

章回小說，李卓吾先生批評忠義水滸傳，第二十三回，橫海郡柴進留賓 景陽岡武松打虎  
(容與堂本，100回)

41 Novel, The Noble Knight-errants of the Water Margin with Commentary by Li Zhuowu, Chapter 23,  
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The Noble Knight-errants of the Water Margin with Commentary by Li Zhuowu, 23<sup>rd</sup>  
scroll (*juan*)

## CHAPTER 23

Chai Jin entertains his guests in Henghai County;  
Wu Song fights a tiger on Jingyang Ridge.

*The poem says:*

<22 The noble man's<sup>1</sup> <21 good reputation is like that of Meng Chang 21, 22>  
Like the ministers of the Eastern Cabinet<sup>2</sup> – <22, 21 he is both talented and of high  
virtue 21, 22>  
<22, 21 Wu Song is so powerful and fierce that a great many people fear him 21,  
22>  
<22 <21 Chai Jin is so eminent that he is known across the four seas 21> 22>  
<22 <21 He is confident that he is able to kill the tiger on his own  
The saying “Three bowls and you cannot cross the Ridge” is mere nonsense 21,  
22>  
<22, 21 Wu Song revenges his brother by killing his sister-in-law—strange indeed  
—  
Thereby gaining great fame which will last forever 21>22>

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<sup>1</sup> This poem is found in 21, 22 and 41 (not in 23). The lines follow in the same sequence in 21 and 22, but in a different sequence in 41 (Rongyutang edition). The first character is *yong*, brave, in 21, but *yan*, noble, in 22 and 41.

<sup>2</sup> 東閣 *dongge*, Eastern Cabinet, a place where talented people are gathered (?). In 21 and 22 we find Eastern Ocean, *Donghai*.

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<23 The story tells<sup>3</sup> that Song Jiang, in order to miss a round of drinking at Chai Jin's manor where he was taking refuge after killing his mistress, had gone to wash his hands and, making a detour back to the gallery, had tripped over a shovel full of hot coals, greatly to the annoyance of a certain stranger, who leapt to his feet looking for a fight. And how his host came rushing to the rescue and how he happened to reveal Song Jiang's name, so that the stranger, hearing who he was, threw himself on his knees and refused to get up, saying: "Fool that I am, I couldn't see what was staring me in the face. I insulted <Page 2> you just now. Can you ever forgive me?" and then Song Jiang raised him up and asked: "But who are you? Won't you tell me your name?"

Chai Jin supplied the answer. "This gentleman is <22 <21 from Qinghe District, his surname was Wu and given name Song, he was the second son in his family. He had been here for one year. Song Jiang said:

"I have heard much talk of Mr. Wu among the rivers and lakes fraternity. But I had no idea I was to meet him here <21><22> today. What a pleasure this is!"

"It's a great thing when men of honour meet by chance like this," said Chai Jin. "We shall celebrate with dinner, so we can have some talk."

Song Jiang was pleased to take <22 <21 Wu Song's hand and lead him into the inner hall. <21> <22> He called Song Qing and introduced him to Wu Song. When Cai Jin invited Wu Song to sit down, Song Jiang immediately asked him to sit beside him in the place of honour. Wu Song naturally refused. This modest show of reluctance went on a long time until finally Wu Song was prevailed upon to take the third place. Chai Jin then ordered the cups filled again and invited them to drink deep. Song Jiang was now able by the light of the lamps to get a better look at his new friend:

His stature is awesome, his bearing deeply impressive; the eyes blaze like winter stars, the brows are an unbroken line drawn in lacquer; the chest so broad ten

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<sup>3</sup> In the prose of the four versions of the novel, 21 and 22 are almost identical, while 23 and 41 are almost identical. There is considerable difference between 21/22 on one hand and 23/41 on the other hand. 21/22 belong to the so-called 'simple editions', *jianben*, while 23/41 belong to the 'complex editions', *fanben*. Many of the sentences are 'shared' between the two sets. But even inside the shared portions there are some consistent differences. 23/41 seems more refined. 21/22 is shorter and more plain. 21/22 uses *yue* as tag for 'say', while 23/41 uses *dao* throughout. Sentences similar to the degree that only one of two characters may deviate, are here registered as 'shared phrases', indicated by the red arrows. It is important, however, to be aware that there may be small differences within the 'shared phrases', some of which are highly interesting for the comparison of the linguistic equipment of each version.

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thousand foes could never throw him down, the speech forceful, evidence of a soaring ambitions; <Page 3> the spirit so brave you'd think the lion which shakes heaven had descended from the clouds, the frame so powerful you'd imagine you were confronting the beast which shatters the world. Truly this seems a good walking the warth, a veritable Mars among men.

