

WATER MARGIN**‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’**

*Told by Wang Xiaotang
Copenhagen, 30 August 1996*

[Extract]

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Seen from afar, he looked like a bull ox with one horn,
seen from nearby, he was a mottled wild beast.
The left ear was spotted with red colour, like the sun,
the right ear was spotted with green colour, like the moon,
between its brows a ‘king’s’ character,
like an officer inspecting the mountains.
His twenty four straws of whiskers
were like needles and barbed wire.
Four big teeth, eight small teeth,
were like iron cramps and steel nails.
His eyes were like bronze bells, their light like lightening.
His tiger’s tail was like a bamboo whip.
In front were his paws, behind were his legs.
When he put his paws to the ground, he could
 climb the mountains and bounce from hill to hill.
When he lifted his hind legs, he could jump over gullies
 and cross rivers.
When he lifted his head and roared in the wind,
the winged game in heaven all lost courage.
When he lowered his head and drank of the water,
the fish and shrimps of the stream all lost their mind.
Among the four-footed beasts he alone stands out.
Deep mountains and desolate moors are his home.
When he has not eaten human meat for three days

he will swing his tail and sway his head and grind his teeth.

“U-u-u-u-u-h! - Ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a!”

The tiger looked at Wu Song and roared. At this moment Wu Song had his eyes fixed on the tiger. Wu Song said to himself: ‘You beast! You are so terrible! You have killed so many travelers! If I, Wu Song had not come here, there would have been nothing more to it, but now I, Wu Song have come, and I’m bound to kill you today!’ Oh, my, that tiger was really ferocious! ‘You are ferocious, true, but I have my ways and wits! Come on! If you don’t come, that’s it! But if you do happen to come, I’ll first kick blind those two tiger eyes of yours. And then I’ll watch how a blind tiger like you is going to eat a man!’

No need to worry about Wu Song! His appearance in the ‘Water Margin’ saga - from the very beginning when he kills the tiger at Jingyang Ridge, to the very end when he takes the Double Dragon Mountain by strategy - all through the ten chapter cycle called ‘Opening with the tiger and closing with the dragon’, it’s marvelous! In every situation Wu Song reacts just right. Why? This is because Wu Song is not only brave, but he is also resourceful. He is a great hero with both wit and courage.

Wu Song watched the tiger attentively: ‘Come on, and be sure that I shall blind your eye with my kick!’ He had his plan ready. So now he put his scarf right on the top of his head, tightened his belt, stamped his feet into his boots, rubbed his hands and rolled up his sleeves. Then he prepared his voice, took stock and shouted:

“Bah! Stay where you are, you bloody daring beast! Here you see Wu Song, himself!”

‘Pooh-pooh-pooh-pooh...!’ In a few jumps he was in front of the tiger and stopped at about three meters away. Our hero was standing in the posture of ‘three tips close together’, that is: the tips of his feet, the tips of his hands and the tip of his nose, these three points were all coordinated and ready, as if they had been adjusted according to a plumb-

line! Wu Song was fixated on the tiger, he did not as much as blink his eyes!

When the tiger caught sight of someone, it always had three ways to strike people with awe. What three ways? The first awesome way was when it opened its mouth:

“Wu-u-u...ma-a-a-a-a!”

It was frightening, when it opened its mouth. When its mouth was opened, it looked like a big pail of blood, and then its breath would emanate from its mouth. And its breath was foul. People in poor health would become dizzy just from smelling this foul air. And their eyesight would become blurred. And the moment you would fall unconscious, you would hear the tiger stepping near!

But Wu Song was not afraid! Wu Song was in very good health! Well, if you had managed to avoid the tiger’s first awesome way, you would be in for the second. What was the second awesome way? That was its two forepaws! The tiger would stretch out its two forepaws and aim at your left and right shoulder, and then it would prepare to rush upon you. If you didn’t get caught, O.K. But if you *were* caught, it would knock you flat and goodbye! Now, if you also managed to avoid its second awesome way, you would be in for the third! The third awesome way, that was its tiger’s tail! If the tail swept across your back, your back was broken. When it swept across your leg, your leg was broken. The tail was swinging hither and thither. If one could avoid its third awesome way, one might save ones life!

