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## PROLOGUE

On 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1644, Manchu troops entered Beijing and put their own six year old Emperor on the throne in the Forbidden City under the reign title ‘Shun Zhi<sup>1</sup>’. The name of the Dynasty was changed by the conquerors from ‘Ming’ to ‘Qing’. Hence began the history of the Manchu rule in China which lasted for 267 years, ending in 1911.

Anti-Manchu feeling remained strong among the Han Chinese<sup>2</sup>. The resistance movement continued with vigour, igniting in the hearts of millions of Chinese people the hope of ‘Overthrowing the Qing and Restoring the Ming<sup>3</sup>’.

The story begins in the eighth year<sup>4</sup> of the reign of Kang Xi<sup>5</sup>. Kang Xi succeeded Shun Zhi and became the second Qing emperor to rule in China. It is 25 years since the Manchu Conquest of China. The literary inquisition is still in progress. Many well-known and respected Chinese scholars have been arrested, some are still imprisoned, and others have been executed, their properties confiscated and their family members beheaded, enslaved or exiled.

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<sup>1</sup> 顺治

<sup>2</sup> 汉人

<sup>3</sup> 反清复明

<sup>4</sup> 1669AD

<sup>5</sup> 康熙

## I

### THE BROTHERHOOD

It was drizzling in the city of Kaifeng. Summer rain had started early. Broad brimmed bamboo hats and straw rain capes filled the already congested streets. Kaifeng was an ancient city, the capital of seven dynasties in the early history of China. Although it had lost its capital status to Beijing, it was still bustling. Shops lined the streets. Hawk and falcon traders, horse traders, pearl and silk traders, salt merchants and peddlers flocked here for business. The city retained its importance as a trading centre because it was at the hub of the busy waterways, situated only a few miles south of the Yellow River.

Not far from the waterfront stood a two-storied tavern, a handsome structure with eaves, carved beams and decorative vermilion pillars. A pair of blue banners hung from a tall pole advertising 'Riverside Inn' and 'Top Quality Wine'. The inn was popular and every table was occupied with people eating and drinking. The shouts and laughter and the flurry of activity were such that no one paid attention when a Daoist priest and his acolyte walked in.

The Daoist was in his late thirties, tall and powerfully built, with a large mouth and bulbous nose. His eyebrows were bushy and his face half covered with wild, tangled beard. A black bandanna bound his head, and he wore a short black robe. His feet were clad in hemp sandals with many eyelets, and a pair of old bronze swords swung from his back. Following behind was his acolyte, a young lad of fifteen. The boy carried over his shoulder a cloth sack made from a large square scarf, the four corners tied in a knot in the centre. Anywhere else, the Daoist would have attracted the attention of the crowd. But this inn was used to accommodating strangers. From the four corners of the land traders gathered in Kaifeng, and there was no better place than the *Riverside Inn* to meet, talk business and take a bowl of wine. The hoteliers were accustomed to turning a blind eye.

The Daoist and his acolyte could not find a seat, so they climbed the stairs to the first floor and found a table by the window facing the waterfront. Food and wine arrived, steamed buns, noodles, braised beef, five-spice bean-curd slices, vegetables, and large bowls filled to the brim with wine. The Daoist was hungry and ate voraciously, gulping down bowl after bowl of wine. His young acolyte was gentle and well mannered. He picked delicately at the vegetables with his chopsticks, and slowly sipped his tea.

At the next table, five men were deep in conversation. A tall, fair-faced man wearing the dress of a scholar said, 'There have been sightings of the Third Prince.

Someone saw him in Guangzhou, some have seen him in Hangzhou. Only two months ago, someone saw him in Fujian.’ The scholar was nicknamed ‘The Iron-Fan Scholar’, because he used an iron fan as his weapon. Deadly darts were hidden in the ribs of the fan. With a flick of the hand, darts fired in all directions to hit their targets. The fan had razor sharp edges and could cut, strike or slide. It could be also used to strike vital energy points, paralysing opponents. The scholar was an ambitious young man, but he had been born at the wrong time and in the wrong place. His grandfather and father had served in the Ming courts. His father had told him that a man could not serve two masters, and so, being a filial son and a Ming Loyalist, the scholar could not serve the Manchus.

“Are you saying that Prince Zhu San<sup>6</sup>, the third son of Emperor Chong Zhen<sup>7</sup>, is alive?” the man next to him demanded. He was tall with a horse-like face, and wore a leather band round his head. On this early summer day, he was still wearing his leather boots. He was a horse trader from Shanxi and had earned his nickname ‘The Phantom Rider’, because of his superior riding skills and his ability to tame any horse. His weapon was a soft whip made from cow tendons which he disguised as a girdle round his waist.

The scholar nodded. “Rumour has it that when the city of Beijing fell to the rebels, Emperor Chong Zhen’s pregnant concubine of the Western Palace fled to Yunnan. There she gave birth to the Third Prince. Nobody had heard of him, but now suddenly he has appeared and claims to be the rightful heir to the Throne.’ He took a swig of wine. ‘When Li ZiCheng<sup>8</sup> and his rebel army captured Beijing, Emperor Chong Zhen hanged himself on Coal Hill.<sup>9</sup> That was the end of the Ming Dynasty. Li had the throne within his grasp. Who would have thought at the time that in less than two months, he would have lost his throne to the Manchus. And all because of the woman Chen YuanYuan<sup>10</sup>.”

Another man at the table spat on the floor. “That filthy traitor Wu SanGui’s<sup>11</sup> favourite concubine. When Li saw her in Beijing, he was struck by her beauty, and decided to keep her for himself. Wu went mad. Instead of fighting it out with Li, Wu went to the Tartar<sup>12</sup> barbarians for help. He led the barbarians to Beijing. He betrayed

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<sup>6</sup> 朱三太子

<sup>7</sup> 崇禎皇帝

<sup>8</sup> 李自成

<sup>9</sup> 煤山

<sup>10</sup> 陈圆圆

<sup>11</sup> 吴三桂

<sup>12</sup> 鞑子

his country for a whore!” The speaker was a short man with a swarthy complexion and high cheek bones. He wore a tattered bandanna and an old tunic which opened in front to reveal a well toned body and skin that gleamed like dark oil. He was a fisherman from Fujian, nicknamed ‘The Flying Fish’. His fighting skills were deadlier under water than on land.

“Slut! Son of turtle egg!” A booming voice caught the attention of other diners in the room. It was a butcher from Guangdong, a short stocky man nicknamed ‘The Hurricane’. His weapon was a nine-ring sabre which rattled loudly in action. The fisherman motioned to him to keep his voice down.

The five companions continued to eat and drink in silence. After a while, the fifth diner at the table grumbled, ‘I would like to chop him into a mince ball and feed him to the dogs!’ This was a hunter from Liaodong, a descendant of a Ming Commander stationed there before the Manchu occupation. His chest was tattooed with a two-headed green snake, and he gained his nickname ‘The Magical Archer’, because he was able to fire two arrows in quick succession so that they hissed like a two-headed snake in the air. ”Was Wu daft, handing our country on a plate to the Tartar barbarians? What did he think he was doing?”

The scholar smiled, “Dear brother, Wu was not stupid. He was only a Ming General then. He got rid of the rebel leader Li, and is now the Prince of the Western Region, answerable to only one man, the Emperor himself. He is many times wealthier and more powerful than before. If he had tried to challenge Li, who knows who would have come out victor? ‘A hill does not have room for two tigers’. It was a safe bet for Wu to get help from the Manchus to make sure Li was eliminated. Did Wu betray his country for a woman? Probably! Don’t forget that Chen YuanYuan is the most beautiful woman on earth. Since the beginning of time, heroes and beauties have always gone together. If a man’s ego is big, a hero’s ego is even bigger. Can you imagine him suffering the humiliation of losing his woman to another man?”

