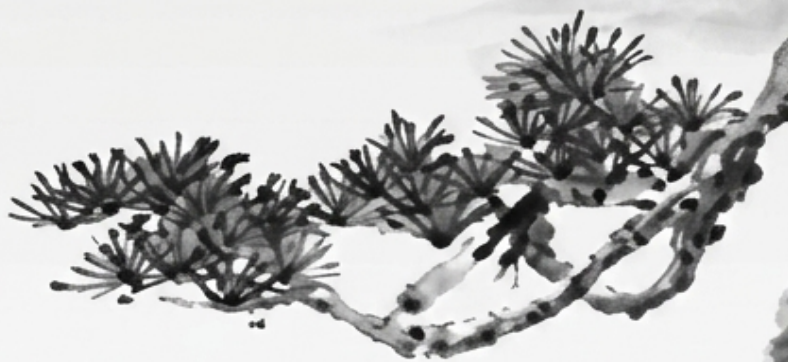


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Golden Stage

Written by Cang Wu Bin Bai

Original Chinese work (c) 2018 by Cang Wu Bin Bai
Unofficial translation and PDF/EPUB formatting (c) 2019-2021 by Huang “Chichi” Zhifeng

Here is a content warning for the whole book: swearing, violence, animal death, semi-fantasy drug usage, alluded-to sex, and accurate depictions of backwards societal values, particularly in regards to physically disabled people and women. There’s nothing egregious, but if you have sensitivities, be warned.

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Ancient Chinese Units of Measurements, for your reading convenience

shichen: one of the 12 two-hour time periods ancient Chinese folks used instead of hours
cun: equivalent to $3\frac{1}{3}$ cm
li: equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$ a km
chi: equivalent to $\frac{1}{3}$ m
zhang: equivalent to $3\frac{1}{3}$ m
catty: equivalent to 604.79g
tael: equivalent to 37.8g

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Prologue

In the Great Zhou's twenty-fifth year of Yuantai, the Eastern **Tartars** invaded Beijiāng.¹ The border defense guard — the Northern Yan Iron Cavalry — collaborated with the two garrisons of Ning and Tong Provinces, and their forces joined up at **Wuding River**. The Tartar troops were defeated, while West Autumn Gate was recovered from their more than seven hundred li taken.

In August² of that same year, the Eastern Tartars' Uji clan presented a memorial of surrender, also declaring that they were willing to pledge allegiance to the Great Zhou, call themselves its subjects, and pay tribute. On the sixteenth, diplomats from both sides completed the surrendering ceremony on the banks of Wuding, stipulating that the Uji would pay an annual tribute of furs, medicine, horses, precious metals, and other such things, as well as that their Khan would send his son into the capital to study **Central Plains** etiquette at the **Imperial College**.

In September, the Dynasty issued a decree ordering the Commander of the Iron Cavalry and Marquis of Jing Ning, Fu Shen, to escort the Tartars' diplomatic convoy into the capital for audience.

Now, with the hostilities beginning to be settled and the Uji withdrawing to outside the Gates, Fu Shen had no worries about possible consequences for the time being. He commanded his subordinate, Yuan Huan, to bring the main forces back to Beijiāng, then personally led a squadron of elite cavalry in accompanying the diplomats southward.

On the ninth of September, the convoy was passing through Blue Sand Pass when the ground suddenly began to shake without cease. The mountain walls on either side collapsed with loud rumbles, rocks falling down like rain. The horses, startled, scrambled madly. Within the panic, the carriage that the young Tartar prince was riding in couldn't dodge in time, and thus was smashed apart by a boulder that dropped down from the sky.

Blue Sand Pass's terrain was craggy and narrow, but it was in the Great Zhou's domain, and had always been calm; it was reasonable to say that there should *not* have been an ambush showing up there. Even though Fu Shen had been cautiously vigilant the whole journey, he absolutely hadn't expected that a sudden, earth-rending calamity would happen right at his own door. For a moment, he couldn't attend to any prince of any age; upon seeing the rocks tumbling down ahead, he promptly decided to turn his horse around, shout out for a retreat, then lead the crowd straight for the entrance they had come in from.

Smoke and dust was all around, nearly dyeing the entire stretch of ravine with the color of sandy soil. Inside an elevated area of thicket, an elaborate crossbow

mechanism changed direction, its glinting, sinister arrowhead aiming right for the Northern Yan Commander that was urging his horse wildly on.

