

Wing Chun

Story Part 13

Following his first visit to the opera, Lan Kwai went quite often thereafter. Each time he went, he watched the young actor and he found that he was just right to learn Wing Chun Kung Fu.



One evening he went to see the opera as usual, however, this time in the middle of the performance a group of about 40 government soldiers suddenly burst in. They were all armed with big swords and spears. One of the soldiers strode in behind the group and he had a black bear embroidered on the chest of his dark purple uniform. This was the uniform of a high-ranking officer. He was obviously in charge.

"Nobody move!" the officer called out, "we have come to arrest some rebels!" Everyone was nervous and some people tried to leave but they were all stopped by the soldiers who pushed them back. "Some of you will have to come backstage for questioning!" the officer yelled. Then turning to his soldiers he shouted, "Arrest everyone who works for the opera!"

Behind the stage there were a lot of people working for the opera. Some were waiting to assist the performers as they went on and off stage, some were other actors, some were musicians and there were also labourers and many other people.

All the actors and musicians who were on stage were rounded up by some soldiers who were ready to take them away. That included the young man who played Guan Gong. However, suddenly someone screamed and the sound of metal striking something could be heard. Fighting had obviously broken out backstage.

The audience panicked and everyone started to run. There were over a hundred people in the opera house and only 20 or 30 soldiers trying and failing to control them. It was chaos. People were screaming and running in all directions, some people were even trying to climb over the temporary walls that had been built to make the theatre. These walls were very weak as they were made from thin wood and bamboo. They began to collapse and people began falling.

Some of the actors knew Kung Fu and so began fighting back. They all knew that the government soldiers were very corrupt and if they were taken away to the police station,

even if they were innocent, they would be tortured until they confessed that they were guilty.

The government had given the police and soldiers the power to torture any suspect while they questioned them. This meant they used innocent people to make up their records. Then they could tell their superiors in the government how many crimes they had solved. However, a good government does not count success against crime by the number of cases solved, but instead it counts how much less crime takes place in a certain area. Sadly, though, at that time the ruling Qing Government was weak. Many foreign powers had come to

China and were taking advantage of it. They sold opium to its people and shipped gold and silver out of the country but the government was too weak to stop them. All they knew was how to take advantage of the people but had no strength to defend the country. At that time there was a saying, "Good sons do not join the police." Of course, there were still some good government officers but it was rare.

In the chaos the young actor knew if he was arrested his life would be over, so he had to escape! He tried to run but a soldier pressed his big sword against him and pushed him back. However, he tried again, but this time he slowly tried to move towards the exit. He got close enough and was about to run but the soldier had already seen him and had already raised his big sword. The young actor knew he was not fast enough to escape and closed his eyes expecting to get chopped. However, suddenly he heard a noise and when he looked he saw the soldier bouncing away and his big sword flying up into the air. Standing next to him was a slim gentleman who wore smart green robes.

The slim gentleman was Leung Lan Kwai. He had seen the soldiers coming in and knew there was about to be trouble. The soldiers were always trying to find and arrest rebels. Most of the rebels were members of the Han people who did not like the Manchurian Qing Government. They tried to fight back

"He saw the soldier bouncing away and his sword flying into the air."

and retrieve their land. All the areas in China had originally belonged to the Han people but since the Ming Dynasty had fallen and the Qing had taken over, the Han people had set up many secret societies who rebelled against the Qing Government. A lot of them hid in the opera troupes and, since they travelled from province to province, it made it more difficult for the government to catch up with them. As the Shaolin Temple was also involved in the struggle against the Qing rulers the temple was burnt down. This was why Grandmaster Ng Mui had to escape and travel to Yunnan Province.

The soldiers had come that evening to arrest members of a secret society who they had been told were hiding in the opera troupe. They had decided to arrest all of them and find out who was guilty later. Lan Kwai did not like the government people. Many times, because of their business, his family had to pay officials to avoid them causing trouble. Fortunately, his father was good at dealing with these kinds of situations and was able to keep their business going.

Lan Kwai was a very dignified person and would not stand for all this corruption. Before, he could not do much about it as he did not have good Kung Fu, but now it was different. He was famous for his Wing Chun in the local villages and towns - everyone knew him. However, in the opera troupe no one knew who he was.

At first Lan Kwai had not attempted to fight back. When everyone had tried to run he had stood still and watched what was happening all around. He watched and tried to observe certain people, especially the high ranking officer in the purple uniform. Lan Kwai could tell that the officer had a certain high level of Kung Fu. Lan Kwai looked at his eyes, his bone structure and the way he walked, which was light. So he could tell that the officer was quite strong internally.

