

New Edition of the Tale of the Noble Knight-errants, Scroll One

Chapter One

For a thousand years his heroic spirit has great momentum, his name is famous across the five lakes and the four seas. He subdued a fierce tiger on Jingyang Ridge, became a captain of foot in Yanggu District. He killed his adulterous sister-in-law to avenge the death of his brother. With just one knife he made a bloody scene at Ducks and Drakes Tower. Among the Thirty-six Celestial Powers this hero is number one!

This folk song is called *Zhe Hu Tian*. It tells about <17 the hero named Wu Song from Guangping Prefecture, Shandong Province. Wu Song was the second son in his family.17> He had an awesome stature, was handsome, his bearing was deeply impressive, <17 and he had outstanding martial arts skills. His character was loyal to the extreme, but his temper was headstrong. He had an elder brother named Wu Zhisheng who was weak in character and very ugly. 17> Wu Zhisheng had so little strength that he couldn't even hold a live chicken. He was shorter than two feet and five-six inches of the tailor's measurement. <17 Although he and Wu Song were born of the same mother, the elder was totally different from his younger brother. Thus, everyone disdainfully called him 17> “Three Inch” Wu the Elder. <17 Let us now tell only about Wu Song. One day he was drunk and killed a man 17> by one punch of his fist. He was afraid of being sued, <17 so he ran away from Qinghe District. He traveled to Taiping Village 17> <17 and took refuge at the residence of Chai Jin.17> <17 He happened to meet Song Jiang from Juncheng District there. Song Jiang was also taking refuge because of a court case. When he met Wu Song, he found out that they had very much in common, so they swore each other blood brotherhood. Wu Song stayed at that Taiping manor for over half a year. Then he heard that the man he thought he had killed, was actually not dead after all. Wu Song was a loyal person, and immediately he thought of his elder brother. He wanted to go back home to visit him. So he took farewell with Song Jiang and Chai Jin and left 17> ¹ for Qinghe District.

¹ Text 17 and text 54 are very close in language both in some of the prose passages and in some of the poems. In the following I shall indicate the starting and ending point of passages of similar close language. However, the translation will follow the present text and differ from text 17 on these minor points of difference. Some passages are so close in the original that the translation does not reflect the slight differences.

What a virtuous man, the famous Wu Song! / He wished to visit his elder brother in Qinghe District,/ and so he took farewell with Chai and Song, two friends at Taiping manor./ He traveled with great haste along the highway,/ keeping his full-length cudgel at hand to protect himself day and night,/ not in the least scared of meeting rascals or robbers in skirmish./ He saw the beautiful country scene of green hills and blue waters,/ experienced all sorts of things on the busy road,/ for lunch and dinner he had wine and food to his heart's content./ <page 2> He slept at small inns in the middle of nowhere./ This particular day it was already well past noon,/ when his stomach started rumbling and he felt very hungry./ There were few villages along the lonesome road,/ where could he find food to satisfy his hunger?/Second Brother Wu was turning hither and thither in search of food and wine,/ when he suddenly saw a young woman standing to the east of the road./

Let us now tell how Wu Song began to<17 feel hungry as he walked along. He finally reached a village, but there were no restaurants or taverns. He stopped and hesitated. *Just then he saw* that to the east of the road there was a hatch. Outside the hatch stood a woman about twenty years old.17> Her hair was combed with oil and her face was powdered. Her eyebrows like butterfly antennas and her eyes like the shape of apricots. She was well dressed too. Wu Song was not interested in her, so he went straight forward. The woman called out loudly to the foreigner on the road: “Good guest, why don’t you have a rest here?” Wu Song heard her calling, stopped and *adressed her thus*: “Is there a place that sells wine and food in this village?” The woman said: “All the people of this village, six or seven thousand persons, are farmers each and everyone, they have no other business. Only my family sells wine and food.” Wu Song asked: “If you sell wine, why don’t you have a sign outside your door?” The woman replied: “The things ² I sell are not supposed to be written on a sign. If you want it, good guest, please come inside.” Wu Song asked: “What are you selling?” The woman answered: “I sell things that can satisfy both hunger and thirst. You just stand there and listen to me.”

The woman stood outside the gate,/ with a smile on her face./ She opened her red lips/ and called “Good guest,/ this business I have/ is quite popular./ If you are interested,/ please come inside with me./

² *an* I, written in italics to indicate the use of *an*. *Wo* I is written in normal print.

