front before the eastern gates of Phoenix City. And as Jiang Ziya and his men exited the city gates to repel this enemy force, Hong Jin took notice of the rebel army being of perfect discipline, consisting of many a general and celestial, who showed such a look of resolve and furiousness that the Shang commander grinned in admiration.

Approaching Jiang Ziya and receiving his name with full respect, Hong Jin began by informing the Prime Minister that he had been sent by royal order of King Zhou to cease their rebellion and make ultimate peace between both of their respective factions. *"I am Senior Advisor of the Leftern House, Hong Jin, and I come before you today to put forth an agreement that can settle our differences in a manner differing from lowly barbarity. As I see that your army is of perfect discipline and formation, yet you carry the name of a rebel, it is obvious that you possess hatred towards the name of King Zhou and intend on his overthrow.*

Now would it ultimately benefit your position by using moral influence to strengthen the swords of your soldiers and create a furthered amount of chaos in this country? I see such an action as being nothing less than folly, as you and your people consider yourselves men of peace that await the times, but in reality, you are treacherous snakes that wish to bite back at your master! Have you taken into consideration the consequence in acting in such a manner? You may possess the capacity to overthrow the dynasty and declare yourselves as heroes, but is barbaric violence truly something that you should carry out as if being nothing less than normality?

In the name of justice, I cannot allow someone such as you to destroy the Shang Dynasty and bind the people's minds to petty delusions of grandeur and peace. If you value your life and the hearts of your people, I order you to throw down your weapons and speak of submission. For what can animals such as yourself perform against men of my ability, other than using celestials as tools to carry out your own evils?"

Smiling with an aura of great resolve, Jiang Ziya responded: *"So, the common class general of the Shang forces declares me as being a rebel of the country and someone who should ultimately be eliminated for the sake of the greater good. I am nothing more than a simple Taoist man that has risen up in the name of Sky, and I will strike down anything that opposes such a will, even if I am forced to destroy every last one of your kind with the sword that rests at my side.*

The will of Sky is vast, and I am the figurehead of destiny that has been ordered to strike down the evil Shang Dynasty and its ruler, so that my benevolent ruler King Wu can rise up and rightfully claim the throne as his! You state my intentions as being nothing less than a passing whim held by a barbarian, yet how can you deny the resolve of my blade as being delusions of peace when I possess the full capability to create such peace?! I am a ruler among men, and nothing can deny what I have chosen to do for this country, as my actions will create a future that everyone shall prosper from, no matter what needs to be sacrificed within the

process. My people fight as my arms and legs, and I treasure them the same. How can one such as you dare talk of justice when my actions are for righteousness and universal happiness?"

Laughing aloud in full determination, Hong Jin boldly stated: *"So it seems that you believe yourself to be a hero of the common man, and use your direct followers as evidence to prove that what you are doing is for the best possible resolution to the present circumstances. Is that not nothing less than truly pathetic, eh? You foolish ape for a human! It seems that no reason can diminish that disparity within your breast, and that you are determined more than anything to bring this country to a greater height of chaos, simply due to your own petty views of justice!"*

Righteousness, love, honor, resolve; are these words that you truly believe will somehow save the people from their consistent despair, and that you will be seen as a hero among men? Listen to reason, you useless old fool! Even if you are able to destroy the Shang Dynasty with the backing of those evil righteous-driven celestials, think that I will simply stand down and allow your actions to pave a pathway of destruction through this country, in face of my ultimate duty and reputation beneath the sword of Shang?!

If you refuse to set aside your delusions even in the face of reason, then I have little other choice then to show that my blade has been carved from the blood of thousands of rebels, and you shall simply be another corpse that litters the death-paved ground of shame once my justice tears open your very heart!"

With these words having been spoken, Hong Jin resolutely ordered his pike men and spear units to charge to his right and left as they advanced to the enemy's position from the front. His bowmen would begin to construct forts to the south and north to use as fortifications. And the mounted cavalry would create a wide pincer formation around the rebel army, expanding the effectiveness of Hong Jin's forward charge.

As Hong Jin neared Jiang Ziya's position, he would be momentarily confronted by the 72nd son of King Wu, known as Wu Shimeng, who was naturally of intense physical ability, and thus subsequently able to beat back Hong Jin's assault with only a small unit of soldiers. Seeing that this new foe possessed a high level of strength to back his resolve, Hong Jin concluded that such a confrontation would not prove fruitful by means of his own martial prowess. He thus gave a signal with his right hand before stabbing his silver flag into the ground, at which he ran inside of a void door that appeared to his right.

With this void door having been opened, Wu Shimeng knew not what fate would befall him if he were to enter. But as such circumstances opened an opportunity for him to potentially seize the head of the enemy commander, he unhesitatingly charged onward through the door. Little could he actually comprehend, however, that Hong Jin immediately was taken to hiding as he was present within his void. And by the time at which Shimeng had entered, the Shang commander's cutless fell upon him like a heavy guillotine, slicing the general into two vertical halves and subsequently placing fear into the hearts of Jiang Ziya and each of his subordinates.

Hong Jin exited his void door and resumed it to its original state as a flag. Loudly then he began to boast at Jiang Ziya: *"You stated earlier that you possess the full capability to create peace within this country, yet how can one deny the power*

that I wield as being something subtle and easily conquered, even as one of your men have now reached River Sphynx and cry out in resent at their own unknowing!

If you wish to take my life and continue with your petty ambitions of grandeur, then call forth those worthless celestials of chaos and use them to your present advantage, otherwise the scent of blood shall echo throughout the countryside as my blade erases your every cell of existence! Don't take me lightly, you barbarian. I have slain thousands of rebels with this resolved sword of justice, and your streaming blood shall simply be another passing page in history, while I shall be looked upon as this country's true hero!"

With this having been spoken, Hong Jin re-awakened his void door and disappeared within, concentrating every ounce of his magical energy to sprout from the ground beasts comprised of dark matter, who roamed across the battlefield in enormous number, tearing apart soldiers of the Rebel Army limb by limb. As these beasts were a part of Hong Jin's subconscious, he was forced to remain in a meditative state while within the void; but with Deng Chanyu's immediate and brave showing of agility, she was able to scatter many soldiers of Shang before entering the door that held the commander, barraging him with a multitude of reinforced pebbles and subsequently causing Hong Jin to yell out in thriving pain and despair.

Attempting to grab ahold of her body with his Hands of Darkness, he had already maxed out the majority of his remaining energy and struggled in such an attempt, causing Ji Kang to initially pierce forward like a shadow and purge the entire battlefield in mist. Taking ahold of his wounded master while in the midst of such a showing, Ji Kang ordered a full-scale retreat back to their encampment, thus scoring for Jiang Ziya a moderate but resentful victory. As Ji Kang and the rest of the Shang forces had returned to their respective encampment, Hong Jin had immediately treated his wounds with advanced medicine and rested for the evening, vowing that he would unconditionally dispose of the woman that had given him such deep wounds, ultimately for the sake of his credibility.

Acting upon these words, Hong Jin departed from the encampment the following afternoon, taking with him a 3,000-strong unit of archers to back his assault, determined to solely tear apart Deng Chanyu, the woman who had humiliated him so deeply. Hong Jin appeared before the eastern gates of Phoenix City shortly following and ordered the appearance of the "rock-throwing whore", Princess Dragon Ji. The princess had taken ear to the ability of Hong Jin's flag and had happened to possess a weapon that could counter such a detriment, rode from the city gates and confronted Hong Jin upon Jiang Ziya's consent.

As Hong Jin was both enraged at the fact that Deng Chanyu refused to show her face, but satisfied that he could enact his revenge on another respective arm of the rebel commander, he initially awakened his void and ran inside, preparing to unleash the largest amount of dark energy that he could sum forth, tearing his enemy into pieces.

To his shock, a large silver portal carrying Princess Dragon Ji was suddenly awakened from within the void, and she strode outside with incredible speed, smashing Hong Jin's back with such force that his armor shattered to pieces, additionally throwing him a great distance before he had reattained his footing. In

a state of great panic, Hong Jin abandoned his flag and fled to the north on his mount, ordering his 3,000 archers in ambush to unleash volleys of arrows at Dragon Ji, who was presently in pursuit at the rear.

Returning to a natural state of mind and fully confident that the woman could never survive such a heavy onslaught, Hong Jin steadied his horse and turned to look at his opponent. But to his intense fear and dismay, the Shang soldiers fell in masses as Dragon Ji unleashed from her magical vase an enormous sum of fire, which had been originally obtained during Luo Xuan's former attack upon Phoenix City.

Hong Jin gazed all around him and saw trees falling apart with flames scattered to the very heavens. Hong Jin, no matter how bold he wished to live another day, frantically sped his horse to the north until he reached the North Sea, at which he dismounted, throwing into the waters an imperial seal that was granted to him by noble birth, carrying with it the will of ancestors.

As the waters began to part from one another with violent waves churning consistently, an enormous guardian dragon leaped from the depths of the ocean, allowing Hong Jin to mount it as if he was its master. Dragon Ji had caught up to him his position. Thus Hong Jin stood atop his beast and loudly proclaimed before his opponent: *"You are a mere tiger that has been uncaged by a rebel who wishes to overthrow the country, and you still consider yourself as being superior to I, a man of true noble birth who even the heavens proclaim as their equal! Is the present situation not anything less than laughable?! I am a man that has been chosen by the Shang Dynasty to lead the masses to unconditional victory, never severing my path of duty nor giving up in the face of any opposition!*

You on the other hand are nothing more than a test-animal, who has been granted supreme power at birth. While at the same time you prove yourself as being too incompetent in knowing how to wield such a power, even to the extent that you shamelessly attempt to take the life of one such as I, known by all as a man of justice! If you give in now and show to me that your life is better off saving than to meet a humiliating death in the face of service beneath a deluded man of the common class, then I shall treat you as if you are my own right arm. An individual who deserves respect and gratitude, and someone who is treasured by the people alike as being a hero that has awakened from ignorance.

My ancestors have long been known throughout the land as prodigies, individuals of both great talent and respect, and saviors of nations and kingdoms, never allowing themselves to falter or give in to unfavorable circumstance, but living on to fight for their resolve another day, destroying any opposition to the throne and securing themselves as men of true repute! Set your eyes upon reason and become a beacon of light as my ancestors have shown themselves to be. Only then shall you make a name for yourself in this pathetic country gutted with every whim of evil and become a figurehead that is deserving of praise and power!

My conviction for the people has never decayed even after so many years of service beneath a land dreaded with incompetency. Think that I will simply give in to a force driven with nothing else than unconditional barbarity and lose an opportunity at guiding the masses with the power and authority that resides within these very fingertips?! The circumstances are futile for any means of victory, as even the gods have answered my noble call, and together we shall both strike down the

evil in this country and blossom the future as a sword of unparalleled conviction and truth!"

In response to this, Princess Dragon Ji approached the sea that stood before her and casted into it her own hereditary seal, effectively summoning forth an enormous dolphin-like creature that bordered the size of Hong Jin's dragon. Mounting her respective beast, Princess Dragon Ji began to shout: *"As you are indeed a man worthy of my respect and admiration, I shall tell you my name and title. I am none other than other than the daughter of Golden Mother of Jade Pond, Princess Dragon Ji, wielder of the 10,000-armed vase! Now that you are competent of my position in this world, by what means could I betray the expectations of my mother and all who serve under my right arm, simply to save my own present life? What you state is not the present way of things, as Jiang Ziya is a man guided by Heaven, destined to allocate freedom to the people and reign forth an era of unparalleled peace!*

No matter how noble you believe yourself to be, the will of my lord and the aspirations of the people are something that you shall never understand, and the waves of the time shall ensure that a person of greater capability rises up and seizes peace for all, and that man is Jiang Ziya! How dare you speak of delusion when you yourself are the one who is ignorant of the present circumstances! I refuse to give in to your swindler ways of trickery!" "It is a sad state of affairs to see a woman of your beauty succumb to such a shallow understanding of this country and the figureheads that are essential in running its every ligament.

Can you not comprehend that even with such a position of influence, you are nothing more than an animal bound in rope that longs to see the light of freedom, feeling every form of resentment as you are forced to unconditionally follow petty codes of filially? If you are unable to awaken from your primitive ways of thought and see my absolute reasoning, than you are fated to be regarded within history as a fool who was destroyed out of nothing less than their own blindness and irrationality. Do you intend on such a detrimental resolution as being your fate within this world? I would hardly consider that as being reasonable by any means, as you will thus have stained any reputation you previously possessed with the blood of resent and ignorance, forever looked upon as a mere nobody that was unable to adapt to the times, let alone crushed by a man of unparalleled repute such as myself."

With this having been spoken, Hong Jin leapt to the heavens atop his one-mile long golden-scaled dragon and fell upon Dragon Ji's beast with incredible speed and valor, tearing apart the dolphin's upper body and etching the sea with a coating of blood. With this having been initiated, Hong Jin's dragon began to bear its heavy fangs into the flesh of Dragon Ji's dolphin; and taking advantage of this situation, Hong Jin leaped upon his foe and landed a crucial blow to her flesh with his sword.

Taking immediate advantage of this, Dragon Ji pressed Hong Jin aside with all her might and ordered her Dragon Binding Rope to bind the Shang commander's body and effectively render him immobilized. Struggling to free himself with every ounce of strength as the rope tightly began to bind his ligaments from any form of movement, Dragon Ji grabbed ahold of Hong Jin and quickly fled back to Phoenix City, the same initial time being forced to evade many consistent attacks by his dragon, which burned with a great flushing of rage over

the position of its master. Nonetheless, Dragon Ji was able to safely return to her respective city, at which she threw Hong Jin before the very feet of Jiang Ziya.

Chapter 67

The Outspoken Warrior is Granted Honors of Lordship; Royalty and Justice become twisted to Circumstance

Jiang Ziya took the hands of Dragon Ji and bowed before her in respect and acknowledgement at having captured the enemy commander. He then gazed before the humiliated Hong Jin — who presently was still bound to the Dragon Binding Rope. And stated: *"So, this justice of yours seems to have brought about nothing less than failure and defeat at the hands of a superior enemy, while you now stand before me as figure of humiliation that was unable to uphold his bold words. What can you state now, General?"*

I control your life within my very fingertips and possess the complete jurisdiction to end it at this moment if I was to will for it. As your boldness and conviction surpass any other warrior that I have confronted within the past, I indeed express my utmost respect towards your noble cause, even though it is distorted, confused, and all together misled.

With this having been stated, I shall allow your life to end honorably, for you have proven to be true to your conviction and dreams. And that is reason enough to allow for you the death of a hero who believed in his own words, as we both are so little apart in our manner of thought, no matter what another may dare state. Guards, away with him to the grounds of execution!"