The keen intuition he had refined on the battlefield now saved his life in this moment of imminent peril. The arrow came cleaving through the air. As if he had eyes grown on the back of his head, he suddenly pulled on the reins while bent over low. The warhorse came to an abrupt halt, its front hooves raising up in the air, and he turned it in a half-circle on the spot, which was just enough to get out of the way of that cold, deadly arrow. Its tip swiped harshly across his back, then sunk half a cun into the rock wall with a *clang*, getting submerged by the surging rock and sand shortly thereafter.

“Who...?!”

Who had tried to kill him?

That chilling thought flashed through his mind for only a second. In the next instant, the shouts of his nearby personal troops pulled him back into the human world.

“General, watch out!”

The huge boulder falling over his head covered the sky, completely blocking his line of sight when he turned to look.

On the ninth day of September in the twenty-fifth year of Yuantai, the Eastern Tartars’ diplomatic convoy was ambushed in Tong Province’s Blue Sand Pass. The young Tartar prince perished on-scene, and more than half of the convoy was lost. The escorting Marquis of Jing Ning’s legs had been crushed by a boulder, his body suffering heavy injury, after which he was taken back to Beijiāng by his trusted bodyguards that same night. Although his life was fortuitously saved, it would perhaps be difficult for him to recover to normalcy again.

When news got back to the capital, all levels of society were in uproar. Not a single person wasn’t shocked.

The Yuantai Emperor was furious, ordering the Three Departments of Law to investigate the case stringently. He also specially decreed generous compensation for Fu Shen, adding a thousand dan^(50kg) of salaried provisions to his original rank of Marquis, sealing him as a Bulwark General, granting him a gold seal along with a purple tassel,³ and permitting him to keep his post when he returned to the capital for recuperation.

The event of Fu Shen’s injury was abuzz in the city, and there was no lack of people confidentially guessing as to whose hands power over the Northern Yan Army would fall into following this. The Emperor issued a special order to temporarily block up the everlasting blab of the crowd; the truth of Fu Shen being

Commander was still present, he was just being kept faraway in Beijiang for right now. Provided that General Fu had enough intelligence and tact, he would know what kind regard had been given to him after hearing the song being played for him, and then abdicate his position with honors once he returned to the capital. Upon handing military power back to the Sacred One, he could trade one pair of legs for a lifetime of glory, wealth, and splendor.

Looking at it like this, His Majesty was not only giving considerable preferential treatment towards this merited official, but could even be described as bestowing him with the utmost of benevolence.

The center of this hearsay, the Marquis-slash-General, accepted the decree, but no sort of activity came from it for a while. It wasn't until the end of September that Fu Shen sent a manifest back, inside of which was clearly-detailed arrangements for turning over the garrisons and military matters of the Northern border, and also a request that the Emperor allow him to leave his post to recover from his ailment.

This manifest allowed Yuntai to breathe a sigh of relief. He refuted his resignation according to standards, then allowed him to move from Beijiang to the capital.

It was unknown how many capital dwellers were counting the days off on their hands and raising their heads with expectant gazes, all waiting to see what had become of the famous, outstanding Marquis. At that very moment, a thousand li away in the twilight, there was a small carriage being escorted by bodyguards as it left the heavily-guarded Yan City, then swiftly galloped for the capital.

Volume 1

1: Return to the Capital

During their journey to the South from Yan Province, they passed Guangyang, Baitan, and other such places. By the time they arrived at **Miyun**, the capital was already distantly visible.

Autumn brought cold weather. First snows had fallen in the Northern areas, while it was pleasantly cool near the capital, which happened to be great for travel. At around noon, a squadron of elite cavalry was going down along an official road. Their leader looked up to survey the scene. Seeing a tea canopy set up not too far away along the path, he lightly pulled his reins to slow his speed. When the carriage behind him caught up, he leaned over to knock a few times on its wooden wall. “We’ve raced the entire night, General. How about we take a rest before proceeding with our hasty journey?” he questioned.

A thin slit was opened in the carriage curtain, and the low voice of a man drifted out alongside the smell of bitter medicine. “There’s a spot for refreshments up ahead? We’ll rest and regroup there. You brothers have worked hard.”

The other man accepted the order, and their group cantered towards the tea canopy. The dust kicked up as they passed drew the successive side glances of passersby stopped for rest next to the road.

The squadron had no banner. They were a river of blue, narrow-sleeved, crossed-collared military robes, each and every one of them of powerful stature and austere grandeur. They didn’t identify themselves, but the three big words ‘do not provoke’ were written across their faces.