*I sell sugar buns and noodles as fine as hair,/ steamed white buns as big as a bowl./
I have homemade snow white wine yeast./ And my hot soup is very different from
the normal./ The city restaurants can't compete with mine,/ my Five Fragrance wine
is always served from original sealed bottles./ Since I offer high quality things for a
low price,/ why do you need the herder boy pointing far away to Xinghua Village./
If you will be my first customer today,/ <page 3> I'll charge you only two hundred
copper coins./ Those unclear words said by that lady,/ fooled Second Hero of
Qinghe District."/*

The story says that Wu Song, being a straightforward man and on top of that very hungry and thirsty, listened to the words of the woman and did not have any misgivings. So he nodded his head and said: "If it's like what you say, then take me inside." On hearing this the woman turned round and went inside. Following her, Wu Song entered the front gate and then went through a hatch. Inside there was a thatched hut with three rooms with bamboo curtains in front of the doors. The woman opened one of the curtains and said: "Please come in, master!" Wu Song lowered his head and stepped inside. The room was quite clean and neat. In the middle there was a square table, with two chairs on each side. Behind the table there was a day bed with blanket and pillow, nicely made with all necessary bedding. Wu Song left his cudgel by the door and <17 sat down on the chair. The woman took the other chair 17> and called on her servant girl³ to pour some tea. Wu Song said: "I don't drink tea, bring me the wine first!" The woman told him: "We have no wine in my home, but if you want wine, I'll send somebody to buy it elsewhere." Wu Song said: "You just mentioned that you had Five Fragrance wine served from original sealed bottles! Why do you say that you don't have any? Well, if you do not have wine, then let's stop arguing about it, but quickly bring me some food to eat! I have to travel." The woman then said "Master, tell me what you would like to eat!" Wu Song said: "You just mentioned that you could offer me sugar buns, noodles as fine as hair and steamed white buns, just bring me that stuff to eat." The woman said: "Master, you are so silly, those things are in fact not for eating!" Hearing this, Wu Song began to understand. Then he said disappointedly: "If they are not for eating, why do you have them?" The woman smiled: "Master, although those things are not for eating, they are much better than food!"

Before the woman opened her mouth, she was smiling all over./ She exclaimed:

³ 头: 应该是“丫头”?

“Silly master, please listen to me carefully:/ there’s an old saying that everyone loves wine, sex, wealth and vigor./ You are aware about the common fact that men love women./ I was sent to a brothel since very young and was trained in erotic play,/ and so<17 I entertained guests with my beauty./ Now since you are at my home being my first customer,/ you should taste me and see if it’s 17> excellent.”/ There are rolls and noodles under my trousers,/ <page 4>loosening my blouse you will see the buns are ready and no need for steaming./ Talking about the sealed Five Fragrances wine, it’s truly superb/ I bet you’ll get drunk without drinking!/ If you don’t believe what I am telling you right here,/ please try it out in the red sheets of my bed!”/ This woman spat out the truth trying to seduce him,/ but she had to face the anger of [Wu Song,] the Star of Celestial Power./

Let us now tell how Wu Song who was suffering badly from hunger met this woman and how she tried to seduce him with fair words. But how could these words work on him? When Wu Song had heard her speech to the end, he got mad and was just about to use his fists. But then he thought: ‘Take it easy now! <17 This kind of woman has to stand in the doorway and sell her looks, 17> welcoming guest after guest. This is her way of earning her living. Even if she was talking a bit rude, she should not be blamed.’ When he thought about this, he suppressed his anger and said with an ironic smile: “Pretty lady, you do have nice intentions, but I am not the kind of man who lusts for sex. I really cannot accept the love you offer me.” <17 The woman smiled: “I don’t believe what you say. From time immemorial there were few men who didn’t lust for women. 17> Even immortals sometimes think of earthly joys, too. Wu Song said: “Well, I’m not an immortal and I just don’t lust for women. Please, don’t say more about this, and don’t get in my way.” After saying that, he stood up and wanted to leave. <17 That woman said: “Master, please sit down! I have something to tell you.” Wu Song asked: “What else do you want to say?”. The woman told him: “Although you are not asking for my service today, you have to leave some money for make-up.” When Wu Song heard this, he was really annoyed and told the woman: “The money is not a big deal, I’ll give you something more valuable, how is that?” The woman said: “What valuable thing do you want to give me, master?” 17> Wu Song stood up and clenched his fist next to that woman’s face. He said to her loudly: “It’s this thing, will you accept or not?” The woman was scared, hid her face behind her sleeve and said: “Why should I wait for that?” Wu Song said: “Depending on these two fists I’ve roved all over the world. Today this is my

gift to you and you will know how it tastes!” <page 5>

Talking about Wu Song,/ he didn't lust for female beauty./ He changed his manner right away,/ turned into a towering rage./ He clenched his fist,/ placed it on the woman's face./ His words were hard and sharp,/ the lady was frightened./