Song Jiang liked what he saw exceedingly, and he asked Wu Song: "Tell me, pray, <22 <21 what is the reason for your staying here?" 21> 22>

"I <22 <21 got drunk one day 21> 22>, back in Qinghe, and had a fight with a confidential secretary," the other replied. "<22 <21 He really riled me. I only hit him the once, but I knocked him out cold. 21> 22> Well, I though I'd killed him, so I cleared off and came here to Mr. Chai's, waiting for it to blow over. Since then it has been more than a year and <22 <21 I've heard the fellow isn't dead 21> 22>, they revived him. "<22 <21 I was planning to go home 21> 22> to see my brother, but then I suddenly came down with malaria, so I couldn't travel. <22 <21 Just now I had a shivering fit and I was sitting over those coals in the gallery when you stumbled into the shovel. I was so shocked that I broke out in a cold sweat, and now I think I'm cured!" 21> 22>

Song Jiang listened delightedly. That night the drinking went on till the small hours. Afterwards Song Jiang insisted that Wu Song go and sleep with them in the west wing. Next day <Page 4> Chai Jin organized a big banquet and had goats and pigs killed to feast Song Jiang. *Of this no more.*

After a few days <22 <21 Song Jing took out some money for Wu Song to make himself a new set of clothes. 21> 22> When Chai Jin learnt of this, of course he would have none of it. He went to a chest and took out some pieces of fine silk, and commissioned his own tailor just outside the gates to supply all three of them with suits of clothes made to measure.

Incidentally, <22 <21 why was it that Chai Jin was displeased with Wu Song? *In fact,* 21> 22> when Wu Song first arrived he had received a grand welcome. But later he was always getting drunk and owing to his impetuous temperament he was inclined to get a stick and beat the servants whenever their ministrations failed to meet his standards. Consequently there was not one of them who looked on him favourably. In fact they all hated him, and invented all kinds of stories to tell Chai Jin about him. So although Chai Jin did not turn Wu Song out, his <22 <21 behaviour towards him had grown much

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cooler. However, now Song Jiang had adopted Wu Song and made him his constant drinking companion. 21> 22>

<22 <21 After Song Jiang had been with them about ten days, 21> 22> Wu Song felt the urge to return home to Qinghe to see his brother. Chai Jin and Song Jiang both urged him to stay on a while, but he <Page 5> said: “It’s a long time now since I had news of my brother, I think I should go back and see him.”

“If you really want to go,” Song Jiang said, “we must not detain you. But if you have time later, do let us meet again.”

Wu Song thanked Song Jiang and Chai Jin gave him some silver for which Wu Song thanked him, saying: “I am afraid, sir, I have given you a lot of trouble.” Then he tied his bundle, took up his cudgel and was ready to depart. But first Chai Jin laid on a little send-off party. Wu Song was wearing a new robe of fine red silk and a white Fanyang hat. With his pack on his shoulders and carrying his cudgel he was finally on the point of leaving, when Song Jiang said: 23> “This is about the love between brothers.

<23 Dear brother, wait one moment.” He went to his room and got some silver and hurried back to the manor gate. “I shall accompany you on the first stage of your journey,” he said to Wu Song.

Song Jiang and his younger brother Song Qing waited while Wu Song said his last farewell to Chai Jin and then Song Jiang also told Chai Jin they would be back in a little and the three of them set off from Chai Jin’s eastern manor together. After a couple of miles, Wu Song suggested it was time to part: “Dear brother, you should go back now. Chai Jin will be waiting.”

“Just a little further, why not?” Song Jiang said.

<Page 6> They conversed as they went and without noticing it, they had covered another mile or so, when Wu Song stopped Song Jiang and said: “You really shouldn’t accompany me any further. You know the saying, ‘When you’re seeing someone off, you may go with them a hundred miles, but still you have to say good-bye!’”

“Allow me to go just a little further,” Song Jiang pleaded. “See that little inn on the highroad there, why don’t we go in and drink a farewell cup together?”

They went in and Song Jiang seated himself at the head of the table. Wu Song laid down his cudgel and joined him, while Song Qing sat across the table from them. They told the waiter to bring wine and ordered some dishes and a variety of fruit and vegetables which were spread on the table before them. They drank some cups and

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watched the sun sinking in the west. “It’s getting late,” Wu Song said. <22 <21 “If you’ll  
allow me I want to prostrate myself four times so I can call myself your blood brother.”

This pleased Song Jiang greatly. 21> 22> The ceremony completed, Song  
Jiang told his brother to take out ten taels of silver to give Wu Song. Wu Song refused it,  
naturally, saying: “When I was a guest at Mr. Chai’s I received a generous allowance.”

“Don’t make a fuss about this, dear brother,” Song Jiang said. “If you refuse I  
shall think you do not prize my friendship.”