The owner operating the tea store had weathered hardships for a long time, so he was accustomed to seeing people come and go, and had little to say. The man in the lead dismounted, handed a silver ingot over, then commanded his subordinates to go eat, have tea, and rest of their own volition. In the meantime, he himself found a shady table, wiped it clean, ordered the shopkeeper to prepare hot tea and a few morsels, then turned, went outside, and helped a pale-faced, weak-auraed, sick-seeming young Don⁴ step down from the carriage.

The man’s steps were floaty, his countenance ill. He needed someone’s help before he could walk, and the distance from the carriage to the tea shop took a long period of slow movement. When he finally sat down, his body seemed to be unable to take it, and he coughed on end. Other guests sitting beneath the shaded awning sighed in relief afterwards; just watching him made them all unbearably tired on his behalf.

It was odd to say, but despite looking like he was about to breathe his last at any time, he had a presence that couldn’t be described, and made one unable to look

away. He had good skin that was one-in-a-million, but didn't have a womanly appearance that was unpopular with people at the time, his elegance as appealing as spring flowers. His features were sleek with a straight nose and thin lips, a biting keenness completely showing through them.

He was tall in stature, and seemingly used to looking down on others, as his eyes were always half-lidded. His entire body brimmed with a sense of leisurely fatigue, and he had thinned until only a few ailing bones remained; the heavy bowls of coarse porcelain in the tea shop looked like they could snap his wrist from their weight.

Yet, when he sat there quietly, that slim back was exceedingly straight, like a stalk of green bamboo shooting up from the dirt. A long blade tempered by disastrous fire, even if scarred and banged-up, could still drink blood with its cold edge — his feeble form did not obstruct him from looking askance at every locale in the realm.

Traveling merchants unconsciously craned their necks, looking just like a flock of actual, attention-grabbed geese. That went until the young man, after slowly finishing his cup of water, slammed the porcelain bowl onto the table with a *bang*. “You gents have all stretched your necks out so much, you could tie donkeys to them. Is this humble one nice to look at?”

The robust men eating and drinking nearby immediately shuddered hearing this. Most of the geese resentfully took back their lines of sight, but some were particularly enthusiastic, even drawing in close to talk to him. “Where are you from, Don? Are you also going to the capital?”

Xiao Xun, who had been attending at this Don's beck and call this whole time, felt his scalp go numb. He prepped for him to say “Get lost,” after which this other guy would promptly get hung up on a tree outside the entrance.

Against expectations, the Don that didn't appear to be especially fond of paying people any attention was somehow tolerant. “Yan City in the North. I'm going to the capital right now for medical treatment,” he answered amicably.

Everyone in their bunch was in casual clothes, no weapons at their waists, and the display of their carriages and horses wasn't very grandiose. The bodyguards were imposing in aura, but the Don commanding them dressed in ordinary wear that didn't seem like the capital's style; the businessman guessed that he might be a Young Lord from some wealthy Yan Province family that was traveling abroad. Due to Yan City being an important strategic border location, it had drastic local customs, so people from a military household escorting others was pretty typical.

As they were strangers meeting by chance, it would be poor for him to directly ask about the other's illness, so he turned the conversation to another novel topic.

“Since you came from the North, did you ever see General Fu’s carriage on the road? That old guy is coming back to his hometown in silken robes! Who knows how showy a display he’s put on!”

Xiao Xun nearly choked to death on his tea. The young Don raised a brow. “General Fu?” he asked in full interest. “The same General Fu that I know of?”

“Of course. Who else could have such a famed name, apart from the Marquis of Jing Ning?”

The young man seemed to be getting interested in the chat. “I can see that you seem to know quite a bit about Fu... *General Fu*?”

“Certainly not, certainly not,” the other waved his hand with a grin. “We merchants that go between the North and South often hear about him on the streets. Him defending Beijiang for all these years has made the roads really peaceful, making our business an untold amount better than it was before. Even when capital citizens bring him up, there isn’t a single one that doesn’t admire him. You wouldn’t know, but last year, he led the Iron Cavalry into defeating the Tartars, and I came back from trading furs in the North to word fluttering all over the streets and alleys, saying that ‘with Commander Fu in Beijiang, the capital can sleep in peace.’ The storytellers and singers in teahouses, and actors in theatres, have all been talking about him.”

The flourishing reputation of the Northern Yan Army and Marquis of Jing Ning was quite evident from that piece alone.