“You miserable wretch!” He cursed, “how ridiculous!/ You just try to trick me, Second Master, into a disaster!/ I wonder how much I should pay you for your make-up?/ Today, I was to be your first customer! You fooled me with your sugar buns,/ but you haven't tasted my spicy ginger!/ It's bigger than your steamed buns,/ and it's stronger than your sealed wine!/ I don't care if your noodles are like black or red hair./ Once I get mad, I'll treat you to a magic potion,/ and then you can welcome your customers on your way to heaven!/ And don't even dream about standing by the door powdering your face!”/ Second Brother Wu was about to beat the prostitute,/ he wanted to give her a serious lesson./ The beauty opened her mouth and called him master./ Politely she said: “Master, please listen to me!/ Today, please, master, control your thunder-like rage!/ I shall never again ask you for make-up money!”/ *If you honorable gentlemen want to know the following story,/ please, wait and see the next session about “Jingyang Ridge”.*

Chapter Two

Being a man, one must attain merit in life./ Having attained merit, one can feel consoled for the rest of ones life./ Feeling consoled for the rest of my life, I love to get drunk./ When I'm drunk I love to go crazy!/
These few idle words will serve to begin the story. Continuing from the last chapter, the story says that Wu Song was about to beat that woman and the woman was scared out of her wits and pleading with him. Wu Song let her alone, <17 took his cudgel, and went out the door. When he had traveled no more than two li along the road, somebody behind him yelled. He said: “You fellow, stop there! 17> <17 I have an old score to settle with you!” 17> <17 Wu Song stopped and turned round. There he saw a fellow approaching. His age was around thirty or more, and he was wearing a 17> brimmed hat and had a black cotton shirt thrown over his shoulder. He was followed by two young men, around the age of twenty. All the three of them had cudgels, <page 6> and they were hurrying fast towards

Wu Song. When they came closer Wu Song opened his mouth and asked: “Are you chasing after me?” That man said: “Of course it’s you! Who else could that be?” Wu Song asked him: “What score do you have to settle with me?” That man replied: “A moment ago in our village, you asked for sex with somebody. But you didn’t pay the girl her make-up money and even wanted to beat her. What kind of behaviour is that! We have to settle this score with you.” Wu Song [replied]: “Whether I asked for sex or not is none of your business. Since you have come to settle the score with me, are you her cuckold man?” That man said: “You can count yourself a big cuckold!” Wu Song said: “If you are not her cuckold husband, what’s your relation to that woman?” The man said: “Try and guess!” Wu Song said: “Is she your auntie?” The man said: “Bullshit! She can be your auntie!” Wu Song said: “Not really! Is she your aunt or your niece or your sister? Just explain to me! How am I able to guess!” That man answered: “Don’t talk nonsense! I’m keeping this girl as my mistress. You just ask around, who among all those single men dares to take advantage of her!” Wu Song said: “How dare you talk so big! What’s your name?” That man said: “Why do you ask for my name? Do you want to sue me? To tell you the truth, my last name is Li and my nickname⁴ is Li Second Ceng. I’m not talking big, all the villagers in this area know about it.” Wu Song said: “It seems that you want to fight?” That man said: “If you have silver, leave me some. Or you could leave me a couple of strings of coppers, and everything is settled. Otherwise, I’ll have no choice.” Wu Song said: <17 “I have neither silver nor coppers with me, just make an entry on me in your account book!” That man said: “I don’t have an account book yet!” Wu Song said: “If you don’t have an account book, let’s go to your home and find a painting hanging in your hall. You can write down ‘The Second Master owes me one time’s whoring money’.” Rage swelled within that man when he heard this, he shouted: “My good fellow! 17> How dare you speak so rudely and curse me! Watch my cudgel!” <17 He raised his cudgel fiercely with two hands and brought it down towards Wu Song’s head. Wu Song stepped aside and dodged the blow. The two young men then charged forward17> and joined the fight. The situation was serious:

Second Ceng got really mad,/ he brought his cudgel down fiercely towards Wu Song’s head./ He used all his strength to bring it down,/ Wu Song didn’t fight back, but stepped aside./<page 7> The two young men/ also charged forward to help./ All of four of them fought,/ in a big turmoil./

⁴ *waisheng* nephew, used for *waisheng* or *waihao* nickname?