The fisherman said sourly, “The four Ming Generals have all done well for themselves. Since surrendering to the Tartar barbarians, they have all been made Princes of the Manchu Empire.”

“There are only three left now,” the scholar reminded him. “Both Kong YouDe<sup>13</sup> and Geng ZhongMing<sup>14</sup> died long ago. Kong left behind only a daughter. Geng ZhongMing is succeeded by his son, Geng JiMao<sup>15</sup>.”

“Yeah, I know,” replied the fisherman. “On top of mountains of privileges, the

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<sup>13</sup> 孔有德

<sup>14</sup> 耿仲明

<sup>15</sup> 耿继茂

three of them, Geng, Shang and Wu have been granted huge territories. Sometimes I wonder whether the Tartar barbarians can sleep at night after giving so much power and wealth to these three.”

The scholar laughed. “Mark my words, they will not last long. The Manchus need time to recover from their long years of war. For the moment they have neither the resources nor the energies to fight. It is convenient to let the three Chinese generals govern the south and keep in check the Han Chinese. But everyone hates these traitors. The Manchus do not see them as a threat to their rule yet.”

“Why did we lose, brother Li? We are a hundred times the number of Tartar barbarians. We have generals, scholars, ministers, yet we lost to the Tartars. Why?” the fisherman grumbled.

“The Ming Emperors did not trust their honest and capable ministers,” the scholar explained bitterly. “They let those half-wit, half-man eunuchs run the country’s affairs. The result is pretty obvious. The country began to rot like an apple from the core. The population was hungry and oppressed. The rebel chief, Li ZiCheng, became the people’s hope. People were excited at first and called him ‘The Daring King<sup>16</sup>’. But once in the Capital, Li let his soldiers kill, rape and pillage. He got caught up in the corrupt lifestyle of the court. People’s lives became as miserable as before. Li let the people down, and that’s why the Manchus were able to get rid of him. Even without Wu’s concubine, the country would have imploded.”

The fisherman lowered his voice. It happened that the Daoist priest sitting at the next table was adept in both External and Internal Kung Fu. He concentrated his mind and summoned his internal force so that he could hear every word.

“Listen,” said the fisherman. “The Tartar barbarians have started witch-hunting the scholars again. Two days ago, they captured our famous scholar Gu YanWu<sup>17</sup>, in a village near Kaifeng<sup>18</sup>. At this very moment Scholar Gu is being escorted by military guards to Beijing where he will be tried by the Board of Punishment. That’s only a rubber stamp and he’s certain to be found guilty. The man who ordered his arrest was none other than Regent Oboi<sup>19</sup>. Who’d dare go against his orders? Oboi is the most powerful man in the country. Even the Emperor himself would not dare challenge his decision. The prisoner and his guards will soon be at the waterfront where their boats are waiting for them. They will use the river route taking them north through Shandong Province to Tianjin. From there, they will travel by land to Beijing. We have our

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<sup>16</sup> 闯王

<sup>17</sup> 顾炎武

<sup>18</sup> 开封

<sup>19</sup> 鳌拜

hooked spears ready. We can use them to chop the legs of the guards' horses when they arrive, and rescue Scholar Gu. Are you with me?"

It was not long before a clattering of horses' hooves could be heard approaching the waterfront. The five men drew their weapons and rushed to the window. A detachment of 20 or 30 military guards, led by a smartly dressed captain, rode towards the inn. In their midst, a man in plain clothes sat awkwardly on a horse which was joined to two other horses, one on each side, with iron bars and chains. Scholar Gu was in his mid-fifties. His hair hung loosely on his shoulders, his beard grey and untidy. He was manacled, and he clung wearily to the reins of his horse as he was dragged along.

The hunter at the window of the inn drew his bow, and with a twang two arrows hit the guards either side of Scholar Gu. The five men pulled on broad brimmed bamboo hats and jumped from the window.

The horse-trader lashed out his whip to coil around the captain's neck, but the captain ducked and leapt from his horse so that instead the whip broke the horse's neck. The captain waved a halberd in his right hand, and on the shield in his left hand were nine inverted hooks. Again, the horse-trader whirled his whip round the captain. Faster and faster moved the whip, round and round the captain danced and parried with his shield. The horse trader took a step forward, and the tip of his whip caught on the hooks of the shield. The captain, seizing the opportunity, thrust his halberd. The halberd was within an inch of the horse-trader's throat when it was knocked aside by an object. It was a chopstick which flew like an arrow from a window of the tavern. The horse-trader pulled a dagger from the handle of his whip and stabbed the hand holding the shield. The captain let the shield fall.

The scholar tackled the two lieutenants. One lieutenant bore a trident with a three-pronged metal head, the prongs flat with sharp edges. The other carried a pair of 'Tiger Head Double Hooks' fitted with a crescent over the handle, designed to cut at very short range. The trident and hook together were effective for cutting, stabbing, hooking and blocking. The scholar himself held a spear with a steel tip shaped like a brush pen in his right hand and the iron fan in his left. He used his spear to block the trident and his fan to strike at the Tiger Head Hook.

The captain continued to attack the horse-trader with his halberd. The horse-trader ducked and darted to disentangle his whip which was still caught in the captain's shield. The captain moved quickly and again he aimed his halberd at the horse-trader, but the halberd dropped from his hand when he was struck a second time, by a dart from the scholar's fan. The scholar had seen the horse trader in trouble, and fired the dart to pierce the captain's shoulder and force him to drop the halberd. The scholar performed a feint, dodged the two lieutenants, and leapt to the rescue of the horse-trader. With his

fan he struck the ‘Spirit Tower’<sup>20</sup> vital energy point on the captain’s back. The captain went down, unable to move.

The lieutenants chased after the scholar. The horse-trader, his whip now retrieved, lashed out at them. He coiled his whip around one lieutenant’s waist, hauled him into the air, and with his left hand, thrust his dagger into his chest, killing him instantly. He cracked his whip again and the other lieutenant turned and ran.

The butcher was responsible for rescuing Scholar Gu. Holding his nine-ring sabre, he jumped from the window of the tavern directly onto Scholar Gu’s horse. The two dead guards, arrows in their backs, sat either side on their horses, feet still in stirrups and their bodies swaying. With two mighty blows, the butcher cracked the iron chains linking the horses and rode off with the scholar.

The fisherman and the hunter dealt with the remaining guards. They used their hooked spears to chop the horses’ legs so that horses and guards fell like dominoes. The horse trader gave a whistle and five black stallions came galloping towards him. The remaining four men jumped on to the horses, one riderless horse following behind, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Back inside the tavern, the Daoist priest was doubled over with pain. It had taken all his internal force to fling the chopstick which saved the horse trader. The exertion had split open his wound and blood seeped from his chest. The young acolyte bent over him. “Are you all right?”

“I’ll be fine. The men are heading for the East Gate of the City. They should be safe there at the Jewish Settlement. I think the scholar with the iron fan is related to one of the Jewish clans.”

“Who were those men?”

“Experts from the Martial Arts Fellowship, *haohans* from the Brotherhood of ‘River and Lake’.”

“Really? I have read in the ‘The Water Margin’<sup>21</sup> about the 108 outlaws of Mount Liang<sup>22</sup>. *Haohans* are brave men who would go through fire and water for their honour and stand together to live and die with their friends. But that’s all I know about them. Do they belong to the Martial Arts Fellowship?”

“The Martial Arts Fellowship includes all those who practise kung fu. It is part of the Brotherhood of River and Lake.”

“I have heard that the ‘River and Lake’ is a shadowy world with an underground culture,” said the young acolyte disapprovingly.

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<sup>20</sup> 灵台穴

<sup>21</sup> 水浒传

<sup>22</sup> 梁山泊



“Yes, you could say that. The Brotherhood includes both knights-errant and hardened criminals. That’s why the world of ‘River and Lake’ is fraught with danger because you never know whose path you may cross.”