Thus, Hong Jin was brought to the grounds of execution and was fully prepared for his life to meet the sword. However, a Taoist man by the name of *Celestial Matchmaker* arrived in a sweat ordering the executioner to [hold] his hand, as *Incantations Immortal of Jade Pond* had provided written decree stating that Dragon Ji and Hong Jin were destined by Heaven to join in marriage.

With these words having been passed on to Jiang Ziya, he initially went to see *Celestial Matchmaker*, forthwith leading him to the residence of Dragon Ji so as to come to a justified conclusion on how to respond to the mandate involving her marriage. Upon entry into the princess's residence, *Celestial Matchmaker* and Jiang Ziya approached Dragon Ji, at which the former began:

"My lady! I am humiliated at the fact that I could not approach you with this matter at a sooner time, but our respective master Incantation has only just recently received written decree stating you are to be married to Shang Commander Hong Jin, so as to secure peace between both respective factions. And I have consequently arrived with the most immediate of speed, intent on employing the command of our lord.

However, your words, my lady, shall determine whether such a resolution is to come about, as I am nothing more than a stone in the riverside in comparison to your nobility and reputation, and will willingly meet the sword if you are to express refusal with this demand."

As Dragon Ji was relatively shocked to hear of such a sudden report and the inappropriate time at which it had been produced, she was nonetheless inclined to accept such a proposal. She not only began to subtly fall in attraction to the young Hong Jin and his great ambition but also came to the realization that he would be more useful alive than not. Both Jiang Ziya and Matchmaker were elated to hear of Dragon Ji's consenting that Hong Jin was freed from his bonds shortly and escorted

to the Shang encampment, for the sake of rallying his soldiers into a mutual surrender. Hong Jin, intense with despair and humiliation in effect to having not only been captured by the rebel forces, but left alive simply to attest his own usefulness to a distorted cause, enraged him internally as he approached the Shang encampment and called his generals to an audience. In a loud voice, Hong Jin began:

"To my great disfavor and detriment, my entire contingent had been torn asunder by the hands of a single woman, and even the ancestral dragon that has supported me since my very birth failed to bring me an ultimate victory. Thrown before the feet of Jiang Ziya and taken away for beheading, my life was saved by a single commanding whim held by one of their barbaric celestials, and now I have succumbed to the humiliation of marrying the one woman who caused my defeat or otherwise meet the sword in death.

Who could have ever considered that I would be torn apart by petty magic tricks and forced, to my very throat, to support the arms and legs of a deluded rebel of the common class! My men, you have all stood by me as true heroes alike that fight for a greater good, but alas, the circumstances have been twisted against any means of our success, and we have no other choice than to lend support to this rebel faction and ultimately throw our names from the path of gods to that of peasants.

Nonetheless, my comrades, I will find a way in which we can tear these bonds of animal skin from our bodies and ascend to the glory and fame that we deserve. And no matter what sacrifices need to be made, the head of Jiang Ziya shall one day become an ornament for my ambitions after I show to the entire country that I am a man who never abandons his justice!"

With this having been stated, Ji Kang and the others vowed to unconditionally follow their leader in service beneath Jiang Ziya. The group then proceeded back to Phoenix City, in which both Hong Jin and Princess Dragon Ji accordingly were wedded on the third day of the third month in the 35th year of King Zhou's reign — respectively seen as a lucky date for their marriage.

The Western Foothills had now made the necessary preparations to ensure a full production of provisions and weapons for a prospective incursion into capital city Morning Song. And for this very reason Jiang Ziya presented himself before King Wu the following day with the proposition of attacking King Zhou with the support of other nobles who mutually shared the same intent.

This nonetheless came across before King Wu as unthinkable, for his father had commanded him never to consider destroying the king even if being a nuisance to the people's prosperity and integrity. It would be nothing less from fully denoting an unfilial and disloyal nature unfettered from traditional values. San Yisheng, however, convinced King Wu that joining the nobles in a united front and forcing the king into a state of repent without conventional attack would be the best course of action, and forthwith suggested that Jiang Ziya should be appointed commander for the sake of managing political affairs from every side of their campaign.

Accordingly granting the prime minister the yellow axe and white scepter as an entitlement to authority in respect to Yisheng's request, the minister then suggested that a high terrace should be constructed in compliment to traditional rites of prayer offering before the rivers, mountains, earth, and heavens.

This was also consented to with relatively open arms, and after reassuring the king that he can be relied upon for the arrangements of such an imperative task, Yisheng visited Jiang Ziya in a toast of congratulations and forthwith confided to both Nangong Kuo and Xin Jia the responsibility of constructing their terrace.

After the passage of ten days the terrace project was complete, and with this San Yisheng approached King Wu and informed him that the 15th day of the third month had been chosen as a date for announcing the prime minister's appointment to commandership.

Chapter 68

Two Hermits Stop the Army

Following the leave of each immortal, Jiang Ziya and his generals would be prepared for the expedition in three days. Once Jiang Ziya had presented a memorial to King Wu — and effectively attained his consent — the former assigned Huang Tianhua as the frontal vanguard general, Wu Ji the right, Nezha the rear, and Nangong the left. Each would thus drink a cup of wine, thank Jiang Ziya, and then take their leave. After Jiang Ziya had performed a muster call before all his generals, he would order Yellow Flying Tiger to drill the army as to ensure perfection.

The great army of Zhou would thus take off the following day once external and internal affairs were well accounted for. It was the now the 24th day of the third month within the 30th year of King Zhou's reign. As the Zhou army passed between Mount Yan and Mount Shouyang, two Taoists would suddenly block their path. The Taoists known as Bo Yi and Shu Qi would reprimand Jiang Ziya for his unfilial actions — and that he should thus await for repent on the part of King Zhou without any form of attack.

The former would respond by saying that such views were exceedingly short-sighted and should be avoided for further hurting of the people's will. After these Taoists had been tied up for their intrusion, they would be set free later to return to their mountain. Once Jiang Ziya and the army of Zhou had reached the Golden Chicken Range, red flags would suddenly appear before the summit of the mountain. After an enemy camp had been effectively located above the summit, Nangong Kuo would volunteer himself to meet the enemy. Wei Ben, the enemy commander, would defeat the former with moderate ease — and send him back to tell Jiang Ziya that he would like to see him immediately.

Before Nangong was to lose his head, Wei Ben would kneel before Jiang Ziya and ask to fight under the banner of Zhou in order for his name to be recorded in the pages of history one day. Jiang Ziya would accept his service with great delight — and release Nangong due to attaining a general that could take his place.

Once King Zhou had gotten word of Jiang Ziya's march to the capital of Morning Song, he would assign Kong Xuan as expeditionary commander of defense. Upon Kong Xuan's meeting with Han Rong at Sishui Pass, he would proudly declare that Jiang Ziya, King Wu, nor any other Zhou generals would be able to stand against his supreme strength — and should thus not be feared. With these words, Kong Xuan would march westward from the gates of Sishui Pass to Golden Chicken Range where his army would halt and set up camp for the night.

Chapter 69

Trouble at the Golden Chicken Range

Once Jiang Ziya had attained word of Kong Xuan's movement, he would ponder alone in his tent over this 37th invasion. Vanguard general Chen Geng would present the first challenge before the camp of Zhou; and Huang Tianhua would effectively answer such a call. Following thirty rounds, Tianhua would unleash his Fire Dragon Javelin to put an end to his opponent's life. As Jiang Ziya dipped his pen into his ink slab to record his general's performance, the nib would suddenly drop off. The former would express inner grievance over such an omen — for he knew that this was the last merit that was to be achieved by Huang Tianhua.

Sun He of Shang would meet Wu Ji of Zhou at the battlefield the following day; and thus a great duel was to be unveiled. During their ensuing battle, Wu Ji would manage to stab his cutlass deeply into Su Hu's chest — effectively ending his life. With hatred over the loss of two renowned generals of the kingdom, Gao Jineng would volunteer himself to attain revenge. Once Nezha had intercepted Gao's attack, the great fire lance of the former would fiercely clash with Gao's spear. As he realized the great celestial abilities that Nezha possessed, Gao would quickly flee to the camp of Shang — but would be severely wounded by the former's Universal Ring in the process.

The following day Kong Xuan would appear before the camp of Zhou in furiousness over his past losses. As the former ran out to clash his great sword against Jiang Ziya's mere cutlass after a short interlude, Hong Jin would run out to meet the former. With immense wrathful rage, Kong Xuan would lash at the rebel. Once Hong Jin had unleashed his portal door ability, the latter would simply laugh as he used his yellow beam to sweep the former in an invisible void.

When Jiang Ziya thus lashed at Kong Xuan with his Devil Beating Whip, it would suddenly vanish in a beam of red light. After the forces of Zhou had thus fled in fear, Jiang Ziya would ponder over Kong Xuan's ability to use five different rays of light. In short time Ziya would order his troops to unleash a surprise attack upon the camp of Shang that night. Kong Xuan, who used divination to deduce the enemy's scheme, would order Gao Jineng of the Swarm to ambush the enemy at the left camp.

As Nezha attempted to invade the central camp, he would be shortly met by an invigorated Kong Xuan. Even though Nezha possessed immense celestial power, he would be unable to defend himself against white light, the most evolved of Xuan's lights. Huang Tianhua would meanwhile invade the left camp and battle against Gao Jineng and his bagful of locusts and wasps. After a fierce battle between Huang's Fire Dragon Javelin and Gao's spear, the latter's wasps would manage to seriously wound the former's jade unicorn — thus sending him smashing to the ground.

As Huang Tianhua used his javelin with fierce resolve, he would be unexpectedly pierced violently through the stomach — and would thus fall to the ground with blood pouring from his abdomen. Gao would then deliver the final

blow to the warrior of Zhou — thus ending his life. Following the end of the battle deep into the night, Yellow Flying Tiger and Jiang Ziya would hear the report. Once Flying Tiger had learned of his son's death, he would be so thrown into grievance and shock that he would lose all senses. With due resolve for revenge, the former would head immediately to Mount Flying Phoenix in order to attain the assistance of Chong Heihu of the magic hawks. Following his arrival at the mountain, he would gaze at three warriors that stood battling each other with varied weapons.

Once Flying Tiger had discussed the situation with these distinguished warriors, it would be decided that the former three warriors would bring Flying Tiger to Chong Heihu's presence the following day. Once Chong Heihu had essentially consented to the former's request, he would meet with both Jiang Ziya and King Wu at the camp of Zhou. After Chong Heihu had dined with the former, he would head out to the camp of Shang with his generals the following day and ensue battle with Gao Jineng. As the battle raged on, an intensely invigorated Yellow Flying Tiger would charge forth on his magical ox.

Chapter 70

Subjugation of the Peacock

Sensing immediate danger within the situation at hand, Gao Jineng would quickly unleash a swarm of wasps and locusts upon his foes. Unexpectedly for Gao however, Chong Heihu would open the gourd on his back — effectively creating thousands of hawks that would devour the latter's insects.

As Kong Xuan immediately ran to his general's assistance, he would gaze in shock at the blade of Yellow Flying Tiger as it dripped with the blood of the now dead Gao Jineng. With no further delay, Kong Xuan would take all five generals in a single beam of light. After putting his new prisoners into the gaols, Kong Xuan would decide not to fight and instead act as a blockade to the Zhou forces.

After Yang Bliss had arrived and was informed of the situation with Kong Xuan, he would head out the following day to the camp of Shang with Jiang Ziya in order to use his Demon Exposing Mirror upon the latter. When Yang Bliss had shined the mirror at Kong Xuan, all he could see was a piece of agate rolling to and fro. After Kong Xuan had lost his patience and ensued in battle with the former, Yang Bliss and the assisting Wei Hu would have no choice but to flee.

Following a fierce battle with the remaining Zhou forces, Kong Xuan would be stabbed in the left shoulder by Princess Dragon Ji and severely wounded in the face by Deng Chanyu's pebble — and would thus flee in defeat. Back in the camp of Zhou, Jiang Ziya would be called for a personal discussion with King Wu and would gradually lose his determination to keep up the fight.

After Jiang Ziya had issued the order to reduce the cooking stoves, every individual would realize that the commander wished for retreat; and they thus begin to pack up for departure without any idea why. Fortunately, Lu Ya would arrive in short time and convince both Jiang Ziya and King Wu to continue the campaign. Once Lu Ya had physically seen Kong Xuan's renown the following day on the battlefield, he would flee back to the Zhou camp in shock. Earth Traveler Sun, who had just entered the camp gate with extra food supplies, would yell angrily at Kong Xuan for insulting his commander in the past — and would thus violently lash out at the latter.

After Earth Traveler had effectively tricked Kong Xuan to fight him dismounted, the former would be able to swiftly move through the ground delivering several blows to Kong Xuan's body. Being more annoyed than physically wounded, Kong Xuan would unleash his rays all at once upon the latter.

Once Earth Traveler Sun had burrowed through the ground as to avoid the former's technique, Kong Xuan would be severely wounded in the face once again by Deng Chanyu's pebbles — and would thus flee. In seething rage over Deng Chanyu's obnoxious technique, he would demand Chanyu at the Zhou camp early the next morning; but Jiang Ziya would be reluctant to decline such by hanging the board of truce.

After Lamp Lighter had arrived the following day to do battle with Kong Xuan, he would use his great eagle in an attempt to see the former's true identity

with his magic bull eye. Once he had flown back in defeat, Buddha Candi would arrive in short time and declare that Kong Xuan was predestined to join him. Thus, the former would head out to meet Kong Xuan immediately afterwards.

Chapter 71

The Offensive on Three Routes

Following Buddha Candi's arrival at the camp of Shang, Kong Xuan would ask for his reason of appearance. After the latter had learned the reason, he would lash at Candi with his great sword and golden staff — but both weapons would be simply brushed aside by the former's tree twig. Once the Buddha had been caught within Kong Xuan's rays of light, all five beams would suddenly explode.

Now being completely defenseless, Kong Xuan would change into his true form, a beautiful peacock. Buddha Candi would thus shortly return to the western region atop Kong Xuan once the Zhou generals had been essentially freed. Following the surrender of Kong Xuan's forces, Jiang Ziya would order his army to march towards Sishui Pass the next day. Upon his arrival at the pass, Jiang Ziya would order Hong Jin to capture the Good Dream Pass while Yellow Flying Tiger was to take Green Dragon. If these passes were to be taken, no enemy attack could be unleashed from the left and right regions of Sishui. Once Hong Jin had arrived at Good Dream, Ji Kang would volunteer to challenge the enemy after they rested from the long march.