Look, how everyone was using his martial skills,/ like the mice teasing a cat./ Just listen to the sounds of cudgels crashing,/ Very soon it would be clear which side had gained the upper hand./ On this side the bachelor Li Second Ceng was beaten down,/ on the other side the two little helpers were tumbling to the ground./ On this side there was a constant screaming: “I’m going to die!”/ Another one shouted: “My back is broken!”/ One village boy was smarter than the rest,/ and ran away when the situation was clear. <17 Second Brother Wu smiled,/ and yelled to that boy: “You useless son of a bitch!/ I should have chased you and given you a good beating!/ Now I give up like opening a cage and letting the birds escape.”/ Then he turned around and called Li Second Ceng:/ “Hurry up! Get to your feet and let’s have this old score settled!”/17>

Let us now tell <17 how Wu Song ordered Li Second Ceng to settle old scores. Li Second Ceng was only concerned about the pain 17> from his wounds. He groaned and weaned all the time at the top of his voice. <17 How could he care about giving a reply! Wu Song said: “You blind bastard! Earlier you wanted to settle scores with me, Second Master. Why don’t you say something now? If you don’t speak, then I, the Second Master don’t owe you anything from now on. I have to go now!” He quickly turned around and walked away after saying this. He traveled a distance of about three li and reached the border of Yanggu District.17> He passed another village, and only then he saw <17 there was a tavern by the road, advertised by a shopsign with five big characters which read: “Three bowls and you cannot cross the pass.” Wu Song didn’t understand that. He walked straight into the tavern, laid his cudgel aside, and sat down at the table facing south. 17> He ordered the innkeeper to bring him a big bowl of wine. Hearing this, the innkeeper came and filled a big bowl of wine which he placed in front of Wu Song. Wu Song lifted it up and emptied it in one gulp “Glug-glug!”. When the innkeeper saw how fast Wu Song finished the wine, he filled another bowl right away. Wu Song asked: “Have you something to go with the wine?” The innkeeper said: “My humble tavern is not big, we don’t have fancy dishes. Some cooked beef is all we’ve got.” “Cooked beef is good enough. Slice me some of the good part.” said Wu Song. The innkeeper asked: <page 8> “How much do you want me to slice for you?” Wu Song said: “Ten pound first, I’ll tell you later if I want more.” The innkeeper said: “My guest, you can’t eat that much! How about two pound less?” Wu Song said: “Your job is to sell for cash, isn’t it? Whether I am going to finish it all or not is none of your business. Bullshit!” The innkeeper said: “Alright, then! If you can eat it, I’ll definitely sell to you as long as I have some.” After saying this, he cut five pound of beef and brought it to the table. Wu Song started his

meal of beef and drank his second bowl. Then he asked the innkeeper to pour more wine. The innkeeper poured another bowl of wine. Wu Song drank it off but the host did not pay him any attention. Wu Song began to bang the table and shouted: “Where is the landlord?” The innkeeper quickly came over and asked: “What do you want, good guest?” Wu Song said: “Why don’t you come and pour me more wine?” The innkeeper said: “Good guest, you have drunk enough.” Wu Song asked: “How much is enough?” The innkeeper said: “Three bowls.” <17 Wu Song said: “Don’t you sell more after three bowls? The innkeeper said: “On our shopsign it is written clear enough, ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge.’” “But what’s that supposed to mean? ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge’?” asked Wu Song.17> The innkeeper replied: “There is a small mountain ridge here at our place which is quite steep. The travelers who visit our tavern like to taste this wine, but as soon as they have had three bowls of the wine, they’re so drunk, they cannot cross the mountain ridge up there! Therefore this wine is called ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge.’” Wu Song said: “Since you dare to brag of your wine, I wonder how strong it could be?” The innkeeper said: “Please sit down, my good guest! Listen carefully and let me tell you about how strong our wine is!”

The innkeeper called “My honored guest” and said:/ “Let me tell you./ Talking about this wine of mine,/ it’s pure and not diluted with water./ With the best yeast and top quality ingredients,/ this wine has rich fragrance and it is very tasty./ When you drink it,/ you’ll feel the wine penetrate deeply into your body./

This wine of mine once knocked out Minister Bi⁵;/ this wine of mine also knocked out immortal Li Taibai./ When Lü Dongbin once drank this wine of mine, he fell under the table./ When Liu Ling⁶ drank this wine of mine, he slept for three days!/ Although this wine is not brewed by the magic hands of Du Kang⁷;/ it still can compete with the nectar made by Lord Lao Zi⁸./ A poor drinker can only take five small cups,/ a heavy drinker will get mighty drunk after no more than three bowls of the wine./ <17 I’ve been a steady and honest guy since I was young,/<page 9> always convinced that life is easy at home, but difficult when you travel./ That’s why I wrote it clearly on the shopsign,/ calling it to the notice of our foreign guests.”/17> The innkeeper’s praise of his wine came to an end,/ but he was getting

⁵ 毕卓: An official who loved drinking. 吏部: Ministry of Official Personal Affairs in feudal China.

⁶ 刘伶: A writer who was famous for his drinking ability.

⁷ 杜康: The person who invented wine.