So Wu Song, after prostrating himself again, had to take the money, which he  
put away in his purse. Then, Song Jiang <Page 7> having paid for the wine with some  
loose change, Wu Song took up his cudgel and the three men left then inn. There at the  
inn door they said their farewells, Wu Song saluting with tears in his eyes before he  
departed. Song Jiang and his brother stood there at the door and watched him out of sight.  
Then they set off on the return journey. They had covered little less than five mile when  
they saw Chai Jin approaching on horseback, leading two riderless horses. It was a  
welcome sight. They rode back together to the manor. When they had dismounted, Chai  
Jin invited them to drink in an inner chamber. For the time being, Song Jiang and his  
brother stayed at Chai Jin’s.

*Here our story divides. 23> There is a poem in proof:*

<22 <21 The farewell feels like an eternity, the road to be traveled is far  
He straightens his back and sets out directly for Jingyang Ridge  
After getting drunk he kills the tiger of the mountain  
His fame is spread everywhere 21> 22>

<23 *Let us just tell* that Wu Song, after parting from Song Jiang, spent the  
night at an inn. Next morning, having breakfasted and paid for his room, he tied his  
bundle, grasped his cudgel and took to the road. As he went along, he mused: “Among  
the rivers and lakes, they talk all the time about Song Jiang, the Opportune Rain. And  
what they say is no exaggeration. It’s real privilege to know <Page 8> a man like that!”

After following the road <22 <21 for several days, Wu Song had reached the  
district of Yanggu, 21> 22> but was still some way off the provincial capital <sup>4</sup>. By noon  
that day, when he was feeling hungry and thirsty, he perceived in front of him a tavern,

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<sup>4</sup> 治 is missing in 41, comparing with 23.

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advertised by a sign which read: <22 <21 “Three bowls and you cannot cross the Ridge.”  
> 21> > 22>

Wu Song walked in and sat down. He laid his cudgel down and <22 <21 asked the host to quickly bring him some wine. *Just look* how the waiter came with three bowls > 21> > 22> chopsticks and a dish, <22 <21 which he laid in front of Wu Song. > 21> > 22> He filled one bowl with wine. Wu Song picked it up and drained it in one gulp. “This wine’s got a real kick!” he exclaimed. “Now then host, how about something to line the stomach? I’ll have something to go with the wine.”

“Some cooked beef is all I’ve got,” the waiter said.

“That’ll do,” said Wu Song. “Slice me two or three catties.”

The waiter went in and cut two catties of beef and put it in a big dish which he then placed in front of Wu Song. Then he poured another big bowl of wine. Wu Song drank it off and said: “Now that’s what I call good wine!”

One more bowl was poured. And that made exactly three Wu Song had drunk and the host wasn’t going to pour any more.

Wu Song started to bang on the table. <22 <21 “Host! <Page 9> Why don’t you come and pour the wine?” > 21> > 22>

The waiter said: “Good guest, more meat I’ll bring you, if that be what you desire.”

“I want more wine – but don’t worry, you can cut me some more meat as well.”

“If it’s meat you want,” the waiter repeated, “I’ll bring it for you, but no more wine.”

“What’s all this?” Wu Song said to himself. To the waiter he said: “Why don’t you want to sell me any more?”

“Good guest!” said the man. “You seen our sign, haven’t you? Says it clear enough, don’t it? <22 <21 “Three bowls and you cannot cross the Ridge”’. > 21> > 22>

Wu Song said: “But what’s that supposed to mean, ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the Ridge’?”

The waiter said: “Although it’s a local brew, this wine of ours has got morre clas than many a famous vintage. Whenever a guest who comes to our inn here, he <22 <21 drinks three bowls of this wine he’ll get drunk > 21> > 22> and is unable to cross the Ridge. That’s why we say, ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the Ridge’. All our guests, just three bowls you know, and after that they don’t ask for no more”.

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Wu Song laughed and said: “Oh, so that’s it! <22 <21 But I’ve had three  
bowls, how come I’m not drunk?”

The waiter said: “This wine of mine is called 21> 22> the Perfumed Glory, but  
it is also called <22 <21 ‘Falling at the Door’. At first you only savour 21> 22> the  
delicious flavour, <22 <21 but after a while you will fall down.”

“Stop talking nonsense!” 21> 22> said Wu Song. “Are you afraid I won’t pay  
you? <22 <21 Bring me another three bowls!”

<Page 10> Seeing that Wu Song was still entirely steady, the waiter brought  
him another three bowls. Wu Song drank and said: 21> 22> “Certainly a good wine!  
Host, whatever I drink, I’ll pay for. Just keep me filled up!”

The waiter said: “Oh, good guest! Don’t go on drinking! When you’re drunk  
on this wine there’s no remedy.”

“Enough talking of bullshit! And if you’re thinking of doctoring the wine,  
watch out, I’ve got a nose for that sort of thing!”

The waiter found it was no good arguing, so he poured another three bowls.

“Bring me another two catties of meat!” Wu Song said.

