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Xun cheng ma

By Kiu-Ying Chan

When the Republic was still young
Yuan Shihai and the warlords
were against Dr Sun.
In the north mountains
there was a bandit named Jiao Long.
This area was
an important strategic site.
Jiao's bandits all had pigtails.
They were known as the Pigtail Army.
The area was constantly fought over.
Yuan sent Jiao his envoy
in a bid to win his support.
Stop! Don't run.
He's over there.
Stop! Don't run.
Stop! Stop, stand still.
Don't run!
I've caught you at last, you bastard!
Your move!
Give us your money.
Stop running!
Have you seen a kid
running for his life?
Roadside Inn.
Have a smoke, they're from Canton.
Really? Let me try one.
A light?
Thanks.
Not bad.
Nephew, isn't it too late
to travel now?
I'm going to stay here for the night.
I'll meet Jiao Long tomorrow.
It's 5 months since I last saw you,
where have you been?
Shanghai and Canton.
It's great being a postman.
Going here, there and everywhere.
Have you thought
about changing your job?
The railway might come here soon.
Once that happens, people will use it
to send their mail.
Don't you think so?

We'll wait and see.
There is no use in hiding.
I'm not hiding, just wrapping up.
How are you, Brother Ma?
Haven't you changed jobs yet?
Isn't it embarrassing?!
- What are you doing?
- We're looking for someone.
Please.
Move, get out of the way.
- If you make me go out, I'll die.
- That is your problem.
It's chaos out there. They steal
from us, we steal back from them.
I despise people like you.
OK then, let's split it.
You have it.
Run!
Wait for me!
- Why aren't you running?
- If I could, I would.
You've messed us around enough.
I'll finish you off!
These two are my friends.
Respect me and let them go.
Respect?
What respect?
Run!
Yao Jie, how are you?
We've got unfinished business.
I'm Hu, and you are...?
I'm just a postman.
Hey, let's go.
What's the hurry?
We still need to talk.
- About what?
- It's a chance to make friends.
If it's about money,
we can still negotiate.
It's not about money, it's about
going into Jiao's territory.
What's the use of money
if you're dead?
You can't handle it by yourself.

Can your friend here help you?

I'm sorry,

I deliver nothing but letters.

Sorry.

Excuse me.

- What about you?

- Count me out.

But we've made

such a good team before.

I'm not interested

in anything apart from stealing.

Excuse me.

Uncle San, I'm leaving.

It wasn't me.

I didn't cheat.

Believe me, it wasn't my fault.

I thought you might need a bodyguard!

I want to talk to you.

Hey! The postman's back. Come on out.

The postman's back.

Slowly, easy.

Let me take them out first.

Here they are.

Li Chang-Ken.

Wait, wait.

Madam Kuei, this is for you.

This is for Chang.

This is Chung...

It's so slow. I wish we had
a proper postal service.

Chen Shen, Chen Fa-Kuei...

This is for Wong...

Who is this?

That's your father.

- Hurry!

- Wait.

Wang Dai-jin. Ho Shao-hao.

- I thought my dad was a manager!

- Shut up.

Li Choi.

Uncle Chang.

Brother Ma, is there anything for us?

Of course there is.

It's very tasty.

Have a look.
It's chocolate.
It's like mud!
I'm not eating that.
He's just messing with us.
Brother Ma.
This is for you.
There's some money inside.
Mayor, please come in.
We've collected some money for you.
Pretend it's your wages.
There's no hurry.
It's not a lot.
As you know,
there's chaos everywhere.
Everyone's robbing everyone else.
It's OK, I won't be leaving
for a few days anyway.
To tell you the truth,
nobody's got any money any more.
As I see it,
you should change jobs.
This line of work is not for you.
Excuse me.
Brother Ma, you're back.
Place your bets.
Thanks.
He's cheating!
Sorry.
It's OK, all settled.
Please, pay up.
That really hurt.
That'll cost you double.
If I pay you double,
who's going to pay me double?
So you won't pay?
I can find my own way home.
Brother Ma.
What are you doing out so late?
My father sold my sister.
And with the money left over...
I want you to take me to Shanghai
so I can buy her back.
She's only 15. Please take me.

We have to buy her back.
What are you doing here?
Why do you still live here?
This place is not fit for anyone.
What's on your mind?
Do you remember Hu?
He really respects you.
He's prepared to pay
So what do you think?
- You change your mind quickly.
- I didn't want to. But...
But what?
- He's paying well.
- Do you want to risk it?
- Sure.
- What are you waiting for?
I can't do it on my own.
Come on, help me.
I'm tired, I want to sleep.
Well, why not? You're not busy.
Not busy? I'm leaving
in the next few days.
He's something else!
Yao Jie.
What?
When do you have
to give Hu your answer?
- Then you agree?!
- Come on.
Move, go away.
I've got something to ask you.
Have you seen anyone
that looks like a scholar?
What sort of scholar?
He wears a long grey gown
and a grey scarf
and he's about this tall.
There's lots of people like that
in the village.
He likes gambling and he cheats.
Oh, him!
You should have said.
So you want information?
You know what to do.

So?

- Are you going to tell us?