⁸ 老君: 被神化的老子。

on the nerves of our hero./

Wu Song said: “Landlord, don’t you brag about your wine. I’ve had three bowls and I’m still not drunk.” The innkeeper said: “Dear guest, you don’t know what they call our wine. One name is “Flavour through the Bottle”, another name is “Falling in the wind”. It is tasty when you drink it, but afterwards you’ll get drunk and fall, when you go outside in the wind!” Wu Song said: “Don’t fool me! I’ve never heard of anyone who gets drunk and is knocked down by the wind. Hurry on, pour me some wine!” The innkeeper could not find any pretext, but had to pour him more wine. Wu Song once again drained three bowls, getting ever more excited and yelling: “Bring more wine! Bring more wine!” The innkeeper said: “My guest, don’t drink too much. It’s not fun if you actually get drunk!” Wu Song bulged his eyes: <17“Whatever I drink, I’ll pay for! It is none of your business whether I get drunk or not.17> The innkeeper said: “If you want more beef, I can bring you some.” Wu Song said: “You’ve got to bring me more wine, and two pound of beef, too.” The innkeeper had no choice but sliced two pound of beef and poured three bowls of the wine. Wu Song again drained the wine and asked for more. The innkeeper said: “My guest, you already drank so much! If you get drunk, there’s nobody who can carry you!” Wu Song said: “If I needed the likes of you to carry me, I wouldn’t call myself a good fellow at all! You just bring me the wine!” The innkeeper said: “You are an odd fellow! I really dare not to bring you more wine.” <17 Wu Song got very angry when he heard this. He pointed his finger and shouted: “You son of bitch are so outrageous! Are you afraid that I won’t pay you? Why do you keep me so tight? If you bring me the wine, that settles the matter. But if you don’t do it and make me, Second Master, really angry, I’ll smash your little tavern into pieces! 17>The innkeeper was frightened of Wu Song’s violence, so he did not dare to stop pouring him the wine. Each time wine was served, it was drained in that very moment. And each time it was drained, a new bowl was served. *Let’s not repeat ourselves.* Having consumed altogether twenty-four bowls of wine, the innkeeper was really shocked.

The innkeeper stood at the side peeking at Wu Song,/ speculating in his mind and counting with his lips: <17 “I’ve seen so many travellers and merchants drinking,/ but nobody was like this ‘broken wine jar with no bottom’! / 17> He has drunk innumerable bowls of the very strongest wine,/ he has eaten five big plates of fat beef!/<page 10> In this world very few men have such capacity for drinking and eating! One may wonder if it is the potbellied Arhat who has descended to our human world./ Three meals a day like this would be

unbelievable/ and just one meal like this in three days would be no joke!/ *The saying is* that ‘Drinking and gambling you’ll lose all you own,/ you’ll have to sell your both house, hut, field and garden.’/ I wonder if this fellow is drunk or not,/ and can’t stop worrying about him every single minute!”/ The innkeeper stood dumbfounded, not even blinking with his eyes./ *Just look* and see how another bowl of wine was turned bottoms up!/ Second Brother Wu finally felt satisfied and had had enough wine./ He gave his order: “Landlord, please, bring my bill!”/

Let us now tell <17⁹ about how Wu Song finished drinking and called the innkeeper to make out his bill. After he had taken out some silver and paid the bill, he laughed out loudly and said again and again: “What ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge.’! I’ve had more than that, but you can watch me cross it!” With these words he grasped his cudgel and marched out of the gate in big strides. The innkeeper followed him outside, crying: “Good guest, please, come back!” Wu Song halted and asked: “I’ve paid for everything, haven’t I? What are you shouting about?” The innkeeper said: “I’m only trying to help, I have something important to tell you!” Wu Song turned round, went closer to the innkeeper and asked: “What’s so important?” The innkeeper said: “The ridge ahead is called Jingyang Ridge. Recently there has been a fierce tiger on the ridge with slanting eyes and white forehead. It kills people along the road. Among the travelers and merchants it has eaten twenty or thirty already. Therefore, the Magistrate of Yanggu District has given orders to the headman to let the hunters trap it in three days. Now the hunters have been punished many times, but so far they have not been able to capture it. So the Magistrate has posted a proclamation warning travelers and merchants that they must cross the ridge between the hours of nine in the morning and three in the afternoon. It’s forbidden to cross at any other time. And what’s more, single travelers are supposed to wait till there’s a group of twenty to thirty people, then they can cross the ridge together. Look, it’ll soon be night, and you travel alone. If you go up to the ridge now, you’ll be just throwing your life away. I suggest you to spend the night here. Tomorrow, you can look for company and make the trip together. That way you will be safe.” “Bah! Don’t make up stories! I’m from Qinghe District,” Wu Song said, “I’ve crossed this Jingyang Ridge dozens of times, and never heard about fierce tigers.<page 11> Now you want to scare me with these words, 17> and you think that I don’t know what’s in your

⁹ The following passage is particularly close to text 17, but not completely identical. F.ex. text 17 has the name of the waiter ‘Xiao’er’, while text 54 only mentions the ‘innkeeper’. There are many other minor divergencies.

mind?”