The young acolyte thought for a moment. “Even if the Brotherhood does include knights-errant, it is still an outlaw fraternity. A knight-errant may save a poor girl by killing the villain, but by taking matters into his own hands, he is an outlaw.”

“Yes, it is a world of vagabonds and outlaws. However, the Brotherhood bonds those who share the same understanding and who abide by the same code of ethics. They come from all segments of society. They can be storytellers, performing acrobats, medicine peddlers, bodyguards, captains, sergeants, monks, nuns, scholars, merchants, bandits...virtually any one.”

“If the Brotherhood can accommodate criminals, I am surprised that it has a ‘code of ethics’.”

“We in the Brotherhood have our own rules of conduct: loyalty and honour are the two most important things. You do not betray your friends; you do not break your promises; you do not play dirty; you do not harm the old, the sick, young children and pregnant women. The outlaws of Mount Liang are regarded as *haohans* because they put their honour and loyalty before their own lives.”

“What happens if someone breaks the rules?”

“He would be despised as ‘scum of River and Lake’. Every righteous man in the Brotherhood would then have a duty to get rid of him.”

“Who is the Brotherhood leader then?” the acolyte asked.

“There’s no leader now. No one has the clout to rally all those in the Brotherhood to follow him. To be a leader you need to be champion in martial arts. You have to prove you’re the best. Until there is a formal contest no one will emerge as champion. The Brotherhood is dominated by the Martial Arts Fellowship. The champion of the Fellowship is automatically leader of the Brotherhood.”

“Just because someone is a champion doesn’t mean he is also a good leader. He could be a bad man.”

“If a leader cannot command respect, the *haohans* in the Brotherhood will not listen to him. He’ll be like a king without subjects.’ He sighed, ‘If we had a leader, we would be a force unto ourselves. We could take on the Tartar barbarians and restore the Ming Dynasty.’”

The acolyte looked up at the Daoist. “So do you know those men who rescued the scholar?”

“They are probably followers of Koxinga<sup>23</sup>, the leader of the anti-Manchu resistance.”

“You mean Zheng ChengGong<sup>24</sup>.”

“His surname was Zheng, but he was granted the use of the Imperial Surname ‘Zhu’ by a Ming Prince in recognition of his loyalty to the Ming Empire. Out of respect, people called him ‘Koxinga’, meaning the ‘Lord with the Imperial Surname’.”

The young acolyte was surprised by the way his teacher’s face lit up at the mention of Koxinga. ‘You admired that Zheng ChengGong, didn’t you?’

“Yes, I did.” The Daoist exclaimed. “Every Chinese admired Koxinga. He was our hero. He fought the Tartar barbarians and refused to surrender. He took his army to Taiwan, drove the red hairy devils from the island, and continued the resistance movement there. The Tartar barbarians were powerless against him.”

”Red hairy devils. You mean the Dutch?”

“Could be. They were from somewhere in the west.”

“But Zheng ChengGong died seven years ago,” the pupil pointed out.

“When he died, he was succeeded by his son...er..”

”Zheng Jing<sup>25</sup>,” his pupil reminded him.

“Yes, Zheng Jing inherited the title ‘Prince of Yanping<sup>26</sup>’ from his father. He has vowed to continue the resistance movement and lead the Chinese to overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming.”

It was the first time the acolyte had seen such animation in his teacher. “Taiwan was part of China before the foreign occupations, right?”

“Right, but Taiwan has not submitted to the Tartar barbarians. Never! The Taiwanese people are Ming loyalists and support the resistance movement.”

“Aren’t they afraid of the Qing army?” asked the acolyte.

The Daoist laughed. ”The Taiwan Strait separates the island from the mainland. Taiwan has battleships and men who’d hold off any attack from the sea. The Tartars can ride on horseback, but ask them to cross the Strait, they’ll be dead fish. The Tartar barbarians can’t swim!”

“It is only a matter of time before Taiwan is fully integrated with the mainland. Taiwan is and shall always be a part of the Qing empire,” said the young acolyte with a seriousness beyond his years.

The Daoist shrugged and called for the bill. Then he rose from his seat, covering

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<sup>23</sup> 国姓爷

<sup>24</sup> 郑成功

<sup>25</sup> 郑经

<sup>26</sup> 延平王

his chest wound with the cloth sack, and together with his acolyte he left the tavern.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTES

(All weights and measures, units, time and dates are converted to English standards. The actual age of the characters is used instead of the Chinese age. Chinese age could be one or two years older than this age.)

### PROLOGUE

#### 0.1 *Han Chinese*

Han Chinese people are Ethnic Chinese. They are supposedly descendants of the Yellow Emperor who reigned from 2696BC to 2589 BC.

### I

### THE BROTHERHOOD

#### 1.1 *The City of Kaifeng*<sup>27</sup>

Qin Guan, a poet of the Song Dynasty (960AD to 1279AD), described Kaifeng as “surrounded by level land in all directions, with a convergence of roads which connect it with the Chu river to the south, the Han river to the west, the Zhao river to the north, and the Qi river to the east....These waterways teem with boats, the bow of one touching the stern of another, while men, carts and animals jam the roads in an endless flow from every corner of the country.” (Xu Xin: The Jews of Kaifeng, China.)

#### 1.2 *Beijing*

When Ming dynasty was first established in 1368AD, the capital was moved from Dadu<sup>28</sup> (meaning ‘The Great Capital’) to Nanjing. The name ‘Dadu’ was then changed to ‘Beiping’<sup>29</sup> by the founding emperor of Ming. In 1406 when Emperor Yong Le ascended the Ming throne, he changed the name ‘Beiping’ to ‘Beijing’. In 1421 he moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing. Nanjing means ‘The Southern Capital’ and Beijing means ‘The Northern Capital’. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Beijing was also known as ‘Jingshi’<sup>30</sup> meaning ‘The Capital’.

In 1927 Beijing was renamed ‘Beiping’ when the Nationalist Party established the capital in Nanjing. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949, the People’s Republic of China was formally established. The capital moved back to Beiping and the name changed back to ‘Beijing’.

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<sup>27</sup> 开封

<sup>28</sup> 大都

<sup>29</sup> 北平

<sup>30</sup> 京师

### 1.3 *Tartar Barbarians*

Manchus were called ‘Da-Zi<sup>31</sup>’ by Han Chinese, meaning ‘barbarians from the Tartar race’.

### 1.4 *Li ZiCheng*<sup>32</sup>.(1606AD – 1645AD)

He came from a poor rural family in Shaanxi, and later became leader of an insurrectionary peasant army. His rebel army grew in size and seized Beijing on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1644. The Ming Emperor Chong Zhen committed suicide. Li had established his kingdom in Xian a few months earlier, and called it ‘Da Shun<sup>33</sup>’.

### 1.5 *Wu SanGui*<sup>34</sup> & *Chen YuanYuan*<sup>35</sup>

Li captured the Ming general Wu SanGui’s father to force Wu to surrender but Wu was hesitant. At the time Wu had the important job of guarding the north-east to hold off the invading Manchus. It was only when Wu’s favourite concubine, Chen YuanYuan, was abducted by a general of Li ZiCheng that Wu defected to the Manchus. Wu joined forces with the Manchu Regent, Dorgan, and defeated Li at Shanhaiguan<sup>36</sup>. Li retreated to Beijing and retaliated by beheading Wu’s father.

### 1.6 *Death of Li ZiCheng*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1644, Li proclaimed himself ‘Emperor’ under the reign title ‘Yong Chang’. The next day, on the 4<sup>th</sup> June, he fled Beijing. Li first fled southwest to Xian, then to Wuchang, and finally a year later, in the summer of 1645, he was surrounded by pursuing Manchus in the mountains of Jiangxi Province, known as the Nine Palaces Mountain<sup>37</sup>, where he died. He was said either to have committed suicide or to have been beaten to death by villagers by mistake when he was trying to steal some food.