The Iron Cavalry was known as the defensive line of the Great Zhou’s northern border, and had always been in the control of the Fu family since its establishment. Originally, it was the Duke of Ying, Fu Jian, who had been Commander of the border garrison.

Central Plainsmen referred to the nomads that ruled the Northern prairies as ‘**Tartars**’. Several decades ago, they had internal unrest and split apart. A portion of the clans were forced to move West, and upon intermarrying with the **Hu**, **Sogdian**, and other such ethnicities of the **Western Regions**, they came to be called the Western Tartars. The other portion, which occupied the comparatively fertile grasslands of the center and East, was called the Eastern Tartars. Twenty-three years back, at the beginning of the Yuantai Emperor Sun Xun’s fulfilled ascension, the Eastern ones audaciously invaded the Great Zhou. The border army at the time had been weak, breaking down with one strike, while the Tartars had strong troops with sturdy steeds. It was like a sword slicing right through bamboo. In the North, they plundered and massacred without restraint, even slaughtering the strategic border cities of Xuanqing and Baoning empty.

In the Late Emperor's Court, peace had been maintained for many a day, with no wars heard of for over thirty years. No one had expected that the Eastern Tartars would charge their troops southwards, even less so that the border army would be too weak to put up a single fight, allowing the enemy to kill their way to their doorstep in no time.

Court voices advocating for peace negotiations grew ever louder. Yuantai, being right in his prime, absolutely refused to bow his head to insignificant barbarians, out of respect for the **Celestial Empire**. Fu Jian had coincidentally been transferred from **Lingnan** to Gan Province due to his military merits, so Yuantai promoted him to Provincial Governor of Gan, then ordered him to lead the three Provinces of Gan, Ning, and Yuan into opposing the Tartars. Over the span of two years, Fu Jian, his two sons, and a host of generals under them assembled a border army numbering a hundred thousand, then purged the Tartars that were inside the Gates. His eldest, Fu Tingzhong, had even crossed beyond the Great Wall, driving his troops right into the hinterlands and nearly striking the Tartar King's city. He failed to complete this solely because Fu Jian had suddenly taken mortally ill partway through. After the campaign, Fu Jian was posthumously titled the Duke of Ying and a Mainstay General. Fu Tingzhong inherited the title, taking over the militaries of Gan, Ning, and Yuan. The second son, Fu Tingxin, was sealed as a Bulwark General, getting control of Yan and You's.

The two constructed an iron-wrought Northern border defense line for the Great Zhou. The army led by the Fu's came to be known as the Northern Yan Iron Cavalry. In the more than ten years between the sixth year of Yuantai to the eighteenth, the Eastern Tartars went into temporary hibernation under the Cavalry's deterrence, the borderlands were calm, and no major battles cropped up again.

That went until the nineteenth year, where Fu Tingzhong was assassinated by the Tartars. They and the northern Jhe clan had formed an alliance for invading the Great Zhou again. Fu Tingxin led his lone army in deep to surround them again, ultimately dying on the battlefield. The past happening of soldiers being at the capital's walls nearly repeated, but the Court didn't have the large quantities of elite soldiers available for use as it once did, and Yuantai no longer held the determination to forge ahead of his early years. The faction pushing for war and faction pushing for treaties quarreled for several phases of morning Court, until it finally made the stupidest, yet also wisest, decision.

They pushed Fu Tingzhong's eldest son Fu Shen, who was not even yet of **crown age**, out and onto the battlefield.

The Eastern Tartars and Fu family had deep enmity. Since this expedition was for the sake of revenge, whoever stirred up the disaster was who was going to go

clean up its awful mess. Furthermore, Fu Shen had been learning in the army since his youth, listening to Fu Tingxin constantly lament that “‘Successors need to be had,” so he barely managed to count as a ‘commander of talent.’

That reasoning *appeared* to be pretty sufficient. However, when viewing Courts past, when had there ever been ‘reason’ for a group of good-for-nothing major officials to shrink back to the rear, then force a teenager to go confront the deadly predators ahead?

There was fortune within the misfortune, at least. The Fu’s might have genuinely been a cluster of **general stars** reborn, because Fu Shen surpassed his predecessors — an inexperienced savant at leading troops.