With cutlass in hand, Shang general Xu Kun would ride out to challenge Ji Kang. Shortly however, Ji Kang would use his black smoke dog to violently lash at Xu Kun's face while he delivered the final blow to his opponent's neck. As like the former day, Zhou general Su Quanzhong would easily be able to take the head of Shang general Hu Yunpeng without breaking a single sweat. Upon seeing the loss of many Shang soldiers due to the enemy's prowess, Hu Sheng, commander of Good Dream Pass, would discuss with his brother, Hu Lei, that the best option would be to surrender for the sake of their people. Hu Lei, however, would neglect such an offer fully and head out to meet the opposition the following day.

Once Nangong Kuo had answered the former's call, Hu Lei would be defeated in short time and presented before Hong Jin. Following Hu Lei's violent remarks against Hong Jin and his betrayal, he would be beheaded. However, a report on Hu Lei's reappearance would soon be issued — and Nangong Kuo would thus leave the camp of Zhou to see what trickery ran amok. After realizing that Hu Lei was truly alive, he would duel with great might against the former and effectively manage to capture him once again. Hong Jin would have no clue what to do with Hu Lei until Princess Dragon Ji arrived to inspect the prisoner. She would soon realize that Hu Lei was performing amateur magic, and that a small ten centimeter long needle should be placed between his hair as to prevent his escape.

Once he had been beheaded this time, his reappearance would never be heard — and his death would thus be confirmed. Hu Sheng would soon attain word of his brother's death, and would thus give a pledge of surrender to the camp of Zhou. Following Hong Jin's consent, Hu Lei would rush to and fro to make preparations for the former's arrival through the pass. However, a woman by the name of Mother Fiery Spirit of Mount Qiuming would arrive shortly — and declare her desire to avenge the death of her disciple, Hu Lei. Seeing this as an opportunity to crush the opposition, Hu Sheng would order the Zhou flags to be stripped. As Hong Jin gazed at the Shang camp flying the flags of Shang once again, the former would grind his teeth and be resolved to show no mercy for their trickery. After

Fiery Spirit had a special unit of 3,000 soldiers taken from Hu Sheng's total of 20,000, they would be specifically drilled and effectively equipped with large paper gourds.

Fiery Spirit and Hu Sheng would thus appear for challenge before the camp of Zhou with their new "Fire Dragon" troops following the passage of seven days. When Hong Jin came to attack Hu Sheng, Fiery Spirit would use her special golden ray of light technique to blind the former while delivering a crucial blow to his flesh. As Princess Dragon Ji emerged from the camp to see disastrous flames spouting from every corner, she would begin to recite spells. However, she would be distracted by a sudden ray of light before feeling the blade of Fiery Spirit sink deeply into her body.

Chapter 72

Grand Completion at the Green Touring Palace

When Princess Dragon Ji had realized that she had been stabbed, she would flee to the northwest without pursuit. As Hong Jin and the princess regrouped their remaining soldiers, they would immediately send an urgent report to Jiang Ziya. After receiving reprimand from Jiang Ziya, they would thoroughly explain the arrival of Fiery Spirit — and the disastrous resolution that resulted. Upon the hearing of Jiang's arrival, Fiery Spirit would emerge from the Shang camp immediately and clash blades with the former.

At the same point in time in which Jiang Ziya was crucially stabbed through the breast by Fiery Spirit, the new Zhou camp roared with flames once more. As the distance between Jiang and Fiery Spirit drew closer, the latter managed to hit him with a hammer and thus move forward to put an end to the rebel leader. Unexpectedly however, Paragon suddenly appeared and used his Haze-Sweeping Shirt and Sky Overturning Stamp to effectively absorb the latter's light and smash her skull into two. With Fiery Spirit now dead, Paragon took her golden coronet (the item she had previously used to create light). After healing Jiang Ziya's wounds and bringing him to his feet, Paragon headed to the Green Touring Palace in order to return the former's coronet.

While making his way to the Good Dream Pass, Jiang Ziya suddenly caught sight of his destined enemy from the heavens, Shen Gongbao. In the former's attempt to hide himself in a thick neighboring forest along the path, Shen Gongbao caught sight of Jiang Ziya and effectively ordered him to come forward. Grimacing with delight over this chance to attain revenge, Shen Gongbao would slash continuously at Jiang Ziya with his sword. Due to being old and seriously wounded, Jiang Ziya fled at the greatest of speed atop his horse lest he was to be killed. Using his legendary Sky Breaking Pearl, Shen Gongbao sent Jiang Ziya tumbling to the ground in a state of near death. Under orders from the Jade Emptiness Palace, Krakucchanda would unfortunately appear to sully Shen Gongbao's resolve.

Now being fully aware of the situation, the former fled quickly to the heavens atop his pearl-coated tiger. After effectively capturing Shen Gongbao with his Immortal Binding Rope, Krakucchanda would order his genii to take the former to the Unicorn Cliff and await his punishment. After Jiang Ziya had been essentially treated with elixir by the former, he would express his inner dignity towards the immortal before heading back on his way. Krakucchanda would thus head quickly to Mount Kunlun to await Master Celestial Primogenitor's judgment upon Shen Gongbao.

Upon Primogenitor's arrival at the Unicorn Cliff, he ordered for Shen Gongbao to be placed under the mountain until Jiang Ziya had created the gods. Shen Gongbao, however, would manage to avoid such a fate by vowing that if he was to attack the former again, might his body be thrown into the North Sea. Celestial Primogenitor, Krakucchanda, and Shen Gongbao would thus head to their own separate paths after such an oath had been created. As Paragon had arrived at the Green Touring Palace, he waited for a long period of time before the gates had been opened by a lad to hear his request. As the former entered the palace and

stood before the Nine Dragon Lignaloe Platform, he kowtowed before Grand Master of Sky with Fiery Spirit's golden coronet in his hands.

With no true resentment over his disciple's death, he declared to the former that if any of his comrades were to ever act against his word and attack Jiang Ziya, it won't matter to him if they were to also meet their own end. After Paragon had emerged from the palace, he would be forced to flee back to Grand Master of Sky's residence three separate times due to the unparalleled hatred and vows of revenge that the latter's disciples felt towards Paragon.

Chapter 73

Yellow Flying Tiger defeated at the Green Dragon Pass

As Paragon returned to the annoyed Grand Master of Sky a third time, the latter would angrily call for his disciples to show their face before him. After the Grand Master had reprimanded his disciples, Paragon would finally be dismissed to head back to Nine Immortal Mountain as he intended. Multi-Precious Immortal, a disciple, would think of a scheme to attain revenge against Paragon and would thus declare to his master that the latter would continuously denote their religion as being heretical and full of hairy foul beasts.

As each disciple agreed with the former's words in full unison, and the latter believed their words, the Grand Master of Sky would tell Multi-Precious to head to Jiepai Pass and set up an Immortal Slaughtering Trap. Before Multi-Precious was to take his leave to the pass, Grand Master would hand him the four Fairy Swords in addition. At this same point in time, Wei Hu would manage to find Jiang Ziya within the forests neighboring the Good Dream Pass — and he and the other generals would thus rejoice over such news. After Jiang Ziya had effectively reorganized his army following the passage of three days, Hu Sheng, in a state of turmoil and confusion, would submit his second pledge of surrender to the camp of Zhou.

Once Jiang Ziya had effectively consented to the pledge and appeared before the pass at dusk, Hu Sheng would kneel to the ground and beg for pardon. The latter, however, would be considered as untrustworthy due to his past obstinacy — and would thus be executed without any true remorse. Following the execution, Jiang Ziya would appoint Qi Gong as garrison commander of Good Dream while he returned to Sishui in order to report everything to King Wu. Back at Green Dragon Pass, Shang commander Qiu Yin would personally demand to see Yellow Flying Tiger the day after his first general had been slain on the battlefield. Huang Tianxiang, the third son of Yellow Flying Tiger, would gallop forward and cut down Gao Gui of Shang in a single breath.

Astonished by the former's prowess and at the same time seething with rage, Qiu Yin would rapidly thrash his silver lance at Huang Tianxiang with equaled skill. As two other Shang generals immediately drew their swords to defend their commander, Huang Tianxiang would manage to land two blows upon Qiu Yin's flesh out of distraction; and the latter would thus retreat. With healed wounds and torn pride, Qiu Yin would charge from the pass and clash blades with Huang Tianxiang once again. Huang Tianxiang began to experience great difficulty against the former's spirit that seethed with revenge — and he would thus quickly land a crucial blow to Qiu Yin's heart mirror which would send him fleeing with blood gushing profusely.

As Qiu Yin's hatred was further heightened by Yellow Flying Tiger's three-day attack upon his pass, Chen Qi would finally arrive with food supplies and ensure his commander that he would become the incarnation of his vengeance. When Chen Qi thus approached the Zhou camp the following day, he would be engaged by Deng Juigong — who was considered no more than a fragile baby compared to the former's prowess. With immense confidence, Chen Qi would

summon forth his Flying Tiger soldiers to bind up the latter while his yellow gas forced Deng Juigong into a senseless state. As Chen Qi thus bound Deng Juigong and threw him before the feet of Qiu Yin, he would be executed immediately for saying words of treason to the latter.

Once Yellow Flying Tiger had heard of such words, Tai Luan could not control his emotions over the death of his master — and he would thus violently clash his blade against Chen Qi's the following morning. After the former had been caught with ease, Chen Qi would confidently challenge the three remaining sons of Yellow Flying Tiger the next day.

Chapter 74

Combat between two Generals

As the three sons of Yellow Flying Tiger lashed their swords with refined ability, Chen Qi would have no choice but to immediately spat forth his yellow fog smoke and bind Huang Tianlu, the eldest. The day after Huang Tianlu had been thrown into jail, Qiu Yin would leave his pass in great eagerness to attain his long-awaited revenge against Huang Tianxiang.

Upon Qiu Yin's arrival at the Zhou camp, Huang Tianxiang and Qiu Yin would violently clash their blades with rivaled renown. Unfortunately for Tianxiang however, Qiu Yin would wave a mysterious red pearl in his face which would instantly encourage drowsiness. As Huang Tianxiang was thus thrown before the commander's feet in the Shang pass, Qiu Yin would execute the former immediately once being further ridiculed. After Yellow Flying Tiger had heard of Tianxiang's execution, he would faint to the ground in a state of unparalleled grievance. After Yellow Flying Tiger had sent an urgent report of the situation to Jiang Ziya, both Deng Chanyu and Nezha would immediately head to Green Dragon Pass in order to offer their assistance.

When Nezha gazed at the corpse of Huang Tianxiang hanging from the pass's wall the following day, the former's rage would burn like fire as he charged his lance at Qiu Yin. Unfortunately for Qiu Yin however, his red pearl would have no effect on Nezha — and would only result in him fleeing with broken bones. During the latter's retreat, Earth Traveler Sun would arrive shortly to offer what he could. At that same night, Sun would secretly check on the condition of Tai Luan and Huang Tianlu before releasing Huang Tianxiang's corpse from the wall. As Yellow Flying Tiger gazed at Tianxiang's body laying along the pass, he would refuse to see any more of his sons lose their lives — and would thus order Huang Tianjue to remain at the Western Foothills with his deceased brother.

Once the Shang forces had realized the happening of Huang's body, Chen Qi would angrily storm out from their gates the following morning only to be challenged by both Earth Traveler Sun and Deng Chanyu. As Sun lashed violently at Chen Qi, the latter would easily be able to bind the former with his yellow gas ability in short time. With fear in her heart, Deng Chanyu would immediately fling two pebbles at Chen Qi, one to the back and the other to his mouth. Now with a broken spinal column and a mouth gushing with blood, Chen Qi would have no choice but to return to the pass with his current prisoner.

Unfortunately for Chen Qi and Qiu Yin however, they knew little about Earth Traveler Sun's ability to escape underground — and they thus lost the chance to kill their new prisoner. As Zheng Lun returned that same night with extra food supplies, he would hear of his new rival in ability, Chen Qi, and would thus lust to meet him on the battlefield for the sake of his pride. Once both Chen Qi and Zheng Lun had met each other the following day, Chen Qi would manage to get the best of the former before they both unleashed their individual beams of gas.

At this point in time, the two warriors would fall asleep due to their opposite's technique — and they would thus be dragged back to their respective

camps by their individualized soldiers. When Chen Qi returned to face his destined foe once more the following day, he would declare a personal battle of honor with Zheng Lun that discloded magic attributes. As these two warriors battled from dawn till dusk to determine the superior, Yellow Flying Tiger would consent to Nezha's surprise attack upon Green Dragon Pass's gates. At the time of dinner, Han Rong would write a report to the king on the war situation, asking him to send reinforcements for the sake of their pass.

After hearing great commotion roaring about within the pass that night, Qiu Yin would charge from his camp and see many generals of Zhou clashing their cutlasses against the forces of Shang. Unfortunately for Qiu Yin, he would have no choice but to escape from the pass atop his dust cloud at great speed once being surrounded by Yellow Flying Tiger and his generals. At this point in time, Chen Qi would lose his life by the hands of Zheng Lun and the Zhou forces would effectively seize the pass. As Nezha reported their success to Jiang Ziya at Sishui, a grand celebratory feast would take place that night.

Chapter 75

An attempted Theft ends in Failure

Once Thunder Quaker was wounded in addition by Yu Hua's dagger, Yang Bliss would arrive shortly and conclude that he suffered from some type of poison. Deciding that he would meet Yu Ha himself, Yang Bliss would purposely allow himself to be hit in the right arm by the former's dagger so that he could flee back to camp and analyze his wound. With no knowledge of what type of poison flowed from his blood, Yang Bliss would immediately see his master, Jade Tripod.

After being informed that the dagger had originally been converted by Yu Yuan of Penglai Island, and three pills were needed from him directly in order to nullify the poison, Yang Bliss would disguise himself as Yu Hua and head to the island. By telling Yu Yuan that his dagger had been redirected into his own flesh while fighting against the Zhou forces, the latter would immediately hand his pseudo-disciple his desired pills. Once Yang Bliss had thus left the island, Yu Yuan would conclude that was relatively impossible for his dagger to be redirected, and Yu Hua's wounds wouldn't have allowed for him to come from such a grand distance due to the dagger's deathly attributes.

Now knowing that he had been tricked, he would pursue Yang Bliss through the clouds — but would only end up fleeing back to Penglai Island after suffering from the former's Sky Barking Hound. Back at the Zhou camp, Yang Bliss would meet Yu Hua on the battlefield once more the next day — and Thunder Quaker would fight in addition to attain his personal revenge. Unfortunately for Yu Ha however, his beast could not take beating from the two individuals and thus allowed an opening for Yang Bliss to severely wound Yu Ha — resulting in the latter's death.