### 1.7 *Chen YuanYuan.*

She was popularly known as the woman who brought down the Ming Dynasty. She was an orphan born in Jiangsu and sold by her adoptive father to a brothel to become a singsong girl. Her beauty, songs and dances became well known in Jiangnan<sup>38</sup> She was first procured for Emperor Chong Zhen when his favourite concubine died, but the offer was declined. She was then presented to Wu SanGui who

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<sup>31</sup> 鞑子

<sup>32</sup> 李自成

<sup>33</sup> 大顺

<sup>34</sup> 吴三桂

<sup>35</sup> 陈圆圆

<sup>36</sup> 山海关

<sup>37</sup> Jiugongshan Mountain 九宫山

<sup>38</sup> Jiangnan 江南 is a geographic area south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The region comprises the southern parts of Jiangsu and Anhui provinces, and the northern parts of Jiangxi and Zhejiang provinces.

fell for her at first sight and made a payment of one thousand taels of silver as his betrothal gift to the bride. Immediately afterwards, Wu had to rush back to the northern front on orders of Emperor Chong Zhen to defend Ningyuan and Shanhaiguan pass against the Manchu troops. Before Wu and Chen YuanYuan could meet again, Beijing had fallen to the rebels. Chen YuanYuan was abducted by a general of Li ZiCheng. The general had fallen for her beauty and had made her his concubine.

According to popular tales which are still believed by some today, Chen YuanYuan was abducted on order of Li ZiCheng who heard about her beauty and wished to claim her for himself. When Wu heard this, he was so furious that he defected to the Manchus to get his lady back, and so caused the downfall of the Ming Dynasty.

### 1.8 *Hooked Spear*

This hooked spear was a weapon invented by the Song<sup>39</sup> General Yue Fei<sup>40</sup> to chop off the legs of the enemy's chained horses, and it had enabled him to defeat the invading 'Jins'<sup>41</sup>.

### 1.9 *'Jins' and 'Manchus'*<sup>42</sup>.

The 'Jins' were ancestors of the Manchus. They originally came from the Jurchen tribes which settled in the vast territorial region of Manchuria in north-east Asia. At the time, Manchuria bordered Russia in the north, Mongolia in the west, China in the south and south-west, Korea in the south-east, and was separated from Japan in the east by the Sea of Japan. It was traditionally the homeland of the Qidans<sup>43</sup>, Jurchens<sup>44</sup>, Tungus<sup>45</sup> and Eastern Turks<sup>46</sup>. After the Manchu Conquest, Manchuria became part of China. Now, the region previously known as Manchuria is divided between China and Russia, the Russian half known as 'Outer Manchuria' and the Chinese half as 'Inner Manchuria'. The Chinese half comprises the provinces of Jilin, Heilongjiang and Liaoning.

In 1616, Nurhaci reunited the Jurchen tribes and created the 'Later Jin Dynasty'<sup>47</sup>. Abahai<sup>48</sup> who succeeded him was aware of the Chinese hatred of the 'Jins' who had invaded China in the twelfth century and had occupied northern China for over one hundred years. So when he became emperor in 1636, he changed the name of the Dynasty to 'Great Qing'<sup>49</sup> and banned the use of 'Jins' in favour of

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<sup>39</sup> Southern Song Dynasty 南宋 (1127AD-1279AD)

<sup>40</sup> Yue Fei 岳飞(1103AD-1142AD)

<sup>41</sup> 金人

<sup>42</sup> 满族人

<sup>43</sup> 契丹人

<sup>44</sup> 女真人

<sup>45</sup> 通古斯人

<sup>46</sup> 突厥人

<sup>47</sup> 後金

<sup>48</sup> Aka Huang Taiji 皇太极

<sup>49</sup> 大清

‘Manchus’.

In 1643 Abahai died without setting foot in the Forbidden City. The Manchu Conquest was led by his younger brother Dorgon eight months later. The Manchu troops entered the Forbidden City on 6 June 1644. Abahai’s ninth son, Emperor Shun Zhi<sup>50</sup>, became the first Qing Emperor to rule in China. At the time, Shun Zhi was six years old and his uncle Dorgon became the Regent.

After the Manchus entered Beijing, the Ming Princes continued to fight in the south. It was only in 1662 when the last Ming Pretender, the Prince of Gui<sup>51</sup>, was executed that the Ming Empire came to an end, and China was unified once again under the Manchus.

### 1.10 *Haohan*<sup>52</sup>

Literal meaning of *Haohan* is ‘good fella’. *Haohans* are brave men who put their honour and loyalty before their lives.

### 1.11 *Taiwan and Koxinga*.

Marshall Zheng ChengGong<sup>53</sup>’s hometown was in Fujian Province, but he was born in Japan. His father Zheng ZhiLong<sup>54</sup> was originally a maritime merchant and a pirate, and was eventually offered amnesty by the Ming court and rose to the rank of Regional Commander. The Manchus seized Beijing in 1644, but the Ming princes were fighting back in the south-eastern coastal areas. The father Zheng ZhiLong arranged for his son Zheng ChengGong to serve the Ming Pretender, Prince of Tang. However, the father was also an opportunist who defected to the Manchus in 1646 and opened the way for the capture and execution of Prince of Tang<sup>55</sup>. The son Koxinga greatly disapproved of his father’s doings. They went their separate ways.

Zheng ChengGong was popularly known as Koxinga<sup>56</sup>, a Dutch romanization of the Chinese title ‘*Guo Xing Ye*’ meaning ‘The Lord with the Imperial Surname’. He was given the honour to use the Imperial surname ‘Zhu<sup>57</sup>’ by the Prince of Tang because of his loyalty to Ming. The Prince further bestowed upon him the title ‘Field Marshall of the Punitive Expedition’. After the death of Prince of Tang, Koxinga supported another Ming Pretender, the Prince of Gui, who awarded him the title ‘Prince of Yanping<sup>58</sup>’.

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<sup>50</sup> 顺治

<sup>51</sup> 桂王

<sup>52</sup> 好汉

<sup>53</sup> 郑成功

<sup>54</sup> 郑芝龙

<sup>55</sup> 唐王

<sup>56</sup> Koxinga/*Guo Xing Ye* 国姓爷

<sup>57</sup> 朱

<sup>58</sup> 延平王

Koxinga continued to wage war against the Qing armies and raided the coastal regions of Fujian, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Jiangsu. He had his operational bases in Xiamen and Jinmen. In 1659 he made the fatal decision of attacking Nanjing and suffered a huge defeat. He gave up Xiamen and Jinmen and turned his attention to Taiwan. At the time Taiwan was occupied by the Dutch.

In 1661, Koxinga's father and brother were killed by the Manchus when Koxinga refused to surrender. His Japanese mother was raped by Manchu soldiers while on her way to join Koxinga in Taiwan and she committed suicide. To rub salt into the wound, the Manchus desecrated Koxinga's family ancestral graves. All this greatly angered Koxinga. He determined to fight the Manchus to the end.

In April 1661, Koxinga and his army landed in Taiwan. After nine months of intense fighting, in February 1662, the Dutch surrendered and left the island, ending 38 years of Dutch rule in Taiwan. The Dutch left Koxinga 'trade goods and cash estimated to be worth 1 million ounces of silver.' (Jonathan Spence: *The Search for Modern China*)

Koxinga died four months later in June 1662 at the age of 38. There were differing opinions regarding his sudden death. Just before his death, he had learned that his eldest son, Zheng Jing<sup>59</sup>, was having an affair with his younger brother's wet nurse and the relationship had produced a child. Koxinga ordered the child to be killed but the order was not carried out. Koxinga died shortly afterwards. Some said that he killed himself. Some said that he died in a fit of madness after he learned of his son's affair. But the most likely cause of his death was 'malaria' which was prevalent in Taiwan at the time.