This good observational skill he had developed by doing Siu Lim Tao very slowly. While he practised like this his mind was able to totally calm down and then he was aware of every single thing around him. When you reach a state like this everything seems to happen slowly as you have time to see and feel it.

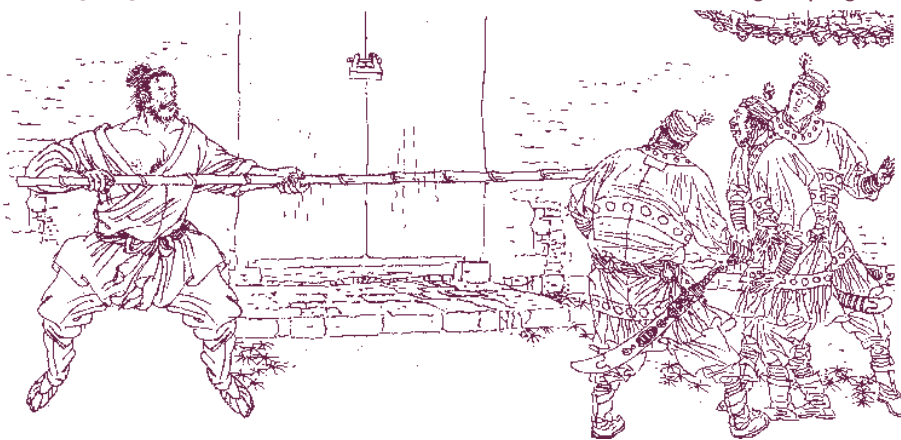
When everyone started to panic and run, the commander of the soldiers went backstage. Lan Kwai focused on the soldier guarding the young actor. When he saw the soldier raise his sword to chop the young actor, Lan Kwai jumped up on to the stage and, stepping forwards, he used his Maan Sau to strike the exposed armpit of the guard. At the same time he used his Wu Sau to block the guard's elbow. Lan Kwai was very fast and his strike caused a lot of pain, so the guard could not hold onto his big sword and it flew up into the air. Luckily it did not hit anyone, it just scared some people when it came crashing down next to them!

Lan Kwai did not give the soldier a chance to recover and he used a sidekick which hit the soldier and sent him flying off the stage and onto the floor below. The soldier did

not move. These techniques were from the third section of the Wing Chun Wooden Dummy technique. The kicking and the Po Pai Jeung (Butterfly Palm) were Lan Kwai's favourite parts.

Lan Kwai was now standing next to the young actor but he did not have time to introduce himself or even speak to him because, just as he was finishing his kick, a sharp spear was attacking his waist to his right. As he put his foot down, with his good footwork he quickly stepped to his right and avoided the spear and, using Dai Bong (Low Wing Arm), he deflected the spear to the side.

Virtually at the same time, with his left hand, he used Lap Sau. He was so fast! Then he used Lap Sau pulling the spear forward in the same direction that the soldier had stabbed. This caused the spear to go further forward than the soldier expected and made him lose his balance and fall forwards. Lan Kwai did not give him a chance. This was a life or death situation and so he had to use a serious strike and used Pai Jang (Side Elbow Strike). He struck the soldier just perfectly and he hit the ground unconscious. He also did not get up again.



In Wing Chun Kung Fu there is not just one attack or one defence. Everything continues as it is a real fighting skill. There is no fancy jumping and tumbling and no screaming and shouting while attacking. Either there is no more as it is over or it is continuous until it

is finished. Expect that your enemy will use any kind of attack. Because of this there are no competitions in Wing Chun as competitions need rules. This means it is very important to develop good sensitivity and the right energy in every move. Whether attacking or defending, you should always be one step ahead of your opponent. When attacking you also need to step faster than your opponent. It is a real fighting skill and not mere performance.

Once Lan Kwai had knocked out two soldiers he knew things were serious and people would start to recognise him. He suddenly turned and hurried over to a corner of the stage where there was lot of dirt and mud. He wiped his hand on the floor and then rubbed his face making his face very dirty. He then said to the young actor, "Let's go!" The young actor was still in his full make-up as Guan Gong and so nobody could see his real face and recognise him. He could see that this slim gentleman's Kung Fu was extremely good and he was grateful to him for saving his life and so he just followed whatever Lan Kwai said.

Around them everything was still in chaos and no one was paying them any attention. They ran out of the theatre. Outside they found another group of soldiers, including the commanding officer who were surrounding an old man. The soldiers were all carrying weapons, swords, broadswords and spears but none of them, even the officer, could get close to the old man.

Lan Kwai was curious and stopped to observe, "Who is that old man?" he asked. The young actor stopped, "The old man?" he looked again, "that old man... he... he is our cook!"

To be continued....

By Michael Tse. The Wing Chun story will be continued on our website, www.tsejigongcentre.com