As Han Rong sat in desperation at the reported death of Yu Hua and the lack of desired reinforcements, the former would be confronted by a man by the name of Yu Yuan who had arrived in the name of avenging his disciple. With great delight over the turn of his fortune, Han Rong would feast with the latter before he left to challenge Yang Bliss for revenge. After realizing that Yang Bliss was not present at the Zhou camp, Yu Yuan would charge his blade at Jiang Ziya to unveil his rage. Even after unleashing his Golden Light Katana, Yu Yuan would have little choice but to flee back to the Shang pass once he was attacked by generals Wei Hu and Li Jing in addition.

Earth Traveler Sun, who gazed at Yu Yuan fleeing atop his camel, would lust to steal the latter's mount due to its superb attributes. Deciding not to risk this chance by discussing it with Jiang Ziya, Sun would burrow through the ground and effectively arrive within Sishui Pass during the second watch that night. As Yu Yuan sat with his eyes closed, deep in meditation, he would hear an individual stealthily moving about through the pass — and would thus feign many snores as to ensure that this suspicious individual knew he was asleep.

Once Earth Traveler Sun had effectively seen Yu Yuan fast asleep, he would quickly beat him across the head a few dozen times. Confused that his beatings did not budge the former to any extent, he would decide to deal with him later and just

take his mount for the moment. Once Sun had thus mounted Yu Yuan's camel, it would at first ride to the heavens but would immediately return to its original position on the ground shortly. Not having any time to react over the camel's unexpected defiance, the earth traveler would suddenly find his head being firmly gripped by Yu Yuan's palm.

By finding many exceedingly deep burrow holes across the pass, Yu Yuan would confirm that this dwarf must have been traveling underground — and he would thus present the latter to Han Rong with his hands clutching Sun's head to present escape. As Yu Yuan thus presented the thief before Han Rong, the former would ask for the Universal Bag that was present beneath his cushion. With the desire in mind to burn Earth Traveler Sun alive within the bag, a large fire would be immediately constructed by the soldiers of Shang.

Unfortunately for Yu Yuan however, Krakucchanda would be informed of the situation by White Crane Lad and would thus snatch the Universal Bag that held Sun in short time. As Yu Yuan glared at Krakucchanda from the heavens with seething rage, he would vow his life upon the chance to kill the latter. Following Krakucchanda's arrival at the Zhou camp, Jiang Ziya would have sentenced Earth Traveler Sun to death for his impulsiveness if it wasn't for the former's persuasion. Once Yu Yuan had continuously called for Krakucchanda to show himself the next day, Jiang Ziya would appear instead with the resolve to take him captive.

Being thrashed about across the ground in desperation over Yu Yuan's keen renown with his sword, Krakucchanda would immediately appear and bind the latter with his Immortal Binding Rope. Back in the camp of Zhou, Jiang Ziya would order Yu Yuan beheaded; but each attempt to behead the latter would result as a mere scratch to the neck. After the failed attempt of Wei Hu in addition, Krakucchanda would order for Yu Yuan to be locked inside an iron box — which would be thrown deeply into the North Sea. By combining the elements of metal and water into one, Yu Yuan would easily break through the iron box and return to the Green Touring Palace.

Even though he escaped from the box, he would still be tightly bounded by Krakucchanda's rope and would thus plead to his master, Mother Golden Spirit, to confront the Grand Master of Sky so that such an issue could be amended. Once each disciple had seen Yu Yuan in such a desperate state, their rage would burn even brighter against the immortals of Zhou. After the Grand Master of Sky had essentially released Yu Yuan from his tight bonds, the latter would leave from the palace with one true desire, "to attain the head of Krakucchanda no matter what it would take." As Yu Yuan thus gave challenge the following day, with the retortion of Jiang Ziya, the former would violently charge his blade into the latter's flesh.

Without delay lest the latter would be killed by Yu Yuan's great prowess, Krakucchanda would immediately bind the immortal with his secondary binding rope. With confusion in his mind over Krakucchanda's subordinate rope, Yu Yuan's fear would be heightened as Lu Ya arrived at the Zhou encampment. With determination to kill Yu Yuan for his past treachery, no matter how justified it might have been, Lu Ya would remove the lid from his gourd — thus releasing a brilliant white light that would pierce through the clouds. As the great beam of light revolved in the air several times, it would come crashing down like an enormous blade to cleave the unfortunate Yu Yuan into two halves. With Yu Yuan

now dead, Lu Ya would bury his body and then take his leave. Back in Sishui Pass, Han Rong would soon attain a report on Yu Yuan's passing.

After holding a military conference to determine their resolution, it would be concluded that each individual soldier should pack their treasured belongings in carts to be transported into the mountainous regions, their temporary home. Han Sheng and Han Bian, the two sons of Han Rong, would immediately meet with their father to state their personal resolve.

Chapter 76

The Occupation of Sishui Pass

Once Han Sheng approached his father, Han Rong, he would spout many great words of devotion and loyalty towards his country. Even though Han Rong remained rather hesitant in order to ensure the safety of his subjects, he would smile in admiration at his son's resolve. To boost the confidence of their father, Han Sheng and Han Bian would both go to the drilling grounds and unleash the renown of their Ten Thousand Knife Vehicle.

With a mere few chants, this technique had the ability to unleash an unparalleled amount of strong winds across the ground — effectively allowing any object present to be absorbed and launched at will due to being controlled with magic. Han Rong, who was rather confused at how his two sons could attain such a powerful technique, would be told that it was attained by Fa Jie, an official of Morning Song, who simply wished for this ability to be their entity of resolve. Now in a state of high morale, Han Rong would order 3,000 soldiers of the Shang forces to be dressed in pure black armor and individually equipped and drilled effectively with thousand knife vehicles.

As Han Rong and his army thus set out to challenge Jiang Ziya, the latter would immediately present himself with his own army — determined to defeat his opposition one last time. After Han Sheng had clashed violently against Wei Ben, the former would retreat temporarily while signaling his three thousand soldiers to unleash their individual vehicles. Caught immensely unsurprised, over eight-thousand soldiers of the Zhou army would be completely slaughtered by their own weapons and other controlled objects that ran amok through the air in a mere few moments. With unparalleled fear, the remnants of Zhou would flee back to camp in quick pace.

For the sake of his honor and dignified spirit to the Shang Dynasty, Han Rong would call off the slaughter so that he could personally kill Jiang Ziya in the future. With this resolve set in his mind, Han Rong would order a night surprise attack with his three-thousand soldiers of Shang. Like great waves of blackness hidden under the veil of night, the army of Shang stealthily ran through the camps of Zhou slaughtering soldiers right and left. With corpses littered in every direction, Jiang Ziya would desperately flee atop his horse for miles with his remaining soldiers.

After being pursued by the forces of Han Sheng and Han Bian for a great while longer, Zheng Lun would finally arrive with his crow troops and clash blades against the former. In great personal fear at the sight of the Shang army's destructive vehicles, Zheng Lun would immediately unleash his two white columns of light to place his neighboring enemies in an unconscious state. With immense luck on the side of Zhou, all 3,000 soldiers of Shang would unfortunately lose their superior magical abilities as Han Sheng and Han Bian were seized by Zheng Lun.

As Han Rong and his forces had thus retreated due to their loss of power, and general morale, the Zhou forces would toast each other over their luck won victory. Once it had been reported that the army of Zhou was calling at the gates of

Sishui the following day, Han Rong would personally climb the city wall to hear them out. Jiang Ziya would shortly present himself before the gates with the former's two sons in a captive state. Han Rong, who immediately offered the pass if his two sons were to be spared, would only stand in agony as he saw their heads tumble to the ground after spouting threatening words to Jiang Ziya.

With rage and sorrow that was equivalent to the very heavens, Han Rong would jump from the city walls to his death. Following Han Rong's death, Jiang Ziya would thus seize Sishui Pass and pacify the people. At this same point in time Paragon would be approached by White Crane Lad at his green touring bed — and would thus be asked to assist in the Immortal Slaughtering Trap's destruction. Upon the hearing of such a need, Paragon would call for his disciple, Nezha, and toast him with wine and dates. Just before Nezha was to be dismissed, he suddenly grew three heads and six additional arms.

With this transformational ability that could be activated upon the user's will, Nezha would effectively be able to carry six different treasures before departing from his master to assist Jiang Ziya. Just as the Zhou forces were planning their assault upon Jiepai Pass, Yellow Dragon would arrive from the heavens and ask Jiang Ziya to create a reed pavilion in preparation for their attack upon the Fairy Immortal Trap.

Following the pavilion's construction, each superior man and disciple would attend to the former location while each general of Zhou protected Sishui Pass and King Wu. As each superior man had finally arrived, Multi-Precious would clap his hands to completely expose his trap to the competitors that stood before him. A great air of death and cold misty winds would shoot forth from the trap — thus putting the superior men into great misery and fright.

Chapter 77

Transformation into Three Fairies

As each superior man gazed at the four fairy swords pointing in different directions while entering the trap, Multi-Precious would suddenly rush forth and clash his duel swords against his hated enemy Grand Completion. After a lengthened battle between these two individuals, Grand Completion would have no choice but to use his Sky Overturning Stamp against the former lest he was to be killed. While Multi-Precious thus retreated with his newly established wounds, the superior men would meanwhile flee back to their reed pavilion. Celestial Primogenitor would arrive from the heavens in his Nine Dragon Lignaloë Carriage shortly afterwards — and would be welcomed with immense gratitude.

Once midnight had arrived, Multi-Precious realized that Primogenitor was now present and would thus head out to retrieve the Grand Master of Sky in order to defeat their new foe. As the following night had approached, Burning Lamp would gaze in the direction of the trap and see the Grand Master of Sky sitting atop his throne while in attendance with each of his disciples. Celestial Primogenitor would order his disciples to enter the Fairy Immortal Trap the next day in ten pairs of two.

As the Grand Master of Sky confronted Celestial Primogenitor and his disciples, the former reprimanded Grand Completion as the reason to his arrival. Even after having the issue elaborated, Primogenitor would relatively agree with Grand Completion's false statement — despite its foulness — thus sending Grand Master of Sky away with the resolve to prove his superiority. When Primogenitor had thus entered the trap to prove the former's words as mere folly, the Fairy Slaying Sword fell from the gate atop the latter's head. However lotus flowers immediately appeared to negate all possible harm.

With no intention to destroy the trap until his other brothers had arrived, he exited and awaited their coming. Once Lao Tzu had arrived in a few moments, he would tell Primogenitor that if the Grand Master of Sky was to continue in his defiance the latter should be put before the Jade Emperor for trial.

In the next day, Lao Tzu arrived, and he explained the set of circumstances to Grand Master of Sky and advised him to withdraw. But Grand Master of Sky felt humiliated for been criticized. Thus he yelled at Lao Tzu and Primogenitor to come in the trap if they were able. Lao Tzu entered, but the sword and magic weapons could not impair Lao Tzu. Thus, Grand Master of Sky raised his sword to strike Lao Tzu, but Lao Tzu then intoned a spell, touched his cape, and three streams of wind gushed out and transformed into three fairies. The three entities aligned with Lao Tzu in the fight, so Grand Master of Sky could not resist their pressure over him.

Chapter 78

Three ways try the Fairy Immortal Trap

Even though the three fairies, transmuted from Lao Tzu's vital force, had physical form, they could not injure Grand Master of Sky. To overcome the Immortal-Slaying Trap, they needed four people with very potent magic arts, so Celestial Primogenitor of Kunlun Mountain and Lao Tzu called upon Buddha Candi and Taoist Jieyin from the west.

In addition, Primogenitor, wrote spells on his four eldest disciples' palms and instructed them that in the next day's battle, if they were to see flames, they should hastily hold the four magic swords and take them away from the trap.

The four Archpriests applied magic arts to protect themselves when they entered the trap. Each of them attacked from one direction. The magic swords of Grand Master of Sky could not damage the four Archpriests. Thus he was besieged and struck several times. After the four swords had been taken away by Primogenitor's four disciples, Grand Master of Sky knew the trap was broken through. He then fled out of it and headed for his temple to perform another powerful magic weapon.

When Xu Gai, the chief officer of the Pass Jiepai, sent a messenger to King Zhou urging for help, King Zhou became apprehensive. But Daji convinced King Zhou that the generals at the borders were making up fake reports in order to gain more financial support from the court. She impelled King Zhou to cut off the head of the messenger.

Jizi, a relative of King Zhou, went to caution him, but the king would not listen to him. Under this situation Xu Gai intended to surrender, but his deputy generals firmly requested to persist in they fight. Then Thunder-quaker killed one of the two deputy generals.

Chapter 79

Four generals in Captivity at Chuanyun Pass

The following day, after his second deputy general was killed, Xu Gai at last resolved to surrender. However a monk called Fajie came to see him and said he had come to revenge his disciple Pen Zhun.

Fajie tried his Soul-snatching Banner to capture Thunder-quaker, but when he waved it on Nezha. Nezha not only was not affected but also he struck the back of Fajie.

The next day Zheng Lun, Earth Traveler Sun and Yang Bliss attacked Fajie. Zheng Lun applied his white flash from his nostrils to strike Fajie before he could use his banner. They captured Fajie, but when the soldier was to cut down his head, the Buddha Candi came to take him back to the west.

Ziya moved his troops to Chuanyun Pass, which was guarded by Xu Fang, Xu Gai's brother. Xu Gai went to persuade Xu Fang to surrender but Xu Fang imprisoned him. Dragon Anji, Xu Fang's assistant, had a pair of magic circles which could make noise to confuse the enemy and then bind his hands. Because Feihu was captured on the first day, Nezha asked Ziya to let him fight with Dragon Anji.

Chapter 80

Collapse of the Pestilence Trap

Nezha was unsusceptible to the magic noise. He struck the head of the dragon and killed him.

In the meantime while Xu Fang was distressing that no one could repel Ziya, a Taoist arrived, he was Lu Yue. When Ziya's followers saw Lu Yue, they all clenched their teeth, because Lu Yue had caused them to suffer a great deal. They attacked Lu from different directions and wounded him badly. After several days Lu's friend Chen Geng came to join him. They had trained a deployment called Plague Trap.