The former name of Taiwan was Formosa. The Portuguese were the first westerners to arrive in the island at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They were impressed by the beauty of the island and named it 'Ilha Formosa' meaning 'beautiful island'. However the Portuguese withdrew from the island and chose instead to keep Macao, a tiny piece of land at the tip of the peninsula 70 km south-west of Hong Kong and 145 km from Guangzhou, as their main operational base in south-east Asia.

After the Portuguese, the Dutch came to Taiwan along with the Spaniards. The Dutch drove out the Spaniards and occupied the Island for 38 years before they too were driven out by Koxinga.

In ancient Chinese documents, Taiwan was referred to by various names including 'Peng Lai', or 'Liu Chiu'. The name 'Taiwan' was termed near the end of the Ming Dynasty

### **1.12 Chinese Wine**

Chinese wine is a form of alcohol produced from distilled fermented grains, millet, and rice.

### **1.13 Kang Xi's mother and the Tong (Tongiya) Clan**

Whether Kang Xi's mother was of Chinese descent has been subject to academic arguments. The facts are the Tong family lived among the Chinese for generations and the grandfather Tong Yangqian was once a Ming general. He later surrendered to the Manchus and was assigned to the Chinese

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<sup>59</sup> 郑经



Plain Blue Banner.

His grand-daughter became a concubine of Emperor Shun Zhi and she subsequently gave birth to a boy who later became Emperor Kang Xi. It was only in 1688 that the Tong clan was raised from the Chinese Plain Blue Banner to the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner. The family surname was changed to 'Tongiya'.

The switch to Manchu banners has given rise to the argument that the Tong clan was of 'Jurchen' origin and that the family's surname was originally 'Tongigya', clearly a Manchu surname. The popular belief is that Kang Xi was 50% Chinese (from the mother's side), 25% Manchu and 25% Mongol (from the father's side).

## II YIN AND YANG

### 2.1 *Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine.*

Acupuncture is based on the theories of *Yin* and *Yang* (literary meaning of *Yin* is shade and *Yang* is light), the *Qi* channels and their interconnection with the internal organs, the Five Viscera and Six bowels (The five viscera are the heart, spleen, lungs, liver, and kidneys. The six bowels are the stomach, bladder, gall bladder, large intestines, small intestines, and the Triple Burners '*SanJiao*'). There are numerous energy points on the external pathway of the *Qi* channels. Originally only 365 such points were identified, but the number identified has now increased to about 2,000. (Stephen Barrett, M.D.: Acupuncture, Qigong and 'Chinese Medicine')

The treatise on *Yin* and *Yang* is expounded in an early medical book known as 'The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine'. This is the earliest and the most important book on Chinese medicine. It develops the theory that a man's health and illness are related to the balance or imbalance of the *Yin* and *Yang* in his body. It inspires the use of moxibustion and acupuncture to cure illnesses. Although the book is attributed to the Yellow Emperor who reigned from 2696BC to 2589 BC, many scholars believe the book was written at a much later date, around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

### 2.2 *Daoism*<sup>60</sup>

Daoism is China's ethnic religion with its own cosmology and a pantheon of deities. Its exact date or place of birth is not clear. The Daoists believe the religion started in China some 4700 years ago when revelations of the *Dao* or the Way were first made to the Yellow Emperor by Guang ChengZi<sup>61</sup>, an incarnate of Laozi<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> 道教

<sup>61</sup> 广成子

<sup>62</sup> 老子

The Daoist Bible, the *Daodejing*<sup>63</sup> or The Way and Its Power, is attributed to the work of Laozi, an archivist during the late Zhou Dynasty (1046BC to 221BC) around the 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Laozi is generally accepted as the Father of Daoism. According to Daoist myths, the universe began with the *Dao* and Laozi is the incarnation of the *Dao* or the Way itself.

Through the ages, the Daoist religion evolved, constantly changing, adapting and reinventing itself. The Daoist religion itself is not a unified religion and consists of a combination of teachings. There are much borrowings or rather mutual borrowings between Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the Daoist fusion of Buddhism and Confucianism was so thorough that its pantheon of deities had included the Daoist Immortals, Buddhist bodhisattvas and Confucian sages. (Isabelle Robinet: Taoism; L.Kohn: Taoist Mystical Philosophy: The Scripture of Western Ascension; Eva Wong: The Shambhala Guide to Taoism)

**Daoist Philosophy.** Daoism is basically concerned with good health, longevity and immortality. These aims can be achieved by following Daoist ideology and practices.

The fundamental philosophical concept is ‘wuwei<sup>64</sup>’ or ‘non-intervention’. It advocates a state of harmony between human, heaven and earth by letting nature take its own course without human intervention. It rejects established values as being too artificial and favours ‘*ziran*<sup>65</sup>’, which means natural or spontaneous. The ideals of a Daoist sage are therefore total serenity and tranquillity of the mind bereft of emotions and passions, withdrawal from the affairs of the world and following the course of nature without intervention. Daoist sages are often hermits living in seclusion in mountain caves.

**Daoist Practices.** Daoist practices can be roughly divided into External Alchemy and Internal Alchemy. Most Daoists practise both Internal Alchemy and External Alchemy. External Alchemy involves the use of furnaces and cauldrons with which the ingredients, mainly minerals and herbs, are compounded into a pill or elixir which is believed to bring immortality. In Daoist Internal Alchemy, it is believed that all essential ingredients are found inside the human body which can be refined and which can achieve the same effect of longevity without the external use of elixir. The Daoist Internal Alchemy is therefore concerned with the cultivation of *Qi* and *Qi* flow.

**Qi, Yin and Yang.** The universe, according to Daoists, develops from a single component, the Primordial Breath<sup>66</sup> (*Yuan-Qi*). The creation began when the Primordial Breath was split into *Yang* and *Yin*. ‘The *Yang* was a pure, light breath which moved upward and created Heaven. The *Yin* was an opaque, heavy breath which moved downward and formed the Earth’ (Isabelle Robinet: Taoism). The make up of the human being is parallel to the universe. Each human being is a small universe and is therefore made up of *Yin* and *Yang*. The theories of *Qi* based on the pattern of *Yin* and *Yang* give rise to the development of the style of kung fu known as Internal Kung Fu as opposed to External Kung Fu.

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<sup>63</sup> 道德经

<sup>64</sup> 无为

<sup>65</sup> 自然

<sup>66</sup> 元气

### 2.3 *Qi and Qi Flow*

*Qi* is the vital and intrinsic energy in a person's body. Like blood which flows in blood vessels, *Qi* flows in *Qi* channels. There are twelve primary *Qi* channels, eight extraordinary *Qi* vessels, and twelve divergent channels. There are also numerous smaller energy pathways branching from the energy channels. The twelve *Qi* channels are connected internally to the organs and externally to the limbs. The *Qi* channels are divided into six *Yin* channels and six *Yang* channels. The six *Yin* channels are connected to the six *Yin* organs and the six *Yang* channels are connected to the six *Yang* organs. Each *Yang* channel of the hand is paired with a *Yin* channel of the hand, and each *Yang* channel of the leg is paired with a *Yin* channel of the leg.

**Energy Points.** All the energy points lie on the external pathway of the channels. Of the eight extraordinary vessels, only the Conception Vessel and Governing Vessel have energy points of their own.

**Extraordinary vessels.** The eight extraordinary vessels have no direct connection with the internal organs. They link the twelve *Qi* channels and supplement the function of circulating *Qi* throughout the body. They also act as reservoirs as they absorb excess *Qi* from the primary channels and return it when *Qi* becomes deficient.

Of all the *Qi* channels in the body, the most important are the Conception Vessel and the Governing Vessel. While the other channels are compared to streams and lakes, these two vessels are like seas. The Conception Vessel is the 'sea of *Yin* energy' to where all *Yin* channels flow. The Governing channel is the 'sea of *Yang* energy' to where all the *Yang* channels flow.