The waiter cut another two catties of beef, poured another three bowls of wine  
and Wu Song <22 <21 went on guzzling for a long while. 21> 22> He only cared about  
drinking. <22 <21 Then he took out some silver 21> 22> and called: “Host, come and  
count this silver, see if it’s enough to pay for what I’ve drunk and eaten.”

The waiter had a look and said: “More than enough, you’ll get some change.”

“I don’t want your change, just give it to me in wine.”

“But good guest, if you want it in wine, that’s another five or six bowls! I’ll  
warrant you can’t manage that.”

“I don’t care if it’s more than six bowls, just bring it!”

“You’re such a big man,” said the waiter, “if you pass out, how <Page 11> are  
we ever going to carry you?”

“If I needed the likes of you to carry me, I wouldn’t call myself a man at all!”

But the waiter still didn’t want to bring the wine.

Wu Song began to lose his temper. “It’s not as if I’m not paying you for it. If  
you don’t stop trying to provoke me, I’ll smash the place up, I’ll turn your bloody house  
upside down!”

“The bugger’s drunk, I’d better humour him,” the waiter said to himself. And  
he brought another six bowls, all of which Wu Song drank.

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Having consumed altogether no less than fifteen bowls, Wu Song now <22  
<21 grasped his cudgel, 21> 22> rose to his feet and saying: “Who says I’m drunk?” and  
matched out of the door. “And you can forget all that stuff about ‘Three bowls and you  
cannot cross the Ridge,” he shouted back.

So off he went, brandishing his cudgel.

<22 <21 But then the waiter was chasing after him, 22> crying: 21> “Good  
guest, where do you think you’re a-going to?”

Wu Song halted and said: “What are you shouting about? I’ve paid for  
everything, haven’t I? Why all this song and dance?”

“I’m only trying to help,” the waiter said. “You’d better come back inside and  
read the government notice <sup>5</sup>.”

“What government notice?”

“Recently, <22 <21 up there in the Jingyang Ridge there is a big beast with  
slanting eyes and a white forehead. He comes out to attack people at night. 21> 22> Done  
for twenty or thirty good men already, he has. The hunters <sup>6</sup> are under orders to trap him,  
there’s a deadline set by the government. And there’s signs posted up in all the approaches  
to the ridge, <Page 12> warning 23> the people living on both sides of the ridge that:  
<23 <22 <21 ‘The travellers must gather into groups and cross the Ridge during the three  
watches from ten to four o’clock. It’s forbidden to cross at any other time.’ 21> 22> And  
what’s more, single travellers 23> are not allowed to cross the Ridge during the day time  
and they <23 are supposed to wait till there’s a group. It’s late now, it’ll soon be night, I  
said to myself, ‘he’s just throwing his life away.’ <22 <21 You’d much better spend the  
night here. 21> 22> Tomorrow you can wait till a sufficient number’s gathered, and then  
you all cross the ridge together.”

Wu Song laughed this suggestion to scorn. “I’m from the region,” he said,  
“and <22 <21 I’ve crossed this ridge a score of times. Who ever heard of a tiger here?  
21> 22> It’s no good thinking you can frighten me with that sort of shit. Anyway, even if  
there is a tiger, I’m not afraid of it!”

“I’m telling you what’s good for you! If you don’t believe me, come inside and  
take a look at the government notice.”

“Balls! I tell you, if there really is a tiger, it doesn’t scare me. <22 <21 What  
you want is to get me to stay in your house so you can come in the middle of the night

<sup>5</sup> 抄白 is missing in 41, comparing with 23.

<sup>6</sup> 打猎捕户 in 41, and 猎户 in 23.



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and rob me of my money <21> <22> and my life. That's why you're trying to intimidate me with some tale of a fucking tiger!"

The waiter said: "Well I never! <22 <21 Here's me, <Page 13> out of the kindness of my heart, trying to help you, but you give my words a bad meaning <21> <22> and twist them around. <22 <21 All right, if you don't believe me, <21> <22> just go ahead!"

*Indeed:*

Of those that went before, a thousand came to grief;  
That the next will safely pass is surely beyond belief!  
In pointing out the facts nothing but kindness is meant;  
But the fool with his suspicions imagines an ill intent!

Shaking his head, the host of the inn stepped back inside.

<22 <21 This Wu Song <21> <22> picked up his cudgel and <22 <21 strode off alone towards the Jingyang Ridge. <21> <22> After little more than a mile, he arrived at the foot of the pass. <22 <21 Here he saw a big tree with a white patch, <21> <22> where the bark had been stripped off to make room for two lines of writing. Wu Song was a passable reader. He raised his eyes and read:

Recently, since <22 <21 a tiger has been attacking people on the Jingyang Ridge. Travellers and merchants must gather into groups and cross the Ridge during the three watches from ten to four o'clock. Ignore this advise at your peril!