Ziya remembered the poem that Primogenitor had written for him. A line in the poem was "*At the Chuanyun Pass, you will suffer from Plague Trap.*" He was very apprehensive. Master Cloud Dweller came to take Ziya's place for one hundred days. Lu Yue and Chen Geng arranged twenty one plague umbrellas in the trap and asked Ziya to attack. Master Cloud Dweller put spells on Ziya's back, chest and cape, then put a pill in his pocket. After Ziya came in, Lu Yue deployed the Plague Trap. While he became unconscious, a black mist surrounded him and black sands fell and covered him. Every day, Lu Yue intoned spells and spread sands on him.

Lu Yue recommended that Xu Fang send Feihu and the other three captured generals to King Zhou. Fang Yizhen was the one chosen as chaperon. Yang Ren was sent down with his freshly completed magic fan called Five-spiritual-fire Fan. He met Fang Yizhen and, with just one fan, Fang was burnt into ashes and blown away.

Yang released Feihu and the others. He told them to stay within the pass until came help at some time. Then he went to see King Wu and Master Cloud Dweller.

Chapter 81

Chickenpox Spirit at Tongguan Pass

Yang Ren entered into the Plague Trap with his spiritual fan. In the occasion Lu Yue tossed the umbrella at Yang, Yang fanned several times, and all the umbrellas were gone. When Lu Yue waved his sword at Yang, Yang fanned another several times and Lu and all his altars were burnt into ashes and were blown away.

When Ziya was released and his life restored, he propelled a final attack. Yellow Flying Tiger and the other generals inside the pass slaughtered the guards and opened the gate and the pass was taken over by Ziya's troops.

After the conquest, Ziya's troops marched toward Tongguan Pass, which was under the commander of Yu Hualong and his five sons. The first battle was savage as were five pairs fighting against a multitude. Yu Hualong was bitten by Yang Bliss's dog, and his sons Yu De and Yu Xian were wounded by Nezha. That night, Yu De took out five cloth coverings in five colors and five pecks to give one to each of his brothers.

After midnight, Yu De told his four brothers to stand on the wrapper and hold the peck. As he chanted the spell, the five men were lifted to fly in the air. Then they spread the poison in the peck to every well and water source.

The next day all the soldiers and generals had chicken pox on their body. Three days later, they all were lying in bed. Nezha and Yang were the only two not affected. Yang flew to Shen Nong, who gave him three pills and one plant. Yang used the pills to save the people and gave the plant to them to cultivate.

Chapter 82

At the Ten Thousand Immortal Trap

Yu Hualong and his five sons were very confident with their magic. Every day they drank, waiting for the death of Ziya and his soldiers. But on the eighth day, when Yu's eldest son Yu Guang went out to check, he saw that the camps of Ziya were just like before.

Thus Yu Hualong led his sons to attack. But during the brutal battle his five sons were killed and he committed suicide. Ziya and his generals took over the Tongguan Pass.

Ziya assigned his generals to encamp at Tongguan Pass to safeguard King Wu. He and his adherents moved ahead to meet the Myriad Immortals Trap. Lao Tzu, Primogenitor and the twelve disciples all came to encounter Ziya. When Lao Tzu and Primogenitor met Grand Master of Sky in front of the trap, they advised Grand Master of Sky to surrender. But Grand Master of Sky had a deep bitterness against them, so he would not listen.

Master Grand Completion took the first combat with Wuyunxian. When Wuyunxian threw his hammer to strike Master Grand Completion, Grand Completion was hurt and ran westward. Grand Master of Sky commanded Wuyunxian to capture Grand Completion, dead or alive.

When Wuyunxian had almost reached Grand Completion, the Buddha Candi appeared and advised Wuyunxian to become a Buddhist disciple. But Wuyunxian refused, and then Candi called a neophyte to bring a magic bamboo pole.

Chapter 83

Subjugation of the Lion, Elephant, and Jaguar

The bamboo pole was a Buddhist magic weapon. It emitted a flash which was able of encasing Wuyunxian so that he could not run away but had to exhibit his genuine archetype form, a huge sea-tortoise. The neophyte jumped on to its back and took it to the Eight Virtues Lake —Bade chi.

When Master of Outstanding Culture entered the Eight Diagrams Map of Lao Tze¹³, his Pangu Banner protected him from injury. When Qiushouxian came to counterattack, Master of Outstanding Culture used a magic rope to bond him and bring him to see Primogenitor. At that time the Immortal of the South Pole intoned a spell, and Qiushouxian changed into his original form, a green-haired lion. Then Primogenitor granted it to Master of Outstanding Culture as his horse.

Lingyaxian was the next one to make a challenge. But Universal Virtue revealed his true form —dharmakaya¹⁴— to subdue him. When Lingyaxian was overpowered, he became pressed backwards to his original form, a white elephant, which Lao Tzu gave to Universal Virtue to ride. Next was Jinguangxian who was subdued by Cihang. Jinguangxian was a golden-hair leopard which Cihang took for a horse.

The Turtle Spirit Divine Mother fought with Krakucchanda. When Krakucchanda was defeated severely by her, Jieyin came to block her and advise her to go to the west. But the Turtle spirit refused to go and struck Jieyin.

When the divine Turtle was finally subdued, she changed into a huge turtle. When the novice came to take her to the west, he unintentionally opened a bag and spiritual mosquitoes flew out to suck the turtle. In a very short time, the turtle was dead. But that was a predestinated occurrence, over which Lao Tzu gave orders to his disciples to enter the Myriad Immortals Trap. Thus each one faced his or her own fate, which was to kill or to be killed.

Grand Master of Sky convoked all his followers to form a deployment. These were twenty eight spirits which formed the twenty eight constellation spirits. In the battle that ensued, Hong Jin and Princess Dragon Ji were slaughtered.

13. The map also is entitled "*Tai Ji Painting*," as a reference to Tai Ji, mother of Wu.

14. Sanskrit: *body-carrier*.

Chapter 84

Occupation of Lintong Pass

Grand Master of Sky was enraged at Lao Tzu and Primogenitor. He ordered his followers to attack them. The battle was ferocious and bloody. All the spirits, demons or immortals whose names were on the Investiture Roster were slayed.

Thus Grand Master of Sky called Dingguangxian to bring the Six Souls Banner, but Dingguangxian fled to beneath the altar. Without his magic banner, Grand Master of Sky became desolate, lost his confidence and intended to escape. Lao Tzu and Primogenitor wounded him but did not kill him. Ziya's troops already had achieved a thorough victory.

When Lao Tzu, Primogenitor and all immortals returned to the altar, Dingguangxian came out and delivered the Six Soul Banner to Lao Tzu. Lao Tzu ordered him to remove the names of Ziya and King Wu, and then to wave the banner on him and the other three archpriests. Thus when the banner was waved, it did not harm Lao Tzu and the others whatsoever.

Later when Grand Master of Sky and his surviving followers were resting, the Chief archpriest, Hongjun, who was the master of Lao Tzu, Primogenitor and Grand Master of Sky, appeared. Hongjun rebuked Grand Master of Sky for transgressing the agreement and next also scolded Lao Tzu and Primogenitor for causing unnecessary butchery just because of their wrath and bitterness.

Hongjun ordered Grand Master of Sky to summon Lao Tzu and Primogenitor. Lao Tzu and Primogenitor rapidly went over and bowed down. Hongjun told the three archpriests that he had come to mediate their disagreements. He lectured them a lesson and gave a pill to each of them. After they ate the pills, Hongjun revealed to them that they had just ingested venomous herbs. If ever any one of them should have any intention of attacking the other, he would die from the poison, but if they retained peace, the pills would be innocuous. With all the matters discoursed, Hongjun and the other archpriests departed.

For future advantage, Lu Ya presented his magic flying blade to Ziya. While Primogenitor was flying back to his cave, his crane-spirit saw Shen Gongbao who was fleeing in front of them. Primogenitor held Shen and ordered the heron spirit to tie Shen and stuff him into the hole at the bottom of the North Sea.

Ziya led his troops to the Lintong Pass. There specifically the four generals Ouyang Chun, Bian Jinlong, Gui Tianlu, and Gongsun Duo were guarding the pass. The generals had committed to fight until the last one. If they could not win, they would defend the city and wait for help.

However as soon as the first day, Bian Jinlong was slayed by Yellow Flying Tiger. Thus his son Bian Ji counter measured a Ten-thousand Skeletons Banner before the gate. If his rivals hunted him and passed under it, they would lose their consciousness. So Bian Ji employed it and captured Nangong Kuo, Yellow Flying Tiger, Huang Ming and Thunder-quaker. But Nezha was not affected by it and was able to strike Bian.

Chapter 85

Betrayal of two Dukes

With the injury of Bian Ji, Ouyang Chun directed a messenger to King Zhou asking for assistance. King Zhou appointed the dukes Deng Kun and Rui Ji as commanders.

Earth Traveler Sun attempted to rescue the captured generals by Bian Ji, but when he approached the gate, he fell under a state of loss of consciousness and so was taken to the execution ground. But as soon the soldiers put him on the ground he managed to escape.

When Ouyang Chun reported to Deng and Rui that he had captured Yellow Flying Tiger and others, Deng at once intended to rescue the life of Yellow Flying Tiger, since Yellow Flying Tiger was his relative. Deng conceived a plan to join King Wu while at the same time the Rui's mind was cogitating of surrendering to Ziya. Thus that night they both intended to talk each other out.

Thus during the night, after several drinks, they at last expressed their deep thoughts to each other. Suddenly, while they were talking, Earth Traveler Sun projected out his head from the ground. Sun suggested to the two to write a message to King Wu and Ziya.

The next day, Deng and Rui just pretended to go out for battle. When they sighted the skeleton banner, they ordered Bian Ji to remove it, saying that it looked ugly. Obediently Bian wrote three charms for them so that they could pass under it safely.

Then Deng and Rui forwarded the sorcerous device to Earth Traveler Sun, who carried it to Ziya. Imitating its design, Ziya made copies of the magical trap and distributed them to all his followers and generals.

Chapter 86

Five mountain spirits return to Sky

With the witchery in their hair, Ziya's generals crushed Bian Ji and chased him under the banner.

Bian fled into the city and closed the gate. Deng and Rui staged a criticism over Bian Ji for him letting the Zhou troops to approach the city. Before Bian could argue, they executed him. They also killed Ouyang Chun because he would not betray Zhou or surrender to Ziya.

Once they had pacified the people in the city, Ziya resumed his incursion. Near the White Orile Forest of Lintong Pass, the troops of Ziya reached Mianchi Country, which was located at the opposite side of the capital Morning Song, separated by a river. The shielding general of Mianchi was Zhang Kui whose wife was Gao Lanying. Zhang Kui had a Black-Mist Unicorn as a mount, which could gallop like the wind. Zhang Kui by means of it had been able of killing two brothers of King Wu.

The following day, Chong Heihu, with his generals Wen Pin, Chui Ying, and Jiang Xiong arrived at Mianchi. King Wu went out to welcome them. While they were talking, Zhang Kui shouted a challenge to the camp, and they, with Yellow Flying Tiger, rushed out to confront him. Chong Heihu planned to allure Zhang Kui to chase him, so that he could release his spirit-crows to kill him. Thus all five of them, pretending to be withdrawing, galloped back. However the unicorn of Zhang ran extremely fast. Zhang caught Wen Pin and Chong Heihu and chopped them into two pieces. And Gao, the wife of Zhang, shot her spirit-needles into the eyes of the others, which allowed Zhang to gallop over and finish them too. Five chief invaders were slaughtered.

At certain moment Yang Bliss went out to face Zhang. Yang Bliss pretending to be weaker than Zhang, allowed that Zhang seized him and carried him to Zhang's ground. Put to immediate extermination, the executioner beheaded Yang. However a groom reported to Zhang that at the same moment, instead Yang had disappeared and was his unicorn's head which had suddenly dropped down and the mount had died. Zhang became furious. This time he rode a horse and captured Yang again.

Once more Yand was put to execution, but before, as a preventive measure, his wife Gao ordered soldiers to take chicken blood and dung to dump over that head of Yang. Additionally, she drew a spell to put in Yang's hair and then ordered soldiers to cut off his head. When the head of Yang apparently fell to the ground, a maid reported to Zhang that suddenly dung had fallen down on his mother and that her head had fallen off. Then Zhang became so depressed that he lost all sense of cautiousness.

Chapter 87

Earth traveler Sun and his wife

The hate of Zhang at Yang Bliss now was boiling out. Without any preparation he left out to challenge Yang to fight. It was the opportunity to Nezha, who reached him and used his Nine-dragon Fire Shade to wrap Zhang and burn him. However, Zhang owned the ability for travelling underground into the earth, and so he escaped out of the shade. As a result of the death of his mother, the mind of Zhang Kui remained in a state of confusion, but his wife oriented him to travel through the inner earth to the camp of Ziya and kill King Wu. Zhang became very satisfied with the plan.

Nevertheless, that night, Yang Ren was in charge over making the security of the camp and Yang Ren had three eyes, one of which could see through the earth. Thus, by his eye, Yang Ren traced Zhang and kept spying on him and reporting to Ziya. Thus Zhang did not have an opportunity to get near to King Wu.

When Earth Traveler Sun convoyed the supplies back to camp, he was communicated of the death of his friend Yellow Flying Tiger. Thus in that night Sun took the moment to go out to avenge at Zhang. Although Earth Traveler Sun was a dwarf, he stroke the leg of Zhang so much that Zhang could not chase him. Hence, Zhang entered into the earth and retreat away. Sun implemented the same magic to pursue Zhang, but he was not as fast as Zhang, so he failed to chase him. Thus, to be able of trapping Zhang Kui, first Sun took a route to meet his master Krakucchanda, who could teach him how to transform earth substance into iron. But Zhang used his magic cunning and learned of Sun's plan and his route to his master. So, Zhang travelled into the earth and ambushed Earth Traveler Sun at Fierce Beast Cliff, where he sliced off his head.

When Deng Chanyu saw her husband's head hanging from a pole, she could not avoid to go and challenge Zhang Kui's wife Gao Lanying to a battle. But Gao Lanying fired her needles to hurt Deng's eyes and killed her.

Meanwhile Ziya commanded his army to lay siege to the city and strike from four directions, but after two days and two nights, there was not successful, so Ziya ordered the soldiers to retreat for a period.

From that time Zhang Kui sent a messenger to Morning Song asking for reinforcements. King Zhou issued an edict to recruit people having the ability necessary to serve the court. Then three men, who were actually sprites from a nearby mountain, presented themselves to the royal house. They were Yuan Hong, —a monkey sprite, Wu Dragon —a centipede-dragon sprite, and Chang Hao —a snake sprite. King Zhou designated them as chief commanders. Yuan Hong then led the armies to encamp at Meng Ford.