**Energy Fields.** The vital energy, *Qi*, is accumulated and stored in energy fields which are the meeting points of *Qi*. The most important being the *Dantian*<sup>67</sup> located two inches below the naval. The two other energy fields on the Conception Vessel are the *Shanzhong*<sup>68</sup> located above the heart and the *Huiyin*<sup>69</sup> located just before the anus. There are also two important energy fields along the Governing Vessel, the *Mingmen*<sup>70</sup> located at the centre of the back waist and *Baihui*<sup>71</sup> located at the crown of the head.

### 2.4 *Fighting Poses*

Each kung fu style has a practice routine which is made up of a series of fighting poses. The number of fighting poses varies with each style of kung fu. There is no minimum or maximum number of fighting poses. Fighting poses can be joined together in sequences and the sequences can be varied. Each pose is given a descriptive phrase. For example, 'Dragon And Tiger Meet', 'Dragon Rises From Sea' or

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<sup>67</sup> 丹田

<sup>68</sup> 膻中

<sup>69</sup> 会阴

<sup>70</sup> 命门

<sup>71</sup> 百会

'Roving Dragon Plays In Water' are some of the basic fighting poses in the Shaolin kung fu style 'The Five Animals Set'.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Dark Way (黑道)** A section of the Brotherhood of River and Lake whose members were mostly hardened criminals and convicts. They included bandits, robbers, thieves, pirates, smugglers, drug dealers, arsonists, assassins and gangsters.

**Haohan (好汉)** The literal meaning is ‘good fellas’. These men were respected by the Brotherhood of ‘River and Lake’ for their bravery, honour and loyalty.

**Kung Fu Terms** (1) External Kung Fu (外功) trains a person in the skills and techniques of a kung fu style. The training develops the muscles, tendons, bones and physical fitness.

(2) Internal Kung Fu (内功) develops and treats the *Qi* (internal energy) in the body.

(3) *Qinggong* (轻功) means ‘the art of lightness’. The body is trained to be ‘light as feather’ so that a person can run at great speed, leap high and drop down softly on the tip of the toe.

(4) Closing or Opening Energy Points (点穴, 解穴) is a specialized skill in martial arts. When pressure is applied to a person’s energy point, he can be immobilised or even die. Similarly, the ‘closed’ energy point can be ‘opened’ or re-activated so that the person can move again.

(5) Energy Points<sup>72</sup> (穴) These are acupuncture points located on the external pathway of the *Qi* channels.

(6) Fighting Pose (武功招数) Each kung fu style has a practice routine which is made up of a series of fighting poses. There is no minimum or maximum number of fighting poses. Fighting poses can be joined together in sequences and the sequences can be varied. Each pose is given a descriptive phrase, for example ‘Black Tiger Steals Heart’, a straight punch at the chest from Shaolin kung fu.

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<sup>72</sup> The English names of the energy points are taken from the book ‘A Manual of Acupuncture’ by Peter Deadman and Mazin Al-Khafaji with Kevin Baker

**Martial Arts Fellowship (武林)** Include all practitioners of martial arts.

**Martial Arts Levels (武术阶段)**

Level 1 *Jing* 精 (Essence) – to train the muscles, tendons and bones. This leads to the development of External Kung Fu (*Wai-Gong* 外功 ).

Level 2 *Qi* 气 (Internal Energy) – to develop, treat and refine the internal energy. This leads to the development of Internal Kung Fu (*Nei-Gong* 内功).

Level 3 *Shen* 神 (Mind and Spirit) – to attain spiritual fulfilment. In Buddhism, one is said to have reached ‘enlightenment’, and in Daoism, one is in union with the *Dao* or Way.

**River and Lake (*Jianghu* 江湖)** ‘River and Lake’ is the literary translation of the Chinese term ‘*Jianghu*’. It was an alternative world which existed in parallel to the Confucian establishment of the day. In a narrow sense, it was an underground world of outlaws and vagabonds. But in the wider sense, it embraced people from all segments of society who were bonded by the same code of conduct. In this alternative world, relationships of honour, loyalty, love, hatred and revenge were resolved in accordance with the ways of the ‘River and Lake’, outside the legal framework or norms of a Confucian society.

**River and Lake, Brotherhood of** People in the world of ‘River and Lake’ were regarded as brothers and sisters, sharing the same understanding and observing the same code of conduct.

## II

### YIN<sup>73</sup> AND YANG<sup>74</sup>

It was Flint's fifteenth birthday. He had come to Shaolin Monastery at the age of six. As a small child he had lived in a mountain cave, a labyrinth of winding and twisting tunnels providing a natural refuge from strangers. Everything in the cave came from round about. Wooden tables and chairs were fashioned from oak trees. Bowls and dishes were seashells, and mirrors were polished stones. The cave had little natural light, but the ceilings were scattered with pearls which shone like evening stars. Coloured stones littered the cave floor: red, green, amber, blue and black. He was too young to recognise these precious gems which men would die to lay their hands on.

There were four of them living in the cave. There was the beautiful woman whom Flint called *Shifu*<sup>75</sup>; his *Shifu's Shifu*, Miao Shan *ShiTai*<sup>76</sup>; and there was his dear old nanny. Flint did not know his parents. He adored his *Shifu* and would like to think that she was his mother. Although she kept her distance, he felt close to her. Her eyes betrayed her emotion, tender and loving whenever she looked at him. They would not tell him about his parents, saying only that one day he would meet them.

For a time, he did not even have a name. He came to be called 'Flint' by Miao Shan *ShiTai* because he liked to collect flint stones, fascinated by their rainbow colours. He would line them up in his corner of the cave. Under the glow of the pearl light, the stones captured the colours of the sky.

The old nanny went away twice a year to replenish supplies. Whenever she came back she brought something for him. Sometimes it was a mountain hare, sometimes a toad and once, a sea-lion and a golden-haired monkey. He liked to ride a giant tortoise under the water and play ball with the sea lion. He played with his sparrowhawk which was trained to zoom in at his whistle. Other sparrowhawks were kept in the aviary behind the cave, but his was the brightest and swiftest of them all. The sparrowhawks were fitted with steel tips at their beaks and claws.

Flint grew up with his animal friends. Once he rose from his bed an hour before dawn, and imitated the morning crow of the cock. The birds in the garden responded

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<sup>73</sup> 阴

<sup>74</sup> 阳

<sup>75</sup> *Shifu* (师父) means Teacher

<sup>76</sup> *ShiTai* (师太) means Abbess

and woke the others in the cave. His mischief brought him an extra hour of exercise. He overheard Miao Shan *ShiTai* say to his *Shifu*, “The child is intelligent and creative. He has good bone structure. One day he will become a great martial artist.” By imitating the sounds of animals, Flint unwittingly built up the *Qi* in his body and he surprised his *Shifu* by his progress in kung fu exercises. The breathing, rhythm, pitch and volume enhanced his *Qi* development. The most powerful use of sound in martial arts is the ‘Lion’s Roar’, which if exercised by someone with immense *Qi* can shatter eardrums.

Miao Shan *ShiTai* and Flint’s *Shifu* were Daoist nuns. Most Daoists practise both External and Internal Alchemy. External Alchemy involves the use of furnaces and cauldrons in which minerals and herbs are compounded into pills or elixirs that are believed to bring immortality. Internal Alchemy proposes that all essential ingredients are to be found inside the human body, and can be refined to achieve longevity without the use of elixir. The Daoist Internal Alchemy is concerned with the cultivation of *Qi* and *Qi* flow based on the pattern of *Yin* and *Yang*. It gives rise to the development of the style of kung fu known as Internal Kung Fu. Daoists believe in total serenity and tranquillity of the mind bereft of emotion and passion, withdrawal from the affairs of the world and following the course of nature. Flint was too young to realise that being a Daoist nun, his *Shifu* could not allow human emotions to disturb her tranquillity of mind.