In its pressed state, Beijiāng could only ask for help from the neighboring Tang and Tong Provinces. However, once Fu Shen was shoved out there, it unexpectedly received assistance from his people. He gathered up the Iron Cavalry to face the main Jhe forces at the three Gates of Yan, and, with the conditions that trade routes would be opened and protectorate status be allowed, also borrowed the cavalry of the Western Tartars’ Yeliang clan. From the Northwest, they outflanked the allied Tartar-Jhe forces, separated them in their strike, then performed a pincer attack, resolving Beijiāng’s crisis.

The Yeliang became a protectorate post-war, their own cavalry getting mixed into the Northern Yan’s. On the grounds that the frontlines were too long and maneuvering was too cumbersome, Fu Shen handed military power over Gan, Ning, and You back to the Central Pivot, focusing on the operations of Yuan and Yan in border defense. Following the battle of the Three Gates, he formally took up post as the Commander of the Iron Cavalry, obtaining the title of Marquis of Jing Ning.

Fu Shen’s merit of pulling against a wild tide should have properly gotten him inheritance of the Duke title, but Yuantai was rattled. Completely disregarding the system of ancestry, he not only approved the Fu’s Third Lord for inheritance of the Duke title in place of his nephew, but also acquiesced to Fu Shen’s action of separating his own residence from the Duke Estate.

Anyone with working eyes could see that His Majesty was scared of the Fu’s, afraid that their Duke of Ying name would be a good one that lasted throughout the ages.

Yet, some people were destined to go against the current. In a brief couple of years, Marquis Fu Shen’s hold on the Iron Cavalry jumped him into being a cornerstone of the Great Zhou, diligently sitting steady in his position of being a thorn in the sides of the Tartars and Jhe. Beijiāng had been calm these years, the Northern commonfolk living and working in peace and happiness, which was mostly due to his contributions. As long as Fu Shen was in the army, then even if he

was just sitting still to act as a figurehead, he was the biggest deterrence to Northern foreigners.

The young Don had been listening to the big talk of this ordinary commoner like it was a joke, but when he heard the phrase ‘the capital can sleep in peace’, his smile completely vanished. Seeing that he was lost in thought, Xiao Xun quickly seized the teapot to replenish his drink, deliberately diverting the subject. “Gen—...*Don*, we’ll still have to hurry along this afternoon, so how about you eat a few bites?”

Returning to his senses, the Don picked up the cup and drank a mouthful of hot tea. The corner of his mouth ticked up, a bit of a sarcastic note in his smile. “If that gets around, a lot of people *won’t* be able to sleep,” he lamented to himself.

A nearby guest in a conical hat was drawn in by their conversation. “I’ve always heard people say that ‘extreme strength begets humiliation, and extreme prosperity will decline,’” he inserted garrulously. “Think about it. He’s been fighting battles in Beijiāng for all these years, but never experienced that concept? Those famed generals of the past either died young or alone, because they were all general stars descended to the mortal plane, fated mainly to crusade. They’re not the same as regular folk. As I see it, he most likely has the seven-kills⁵ fate, and him not being allowed to have legs is built from his sin of killing too much—“

With a sharp *clink*, the bowl in Xiao Xun’s hand was crushed into several pieces, blood pattering down from the seams of his fingers. Everyone turned towards the sound, all the utmost of stunned. The interior of the tea store shortly went quiet, making one feel awkward.

“Your hands are really strong. I’ll buy you an iron rice bowl next time so that you don’t waste stuff.” The Don’s face was no different from before, and he sounded particularly nonchalant. “Go get some medicine for yourself. Don’t forget to pay for the damages.”

Head lowered, Xiao Xun gave an *mn*.

There was no way that topic could continue after getting interrupted by that little episode. No matter what high praises and flowery words that one guy could say, they wouldn’t bring him luck. This time, it was a busted teabowl, but next time, he might get surrounded and beaten up.

However, the dissonant Don was having fun watching the ruckus, and couldn’t wait to make it worse. “Interesting,” he said with a slight smile. “According to what this brother has said, dying young and being unmarried are apparently recurring. Since the Marquis of Jing Ning is now crippled, it seems like he’ll be able to take a wife soon.”

Xiao Xun: “...”

Somebody slapped his table and stood. “How could a manly man suffer from having no wife?! A brave hero like him could get any kind of woman that he wanted!”

“Yeah! Exactly!” someone else agreed. “If he likes men, there’s who-knows-how-many of those waiting to marry him, too!”

A fit of earth-shaking laughter immediately exploded inside the tea shop.