Second Brother Wu was mighty angry and spoke in a freezing voice:/ “Landlord!” called he and said: “You are obviously harbouring ill intent!/ You made the story up to scare me,/ because you have a big plan in your mind./ You plan to fool me into staying at your tavern,/ in order to rob my money and take my life!/ But I’ll guarantee your plan will come to naught!/ In front of me, Second Master, you’re not going to play tricks./ Even if there really is a wolf or a tiger, it doesn’t scare *me*. I will and shall cross this Jingyang Ridge!”/ After hearing these words, the innkeeper had to stomach his anger./ Then finally Wu Song turned around and took off in a hurry./ Very soon he had climbed the mountain top and was bouncing along the mountain ridge./ He felt hot all over and fell into a drunken stupor./ Suddenly, he heard a fierce gust of wind coming from the wood./ From behind a rock sprang out the road-blocking King of the Beasts,/ staring with a fixed look at Wu the Second from Qinghe district./ *Please, wait for the next session of storytelling where we shall tell the following in detail!*

Chapter Three

<17 I return to the homeland I left while young./ The sound of the local tongue is still the same, but my hair has grown thinner./ The children I meet do not know who I am./ "Where are you from, dear sir?" they ask with beaming eyes./¹⁰ 17>

Let us stop chatting and continue to tell from the last session. The story says that when the innkeeper told Wu Song how this fierce tiger was attacking people, Wu Song didn’t believe him and even said some hurting words. <17 The innkeeper said: “I was too kind, trying to help you. But you were provoked to give me such an answer. This was goodness paid with bullshit. If you don’t believe me, why should I care?” After saying this, he unhurriedly stepped back inside the tavern. 17> <17 Wu Song turned and made off towards Jingyang Ridge. When he arrived at the foot of the ridge, he noticed that the sun was already low in the sky. He began to climb the mountain while the wine still had effect. He saw a temple for the mountain spirits at the roadside, with a proclamation hung up on the wall. Wu Song paused to read it. It said:

‘The Magistrate of Yanggu District warns all travelers that, due to the recent

¹⁰ This poem is also found in text 17 where it is placed at the beginning of the performance text.

appearance of a fierce tiger on the ridge, attacking people, he has set up a deadline for the headman and hunters to capture it. <Page 12> All travelers who want to cross the ridge, must not to attempt the crossing of the ridge except between the hours of nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, 17>and must cross in groups. <17 Single travelers are not allowed to cross the ridge alone. They must be careful and not risk their lives! Urgent warning!’ 17>

The story says <17 when Wu Song read this, he realized that what the innkeeper had said was true. 17> If he kept going, how would he handle it in case he met that brute thing? But if he returned to the tavern, the innkeeper would surely laugh at him. <17 As he hesitated, he saw again the red sun setting slowly in the west. Admitted that he felt scared, 17> wouldn’t people feel cheated? <17 After all, Wu Song was a brave man and he had had a lot of wine, too, how could there be any good argument for turning back? In his heart he was still hesitating, so he called his own name and said: “Wu Song, Wu Song, your bravery is useless! You used to be famous enough among the rivers and streams fraternity, but how can a mere proclamation make a good fellow so scared he does not dare to go forwards?!” Thinking of this, his courage was roused, and he trudged on up the mountain path. 17> As he walked, <17 the wine began to make itself felt still more. 17> He wanted to find a suitable place to sleep. <17 As he advanced towards a dense thicket, suddenly he saw a black rock by the road, which was smooth like a mirror. Wu Song said: “On this cool bed, I shall sleep a while!” So he laid his cudgel aside, loosened his clothing and fell asleep on the black rock.

Second Brother Wu drifted off to sleep on the black rock,/ and didn’t care about tigers or wolves on the mountain./ Since he was a child he had always been very brave,/ and on top of that he was drunk and tired and could not keep his eyes open./17> He was on a small path in the middle of the wild and rocky mountains,/ this place was very different from staying in a pleasant pavillion among towers and mansions./ He couldn’t hear the song of birds playing on the branches./ He couldn’t hear the chuckling sound of water flowing in a creek/ He had forgotten the proclamation in front of the temple for the mountain gods./ Apparently his drunken stupor was foreboding distaster./ It was October, the early winter when days are short./ Soon the globe of the sun was setting in the west./ This hero had not even had time to dream a pleasant dream,/ when a fierce gust of wind came from the forest./ <Page 13>

<17 When Wu Song was half asleep, there came a fierce gust of wind in the forest. It swept the trees and stripped the branches bare, and suddenly in the turmoil he woke up. He opened his eyes, and jumping out in front of him, *just look a fierce tiger with white forehead and slanting eyes*, its fur like rich brocade. It bared its teeth and flaunted its claws ferociously.17>

Wild and ferocious, it dominated the whole mountain ridge. Prowling on the big rocks, the moment it set out a strong wind was stirred up. Rich brocade covered it all over, its teeth and claws were as sharp as steel. Springing forwards it covered more than four meters. Stretching backwards it was longer than two meters. When it roared, the mountain was shaking. All animals hid themselves when they saw the shadow of the tiger. During the flowering of the Eastern Han dynasty, the emperor Han Guangwu once on this very spot subdued the King of the Beasts!