Flint was taught to use Abdominal Breathing from a very young age. Air was channelled into the abdominal area, so that the abdomen expanded during inhalation and contracted during exhalation. He learned Reverse Abdominal Breathing, where the abdomen contracted while inhaling and expanded during exhalation. The breathing exercises stimulated and guided the flow of *Qi* and were essential training in the development of *Qi* in the body. Almost as soon as he could walk, his play took the form of physical training. Games were devised to stress balance, agility and flexibility, and as he grew older, the games became more advanced. He would practise rolling, jumping, leaping and tumbling. He practised somersaults, front flips, back flips and body drops. He could drop from a 30 foot high tree and perform 10 somersaults before hitting the ground. He did not realise he was being trained in the fundamentals of kung fu. By the time of his sixth birthday, he was a strong and healthy boy.

He had also learned to hold his breath and summon his *Qi* as he began *Qinggong*, ‘the art of lightness’, which trained the body to become light as feather. When an expert in *Qinggong* runs, he is so fast and so light on his feet that it is like a passing breeze. *Qinggong* enables one to leap high in the air and come down softly on the tip of the toe.

Flint was beginning the more complicated steps of the mystical *Qinggong* style ‘The 72 Cloud Steps’ and progressing well in his exercises when he suffered an



accident and became so ill that he had to stop all his exercises.

It was the morning after his sixth birthday. He was, as every day, swimming under water when he noticed a small crack in the rocks. He managed to squeeze his small body through the crack, crawling along a long narrow tunnel. When he reached the other side, he realized that the cave which he called his home was in fact at the bottom of a great waterfall. Despite the ferocity of the cascading water and the fast current, he managed to swim to the point where the waterfall flowed into the river. The river was squeezed between the steep flanks of a gigantic gorge.

He sat against a boulder on the river bank to rest. The grass was lush and green. The mountain slopes were scattered with richly coloured flowers. With the flowers came bees and butterflies and birds. Flint saw a black-headed greenfinch, a chestnut-tailed starling and a white-tailed robin. There were wild rabbits and foxes.

He lazed on the river bank enjoying the fresh air, the light breeze and the fragrant smell of flowers, and whistled for his sparrowhawk to join him. He wondered whether his nanny travelled down this river to the outside world. The river seemed long and endless.

Flint possessed a rare gift. He was born with a sense akin to an animal instinct. He could sense a change in surroundings before others became aware of it. As he stretched out on the grass, he felt an approaching danger. The world was still. The birds stopped singing and fluttered frantically away. Animals disappeared from sight.

He looked around to see ripples on the surface of the water. Something was swimming towards the river bank. The water churned, and from the water sprung a large head with glassy eyes. A snake-like creature crawled ashore, black in colour and very, very long. It had two fins in front and two fins at the back. Its head was like an eel's, but was bigger than Flint's thigh. It made a small cry, like a dolphin. Flint jumped up and ran behind a boulder hoping the creature would go away. But the creature followed him. He began to run. The creature caught up with him and coiled itself round his body. Its head was now poised directly above his face, and the glassy eyes glared at him coldly.

He could not move. The coil round his body grew tighter. The creature flicked out its tongue, its breath foul like rotten fish. A slimy tongue licked his face, and he saw sharp fangs. Then came the 'keck-keck-keck' calls of his sparrowhawk. The creature raised its head towards the sound and made a threatening cry. The sparrowhawk weaved around them, at times closing in with its steel tipped claws, at times disappearing out of sight, then reappearing to scratch and peck at the creature. The creature strained its head to follow the bird, lashing out its tongue. Suddenly, the sparrowhawk dipped down with closed wings and dug its claws into the neck of the creature, pecking at its throat, piercing it. Blood spouted and Flint put his mouth to the hole to suck the creature's

blood. He thought that if he sucked out its blood, the creature would die. The coil around his body began to loosen. Flint lost consciousness.

When he came to, he was shivering with cold despite being covered with a large deer skin. His arms and legs were numb, and his hands and feet felt cold as ice. His breathing was slow and shallow, and his skin had turned purple.

There were tears in his *Shifu's* eyes. She told him, "You were attacked by a sea serpent."

"A sea snake?"

"Not a snake exactly. Sea snakes don't have gills or fins, and their tails are larger than their heads. The sea monster had a tail like the tail of a tadpole. We had thought sea serpents were legendary until now. Don't be afraid. The monster is dead. You're safe now."

When he woke again, he heard Miao Shan *ShiTai* talking with his *Shifu*. "The blood of the sea monster is very poisonous. It contains tremendous *Yin* energy. By drinking the blood of the sea monster, the child has become overwhelmed with *Yin*. This has caused disharmony of the *Yin-Yang* in his body. As a result of this excess *Yin*, the child is suffering a 'cold illness'. He has more *Yin* energy than I could handle otherwise I could help him channel it to the right place. Our style of kung fu has already built up *Yin* energy in our bodies, and the transfer of our energies to the child would only aggravate his illness. I have fed him the Golden Pearl of Elixir. The Elixir pill has stopped the excess *Yin* energy from spreading to his heart and to his internal organs. But now his *Qi* flow is blocked."

"I'm most grateful, *Shifu*. I know that it took you 20 years to collect the ingredients for the Elixir pills, and that in all that time you have only been able to make three pills." She wept softly. "What has the child done to deserve such kindness? I am forever indebted to you, *Shifu*."

Flint had never seen the face of Miao Shan *ShiTai*. Her face was always covered by a black veil, and he had wondered what she looked like. She must be older than his *Shifu* because she was his *Shifu's Shifu*. He was rather afraid of her. She always spoke in a voice devoid of emotion. When she walked, she made no sound, as if she were floating on air.

Miao Shan *ShiTai* said, "I've tried using acupuncture with needles in the boy's energy points, but it's of no effect".

"*Shifu*, is there no hope at all?"

Miao Shan *ShiTai* replied with her usual calm, "We have tried bear's gall bladder, ginseng, and other precious herbs but they have not been effective. I have even given the child Five Poisons Wine containing poisons from five types of venomous creature,

centipedes, scorpions, snakes, spiders and toads, to produce *Yang* energy. This provided only temporary relief and has not cured the root of his illness. I cannot go on giving him the Wine. Too much will kill him. The only way that his life may be saved is to find someone who has developed tremendous *Yang* energy, and to transfer that *Yang* energy to the child. At the same time we must get the child to practise the *Yang* style of kung fu to generate his own *Yang* energy to balance the excess *Yin*. I am thinking of sending the child to Shaolin Monastery. The Abbot there is an expert in the *Yang* style kung fu”

“My elder adoptive brother is a disciple of the Abbot. I shall write to him at once.”

“Even before this incident, I had thought of sending the child to Shaolin. He needs to be with children of his own age. Our religious order is meant for women. He cannot stay with us indefinitely.”

Flint began his journey to Shaolin Monastery accompanied by his old nanny. He could not understand why he was so ill. She told him about the *Yin* energy in his body. A girl was *Yin* and a boy was *Yang*. He was confused. If he was *Yang*, why did he have excess *Yin*?

“Everyone has both *Yin* and *Yang* in the body. The *Yin* and *Yang* must balance, as excess *Yin* will cause ‘cold illness’, and excess *Yang* will cause ‘hot illness’. It is only when *Yin* and *Yang* are in harmony that you can enjoy good health and a long life,” his nanny explained.

When they arrived at Shaolin Monastery, Flint was in a semi-conscious state and was taken to see a monk whose religious name was Xuan Kui. The monk was the elder adoptive brother of Flint’s *Shifu*. When he saw Flint’s condition, the monk took him immediately to the Abbot’s room. The Abbot read the letter from Miao Shan *ShiTai*, holding the boy on his knees.

“He looks very ill indeed.”