In the previous Dynasty, taking a man as a wife had been in vogue. Despite the Great Zhou banning male-male marriages amongst the citizens, bigwigs had no such prohibition, and there was even a precedent for the Emperor to sanction such unions. The Marquis was a well-known wealthy bachelor of the capital, the man of many a young woman’s dreams, yet he was dragging his feet in marriage. Some people therefore conjectured that he had a completely *different* preference.

Bringing up such matters of romance made everyone’s interest in the conversation even denser. The Don quit butting in, only quietly listening to them all discuss the Marquis’s life. A constant smile was at the edge of his lips, as if he was hearing some kind of extremely fascinating, extremely marvelous tale.

After a good deal of silence, Xiao Xun gently prompted him. “Gen — ...Don, the sun has already set. Shall we go now?”

“Hm? Yes.” The young Don reached out so that Xiao Xun would help him up, then languidly cupped his hands towards the crowd of traveling merchants. “My good brothers, this humble one is anxious to get to the capital, so I’ll be leaving a step ahead.”

They raised their hands to bid farewell, one after another. Xiao Xun helped him into the carriage, then lowered the curtain. Once the vehicle had rolled several hundred steps away, he was suddenly heard to speak up from inside. “Zhongshan, give me the pills.”

“But... didn’t Mister Du say for you to only take them half a shichen in advance?” Xiao Xun took out an embellished pouch from his lapels, inside of which was packed a thin, baby-white porcelain bottle. “We still have two shichen to go before we enter the capital.”

“Don’t talk crap.” A hand reached out from under the curtain to snatch the bottle away. “Further ahead are the Capital Bases. We can fool average people like this, but we’ll definitely be recognized there, and there won’t be any time to feign lameness then.”

“You actually *are* lame, though...” Xiao Xun mumbled.

This sickly-ghost-looking Don — also known as the Marquis of Jing Ning that everyone described as ‘fated to crusade’ — tilted his head back to swallow a

fingertip-sized brown pill. “Zhongshan, between a General that has hopes of recovery and a thoroughly disabled cripple, which do you think is more liable to keep you up at night?” he mocked.

Xiao Xun said nothing.

Fu Shen tossed the bottle back into the other’s hands, then closed his eyes in wait for the numbing sensation that was about to spread through his limbs. “Let’s go,” he said softly.

2: Into the Estate

At nightfall in a Capital Base encampment, a hundred li outside the capital in its Western outskirts.

The Commander of the Sharp Wind Base, Zhong He, personally came out to welcome them, with Xiao Xun stepping forth to bow to him. Before he could finish that bow, though, Zhong He tossed him to the side and anxiously leapt for the carriage, nearly prostrating himself in worship. “This humble general, Commander Zhong He, pays respects to General Fu!”

Sharp Wind ranked first of the Five Bases. Zhong He was of the third rank⁶ and already very esteemed, yet he was still utterly respectful towards the Marquis of Jing Ning.

A hand wrapped in bandages lifted the curtain open, the strong stench of medicine slowly dispersing about in full. Fu Shen wore no armor, draped only in a robe. His chest and arms were entirely wrapped in bandages, the blanket on his legs hanging all the way down to his feet. His complexion was blue and pale, lips having no color at all and long hair hanging loose. His entire body seemed like it was hanging on by only a breath; so weak, the wind could collapse it.

Fu Shen nodded at him in regards. “Commander Zhong, I trust you’ve been well. Forgive this Fu for... *cough*... not being at liberty to move. I can’t get up to greet you.”

Zhong He had heard before that the other was heavily injured and couldn’t walk, but hadn’t expected that the injuries were *this* bad. He hadn’t put too much belief in the rumor of Fu Shen being genuinely crippled, at first, but he had to believe what his own eyes were seeing. With how Fu Shen looked now, forget about him resuming how he had been before; it seemed like even living a steady couple more years had become an issue.

Zhong He saw a swathe of darkness before his eyes, feeling cold from head to toe. In his grief, his manner of address even changed. “Jingyuan, these injuries... you...”

Hearing his tail-end note quavering, Fu Shen’s eyes went red around the edges. The man was acting like he hadn’t simply been injured, but was soon about to leave his mortal form. Unable to resist drawing his mouth down, he sighed. “Many thanks for your concern, Commander Zhong. It really is just a leg injury, nothing life-threatening. Ah, Zhongshan, go find a handkerchief so that he can wipe his tears.”

In his earlier years, Zhong He had served in Yuan Province’s army, and been acquainted with Fu Tingzhong and Tingxin in the olden days. In view of that, he could be considered Fu Shen’s half-elder. Unfortunately, after Fu Shen took control