The moment Wu Song saw it, he shivered, turned round and tumbled down, grabbed his big cudgel, and leapt to one side of the black rock. <17 The tiger had spotted Wu Song already before it sprang out from the wood. So it shook its striped fur, clawed the ground with its front paws, pushed back its hind paws, and made a jump, springing towards Wu Song. 17> Good Wu Song had a very quick reaction. In a flash he dodged, and ended up behind it. The tiger made a turn, again raised its front paws and attacked Wu Song. <17 Wu Song again dodged behind it. The tiger was both hungry and thirsty, and failing to grasp its prey twice, it was burning with impatience and gave an ear-splitting roar as if a mountain was falling and the ground split open. It opened its enormous mouth and jumped towards Wu Song. Wu Song raised his cudgel in both hands and shouted: “You monster, you are in for a beating!” He brought the cudgel down with all the strength of his two arms. But who would imagine that his cudgel did not even touch the fierce tiger? The stroke went right on to the black rock. With a swoosh half of the cudgel was gone, and he was left with only the broken half in his hand. 17> *It is slow in the telling, but it was fast in the act*, the tiger was again right in front of him. <17 Wu Song was in a desperate hurry. He threw away his broken cudgel, instantly stretched out his two bare hands and took a firm grip on the striped neck of the tiger, forcing its head down to the ground with all his strength, not a moment did he relax his grip. With his legs he delivered fearful kicks to its face. The tiger was in unbearable pain, it thrashed about but couldn’t get up, and all it could do was trying to move back and forth. Wu Song thrust it down with his left hand, managed to work his right hand free and hammered it several

times under its ear with his fist. *Just look* how the red blood began to gush from the tiger's ears, eyes, nose <Page 14> and mouth. After a while it lost its energy. Wu Song grabbed it, thrust it down to the ground, and continued to give it more blows with his fist. *One could see* how this lively tiger stopped breathing and died, lying there motionless. Only then did Wu Song loosen his grip and stop beating. 17>

What great strength Second Brother Wu had! *You've seen* how mighty drunk he went into the deep mountain and subdued the tiger./ It laid there stiffly by the roadside and did not move anymore./ It looked like a brocade blanket halfways covering an ivory bed./ He beat it with his bare fists,/ without bow and arrow, knife and spear./ Apparently even the Heavenly Guardians of buddhism couldn't do this./ he was not inferior to the King of Heaven, called Li with the golden pagoda./ Since then Jingyang Ridge was liberated from the evil,/ and travelers on the road were never attacked by a tiger and losing their lives./ If this man could be offered an official position,/ he would be able to help the Emperor defend his kingdom./ It is said that heroes only come from families of generals,/ we should know that ever so often the pillars of the state descend from poor and ordinary families./ This hero fought the fierce tiger until the end./ *Just look*, it was already dark and there was no glint of the sun./

The story says that <17 after Wu Song had killed the fierce tiger, he went back to that rock and sat down. As he sat there and rested for a while, it was already dark, and Wu Song speculated in the darkness: "Too bad! If another one springs out now, what can I do? I'd better get down the ridge and find a place to stay for the night." Then he stood up and marched down. He had barely gone half a *li* when he suddenly saw something jump out from the thicket of dry grass. Wu Song had a fright, but when he looked carefully, it was two men who wore suits made from tiger's fur. Both of them carried five-steel-tined forks. Wu Song asked: "What are you doing here?" Those two men then gave a timid reply: "A-a-a...are you a man or a ghost?" Wu Song said: "I'm a man, how could I be a ghost?" One man said: "Have you eaten a bear's heart or leopard's gall that you travel alone in the dark of night, with no weapon in your hand, it's so weird!" Wu Song said: "Then what are you two doing here?" That man replied: "Friend, don't you know that recently there has been on this mountain ridge a fierce tiger with white forehead and slanting eyes <Page 15> which has eaten all the people who have traveled on this road. Since the Magistrate of this district did not see any way out, he set up a reward and the

hunters were ordered to take turns and try to capture it. But seven or eight of us local hunters were killed by the tiger already. It is *our* turn to be on duty tonight. So we gathered a dozen of local villagers, and we have been waiting here for quite a while. Now we suddenly meet you traveling here alone. Didn't you see a thing?" Wu Song said: "When I was up in the mountain a while ago, that tiger came out from the wood and sprang at me. I grabbed it and beat it to death with blows and kicks." That man said: "Fie! That's a damned lie! Not to mention the fact that you were all alone, but even if there had been eight or ten people, they would not dare to get close to it. Let me just tell you one thing that happened last night, **17**> which was really scary."