Chapter 88

A White Fish from the Yellow River to the Dragon boat

Zhang Kui became frustrated when he knew that Chang Hao had marched his troops to Meng Ford. Thus Gao, his wife, proposed that they should just stay within the city defending it resolutely, and so not go outside to open fight. Gao wondered that in the case of Ziya's troop running short of supplies, their only option would be a withdrawal.

Meanwhile Krakucchanda,¹⁵ the master of Earth Traveler Sun, sent a messenger bringing an incantation and a letter to Ziya, explaining to him how to use the spell and how to trap Zhang Kui and take the city. Thus in the following day, Ziya and King Wu trotted strong horses to look around the city. When Zhang saw them scouting in the surroundings, he dashed out the gate to hunt King Wu. Nezha and Thunder-quaker waited until Zhang had galloped far away, and then flew into the city to kill Gao Lanying, and opened the gate. Then, Ziya's troop attacked. At that time, Nezha returned flying to rescue King Wu from Zhang.

When Zhang Kui realized that he could not win, he ran for reinforcements diving dived into the earth and returning to the city. When he perceived that the city had been taken, he decided to rush to Meng Ford to confront Chang Hao. But Yang Ren used his eyes to track down Zhang's route and directed Yang Bliss and Wei Hu to follow Zhang.

When Zhang reached the bank of the Yellow River, Yang was waiting there, and burning the enchantment. Without any warning the earth became iron hard and Zhang could not move at all through it. That being so he had to come out and try to escape on the ground. But when his head just projected out of the earth, the club of Wei Hu fell down on his head smashing down it.

In the aftermath, Ziya bought boats from some anglers to cross the Yellow River. With the King Wu's boat already in the middle of the river, a white fish jumped into the boat. King Wu wanted to return the fish to the water but Ziya explained to him that this was an auspicious omen pointing out —someone from the boat— that the Zhou lineage would be established as the ruling family. Then Ziya provided to himself to first step down the boat and then went tell ahead all the feudal lords not to address King Wu as king. But when still some feudal lords wanted to set up a new king, Ziya without delay dodged the subject of conversation in order to avoid any suspicion of King Wu.

15. In some accounts the master of Earth Traveler Sun is called **Ju Liusun**.

Chapter 89

Cutting open the Bellies of Pregnant Women

Then Yao Shuliang and Peng Zushou arrived to face a battle with Chang Hao and Dragon Wu. During the fight, Chang and Wu shift-shaped to their original forms, respectively a huge snake and a centipede dragon, to gush out venomous air to kill the challengers. Also Nezha and Yang Bliss, using their magic weapons, tried to slay them, but just failed.

Yuan Hong sent a messenger to inform to King Zhou the preliminary success. News of this success prompted King Zhou to celebrate. King Zhou ordered Fei Lian to bring his reward. During the banquet of celebration, Daji bragged to King Zhou about her divination abilities. As he and Daji stood in their tower, they saw an old man and a young man fording a small river in bare feet. The old man seemed unconcerned to the cold water and walked fast, while the young man vacillated under the fear of cold water. King Zhou consulted Daji about the different behaviors and Daji told that the old man was born when his parents were young, so his bone marrow was well formed. She claimed that to the case of the young man, for him having been born to aged parents, resulted the opposite.

King Zhou ordered his guards to take the two men to the court and break their calves to check if it was so and indeed was entirely as Daji had alleged. Next Daji bragged also that she had learned magic arts, so she could predict the gender and position of a baby within a woman's womb. King Zhou again ordered the guards to bring in several pregnant women, to cut open their wombs and examine the sex of the babies. Daji had been accurate in all instances.

When King Zhou's relatives, Wei Zi and Jizi came to reproach King Zhou, the king felt offended and declassified Jizi to be a slave. Wei Zi took the ancestral tablets and fled the capital to become a recluse.

One day Gao Ming and Gao Jue, who were two people with ugly and disturbing appearance, came to look for Fei Lian. They claimed they intended to assist King Zhou to defeat Ziya. Fei Lian took them to see King Zhou, who designated them generals and sent them to Meng Ford.

Chapter 90

Subjugation of two Sprites

With the battle before them, Gao Ming and Gao Jue met Yuan Hong and the sprites promptly recognized each other. Yuan Hong knew that Gao Ming and Gao Jue were actually the peach spirit and the willow spirit. And the two Gao brothers realized that Yuan was the monkey sprite. They were satisfied to be together in the battle.

Throughout the fight, Nezha, Yang Bliss, and Yan Ren made use of their powerful magic weapons to strike the two Gao brothers and Yuan Hong, but none of the weapons proved effective against them. They just disappeared like the wind. Yang Bliss informed Ziya that the brothers Gaos had not seemed like other men. This way Ziya commanded the soldiers to prepare peach wood and blood in order to halt their witchcraft. But the following day, the two Gaos mocked at Ziya, saying that none of his traps would be operative against them. Ziya conceived that there were spies in the camp, but Yang Bliss did not share the idea. So, Yang flew to consult his master, the Immortal Jade Tripod.

Jade Tripod revealed to Yang that the brothers were a peach-scout spirit and a willow-scout spirit and that their roots extended to a temple, which transferred its soul to the two gate guards QianLiYan —thousand li eyes— and ShunFengEr (movable wind ears). That was why they could see things from a thousand li and hear Ziya's plans from far away. Jade Tripod recommended Yang Bliss to pluck their roots from earth and burn the statues, only then could they be defeated. Yang Bliss returned and wrote down the instructions on a piece of paper so that Ziya should follow. Ziya ordered soldiers to beat on thousands of gongs and use red cloth to build a wall. He then assigned each general a task.

With such measures Gao Ming and Gao Jue did not see or hear what was happening. A wind blew over the banner and Ziya using his magic calculation discovered that the Gaos and Yuan Hong had planned a night raid. As a result, he assigned a strategic position to each general, and still in that night, Ziya ascended the altar to put into effect his concealed trap.

Chapter 91

Fire attack on Mount Coiling Dragon

Nezha and Yang Bliss were waiting when the two Gaos tried to assault the camp of Ziya. As soon as the two sprites fell into the trap, they were slaughtered, but still Yuan Hong managed to slay Yang Ren.

Next Yang Bliss flew to consult Master Cloud Dweller, who lent him the Demon-reflecting Mirror. By means of the mirror, Yang could learn what kind of entities they were. Thus when during the battle Chang Hao shape-shifted into a white snake, Yang turned into a huge centipede dragon that cut the snake into two pieces. When Dragon Wu revealed his original form, a centipede dragon, Yang then shape-shifted into a giant rooster to peck Wu to death.

Wu Wenhua, a giant, appeared to assist Yuan Hong. During the hours of the daylight Wu Wenhua battled the Dragon Beard-Tiger. Beard-Tiger had a short height, thus Wu Wenhua could not reach him and ended wounded on his feet. But still in that evening Wu advanced into the camps of Ziya at last killing Dragon Beard-Tiger, and using his huge arrow and bow he also struck and killed many soldiers of Ziya. Yuan Hong too launched an attack, so Ziya's troops were severely devastated.

Yang Bliss remained alone to fight and take care of the storage of supplies. Thus he took a straw and blew it to transform it into a giant taller than Wu Wenhua, who became very frightened and fled back to his camp.

In the next day was reported to Ziya that their casualties numbered two hundred thousand. On top of that, thirty-four generals had been killed. The tributary Meng River was crammed with bodies. On the other side, King Zhou became exultant when he was informed about the events. Zhou fell even more in wine and sex. However, some generals in Yuan Hong's army were ashamed to see sprites serving in the army. Knowing that sprites augured the end of the dynasty, the generals under Yuan Hong began to look for ways out of the army.

Yang Bliss and Ziya planned to get rid of Wu Wenhua first. Gun powder, dry wood and charcoal they buried under the ground in a valley which had no exit and only one way to go in. Ziya and King Wu rode horses to lure Wu Wenhua to pursue them, and then they led him to that ravine.

Chapter 92

Subjugation of seven Sprites

Firstly Wu Ji and Nangong Kuo allowed King Wu and Ziya go through the pass as a bait. Next they ordered to the army roll logs and rocks down to block Wu Wenhua's way out of the ravine. As soon Wu chased them, he became trapped in the valley and then the soldiers ignited the fire scorching the giant Wu Wenhua to death.

A pig sprite shape-shifted as human arrived to join Yuan Hong, the monkey sprite. He was called Zhu Zizhen, who was also a monk. When Yang Bliss confronted Zhu Zizhen, Yang Bliss, suspecting the monk, took his Demon-Reflecting Mirror to see Zhu's original form, but then pig sprite promptly swallow Yang Bliss.

Later when Yuan Hong and the pig-monk Zhu Zizhen were having a banquet to celebrate the victory over Yang Bliss, another entity, came in. He was Yang Xian, a goat sprite in human form. But then Yang Bliss, who was within Zhu Zizhen's stomach, rebuked the pig for eating too many people, and gripped tightly and sharply his liver and heart. Zhu Zizhen, under extreme pain, pleaded for mercy. Yang demanded him to shape-shift to his original form and reveal himself to Ziya. Inflicted by the pangs Zhu Zizhen walked to Ziya. Once there at Ziya's camp, when Nangong Kuo saw the huge pig coming in, he promptly beheaded the sprite.

Then another entity joined Yuan Hong. This time he was a dog sprite called Dai Li. The three sprites raided out to revenge Zhu Zizhen's death, but Yang Bliss and Nezha killed the dog Dai Li and the goat Yang Xian.

Next, the ox sprite called Dasheng, who had slayed Zheng Lun in a battle, came to help Yuan Hong. Once Yang Bliss came to wrestle the ox sprite, Nu Wa appeared from the air to fasten the sprite. Her maid-attendant used a rope to tie Dasheng's nose and to beat on his back. Thus the sprite Dasheng shape-shifted back into a giant ox and Nu Wa delivered the ox to Yang Bliss, who brought it to Ziya to cut his head off.

That night, Ziya propelled an attack that smashed the defense of the monkey-sprite Yuan Hong. But Yuan Hong's fight resisted fiercely against Yang Bliss. All the time Yuan shape-shifted into something new. As counterpart Yang Bliss also shape-shifted into a rival of each form, so he stalled Yuan. Yuan withdrew to a mountain and convoked his little monkeys to help. Yang could not match the thousand monkeys, and only could scape using his magic. Nu Wa appeared up and delivered to Yang a map of the Mount-river Plum. Then she taught him the spell to make it to work. Thus as soon as Yang hanged the map on a tree, it changed into a mountain. Seeing the mountain, the seventh and final sprite, the monkey Yuan thought the mountain as any other and went to climb it up.

Chapter 93

Occupation of Youhun Pass

Within a short time after Yuan Hong rose up the mountain, his mind became obsessed by hallucinations. He returned into his monkey form without realizing the shape-shifting. Whatever he wondered in his mind would become solid before his eyes. When he saw what looked like a big, ripe peach on a tree, he ate the peach and went to rest on a stone. Promptly Yang dashed to the lethargic Yuan, who could not even stand up to fight. Yang bound him and brought him to Ziya.

Ziya commanded Yang to behead Yuan Hong. Thus Yang Bliss cut off Yuan's head, but then another head grew from his body. Yang repeatedly cut the monkey's head only to see it grow again. Then came to Ziya the remembrance of Lu Ya's flying blade which he removed from a gourd. That blade had two eyes radiating two flashes. With the blade fastened against Yuan's head, it was turned a few times around the head. Afterwards the Yuan's head finally was chopped down on the ground.

Jinzha and Muzha were assigned to get past Dou Rong, the local commander, and so take over Youhun Pass. Thus they masqueraded themselves as Taoist cultivators from Penglai Island offering their services to Dou Rong.

But Dou and his generals got suspicions on them even when they told Dou that their masters were killed by Ziya, and that they had come to revenge their masters' death and pacify the rebellion of Ziya.

As a result Jinzha and Muzha surfaced a plot. In the next day they staged the capture of one of generals of Ziya, which then brought the trust of Dou on them.

In the second fight, they along with the East Keeper, the Grand Duke Jiang Wenhuan, launched a raid that night. Taking the opportunity, Ziya's troops attacked the pass during the night. Thus Jinzha and Muzha opened the gate unsettling Dou Rong.

Chapter 94

The Siege of the Capital

As the fighting went into eruption, Dou Rong ended slayed. Breaking into the city, Muzha slaughtered the wife of Dou. Those still alive surrendered to the forces of Ziya.

Then Jiang Wenhuan, the Duke of the East, led his men to join Ziya. Ziya gathered all the allied troops and commanded a march toward Morning Song. The combined army of the four grand dukes numbered 1,600,000. It surrounded Morning Song and stretched out as far as the eye could see.

Meanwhile at the court, King Zhou was apprehensive. He inquired his generals and officials what measures they could perform then. They concluded that the best to do was to shield the capital as well as to enlist skilled men to fortify the army.

Three sworn brothers presented themselves to see King Zhou. King Zhou designated them as commanders, but in their first battle they were slaughtered. Next Yin Pobai offered himself to go to dialogue with Ziya, because he was acquainted with Ziya before the conflict, so he wondered that he could persuade him to halt the hostilities.

Thus Yin Pobai tried at length to convince Ziya to peacefully withdraw, but Ziya did not pay attention to him. Yin then became exasperated and started to reproach the conduct of Ziya. Seeing this Jiang Wenhuan raised his sword and chopped Yin Pobai into two pieces.

Chapter 95

The Ten Accusations

Yin Chengxiu, the son of Yin Pobai, hastened out from the city to take vengeance on his father's death, but ended killed by Jiang Wenhuan. The capital city was under a siege by the army of Ziya. However when his troops stormed from four gates, they failed since the strong defense firmly resisted their assault. Then the allies of Ziya came up with a plan to Ziya that so they could perform a spell to move in and open the gate. But Ziya did not intend to cause too many civilians killed, thus as an alternative he wrote many copies of an announcement inciting the residents of Morning Song to rebellion, and threw them into the city.

At midnight indeed the locals, persuaded by Ziya's announcements, opened the gate. At such event Ziya aroused from sleep and straightway commanded that only ten thousand soldiers should break in and that they must not kill the common people nor steal their possessions.