When Wu Song had read it he laughed and said: <21> <22> "It must be a trick by that scoundrel of an waiter to frighten travellers into staying at his inn. That sort of bullshit won't scare me!" <22 <21 Grasping his cudgel he began to climb the ridge. <21> <22>

By now <Page 14> the afternoon was drawing on and the sun's red disk was starting to sink behind the mountains. But Wu Song, spurred on by the wine he had drunk, was determined to conquer that ridge. He had not gone more than a few hundred yards, however, when he came upon a tumbledown <21, 22 temple dedicated to the spirits of the mountain, <21> <22> Approaching, he saw that <22 <21 there was a notice bearing an official seal fixed to the door. <21> <22> He paused to read it. It said:

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Yanggu district office announces <sup>7</sup> that due to the recent <sup>8</sup> appearance of a fierce man-eating tiger and the fact that the local hunters commissioned to trap <sup>9</sup> it have not yet succeeded in their objective, travellers and merchants must gather into groups and cross the Ridge during the three watches from ten to four o'clock, and furthermore single travellers are not to attempt the journey alone **23** during the daytime, **<23** lest they perish in the process <sup>10</sup>. Traveller take heed!

After reading this, **<22 <21** Wu Song realized that there was indeed a tiger. **21> 22>** At first he thought of **23>** starting to go back **<23** to the inn, but then he said to himself: “If I go back there, I’ll have to endure his mockery. It’ll look as if I’m scared. So I can’t very well turn back.” He turned it over in his mind for a while and then concluded: “What the hell am I afraid of? I’ll just go on and see what happens.”

So on he went. And as the wine began to mount to his head, he took off his hat and strung it on his back, and tucked **<Page 15>** the cudgel under his arm. Step by step, he trudged on up the ridge. Turning to look at the sun, he saw that it was slowly setting. This was real November weather, when the days are short and the nights long, and it’s easy for nightfall to catch you unawares. “What’s all this nonsense about a big tiger,” Wu Song was muttering to himself. “People are scared of the mountain that’s all, they don’t have the guts to climb it.”

He walked on a bit further and the wine began to make itself felt still more. He was feeling hot, so holding his cudgel in one hand he used the other to loosen his clothing and bare his chest. He was swaying and stumbling as he advanced towards a dense thicket. He caught sight of a smooth **<21, 22** black rock, so he laid his cudgel aside and sank down to rest upon the rock. As he was drifting off to sleep, *just look* **21> 22>** how there came a fierce gust of wind. **23>**

When this wind occurs, *all one can see is:*

**<23** Formless and invisible, it strikes to a man’s heart;  
It comes in any season and it blows all things apart;

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<sup>7</sup> 示 is missing in 41, comparing with 23.

<sup>8</sup> 近来 is missing in 23, comparing with 41.

<sup>9</sup> 打捕 in 41, and 行捕 in 23.

<sup>10</sup> 不便 is missing in 23, comparing with 41.

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Sweeping through the autumn woods it strips the branches bare,  
Whistling among mountain peaks, it fills with clouds the air.

*In fact*, clouds as is well known originate with dragons, and wind is associated with tigers.

When the gust had passed, he heard a crash through the trees and out sprang a <22 <21 big beast with bulging eyes and white forehead. <Page 16> When Wu Song saw this 21> 22> a horrified “Aiya!” broke from his lips. <22 <21 He rolled off the rock 21, 22> and grabbing his cudgel 23> in his right hand <23 dodged behind it.

Now the big beast was ravenous. It <22 <21 pressed its two paws into the ground with ease, 21> 22> springing upwards, <22 <21 and taking off into mid-air intended to land on its prey from above. 21> 22> Wu Song had such a shock that he felt all the wine start out of him in an icy sweat!

*It's slow in the telling, but happens in a flash.* <22 <21 When he saw the beast spring, Wu Song leapt out of the way, ending up behind it. 21> 22> That's exactly what the big beast didn't like, to have a man at its back. Thrusting upward off its front paws, it flexed its back and twisted round to pounce again. But again Wu Song dodged to one side. Failing to grasp its prey, the tiger gave a roar like half the heavens exploding, a roar that seemed to shake the very mountains, and lashed out at Wu Song with its tail, rigid as a steel bar. Once more Wu Song leapt aside.

*In fact*, <22 <21 when the big beast attacks a man, it generally has these three strategies: springing, pouncing and sweeping. When all these three methods failed its spirit was half broken. 21> 22> After that big beast failing to catch Wu Song with its tail it <22 <21 gave a loud roar and turned round again. 21> 22> Seeing the big beast had turned its back on him, Wu Song <22 <21 grasped his cudgel in both hands 21> 22> <Page 17> and brought it down with all the strength of his body. There was a resounding crash.