- OK, I'll talk.

- Where is he?

- He left two days ago.

Let him go.

So we need one more person?

Yes, he's essential,

he's an explosive expert.

It won't kill you, back to work.

What are you doing?

Do you want to get fired?

Hey, get on with your work. Now!

Lunch!

Lao Bu, Shen wants to make a bet
with you.

Go on, are you scared of him?

Everyone thinks you'll win.

Everyone wants some action.

You chicken!

Haven't you got the stomach for it?

We better call you

Bu the Coward from now on!

Come on, then.

Action!

Come on.

Who are they calling coward now?

- You've arrived.

- Yes.

Yao Jie.

Your mouth!

Mr Hu, don't depend on
our good will again.

And remember,

you must keep this secret,

we don't want any

political embarrassment.

But, who are the men?

I'm not staying.

This way, please.

These are the gifts for you
to take to Jiao Long.

This way, please.

Take a seat.

You must get there in seven days.
Take these presents to Jiao Long's
house in the mountains.

Once you've delivered these boxes
your mission is complete.

But...

you must be on time.

Jiao Long's birthday
is on the 20th of December,
so don't be later than that date.

And another thing...

no one is allowed
to open the cases during the journey.
Even if you run into serious trouble
don't open them.

Destroy them if you have to.

This is half in advance,
you'll get the rest on delivery.

So when do we three leave?

Not three, four.

Fu Jun, come in.

This is Fu Jun from Canton,
this is...

The postman, we've met.

That's really good.

Fu is familiar with the underworld.

If you run into any trouble...

he should be an asset.

How many people know about this?

Just us.

Fu is pretty arrogant.

He must be keeping an eye on us.

Let's go.

What's wrong with her?

Brother Ma!

Guihua!

- Why are you here?

- I'm going with you.

- I can't take you along.

- I won't be any trouble.

I don't know what
is lying ahead of us.

You've got to take me with you.

Go and take the train.

Why did you bring so many rats?
They'll come in handy.
What's in those cases, then?
They're for Jiao Long,
it'll be something special.
What is that?
It's something I've invented.
As I see it,
this isn't a simple matter.
Are you regretting it now?
Don't be silly,
you know what kind of person I am.
You've saved my life,
whatever you want me to do, I'll do.
Tonight's cold,
this will keep you warm.
Don't get too involved, we'll just
deliver the cases and get the money.
Brother Ma, who's on watch tonight?
You sleep first, I'll do tonight.
Drink some of this,
it will keep you warm.
Brother Ma, the horse is gone!
Bu!
Where's the horse?
Damn, I accidentally fell asleep.
Accidentally? I think you were drunk.
The cases are gone too.
How will I explain this?
They'll kill me!
Calm down, let's talk it over.
Fine, yes, calm down -
you may not need the gold, but I do.
What do you mean?
Just give me the gold.
If you jumped off a cliff
I still wouldn't give it to you.
What do you mean?
I didn't like you
from the moment I set eyes on you.
Typical peasant miner.
OK, let's look for the horse.
Help!
Help!

Stay here, we'll go and look.
Help me!
Help!
Haven't we seen her before?
Our horse!
Help me!
Watch the horse.
Are you all right?
- Are you OK?
- I'm fine.
Come on.
- They look like Jiao's bandits.
- Let's go.
Yao Jie!
Over there, quick!
Where are we? It's so dark here.
- It's called the snake pit.
- There are snakes in here?
There's nothing to be afraid of.
Want a drink?
You were clever, I'm glad
those bandits didn't get away.
You have to be clever to survive.
You're OK, have a drink.
Here.
It'll keep you warm.
My family lives in Feng Shui.
As we're in the area,
why don't we visit them?
Good, while we're here, why not?
Let's escort Miss Li home.
Just in case she has more trouble.
Brother Ma!
Brother Ma.
Someone's here.
It could be the bandits.
Get the horse.
- Where are you from?
- Panlong.
Have you seen
two men around here?
No.
Bring me the boy.
Don't move.

Where did you get this?

I found it.

It's nothing to do with me.

- Look after him.

- Are you OK?

- Let's go.

- Get the horse.

Go.

Go.

It's nothing,
it's only a scratch.

What do you think they are doing?

Who knows?

Women are difficult to understand.

Yao's hurt and we've got to
look after those girls.

We don't know when
we'll reach the Laoma Pass.

Don't worry,
we've still got three days left.
After this, what are you going to do?

Are you going back to Canton?

I want to go to Hong Kong.

And you?

I've got no plans.

Why don't you come with me?

Aren't you worried I'm stupid?

Don't be so petty!

Hurry up.

Damn horse!

Wait here.

Move.

- Leave it.

- Help me with the cases.

Do you come from the south?

Yes.

I lived in Canton for a while.

Did you come up north
because of these cases?

I go wherever I want to try my luck.

Do you think
you'll be lucky this time?

Let's go.

Come on, we've almost reached

the foot of the mountain.

What do you think of Miss Li?

Fu seems interested in her.

Mind your own business.

After this you'll reach Laoma Pass.

Will you stay there?

No.

So you want to go back to Canton?