While King Zhou was drinking wine with Daji his guards arrived with the terrible news. The Chief Commander of the royal guards warned Zhou to be prepared to imminent fight since in other way they would be seized. King Zhou assembled the royal guard, but along the palace wall Ziya's troops were already had positioned. On his horse King Zhou rode to meet Ziya, who then told to King Zhou that because he was a despot, the Ziya's alliance had come to execute him on behalf of Sky. King Zhou questioned Ziya what faults he had caused. Ziya then alleged ten serious crimes proclaiming them as:

1. King Zhou was the most wicked king in the dynasty.
2. King Zhou killed his queen.
3. King Zhou attempted to kill the crown prince.
4. King Zhou killed many loyal ministers.
5. King Zhou assaulted the East and South Grand Dukes.
6. King Zhou allowed cruel tortures invented by Daji to be used on the innocent.
7. King Zhou depleted the national resources and wealth.
8. King Zhou was unchaste and killed Yellow Flying Tiger's wife in pursuit of his lust.
9. King Zhou cut off legs and cut open pregnant women for leisure.
10. King Zhou spent all his time in pleasure with Daji and Hu Ximei.

When King Zhou heard Ziya's accusations, he became exasperated. Then especially the Duke of the East, whose father and sister had been brutally assassinated by King Zhou, but also the feudal lords, called for the decapitation of King Zhou. Then they jumped in to fight at King Zhou.

King Wu seeing the scene, disapproved the vassals conflicting with their ruler, and so he directed Ziya to halt them. But Ziya tricked King Wu asking him to beat the drum. King Wu beat the drum unaware that the sound produced by him was a summoning which promoted the advance of the troops, and not a withdrawal as he thought. At the sound of the drum, all lords and soldiers dashed to fall upon King Zhou.

Chapter 96

Daji under Siege

With King Zhou under attack and already wounded in his back, Lu Renjie, Lei Kun and Lei Peng wrestled to rescue him from the assault, but the three defenders were all murdered. Nevertheless it was enough to King Zhou to flee back into the palace.

Meanwhile the two evil traitors, the officials Fei Lian and E Lai, sneaked into the core of the palace and stole the royal seal. They reckoned that presenting the seal to King Wu, who they regarded a benevolent person, doubtlessly would favor them and spare their lives.

Already in the palace King Zhou received consolation from his three favorite concubines, the sprites Daji, Hu Ximei, and Wang Guiren. They were telling him that they could square up to the distresses of King Zhou, since they had powerful magic skills, and so could fly out during the night and kill King Wu.

Ziya was confident and so did not expect any raid more from the enemy. However in that night the three sprites, Daji, Hu Ximei and Wang Guiren, promoted the chaos on his troops slaying many soldiers. But the sprites failed in their attempt to eliminate Ziya's forces and kill King Wu since the many followers of Ziya carried magic skills and these thwarted the three sprites.

Finally when the sprites returned to the palace and reported to King Zhou, he ordered them to flee for their own lives. Then alone, Zhou walked to the Star-Plucking Tower.

When the three sprites were then preparing to the flight, Ziya through his magic reckoning discovered their intentions. He ordered the three generals Yang Bliss, Wei Hu and Thunderbolt to capture them. The generals waited in the air until they saw the three sprites floating out of the palace to the sky. The generals chased after them but Nu Wa unexpectedly appeared to block the way of the three sprites.

Chapter 97

The King Burns

Using a magic rope Nu Wa bound the three sprites and delivered them to Yang Bliss.

Thus the three sprites were conveyed to the executional grounds. Ziya scolded them for eating the servants of the palace and for creating the plots to execute virtuous officials. Daji pleaded to Ziya saying that she was only an ordinary girl from the Su house, so she could not have persuaded King Zhou to perpetrate any evil acts. But Ziya, facing the feudal lords, described to them that she was not Su's daughter but a fox sprite.

Without delaying, the executioners cut off the heads of the Zither sprite and the Pearl Chicken Sprite. However Daji employed her bewitching and charming seduction at the executioner. He became so infatuated that he could not raise the sword. Two more other executioners came to the task but also failed. Thunder-quaker went to report the situation to Ziya who then cast his flying blade to behead Daji.

From the palace King Zhou witnessed when the execution fell upon them and felt sadness. Still on his way to the Star-plucking Tower, many ghosts came there to haunt Zhou but he just opened his eyes wide to terrify them instead, who ran away. When he reached at the Tower, he was dressed with the royal robe with pearls and jade covering it. Then King Zhou ordered the soldier Zhu Sheng to put on fire the Tower. When King Zhou was burnt to death, Zhu joined the king jumping into the fire to commit suicide.

As King Wu and the other feudal lords entered into the palace, Ziya promptly ordered to extinguish the fire.

Chapter 98

Jewels and Relief supplies distributed

King Wu granted clemency to the maids and servants of the palace, and thus he ordered his soldiers to not mistreat the palatial staff or spoil their personal belongings. However King Wu took the numerous jewels, jade and gems spread in Deer Tower of the palace, and distributed them to the feudal lords and relief to the subject people.

Ziya provided a due royal ceremony for a king's funeral when he ordered the burial of King Zhou. Then, to the presence of King Wu, was brought Wu Geng, the son of King Zhou, who by then was suffering the hostilities from the feudal lords, who in turn meant to execute Wu Geng. But King Wu frustrated their intentions granting a piece of land to Wu Geng, and so titling him as the Lord of Shang, which would succeed the Yin family lineage.

The feudal lords in unanimity expected King Wu to take the throne, however King Wu considered it not appropriate since he was originally a subordinate to the king deposed. Still Ziya reasoned to King Wu that for stabilizing the moment, King Wu could seat in the throne as a temporary king until, later and at last, appeared a sage man. Then King Wu could transfer definitely the throne to this coming wise man. King Wu accepted such condition.

After ten months in Morning Song, King Wu took the road of return to his home. However the Taoists, Bo Yi and Shu Qi, once again blocked King Wu's way, which was back to Xiqi. They cried and sang a song to mock King Wu. Later they refused to eat the granted millet of Zhou and starved to death.

Meanwhile taking the opportune moment the former Zhou officials, Fei Lian and E Lai, presented the royal seal to Ziya. Ziya was satisfied and bestowed positions to them.

As to Ziya himself, he had become the Prime Minister of King Wu. Having learned these news, the ex-wife of Ziya, lady Ma, felt so unsettled for what she had reacted to Ziya, that she committed suicide.

With all in stabilized places, Ziya went look for Primogenitor, so he flew to Kunlun Mountain.

Chapter 99

Deification of the Spirits

Archpriest Primogenitor told Jiang Ziya to return to the capital Morning Song and that he would send a decree to him later.

At last after the decree arrived, Ziya proceeded to Mount Qi, the Investiture Altar. There, to all the souls and spirits, he proclaimed the decree. He canonized three hundred and sixty five gods in eight departments. To each one of the gods was given a name and determined a position: ¹⁶

1. Bai Jian - God of Pure Happiness
2. Huang Tianhua - Bing Ling Gong - God of the Three Sacred Mountains
3. Huang Feihu - God of Taishan, the East Mountain
4. Chong Heihu - God of Hengshan, the South Mountain
5. Wen Ping - God of Songshan, the Middle Mountain
6. Cui Ying - God of Hengshan, the North Mountain
7. Jiang Xiong - God of Huashan, the West Mountain
8. Wen Zhong - Chief of the Thunder Gods
9. Dong Zhong - Thunder God
10. Xin Huan - Thunder God
11. Zhang Jie - Thunder God
12. Tao Rong - Thunder God
13. Pang Hong - Thunder God
14. Liu Fu - Thunder God
15. Gou Zhang - Thunder God
16. Bi Huan - Thunder God
17. Qin Wan - Thunder God
18. Zhao Jiang - Thunder God
19. Dong Quan - Thunder God
20. Yuan Jue - Thunder God
21. Li De - Thunder God
22. Sun Liang - Thunder God
23. Bai Li - Thunder God
24. Wang Bian - Thunder God
25. Yao Bin - Thunder God
26. Zhang Shao - Thunder God
27. Huang Gen - Thunder God
28. Jin Su - Thunder God
29. Ji Li - Thunder God
30. Yu Qing - Thunder God
31. Mother Golden Light (Goddess of Lightning) - Thunder God
32. Fair Lotus (Goddess of the Wind) - Thunder God
33. Luo Xuan - Chief of the Fire Gods

16. Although it was decreed 365 gods, the list presents only 337 names wherein some of these do not appear during the tale, whereas other characters from the tale are absent in it. Moreover in the list are named 71 Earthy stars and 35 Sky stars. All this suggests that the list may be a long after accretion to the original narration.

34. Zhu Zhao - Fire God
35. Gao Zheng - Fire God
36. Fang Gui - Fire God
37. Wang Jiao - Fire God
38. Liu Huan - Fire God
39. Lu Yue - Chief of the Plague Gods
40. Zhou Xin - God of Plague in the East
41. Li Qi - God of Plague in the South
42. Zhu Tianlin - God of Plague in the West
43. Yang Wenhui - God of Plague in the North
44. Chen Geng - Grand Instructor for Goodness
45. Li Ping - God of Destroying the Plague
46. Mother Golden Spirit - Honorable Goddess of the North Pole Dippers
47. Su Hu - God of the Eastern Constellations
48. Jin Kui - God of the Eastern Constellations
49. Zhao Bing - God of the Eastern Constellations
50. Ji Shuming - God of the Eastern Constellations
51. Huang Tianlu - God of the Western Constellations
52. Long Huan - God of the Western Constellations
53. Sun Ziyu - God of the Western Constellations
54. Hu Sheng - God of the Western Constellations
55. Hu Yunpeng - God of the Western Constellations
56. Lu Renjie - God of the Central Constellations
57. Chao Lei - God of the Central Constellations
58. Ji Shusheng - God of the Central Constellations
59. Bo Yikao - God of the North Pole
60. Zhou Ji - God of the Southern Constellations
61. Hu Lei - God of the Southern Constellations
62. Gao Gui - God of the Southern Constellations
63. Yu Cheng - God of the Southern Constellations
64. Sun Bao - God of the Southern Constellations
65. Lei Kun - God of the Southern Constellations
66. Huang Tianxiang - God of the Northern Constellations
67. Bi Gan (God of Culture) - God of the Northern Constellations
68. Dou Rong (God of Military Affairs) - God of the Northern Constellations
69. Han Sheng - God of the Northern Constellations
70. Han Bian - God of the Northern Constellations
71. Su Quanzhong - God of the Northern Constellations
72. E Shun - God of the Northern Constellations
73. Guo Cheng - God of the Northern Constellations
74. Dong Zhong - God of the Northern Constellations
75. Deng Jiugong - God of the Green Dragon Star
76. Yin Chengxiu - God of the White Tiger Star
77. Ma Fang - God of the Red Sparrow Star
78. Xu Kun - God of the Mysterious Martial Star
79. Lei Peng God of the Gone-with-the-Old Star
80. Zhang Shan - God of the Snake Star
81. Xu Gai - God of the Solar Star
82. Queen Jiang - Goddess of the Lunar Star
83. Shang Rong - God of the Jade Hall Star
84. Ji Shuqian - God of the Heavenly Precious Star

85. Hong Jin - God of the Dragon Virtue Star
86. Princess Long Ji - Goddess of the Red Phoenix Star
87. King Zhou - God of the Heavenly Happy Star
88. Mei Bo - God of the Heavenly Virtue Star
89. Xia Zhao - God of the Lunar Virtue Star
90. Zhao Qi - God of the Heavenly Amnesty Star
91. Lady Jia - Goddess of the Upright Behavior Star
92. Xiao Zheng - God of the Metal Mansion Star
93. Deng Hua - God of the Wooden Mansion Star
94. Yu Yuan - God of the Water Mansion Star
95. Mother Fiery Spirit - God of the Fire Mansion Star
96. Earth Traveler Sun - God of the Earth Mansion Star
97. Deng Chanyu - Goddess of the Six Combinations Star
98. Du Yuanxian - God of the Doctorate Star
99. Wu Wenhua - God of the Power Star
100. Jiao Ge - God of the Admonishment Star
101. Huang Feibiao - God of the River Leading Star
102. Madam Chedi - Goddess of the Moon Leading Star
103. Jiang Huanchu - God of the Imperial Coach Star
104. Huang Feibao - God of the Heavenly Inheritance Star
105. Ding Ce - God of the Imperial Chariot Star
106. E Chongyu - God of the Heavenly Horse Star
107. Li Jin - God of the Imperial Grade Star
108. Qian Bao - God of the Heavenly Medical Star
109. Concubine Huang - Goddess of the Earthly Queen Star
110. Ji Shude - God of the Domestic Dragon Star
111. Huang Ming - God of the Dragon Taming Star
112. Lei Kai - God of the Station Horse Star
113. Wei Ben - God of the Yellow Pennant Star
114. Wu Qian - God of the Leopard Tail Star
115. Zhang Guifang - God of the Mourning House Star
116. Feng Lin - God of the Lamenting Visitor Star
117. Fei Zhong - God of the Pulling-Twisting Star
118. You Hun - God of the Rolled Tongue Star
119. Peng Zun - God of the Throat Control Star
120. Wang Bao - God of the City Planning Star
121. Ji Shukun - God of the Flying Curtain Star
122. Chong Houhu - God of the Great Spending Star
123. Yin Pobai - God of the Minor Spending Star
124. Qiu Yin - God of the Linked String Star
125. Long Anji - God of the Railing Star
126. Tai Luan - God of the Head Spreading Star
127. Deng Xiu - God of the Five Devils Star
128. Zhao Sheng - God of the Goat Cutlass Star
129. Sun Yanhong - God of the Bloody Light Star
130. Fang Yizhen - God of the Official Seal Star
131. Yu Hua - God of the Single Morning Star
132. Ji Kang - God of the Heavenly Dog Star
133. Wang Zuo - God of the Sickness Spell Star
134. Zhang Feng - God of the Bone Boring Star
135. Bin Jinlong - God of the Death Spell Star