But what he had done was demolish a whole tree, branches and all. He looked for the big beast. His staff had not even touched it. He'd rushed <sup>11</sup> his stroke and all he'd achieved was to <22 <21 hit on a dead tree. Now his cudgel was broken in two 21> 22> and he was left with only the broken half in his hand. <22 <21 That big beast roared, 21> 22> it was enraged, <22 <21 it turned and sprang at him again. 21> 22> Wu Song leapt back, covering ten paces in a single bound. The big beast reared up on its hind legs and

<sup>11</sup> 慌了 in 41, and 打急了 in 23.

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came at him with all its claws out. Wu Song threw away his broken stick and suddenly grabbing the big beast's striped neck with his bare hands began forcing it down to the ground. The beast tried to struggle, but **23** it lost its power, and **<23** all Wu Song's strength was employed against it, not for a moment did he relax his grip. **<22 <21** With his legs he delivered fearful kicks to the big beast's **21> 22>** nose and eyes. **<22 <21** That big beast roared furiously, and as it thrashed about under this onslaught its paws churned up two mounds of mud. Wu Song thrust the beast down into the mud **21> 22>** **<Page 18** and irresistibly its power began to ebb. Still gripping the striped coat tightly with his left hand, Wu Song managed to work his right hand free and began raining down blows with an iron fist, hammering the beast with all his might. He got in fifty or sixty blows, till from the beast's eyes, mouth and nose and ears **<22 <21** the red blood began to gush. **21> 22>**

With all the power of the heroes of old, by the sheer force of his manly spirit, Wu Song was able easily to convert that savage monster **<22 <21** into a senseless heap, **21> 22>** for all the world like an embroidered bag. **<22 <21** *There is an old ballad* **22>** describing Wu Song fights a tiger on Jingyang Ridge. **23>** **<22** *Please look:* **21> 22>**

**<23 <22 <21** On Jingyang Ridge<sup>12</sup> a sudden squall,  
Day hides its face in a thick black pall; \* **23>**  
Red leaves reflect their colour like flames on the marshes,\*  
Yellow grass sprouts grow throughout the land;  
**<23** Twilight cloaks the desolate wold,\*  
And a deadly chill pervades the world.  
A sound like thunder splits the ears  
As the king of beasts on the slope appears.  
He proudly bounds, teeth and claws on show, **23>**  
At the entrance of the valley the **<23** deer are all running in a panic.**21, 22, 23>**  
The fox and rabbit of the mountain disappear without a trace,  
The roebuck and monkey by the mountain creek get terrified.  
**<22 <21** Bian Zhuang sees it and gets frightened out of his senses,

<sup>12</sup> Some single characters in this poem, found in all four editions (21, 22, 23 and 41), are different giving a slightly different sense. 21 and 22 are very close, while the relationship to 23 and 41 is quite complicated. Sometimes 41 is closer to 21/22, sometimes closer to 23. Lines with divergencies between 21 and 41 are marked with \*.

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Cun Xiao <Page 19> encounters it and gets scared from his wits.\*

<23 The Qinghe hero, still half tight,  
Waits alone, but ready to fight.  
To watch that man-eater hunt a meal,  
The way it springs... it would make you squeal!  
He falls on the man like an avalanche,  
But the man's a cliff, he doesn't flinch;\*  
He grips with the force of a missile crashing –  
And the tiger's paws in the mud are thrashing,  
Blows and kicks, a relentless flood,  
Both hands soaked in the crimson blood.\*21, 22>  
Dreadful carnage! On the blood-soaked ground  
Fur and whiskers are strewn around.<sup>13</sup>

<22 <21 When you look at it closely its fierce power is already used up, \*  
When you look at it from afar its awe-inspiring posture is all but gone.<sup>14</sup>  
There it lies now, bright stripes fading,  
Sprawled among weeds, both eyes clouding. 21> 22>

*At this moment* what Wu Song on Jingyang Ridge provided for that savage tiger, in less time than it takes to eat a simple meal, was a surfeit of blows and kicks: he beat the big beast <22 <21 till it did not move. 21> 22> For a moment it lay helpless, faintly panting. <22 <21 Then Wu Song let go 21> 22> and went to find the broken end of his cudgel. With this, <22 <21 fearing lest the big beast revive, he belaboured it a while longer, 21> 22> till the breath was quite gone out of it.

<Page 20> <22 <21 “I might as well drag the big beast down the mountain,” he decided. 21> 22> But when he thrust his hands into the bleeding mass and started pulling, <22 <21 he could not shift it. 21> 22> All he did was exhaust himself, till his arms and legs began to fail 23> and he couldn't move. <23 <22 <21 So he went back to the black rock and sat down to rest. He thought: “It's getting quite dark now. If another tiger should appear, I don't think I'd be able to cope. I'd better try and get down off the ridge. 21> 22> I can come back and deal with this thing in the morning.” He picked up

<sup>13</sup> These two lines found in 23 and 41 are lacking in 21 and 22.