He put his hand on Flint’s back. Flint felt warmth flow from the Abbot’s palm into his body. It was the first time after many days of suffering that he had felt comfortable. He no longer shivered. He felt as though he was sunbathing on a warm summer’s day, and he drifted into sleep. When he woke again, he found himself lying on a bed. The monk Xuan Kui was talking to his nanny in the other corner of the room.

“How is my sister Miss Anya?”

“Miss Anya has joined our Daoist Order. Her religious name is ‘Wu Si’. She is learning kung fu from Miao Shan *ShiTai*. I am maid to Miao Shan *ShiTai*.”

“I gather from Miao Shan *ShiTai*’s letter that she is successor to the Ice Maiden who founded the Daoist order, The Way of the Great Perfection, famous for the kung fu style known as the Black Ice Palm.”

“My mistress took refuge in a mountain cave to hide from an enemy. There she discovered the relics of the Ice Maiden and the secret manual of the Black Ice Palm. It was written in the Will of the Ice Maiden that whoever found her relics and practised her style of kung fu would become her successor. My mistress kowtowed before the relics, and from that day on, she was successor to the Ice Maiden and head of her Daoist order.”

Monk Xuan Kui read the letter sent by Flint’s *Shifu*. He became lost in thought. The monk now understood what had happened to his sister during the years since she had left home. He looked at the boy before him. He was only six but it was clear that he had inherited his father’s chiselled good looks. The monk remembered the eyes of the boy’s father; sharp and cold. But this boy had inherited his mother’s eyes and mouth. His eyes were warm and intense. The corners of his mouth curved slightly upwards like his mother’s. He took an instant liking to the boy. He agreed that it would be best not to disclose to the boy who his parents were until he grew older.

“‘Flint’ is a perfect name for the boy,” said the monk. “I hope when he grows up, he will be as tough as flint stone, and that he will ignite the fire that gives light and warmth to those around him. Please leave the boy with me and tell Nun Wu Si that I will take good care of him and that he will recover from his illness.” The monk hoped in his heart that the boy would grow up a stronger person than his mother and a warmer person than his father.

During Flint’s first week in Shaolin, the Abbot and other senior monks took turns to place their hands on his back every other hour, transferring their *Yang* energies into his body to combat the excess *Yin*. By passing the *Qi* to him, the monks became weak themselves and needed time to regenerate the *Qi* in their own bodies. The *Qi* transfer exercises were gradually reduced and after four weeks, twice daily was enough, once by the Abbot and once by the monk Xuan Kui. After a further three months, this was reduced again to once a day. Flint was taught simple Shaolin *Qi* exercises such as ‘Lifting the Sky’ to enable the *Qi* to flow to his arms and hands; ‘Carrying the Moon’ to strengthen the spine; and meditation exercises to calm the mind. In time, Flint was able to practise on his own to gain limited flow of *Qi* in his body.

Flint learned more about his illness. His *Shifu* in Shaolin asked Flint to think of the shady side of the hill as *Yin*, with the sunny side as *Yang*. *Yin* and *Yang* are direct opposites. Whilst *Yang* stands for the positive side of things, *Yin* stands for the negative. It follows that *Yang* represents the sun, heaven, day, fire, heat, and anything relating to brightness and happiness. And *Yin* stands for the moon, earth, night, water, coldness, darkness and sadness. Flint came to understand that *Qi* was the vital and intrinsic energy in the body. Like blood which flows in blood vessels, *Qi* flows in *Qi* channels. There

are twelve 'primary' *Qi* channels, eight 'extraordinary' *Qi* vessels and numerous smaller energy pathways branching from the energy channels.

All the energy points lie on the external pathway of the channels. Of the eight extraordinary vessels, only the Conception Vessel and Governing Vessel have energy points of their own. Knowledge of the location of energy points is essential for a martial artist. One way of defeating an adversary is to attack the adversary's energy points, to paralyse him.

Flint's illness had been difficult to cure because the excess *Yin* energy had spread to the 'extraordinary' vessels. It was due to the Elixir pill that the *Yin* energy had stopped spreading into the 'primary' channels. This, however, had the adverse effect of blocking the *Qi* flow, as the excess *Yin* energy became stuck in the 'extraordinary' vessels. Normally when the *Qi* flow was blocked, one would die within seven days. It was the miraculous power of the Elixir pill that had kept him hanging by a breath until he reached Shaolin Monastery. To cure his illness, he would need to concentrate on the *Qi* exercises to unblock his *Qi* flow. Almost all types of kung fu require fundamental training in *Qi* development. The deployment of *Qi* enables the exponent to move fast and forcefully without shortage of breath. The stronger the *Qi* in the body, the more powerful the kung fu skills. Training in the development of *Qi* is 'Internal' kung fu.

When Flint was thirteen years old, the old Abbot Tong Ti went into seclusion. He appointed the monk Xuan Kui, adoptive brother of Flint's *Shifu*, as the new Abbot of Shaolin.

Two more years passed, Flint was approaching fifteen. The new Abbot Xuan Kui was concerned to find a way to cure Flint's lingering illness. Flint had improved significantly during his time at Shaolin, and Xuan Kui thought he was ready for a 'small universe' breakthrough which might eradicate the root of his illness. The 'small universe' energy flow is the continuous flow of *Qi* around the Conception Vessel and the Governing Vessel. It is universally heralded by martial artists that if a person has attained the 'small universe' energy flow, he will 'eliminate a hundred illnesses'; if he has attained the 'big universe' energy flow, he will 'live a hundred years'.

Abbot Xuan Kui realised that he alone could not help Flint achieve a 'small universe' breakthrough. Flint had been taught breathing techniques by Miao Shan *ShiTai* since babyhood and the *Qi* flow in the *Yin* channels was very different from the Shaolin style of breathing. This explained why Flint's right hand was cold and his left hand was hot. His face was paler on the right side. In addition to building up *Yang* energy, Flint must also learn how to channel the *Yin* energy to the proper places. This meant that he would need to develop both a *Yang* style kung fu and a *Yin* style kung fu. The only person who could help Flint was Miao Shan *ShiTai*, who was the Abbot's

equal in *Qi*. Together they could help Flint reach a ‘small universe’ energy flow. The series of exercises would take 49 days, and the best time to practise was midnight.

Miao Shan *ShiTai* came to Shaolin at the Abbot’s invitation. Each night, at midnight, Flint climbed the hill behind the monastery to practise the ‘small universe’ exercises with the Abbot and Miao Shan *ShiTai*. The Abbot had warned him not to let the other boys know about their night-time exercises. Any disturbance during the *Qi* exercise could put all three of them at risk of their lives. Disturbance during the *Qi* meditation can result in the body back-firing, and the *Qi* running riot, disrupting the *Qi* flow. A person could end up paralysed and even die.

By day, Flint met secretly with Miao Shan *ShiTai* in the woods to learn the Black Ice Palm kung fu. This consisted of a series of 72 fighting poses with numerous variations. To be effective, the Black Ice Palm also required combination of the special *Qinggong* steps created by the Ice Maiden. Flint had stopped learning the *Qinggong* ‘72 Cloud Steps’ after he was attacked by the sea serpent. Miao Shan *ShiTai* demonstrated the *Qinggong* steps and the Black Ice Palm kung fu. She encouraged Flint to memorise everything so that he could practise on his own. She also taught him Tortoise and Foetal Breathing. Tortoise Breathing imitates a tortoise’s way of breathing inside its shell where the breath is very faint. Foetal Breathing combines Tortoise Breathing and abdominal movement with inhalation and exhalation, imitating the way a foetus breathes inside the womb. The midnight exercises lasted for 49 days, and were to finish on Flint’s fifteenth birthday.

Flint looked forward to his birthday for another reason. He had made many friends in his time at the monastery, but his closest friends were two young boys named Bussie and Tobie, and a man named Storm who tended a vegetable plot behind the monastery. Storm had been away travelling and he had promised Flint that he would be back for his birthday.