That man just opened his mouth,/ he looked frightened in his face./ He called "Sir!
Listen to the details of my tale. <**17** Yesterday there was a local fellow,/ his name
was Xing Gang./ He led a group of ten people/ armed with knives and spears./ They
climbed the mountain to capture the fierce tiger,/ then misfortune came upon them./

Xing Gang didn't even have a chance to do anything when he first saw the tiger,/ that tiger already dragged him away and tore open his chest./ In no time it had devoured him, body and head./ His group of people had a great shock./ This man had no elder or younger brothers,/ so his poor mother cried to death./ **17**> His wife and children were to live with another man/ and his children had to call others dad and mum./ This is what happened last night./ This morning the grievous news soon spread around to the villages and hamlets./ I don't believe that one can kill a tiger with bare fists./ Don't boast and brag in a lonely place like this./ Although tales of fighting dragons and tigers have always existed,/ only the Four Heavenly Gods from Bingling Castle were capable of such feats."/ While the three people stood there talking,/ *just look* how a group of villagers climb up the ridge./

The story says that <**17** while these two hunters were talking with Wu Song, *just look* how a group of local villagers came from below. Wu Song asked: "Who are the people in that crowd?" The hunters said: "They are also *our* comrades." As they were speaking, the crowd was approaching and asked in chorus: "You two fellows over there, who are you talking with?" The hunters replied: <**Page 16**>"Look at this man, he climbed the ridge alone and *we* were scared by him. We asked if he saw the big beast, and he told us he had it already beaten it to death with his bare fists and kicks. Do you think we could trust him?" The other people said: "If one man would try and handle a fierce tiger, he must

have six arms, three heads 17> and twelve legs.” One of them added: “This pure nonsense! I have only heard about tigers eating men, but I have never heard about any man who could beat a tiger to death.” <17 Wu Song said: “If you don’t trust me, let’s go together and have a look. Then you will know for sure.” When they heard this, they fetched some fire and lit several big torches right away. Following after Wu Song, they soon came to a forest. *Just look* how a fierce tiger was lying there stiff and dead, with traces of blood from its four openings. The crowd were both shocked and happy. They tied the dead tiger up with ropes and seven or eight people carried it in procession. Some of the villagers went ahead and informed the headman. So the headman gathered all the villagers, lit up lamps and torches, and came to receive Wu Song. They invited him to the village and offered him a guest seat. The headman said to him: “Since this fierce tiger appeared on Jingyang Ridge, *our* whole village has been in danger. Now at last you strong fellow have turned up and done away with the evil for *our* region. But we still don’t know your name and where you come from? Please, *tell us the details*.” Wu Song told them the following: “I come from Qinghe District, my name is Wu Song and I’m the second in my family. I traveled from Cangzhou to here. It was sheer luck that I chanced upon the fierce tiger and did it in, and this was because of your good fortune.” The headman said: “Strong fellow, how could you say that? It’s all because of the great advent of a brave hero like yourself. Now you must be very hungry, strong fellow, let me bring you some food to eat. 17> But in this village and in such a short time, we don’t have anything special to treat you, we are sorry for that.” Excusing himself like this, he shook hands with him and went away. The people from the village stayed and accompanied Wu Song. Not very long afterwards, the headman had a meal ready. <17 Wu Song didn’t care about courtesy, but started eating right away. 17>

The food was prepared in a hurry, so there was nothing special,/ but something plain and good./ Right upon this time Wu Song/ felt both hungry and thirsty./ Plates full of pancakes and meat,/ were placed in the middle of the table./ These people were honest and sincere,/ there was no nonsense about it./<Page 17>

There was one plate of sliced beef flavored with garlic and vinegar,/ looked like at least eight pounds./ There were two or three pancakes made of fine white flour./ In addition, there were pickled cucumbers and radishes soaked in sesame oil./ In the porcelain bowl there was millet porridge,/ which was still boiling hot./ This was a simple meal served far away from the big town,/ with only poor home-made wine

說唱文學，新刻義俠傳，卷一，(第一回至第三回)

54 Performance literature, New Edition of the Tale of the Noble Knight-errants, Scroll One (Chapters one to three), Feng Yining trans, revised VB 15 February 06

and fruitjuice/ Serving their guest a crude meal like this,/ little did they know if Wu
Song had eaten his fill or not./

[The text is continued in Chapter Four to Chapter Ten]

Translated by Feng Yining and Vibeke Børdahl