<sup>14</sup> The above two lines are not included in the Dent-Young translation (based on 23), but they are nevertheless found in 23, as well as in 21, 22 and 41.

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his hat, which had fallen beside the rock, and skirting round the thickest part of the forest, set off at a steady pace down the mountain.

He had hardly gone half a mile, <22 <21 just look how at this moment two big beasts emerge from 21> 22> the brushwood! “Aiya!” Wu Song cried, <22 <21 “now I’m finished <sup>15</sup>!” 21> 22> Then in the shadow the two big beasts rose on their hind legs, and when Wu Song looked carefully, <22 <21 it was two men who had sewn themselves suits made out of tiger skins, 21> 22> fitting tightly to their bodies. They carried five-tined forks.

<22 <21 They were shocked to see Wu Song and said: 21> 22> “Have you the courage of a wild beast, a leopard’s gall, a tiger’s claws? Have you a heart so big it won’t fit in your body, that you dare, <22 <21 alone in the dark of night <Page 21> and unarmed, to cross the ridge? 21> 22> Are you a man or a ghost?”

<22 <21 “Who are you?” Wu Song asked in return.

“We are hunters from this place,” they replied, 21> 22>

“And why are you headed this way, up the mountain?”

They registered amazement. “Haven’t you heard? <22 <21 There’s a big beast right here on Jingyang Ridge. Every night it is out hunting for people. 21> 22> Seven or eight of our fellows, hunters that is, have lost their lives already, and countless travellers, all devoured by this terrible beast. <22 <21 The Magistrate of our district has made 21> 22> the local authorities and <22 <21 us hunters responsible for capturing it. 21> 22> But it’s incredibly ferocious and dangerous to approach <sup>16</sup>, no one dares get too near. We’ve had I don’t know how many beatings on account of this, but we just can’t catch him. <22 <21 It’s our turn again tonight. 21> 22> We’ve got a few dozen villagers here to back us up. Wu’ve put down traps everywhere, loaded with poisoned darts. <22 <21 We had just finished setting our ambush. 21> 22> Imagine our surprise when we saw you strolling down the mountain. What are you? <22 <21 Did you see the big beast?”

Wu Song said: “I am from Qinghe, my name is Wu and I’m the second in my family. <Page 22> Yes, I ran into the big beast, 21> 22> in a pretty wild part of the mountain, <22 <21 and I’ve just beaten it to death.” 21> 22>

The hunters’ jaws fell open. “Are you joking?” they said.

<22 <21 Wu Song said: “If you don’t believe it, look at all the blood on me.”

The hunters said: “But how did you kill it?”

<sup>15</sup> 死也性命 is missing in 23, comparing with 41.

<sup>16</sup> 得他 is missing in 23, comparing with 41.

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Wu Song told the facts about how he killed the big beast. 21> 22> The hunters were as relieved as they were astonished. They called the villagers, who now came crowding forward, a dozen or more of them, carrying steel-tined forks, foot-bows, knives and spears.

“Why didn’t these troops go with you up the mountain?” Wu Song asked the hunders.

“Catch them going up there, with a freocious beast like that on the loose!” the latter replied.

When the hunters told the villagers that Wu Song had killed the beast they didn’t believe it.

“If you don’t trust me, let’s all go and have a look,” Wu Song said. They had flints and tinders boxes with them, so they lit half a dozen torches and <22 <21 followed Wu Song back up the mountain. There was the dead tiger, <Page 23> sprawled in a heap. 21> 22> Immediately there was great rejoicing. One of the villagers was sent on ahead to inform the district authorities, while the others <22 <21 put a rope round the tiger and carried it down the mountain. 21> 22>

When they reached the bottom a crowd had already gathered. They proceeded on, the tiger going in front and Wu Song now being carried in a mountain palanquin, till they reached the house of a local bigwig. The heads of the household were all waiting for them outside the gate. The tiger was carried to the main hall. Everyone of any standing in the district had come to see Wu Song, and so had all the local hunters, so there were twenty or thirty people all told.

“Won’t you please tell us your name and where you come from?” they said to Wu Song.

“My name’s Wu Song and I’m the second in my family. I was on my way home from Cangzhou. Last night I stayed at the inn on the other side of the ridge and got rather drunk. When I climbed the ridge there was this beast.” Once more he gave a detailed account of his pugilistic exploits with the tiger.

“My! This is a real hero!” the audience said.

Wu Song was now offered wine and the hunters produced dishes of game to go with it. Wu Song <Page 24> was exhausted from his fight with the tiger and the master of the house, after telling the servants to prepare a guest-room, urged him to go and lie down.