136. Bai Zianshong - God of the Heavenly Defeat Star
137. Zheng Chun - God of the Floating-Submerging Star
138. Bian Ji - God of the Heavenly Slaying Star
139. Chen Geng - God of the Yearly Killing Star
140. Xu Fang - God of the Yearly Punishment Star
141. Chao Tian - God of the Yearly Breaking Star
142. Ji Shuyi - God of the Lonely Fire Star
143. Ouyang Chun - God of the Lost Spirit Star
144. Wang Hu - God of the Monthly Breaking Star
145. Lady Rock - Goddess of the Monthly Touring Star
146. Chen Jizhen - God of the Dead Air Star
147. Xu Zhong - God of the Salty Pond Star
148. Yao Zhong - God of the Monthly Disgusted Star
149. Chen Wu - God of the Monthly Punishment Star
150. Gao Jineng - God of the Black Killing Star
151. Zhang Kui - God of the Seven Murders Star
152. Yin Hong - God of the Five Grains Star
153. Yu Zhong - God of the Avoiding Murder Star
154. Ouyang Tianlu - God of the Heavenly Punishment Star
155. Chen Tong - God of the Heavenly Net Star
156. Ji Shuji - God of the Earthly Net Star
157. Mei Wu - God of the Heavenly Space Star
158. Ao Bing - God of the Parasol Star
159. Zhou Xin - God of the Ten Evils Star
160. Huang Yuanji - Goddess of the Silkworm Breeding Star
161. Gao Lanying - Goddess of the Peach Blossom Star
162. Lady Ma - Goddess of the Broom Star
163. Li Gen - God of the Great Calamity Star
164. Han Rong - God of the Scattering About Star
165. Lin Shan - God of the Mourning Dress Star
166. Dragon Beard Tiger - God of the Nine Ugliness Star
167. Sa Jian - God of the Three Corpse Stars
168. Sa Qiang - God of the Three Corpse Stars
169. Sa Yong - God of the Three Corpse Stars
170. Jin Cheng - God of the Yin Mistake Star
171. Ma Chenglong - God of the Yang Error Star
172. Gongsun Duo - God of the Cutlass Slaying Star
173. Yuan Hong - God of the Four Waste Star
174. Sun He - God of the Five Poverties Star
175. Mei De - God of the Earthly Space Empty Star
176. Concubine Yang - Goddess of the Red Lovely Star
177. Hou Taiyi - God of the Danger Moon Swallow Constellation
178. Su Yuan - God of the Moon Fox Constellation
179. Xue Ding - God of the Moon Deer Constellation
180. Gao Yan - God of the Heavenly Leading Star
181. Huang Zhen - God of the Heavenly Gallant Star
182. Lu Chang - God of the Heavenly Planning Star
183. Ji Bing - God of the Heavenly Leisure Star
184. Yao Gongxiao - God of the Heavenly Courageous Star
185. Shi Kuai - God of the Heavenly Heroic Star
186. Sun Yi - God of the Heavenly Fierce Star

187. Li Bao - God of the Heavenly Mighty Star
188. Zhu Yi - God of the Heavenly Courageous Star
189. Chen Kan - God of the Heavenly Honorable Star
190. Li Xian - God of the Heavenly Rich Star
191. Fang Bao - God of the Heavenly Full Star
192. Zhang Xiu - God of the Heavenly Lonely Star
193. Li Hongren - God of the Heavenly Injured Star
194. Wang Longmao - God of the Heavenly Mystic Star
195. Deng Yu - God of the Heavenly Healthy Star
196. Li Xin - God of the Heavenly Dark Star
197. Xu Zhengdao - God of the Heavenly Safety Star
198. Dian Tong - God of the Heavenly Empty Star
199. Wu Xu - God of the Heavenly Swift Star
200. Ren Laiping - God of the Heavenly Different Star
201. Gong Qing - God of the Heavenly Demon Star
202. Shan Baizhao - God of the Heavenly Minute Star
203. Gao Ke - God of the Heavenly Retreating Star
204. Qi Chen - God of the Heavenly Longevity Star
205. Wang Hu - God of the Heavenly Sword Star
206. Bo Tong - God of the Heavenly Level Star
207. Yao Gong - God of the Heavenly Criminal Star
208. Tang Tianzheng - God of the Heavenly Damage Star
209. She Li - God of the Heavenly Defeat Star
210. Wen Jie - God of the Heavenly Imprisonment Star
211. Zhang Zhixiong - God of the Heavenly Clever Star
212. Bi De - God of the Heavenly Violent Star
213. Liu Da - God of the Heavenly Weeping Star
214. Chen Sanyi - God of the Heavenly Skillful Star
215. Chen Jizheng - God of the Earthly Leading Star
216. Huang Jingyuan - God of the Earthly Evil Star
217. Jia Cheng - God of the Earthly Courageous Star
218. Hu Baiyan - God of the Earthly Heroic Star
219. Lu Xiude - God of the Earthly Gallant Star
220. Sun Xiang - God of the Earthly Mighty Star
221. Wang Ping - God of the Earthly Strange Star
222. Bai Youhuan - God of the Earthly Fierce Star
223. Ge Gao - God of the Earthly Literature Star
224. Kao Ge - God of the Earthly Upright Star
225. Li Sui - God of the Earthly Secluded Star
226. Liu Hen - God of the Earthly Closing Star
227. Xia Xiang - God of the Earthly Strong Star
228. Yu Hui - God of the Earthly Dark Star
229. Bao Long - God of the Earthly Helping Star
230. Lu Zhi - God of the Earthly Gathering Star
231. Huang Bingqing - God of the Earthly Assisting Star
232. Zhang Qi - God of the Earthly Safety Star
233. Guo Yi - God of the Earthly Spirit Star
234. Jin Nandao - God of the Earthly Beast Star
235. Chen Yuan - God of the Earthly Minute Star
236. Che Kun - God of the Earthly Clever Star
237. Shang Chengdao - God of the Earthly Violent Star

238. Zhou Geng - God of the Earthly Silent Star
239. Qi Gong - God of the Earthly Mad Star
240. Huo Zhiyuan - God of the Earthly Rampant Star
241. Ye Zhong - God of the Earthly Flying Star
242. Gu Zong - God of the Earthly Walking Star
243. Li Chang - God of the Earthly Skillful Star
244. Fang Ji - God of the Earthly Bright Star
245. Xu Ji - God of the Earthly Progressive Star
246. Fan Huan - God of the Earthly Retreating Star
247. Zhuo Gong - God of the Earthly Full star
248. Kong Cheng - God of the Earthly Successful Star
249. Yao Jinxiu - God of the Earthly Round Star
250. Ning Sanyi - God of the Earthly Disappearing Star
251. Yu Zhi - God of the Earthly Different Star
252. Tong Zhen - God of the Theory Star
253. Yuan Dingxian - God of the Earthly Gallant Star
254. Wang Xiang - God of the Earthly Happy Star
255. Geng Yan - God of the Earthly Adroit Star
256. Xing Sanluan - God of the Earthly Swift Star
257. Jiang Zhong - God of the Earthly Suppressing Star
258. Kong Tianzhao - God of the Earthly Detaining Star
259. Li Yao - God of the Earthly Devil Star
260. Gong Qian - God of the Earthly Sprite Star
261. Duan Qing - God of the Earthly Tranquil Star
262. Men Daozheng - God of the Earthly Submitting Star
263. Zu Lin - God of the Earthly Secluded Star
264. Xiao Dian - God of the Earthly Space Star
265. Wu Siyu - God of the Earthly Lonely Star
266. Kuang Yu - God of the Earthly Complete Star
267. Cai Gong - God of the Earthly Short Star
268. Lan Hu - God of the Earthly Corner Star
269. Song Lu - God of the Earthly Imprisonment Star
270. Guan Bin - God of the Earthly Treasure Star
271. Long Cheng - God of the Earthly Level Star
272. Huang Wu - God of the Earthly Damage Star
273. Kong Daoling - God of the Earthly Slave Star
274. Zhang Huan - God of the Earthly Examining Star
275. Li Xin - God of the Earthly Wicked Star
276. Xu Shan - God of the Earthly Soul Star
277. Ge Fang - God of the Earthly Counting Star
278. Jiao Long - God of the Earthly Punishment Star
279. Qin Xiang - God of the Earthly Torture Star
280. Wu Yangong - God of the Earthly Strong Star
281. Fan Bin - God of the Earthly Inefficient Star
282. Ye Jingchang - God of the Earthly Healthy Star
283. Yao Ye - God of the Earthly Spending Star
284. Sun Ji - God of the Earthly Theft Star
285. Cheng Menggeng - God of the Earthly Dog Star
286. Chong Yingbiao - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
287. Gao Ping - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
288. Han Peng - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars

289. Li Ji - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
290. Wang Feng - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
291. Liu Jin - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
292. Wang Chu - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
293. Peng Jiuyuan - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
294. Li Sanyi - God of the Nine Brightly Shining Stars
295. Lu Xiong - God of the Water Virtue Star
296. Yang Zhen - God of the Water Leopard Star
297. Fang Jiqing - God of the Water Beaver Star
298. Sun Xiang - God of the Water Ape Star
299. Hu Daoyuan - God of the Water Earthworm Star
300. Yin Jiao - God of the Year
301. Yang Ren - God of the Sixty-Year Cycle
302. Wen Liang - God on Day Patrol
303. Qiao Kuan - God On Night Patrol
304. Han Dulong - God for Increasing Happiness
305. Xue Ehu - God for Decreasing Happiness
306. Fang Bi - God of Doctrine Preaching
307. Fang Xiang - God of the Vanguard
308. Li Bing - God on Yearly Duty
309. Huang Chengyi - God on Monthly Duty
310. Zhou Deng - God on Daily Duty
311. Liu Hong - God on Hourly Duty
312. Wang Mo - God to Guard the Precious Spiritual Firmament
313. Yang Sen - God to Guard the Precious Spiritual Firmament
314. Gao Youqian - God to Guard the Precious Spiritual Firmament
315. Li Xingba - God to Guard the Precious Spiritual Firmament
316. Zhao Gongming - Genuine God of the Profound Dragon Tiger Altar
317. Xiao Sheng - God of Welcoming Treasures
318. Cao Bao - God of Storing Valuables
319. Chen Jiugong - Envoy of Welcoming Wealth
320. Yao Shaosi - Fairy Officer of Good Market
321. Mo Liqing - Developing Heavenly King
322. Mo Lihong - Wide-eyed Heavenly King
323. Mo Lihai - Literature Heavenly King
324. Mo Lishou - National Protection Heavenly King
325. Zheng Lun - God of "heng"
326. Chen Qi - God of "ha"
327. Yu Hualong - Green Haze Prime King Controller of Smallpox
328. Lady Jin - Saint Queen to Protect Sickrooms
329. Yu Da - God of Smallpox in the East
330. Yu Zhao - God of Smallpox in the West
331. Yu Guang - God of Smallpox in the South
332. Yu Xian - God of Smallpox in the North
333. Yu De - God of Smallpox in the Center
334. High Firmament - Goddesses of the Golden Universe Muddling Dipper
335. Jade Firmament - Goddesses of the Golden Universe Muddling Dipper
336. Green Firmament - Goddesses of the Golden Universe Muddling Dipper
337. Shen Gongbao - Water-Dividing General

Every department was responsible for supervising one aspect of the human world.

When Ziya returned from the Investiture Altar, Fei Lian and E Lai were brought to him and Ziya ordered the soldiers to carry them to immediate execution.

Chapter 100

King Wu creates the States

The evil spirits, Fei Lian and E Lai, were canonized as gods that invariably bring about unsuccess and misfortune.

Ziya recommended to King Wu to reward subjected lands to his generals, officials, and relatives. However Li Jing along with his three sons, Thunder-quaker, Wei Hu and Yang Bliss, came to court to inform that they did not desire positions and wealth. They, for preference, asked to be liberated from service. Later the four ones also became gods. Also Jinzha, Muzha, and Nezha resolved to leave King Wu. All the seven ones gave priority to return to a life as in meditative seclusion. But before they left, King Wu feasted them.

To reach a decision about the enfeoffment, King Wu talked about with Ziya and a Duke of Zhou. In the following day King Wu enfeoffed many nobles, including Jiang Ziya. All the leaders of the individual states were named. King Wu designated seventy-two lords, each one received a title and feoff. They showed their gratitude and proceeded to their states.

At Mount Western Foothills Ziya was enfeoffed. In addition, he was conferred on the symbols of authority for his supervision over the other lords, which were a white banner and a yellow hatchet.

Five years later, Mount Western Foothills had become a strong, flourishing and passive state.

The Ten Crux Battle Formation

The Ten Crux¹⁷ Battle Formation is a set of ten fictional and unpractical battle formations employed by the Sky Lords of Golden Crab Isle. This is truly known as the Grand Old Master's trump card during his campaign against Jiang Ziya.

Sky Extinguishing Battle Formation

Sky Lord Qin — Within Lord Qin's battle formation, the forces of Sky, Earth, and Man are all combined as one. The straight must be mixed with the foul within this process. Due to the immense intensity of this formation, any mortal that is to enter will be immediately turned into nothing more than ash.

Earth Quaking Battle Formation

Sky Lord Zhou — Within Lord Zhou's battle formation, laws of geomancy and physics are employed. All varied forces such as fire, wind, and so forth, are invested into a single flag. Whenever the flag may wave, great fire and wind will spew forth. Any individual that may enter this formation will be burned alive and nothing more.

Howling-Gales Battle Formation

Sky Lord Teng — Within Lord Teng's battle formation, the wind plays a major role. Whenever the wind is to howl, thousands of knives and daggers will appear from all directions; not even the thickest of armor could withstand the sharpness.

Frozen-Glacier Battle Formation

Sky Lord Yuan — Within Lord Yuan's battle formation, glacial ice is present. On top of this "glacial ice" lays mountains of knives and swords guided by thousands of lightning bolts. Of course, survival is of little probability upon the entering of this formation.

Golden-Light Battle Formation

Sky Lady Luminous Glow — Within Lady Luminous Glow's battle formation, many giant mirrors will be fashioned atop poles. The great rays of the sun are harnessed on the surface of these mirrors and can be controlled by turning the poles angles. The heat is greater than imaginable, and thus death is inevitable.

17. The original translation writes "*crucible*" instead of "*crux*."

Blood–Curdling Battle Formation

Sky Lord Sun — Within Lord Sun's battle formation, fierce wind plays the primary role. While combining fierce winds with black sand, it is utterly impossible for any individual to escape the formation. While inside, their blood will continuously curdle until imminent death.

Blazing–Flame Battle Formation

Sky Lord White — Within Lord White's battle formation, the Thunder Fire, Rock Fire, and the Triple Whammy Fire are the three main forces of fire. Killing radiation and heat will be present within this blazing–fame formation, and thus not even the most durable of individuals could survive.

Plummeting–Soul Battle Formation

Sky Lord Yao — Within Lord Yao's battle formation, a straw effigy is present and truly needed. By bowing before his effigy, any specific individuals' soul can be stolen while their spirit is strangled. Certain death is obvious through this formation indeed.

Crimson–Water Battle Formation

Sky Lord Zhong — Within Lord Zhong's battle formation, a giant trigram platform is present. Within this platform, there are three magic gourds containing varied deadly fluid to burn away any unfortunate individual that happened to enter the formation.

Scarlet–Sand Battle Formation

Sky Lord Wang — Within Lord Wang's battle formation, great illusion is present. While the individual is seemingly walking across blood–red sand, they are truly walking across millions of tiny knives — as small as each grain of sand.