Yes, but before I go back

I'll visit Feng Shui.

- Do you know someone there?

- No.

So what will you do there?

Try your luck?

Fu.

I've waited a long time for you.

Don't you remember in Canton

you tricked and then killed somebody?

I can tell you now,

I've already accepted the money.

I just haven't done the job yet.

Do you understand?

There's two sides to every story.

You're squashing me!

Ah Hui!

- Are you OK?

- I'm fine.

Did you kill those two men?

Just some unfinished business.

Where's Miss Li?

I don't know. I've looked everywhere.

Maybe she's gone back to Feng Shui.

I don't know.

Let's talk about this later.

Well?

I've asked everywhere,

no one knows her.

- Where are the others?

- They left early.

Today's society is so chaotic,

there's all kinds of people.

Don't get depressed about it,

let's go for a walk.

I'm not going, you two go.

That's enough.
The way I see it, that Miss Li...
she's a strange one.
I don't think she's honest.
What do you think?
Do you know what
we're delivering to Jiao Long?
How should I know?
I'm going for a walk.
Place your bets.
Come on, hurry.
That's it, no more bets.
Eight and nine.
Player one, you lose.
And you lose too.
Come on, move. Let me play.
Place your bets.
Stop pushing.
No more bets. It's 20.
Hey, what about you?
Any more bets? Last bets.
No more bets.
Are you ready yet?
- Why are you following me?
- I'm just going to the toilet.
Really?
Brother Ma.
Captain.
Did you know
that Hu works for Yuan Shihai?
Yuan has stated
his allegiance to the crown.
The gift you're delivering
from Hu to Jiao
will help Jiao in Yuan's cause.
They'll join forces against Dr Sun.
No matter what,
we must have these cases.
It's my duty to deliver them.
Nobody is to touch them.
- Take them.
- Yes.
I think you'd better give up.
Are you all right?

Get up.

- What is it?

- We're in trouble.

What are you doing?

- Brother Ma.

- Brother Ma.

- Where are the others?

- They're waiting at the junction.

Let's go.

I'll ask you again, where are
the rest of the revolutionaries?

I know every move
that you and your friends make...
so why are you resisting me?

Why don't you cooperate
for both our sakes?

Be careful, it's slippery.

- Help him.

- Thanks.

Careful.

Careful.

Wait.

Listen.

Let's go.

They're getting closer.

Faster.

Watch your back.

Behind you!

Move!

Quick, run!

Forget the cases!

Run!

- Are you OK?

- Fine.

Run!

- I'll help you.

- You go first.

Yao Jie, you still awake?

Will we reach Laoma Pass tomorrow?

I promised to deliver
the cases because I am your friend.

If there's anything more to this,
you should tell me.

I'm not hiding anything from you.

Who killed that revolutionary?
How should I know? I wasn't there.
Were you shocked
when you saw the body?
If you don't trust me, fine.
You didn't want to work
for Hu in the beginning.
Then you changed your mind. Strange.
I only did it for the money.
What's inside the cases?
I don't know.
Tell me or I'll open them.
- Don't. You can't open them.
- Why not?
You're not allowed.
What's going on?
Brother Ma, you can't do this.
My sisters' lives are at stake.
Yuan hired Hu in Tokyo.
He's a Ninja.
I used to work for him.
This time, he asked me to help out.
But I refused
and he took my sisters hostage.
He forced me to deliver
the cases and keep an eye on you.
Once the cases are delivered,
he'll release my sisters.
- What's inside those cases?
- I don't know.
Yuan has so many soldiers,
why has he hired us?
He's using us to bring
the revolutionaries out from hiding.
So Miss Li has fallen for the trap.
Hu is a sly man,
I've no idea what he might do next.
Let me deliver the cases alone.
If we're not back by sunset,
take the other cases and leave.
Brother Ma, I'll wait for you
to take me to Shanghai.
Brother Ma?
Be careful of Hu.

I told you women were troublesome.
Unlike us men!
You must have had a hard journey,
but you've made it on time.
Guihua's been gone too long.
I'll go and find her.
- Keep your eye on them.
- OK.
Brother, brother.
Are you all right?
- When are you taking us home?
- Take us home quickly.
Take us home, please.
Yao Jie, since you've been so clever
and haven't delivered
all of the cases together,
you can stay here with your sisters
until Brother Ma
delivers the rest of them.
This is wonderful.
Four boxes make a machine gun.
How wonderful.
Do you want to see
how powerful it is?
Yes, get rid of these
revolutionaries for me.
It's really powerful.
Since you like it so much,
Yuan can deliver more.
Great!
So this is what we've delivered?
There will be more
opportunities for us to cooperate.
Of course.
Yao Jie, you can go.
Mr Hu, we'll celebrate well tonight.
I'm sorry,
I have to go and help Yuan.
Quickly!
Brother Ma.
Cheers!
Your good health.
Cheers! Let's have another drink!
We have to drink more!

Fire! Fire!

Mr Hu, we'll celebrate well tonight.

I'm sorry,

I have to go and help Yuan.

Still trying to be a hero.

I'm doing it for my friends.

You're more stupid than I thought.

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