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Next day at dawn the head of the household <22 <21 sent someone to the Magistrate with a report. 21> 22> A frame was constructed for carrying the tiger. As soon as it was fully light Wu Song got up and washed. the important people of the village brought a sheep and a barrel of wine, which was served in front of the main hall. Wu Song dressed and put on his hat and came out to meet everyone. They toasted him and said: “Heaven knows how many people this beast injured, or how many hunters suffered floggings because of it. <22 <21 Now at last a hero has appeared and rid us of the menace. What a relief, 21> 22> both for the people of this village and for all travellers, who can now complete their journey in safety! We really owe you a lot!”

<22 <21 Wu Song thanked them and said: 21> 22> “It is not through any merit of my own, <22 <21 I was simply enjoying the reflection of your good fortune.”21> 22>

Everyone had come to congratulate him. When they had breakfasted and drunk wine the tiger was carried out and placed on the frame, while Wu Song was garlanded with a piece of red silk. Wu Song left his bundle and other things in the village, and they all departed through the gate. Immediately <Page 25> some persons sent by the Magistrate of Yanggu district appeared, with orders to escort Wu Song. After some introductions, four servants were instructed to carry Wu Song in an open sedan, while the tiger was borne along in front, draped in red cloth. Thus they proceeded to Yanggu.

The people of Yanggu, having heard about a hero killing the tiger of the Jiangyang Ridge, all turned out to cheer<sup>17</sup>. The whole district was in an uproar. From his sedan Wu Song saw them pushing and shoving, packing every street and alley, everyone <22 <21 eager to get a glimpse of the tiger. 21> 22> The procession reached the government offices and stopped at the entrance to the *Yamen*. The Magistrate was already in the courtroom, waiting to receive them. Wu Song alighted and the bearers set the tiger down on a raised walkway. <22 <21 The Magistrate, having observed Wu Song’s stature and seeing the brocade skin of the big beast, 21> 22> said to himself: “Who but such a fellow could have finished off that enormous animal?” When Wu Song had saluted, the Magistrate said: <22 <21 “Hero, do tell us how you killed this big beast.”

So Wu Song told the facts about how he killed the tiger 21> 22> in the courtroom. Everyone present <Page 26> heard him with amazement. <22 <21 The Magistrate then offered Wu Song several cups of wine in the hall and presented him with a thousand strings of cash 21> 22> collected by the local dignitaries <22 <21 as reward

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<sup>17</sup> 将来 in 41, and 了来 in 23.



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<sup>18</sup>. 21> 22> But Wu Song modestly said: <22 <21 “I was simply enjoying the reflection of your good fortune, Your Excellency. I was just lucky to kill the tiger, 21> 22> it was not through any merit of my own. How can I accept this money? <22 <21 I have heard that the hunters here suffered sanctions on account of the tiger. Might we not divide the money and give it to them?” 21> 22>

“If that is your wish,” the Magistrate said, <22 <21 “I leave it to you to arrange it.”

Wu Song distributed the money among the hunders, and the Magistrate, impressed by Wu Song’s open-handedness 21> 22> and humanity, decided he would like to secure his advancement. “Although you are from Qinghe,” he said, “right next to us here at Yanggu. <22 <21 Today I would like to offer you a position as my captain. What do you say?” 21> 22>

Wu Song knelt to thank him. <22 <21 “I shall be forever in your debt for this, Your Excellency,” 21> 22> he said.

Accordingly, <22 <21 the Magistrate called the registrar and had him write out the order appointing Wu Song with immediate effect a captain of foot. All the important members of the community came to offer their congratulations 21> 22> and there were celebrations lasting several days. <22 <21 Wu Song thought <Page 27> to himself: “I merely wanted to go home 21> 22> to Qinghe <22 <21 to see my brother, and now here I am, an officer 21> 22> in the Yanggu militia!” From that day on he had been favoured by his superior and his fame spread throughout the district.

Several days had passed, and then <22 <21 one day as Wu Song 23> had nothing to do and <23 left the government offices in search of amusement, he heard someone call out behind him: 21> 22> “Captain Wu, <22 <21 you’ve made your fortune now, 21> 22> is that why you don’t come to see me?”

When <22 <21 Wu Song turned his head 21> 22> and saw who it was, he let out a cry: “Aiya! What are you doing here?”

Had Wu Song not met this person, things would have turned out very differently, and Yanggu would not have witnessed a scene of terrible carnage. As a result of the meeting,

Blades will whistle and heads will roll,  
Bright swords be drawn and the hot blood flow. 23>

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<sup>18</sup> 赏賜 in 41, and 给 in 23.

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*Indeed:*

Because of wine and women<sup>19</sup> families and states have fallen apart;  
But the name of a noble man is seldom slandered in poetry and history.

<23 <21 *But to know whom it really was* 21> who called out to Wu Song,  
addressing him as Captain Wu, <21 *you must listen to the explanation in the next session.*  
21> 23>

Translated by Yu Jing and Vibeke Børdahl

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<sup>19</sup> This couplet is found only in 41.