Just at this moment the tiger looked at Wu Song and began to prepare its first awesome way. How could it imagine that when it broke out in a roar, that big fellow opposite didn’t even move! Well, this tiger was quite resourceful, too! This huge beast was intelligent. ‘Since my first awesome way is no use, let me try the second!’ The tiger lifted its two forepaws and rose on its hind legs and gave a roar:

“Wu-u-u...ma-a-a!”

Did Wu Song watch the tiger attentively at this moment, you think? He was standing in the posture of ‘three tips close together’ and did not as

much as blink his eyes! He saw the animal was on the point of springing, it was just about to spring on him. But Wu Song dodged to the left, and when the tiger made a jump into the air, it landed on his right side. The tiger had made a jump into the air, and Wu Song used this opportunity to try and catch it. Who would have imagined that the tiger, this huge beast, could be so smart?

“Ma-a-a-a-a!”

It slunk away under his hand! Wu Song turned round and tried to spot the tiger again:

“Ha, ha! You monster, so you are making yourself scarce!”

Had the tiger disappeared? Who says the tiger had disappeared? Do you think the tiger could disappear at this moment? Wu Song leaned to the other side, and then he planted his left foot firmly in the ground, stretched his right foot up and swung this one foot in the air. A master of the situation he aimed with the tip of his foot towards the right eye of the tiger, and there you are! The right eye of the tiger was kicked blind. The eyeball exploded just like a splattered egg. The tiger began to shed blood. When the tiger began to shed blood, didn't it run away at once? Well, even if it might run away it would surely come back again. At the top of the ridge it leapt and turned round. It turned round and stood face to face with Wu Song again. In the light of the moon Wu Song was staring intently at the tiger:

“Hey!”

Wu Song said to himself: ‘You beast! A moment ago I dodged, planted my left foot firmly, twisted my right foot and kicked out your eye! I am a master of the situation and I plan to kick out your eyes. Now I have already kicked your right eye blind, and if you do not attack any more, that's the end of that! But if you do attack again, be sure that I'll kick blind your left eye as well! And then let's see how you, a blind tiger, will go about eating people!’

The tiger was above him. The tiger was staring at Wu Song, too. It had not given in. My! Well, it had not yet had its free meal! It did understand that it had lost one eye in the game, one light had been turned off!

“Wu-u!”

The tiger rushed towards Wu Song again. It looked at him: ‘Be sure that I’ll spring at you and kill you!’ You see, it was just on the point of springing, when Wu Song dodged to the right. As soon as he dodged, the tiger landed on his left side. Our hero planted his left foot firmly in the ground and lifted his right foot up in the air:

“Hey!” and kicked it with his foot, kicking out its left eye. The tiger gave a roar:

“Wu-u-u...”

Why did it roar? It was blind in both eyes, can you imagine? Dear me! What a panic! Wu Song said to himself: ‘You damned beast, so you still think you are going to run away! But you shall not escape from death this time! Then Wu Song took a step forward onto his left foot, raised his left hand, and with his five fingers - his five fingers were like iron hooks - he took a firm grip on the tiger’s neck:

“Hey ho!”

You see, when he cried out, he [lifted] his arm - how on earth could that be a human arm of blood and flesh? No, it was more like a thousand pound iron pillar. The tiger could not even move any more.

“Wu-u-u...”

Its four paws were scratching the earth below: ‘Scratch, scratch, scratch.’ Its tail was swinging from side to side. Wu Song stared at the tiger: ‘Ah, you damned beast! And you still try to wag your tail, don’t you? Hem! That won’t do! Just think if your tail happens to strike me! Your tail is like an iron whip, and if you hit me and I’m hurt, what a mess!’ Our hero moved forward a bit, so that his body leaned against the tiger’s left hip. Then Wu Song took a step forward with his right foot and put his right hand on top of his left, planted his left foot firmly on the ground and swung his right leg up in the air. With his right heel he aimed at the tiger’s spine and shouted:

“Hey!”

‘Phew!’ You see, when he kicked this time, that was a mere trifle! But now he had managed to hit the root of the tiger’s tail. The root of the tail,

well, you see, when he hit it, only one single sound was heard: ‘Crack!’

How on earth would you guess that the bone of its tail had been broken off? The tiger’s tail could not swing any more. It could not swing, but drooped to the ground. Wu Song took the opportunity to mount the tiger. He held the tiger with his hand in a firm grip. The tiger was suffering badly. It had never carried anything so heavy before.

“Wu-u-u...”

Although its eyes had been blinded, it stubbornly tried to turn round. Wu Song watched it: ‘Damn, how stubborn you are! You, you!’ Our hero raised his fist:

“Got it!”

‘Phew!’ You see, when he beat it this time, he hit its right eyebrow.

“Wu-u-u...!”

The tiger shrank under him. When the tiger shrank under him, Wu Song raised his right fist and aimed at its right flank, and then he began to beat it, knocking it with his left and with his right fist without stopping:

“Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!...”, swooping down on it a dozen times or so.

That cannot be right! That’s something everybody knows: Since the days of old up till now people have always known that Wu Song caught the tiger with his clever fist and killed it with three knocks and two kicks! Why do you tell us that he beat it a dozen times or so? Well, even if he did beat the tiger a dozen times, he didn’t change the spot where he hit it. He aimed at the tiger’s right flank, beating it on the same spot with his left and with his right fist, and later when the wound was examined, it was only counted as one knock. So now Wu Song again looked intently at the tiger and sighed:

“Ah!”

‘Will I ever be able to go to the battleground again and fight? Will I ever be able to take the life of my enemies? I can’t even kill a tiger! Oh, I have an idea! If you want to kill a man, you must wound him on his deadly spot. And when you want to kill a beast, you must also wound its deadly spot. Where can one find its deadly spot?’ Suddenly he caught sight of

the tiger's right ear exactly under the palm of his hand. Wu Song took the opportunity to raise his fist high up and ground his teeth with hatred: 'You damned beast! Just think how many travelers you have killed since you came to this place! Be sure that I will kill you with this fist of mine!' And then he shouted:

"Hey!"

'Phew!' You see, when his fist came down this time, the tiger roared:

"Wu-u-u...!"

And while it was still roaring, something gushed more than three meters from the tiger's left ear: 'S-s-s-s-s!', something just like a red silk thread. What was it? Blood! Why? Wu Song knocked the tiger on its right ear, so the blood ought to gush forth from its right ear. Why did it gush from its left ear? Because Wu Song's fist was so extraordinarily strong, he had smashed the tiger's right ear completely. When you cannot pass through the main entrance, you had better try and get through the back door: 'S-s-s-s-s!' Oh, when this blood was gushing forth, the tiger stopped moving, its head drooped. Wu Song took a look at it: 'You are done for!' Had the beast died? 'Are you pretending to be dead?' The he pushed the tiger a couple of times with his hands, but it didn't move at all. When Wu Song let go of the tiger's head, it fell flat to the ground: 'Plop!' It had died! It had died, had it! Died, died! Wu Song loosened his grip and stood up. When he stood up, he planted his left foot firmly in the ground and swung his right foot up in the air: 'Phew!' Then he kicked the tiger's body once more: 'Thump!' The tiger's body fell to one side. Wu Song looked intently at the tiger:

"Ha, ha! You monster! Where have all your majestic airs gone?"

Second Brother Wu, his courage was strong,
stood up and went straight to Jingyang Ridge
with his clever fist he killed the mountain tiger,
since then his great fame has swept over all the world.

Our hero leapt down the eastern slope of the ridge and arrived at the

stone. He shouldered his bundle and leapt over the top of the ridge: ‘Pooh, pooh, pooh, pooh!’ He wasn’t tipsy any more, see! He was running for fun. In leaps and bounces he crossed the top of the ridge. When he had marched for three *li*, he suddenly saw the road forking in front of him: to the right a big road and to the left a small path. Could it be the big road that led to Yanggu District? Or was it the small path that led to Yanggu District? Moreover, in the middle of the night there was nobody around that he could ask. Wu Song was standing there and speculating, when he suddenly at the rim of his ear became aware of a ringing sound of iron bells: ‘Drrr-ding-dong-ding-dong...’, coming from the grove near to the small path. Wu Song accordingly leaned toward that direction and stared attentively:

“Haiya!”

Why did Wu Song shout out like that? Dear me! ‘Over there, there are two tigers more! On Jingyang Ridge there is not only one tiger, no, at this place there are two tigers more, a yellow tiger and a black tiger! Are you kidding! How many tigers are there after all on the Jingyang Ridge? If I had not seen you tigers, so what! But since I *have* seen you tigers, be sure that I will kill you! Be sure that I will do away with the evil for all the traveling people.’ Wu Song was standing there and making a plan, he was just about to thrust himself onto the two tigers to kill them.